

Report on Environmental Panel meeting (Forestry) Wed 26th Oct

A national and district update was given. In accord with Scottish Government policy the area of forest in the country as a whole is being increased from 14% to 25%. Forest Enterprise will help private landowners to plan their crops, use appropriate species and plant economically and conveniently for harvesting. This would be in lieu of grant assistance. Forestry land may be leased for farming and there is one small example of this under negotiation on Arran. Timber prices at present mean that Arran timber is profitable though this position may be temporary.

The necessity of choosing disease- free nursery stock with the correct, resistant DNA was emphasised. Several diseases and pests are attacking timber as in the NT ground at present. The prevalence on the mainland of a viral disease to which larch is particularly vulnerable has resulted in larch being omitted from present re-stocking on Arran. Rhododendron is a prime carrier.

The meeting was presented with the re-planting plan for Glenrickard ie all the land on the left when driving towards Lamlash from Brodick. The total planted area will be reduced and will include broadleaf, Scots pine, Lodgepole pine, Douglas fir, and Norway spruce and will include some mixed areas of less dense, walkable forest. The whole area will be felled by 2045 with replanting continuing in the meantime.

The Forestry is anxious to trace eagles in Galloway which are believed to come from Arran. They disappear or die and the cause has not yet been traced. There was some discussion on detection strategies. The Black Grouse project on Arran has run into difficulties. Fertile eggs can be produced but many are lost as a result of the inadequacy of the broody hens used to rear the eggs. Experience and advice may improve the position. Black Grouse released last year all died though one from the previous year is still alive and 5 out of 7 of this year's birds are still surviving.

It is possible that a bio-energy plant application may be made in the near future. This is the same firm and project which met with approval by the Community Council some years ago, not to be confused with the oil burning, so called bio- plant of several years before. This would provide a ready market for Arran timber and would use the poorest grade of timber with a consequent reduction in heavy road traffic.

A short report on the work of the Community council was requested and given.

