

13 Feb 88

Seeking to protect Bennachie wildlife

SIR, — I refer to the story "Anger over Bennachie trees scheme" ("Press and Journal", January 20). Paradise Wood was declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) in 1983. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, SSSIs have to have management agreements, which have to be drawn up between the owners and the NCC. I would therefore be breaking the law if I did not do this.

In order to draw up the management agreement, it is necessary to classify the woodland as if no SSSI order had been implemented. It is for this reason that proposals were put forward to the Forestry Commission that part of the wood be classified for the production of soft-

woods and part for hardwoods. The director of planning should have consulted the legal department of Gordon District Council about the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, SS 32 and 50 (2), in order to be able to advise the councillors.

As far as the application to plant trees on Bennachie is concerned, Monymusk Estate wish to protect the wildlife from constant and unnatural human encroachment. Bennachie has become a magnet for almost anyone who wishes to get into the hills and I have seen people up there as early as 3 a.m. and as late as 11.30 p.m.

This leaves very little time for the flora and fauna to carry on with their natural lives. For instance, I have seen roe-deer feeding

as if they are always on guard, with a few hurried mouthfuls here and there, instead of grazing peacefully. It is unnatural that animals should be subjected to such stress.

As a member of the Council of Bailies of Bennachie, I am very aware that Bennachie has been projected into public focus instead of just enjoying a warm spot in the hearts and minds of the people of the North-east. I believe that action should be taken now to protect Bennachie from the ravages of overindulgent human intrusion, without denying the public access completely, so that forthcoming generations can enjoy Bennachie as we in the past have done.

Sir Archibald Grant, The Estate Office, Monymusk.