



SUTHERLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Mr Reid

If calling, please ask for

Your Ref.:

My Ref:

438/DOR/DR/MR

Date

24th August 1995

Mr J K Bell
Rhian
Evelix Road
DORNOCH
Sutherland

Dear Mr Bell

DORNOCH COMMON GOOD LAND

With regards to the above and the acreage I have now researched the title passed to the District Council which clearly states an area of 110 hectares, or 272 acres. I have informed Mr Allison of this and asked him to amend sign No. 4 accordingly, and I also enclose a copy of the plan for your information.

Yours sincerely

Director of Technical Services and Housing

Enc

15 Nov. 1995

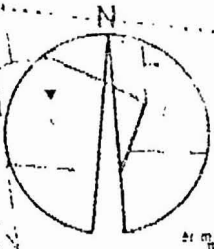
Phone call from Douglas Reid.

- 1. Claims corrected area is 488 acres ~~or 1175~~ hectares*
- 2 Writing to legal dept. to get correction made*

197.5 hectares

1175 hectares

PLAN REFERRED TO



DORNOC BURGH

SETHOFFIELD

THIS IS THE PLAN REFERRED TO
IN THE FOREGOING NOTICE OF TITLE
IN FAVOUR OF SUTHERLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

W. Hunter

AREA 110 hectares
(272 acres)
more by

79

F

80

C

D
0.4 of 1 km²

BURGH SANDS

81

2000 metres

Over the area to Clark Burn - 160 hectares 395 acres.



SUTHERLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMHAIRLE SGIRE CHATAIBH

J K Bell Esq
Rhian Cottage
Evelix Road
DORNOCH

District Offices,
GOLSPIE,
Sutherland KW10 6RB

Telephone
Golspie (01408) 633033
Fax
Golspie (01408) 633120

Writer: John Allison
My Ref: JA/EI/MIS/D/10
Your Ref:
Date: 25 May, 1995

Dear Mr Bell

DORNOCH COMMON GOOD LANDS

I gather, from speaking to Fraser Symonds the other day, that you are in the process of preparing the text for display boards for use on the Common Good Lands.

It seems as though Scottish Natural Heritage will be prepared to contribute finance towards such interpretative boards as well as to the cost of carrying out the protective works which will go along with the interpretative boards to try to discourage inappropriate use of the common good lands. It would seem therefore useful to combine the estimated cost of both exercises into the one application for financial assistance which can be submitted to both Caithness & Sutherland Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage and thus mitigate the impact of any such expenditure on the Common Good Fund itself which will also be contributing to the Dornoch Heritage Centre.

If you have reached the stage of having received estimated costs for the preparation of the interpretative boards, it would be extremely helpful to have this information because I am hoping to receive estimated costs of the fencing etc. works from the Department of Technical & Housing Services.

I look forward to hearing from you as to what progress is being made.

Yours sincerely

John Allison
Director of Administration

Plants and Animals of the Dornoch Area.

The countryside around Dornoch can be divided roughly into four different types, not including cultivated farm land. These are (1) the beach; (2) the golf links; (3) woodlands; (4) moor. Of the four the beach is probably most accessible, most reliable and one of the most interesting.

The Beach

(a) **Sandy shore.** Unless one is prepared to dig furiously around the low water mark, most of the things found on a sandy shore are only the remains of animals and plants. Empty winkle, whelk, limpet, cockle (fig I) top and razor shells (fig II) will be found as well as the empty "Skeletons" of the sand urchin or sea potato (fig III) as brittle as egg shells.

(b) **Rocky shore.** More life is visible on this type of beach. The seaweeds found will be from high water downwards, channel wrack, spiral or flat wrack, serrated, bladder and egg wracks; sea lettuce, carrageen; with laminaria (tangle, or kelp) at the extreme low water mark. (Figs IV - X). Feeding on the weeds, at least three species of periwinkle (Fig XI) will be found, while on the rocks will be seen barnacles and mussels (figs XII & XIII). Dog whelks (fig XIV) feed on the periwinkles and limpets (fig XV) feed on the barnacles and mussels. In rock crevices there are the red beadlet anemones (fig XVI) and bread-crumble sponge. (fig XVII).

The Links

The common wild flowers on the links are Eyebright, milkwort (blue and white varieties) birds-foot trefoil, vetch, cuckoo flower, whin, buttercup, daisy. On the low course 3rd hole, Grass of Parnassus will be found and Purple Orchis may be found on the 18 hole course.

Occasional adders may be seen, especially among the whins. They can be recognised by the diamond pattern down the back and the V sign on the head.

Woods

(a) **Deciduous.** Earls Cross wood consists mainly of beech (and pine) with some rowan, raspberry, whin, broom and elder at the edges. At The Mound there is an extensive Alder wood and at Spinningdale one of the few oak woods in the district.

(b) **Coniferous.** There are forestry plantations of pine, spruce and larch at Embo Street, Cyderhall and Skibo.

Roeders are common amongst both kinds of wood, and red squirrels may be seen in the coniferous plantations. A great many hares will be seen and a few rabbits. Blaeberrys (Bilberry, whortleberry) are worth looking for in August and won't be hard to find.

Moors

On the strongly acid peat moors around Dornoch, Heather (Ling) and Bell Heather are very common. The dark green spiky heath grass and moor grass are also abundant. Bog-cotton, Bearberry, Cowberry and Thyme will be seen.

Adders are common on the hills and strong boots or shoes and heavy stockings should be worn in amongst heather. Generally adders will hear footsteps and move away from people and animals but in spring and autumn and in the evenings one may be surprised. If bitten it is advisable to get to a doctor within about 30 minutes.

During the summer the Red deer move up into the hills away from the flies but some may be seen in the evenings further down the slopes. Roe deer, brown and mountain hares and rabbits are common.

Hares may be distinguished from rabbits by greater size, longer ears and hind legs and black tips to ears.

DORNOCH FIRTH SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Sutherland District and Ross and Cromarty District, Highland Region

PLANNING AUTHORITY: Highland Regional Council

File Reference: 708

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE:

O.S. 1:50,000 Sheet No: 21
1:25,000 Sheet No: NH 78, NH 88

AREA: 3577.4 hectares 8839.65 acres

DESCRIPTION:

Biology

This is the northernmost of the large firths of eastern Scotland and is virtually unaffected by industrial development, in contrast to the neighbouring Cromarty Firth. The flats are of great importance for their wintering birds while the remainder of the site shows a particularly fine series of transitions between habitats, many of which have their own features of interest.

Coastland, Heathland

Extensive flats support a rich marine invertebrate fauna which attracts large numbers of wintering wildfowl and waders. There are sizeable beds of Eelgrass Zostera spp., of the alga Enteromorpha, and of Glasswort Salicornia sp.

Foredune is dominated by Marram Grass Ammophila arenaria and Lyme Grass Leymus maritimus. Dune grassland is species-rich, supporting good populations of Grass of Parnassus Parnassia palustris, Purple Milkvetch Astragalus danicus and Creeping Willow Salix repens.

Fixed dune grades into heathland dominated by Heather Calluna vulgaris and Cross-leaved Heath Erica tetralix, locally passing into heath scrub with Juniper, Broom Cytisus scoparius and Roses. There are heath/lichen hummocks on bare sand at Cuthill Links.

Dornoch Point displays some fine transitions between species-rich damp slacks and saltmarsh, with the latter showing a good creek development.

Birds

Though a range of birds breed on the dunes, saltings and heath, the site is most important for its wintering wildfowl and wader populations. At peak times Wigeon numbers reach 12,000, Velvet Scoter 8,000 and Long-tailed Duck 7,000 all levels of international importance, though seaduck numbers are typically irregular. There are nationally important wintering numbers of Common Scoter, Whooper Swan, and Red-breasted Merganser. At peak times the wader population may surpass 7,500.

Plants

Noteworthy species include Sea Centaury Centaurium littorale, Eelgrasses Zostera angustifolia and Z. noltii, and Baltic Rush Juncus balticus.

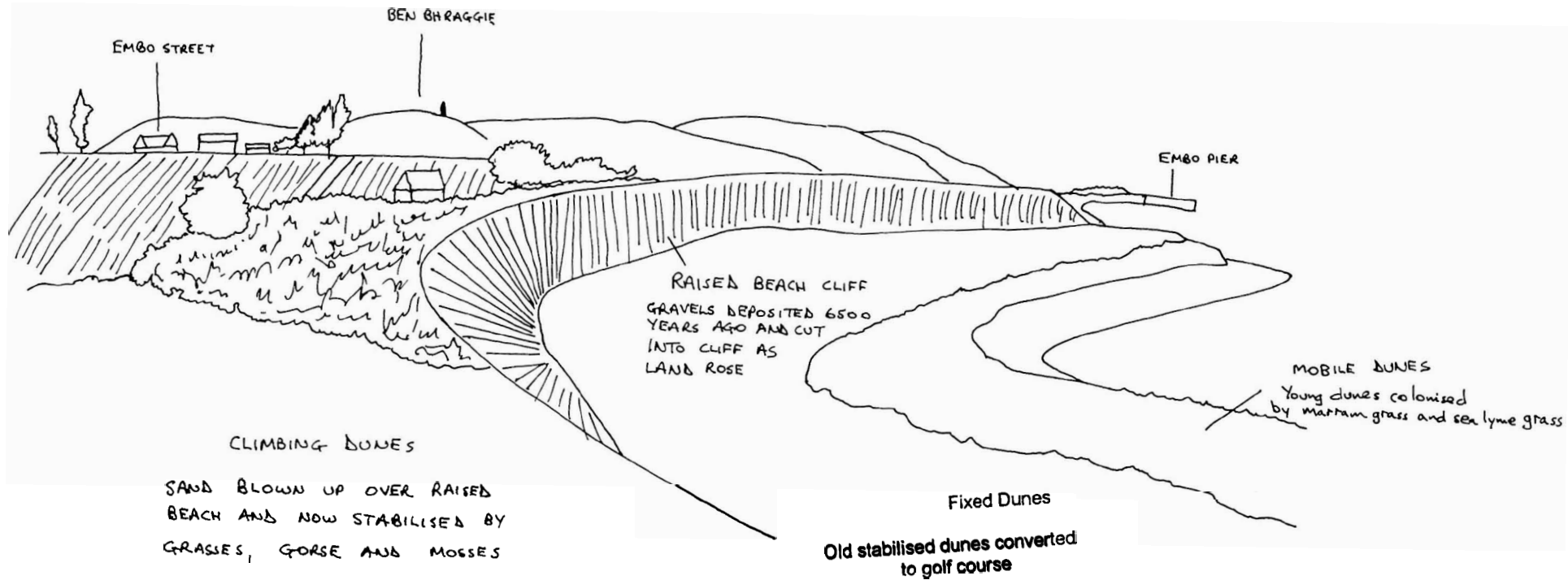
REMARKS:

4 752.97 acres 1920.2 ha lie in Sutherland District, 1657.2 ha in Ross and Cromarty District.
Amended boundary.
A Nature Conservation Review Site Grade 1.

PREVIOUS NOTIFICATIONS

First notified in 1975 as Lower Dornoch Firth.

Date: August 1985



EMBO STREET

BEN BRAGGIE

EMBO PIER

RAISED BEACH CLIFF
GRAVELS DEPOSITED 6500
YEARS AGO AND CUT
INTO CLIFF AS
LAND ROSE

CLIMBING DUNES

SAND BLOWN UP OVER RAISED
BEACH AND NOW STABILISED BY
GRASSES, GORSE AND MOSES

Fixed Dunes
Old stabilised dunes converted
to golf course

MOBILE DUNES
Young dunes colonised
by marram grass and sea lyme grass

DORNOCH COMMON GOOD LANDS

**REPORT BY ANN MACKAY
MID SUTHERLAND COUNTRYSIDE RANGER**

JANUARY 1997

Introduction

Dornoch Common Good Lands are of great value to the people of the Royal Burgh of Dornoch. they are used extensively for recreational activities by local people and attract many visitors to the area each year. Areas of physiographic and ecological interest are found within the Good Lands and this has led to sanctuary protection, due to their national and international importance.

The dune system, saltmarsh and coastal grasslands are now rare habitats, and every effort should be made to protect them for the future. The large and diverse population of birds the Good Lands support throughout the year are of international significance and attract many visitors to the area.

To determine best management practices for the area, Sutherland District Council commissioned a report to be compiled by AURIS. This was completed in November 1994 and described as "A Management Plan For Dornoch Common Good Lands".

The purpose of this subsequent report is to present an audit of how management recommendations put forward by AURIS have been implemented. Recommendations for future management and development of the nature conservation interest of the site are also made.

The habitats found within the Good Lands and land uses have already been dealt with extensively by the AURIS report and by Dr Tom Dargie, in his report on Sand Dune Vegetation for SNH in December 1994.

This report does not therefore list species, communities or habitats as they can be readily found in the above publications. This report is an update to complement previous work.

Points of Action From the AURIS Report

Northern Quarry	Parking and overnight parking has been successfully stopped now. Dumping on the site has been stopped. No interpretative signs have been erected but this is not causing any problems with car parking. It would be best to leave this site undisturbed so that shrubs and vegetation can recover.
Saltmarsh Turf Cutting	Has been stopped.
Dune Turf & Sand Extraction	Has been stopped.
Footpaths	Access from the Northern car park is still a problem and the bank needs stabilising. The construction of more substantial board walks and channelling of people to these boardwalks by restricting access is needed. A drystone dyke would be more in keeping with the area than a wire fence, a wooden fence would also be more suitable. This may cause a problem with views from the cars parked, and would need to be investigated further.

Vehicle Control

This has been achieved very effectively. The bollards work well and are non intrusive, they do not detract from the flat open landscape at all.

Occasional non compliance by 4 x 4 vehicles occurs at the end of the track on Dornoch Point, but hopefully increased interpretation/education in the area would help alleviate this. Motorbikes can still get access, but this damage is sporadic and less than it was.

The track down the side of the airstrip is open during dry periods in the summer. Local access has always been enjoyed down to the car park and management is wary of cutting it completely. It is, however, used when wet which means it gets wider and wider, encroaching on coastal grassland area. To avoid this, the track should only be open when the ground is dry and hard. The hard track to the west of this one would be more suitable to use, but the bollards cut it off from access.

Agricultural Showground

The damage discussed in this section is not apparent.

Currently activities associated with the show are not adversely affecting the vegetation of the Good Lands. Currently car parking is restricted to a strip of the coastal grassland and has not caused undue damage. Intrusion further east into the herb rich areas would not be acceptable, and in a wet year, parking on the coastal grassland should be stopped if at all possible. The majority of the show takes place on improved grassland and is not a problem.

Plantation

The thinning of the conifer plantation on Struie Course has been agreed by the golf club. The golf club should be encouraged to promote the development of juniper and heather wherever possible.

SSSI Area

In general the mowing of herb rich areas will increase species diversity. However, SNH does not see this as a priority for this site, and preventing PDO's is more important. The main causes of damage on the site, vehicles and turfcutting, has been stopped so that the main focus of management should be to protect the site so that it can recover undisturbed. Increased interpretation at the site will educate local people so that they can appreciate it more, understand its value and want to preserve it. The Countryside Ranger has had a number of site visits with SNH to discuss current status of the site and possible future management.

Management on the Golf Course

The use of all toxic chemicals has been minimised.

All fertilisers are organic.

A compost site has been designated and is used.

Heathland and juniper have been noted for their wildlife interest and are protected from vehicles, fire and chemicals.

The countryside ranger has visited the golf course greenkeeper and discussed the wildlife value of the course and importance of environmentally responsible practices.

Communication between SNH, the Countryside Ranger and Golf Club Personnel should ensure that conflicts do not arise and the current coexistence of wildlife habitats and golf courses on the Good Lands continues smoothly.

Improvements to the Area

Construct land form and planting screens around the caravan site and sewerage works. Landform should be undulating and fit in with natural surroundings i.e. dune systems. Plant native shrubs such as juniper - as it is already present and growing in the vicinity, gorse, broom, hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose. Current planting has not established well.

Access through the dunes to the beach

From the car park, improvements are needed i.e. a more substantial boardwalk and more of them. Improved fencing is also required or perhaps a drystone dyke - the Council has its own dyker.

From the caravan park paths are narrow and lightly used. Many small paths are better than larger "motorways" for people as this would concentrate trampling and lead to erosion problems. This situation will have to be reviewed annually to determine damage levels and the need to control access or modify paths/walkways.

From a wildlife point of view, the most important area currently under review is the coastal grassland area behind the dune systems. This area does not currently have any protection despite being the best example of coastal grassland on the east coast. It is currently situated just north of the SSSI site.

The lack of statutory protection belies the importance of this site as a recreational area for the people of Dornoch, and the potential use of the site for environmental education. A number of interesting plants, including orchids and insects such as the rare Burnet moth could provide excellent opportunities for guided walks and school or youth group projects.

The new Countryside Ranger shall lead guided walks through the Common Good Lands as a pilot study in the summer of 1997. School groups will also be encouraged to use the Common Good Lands for environmental projects, under the supervision of the Ranger if necessary.

A leaflet showing self guided walks of the Common Good Land, with points of interest shown could be produced for the area. This would encourage people to explore the point of the beach, saltmarsh area and associated bird life.

The Golf Club shall continue to be encouraged to use environmentally responsible products, and manage the rougher areas for wildlife wherever possible.

The potential for the amenity tree planting could be further explored to improve the visual aspects of the Good Land. Tree planting could effectively screen off sewerage works, caravan site, housing, small reservoir, etc. The exact sites for planting would be determined by the Good Land Committee and foresters from Forest Enterprise for example. New planting should not take place on habitats of botanical interest, and should consult with SNH before work begins. Wherever possible, native species should be used.

The development of heath scrub and juniper should be encouraged in favour of new planting wherever possible.

Highland Council employs a Drystone Dyke Officer who could visit the Good Lands, repair dykes in need of work, and build new ones at suitable sites i.e. around the north car park.

The floral diversity of the coastal grassland could be improved by mowing every second year in late summer, and removing the cuttings. This would create a shorter sward which would allow more wild flowers to grow and increase their range. This is occasionally done for the show ground car parking. Potential new management practices for coastal grassland would be discussed with SNH and the Highland Council.

- * The use of the Common Good Lands for research projects has not been investigated. It would be an excellent site for botanical, zoological, geological studies and interested institutions should be approached.

Future Management

Currently Dornoch Beach has a Rural Beach Award which commends past, and present care of the site and values its relatively clean and unspoilt nature.

It is the unspoilt, natural and scenic quality of Dornoch Common Good Lands that make them a valuable asset to the Royal Burgh of Dornoch. The Royal Dornoch Golf Course is internationally renowned, and the beautiful setting it enjoys must only enhance that reputation.

The Good Lands are used for walking by local people, and provides a place where residents can roam freely without access worries and enjoy the feeling of space and peace and quiet. There are also many opportunities to appreciate the flora and fauna of coastal habitats, now rare in the rest of Britain.

Tourism is now a principal industry and features which encourage income through visits to Dornoch should be protected and promoted. By maintaining the natural beauty of the Good Lands it will remain an asset to the area and generate income to the area. By increasing interpretative facilities on the Good Lands, understanding of the area will be enhanced and the experience of the visitor will be improved.

Increased popularity of an area will lead to increased visitor pressure which can create its own problems. Currently visitor pressure is not too great and erosion is not a widespread problem, limited to the Northern car park. However, this is a situation which needs constant monitoring, and when problems do arise, swift action is needed in terms of visitor management. Education and interpretation is the key to encouraging visitors to be responsible and ensuring the Good Lands are not damaged.

Future management should concentrate on maintaining the scenic beauty of the site and protecting the diverse range of wildlife which depend on the Good Lands. New landscaping and tree planting should be carried out to improve the scenic aspects of the Good Lands, and hide features which detract from the natural landscape.

Any new developments should be planned in consultation with the people of Dornoch; who were given the Good Lands.

In general a policy of non intervention is the preferred option as long as the site is monitored and any damaging operations stopped. Increased knowledge of the site will hopefully encourage more value to be placed on the Good Lands by local people and ensure its protection and survival in the future.

It is the rare landscape features habitats (see AURIS report), and unspoilt natural beauty of the Good Lands which make them so valuable for wildlife and people alike. All future management should ensure that these assets are retained and not lost to potential "improvements" or developments.

Current Statutory Designations on Dornoch Common Good Lands

Dornoch Point, as shown on the accompanying map, has the following designations:

NSA	=	National Scenic Area
SSSI	=	Special Site of Scientific Interest
Proposed Ramsar + SPA	=	Special Protected Area (Natura 2000 site)
Proposed SAC	=	Special Area of Conservation (Natura 2000 site)

NSA designation covers the entire Dornoch Firth and includes Dornoch point south of Dornoch Burn.

SSSI boundary is shown on the accompanying map. This site is designated to protect the wide diversity of intertidal and terrestrial habitats on the point. Dornoch Point also supports wildfowl populations throughout the year which are of international importance.

For further details on SSSI designation see the AURIS report.

The proposed Natura 2000 sites are currently pending approval from the EC before they can be officially designated, as this is a European Directive. These European designations have been introduced to protect areas which support habitats, birds or animals of international importance.

Chemicals Currently used on Royal Dornoch Golf Course

Rourol Green Fungicide

Vitesse Fungicide

Dicotox Extra - selective weedkiller

Go-Green - Liquid Iron

Seven Iron - Liquid Iron

Primer Wetting Agent

Liquid Seaweed - organic

Agricrop Liquid - organic

None of the above products are having a detrimental effect on the flora or fauna of the Common Good Lands. The products used are selected carefully to be environmentally responsible and they are applied with care to selected areas, i.e. greens only.

Protective Services in Highland Council have examined this list and find them all to be suitable for use on the golf course.

Dornoch Common Good Lands

History has given to the inhabitants of the Royal Burgh of Dornoch a precious asset in some five hundred acres of Common Good Land.

As early as 1224 Bishop Gilbert in setting up rules for his diocese refers to "the common pastures of the said city of Dornoch." By 1630 Sir Robert Gordon writes of Dornoch Links as "the fairest and largest linkes of any pairt of Scotland fitt for Archery, goffing, ryding, and all other exercise."

From a receipt dated 1618, we know that the young John Glas, Earl of Sutherland enjoyed golf and archery here.

Thirty six years later, some 3500 foot soldiers and 1500 horsemen were on the Links engaged in a grimmer sport than golf. They were being reviewed by Lieutenant General Middleton who had landed at Little Ferry from Holland with 80 officers and a considerable cargo of arms. They were seeking to restore Charles II to the throne.

Another review took place there in 1942 when King Haakon addressed some of his exiled Norwegian troops.

At various times the Town Council made rules to control the use of the Links and to provide revenue. The minutes of 1812 contained the following passage:

"And they (i.e. the Town Council) order that the Pro Fiscal prosecute any person who may presume to tirr the soil of the said Links or remove or carry away feal or divot or earth therefrom after this date." The turf referred to would be lifted with a cabar lar or flaughter spade and used in thatching or building the upper walls of houses.

The Bye-laws of 1895 stated that "The inhabitants of the Burgh shall be entitled, as use is, to graze horses and cattle and their followers but not sheep, on the Links. paying the Common Good of the Burgh the dues therefor."

Turf cutting was still prohibited and vehicles had to follow specified tracks. Detailed instructions were given as to how golfers should conduct themselves; eg. the golfer "shall not raise the turf of the teeing ground!" Rents from the Common Good for quarrying stone, grazing animals, or from shooting rights brought in more income than the Burgh Assessments.

The coming of the railway in 1902 and a vigorous publicity campaign by the then Golf Club Secretary, John Sutherland, brought prosperity to Dornoch, and golfing greats like J H Taylor, Harry Vardon, Joyce and Roger Wethered and more recently, Tom Watson, Greig Norman and Ben Crenshaw have sung the praises of Royal Dornoch world-wide. This means greater pressure on the Common Good lands for golf and other recreation. We hope that you will respect this environmentally sensitive area, thus maintaining for future generations the enjoyment, we hope, that has been yours on Dornoch Links.