

19th September 2022

Hi FLS,

We are responding to the Asset Transfer Request by 'Slattadale SCIO' for a 0.58 hectare parcel of field and woodland at Slattadale Forest in Wester Ross.

Our family home is Slattadale House which is less than 100 metres from the boundary of the proposed Asset Transfer land. We also share the access to the A832.

We have lived at Slattadale since 2004 and are quite clearly the people most directly affected by the proposed Asset Transfer and would really like our views to be given serious consideration.

In principle, we fully support this application by 'Slattadale SCIO'; outdoor education for the local school community is hugely important and will hopefully promote responsible and sustainable attitudes to the environment. We are grateful to have been consulted as part of the process. Although outside the remit of this application, we would question whether this is the best location for such a facility; this location is not particularly sustainable and is only readily accessible by road transport - why is it not in Gairloch with easy access from the High School?

We do have some more specific concerns:

Any use of the site must be in compliance with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and we believe that any Transfer of the Land should include reference to such compliance.

In particular, but not exclusively, we would draw attention to the following extract from SOAC (Page 102):

“Never light an open fire during prolonged dry periods or in areas such as forests, woods, farmland, or on peaty ground or near to buildings.....”

This site is within a forest/wood on peaty ground and is under 100 metres from our home; fires should therefore not be allowed under any circumstances and we think that this should be included as part of any

Transfer. Fires being lit by visiting members of the general public has always been one of our biggest concerns in recent years (signs saying “No Fires” are often ignored) and if ‘Slattadale SCIO’ were to have fires, this would clearly set a poor example both to the general public and to the young people that this facility is seeking to educate.

In relation to the concern over fires, we note that ‘Slattadale SCIO’ is suggesting the installation of a wood fired pizza oven at the site; we believe that this is not acceptable. A pizza oven is not an appropriate countryside activity.

The Southern part of the land to be transferred (also happens to be the part closest to our home) is currently populated by a significant stand of Birch Trees. As you will be aware, the new Slattadale Land Management Plan is close to being published as a final draft for consideration by Scottish Forestry. Under the Plan all non-native woodland is due to be clear felled over the next few years and left to regenerate naturally; it is therefore hugely important that stands of native trees are retained to help with the long term regeneration proposals. We would therefore like it noted that any proposal by ‘Slattadale SCIO’ to remove any of these trees should be denied. Any such removal would also adversely affect our immediate environment and does not set a proper example to the young people that this facility is seeking to educate. We understand that ‘Slattadale SCIO’ is proposing that these trees be part felled to provide access to the land from the car park; access could easily be provided without any requirement to fell established native broadleaf trees.

As long term local residents we earnestly hope that the proposed use of the site once transferred will not adversely affect the quiet enjoyment of our home and garden. We do not expect to be disturbed by the various activities that may take place and any use overnight should not be allowed unless it complies with SOAC; for example, if there is an intention to camp on the land that will only comply with SOAC if those camping have walked/cycled/kayaked a reasonable distance and brought all their camping paraphernalia with them. Arriving in a School minibus and erecting tents with the intention of staying overnight is not in compliance with SOAC and will set, once again, a very poor precedent to the general public.

The erection of any buildings on the land (including the ‘Keder Greenhouses’) will almost certainly require planning permission even if

they're not permanent structures; as far as we are aware, this piece of land will not have any 'Permitted Development Rights' under Town & Country Planning Legislation once ownership is transferred from FLS. It should also be noted that any change in the use of the land from agriculture/forestry will probably require planning permission. This site is within the Wester Ross National Scenic Area and any development that takes place, permanent or temporary, must respect that designation; we are not convinced that 'Keder' style structures or any similar developments are really appropriate in this location adjacent to Loch Maree.

If this application is granted we trust that the use of the site will be restricted solely to Gairloch High School and its Associated Schools Group. This site should not be available as a general community asset but be restricted to countryside related educational uses only.

Thank you for considering our views.

Kind regards,

Huw, Sam & Sofie Banister

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