

9/90

Bennachie under threat VIEW RUINED BY PLOUGHING

BELOVED BENNACHIE is under threat from private development and there is little the guardians can do to stop it.

The Baillies of Bennachie and the North-East Mountain Trust are virtually helpless and their last hope, a management plan for the hill, is gone.

In their annual report just publicised, the trust delightedly noted that their exhortation to Gordon District Council to formulate a management plan, also taken up by the Baillies, had been adopted.

But Trust general secretary, Mr J. W. H. Conroy, stated, "Since the report was completed, Gordon District Council have informed the trust that, because of lack of staff and other resources, it will not now be able to formulate a management plan for Bennachie in the near future.

"This is a great disappointment, because in the North-East of Scotland, Bennachie is a hill of both great scenic and recreational value.

WILDERNESS

"It is probably one of the most-visited areas of upland in Grampian, being easily accessible, and near to areas of large population.

"To many people, Bennachie, and in particular its western slope, is often the first

and only chance they have to experience wilderness and isolation."

Although it is appreciated that a management plan would not solve all the problems, the guardians of the mountain feel that such a proposal would help discourage untoward development.

NO SENSE

The episode which has underlined the need for such a plan involved the fencing-off of some land on the hill by a private landowner who refused public access.

The trust were asked to help by the Baillies and a joint party visited the site, finding a "dismaying scene," according to the trust's report.

Even members familiar with forestry and agricultural land-use practices were taken aback by the way a steep hillside had been ploughed.

The operation appeared to endanger the soil on the slope, leaving it very vulnerable to rapid erosion in any downpour.

A bulldozed track around the area seemed to fulfil no clear function, and was poorly constructed. It was already showing signs of erosion.

The whole operation had marred the view from a popular viewpoint.

The report concludes, "It is depressing to note that in such a highly-valued area, the public are helpless to prevent or even influence what seemed to the inspecting team thoroughly bad land management."



Bennachie in its winter cloak of snow, which hides the scars of apparent land mismanagement.

GREAT PRICES FOR CHRISTMAS GIFTS

WITH

LOW

EVERY COOKER