

Statement of reasons for requesting a review

Our reasons for requesting a review are that we don't think that the decision to refuse the request outright was reasonable. We were the first group to make an application of any scale to FES and therefore it has been a learning experience on both sides. We repeatedly asked if there was more information that should be provided but were not given any clear idea on what else could be submitted or that there were any deficiencies in the application.

The Evaluation panel could have asked for clarification on a number of issues rather than basing their decision on inaccurate analysis or groundless claims about the negative impact of our proposals. This was an application which had strong support from an area that has potential but needs intervention. There is no one else providing input or leading on rural development in this area unlike the support provided in the Highlands and a flat refusal after a year of work by the community seems harsh and unreasonable.

We have attached a detailed statement of reasons which addresses each of the grounds given for the decision and also a paper called Economic Impact and Best Value Considerations and we would wish the contents of both to be included as part of our Statement of Reasons for requesting a review.

We have concerns about the process and feel that a number of false assumptions could have been avoided if more panel members had attended the site visit, and if this had allowed us time to present our case. The date offered also subsequently changed which meant our chairman could not attend. There was very little opportunity in the process to explain our project directly to the panel which would have been helpful.

Our request has to be evaluated against the existing use of the resource and the community benefits which will result in each case. We feel that there has been an assumption that the existing use by Forest Enterprise is delivering community benefits and providing good management in line with the Scottish Forestry Strategy. We challenge this assumption as we see very little community benefit of any kind and face the dis-benefit of the boardwalk in the Marshes being dismantled. The area has already been effectively closed to visitors for over a year with a resultant down-turn in visitors and recreational benefits for residents. We feel our project will demonstrably provide more community benefit and best value than existing management. Taking all the statements of reasons together, and weighing up the benefits and dis-benefits, we feel the decision to refuse is unreasonable and ask that it be reviewed.

EYCDC Chairman and Board