

Rest and be Thankful Planting Proposal

The new planting proposal for the rest and be thankful site, is taking place largely to secure slope stability.

The area has been overgrazed for decades; this has resulted in poor vegetation with no bushes or trees resulting in many incidences of landslides. The current condition of the ground makes it of little value for a range of upland species including golden eagles.

As the districts species expert and the golden eagle coordinator for the Argyll raptor study group, I have been asked to give my opinion on the proposal and its likely impact on golden eagles. The nearest territory is 6km away from the site and was successful in 2017, I fitted a satellite tracker (under licence) to the juvenile; this was done as part of a national project to ascertain post fledging data from juvenile eagles. The chick which normally mirrors the adults movements only ventured on to the proposed area once in 7 months before dispersing from its natal territory. Unless carrion was available on this area it has little benefit to golden eagles. **The PAT model carried out on the area by Natural Research and Dr P Whitfield on the 27/09/2016 for proposed planting scheme, indicates there is no impact on known territories.**

This area is largely ignored by golden eagles for hunting; I have recorded birds in the area which seem to be moving through, the area has very low densities of prey which would be of value to eagles at this time with the possible exception of fox and badger cubs. The work planned would not impact on either of those species. The proposal would certainly have a beneficial effect on the habitat and would result in an increase in prey species making this area more attractive to eagles for feeding. By planting at relatively low densities, the area would be more attractive to birds such as black grouse, if some heather can be established above the tree line then red grouse could come back, all be it at low density on the higher slopes, there are currently no records of either species on this side of the hill at the moment. There are grouse on the west of the proposed area which would take advantage of the improvement in habitat once this has become established. Mountain hare may also return as there are small remnant populations further north.

David Anderson

Conservation Manager 21/02/18