



## **SCOPING OPINION**

### **CAMBUSMORE ESTATE 030902211**

Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) has been asked to consider under the Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 the impact of creating a new 3,030ha woodland at Cambusmore Estate, Sutherland. The majority of the proposed planting area falls within the Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors Special Protection Area (SPA) which is designated for its breeding population of Hen harriers.

FCS considered the screening opinion request and on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2018 confirmed the proposals will require EIA consent for the following reason:

- The proposal will significantly affect the biodiversity of the Strath Carnaig & Strath Fleet Moors SSSI and SPA by impacting on the availability of the Hen harrier nesting and foraging habitats.

Following the scoping meeting which included Cambusmore Estate, RSPB and SNH on the 21<sup>st</sup> February FCS sought further information from RSPB and SNH on the impact of the proposals on the SPA. Taking into account the information which has been provided we have outlined the matters which must be assessed and addressed within the EIA Report.

#### **Requirements of the EIA Report:**

The part of the Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors SPA within the application site supports 30% of the breeding hen harriers within the SPA. A woodland proposal of this scale is likely to have a significant effect on the SPA's Conservation Objectives.

The EIA Report must demonstrate that the woodland creation proposal will not adversely affect the SPA's Conservation Objectives which are:

- To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (Hen harrier) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and
- To ensure for the qualifying species (Hen harrier) that the following are maintained in the long term:
  - Population of the species as a viable component of the site
  - Distribution of the species within site



- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

To help inform the above the EIA report must provide an assessment of the short and long term impacts of the proposals including changes in:

- Foraging habitat, including prey levels and availability
- Nesting and roosting sites and habitats
- Potential for displacement of breeding Hen harriers
- Risk of predation

The assessment of prey levels and risk of predation should include consideration of potential or predicted changes in prey populations, populations of nest and roost predator species, competing species, fledging success. Current and proposed levels of predator control should be set out.

The assessment of foraging habitat should include consideration of the importance of the small areas of open habitats such as narrow streamside grasslands and flushes along seepage lines/springs, which are likely to support good small mammal populations.

The level and nature of any disturbance during any management or maintenance operations should be considered. The retention of suitable nest habitat should be on a scale to accommodate movement of nest locations by Hen harrier.

The SPA is currently in a favourable declining condition. The EIA report should set out the current land use and as part of the assessment of the above factors, it should consider options for the scale, location and type of planting.

### **Information availability**

In order to assist with the proposal design SNH would be able to provide the applicant with the Hen harrier nest locations for the application site plus a 2km buffer on receipt of a data request.

**Forestry Commission Scotland.**

**28/03/2018**