

## Forestry Commission Scotland

### A Rational for investing in access and recreation in the Carron Valley

#### Background

The Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) actively engaged in recreation provision at the Carron valley only relatively recently.

FCS has been formulating a modern framework for its investment in recreation. The framework within which FCS prioritises its allocation of resources in recreation provision is detailed in the Scottish Forestry Strategy (SFS) under the access and health theme. This has been further defined by policy directions agreed by the management board and national committee in paper NC 18/06, March 2006.

#### Exploring the agreed rational for investing in the context of Carron Valley

1. *It is close to where people live and facilitates activity and enjoyment in areas of high social exclusion and health deprivation'*

The SFS defines three relevant distance measures for our engagement in local recreation health and access opportunities. 1km for the woods in and around towns programme (income deprivation map) and the space for people accessible woodland standards at 500m and up to 4km for bigger woodlands over 20 hectares (facility buffer map). The public benefits are a contribution to active lifestyles, local journeys through woodland as part of the greenspace infrastructure, and the improved mental health benefits these bring. For Carron Valley the public benefits conveyed by having woodland on the doorstep would apply to the resident population. Using Scottish Multiple Index of Multiple Deprivation data (SIMD) geographies there are 5222 people in surrounding area. Most of the area defined by these geographies falls outside of the FCS priority distance buffers meaning that these benefits at Carron Valley apply to a population estimated at 300 (population by data zone map). None of the local population geographies falls in to the Executives priority investment locations of the 15% for multiple deprivation.

**Recommendation 1** - The existing provision would already meet the objectives of local access and health options and not require further investment.

2. *It will contribute to the economic development of low income/high unemployment areas.  
Where this supports rural diversification and sustaining fragile rural communities.*

The local community and the current recreation provision in Carron valley is defined as 'accessible rural' and not a priority location for rural development. Neither do they fall in to the top 50% for income deprivation (income deprivation map) where the rational for investing might be to drive investment

in the local economy. The woodland is not in a tourism area. There are few existing businesses able to capture any revenue flows resulting from visitors. Non local visits to Carron Valley are predominantly by car as there is no public transport. This implies a day visit and short stay customer base. Our knowledge of these visitors is that they are generally affluent and not a priority for further investment, beyond offering a good quality recreation experience. There is a rational for attracting new audiences to the outdoors and supporting those visitors not typically in the current visitor profile, these require accessible, signed, multi use facilities. Toilets and regular on site Ranger provision support their decision to visit.

**Recommendation 2** – Carron Valley would not be a priority location for investment in recreation infrastructure for day visit or tourism reasons. There is a rational for ensuring a quality experience through basic maintenance and signage. Completion of the existing toilets and on site ranger service would be a public benefit investment.

*3. It will be self-financing or generate a surplus for investment in the above priorities.*

The present level of use would not by our current knowledge of numbers and visitor expenditure provide a sustainable income stream for sustainable management.

**Recommendation 3** –Carron valley is not a place for FCS to provide a cost neutral and therefore sustainable recreation experience.

*4. We will encourage non-state provision of high-quality forest recreation. We want to promote recreation provision that is environmentally and financially sustainable and of high quality, and where appropriate developed and delivered in partnership*

In places such as Carron Valley where there is no clear rational for public sector funding, except those stated above, FCS would consider offering private or community business opportunities to undertake recreation delivery on the national forest estate. These must meet FCS business, public interests and corporate standards tests.

**Recommendation** – Where there is no priority public benefit rational to invest, FCS could offer a sustainable private or community business opportunity. This would need to conform to a suitable business arrangement that meets FCS business, public interests and corporate needs.

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