



Scottish
Forestry
Coilltearachd
na h-Alba

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Lord Stormont C/O Mark Hamilton
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Our Reference – North Logiealmond Woodland Creation

17th November 2022

Dear Lord Stormont

The Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

I refer to your application North Logiealmond proposal at NN 950 370 near Amulree which contains proposals for, 397.65 hectares of afforestation and 3.72 hectares of deforestation.

We are required to provide a Screening Opinion under the above Regulations as to whether the work you are proposing is an EIA project and will require EIA consent.

I can confirm that the work you propose will **not** require EIA consent.

Population and Human Health

1. A core paths used for public access are located within the area proposed for woodland creation.

Public access provisions are described in the North Logiealmond Screening Opinion Request and supporting information and identified at one of the tracks on the North Logiealmond fencing map.

Potential significant effects have been addressed as opportunities for public access will continue in accordance with The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Public access provision will be enhanced through the establishment of new forest tracks that will link with the existing route. The existing core path will not be within a fence therefore the woodland creation will not restrict access in any way. New tracks will be accessible through self-closing gates as per the fencing map.

The proposed mitigation is compliant with UKFS Requirements for Forests and People.

Cultural Heritage

1. A number of archaeological features are located within the area proposed for woodland creation all of which are unscheduled.

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and walkover survey has been undertaken in support of the request for a screening opinion. It recommends a series of mitigation measures intended to minimise or avoid adverse impacts upon heritage assets

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The mitigation measures laid out within the assessment have been incorporated into the woodland design and detailed in the supporting documents.

No forest operations will take place within buffer areas identified in the above documents and access to historic features will remain.

The proposed mitigation is compliant with UKFS Requirements and Guidelines for Forests and the Historic Environment.

Biodiversity

1. Protected species may utilise the area proposed for woodland creation.

A European Protected Species and Breeding Bird Survey have been undertaken in support of the request for a screening opinion. No mammals of conservation concern were identified on the site however several bird species were.

These assessments identified that without appropriate mitigation the woodland creation proposal could have a negative impact on the following species:

- Black grouse;
- Waders Inc. snipe and curlew, oystercatchers and lapwing.

Specific mitigation measures that will be adopted for each species are described within the North Logiealmond Screening Opinion Request and supporting documents, and have been incorporated within the forest design. More details are given in the sections below.

Potential significant effects will be avoided through strict adherence to the species mitigation measures identified within the North Logiealmond screening opinion request and supporting documents including the Wader assessment document.

The proposed mitigation is compliant with UKFS requirements and guidelines for Forests and Biodiversity.

2. Waders

The ornithological report identifies a significant adverse impact upon several wader species of bird, (red and amber listed birds of conservation concern) in an area that has a local importance to waders.

The proposed forest design has been sensitively redesigned to reduce the overall afforested area and includes sufficient areas of open ground with interconnecting corridors of open ground that lead to the surrounding landscape, which will minimise the direct impact of afforestation on the local wader populations to a manageable level.

The felling and not restocking of forest block 1z (3.72 ha) on the north eastern edge of the site (coloured green with a black stripe and described as other land fell - no restock) will provide significant net benefit to waders, principally curlew, by removing an area of predator shadow, which would otherwise sit in the middle of a large wader management area. The benefit provided to waders by the creation of a unified area of managed open habitat justifies deforestation without the requirement for compensatory planting as set out in the Scottish Government's Control of woodland removal policy.

Furthermore a specific wader management assessment and management plan has been created to cover an area of 132 ha which will be actively managed to improve the habitats for waders and an additional adjoining 34 ha which will remain under agricultural practice and therefore act as habitat. This area will also link into similar habitat managed for waders in the adjoining Meikle Findowie woodland creation

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site. Management will include create scrapes, managing grazing and undertaking predator control and ongoing monitoring as detailed within the Wader assessment and predator control plan documents. Monitoring will be reported to Scottish Forestry as outlined within the plan.

3. Black Grouse

The ornithological report identifies the potential to have an adverse impact upon a single black grouse Lek (red listed birds of conservation concern). Mitigation measures for Black Grouse include

- A buffer of 60 m to 100 m of open ground from the surrounding planting, which will be native Scots pine and native upland birch planting.
- Maintaining open ground connectivity across the site.
- Erecting fence markings to the entire perimeter fence.
- Creating of substantial areas of native broadleaved and pine woodland, which will provide suitable foraging habitat.
- Works in the locality of the Lek will be timed to avoid the breeding season.

These mitigation measures follow best practice and can be seen to have been implemented within the woodland design and supporting documents.

4. Protected habitats may be present within the area proposed for woodland creation.

A habitats, vegetation and soils survey has been undertaken in support of the request for a screening opinion. The survey report identifies a number of sensitive habitats including mire communities, bog habitat, flushes and calcareous grassland. The survey also identified habitats that have the potential to support Ground Water Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) and a number of notable species.

The North Logiealmond design Map, Screening Opinion Request, and phase 1 habitat map confirms the location of the protected habitats and botanically rich GWDTEs, which are a constraint to planting, will be protected within the forest design and no forest operations will take place within a minimum 20 m buffer area.

The proposed mitigation is compliant with UKFS Requirements and Guidelines for Forests and Biodiversity.

Soil

1. Deep peat soils are located within the area proposed for woodland creation.

The soils survey undertaken in support of the request for a screening opinion identified areas likely to contain deep peat soil. The extent and distribution of deep peat soil has been further defined through a targeted peat survey, these areas are identified on the North Logiealmond soils map as deep peat.

Potential significant effects have been addressed, specifically through:

- All areas of deep peat greater than 0.25 hectares having been identified and excluded from the forest design, as identified on the North Logiealmond Species Map.
- Any areas of deep peat less than 0.25 hectare (considered un-mappable) will be identified on the ground and care taken when cultivating the site to ensure these areas are not disturbed and remain unplanted.
- All areas of deep peat will be provided a minimum 20 m buffer area in which no forest operations will take place.
- Soil disturbance will be significantly reduced during cultivation by mounding the site.

The proposed mitigation is compliant with UKFS Guidelines for Forests and Soil and Forests and Climate Change.

Water

1. A number of watercourses are located within the boundary of the woodland creation proposal.

Watercourses are clearly identified on all proposal maps submitted in support of the request for a screening opinion. The North Logiealmond Species Map demonstrates watercourses have been buffered with open ground and native mixed broadleaves. In accordance with industry best practice minimum working distance buffer areas for watercourses have been determined according to the width or nature of each watercourse. Specific minimum working distances will adhere to the Forest and Water Guidelines 5th edition as referred to within the North Logiealmond Screening Opinion Request and supporting documents.

The proposed mitigation is compliant with The Controlled Activities Regulations General Binding Rules and UKFS Requirements and Guidelines for Forests and Water.

Landscape

1. It was agreed that a Landscape Analysis would be required to guide forest design and communicate how the proposed woodland would be incorporated within the site area, whilst respecting the sensitivities, special qualities and character of the landscape.

A Landscape Analysis has been undertaken in support of the request for a screening opinion.

The analysis provides an overview of the landscape sensitivities and landscape character of the study area. This assessment is illustrated with a range of viewpoints and visualisations. These visualisations and their associated text provide a comprehensive illustration of the potential visual effects of the proposals.

Potential significant effects have been avoided as the Landscape Analysis makes evident an appropriate application of the principles of forest design and demonstrates the proposal is an appropriate response to the landscape characteristics and visual amenity considerations of the local area.

Although the proposed woodland will eventually create a mixed in-forest and open ground experience for those using the Core Paths, there is sufficient species diversity and open ground to create an interesting visitor experience.

The deforestation of block 1z as described above in the biodiversity section will provide additional landscape benefit by removing a block of geometric shape, which does not add to the aesthetics of the site. The removal of this block will ensure the new woodland creation creates a more organic shape in the landscape.

The proposed forest design is compliant with UKFS Requirements and Guidelines for Forests and Landscape and Guidelines for Forests and People.

1. Material Assets – Population and Human Health – Timber Transport

Consultation with the Local Authority has confirmed suitability of the chosen route in terms of safety, community impacts and road restrictions. Further consultation with the Local Authority will be required in advance of any timber haulage taking place to minimise impacts to a manageable level.

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Taking into consideration the proposed mitigation we consider the residual impact of timber haulage from the woodland creation proposal to be minor and therefore not a significant effect.

Conclusions

The final application presents as a considered approach to a new mixed productive and native woodland at large scale. As set out above, the applicant has identified and mitigated the various sensitivities and constraints on the site as well as recognising the opportunities for the development of native woodland and riparian woodland corridors and connected open habitat.

The small area of deforestation, will provide public benefit by improving the quality of the open areas managed for waders by reducing the predator shadow over the area. Moreover the removal of the shelterbelt will improve the visual appeal of the area. No significant sensitivities were identified within the area of woodland removal.

As set out in the Perth & Kinross Forest and Woodland Strategy, Perth and Kinross has a strong forestry tradition with relatively diverse woodland cover. This degree of diversity makes Perth and Kinross quite distinct and attaches the name of Big Tree Country.

The strategy guides the type of new woodland sought under the strategy:

- with new woodlands and forests enhancing local distinctiveness and sense of place; and
- Woodland that is both productive, contributing to carbon sequestration, and rich in wildlife with a focus on greater connectivity through woodland habitat networks.

This application contributes well in both these aspects, with species choice matching environmental conditions.

The application also responds positively to the priorities and themes of the strategy. The final application contributes strongly to Themes 1 (Climate Change), Theme 2 (Timber), Theme 5 (Access and Health) and Theme 7 (Biodiversity).

Work in relation to this forestry project is expected to start within 5 years and be completed within 10 years from the date of this letter. If you have not started any of the work identified in this screening opinion within 5 years from the date of this letter but still wish to proceed with the project, then please advise us. We will screen the proposal again to decide whether your project requires EIA consent under these Regulations.

Please note that if you intend to apply for grant funding for this work, you must wait until you get an approved contract from us before you start any of the work.

Yours sincerely



Sephera Creber
Woodland Creation Technical Officer
For
Cameron Maxwell
Conservator

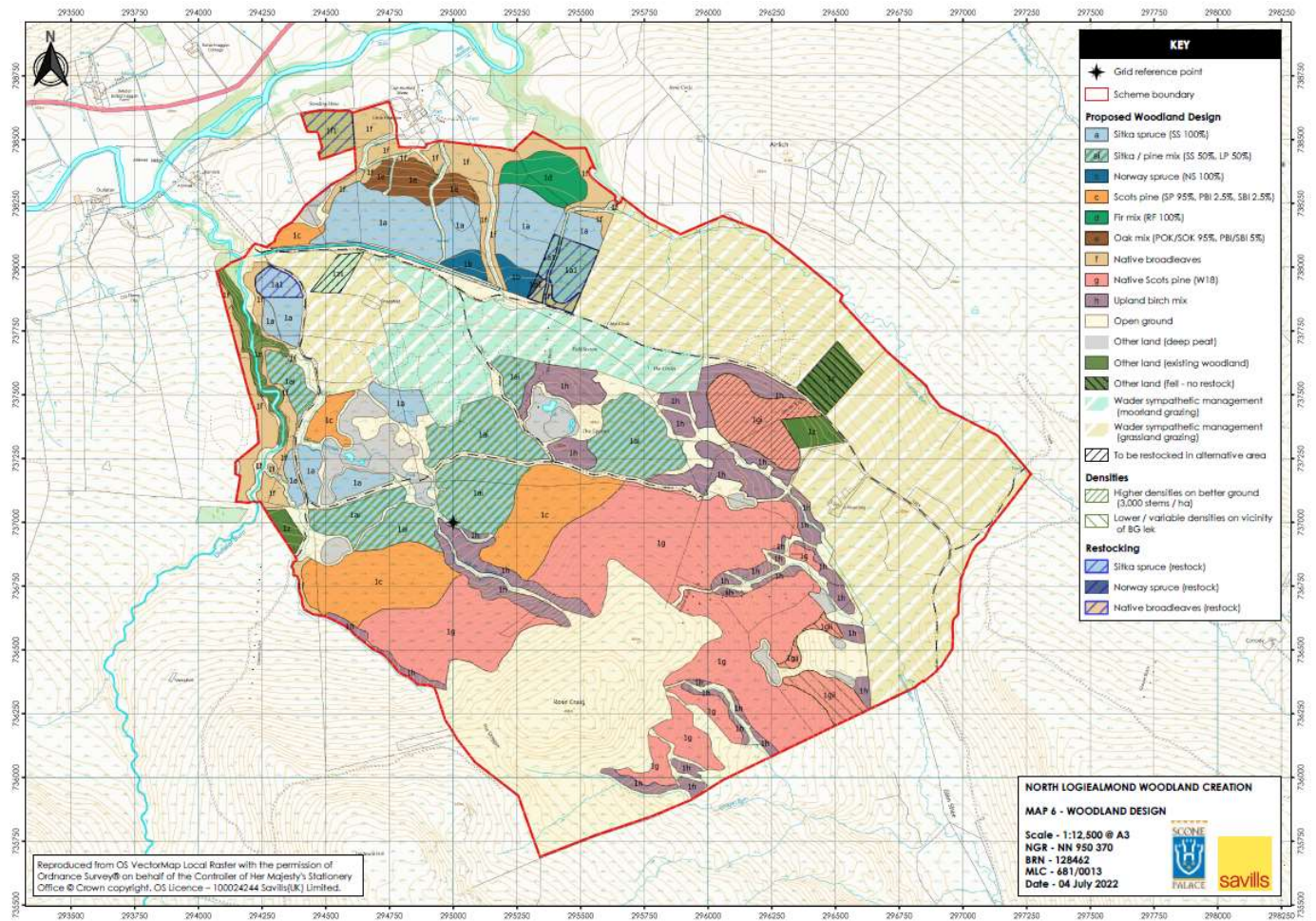
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Map 1: Species map (not to scale) including areas of wader management.



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