

16 June 2009

Mr Kenneth J Gibson MSP
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Gibson

Your Consultation – “Protecting Scotland’s Regional Parks Bill

I have read your Consultation paper and noted the questions you ask.

I find the overriding theme of the paper is to prohibit any industrial development in regional parks. The implication being that regional parks are simply places for people to visit from time to time.

I work in the quarrying industry whereby we produce aggregates and dimensional stone for all kinds of construction projects including the building known as the Scottish Parliament. Unfortunately we can only quarry the stone where it is found and often, because of the nature of geology, these happen to be in places of natural beauty. That does not mean quarries spoil or ruin the visual aspects of the countryside. We have environmental and planning laws that ensure that quarries cause little or no harmful effects on the countryside. Your Bill would appear to want to put a stop to any quarry work in a regional park.

You should be aware that over 50% of SSSI sites began as a quarry. Numerous old worked out gravel pits have been handed over to organisations like the RSPB to develop as new nature reserves. Many old quarries are now used as areas of geological interest for students. Thorpe Park in London, the Eden Project in Cornwall and Doune Ponds here in my village in Perthshire all started life as quarries. What I am trying to say is, our industry does not detract from the environment, it enhances it. Your paper would appear to lump us together with wind farms and other developments that may spoil the visual aspect.

Today we are more conscious of the rural community and have noted the government’s efforts in promoting rural jobs, rural communities and rural housing. So where are the rural jobs? We have forestry, farming and tourism, they are obvious but do not forget quarrying. It too is a rural industry that does its bit in sustaining the rural economy. We have enough NIMBYs and BANANAs (build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone) and your Bill as it is written could encourage more. The Scottish Government have recognised the contribution played by our industry in developing the infrastructure of the country and have stated so in the new planning regulations. Even in National Parks the plan (as you state on page 7 of your consultation) is to *Promote sustainable economic and social development of the area’s communities*. Your paper would appear not to support this point of view.

Finally I ask where do you think all of the raw materials come from to build the latest projects funded by the Scottish Government? I am of course talking about such projects as the M74, M80, New Forth Crossing, Clackmannan Bridge, and the Waverley Line (to mention just a few). Added to this are the quantities of dimension stone required to repair the beautiful historic buildings of Edinburgh. It all comes from quarries Mr Gibson.

I realise that when you considered your Bill for regional parks you did so with the very best of intentions but please reconsider what you have written about industries in the parks. Not all industry damages the park, there are enough laws to protect the great outdoors without anymore unnecessary legislation. Don't forget, in these days of economic crisis, industry does bring jobs. Believe me it is difficult to enjoy the great outdoors when you are on the dole with little or no money coming in.

Yours sincerely

Richard Bird
Executive Officer