



**Scottish
Forestry**
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Conservator Cameron Maxwell

3 July 2019

Lochlan Dulson
Scottish Woodlands
Lochgilphead

By email

Dear Lochlan

Acha-Bheinn woodland creation – EIA – Scoping opinion

Thank you for the revised scoping report and associated appendices.

As background, Forestry Commission Scotland (now Scottish Forestry) made a screening determination on 22 December 2017 that the proposal for the creation of 95.7 hectares of woodland at Acha-Bheinn, by Barmolloch, was an EIA forestry project, which therefore required our consent. A scoping meeting was held on 28 March 2018.

If you have not done so already, you should circulate a copy of the final scoping report and associated appendices to the stakeholders who attended the meeting, to any statutory stakeholders who didn't attend the meeting, and to any stakeholders who couldn't attend the meeting but indicated that they wished to be kept informed about the proposal.

Under s15 of the Forestry (Environmental Impact assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, and having taken into account:

- The specific characteristics of the forestry project
- The specific characteristics of forestry projects of the type proposed; and
- The environmental features likely to be affected by the forestry project

You must assess the following effects on the environment in the EIA report for this EIA forestry project:

- The cumulative impact (and at a landscape scale) on black grouse populations and the loss of their open ground habitat brought about by the current proposal and the preceding three Barmolloch schemes (Barmolloch 1, 2 and 3), using the area identified in Appendix 5 of the applicant's scoping report, as the study area.

This should include addressing the following issues and questions:



- What is the likely black grouse population within the area of the forestry project and in the wider survey area as shown in Appendix 5 of the scoping report:
 - Now
 - Prior to the planting of the 3 Barmolloch woodland creation areas, and in the intervening years between then and now (in so far as that data is available)
 - Provide a description and analysis of any population changes during that time
 - After the collection and analysis of the survey information, assess the impact on black grouse and make recommendations to mitigate that impact; and
 - Seek any information available on black grouse populations on the nearby National Forest Estate managed by Forestry and Land Scotland and include that in your assessment.

The methodology for the survey work should meet recommended professional ornithological practice and be approved by Scottish Forestry.

Your EIA report must be based on this scoping opinion and must include the information that may be reasonably required for reaching a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the project on the environment.

The EIA report must include, at least, all those requirements set out in s6(3)(a)-(f) of the regulations.

Alternative options to be assessed should include:

- No planting on the site
- Planting of a low density native woodland mosaic
- Other, different design of woodland creation
- Moorland management
- Predator control; and
- The use of extensive grazing regimes to help deliver a habitat that benefits black grouse.

Mitigation proposed may include a range of mitigation types including those identified above.

The EIA report must be prepared by competent experts and the report must be accompanied by a statement from you, outlining those experts' relevant experience or qualifications.

You should ensure that the project presented and described in the EIA report meets the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and, in particular, you should ensure that you address all the UKFS issues set out in our screening determination and statement of reasons dated 22 December 2017 together with any UKFS issues raised by stakeholders and recorded at the scoping meeting on 28 March 2018.

In terms of a number of issues raised by stakeholders at the scoping meeting, we are satisfied that:

- Good practice (following UKFS) in the design of any woodland in and around the higher, craggier areas within the forestry project area likely to be of use to golden eagle, will ensure there will be no negative impact on golden eagle

- The project area is not sufficiently sensitive in terms of archaeology to require trees not to be planted or prohibit ground preparation to take place, if any woodland planting is eventually consented as part of this process. A full walkover survey has been carried out by a competent archaeologist and appropriate buffers have been recommended for each of the remains.

However, the archaeological report did identify that "there is the potential that archaeological deposits and structures survive beneath the topsoil on anyone of the numerous terraces and areas of flat ground" and cup and ring marks on a boulder were found during ground preparation on the adjacent site.

Therefore, in the event that woodland creation does take place on this site, the applicant will have to:

Discuss with Scottish Forestry - the requirement for the applicant to have an archaeologist on site at an early stage of any ground preparation to carry out an assessment of disturbed ground on the terraces and areas of flat ground mentioned in the archaeological report, on a sampling basis, to assess whether there is a higher risk of uncovering and damaging archaeological deposits and structures, and if such deposits or structures are found, to put in place the appropriate mitigation.

Put in place procedures for the appropriate training of operators and site managers in relation to the potential for undiscovered archaeology and;

Make arrangements for an archaeologist to attend promptly for any potential discovery during operational works.

- Timber transport issues will have to be addressed as part of UKFS compliance, and in advance of any planting, if consented. We have a regional timber transport officer to help with this.

It will be helpful to meet soon to discuss next steps. In the meantime, we will circulate this scoping opinion to stakeholders.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C Maxwell', written in a cursive style.

Cameron Maxwell