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Comments on asset transfer of Coilhallan Wood

Coilhallan Wood under the ownership and management of FCS and now FLS is a much used and valued asset for locals and visitors to the area.

My concerns about the asset transfer are

I don't think the case for local support is based on a large enough percentage of the local community. I would suggest that 10% is not big enough to use with any safety. I would suggest that the CCDT claim that they have a mandate from the community is misleading. Their figures seem to be taken from less than 300 people. At the public meeting held by the CCDT the two largest land owners who border with the wood had not heard about the proposal until that night, which suggests if they had not been at the meeting they would not have known about the project.

The initial financial feasibility study was based on mountain bike trails which now have been withdrawn. I feel that the financial burden of owning the woodland has not been addressed, and could have serious repercussions for the community. The Woodland Management Plan 2016-2022 by Victor Clements says "it is difficult to imagine what actual advantage ownership would bring". To have no sustainable income and only the sale of timber (at twice the market value) as suggested seems financially dangerous. There seems to be an acceptance that grant aid will always be available which I find a dangerous assumption. I can find no back up plan to cover the possible shortfall.

There seems to be no understanding of the need for professional management to look after and maintain a forest. The proposal to run the forest with volunteers in my opinion shows a lack of understanding of what could be require if there were health and safety issues.

My view is that the community enter into an agreement with FLS to work together for mutual benefit, I understand with such an agreement there is a special fund that FLS can access.

Yours

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