ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT
NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Proposal for Afforestation and Road building

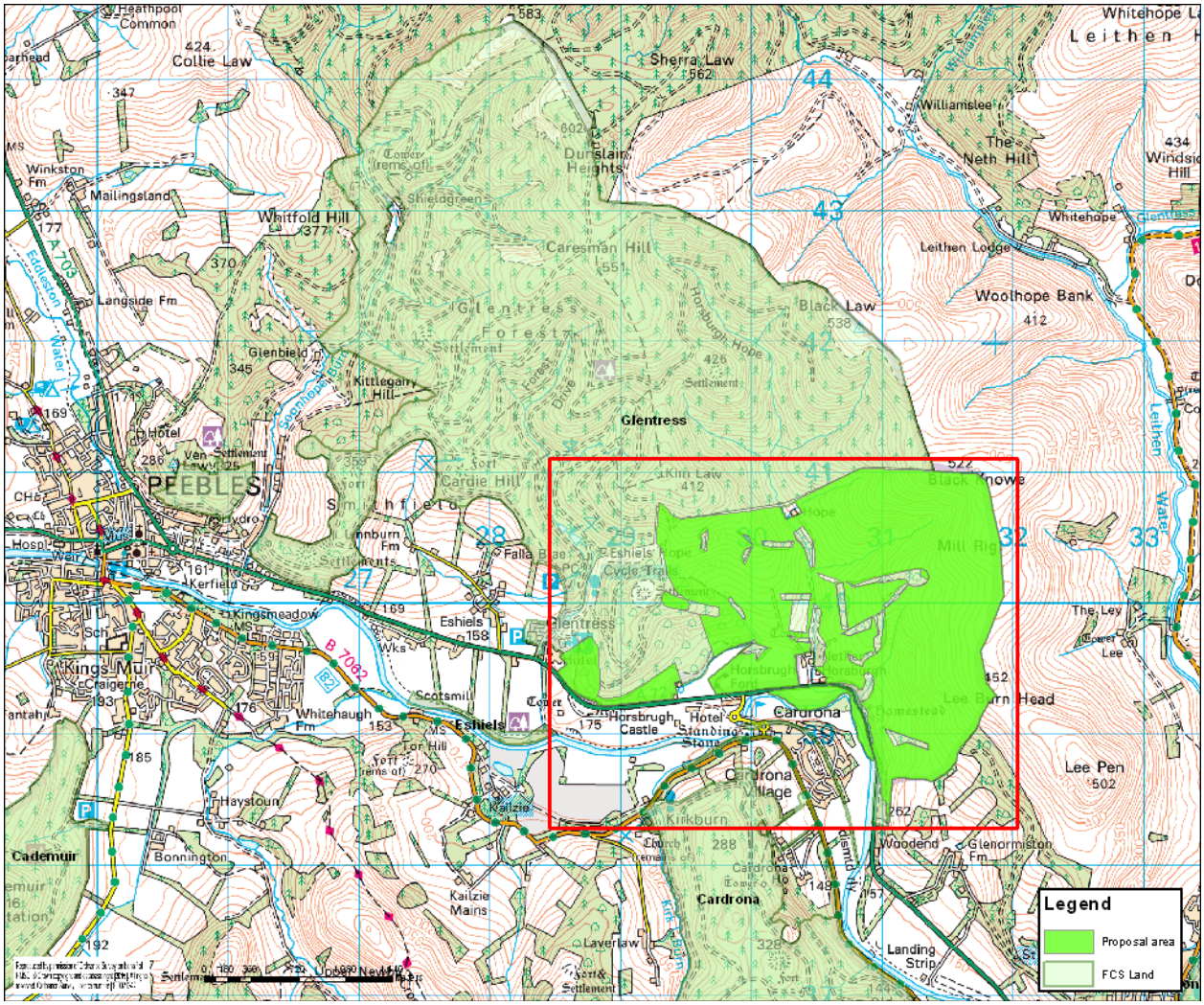
Nether Horsburgh, Glentress, Peebles.

Prepared by Alan Gale

Location

This environmental statement (ES) has been prepared to inform a proposal for afforestation and road building on Nether Horsburgh Estate some 3km east of Peebles, Scottish Borders – see Figure 1.

Figure 1 Location Map



1 Non-technical summary

This Environmental Statement (ES) covers the potential impacts arising from:

- proposed afforestation of about 250ha over a gross area of 404 hectares of mixed grazing and open hill at Nether Horsburgh, near Peebles in the Scottish Borders
- the construction of a new timber haul route from the existing Glentress forest
- forest roads associated with the afforestation
- 2.0ha of woodland removal for landscaping benefits.

This Non-Technical Summary gives findings from the Nether Horsburgh ES.

1.1 Background

The land at Nether Horsburgh (on which the woodland creation scheme is proposed) was acquired by Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) in 2011 as part of Scottish Government Woodland Expansion Programme (Figure 1). The land is situated in the Tweed Valley next to the existing FES managed Glentress Forest (National Grid Reference NT 301396).

The primary aims of the woodland creation scheme are as follows.

1. For social, environmental and economic benefits, create an expansion to Glentress Forest with an ideal countryside design.
2. To satisfy both local and national timber markets and plant a variety of high yielding conifer and broadleaf trees – whilst selecting species taking account of climate change predictions.
3. Expand native woodlands and maintain or improve the condition of priority open habitats to support important species.
4. Enhance the environment through good management of archaeology, water and soil.
5. Create the opportunity for business development through woodland designed for tourism and access.
6. Support local community to develop local capacity and by providing access opportunities.
7. Provide open access throughout the woods for multi-user groups.

The new woodland will be managed to the standard laid out in the UK Forest Standard (UKFS), the reference standard for sustainable forest management in the UK. The new woodland and land will also carry UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) certification, an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable woodland management in the UK.

1.2 The afforestation

With a wide range of aims and ambitions, the key to successful new woodland in this populated area will be diversity of species and respect for the sensitive environmental factors.

The EIA only covers the new planting shown in the table below.

Table 1 Area statement – Afforestation in EIA area – see Appendix 8.29

Tree Species in EIA area	Area ha
Noble fir	5
Douglas fir 60%/grand fir 20%/western red cedar 20%	21
Scots pine / noble fir	4
Productive Broadleaves	43
Native productive broadleaves	29
Scots pine	16
Sycamore	1
Scots pine / birch	4
Sitka spruce	25
Norway spruce	3
Sitka spruce planted at the end of the consent period	21
Graded Douglas fir / Sitka spruce	36
Beech	5
Mixed broadleaves 50%/open space 50%	42
Open	121
Parkland trees (Open)	28
Total	**404**

As this planting on the EIA area is part of a larger proposal, including existing woodlands, the analysis of the tree type and species grouping as per UKFS is calculated on the whole area, see next page.

The full land management plan proposal (including adjoining enrichment and restocking of existing woods) can be seen on Figure 2.

Table 2 Area statement – the area of the total project including the enrichment and restocking of existing woods as well as the EIA area (as shown in Figure 2)

UKFS category (UKFS pg54)	Tree Species/Landuse	Area ha	%	% UKFS category
< 75% primary species	Sitka spruce	30.3	5.8	16.9
	Sitka spruce to be planted 2023	22.2	4.2	
	DF/SS 50/50 Douglas firs and Sitka spruce	36.2	6.9	
Other species**	Douglas fir 60%, grand fir 20%, western red cedar 20%	22.7	4.3	26.0
	Noble fir	6.4	1.2	
	Norway spruce	2.8	0.5	
	Scots pine	16.5	3.1	
	Scots pine / birch	4.2	0.8	
	Scots pine / noble Fir	4.4	0.8	
	Sycamore	1	0.2	
	Research plot	3.1	0.6	
	Enrich existing forest at Castle Hill – broadleaves and conifers	25.7	4.9	
	Beech	5.7	1.1	
	Retain existing woods	43.7	8.3	
	Productive broadleaves*	55.2	10.5	
> 5% native broadleaf	Mixed native broadleaves MB 50% Open 50%	24.6	4.7	20.9
	Native Productive broadleaves	29.5	5.6	
	Parkland trees on valley floor	27.9	5.3	
> 10% open space	Deforestation for landscape	2	0.4	36.2
	Open land	160	30.5	
		524.1		
				100.0

* C. 90% native broadleaves.

** Although not an UKFS category, this group of species is known as secondary species in UKWAS.

Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

Dumfries and Borders FD

Nether Horsburgh
Proposal

Scale: 1:10,000
Date: October 2015

Legend

- Build summer 2016
- Glentress Haul Route (Proposed)
- Spur road (Proposed)
- Future forest road (15+ years)
- Parkland_Trees
- Heritage_points
- Heritage line
- Heritage_Polygon
- Scheduled_Sites
- Planting_2023
- Beech
- Douglas Fir 60%/GF 20%/WRC20%
- Enrich
- Forest Research Plot
- Graded Douglas Fir / Sitka Spruce
- Mixed Broadleaves 50%/Open Space
- Native productive broadleaves
- Noble Fir
- Norway Spruce
- Open Space
- Productive Broadleaves
- Remove these trees
- Retain
- Scots Pine
- Scots Pine / Birch
- Scots Pne / Noble Fir
- Sitka Spruce
- Sycamore

Figure 2 - Afforestation proposal (including enrichment and restocking of existing woodland

0 65 130 260 390 520 Meters

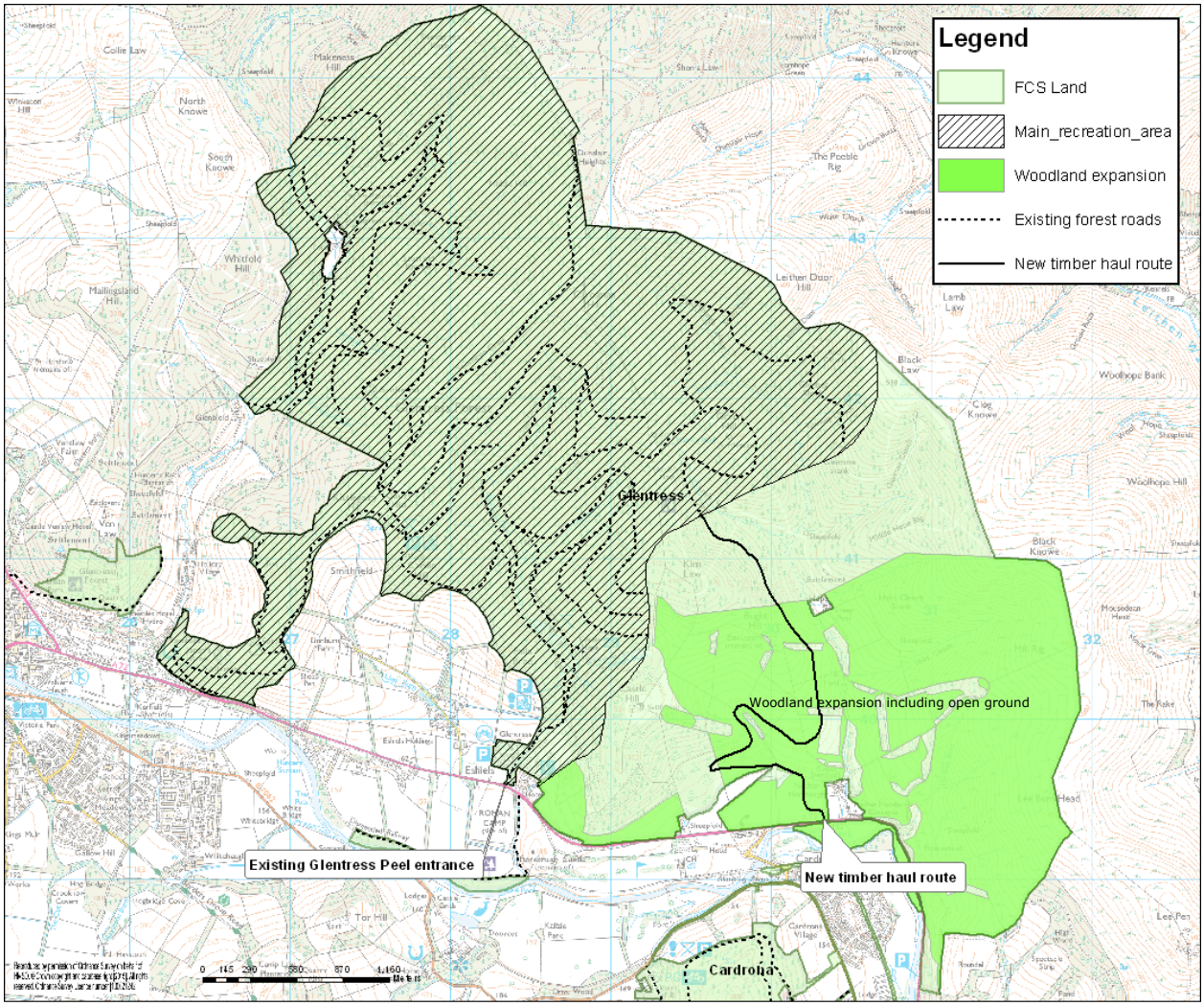
N

1.3 New timber haulage route

A major component of the woodland creation project and the acquisition at Nether Horsburgh has been the incorporation of a timber haulage route that links to the forest road network in the existing FES managed Glentress Forest.

Glentress Forest hosts the Glentress Peel Visitor Centre with over 300,000 public visits per year. Access to Glentress Peel and associated forest trails and infrastructure is currently via the same access point from the A72 as forest operations and timber haulage. Having a dedicated timber haulage route from existing Glentress Forest road network via Nether Horsburgh to the A72 would offer almost complete separation of these two activities improving the management of safety for forest visitors – see 3.

Figure 3 New Timber Haulage Route



1.4 Why an environmental impact assessment?

A full Land Management Plan (LMP) proposal for the area was submitted to Forestry Commission in Nov 2014, and at that stage we requested EIA Screening under the Environmental Impact Assessment Act. Following consideration by FCS, the regulator, a full Environmental Impact Assessment was requested on 18th of December 2014. This response detailed three areas to be assessed and included in the EIA.

1. Significant scale of the woodland creation and new forest roads in a populated area.
2. Landscape impact in a sensitive location (Special Landscape Area).
3. New timber transport route for the significant timber production from the existing Glentress Forest.

It is perhaps worth noting that EIA screening was done relatively late with this project, in that a large extent of the design and design mitigation was in the fully developed LMP.

An important part of the request for the ES was to ask us to look again at the proposed timber haul route.

1.5 The environmental statement

This ES has been informed by a number of different pieces of work over the past few years.

1. Site surveys, reports and recommendations e.g. open habitats survey, bird survey and soil survey etc. These full reports can be seen in the Technical Appendices.
2. Extensive planning work by FES over the past few years preparing for the EIA Screening and Land Management Plan (LMP) submission.
3. Scoping and public consultation via statutory consultation, public consultation and drop-ins, one-to-one site meetings.

The overall objective of this ES is to respond to the EIA screening by identifying the main, or significant, environmental issues relating to the proposed afforestation and road building; identify the nature and scale of the environmental effects; and identify the suitable mitigation measures for these environmental issues and where possible turn any adverse effects into beneficial effects. The ES is presented as a main body text document with printed separate appendices showing reports and maps.

1.6 Environmental Statement (ES) and Land Management Plan (LMP) submission

On completion of this ES, the revised LMP is being resubmitted alongside the ES. The ES covers only those areas agreed at EIA scoping, and the LMP covers all issues.

1.6.1 Environmental Statement summary

Each of the three issues identified for the EIA are summarised below.

Issue 1. Significant scale of the woodland creation and new forest roads in a populated area.

Although permanent and irreversible, the change or development from open land to forestry (and associated roads) will not be significant in terms of EIA regulations and will have some positive beneficial effects on the wider Tweed Valley, water, public access, landscape and management of land around Dirtpot Corner.

The wider Tweed Valley can tolerate the change in land use (including forest roads) provided that the design is sensitive to the qualities laid out in the Special Landscape Area, and considers the impacts on water, historic landscape, communities and tourism. Indeed there is a predicted moderate beneficial effect. Overall there is not a significant cumulative impact of the afforestation and forest roads upon the Tweed Valley.

This large scale afforestation and road proposal has the potential to impact on **water** and in particular ground-water quality, flood risk and water ecology. The EIA concluded that this will not be significant provided that the design reduces diffuse pollution and existing riparian woodland (natural woodland leading along burns and streams) is protected and expanded to provide a buffer between the new productive woodland and the water. The new riparian woodland is likely to have a positive impact on water quality over time as it matures.

The afforestation and proposed roads will have an effect on neighbours, the key concerns were raised as: the private water supplies, septic tanks and light issues affecting the setting of properties. The EIA concluded that this was not significant provided that diffuse pollution from farm animals is avoided near the private water supply catchment – see Appendix 8.27, broadleaved trees are planted around the private water supply rather than conifers, machinery and roads were excluded from the private water supply catchment, trees are excluded from the septic tank area and tree planting and roads are set back from the private dwellings to reduce their effect on views and the setting from the properties.

Biodiversity value was identified as a key factor that could be impacted by the large scale afforestation and forest roads, and in particular, the effect on important open habitats, existing native woodlands (with important conservation status), deep peat

and butterflies. The EIA found that the proposal would not have a significant effect on these issues because the plans proposed help protect and expand Nutwood, retain the important upland heathland area as open and avoided planting trees on deep peat.

Archaeology could be affected by the afforestation and road building, but provided the setting of the features was considered, buffer zones created, views retained and links to potential access routes kept open, the impact would not be significant.

Given the scale of the proposals and the location, impact on **public access and safety** was raised as a concern, specifically the safety of pedestrians near the A72 main road, lack of new recreation facilities planned in the new afforestation area, the barriers created by a deer fence and the possibility of blanket forestry creating a barrier for access. Each of these issues is addressed in the ES and it was found that actually there is a positive beneficial impact on access with the change to forestry provided that Glentress Peel is promoted as the single point of public entry. Visitor vehicles are excluded from the new access point on the A72 and the deer fence is carefully designed with public access gates to aid the safe flow of visitors. The new forest design is laid out in such a way that informal public access can take advantage of the gaps between the different areas of trees and enjoy the environment and finally, provided the existing stock fences are removed.

We consider that the proposal for afforestation and the proposed deer fence would not have a significant impact on **deer** or on public road safety as a result of deer movements.

The risk of **landslide** and disruption to the public road at Dirtpot corner has been a long-standing and sensitive issue. By carefully planning the afforestation and road building above the slope, excluding ground preparation, undertaking and acting on regular site surveys, and liaison with SBC the impact is reduced to NIL or arguably a beneficial effect with shrub roots binding the soil.

Issue 2. Landscape impact in a sensitive location (Special Landscape Area).

Although permanent and irreversible, the afforestation change to the landscape will be positive (beneficial), with regards to the roads, there will be some adverse impacts on the landscape (but not significant in terms of the EIA regulations).

The site falls within a regionally important **landscape** status and during consultation some people expressed concern about the impact of the afforestation on the landscape. And in contrast others explained the benefits of an attractive landscape on a number of sectors, including community and tourism. The forestry proposal for the site recognises these drivers for good design and has gone beyond the standards required, particularly in terms of tree species diversity and woodland management structure/types. Typically the design includes woodland managed under continuous cover techniques and with high component levels of broadleaves/hardwoods rather than conifers/softwoods. This diversity of species and structure helps create and improve good landscape design. The following design techniques will ensure that there is a positive (beneficial) effect on the landscape rather than adverse.

- Avoid planting areas of important semi-natural vegetation.
- Retain the summits of key hills as large scale open spaces.
- Retain open space along the flat valley floor.
- Establish a diverse variety of species to reinforce the rich variety of colour and texture and diverse character of woodland types associated with this landscape.
- Establish broadleaved woodland associated with the gullies and watercourses.
- Retain views from the A72 towards the hills and along the valley of the River Tweed.
- Also ensure that open views are a feature from Cardrona village and Kailzie estate.

The preferred planting option offers a balanced approach to **establishing woodland** while still retaining the key characteristics, special qualities and visual amenity of the Tweed Valley. The changes to the landscape will be significant, but are not adverse. The changes will retain key elements of the existing landscape, and reinforce both key characteristics of the Tweed valley and a number of the special qualities of the Tweed Valley Special Landscape Area.

There is potential for significant **landscape impact with the siting of new forest roads** on the wide open landscape, albeit temporary, assuming the road would be contained within the future forested land. By carefully siting the proposed road low in the valley, avoiding hilltops, avoiding excessive cut-and-fill sections, and establishing a permanent forest structure, the impact of the new roads on the landscape is minor and therefore not significant.

Issue 3. New timber transport route for the significant timber production from the existing Glentress Forest.

This proposed new forest road, on balance is the best option. There is beneficial impact on the visitor safety and minor impact on the landscape, and on the environment. Unfortunately, there is however unavoidable temporary moderate impact on the neighbours at Hope Cottage, but this will become a minor impact when trees screen the road from the cottage.

Currently, Glentress Forest is accessed by the existing single access road from the A72 to Glentress Peel. This road has to provide access for significant recreation use contributing to the local economy as well as the access for significant forest operations and timber haulage. This shared use creates pressure and a potential conflict of use between different forest users and adds significant issues for the management of health and safety at this access point.

The purchase of Nether Horsburgh to be managed by FES allows for the exploration of the opportunity to separate the timber traffic and operations from the recreational users by building a new timber haul route linking in to the Glentress Forest road network and exiting to the A72 on to the 'Horsburgh Straight'. This will allow the Glentress Peel entrance and immediate surrounding forest road network to be almost

completely free of forest operational and timber haulage traffic, significantly improving the safety of forest visitors and improving the visitor experience. The timber haulage will be removed to an area of the forest where recreation will not be actively developed under the current Glentress Masterplan – see Figure 3 or the map showing separation – Appendix 8.23.

Planning permission was granted by SBC in 2014 for the 'new and additional' access point on the A72 along the 'Horsburgh Straight'. This will remove operational and timber traffic from the Glentress Peel entrance for visitor safety, as well as providing access for afforestation and future harvesting operations at Nether Horsburgh. The development makes its **safer**, enabling visitor zoning and improving the experience for the visitor at Glentress Peel.

By relocating the timber traffic to the other side of the hill at Nether Horsburgh inevitably there is some adverse impact on the **immediate neighbours** including; landscape, noise, dust and an effect on setting. By carefully selecting a route and siting the road away from houses at Nether Horsburgh and by relocating the road further up the slope at Hope Cottage, planning for forest structure to screen the road in the medium term (once trees are established) and by committing to partial screen planting for Hope Cottage, the resultant impact on these immediate neighbours will be moderate. This will become minor once the trees are established. This is a temporary significant effect in terms of the EIA regulations.

The creation and use of a new timber haul route across an open site is always going to have some adverse environmental impacts due to the additional pressure. On this site, **water, soil and archaeology** will be affected. By carefully selecting the chosen route, the significance is reduced to minor. The chosen route is sited >200m away from the scheduled ancient monuments, follows all recommendations made by archaeologists, stays away from natural water courses, avoids siting the road on the steepest part of the slope above Hope Cottage and commits to removing overspill from the road cutting opposite Hope Cottage. With the chosen route, the project will not have significant impact on the environment.

1.7 Overall statement of significance

Provided that the mitigation measures we propose are successfully implemented, we do not consider any remaining effects, in the context of the EIA regulations, to be significant with the exception of the effect on the residents at Hope Cottage.

The effect on the residents of Hope Cottage will be because the timber haul route passes near the property and the fact that there will be limited screening of the road by trees until they have become established. This temporary, but significant, effect is due to the visibility of the lorries, their associated noise and dust, and the disruption that they will cause in an otherwise tranquil place. As the trees grow and act as a screen, any effects will be reduced and become minor. The type of the woodland screen (permanent broadleaved woodland) will ensure the mitigation is permanent.