

LAND REFORM REVIEW GROUP 7 January 2013

Dear Sirs,

The Embo Trust has used the current Land Reform 2 Community Registration of Interest legislation to register its ambitions for the contiguous and neighbouring farms of Coul and Trentham, part of the residue of the old Cambusmore Estate. Whilst of some nuisance value, the legislation as it stands has no clear purpose, and the process, though interesting, has been unfruitful. We commend the very great assistance given to us by Scottish Government officials during the process. Where is the bite in the legislation?

The Embo Trust has also had a National Forest Land Scheme application for the neighbouring Fourpenny Plantation accepted by the local community after a ballot, and subsequently by Forestry Commission Scotland. We were eventually badly let down by the BIG Lottery assessment committee, but fully commend the assistance given by FCS Officers throughout the bid. Where was the money when we needed it?

Finally, the charge towards wind-farm proliferation should be addressed within the context of Land Reform. I note the following statement from Community Energy Scotland:

‘it is worth noting that a typical 0.9MW wind turbine in community ownership will generate the same level of net income as a 50MW wind farm paying £2000/MW community benefit.’

Highland Council’s current recommendation for Community Benefit stands at £5,000 per Megawatt. To compensate communities for loss of amenity arising from wind-farm development, I strongly suggest that developing landowners should also subscribe 1 Hectare of accessible land for each rated Megawatt – thus, a 50 Megawatt development would give rise to 50 Hectares of accessible land either to the Council Land Bank or to the local community groups to be used for housing or croft creation, or other socio-economic purpose. New developments can be charged under this scheme as they come on-line, whilst established wind-farms can be subject at the end of the 25-year planning window.

I trust you may find my thoughts of some interest,

Kindest regards

Jim McGillivray

Chair, Embo Trust & Cllr, East Sutherland & Edderton Ward.