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Non-Technical Summary

Woodland Creation and Management

Cambusmore Estate, Sutherland
Volume 3

K R Greenland Farming

5 July 2019

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Preface

This document comprises the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) which is a summary of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report), (Atmos, 2019) prepared to provide environmental information for the planting of 1,258 hectares (ha) of native broadleaf, mixed conifer and shrubs of varying densities alongside ongoing management of land at Strath Carnaig, Cambusmore Estate in Sutherland, Scottish Highlands (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development').

The EIA Report has been produced to provide information on the nature and extent of the likely significant environmental impacts of the Proposed Development.

For reference Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) became Scottish Forestry (SF), an executive agency of the Scottish Government, on 1st April 2019

The application for consent has been made to SF under the Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

The EIA includes the following documents;

- Volume 1: EIA Report Main Text (Confidential and Non-Confidential Versions);
- Volume 2: EIA Report Figures (Confidential and Non-Confidential Versions);
- Volume 3: Non-Technical Summary;

In addition a number of supporting documents have also been prepared to support the Application. Further details of these can be found in the following Appendices of Volume 1;

- Appendix A: Issues Log;
- Appendix B: Draft Habitat Management Plan;
- Appendix C: Soils;
- Appendix D: Woodland Creation Potential Report;
- Appendix E: Archaeology;
- Appendix F: CONFIDENTIAL Hen harrier Report;
- Appendix G: Scottish Forestry Screening Response;
- Appendix H: Scottish Forestry Scoping Response; and
- Appendix I: RSPB and SNH Scoping Responses.

The EIA is available for viewing by the public during normal office hours at the offices of Scottish Forestry, Fodderty Way, Dingwall, IV15 9XB office. The documents will also be available online on request from the SF. Comments can be submitted by email to highland.cons@forestry.gov.scot or sent to;

Scottish Forestry
Fodderty Way,
Dingwall,
IV15 9XB

Further details about this project can be provided on request from;
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The EIA Report can be purchased from Atmos for £500 for a paper hard copy or £10 for a CD copy.

1 Introduction

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) accompanies the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report), (Atmos, 2019) which is submitted alongside the planning application by K R Greenland Farming ('the Applicant') for the proposed planting of 1,258 hectares (ha) of native broadleaf, mixed conifer and shrubs of varying densities alongside ongoing management of land at Strath Carnaig, Cambusmore Estate in Sutherland, Scottish Highlands (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development').

Atmos Consulting Ltd. (Atmos) was appointed by the Applicant to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development is located approximately 11 kilometres (km) south west of Golspie and 13km northwest of Dornoch (Figure 1) and comprises the planting of some 1,258 ha of trees and ongoing management of the site.

This NTS summarises the content and conclusions contained within the EIA Report, which was produced in accordance with *The Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017* ('The Regulations'). The EIA Report presents the findings of the EIA and is designed to describe the Proposed Development, identify and assess potentially significant environmental impacts and to propose mitigation where appropriate.

1.1 The Applicant

The Applicant is K R Greenland Farming, who are responsible for undertaking farming and land management activities on behalf of Cambusmore Estates Ltd. The Applicant runs agricultural herds together with undertaking woodland and sporting management on the Cambusmore Estate, with a strong emphasis on conservation and enhancing biodiversity. The Applicant has been active in promoting the farming and tourism interests of Sutherland and Caithness through its active participation in the success of North Highland Products Ltd.

Atmos Consulting Limited (Atmos) is an experienced environmental consultancy providing environmental assessment and planning expertise, working on behalf of the Applicant and is acting as agent for the Proposed Development.

1.2 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The primary purpose of the EIA process is to inform the decision maker of the environmental implications of a development proposal. Through this process information is collected about the possible environmental impacts of a proposed development. These findings are evaluated and presented in a systematic and transparent manner to assist consultation, to inform the design of the Proposed Development and to enable the decision makers to take account of these impacts in their consenting process determination. Further to that, the EIA also helps to identify controls over the construction or operation that are needed.

The scope of the EIA for the Proposed Development was agreed with SF through a formal Screening meeting and Scoping Opinion received in March 2018 and subsequent consultation with SF and relevant stakeholders. The submitted application and EIA will be considered by SF and statutory consultees under The Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 for EIA Consent.

The EIA has identified the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on the environment and an assessment was made as to whether these impacts could be significant. A number of mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts have been incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development or are proposed as part of the planting process or the ongoing management of the Proposed Development.

The EIA Report sets out the findings of the EIA completed in accordance with The Regulations. The EIA Report contains the environmental information required for the determination of the application and is structured as follows:

- Volume 1: EIA Report Main Text (Confidential and Non-Confidential Versions);
- Volume 2: EIA Report Figures (Confidential and Non-Confidential Versions);
- Volume 3: Non-Technical Summary;

The findings of the assessments are intended to assist SF, and other stakeholders, in coming to a view about whether or not, and how, the Proposed Development should proceed.

A specialist team was put together to undertake the assessment in line with the Scoping Opinion from SF and consisted of the Following;

Table 1: Project Team

Section	Team	Statement of Competence
Planning Non-Technical Summary Biodiversity and Nature Conservation	Atmos Consulting	Atmos has a proven track record in Environmental Impact Assessments. All in the team are appropriately qualified and members of relevant professional bodies.
Woodland Creation Potential Report and Soils Report	Andy Kennedy	Andy has a BSc in Forestry and approximately 38 years in the industry. He has previously worked for Scottish Forestry (prior to SF) for 10 years and the Forestry Research for 18 years as a research forester and field surveyor. The last 15 years Andy has specialised on soils and derived subjects. He has also taken roles as a soil surveyor, trainer of soils surveyors for FC across the UK, quality auditor of soil survey contractors and advisor to FC operations management and policy groups. The Woodland Creation Potential Report was supported by Malcolm Morrison who has a diploma in Forestry from the Scottish School of Forestry (1986) and has 32 years of experience of forestry in the Highlands of Scotland.
Archaeology	AOC Archaeology	AOC is one of the most experienced heritage consultancy practice and is registered is a Registered Archaeological Organisation (RAO) through the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).
Issues Log Draft Habitat Management Plan	Anthony Elletson	Anthony has 25 years' experience in woodland and related project management and contracting, solicitor (non-practising), regulatory consulting and strategic business planning frequently relating to sites with specific sensitivities.
	Ken Greenland	Ken is the owner of Cambusmore Estates, he is a

Section	Team	Statement of Competence
		farmer and land manager of 40 years' experience. Quantity Surveyor and project manager for 30 years gaining experience in a wide range of projects frequently involving sensitive sites.
	Jenny Bell	Jenny has more than 20 years' experience in ornithology. She has developed extensive knowledge of survey methods on both avian and non-avian ecology and has contributed to developing Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) guidance using bespoke methodology.

1.2.1 Consultation

A vital aspect of the EIA process is consultation, both to agree which environmental topics require to be assessed and to understand public perception of the Proposed Development in order to help in the design process. Screening and Scoping consultation was undertaken throughout the development of the EIA in order to confirm the scope and extent of environmental assessment required.

1.3 The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development is located approximately 11 kilometres (km) south west of Golspie and 13km northwest of Dornoch, to the west of the A9 Inverness Wick trunk road, and comprises the planting of some 1,258 ha of open hills currently dominated by heath, bog and grassland habitats. The current land use comprises of rough grazing with some isolated non-grazing areas due to areas of deep peat.

The Proposed Development is located within the wider Cambusmore Estate which comprises some 5,000 ha. Elevations across the site vary considerably with the highest elevation of 307m above ordnance datum (AOD) at the summit of Meall an Eoin in the southeast dipping to circa 115m along parts of the existing access roads in the centre of the site.

The Proposed Development is located within the Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protection Area (SPA) which is designated for its breeding population of Hen harriers *Circus cyaneus*, see Figure 3.

1.3.1 Project Alternatives

Prior to the final design presented within this EIA Report numerous alternative uses were considered for the land which are summarised below:

- Grouse Moor - A section of the Proposed Development site was formerly used as a grouse moor and re-establishing this use was considered by the Applicant. However due to considerable expenditure associated with increasing bags, rebuilding butts, upgrading estate tracks, employment of additional gamekeepers, extensive heather burning together with feeding costs and restrictions on sheep grazing it was concluded that such a use would neither be financially viable nor compatible with the overall objectives for Cambusmore as a whole
- Continue Current Management - Consideration was given to maintaining the current management of the area contained within the Proposed Development.

Efforts over a number of years to undertake muirburn had not been successful due in large part to climatic and ground conditions together with seasonal constraints around early ground nesting birds, this therefore inhibited efforts to promote heather and grass rejuvenation on the hill. Therefore, maintaining the current management regime for the site would ultimately lead to a further decline in the quality of habitat and this option was discounted as it was considered that it did not offer sufficient habitat enhancement potential and would result in considerable expenditure.

- Commercial Woodland – the possibility of afforestation was considered from successful evidence of a neighbouring woodland. Peat depth surveys were undertaken and discounted large parts of the proposed area unplantable. Access to the proposed planting areas would of required a large network of expensive roading. Alongside this by having commercial woodland operation would likely lead to a negative impact upon Hen harrier habitats and thus the integrity of the SPA likely could not be maintained.

1.3.2 Preferred Option

The Proposed Development presented in this EIA therefore comprises the planting of mixed conifer, native broadleaf trees and shrubs of varying densities alongside ongoing management. The planting proposal is proposed to be made up of the tree species as detailed further in Section 3.2.1 of the EIA Report and illustrated in Figure 2.

The Proposed Development started off as a much larger project which has undergone a number of iterations to arrive at what is now the subject of this EIA report. Having excluded all areas of deep peat, common grazing's and potential grazing areas.

The arrival of the final design of the Proposed Development was also informed by an NVC survey which afforded more detail as to species suitability. This was further refined by removing planting from hilltops and other areas which would be visually intrusive. Access to various Hen harrier records further refined the Proposed Development so as to secure and promote breeding and foraging habitat. This has resulted in large areas of open ground being designed into low and variable density planting of native broadleaves and Scots Pine across large parts of the Proposed Development area.

Having established what areas were able to be planted the decision was made to confine species selection within the SPA to native species of tree, shrub and scrub. This has resulted in areas of Scots Pine, Upland Birchwood and low density Native broadleaves together with one area on the eastern edge (and partially out with the SPA) proposed to contain limited quantities of Norway Spruce. There will be no diverse conifer within the SPA.

Recognising that parts of Cambusmore Estate to the west of the A9 trunk road lie out with the Strath carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors SPA consideration was given to incorporating these areas within the Proposed Development to create viable wildlife corridors between differing parts of the estate and also in an effort to offer a limited amount of potentially commercial woodland (albeit on a long term basis).

2 Policy Context

The Proposed Development has followed the requirements of both the Forestry (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and the SF EIA for Forestry Projects (2018).

It is also in line with the Mackinnon Review of 2016 which considers a range of recommendations in which Forestry proposals should be assessed and considered.

3 Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

Consultation during Scoping identified the presence of the Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors Special Protection Area and its qualifying Hen harrier population as the ornithological feature requiring consideration within the EIA Report.

Data was obtained from Highland Raptor Study Group relating to the historic distribution of Hen harriers within the Proposed Development and in 2018 surveys were undertaken to:

- Identify breeding harriers within and around the Proposed Development;
- Carry out vegetation surveys across the Proposed Development;
- Measure prey species density; and
- Map flight activity of harriers.

This established a good understanding of the likely value of areas of the Proposed Developments and the underlying habitats to be assessed with respect to Hen harriers.

Examination of the Proposed Development suggested that the greatest changes to the site will occur in areas with lower value for harriers, although there were some exceptions to this. The proposal includes changes which will improve the habitat for harriers by reducing grazing on the site which will promote vegetation growth and differentiation as well as increasing the diversity of habitats present by introducing small areas of woodland and scrub outside of the woodland areas to be planted. Hen harriers prefer habitat mosaics so increasing the diversity across the development is favourable for them.

Additionally habitat changes in the short and medium term is likely to increase prey availability across planted areas; these will decline as canopy closes, but edge effects will be maintained. Reduction in grazing pressure and increased habitat diversity will also likely improve the habitat for prey species.

Predator control will be undertaken to ensure that the habitat changes do not result in an increase on predation on vulnerable nests. Measures were also identified to ensure that disturbance during planting or management is restricted to protect breeding Hen harriers.

As a result, there are no adverse significant effects identified for Hen harriers and thus the SPA. Significant beneficial effects were identified in relation to the increase in habitat quality for Hen harrier as a result of the changes in habitat and grazing pressures on the Proposed Development.

4 Summary Conclusion

The Proposed Development has been carefully designed to minimise environmental impact and overall the Proposed Development is considered to have **beneficial** significant impacts on biodiversity and nature conservation (in terms of the EIA Regulations).

5 References

Atmos Consulting Ltd (2019) *Volume 1 EIA Report, Main Text; Confidential.*

Atmos Consulting Ltd (2019) *Volume 1 EIA Report, Main Text; Non- confidential.*

Forestry Commission Scotland, 2018, EIA for Forestry Projects.

Scottish Government, (2017) Forestry (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.