

Bennachie and forestry plans

SIR,—It was with some surprise that I read the letter (February 3) from Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk.

He is entitled to be represented on the Council of the Bailies of Bennachie because of his ownership of land on the hill.

He has not attended a meeting for several years and, although he regularly receives copies of our minutes, he may not be aware that the Bailies objected, in the strongest possible terms, to his afforestation proposals for Bennachie.

Therefore, it is misleading

for Sir Archibald, while trying to justify his actions to the public, to express his opinion in a way such that it might be interpreted as that of the Council of the Bailies.

Our objection to his application for public funds to be used to afforest the Monymusk Triangle was based on the need to protect the wildlife, landscape and public access.

Under the proposed plan, the existing valued mixture of heathland and regenerating scots pine would be replaced by a monoculture of sitka spruce, enclosed by a fence, and it is difficult for me to see what

provision Sir Archibald has made for wildlife.

Is the fence to keep deer in — or people out?

Many of the trees at present growing on the Monymusk Triangle were planted for amenity purposes by the Bailies, with the encouragement of Sir Archibald's mother, the previous Lady Grant.

The Monymusk Triangle includes an important and long-established pedestrian route to the Mither Tap and cross-country access to the north side of the hill.

No provision has been made in the plan for continued access and, over the

years, Sir Archibald has refused to allow the Bailies to carry out footpath maintenance and has threatened to close the path to the public.

His forestry-grant application was a considerable shock to the Bailies: in a letter dated March 10, 1987, he wrote: "Monymusk Estate has recently drawn up the next five-year plan for forestry planting and I can inform you that no plans have been made to plant up any of the Monymusk Triangle".

M.B. Davidson, clerk, The Bailies of Bennachie, Averans, Whiteford, Pitcaple.