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**From:** Thompson, Jeremy [mailto:jeremy.thompson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk]  
**Sent:** 08 May 2007 17:16  
**To:** niall  
**Cc:** group@carronvalley.org.uk; Robert Hunter; OKaneD@northlan.gov.uk; Geoff Brown for Sc Water; Charlie Allan; Gillian Barrie; group@carronvalley.org.uk  
**Subject:** RE: Project Plan and PID issues

Niall,

My immediate priority has been to complete the PID in order for the management board to consider it next week and with that in mind I am afraid it has already been submitted. I would be happy to discuss your concerns at the next Carron Valley Partnership meeting by which time I hope we have approval from the board to take the project forward.

The PID reflects the best possible outcome we could hope for at this present time and will allow a substantial number of outputs to move forward. Further delay in the submission of the PID will knock back the process further and the likely outcomes may be less favourable.

I look forward to a successful Open Day on Saturday and making the recreation developments at Carron Valley a reality.

Jeremy

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**From:** niall [mailto:niallt@██████████]  
**Sent:** 08 May 2007 06:38  
**To:** Thompson, Jeremy  
**Cc:** group@carronvalley.org.uk; Robert Hunter; OKaneD@northlan.gov.uk; Geoff Brown for Sc Water; Charlie Allan; Gillian Barrie; group@carronvalley.org.uk  
**Subject:** RE: Project Plan and PID issues

Jeremy

I'm sure you agree the immediate priority is to successfully host the forthcoming event and to do so in a spirit of mutual cooperation. CVDG are very busy with final preparations for Bikefest therefore I suggest we reserve our mutual positions until after this has taken place. We will be happy to table a resolution to the situation thereafter.

In the meantime, Carron Valley Development Group request the Commission defer submission of any PID document to the Management Board until such time as the Carron Valley Partnership, and that includes CVDG, has formally discussed the matter. There can be little doubt among the various Partners about what is at stake - we are dealing with fundamental principles therefore we would hope the Commission understands the gravity of the situation.

Please confirm if the Commission are willing to comply with this request.

Niall

07/10/2008

Niall Thomson  
Chairman  
CVDG

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**From:** Thompson, Jeremy [mailto:jeremy.thompson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk]

**Sent:** 04 May 2007 12:16

**To:** niall

**Cc:** group@carronvalley.org.uk; Robert Hunter; OKaned@northlan.gov.uk; Geoff Brown for Sc Water; Charlie Allan; Gillian Barrie

**Subject:** RE: Project Plan and PID issues

Niall,

Thanks for you response.

I am pleased that you have copied all the partners into what involves the fundamental workings of the Concordat and processes relating to it.

One of the main advantages of the partnership as I see it is to ensure that we all working to common aims and objectives which we can all sign up to and thereby improve joined up thinking which in turn creates synergy that will make a real difference to getting things achieved on the ground.

This will only work properly when the partners understand where the other partners are coming from and respect the real issues that partners while on one hand can deliver benefits but at the same time create increased demands such as resources both of money, staff time and duty of care to the public, employees and contractors. This is particularly true for the Forestry Commission who manage the land that the project is on.

I am committed to working with partners to achieve great things at Carron Valley with the above in mind.

Without wanting to get into detail I would remind you the concordat does contain an annexe with the Approval for Project Plan requiring the signed agreement of the Commission and partners before work can be approved.

Some of the partners have expressed an urgent need for the next CVP meeting to be brought forward to discuss the issues you have raised. I intend to offer a range of dates for the week commencing the 14th May. I would very much like to you to be present at the meeting and would appreciate you coming back first with dates that suit your members.

Jeremy

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**From:** niall [mailto:niallt@[REDACTED]]

**Sent:** 03 May 2007 11:17

**To:** Thompson, Jeremy

**Cc:** group@carronvalley.org.uk; Robert Hunter; OKaned@northlan.gov.uk; Geoff Brown for Sc Water; Charlie Allan; Gillian Barrie

**Subject:** RE: Project Plan and PID issues

Jeremy

Forestry Commission Scotland are a signatory to the Concordat between "the Commission" and: North Lanarkshire Council, Stirling Council, Scottish Water, Carron Valley Development Group, and Clanranald Trust for Scotland. Central Scotland Forest Trust has a pivotal role in delivery of Project Plans agreed by this

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partnership. The Concordat has stated aims and objectives, it has an agreed process.

The PID to which you refer contains a Blue route over Tomtain Hill however, the Project Plan already approved by the Carron Valley Partnership and the Commissions senior management team contains a Red route over Tomtain hill and so the Commission has taken unilateral action and changed the design completely. In terms of the overall design the change is not a minor change in "direction" - essentially it renders the entire approved Project Plan irrelevant. Carron Valley Development Group has offered to resolve the matter informally with the Commission and you have now confirmed that the Commission has refused this request.

The matter is now very simple: Did the Commission agree to submit the approved Project Plan to their Management Board or did they not? The record shows the Commission did agree this. Furthermore, there has been no indication (to the Carron Valley Partnership) that the Commission had a subsequent issue with the Project Plan - one that would have required detailed consultation and approval within the Carron Valley Partnership. In this respect, Carron Valley Development Group considers the Commission to be in breach of process.

With regard to the specific point concerning Red versus Blue and for the avoidance of doubt, your e mail confirms: "we are not going to change the direction of the project as described in the PID" Once again Carron Valley Development Group consider the Commission to be in breach of process. Now the Commission wishes to bring forward the date of the next Partnership meeting and it appears this is to obtain some form of mandate for a decision which has already been taken or, in plain language - closing the door after the horse has bolted. CVDG are volunteers who have booked leave to attend pre agreed meeting dates and we cannot simply take additional leave to reconvene at alternative times simply to be told FCS "direction."

We look forward to seeing you on the 24<sup>th</sup>

Niall

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**From:** Thompson, Jeremy [mailto:jeremy.thompson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk]

**Sent:** 02 May 2007 16:46

**To:** niall

**Subject:** RE: Project Plan and PID issues

Niall,

I acknowledge receipt of your e mail.

After discussion with Michael I confirm we are not going to change the direction of the project as described in the PID.

I have spoken to the other partners and there is a consensus that if possible we should bring forward the date of the next CVP meeting on the 24th May in order that we can explain our position and move forward.

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Jeremy

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**From:** niall [mailto:niallt@██████████]  
**Sent:** 01 May 2007 12:06  
**To:** Thompson, Jeremy  
**Cc:** Wall, Michael  
**Subject:** Project Plan and PID issues

Jeremy

I write concerning our telephone conversation on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April. I did attempt to resolve the issues with you over the phone however, it was apparent I failed to impress upon you the seriousness with which we view FCS actions. CVDG held an EGM over the weekend and this is our agreed position:

You stated you have not held discussions with the Project Champion Alan Stevenson on the subject of the Carron Valley project. Given the long history of this project, it's strategic position, it's significance to the people of Central Scotland, the continued investment and considerable commitment of SC, NLC, CSFT, CVDG and in some regards FCS itself and also given your role as Special Projects Manager with a brief to steer the CV project (and in turn Alan's role in this instance to champion the project to FES Board) CVDG are astonished by this statement. For the purpose of this project the two roles are inextricably linked, they are integral to the success of the PID presentation.

Conversely, you also stated you had project input discussions with Ms Nicky Whittaker - FCS Funding Officer and Mr Karl Bartlett - FCS Cycling Development Officer specifically with regard to detail within your PID document. You have led CVDG to believe that either or both of these individuals have requested that you change the proposed Red grade MTB route over Tomtain to a Blue grade route and that FCS have taken unilateral action by changing the PID document without the agreed consultation with the Carron Valley Partnership. I remind you that you have already submitted a Project Plan containing the Red route over Tomtain to the CVP meeting 22 /03 07 - the meeting minutes show this. Both you and Rena Tarwinska are on record on numerous occasions referring to the Red route over Tomtain and for a whole range of reasons which I will expand upon shortly, I think we can agree this is not a minor detail:

- FCS has fundamentally failed to recognise agreements and follow established process. The CVP Concordat, CVDG Project Plan, various letters and e mails from Michael Wall, your own Project Plan, CVP minutes and lastly briefing documentation from Mike Batley of CSFT all demonstrate both agreed process and agreement of Project Plans
- Can FCS provide CVDG with consumer research data which supports such an unprecedented length of blue route at Carron Valley?
- Such a Blue is an unworkable concept in the context of the agreed Project Plan, the overall design, the built lengths and Tomtains geography / topography

I record CVDG thanks to Michael Wall for offering the assistance of Ms Nicki Whittaker to help with funding matters. NW met with Angela ██████████ Rena Tarwinska and myself on 24/11/06. NW indicated that it would be difficult for her to assist with the funding required for this project as it neither qualified for WIAT or EU assistance. When asked what FCS would be prepared to do in terms of preparing a specific case to the Scottish Executive NW indicated that FCS would be unlikely to take such action as there could be other projects which were more deserving of this. The inference was that CV would not be a special case although this directly contradicts Alan Stevenson's very remarks to Richard Barton and myself on 07/11/06. Furthermore, NW made uninformed comments regarding projected annual maintenance costs at Carron Valley. All in all, this posture did little to engender the spirit of close cooperation and partner working which Michael outlined in his letter and CVDG observations on Ms Whittaker's contribution were recorded in meeting minutes taken by Rena Tarwinska.

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In respect of Karl Bartlett, CVDG have requested his support and assistance for this project over a period of some 4 years - firstly in his former FCS role with Scottish Borders, more recently in his role as IMBA representative and latterly in his role as FCS Cycling Development Officer. No assistance has been forthcoming. My holiday was interrupted 2 weeks ago to urgently discuss trail grading issues with you directly. You indicated it was essential we met with Karl at the earliest opportunity to discuss the agreed trails so Jamie [REDACTED] and myself arranged to take time off work at short notice specifically to meet Karl. Despite this, you then immediately announced that Karl was unavailable that week anyway. You were then late for the meeting and the opportunity, whatever that was, got missed.

Returning to our telephone conversation: CVDG regard the assertion that a "Red trail will not get through the Board" as preposterous. Please refer to "The West and Central Scotland Forest Cycling study - Research Findings and Development Recommendations" undertaken by Tourism Resources Company in November 2005 a copy of which is in FCS possession. Note the inclusion of Red and indeed Black trail. Please also refer to An Ambition for Forest Cycling and Mountain Biking: Towards a National Strategy - Final Report December 2005 a copy of which is also in FCS possession. This research was undertaken by the same consultants. Note again TRC recommendations for both Red and Black trail at Carron Valley. The later research was undertaken to inform an "emerging" National Strategy which Michael Wall referred to in a letter to CVDG almost 3 years ago 7<sup>th</sup> June 2004.\*\* My information is that FES Chief Executive Hugh Insley is familiar with the contents of the TRC report and FCS are clearly satisfied with the accuracy and professionalism of both TRC and EKOS consultants as FCS engaged both of these organisations to undertake an evaluation of Laggan Wolfrax as recently as December 2006. CVDG own research supports a Red grade trail and in fact a graded trail network is very much the established norm. You are now in possession of CVDG research and we have no problem making this available. We note FCS invited public comment (online) on the later TRC report to inform the National Strategy although it has not published the results of this.

Is there something in these huge volumes of research data which is missing Jeremy?

Furthermore

- Please note the precise line of questioning in my e mails to Michael Wall. I wrote specifically to avoid any future misunderstandings e.g the type of mess we are now in. Note the precision of Michael's final response - there is no ambiguity.
- You have been forwarded full details of CVDG own consumer research and the scientific data provided by our electronic trail counters. The feedback reflects exactly what people say and the Trail Counters have proven to be consistently reliable in use.
- There is an accountability question and there is also the not insignificant issue of how much public cash has been spent by Councils, FCS and other agencies to repeatedly arrive at the same conclusion.
- Devaluing a democratic process in this manner runs counter to the significant efforts expended by Michael Wall and the other Partners over one year ago in drafting the principles of the Concordat and CVDG will be astonished if senior FCS management has a hand in this.
- Michael Wall and Alan Stevenson agreed to back the Project Plan (subject to MW subsequent shortening of the Red) fully 6 months ago and they had sight of the PP weeks in advance of this. Michael then wrote to me per the enclosed. It is therefore unacceptable for FCS to be making sweeping unilateral changes at the eleventh hour with no further reference to the CVP. It is now frankly down to Michael and or Alan in whichever combination to work this out and sell the PP to the Board.
- If presented with the facts and a well conceived and structured PID, the Board will have an open mind because in my 25+ years of commercial experience - that's precisely what Boards need to have. Ultimately it is down to the Project Champion to convince the FES Board the merits of the case. As you must surely see, there is no lack of positive research material to substantiate the Project Plan
- I paraphrase the detail of our conversation regarding the following point: Your notion that the Red Trail is some kind of moveable feast, that it can simply be exchanged on a whim for a "over long" blue which will somehow satisfy the needs of the lower social classes, that CV will thus perform a role as a sort of crude

feeder station to other FCS locations with “proper grown up trails” (as in Red and Black) that all this will somehow “correct” trail grade imbalances and shortcomings at other centres is quite frankly a gross insult to CVDG and the other Partners who have spent years on this development, hundreds of hours on surveys and tens of thousands in research costs. It also presupposes these people will either never aspire beyond a basic level of riding or that they will have the resources necessary to get to The Borders and other even further flung locations just to ride a Red trail. Also, you will be still be left with incomplete chunks of Red at Carron Valley (from what is on the ground at present.)

Lastly, I move on to your e mail received 30<sup>th</sup> April entitled “clarification of PID process” I suggest that it is you that requires clarification on the matter of process Jeremy - see above, see also Concordat doc enclosed. The PID “emerged” immediately after the Concordat was signed and our Project Plan was on the table so the PID needs to reflect the agreed Project Plan. CVDG also note that not only has the Red trail been changed to Blue - entire sections of CVDG agreed Project Plan are absent from the document (see years 2008/9) It has become apparent that within a very short space of time you have cherry picked what you and or others think will get through the board and that is hardly the basis for a robust design. Notwithstanding the process issues, are you sure your PID trail plans - whatever these are, will actually work? As matters stand, you are planning a Blue trail with a 1.3km Red ending!

Can you explain what detailed research you have undertaken to arrive at your conclusions? How will the Board see the bigger picture, or at least what was the bigger picture? You have singularly failed to explain to the CVP, in plain language, in what context any of this will be set before FES Board. If this PID contains all of the Red (and I repeat - it's in your Project Plan) of course there will be an apparent imbalance. That does not mean there is imbalance in the overall plan - does it? Of course it doesn't - quite the opposite in point of fact. What is to follow in subsequent PID's as the network would remain incomplete? If an approved PID is “frozen” how do these glaring omissions get added at a future date? These are all issues we should have been debating months ago within the CVP but we (the remainder of the CVP) have been labouring under the apparent misconception that everything is going according to your Project Plan. FCS have now moved this PP from a whole Red to half a Red to no Red in 2 strokes of the pen.

Your electronic communication is not addressed, it was pre dated fully 3 business days before it was received and it refers to a meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April which did not take place. Finally, you are on record sanctioning a major funding bid by CSFT and CVDG which was delivered 24<sup>th</sup> April (see enclosed minutes) and that bid contains the Red route over Tomtain - again sanctioned by you. FCS current position is riddled with contradictions so what precisely was the point in issuing this document? In doing so, you potentially threaten that funding bid and you have cast concern and uncertainty over the entire project. CVDG note from Robert Hunters e mail that this is already having a negative effect on Partner working. Also, In terms of Robert's observations on the 12<sup>th</sup> May launch - we concur. We have all been working our backsides off and we have been playing by FCS rules. Sadly, despite all our endeavors, this is simply history repeating itself.

In conclusion: when you suggested “Should I put the Red in then?” Firstly, it has never been out and secondly I refer to the foregoing and the enclosed. CVDG state once again, it is not for CVDG or any of the other CVP members to justify an agreed position it is for FCS to deliver on it.

It is abundantly clear you have been placed in a very difficult position Jeremy and you have our sympathy for this however, this e mail has been copied to Michael Wall to allow internal discussions within FCS regarding the implications of recent developments which could be viewed as Machiavellian. CVDG have no wish to escalate the matter within the CVP or elsewhere however, we have not come this far to have process flouted and agreed positions manipulated and systematically deconstructed in this manner.

Regards

Niall Thomson  
Chairman

07/10/2008

CVDG

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\*\*According to Michael's last correspondence on the matter, the National Strategy was to be "delivered" in October 2006. 6 months ago, 2+ years overdue

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