

2 November 2017

CONCERN AND SUPPORT ARE MUSHROOMING



WORLD-FAMOUS SCIENTIST VISITS SITE OF PROPOSED WORLD-CLASS GOLF COURSE

Tom Dargie of Not Coul encountered a great scientist on Coul Links last weekend. Professor Roy Watling was so worried about the golf course at Coul that he came north, uninvited and at his own expense, to make his own 2017 list of the mushrooms present in the SSSI. Last year Roy and a group of like-minded scientists found many species at Littleferry, the other dunes in the north of Loch Fleet SSSI. He was escorted by his son Chris and both were trying to work at Coul *incognito* for fear of being denied access. Roy, pushing 80, is a world-famous expert on fungi and spent his professional career at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh and in the tropics.



Professor Roy Watling MBE, PhD., DSc, FRSE, F.I.Biol., C.Biol., FLS in these photos (© Tom Dargie) is east of the proposed 16th fairway at Coul. This is in a habitat which would receive golf fungicides via drainage. He has just found a milk cap mushroom which has to go back to the lab for name confirmation. This mycorrhizal species (a fungus associated with plant roots and benefiting the plant) was only known in Scotland from Orkney dune willow.

There is abundant dune willow at Coul and many other species require fungi to thrive. They include marram grass, the most important of all dune species. But what about all those golf chemicals draining through the site in the groundwater? They will go well beyond the 14 hectares of chemically-maintained golf lawn which we are told is the only harm being done to Coul and the Loch Fleet SSSI. All dune wetland downhill of a lawn will be potentially affected, with their vital mycorrhizal fungi. Can anybody find an answer in the Environmental Statement (ES) which is supported by proper EIA science? There is no mention of the importance of these fungi in supporting biodiversity throughout Coul. There is no information on the quantities of chemicals which will enter Coul groundwater and travel through the site and then into the sea (the Moray Firth Special Protection Area). The material on fungi in the ES is not fit for purpose. Same for the effects of all those fungicides and fertilisers. No wonder biodiversity is often poor on links golf courses.

Notes for Editors

Not Coul is an unincorporated group of local objectors to the proposed golf course scheme. It is well supported in both Embo and Dornoch. It draws on professional support from ecologists, ornithologists, golf specialists, planners and lawyers, as well as from the lifetime's experience of local people.

In response to the application, Not Coul is examining the entire Environmental Statement with care and in detail, and will publish its findings when they are prepared and verified.

Not Coul's contact in working hours is

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