

Note of the Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Meeting at Haltwhistle to discuss the proposed woodland creation at Wallshield

11th October 2013

1 Purpose

This document records the key concerns and issues raised at the Environmental Impact Assessment screening meeting held on the 11th October 2013. The discussion focused on the planting scheme at Wallshield but some comments/issues relate to wider forestry issues. **The names of private individuals have been removed from this public version of the Note.**

2 Attendees

Forestry Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iwan Downey (Field Manager) • Ian Everard (Woodland Officer)
Applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The land owners • James Holliday (Edwin Thompson Associates) (Agent for the owners)
Interested Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Alan Sharp (Northumberland CC & Northumberland National Park Authority Member) • Robert Mayhew (Northumberland National Park Authority) • Neighbouring land Owner • Neil Douglas (RSPB)
Apologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heather York (Natural England) • Mike Collins (English Heritage)
Did not attend	Local Access Forum

3 Note of meeting

3.1 The EIA process

An introduction from Iwan Downey explained why the meeting was taking place: to record the attendees concerns as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening process. The EIA process was outlined.

3.1.1 EIA Screening

The Forestry Commission's (FC's) screening process will collect views on the proposed planting scheme so that FC can 'screen' the proposals for significant impacts and can give an 'Opinion' as to whether the proposal will have a significant effect on the environment. If the impact is considered significant than an Environmental Statement will be prepared to assess the impacts and enable to FC to decide whether or not to

give consent for the work, and if so whether conditions are required to mitigate against any impacts.

3.1.2 EIA Scoping & Environmental Statement

Scoping is the process by which all the issues the Environmental Statement (ES) must cover are identified. This stage will only occur if, in the FC's opinion, the proposals are significant. Whilst scoping is a separate process the screening process can help inform the scope of the ES.

4 Issues raised at the meeting

Based on discussion at the meeting and previous written submissions the following concerns have been identified to date.

4.1 Landscape

The Landscape concerns related to:

- a) The proposed woodland resulting in a change in key landscape characteristics due to the size and scale of the proposed woodland.
- b) That the woodland would be inappropriate because it would not be in line with objectives included in the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site and Northumberland National Park Management Plans.
- c) That the woodland would be detrimental to the views available from neighbouring Scotch Coulthard, and of Wall Shield Crags.
- d) The scale and visibility of the proposed planting within the wider landscape.

4.2 Water

Concerns regarding water related to:

- a) Impact of the proposed planting would have on the water supply for Scotch Coulthard.

4.3 Archaeology

Concerns regarding archaeology related to:

- a) Impact on the World Heritage Site Buffer Zone and the interpretation of the Wall's historic setting by visitors.
- b) Impact on existing archaeological interest on the proposed planting site.

4.4 Biodiversity

Concerns regarding water related to:

- a) Impact of the proposed planting would have on ground nesting birds in the area (including on site and adjoining properties) by providing a habitat for predators.
- b) Impact of the proposed planting on the bat population using the crags and mineshafts.

4.5 People

Concerns regarding water related to:

- a) Impact of the proposed planting would have on walkers using the public rights of way on site.
- b) Impact of the proposed planting on the use of the open access land included in the planting area, as well as adjoining areas.
- c) Impact of the proposed planting on the applicants' family business because the current farm size is not economically sustainable.

5 Other Issues and Queries

Other issues relating to the proposals but not directly impacting on the screening process raised at the meeting:

5.1 Applicant stated they were Personal Occupier of the land on the EWGS application

The main purpose for requiring this information as part of the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) grant application is to determine whether a public or private body is applying as this may affect EU funding. A Personal Occupier is described in EWGS Guidance as where 'you or your family own or the property, or hold it as a family trust, partnership or family farm'.

5.2 The Agent (James Holliday) signed the application form

The applicant had authorised James Holliday to act on his behalf at Wallshield using the FC's Agent Authority Form.

5.3 A question was asked as to which parties FC are required to consult

The proposed planting at Wallshield is subject to two separate consultation processes; EIA screening and EWGS:

EIA Screening

There is no requirement for the FC to consult during the EIA screening process. However, EU guidance on the screening process encourages dialogue with the applicant and that we may "*find it useful to consult with and take advice from a number of other organisations*". These include:

- Authorities with a statutory responsibility for environmental matters e.g., Natural England, Environment Agency, English Heritage and National Park Authority.
- Other interested parties e.g. Parish Councils, neighbours to help identify any local concerns about the proposal.
- Experts and members of academic or research institutes such as the FC's National Expertise Team or Forest Research.

EWGS Consultation

In accordance with the obligations placed on FC by Ministers that sets out who FC will consult with on new planting applications at Wallshield, FC are required to consult/notify:

- The local archaeology service – Northumberland National Park Authority
- Local Planning Authority – Northumberland National Park Authority
- Local Access Forum
- English Heritage
- National Park Authority - Northumberland National Park Authority

Public Register

In addition to the above consultation all EWGS woodland creation schemes are placed on a Public Register, available on FC's website

(https://www.eforestry.gov.uk/glade/public_register_publicRegisterMap.do).

5.4 A request was made to understand the Appeal Processes relating to EIA decisions

The Applicant

The applicant can request a Direction from the Minister on whether consent is required if either:

- The FC's Opinion is that consent is required, or;
- FC fail to provide their Opinion within the statutory timescale. In this instance the FC are giving their Opinion under their own "motion" in association with a grant application and the statutory timescales do not apply.

Where consent is required for the project the applicant can appeal to the Minister if FC:

- refuse the application,
- have granted consent with additional conditions, or;
- restricted the time allowed to complete the work.

Others

Any person who is aggrieved by FC granting consent (not the Opinion) can make an application to the courts within six weeks of consent being granted.

For other issues the only course of action would be to seek a Judicial Review.

6 Closing Remarks

The FC confirmed that a record of the meeting would be circulated for any comments and that the points raised at the meeting along with the views expressed by other interested parties would be considered in their Opinion.