FORMAL RESPONSE

GLENFINNAN COMMUNITY

This is the formal response from the trustees of the Glenfinnan Community Facilities SCIO (GCF) to the author of the following representation regarding our proposed Callop Forest Development, forwarded to us by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) on 21 September 2026.

We apologise in advance if it seems disrespectful, but the authorship of representations is redacted by FLS, so we can only address our response rather impersonally to "you".

You have raised a number of concerns that we feel are best addressed on a point-by-point basis, so we have quoted the text of your representation directly in blue and followed each point with our response.

To: Forestry FLS Communities

Subject: Representations for Proposed Redevelopment Site: Callop Forest Development

Date: 11 September 2026 22:11:13

Please accept this representation for the proposed Callop Forest Development by Glenfinnan Community Facilities SCIO - deadline 11th September 2026

Site Scale

The proposed developments for large scale 26.8 hectares of infrastructure will irrevocably change the landscape and break the scenic view up to Callop Glen seen from the A830.

GCF's CAT request does indeed request the transfer of 26.8 ha of land; however, this comprises two distinct parcels of land, Area A of 23.57 ha and Area B of 4.19 ha. These areas are outlined on the map and aerial photograph supplied as supporting documentation in our application.

Assuming the usual meaning of infrastructure, then GCF's proposal is to develop infrastructure only in area B, 4.19 ha.

The much larger Area A will not be developed in that sense. Its flora and fauna are well covered by multiple long standing ecological protections; two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designations, a Special Protection Area (SPA) designation, and a Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designation. It is also classified as Native Woodland and is within an officially designated National Scenic Area.

In contrast, area B is only, and as you will see from the peat survey report, not entirely accurately, classified as peatland.

Our motivation for acquiring Area A is to secure its future as a natural recreational resource for both residents and visitors. Area A will be actively managed as a woodland for recreational walking, dog walking and cycling. Specifically,

- by removing invasive non-native species and replanting native species for conservation and to improve biodiversity,
- by repairing, expanding and maintaining the network of paths, boardwalks, and culverts.
- by protecting new plantings from free-roaming deer by way of fence enclosures and without resorting to culling.

We also take great heed of the constraints and proposals in the 2026 Land Management Plan (LMP) for East Loch Shiel that is currently in preparation by FLS.

These developments will be implemented as a by-product of the proposed collaboration with local educational institutions to use Area A as an outdoor classroom for new rural skills courses, and will be funded through the GCF by revenue from the facilities proposed for Area B.

It is also worth mentioning that, given the ecological and land ownership constraints, and the specific locational need, we believe, based on the conclusions of multiple consultancy reports provided as evidence, that Area B is the only suitable site for the proposed infrastructure.

You also mention the view up to Callop Glen from the A830. While we obviously cannot make the proposed development invisible, we can use the natural terrain and additional soft landscaping to minimise the visual impact. The design architects have already been briefed that this is a requirement.

Site Plans A through to D demonstrate options for continued expansion which begs the question 'where do you stop?'

Site Plans A – D relate only to the 4.19 ha Area B.

The plans do document a variety of possible layouts, all within the proposed boundary of Area B. However, it would be wrong to regard them as “options for continued expansion”. They may be more accurately described as an evolution of thinking driven by an improving understanding of the site. Option D, or some variant of that, was the preferred option for the majority of residents who attended the village consultation on 26 Feb 2026.

The apparent expansion from an initial, and very speculative, proposal for a 2 ha site, evolving to the final proposal for a 4.19 ha site was motivated by an improving understanding of our capacity needs, a wish to work with the landscape rather than against it, for example, by retaining the rocky knoll in the middle of the site, by avoiding SEPA designated flood risk areas, and by working around areas of deep peat where possible; all of which conspire to spread out the site without a proportionate increase in capacity. However, a more spread out design also gives greater opportunity for soft landscaping to improve screening and achieve a more rural aesthetic, which we hope will go some way towards addressing your concerns about the views south from the A830.

The current Eastern boundary of Area B defines a hard limit to the extent of development in that direction. Its’ definition is informed by the extant watercourses, SEPA flood risk map, and the peat survey we commissioned. We have only requested sufficient land from FLS to accommodate the currently proposed facilities, there is no allocation for expansion in our CAT request and, given the peat status of the land further to the east, we believe that any such ambition would certainly be rejected by both FLS and Highland Planning.

So, to answer your question, we stop development at the currently proposed boundary of Area B, which amounts to just 15.6% of the land area under consideration.

The notion that visitor numbers can be managed and controlled is shortsighted as we have seen from the huge and growing numbers that attend Glenfinnan throughout the year.

It is precisely because the huge and growing number of visitors is completely unsustainable that Glenfinnan Community Council, Glenfinnan Community Facilities SCIO, the National Trust for Scotland, Glenfinnan Station Trust, and the vast majority of residents, businesses and land owners in the Glenfinnan Community Area support a unified visitor management “masterplan” in which a major component is to establish an off-site parking facility east of Glenfinnan to help manage increasing

visitor numbers and reduce congestion, road safety risks and environmental pressures associated with the village's popular attractions.

The plan is being actively and collaboratively developed by the above organisations under the guidance of VisitScotland and Highland Planning, with additional input from the Scottish Land Fund, Highland Council, Transport Scotland, Network Rail, Scotrail, NatureScot, SEPA and other interested parties.

The short version of this plan is that all private cars and campervans will be directed, by physical signage and unified social media, to park at Callop and for the vehicle occupants to walk, cycle, e-bike, or use the free electric shuttle bus service to transfer into the village. Tourist coaches and mini-buses, service buses, and blue badge holders will be directed to a new off-road drop-off and parking area created by amalgamating the existing community and NTS car parks adjacent to a new and expanded Glenfinnan Visitor Centre.

All parking will be pre-booked and the strong message to visitors will be simple; don't visit Glenfinnan unless you have booked parking or are coming by tourist or public transport.

Anything less prescriptive is doomed to failure.

Historical Site Use

A frequent spot for local walkers, this will now become a busy interchange which completely shifts the dynamic of a once quiet and peaceful place.

There is no denying that the dynamic will shift, however, the 23.57 ha of curated woodland with improved biodiversity and accessibility will provide a new and improved spot for local walkers.

The current parking area beside the river was often frequented by Scottish Gypsy Travellers and served as a traditional stopover site for them as well as for hillwalkers. The premise that this should now be restricted with the introduction of barriers to prevent overnight parking would remove this access right. This site is currently enjoyed by locals and visitors aware of this location who treat it respectfully. Callop has always been a meeting point but a change of site use to include permanent infrastructure is something that will change the environment forever.

The current parking area beside the river is more accurately portrayed as frequented by overnighting campervan tourists alerted to the existence of this location by social media. The daily huddle of campervans is a traffic hazard for forestry and fish farm lorries and staff vehicles and also regularly impedes access to Conaglen Estates hydroelectric facility and workers cottage. MOWI, FLS and Conaglen Estate are all in favour of moving the access barrier north of the Callop road bridge.

Hill walkers and other stopover parkers will be catered for by a long-stay section in the proposed car park, and camper van users will be better catered for by a serviced caravan aire with black water disposal facilities. Since the aire would be pre-booked and pre-paid with coded access, there will be more opportunity for recourse in the event of any anti-social behaviour.

Regarding access rights, the Callop access road, the forest road including the small car park, and the road to Callop cottage are all private unadopted roads.

The Land Reform Act (Scotland) 2003 is a commendable piece of legislation that created a statutory right of access to the hills, moorland, forests, rivers, lochs, the coast, and most open spaces for walking, cycling, horse-riding, wild camping, swimming, and canoeing.

The Act does not extend these rights to motorized transport.

Fire Risk

Wildfire risk is highlighted in the documents in reference to existing car parking by the riverside with a comment on overnight camping being restricted.

This comment relates to the creation of substantial campfires, of which there is clear evidence on site.

The fire risks are not mentioned in relation to the extensive Carparking Area, Campervan Areas and sections for Buses. All it takes is one cigarette end to spark a fire. The surrounding peatland which has been highlighted in the site assessment is prime tinder during dry periods (of which we are now experiencing increasingly in Spring and Summer). As we have seen from the devastating fires in Cairngorm National Park in 2026 - peat bog when alight can burn for days, weeks even. This is of primary concern for the surrounding areas to proposed site development as well as the risk it poses to native woodland.

As you rightly point out, fire risk increases with a large number of people, but we already have a large number of people; where they are located does not significantly alter that risk. Experience shows that the dry bracken that covers much of Glenfinnan in the spring is the most likely fuel for a wildfire. Cinders from the steam train have been the likely culprits for several such fires in recent years. Also, with staff in attendance the likelihood of early fire detection increases.

Pollution

A vehicle specific site with so many people poses obvious pollutant factors to air quality and risk to the Callop River and eventually Loch Shiel.

The demonstrable alternative is a tailback of slow-moving and manoeuvring vehicles including diesel buses and heavy lorries in both directions along the A830, stalled by unsafe and illegal parking, pedestrians including small children straying onto the carriageway, full car parks, and coaches unloading at the roadside with their engines idling to pretend that they are not parked. All of which is an at least equivalent threat to air quality in the middle of the village and directly adjacent to the River Finnan and Loch Shiel.

In the proposed development; the pollution free transition into Glenfinnan (by active travel or electric shuttle bus), the bias in favour of mass transit, and the presence of charging points to encourage greater adoption of EVs all speak to a less polluted future.

It's perhaps also worth mentioning that in Scotland, all new developments such as this are required by law to route surface water run-off through a Sustainable Drainage System, or SuDS, to manage any pollution directly at the source. These systems trap and break down harmful substances like hydrocarbons and heavy metals before any clean water is released, protecting the surrounding environment much better than uncontrolled runoff from a basic car park such as the current parking area.

Already the A830 from Fort William to Glenfinnan is a constant stream of traffic and noise pollution has significantly increased in last the 5years. Introducing a set up with even more infrastructure for vehicles which are passing through this area means this is only going to increase.

Our motivation is not to increase the number of visitors to Glenfinnan, we have quite enough already, but to more effectively manage the experience for those who do come thereby reducing the congestion and associated detriments to village life.

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There have been no issues with excess rubbish or fly tipping on this site to date. However, all over the Highlands and beyond we are seeing reports of increasing incidents of littering at sites with heavy footfall and increased visitor numbers. The proposed development only increases the risk of human impact.

We beg to differ on this point. We have strong anecdotal evidence that the Finnan and Callop rivers have been used by campervan tourists to dispose of black water (i.e. chemical laced human waste). We intend to address this issue by providing safe disposal facilities as part of the development.

Fly tipping is, by definition, a solitary activity conducted in secrecy, so is not a concern for an active and staffed development.

Littering, on the other hand, is undoubtedly an issue and for this reason Highland Planning have already asked, in their pre-planning response, for a robust statement of "waste servicing arrangements" and we have a very clear idea of what that will entail from our experience in the existing community car park.

We agree that there will be increased human impact at Callop, but it is motivated by the inescapable need to diminish human impact both on the village of Glenfinnan and all users of the A830.

I hope these comments go some way to alleviating your concerns and perhaps encourage you to look at the Callop proposal from a more holistic perspective.

Regards,

The Trustees of Glenfinnan Community Facilities SCIO.

Approved: 8 Oct 2026