
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: FULL PLANNING PERMISSION FOR AN EXTENSION TO 'WOLFTRAX' BIKE TRAILS AND ERECTION OF A SHELTER BUILDING AT LAGGAN 'WOLFTRAX' MOUNTAIN BIKING CENTRE, LAGGAN BRIDGE, STRATHMASHIE.

REFERENCE: 06/317/CP

APPLICANT: FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND,
INVERNESS FOREST DISTRICT, TOWER ROAD, SMITHTON, INVERNESS, IV2 7NL

DATE CALLED-IN: 25TH AUGUST 2006

RECOMMENDATION : GRANT WITH CONDITIONS

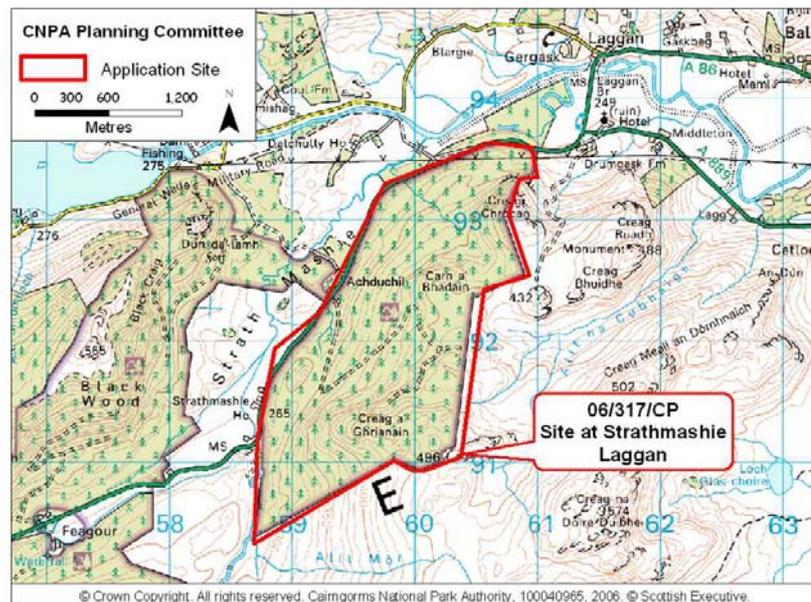


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. Full permission is sought in this application for an extension of the bike trails at the Wolftrax Bike Centre and also the erection of a shelter on one of the trails. The 'Wolftrax' centre is located at Laggan Bridge, at Auchduchil Forest, Strathmashie, near the south western tip of the Cairngorms National Park and has been operating successfully since 2004.
2. There are a number of aspects to the proposed development. Firstly a new 'blue descent' is proposed and it is intended to extend approximately 2000 metres, over an average grade of + / - 6%. The trail will link in with the existing blue route and fun park area and the new section is intended to wind its way gently downhill towards the basecamp, generally shadowing the line of an existing forestry road and crossing the road at one point.¹ It is intended that the width - a minimum of 1 metre - will be suitable for novice riders. The trail will zig zag on itself as it descends towards the car parking area at basecamp with each of the turns being banked by berms. The path would be constructed of suitable crushed rock that binds to give a smooth, hard, well draining surface. There are also a number of burns running off the hill and the specification details for this route indicate that they would be piped under the formation. It is also proposed to incorporate a number of jumps and bumps into the trail, which are described as being 'novice friendly trail features.'
3. A second aspect of the proposed development is the creation of a new easy grade circular route in the north western area of the subject site. The circular route would extend for approximately 3,500 metres in total, starting and terminating at the car parking area. The first 1,200 metres of the route from the car parking area would be constructed for multiple use. This section of the route is proposed to run northwards, almost parallel to the A86 trunk road to the west of the site. This first section of the green grade route would lead to the site of a proposed shelter, from where there would be two further trail options – (1) a further 1,000 metre trail in a north easterly direction, terminating at the Gorstean car parking area; and (2) a continuation of the circular green grade route, which would travel in an easterly direction leading to the proposed new skills area, before continuing south over the final 2,000 metres to terminate at the Auchduchil car park / basecamp area. In addition to serving as a bike trail, the section of the route from Auchduchil to Gorstean is intended to fulfil several other functions, including forming part of a planned 'route to school' path², the provision of access to the

¹ The existing forest road allows maintenance access to the existing blue grade 'Fun Park' area. Although not forming part of this proposal it is intended to bring this area up to a standard where it can be ridden by a 'Phoenix 2' 4 wheeled mountain bike which is suitable for use by those with limited use or no use of their legs. In order to facilitate this wider use, the company responsible for operating the ancillary services at 'Wolftrax' have indicated that they will have 'Phoenix 2' bikes available for hire.

² The path would form part of 'safer routes to school' initiative, which is intended to facilitate utility non vehicular travel from Strathmashie House to Laggan Bridge.

site of the remains of the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit which is considered to be of significance to the cultural heritage of the area, and in the future the route is also intended to form part of a link to further horse trekking trails which Laggan Forest Trust aspire to construct in order to circumnavigate the Laggan Woltrax mountain bike facility.



Fig. 2 : start of proposed green route



Fig. 3 : Green route emerging at Gorstea

- The site of the aforementioned shelter is at the proposed fork of the green grade trail (with the option of travelling northwards towards Gorstea or eastwards towards the proposed new skills area and the remainder of the green grade circular route) in a location which has been clear felled in the past and is now relatively open and visible from the surrounding area. The proposed shelter is a simple open sided structure, with the hexagonal roof having a diameter of 5 metres and consisting of mineralised felt with timber fascia boards. The roof structure is to be supported by larch timber uprights.

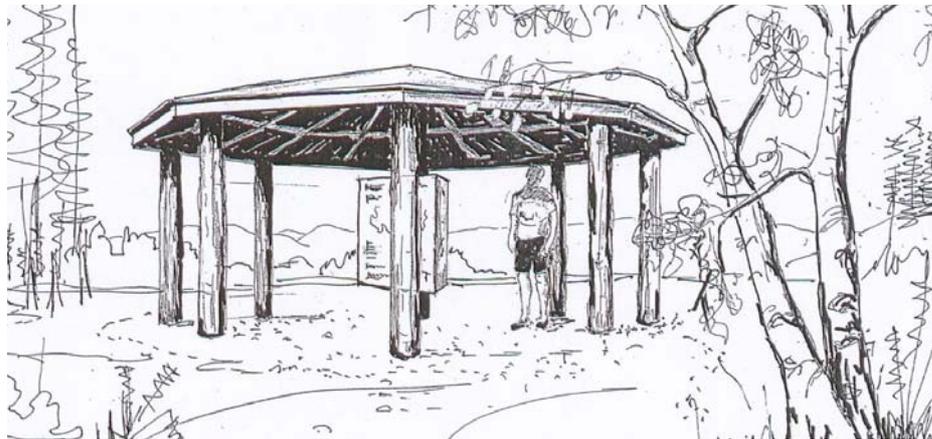


Fig. 4 : Proposed cyclists shelter

- The proposed skills area is intended to enable cyclists of all levels, from novice through to expert, to further develop their skills in a safe environment prior to venturing onto more demanding trails. The skills loop would incorporate all of the various trail types that would be found on the mountain bike trail network and would include a number of technical trail features such as drop offs, berms and jumps. The skills area is proposed to be located in a slightly elevated position, above the level of the A86. Part of the skills loop is in an open clear felled area,

whilst the remainder would be constructed within the adjacent forested area, which is not scheduled for felling until the 2012 – 2016 period.



Fig. 5 : Approximate position of skills area and shelter, as viewed from the A86 Trunk Road.

6. Supporting documentation accompanying the planning application makes reference to plans for Saturday morning training sessions on the green route and associated skills area for young children and inexperienced riders. It is conceded in the documentation that novice cyclists are poorly serviced by the Wolftrax trails and man made trails in general, and the development of the proposed “fun, green loop and skills area” is considered to offer the potential to increase new user groups, and in providing novice cyclists with good purpose built trails is intended to encourage a future supply of mountain bikers to the harder trails.
7. A third trail proposed is an extension to the existing ‘red’ grade route, which would effectively double the length of the overall route. The extension to the red route is proposed in the southern area of the subject site. The trail is intended for intermediate cyclists and would involve a descent from a viewpoint known as the Wolf’s Lair, through rock bands and trees before opening into a clearfell site, and then continuing its descent off the hill, re-entering the forested area. The existing ‘red’ route is estimated to have been used by approximately 45% of visitors to ‘Wolftrax’ in 2005.

8. In an effort to gauge the level of usage of the 'Wolftrax' facility Forestry Commission Scotland installed counters on each of the three existing trails and after a full year of operation it was estimated that 20,000 – 25,000 cyclists used the facility. Consultants were appointed by the Forestry Commission in June 2006 to undertake an evaluation study of the economic impact of this facility. Although the study is not yet complete, Forestry Commission Scotland acknowledge the length and mix of purpose built tracks in the area at present are such that they can be ridden in one day and do not therefore encourage visitors to make overnight stops in the area. One of the purposes of the works proposed in this planning application is to redress this trend and encourage mountain bikers to spend longer periods using the facility which could increase the potential for overnight stays in the area.

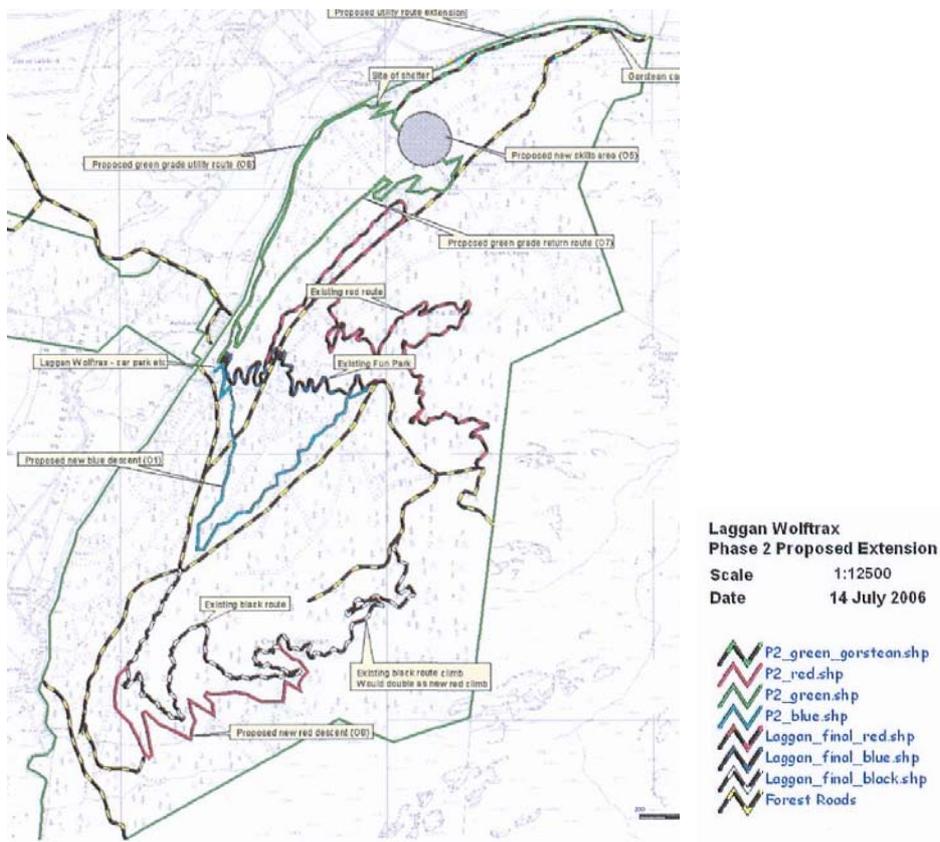


Fig. 6 : Proposed new routes at Wolftrax

9. The details of the design and construction of the mountain bike trails refer to the need for them to be constructed to handle a large number of cyclists in all weathers and it is intended that this would be achieved by ensuring a good drainage regime on and around the trails, with proper compaction of suitable fill materials. It is also indicated that trail gradients will regularly alternate in order to prevent water flowing down long sections of the trails.³ In terms of the machinery used to create the proposed trails, green and blue grade trails which are usually in wider corridors of at least 1 metre and over easy terrain can be built using

³ Supporting documentation states that water bars and cross drains cannot be used on blue grade routes, but may be used and are in fact quite desirable features on the more complex red and black routes.

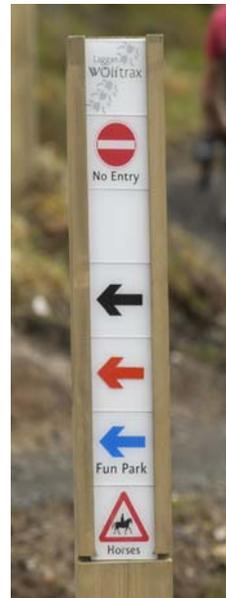
larger excavators and tracked dumpers. The construction of the red and black trails, which are narrower and in more remote areas of the site, would require smaller machines and smaller tracked dumpers capable of working in tighter corridors and on more demanding terrain.

10. The creation of the new trails will necessitate the felling of a significant number of trees of various species. Table 1 below provides details of the estimated number of trees to be felled.

Route	Trees to be felled
Utility route	50 scots pine; 60 sitka spruce; 290 japanese larch; 15 lodgepole pine; 20 broadleaves.
Blue route	200 scots pine; 330 sitka spruce; 180 norway spruce; 15 japanese larch; 25 lodgepole pine; 20 broadleaves.
Red route	20 scots pine.

Table 1 : Estimated extent of tree felling

11. The trails will incorporate waymark signage similar to the 'corporate' signage already in place at the existing facility. As yet the detailed information to be incorporated onto the signage, or their exact locations has not been determined. It is also proposed that the cyclists shelter on the green route and close to the proposed new skills area will have an information board interpreting the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit and also the views from the site.



Figs. 7 and 8 : Examples of existing signage at Wolftrax

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

12. **NPPG 11 – Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space** sets the national policy context within which to assess developments of the nature proposed. A section entitled ‘The Countryside : Sport and Recreation in Rural Areas’ (paras.60 – 67) is of particular relevance, and it is acknowledged that in addition to widespread participation in ‘informal recreation’ such as hill walking and rambling, a smaller but growing number of people are taking part in more ‘organised sports’. Cycling and horse trails are specifically mentioned. In addition to recognising that natural resources for specific activities attract visitors to the countryside, **NPPG 11** also alludes to the fact that people residing in rural areas have the same need for sport and recreation facilities, and given the often scattered population of rural areas, it is often the case that a combination of support and use of facilities by residents, tourists and visitors are the only means by which such facilities are viable. In addition, **NPPG 11** highlights the fact that the provision of recreation facilities in rural areas has a significant purpose “in contributing to the retention of population and in promoting tourism, hence having an impact on the rural economy.”
13. **NPPG 11** is realistic in noting that there are concerns about rural recreation, for example where there may be conflict between active sports such as mountain biking and more passive sports, such as walking or fishing. Other concerns highlighted include the environmental impact of recreational pursuits and their related developments, their relationship to rural land management, and “how they can be harnessed to bring benefits to the rural economy without posing a risk for landscape, nature conservation and rural management objectives.”
14. Paras. 64 and 65 of **NPPG 11** provide guidance on the provision of recreational facilities within sites designated for nature conservation purposes or areas designated for their national landscape or cultural heritage importance. It is recognised that some recreational developments may be inappropriate but “there is no general prohibition against development in these areas.” In general however, the approach of the strategic provision of managed facilities or the selection of alternative locations is advocated as a means of possibly reducing visitor pressure on the more sensitive environments.
15. Highland Council Structure Plan 2001
The **Highland Structure Plan 2001** includes several policies that are broadly applicable to the type of development proposed, including policies on sport and recreation as well as tourism and the environment. The benefits of sport and recreation facilities are highlighted in section 2.5.1 of the Plan, where they are attributed to making an important contribution to sustainable development and enhancing the health and quality of life of the residents of the Highlands. The Plan’s strategic themes include encouraging the

“adoption of a proactive approach to the wise use of the natural environment”.

16. Section 2.5.10 of the Plan concentrates on the subject of informal recreation and access, noting that it is of very high importance, underpinning a range of recreational pastimes and their associated quality of life benefits, as well as being a key component of the tourism industry. The Plan however recognises that increasing demands for access necessitates the achievement of a balance between accommodating the needs of countryside users and protecting the fragility of the Highland countryside. Section 2.5.13 of the Plan notes that the “protection of rights of way and provision of an integrated system of well maintained and signposted paths catering for walking, cycling and equestrian use are a valuable resource for local communities and visitors, both in terms of providing access and heightening appreciation of the wider environment.
17. The **Highland Structure Plan** also includes a number of detailed policies on Tourism which are considered pertinent to the development proposal. Section 2.7.1 of the Plan describes tourism as a vital element of the Highland economy, and notes that opportunities to participate in outdoor pursuits are amongst key visitor attractions. The Structure Plan strategy aims to build on the Highland identity and take a proactive approach to the wise use of the natural environment as a primary resource for tourism. Section 2.7.1 also highlights the fact that community needs should also be considered in order to ensure that facilities and opportunities are provided which serve the needs of both visitors and local residents.
18. **Policy T2** of the Structure Plan aims to support high quality tourism development proposals, particularly those which extend the season, spread economic benefit more widely and provide opportunities for the sustainable enjoyment and interpretation of the area’s heritage.
19. The **Structure Plan** includes a detailed section on forestry, noting that it is a significant land use within the Highlands, and highlighting the fact that forests increasingly serve a variety of purposes besides commercial timber production (section 2.10.3). The opportunity to provide an important network of recreational facilities, capable of accommodating a much higher number of visitors than more open areas is emphasised. Reference is made to the growing trend for community woodland initiatives, which is seen as a reflection of a growing trend of “community aspirations to secure a stake in the future development of their area.” **Policy F4** accordingly states that the Council “welcomes and wishes to encourage the continued involvement of communities in the management and fuller understanding of their local woodland resources.”

20. The proposed site is located within a designated Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). **Policy L4** on Landscape Character applies, where it is stated that “The Council will have regard to the desirability of maintaining and enhancing present landscape character in the consideration of development proposals.”

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan (1997)

21. The **Local Plan** details a number of pertinent conservation objectives and states that the priority is to promote sustainable development of the areas’ resources and ensure an acceptable balance between economic growth and safeguards for the outstanding heritage. The conservation strategy advocated for the countryside includes provision being made for the restoration and expansion of the core Caledonian Forest, and the upgrading of facilities for recreation, tourism, interpretation and education / research in more robust locations. In particular, multiple use of forest areas is encouraged.
22. The subject site is located on land allocated for Forestry purposes in the Landward Strategy of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan**. The general principles in considering planning proposals in the landward area as detailed in the Local Plan include the protection of the area’s exceptional scenic, nature conservation, wildlife and landscape resources and heritage; the promotion of a hierarchy of visitor facilities for information in relation to the natural environment; and the promotion of tourism and countryside recreational pursuits, including use of the area’s outstanding resources for outdoor activities.
23. Tourism and Recreation is addressed in Policy 2.2.9 of the Local Plan where it is acknowledged that tourist activities will continue to make a vital contribution to the economy. The priority is to ensure that broadening the range and quality of facilities is balanced with protecting the area’s exceptional scenic and heritage resources. The Local Plan also states that the more accessible intermediate lowland areas have potential for a broad range of activities and that provision should be made for upgrading recreation, tourism, interpretation and education / research facilities in the more robust locations better able to absorb visitor pressure. Multiple use of forest areas in particular is encouraged.

CONSULTATIONS

24. In a consultation response from **Transport Scotland** it is recommended that a detailed condition be attached in the event of the granting of planning permission. The condition requires the achievement of adequate visibility splays at the junction of the entrance to the facility with the public road (A86 trunk road). The condition is intended to ensure that drivers of vehicles leaving the site are enabled to see and be seen by vehicles on the trunk road carriageway in order to join the traffic stream safely.

25. In an initial response from the **Archaeology Section** of Highland Council reference was made to part of the green grade trail and associated skills area being in close proximity to the remains of the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit camp, describing the sites as unique in the area and forming a central element of the heritage of the area. It was recommended in the consultation response that slight amendments be made to some of the routes in order to avoid the most sensitive areas and avoid accidental damage during construction.
26. Further to the amendments being made a revised consultation response was received from Highland Council's **Archaeology Section**. The response detailed an on site meeting that the archaeologist attended, at which it was confirmed that the proposed 'green route' would be re-routed slightly to avoid the sensitive area of the NOFU camp, and that the proposed shelter would be positioned on the realigned route above the remains of the camp. It was also suggested that the shelter may provide a useful point from which to view the NOFU site. It was agreed at the site meeting that all sites of archaeological interest in the vicinity of the proposed 'red descent' would be identified and marked out (with an appropriate buffer) in advance of any construction taking place. Similarly it was agreed that all sites of interest on the proposed 'blue descent' would also be identified and marked out in advance of construction – the blue 'descent' affects an area where the remains of the NOFU railway are in evidence. It was also agreed at the site meeting that any further features noted during construction that are suspected to be of archaeological / historical importance would be reported to the Archaeology Unit of Highland Council, in order to facilitate adequate recording. The final consultation response from the Archaeology Unit confirms acceptance of the proposal on the basis that the points agreed at the meeting are adhered to.
27. The response from the CNPA's **Economic and Social Development Group** concentrated on the economic impact of the development. The proposal to provide additional routes and shelter facilities is welcomed as it "improves the product on offer by providing more routes for all abilities." The attraction of a wider cross section of people is welcomed as it "potentially increases the economic gain to be made from the venue" as opposed to its current state which tends to predominantly attract a smaller target market of expert mountain bikers. **ESDG** also suggest in the consultation response that in providing additional routes, the length of time people spend at the venue and in the surrounding area may increase, thereby creating economic benefit for the surrounding Laggan area. In conclusion **ESDG** consider that the implications are positive from an economic development perspective.

28. In the summary of an initial response, the CNPA's **Natural Heritage Group** stated that the principle of the application was considered to be acceptable in landscape terms, although some concern was expressed that the proposed new skills area "may be a visual detractor" and consequently the consultation response suggested that mitigation was required. In assessing the detail of the proposal, the NHG response recognised that individual trees will have to be felled in many parts of the site in order to make way for the proposed tracks. This was not generally considered to be a problem and it was noted that the nature of the forest means that felling a proportion of trees will not affect the overall contribution that it makes to the character and amenity of the area. Furthermore, was stated that "there may be benefits to the localised biodiversity from opening up the canopy and allowing more light into the forest floor."
29. Detailed comment was made in the initial response on the skills area, which it noted was to be located largely in an area already felled. The necessity to potentially undertake considerable amounts of remodelling and possibly importing of material was considered to potentially have adverse visual affects, with NHG referring in particular to the clear views from the area to the surrounding landscape, with particularly fine views out towards the north and west. It was also noted that there are clear views over much of the proposed skills area from the forest track to the south which is higher than the skills area. Consequently NHG recommended that the area should be planted with native pines in order to screen those significant views and also to protect the general amenity of the area. It was also noted that the southern end of the skills area site has a number of mature pines remaining within an area that has been clear felled. The remaining mature pines represent a valuable landscape and wildlife asset and must be protected. The NHG response recommended that any proposed tracks in the vicinity avoid all contact with the trees and their roots. Reference was also made to the need for all routes to avoid contact with the remains of the previously mentioned Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit camp.
30. Further to a site meeting with the proposers of the development and the submission of additional information, including a more detailed layout for a slightly revised skills area, an amended response, dealing with landscape issues, was received from the **Natural Heritage Group**. The response states that the modified track alignment satisfies the concerns previously expressed about the application. It is noted in particular that the track goes around the Newfoundland lumberjack camp and should not therefore impact on it. It is also noted that the green track / link to the skills area tracks, then passes along the edge of the mature planting block where the construction method would render the track largely invisible from the main road and surrounding area.

31. The **NHG** report also makes comment on the proposed position of the timber shelter and the track to the south of this, noting that they are within an area where regenerating trees are growing well, and will provide effective screening in the medium term. Reference is made to the fact that some of the adjacent planting blocks are due to be felled within the next few years, although it is noted that the regenerated woodland around the tracks will be sufficiently tall to effectively screen the track once the other blocks are felled.
32. Finally in relation to the indicative signage proposals that have been provided the **Natural Heritage Group's** landscape officer has commented that it is acceptable, referring to the vertical design and describing the style and construction as being "quite discrete." The signage is considered to have the potential to blend in unobtrusively with the surroundings.
33. The CNPA's **Visitor Services and Recreation Group** examined the proposal, particularly from an access perspective and in general welcome the application and express support for the proposed further development of the Wolftrax facility. The response highlights in particular the need for better off road provision for nearby residents to the facility and consequently express support for the proposed trail which is likely to be used as part of a 'route to schools' initiative. Having regard to the fact that any access from the existing residential properties to the trail would necessitate crossing the A86 trunk road, VSRG express support for an approach being made to the Scottish Executive to provide a safer crossing opportunity at this location.
34. In conjunction with the proposed multi function use of the trail from Auchduchil to Gorstean, the **VSRG** response refers to the need for appropriate signage on this route, in order to remind all users that the route is multi functional and to encourage responsible behaviour.

REPRESENTATIONS

35. No representations have been received in respect of the proposed development. However, as part of a recent submission of additional information from Forestry Commission Scotland, as applicants, a copy of a letter from **Laggan Heritage** has been submitted. Members of the Laggan Heritage group visited the subject site with Mr. Ewan Campbell of Laggan Forest Trust on November 8th 2006 and further to that visit the letter confirms that "the current proposed routes and extensions explored and discussed at the site visit do not impact on the remains of known NOFU sites." The letter from **Laggan Heritage** concludes with a request that all machinery during the proposed construction of the tracks, is kept strictly to the line of the proposed tracks and that a member of the Laggan Heritage committee is present during the initial cuts of the area.

APPRAISAL

36. On the basis of national, regional and local level planning policy as outlined in earlier sections of this report, the principle of this type of recreational development is acceptable, and indeed supported by policy. A further positive point to note is the fact that there are no constraints on the site and the forest is not the subject of any natural heritage designations. Accordingly, the proposed site at Strathmashie is not considered to be sensitive in relation to nature conservation issues. It has been detailed in previous reports relating to the Wolfrax facility⁴ that the forest is not known to have any capercaillie population. This issue was explored in considerable detail in the course of the CNPA commenting on the Notice of Proposed Development by the Forestry Commission for the Wolfrax Mountain Biking Centre. At that time it was noted that the forest is isolated with respect to other capercaillie populations and is therefore unlikely to receive dispersing capercaillie. Furthermore, the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology capercaillie distribution map does not show any records for the species in this area with the record dating back to the early 1980s.
37. Efforts have been made to ensure that the proposed new trails where possible skirt the periphery of the existing canopy by following fire breaks – this is particularly evident along much of the initial green route from the basecamp area, or are proposed in areas where harvesting operations have recently been undertaken, such as the proposed ‘red’ grade route. As detailed earlier the proposed shelter on the green route is to be positioned within an existing cleared area on the periphery of an area of nature Scots pine. Nonetheless, the proposed development will result in the necessity to fell a significant number of trees, as detailed in Table 1. However, it is not considered that this will have a significant landscape impact, with felling mostly contained in the midst of the forest and also bearing in mind that this is a commercial forest where felling activity has been accepted.
38. The forest area included within the application site already facilitates a mix of recreational uses, including pony trekking, walking and of course the previously established mountain biking routes. The diverse recreational uses already carried out in the forest do not give rise to conflict between uses and extensions of the mountain bike trails are not considered likely to alter the harmonious existence of varying recreational uses. A strategic approach is being taken to the development of recreational facilities at Strathmashie Forest, in order to manage potential conflicts by allowing differing needs to be met in the various areas of the woodland. Appropriate “in forest” signage is already being used as a management tool to minimise such problems.

⁴ Planning application for full planning permission for the formation of horse access trails (CNPA Planning Ref. No. 05/409/CP) and the CNPA’s consultation response on the Forestry Commission’s Notice of Proposed Development of the Wolfrax Mountain Biking Centre (CNPA ref. no. 04/004/CP).

39. It is likely that the development of additional mountain biking trails and the associated skills area will result in an increase in the number of users of the area, although no information has been submitted to quantify this. In terms of vehicular movements in the area, users of the new bike trails will continue to have the benefit of using the existing 'Basecamp' facilities, including the use of the established entrance from the A86 which has been developed to the standards required by the Trunk Roads division of the Scottish Executive, as well as use of other facilities such as the car parking area and toilet and refreshment facilities. On the basis of the existing level of infrastructure and facilities in the 'Basecamp' area and their shared availability for all users, it is not considered that the increased number of users associated with the new bike trails would give rise to any adverse impacts in terms of general safety in the area.



Fig. 5 : existing vehicular access to Wolftrax 'Basecamp' area

40. In conclusion, the proposal meets the terms of planning policy as detailed in NPPG11, The Highland Structure Plan and the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan. It will consolidate access provision in a forest area which offers the potential to absorb such uses without detriment to the natural heritage of the area. In addition the development also has the potential to bring economic benefits to the area. The principle of development of this nature has already been accepted with permission being granted for the initial phases of the Wolftrax development. The success of that development has generated the need for the expansion of the bike trails as proposed in this current application, in a location which is environmentally less sensitive than other areas of the Cairngorms National Park.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

41. The proposal has no negative impacts on species or habitats and the limited landscape impacts can be mitigated by the planting of appropriate vegetative screening, particularly in the vicinity of the skills area and shelter. Efforts have also been made to minimise the impact on the cultural heritage of the area through slight amendments to some of the proposed trails in order to avoid the remains of the NOFU camp. Although, there is no direct on-site conservation benefit, the proposal does provide the opportunity to direct this type of development away from more environmentally sensitive areas of the National Park.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

42. There are no significant negative impacts associated with the proposed development, although there may potentially be an increase in travel by car to and from the site. However, the creation of a facility using an existing woodland, which promotes a healthy outdoor pursuit must be seen as a positive sustainable use of the National Park's natural resources.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

43. The proposed development promotes increased recreational use of the area and provides opportunities for enjoyment of this part of the National Park. The proposal also involves developing one of the trails for multi function use by cyclists and forming part of the 'route to school' linking Strathmashie with Laggan village.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

44. The proposal by its nature and location provides the opportunity to attract additional visitors to the Laggan area and the development of additional routes would possibly encourage increased numbers of overnights or longer stays in the area. The proposal is therefore considered to be of significant benefit to the socio-economic development of the community and the wider area.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to :

Grant Full Planning Permission for an extension to Wolfrax bike trails and the erection of a shelter subject to the following conditions -

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.
2. The visibility splays shall be provided and maintained on each side of the access to the satisfaction of the local Planning Authority. The splays are the triangles of ground bounded on 2 sides by the first 4.5 metres of the centreline of the access driveway (the set back dimensions) and the nearside trunk road carriageway measured 215 metres (the y dimension) in both directions from the intersection of the access with the trunk road. In a vertical plane, nothing shall obscure visibility measured from a driver's eye height of between 1.05 metres and 2.00 metres positioned at the set back dimension to an object height of between 0.26 metres and 1.05 metres anywhere along the y dimension.
3. No advertising signs shall be placed on the trunk road verge.
4. Prior to the commencement of development, a method statement and programme for the construction of the bike trails shall be submitted for the agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage. All works shall subsequently be carried out in accordance with the method and programme agreed.
5. The green route and associated skills area and shelter shall avoid the remains of the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit camp and no part of the camp remains shall be damaged.
6. Prior to the commencement of construction of the red and blue descents, all sites of archaeological interest in the vicinity shall be identified and marked-out and details shall be submitted for the written approval of the CNP acting as Planning Authority, in consultation with the Archaeology Unit of Highland Council. Where deemed necessary small scale re-routing shall be undertaken to avoid impacts on the sensitive areas.
7. In the event of any further features are noted in the course of construction which are suspected to be of archaeological / historical interest, all details shall immediately be reported to the CNPA acting as Planning Authority and to the Archaeology Unit of Highland Council. Where deemed necessary all relevant features shall be adequately recorded prior to any further development proceeding in the vicinity of the feature.

8. Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, use of the cycle routes, hereby permitted, shall be restricted to pedal cycles only and there shall be no use of the routes by any form of motorised cycle.
9. Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, controlled waste, namely peat, soils, rock and other materials produced as a result of construction works or excavations or other operations on site, shall be disposed of only at a licensed facility or re-used strictly in accordance with an activity exempt from waste management licensing controls, as specified within The Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994, and pre-registered with SEPA.

Mary Grier
11th November 2006

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The map on the first page of this report has been produced to aid in the statutory process of dealing with planning applications. The map is to help identify the site and its surroundings and to aid Planning Officers, Committee Members and the Public in the determination of the proposal. Maps shown in the Planning Committee Report can only be used for the purposes of the Planning Committee. Any other use risks infringing Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Maps produced within this Planning Committee Report can only be reproduced with the express permission of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and other Copyright holders. This permission must be granted in advance.