

THREESTONEBURN FOREST

APPENDIX 16

SCOPING REPORT

THREESTONEBURN

SCOPING MEETING

6th MARCH, 2007

Those present:

Ian Hall	Lilburn Estates
Tony Hume	Lilburn Estates
Timothy Matthewson	Lilburn Estates
Ian Robinson	Scottish Woodlands
Mike Hall	Scottish Woodlands
Denise Caudle	Chair – Regional Advisory Committee
Brendan Callaghan	Forestry Commission
Neil Dixon	Forestry Commission
Colin Grayson	Forestry Commission
Caroline Cumming	Ilderton PC
Stephen Shell	Ingram PC
Allan Williamson	Ingram PC
Mark Wilkinson	Northumberland Wildlife Trust & Save our Squirrels
Jennifer Lampert	Behalf of Mr & Mrs Wright (Owners of Threestoneburn house)
Elaine Rigg	Northumberland National Park
Mary Gough	Northumberland National Park
Phil Warren	Game Conservancy Trust
Margaret Brown	Owner of Ilderton Dodd
Mrs Allgood	Owner of Reaveley

MINUTES OF SCOPING MEETING

Chaired by Ian Hall of Lilburn Estates & Ian Robinson of Scottish Woodlands

Meeting commenced at 2.15pm

Ian Hall: Ian welcomed everybody to the meeting. He introduced himself and Ian Robinson from Scottish Woodlands. Ian Hall explained Lilburn Estates had purchased Threestoneburn Forestry and that the purpose of today's meeting was to gather the views and questions from those present. Some questions would be answered in today's meeting and others would be answered as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Those present were invited to tell the rest of the group their name and who they worked for/ represented

Ian went on to tell the group the Estate's intention was to return the area back to moor land and have a sheep farm and grouse moor, which would involve a large felling project. Whoever had bought the forestry would fell it over a 40-50 year period and re-plant the felled areas. Lilburn Estates will fell the forestry and return it to moor land very quickly. This would be a 3 year period provided the Estate get permission and agreement from the relevant bodies. The felling of the forestry would be a similar project to that at Wooler Common where the first area felled is now back to 65% heather cover and has had ponds created. Ian explained it was now impossible to tell the second area felled had previously been a forest. The estate had improved tracks and roads at Wooler Common during that project. There would be a similar ambitious program at Threestoneburn and the Estate and Scottish Woodlands had already looked at the amount of timber, which will be leaving the forest and the need for new roads

Ian Robinson: Ian firstly showed the group a general Ordnance Survey location map of Threestoneburn showing the A697, Wooler, Powburn and the Calder road

The second map shown to the group was a Forestry Commission species map. The forest was made up of 92% Sitka Spruce (blue on map), 6% Lodge Pole Pine (green on map) and 2% Larch (orange on map). Approximately 100ha is unplanted; the eastern flank of Hedgehope Hill, the eastern flank of Dunmoor and Cunyan Crag

The third map showed the environmental features of the forest and surrounding area. The pinked hatched area was the Cheviot Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), which was also part of the un-planted area of the forestry. Natural watercourses had been highlighted blue with 2 scheduled monuments marked red and 4 non-scheduled monuments marked green. Public footpaths do run through the forestry towards Threestoneburn house, which meet the bridleway running between the Dodd and Langleeford

The fourth map referred to was a landscape appraisal drawn by the Forestry commission. This showed the watercourses more clearly than the above map and these areas could be used as an appropriate amount of riparian zone re-planting. No concrete areas of re-planting had been decided but this will be clearer after the EIA. Other watercourse re-planting on other parts of the estate will likely to be undertaken

Ian went back to the first OS map showing the existing road network. Ian told the group the Forestry Commission have asked Lilburn Estates to carry out an EIA to justify the felling of Threestoneburn. The EIA covers 4 points: de-forestation, afforestation, roads and quarries. Ian Robinson told those present the existing roads weren't sufficient for the proposed harvesting operations

Ian Robinson: If the Forestry Commission still managed the forestry, they would be undertaking road repairs and improvements. There are currently 6.5km of existing roads within the forestry, all of which need up-grading. Roughly 4-5km of new roads would be required for harvest. No stone would need to be brought in as there are 2 quarries within the forestry. These will be utilised, extended and then landscaped after the project

Ian asked for input from the floor; some questions would be answered now, others would be answered in the EIA

Jennifer Lampert: Jennifer asked which tracks will be used and will they need to be improved

Ian Hall: The track that goes to Mr & Mrs Wright's house within the forestry will not be used. The track from the Dodd to the main forest gate will be used. Work will be needed to up-grade this track before and during the project and will be returned to the way it was, if not better, after the felling

Ian Robinson: The Dodd road will be maintained so the forestry can be accessed in a 2wd car for workers, visitors etc

Ian Hall: Work has already been carried out on the road. The road will be maintained during the felling and put right at the end of the job

Elaine Rigg: Elaine asked what were the long term intentions for existing and newly created roads

Ian Hall: A road network will be needed for the felling. Those roads which aren't required will be used to maintain other roads

Ian Robinson: Ian referred to a Forestry Commission map, which showed the forestry commission's road proposals. These showed existing roads (pink on map) and proposed new roads (blue on map). Lilburn's road network would be similar to the Forestry Commission's

Elaine Rigg: Elaine expressed concern about the impact the roads would have on the landscape

Ian Hall: Ian reiterated that those roads not needed would be used to maintain those roads needed

Allan Williamson: Allan enquired which route will be taken to get to the A697

Ian Robinson: Ian had already had a discussion with the Highways Agency. The Highways Agency preferred route would be via Reaveley. This road had been maintained to a higher standard than other roads due to the sand and gravel quarries

Stephen Shell: Stephen enquired if the estate had looked at the possibility of the South Middleton route

Ian Hall: The estate had considered that option but didn't think it was as good as the Reaveley route

Stephen Shell: Stephen responded by asking why

Ian Robinson: There is no existing road between the forestry and South Middleton

Stephen Shell: Stephen asked why not spend money on creating a shorter road between the forestry and South Middleton rather than improving and maintaining the longer road between Threestoneburn and Calder

Colin Grayson at this point asked for the two routes to be shown on the OS map and Ian Robinson duly did this

Stephen Shell: Stephen thought this should be an issue for the estate to look into

Mrs Allgood: Mrs Allgood asked why can't the lorries go through Roddam or could a speed limit be put in place if they go through Reaveley

Ian Robinson: The Roddam road is not suitable for HGV's. Introducing a speed limit won't be a problem

Ian Hall: If a speed limit were to be put in place, the estate would enforce it

Ian Robinson: Ian asked the Ingram PC how many wagons left the quarries

Allan Williamson: They were allowed 28 each way per day – but there were more on some days

Ian Robinson: Over 36 months there would be 10 lorries per day or 50 per week during the felling

~~Stephen Shell: Timber lorries are bigger and heavier than gravel lorries~~

Allan Williamson: Alan enquired what weight will they be

Michael Hall: 45t

Allan Williamson: Allan pointed out the roads are narrow for a 45t wagon

Jennifer Lampert: Jennifer asked how many lorries there will be per day

Ian Robinson: 10 in, 10 out per day

Allan Williamson: Allan asked who would enforce/ monitor a speed restriction

Ian Hall: The company that has been given the contract (this still hasn't been decided yet) would be in charge of monitoring speed but Lilburn would also enforce and monitor speed restrictions

Allan Williamson: Alan asked if there will be spot checks during the felling

Ian Robinson: Rules will be set out prior to the harvest and a complaints procedure will be put together as part of the EIA

Ian Hall: Lilburn would like to work with the neighbours of the estate and the surrounding community. This project would be an upheaval for 3 years compared with a continuous 30-40 year project if the forestry was still run by the Forestry Commission

Ian Robinson: If the Forestry Commission still owned Threestoneburn they would start felling now for the next 20 years

Mrs Allgood: Mrs Allgood reiterated speed was the problem with the sand and gravel lorries and a speed restriction would be a good idea

Michael Hall: Michael told the group the speed restrictions could be monitored by the contractors themselves and a "3 strike and then you are out" rule could be put in place. It's not in the interest of haulage companies to be banned from the job and residents could contact the contractor.

Mary Gough: Mary asked what actions will be taken to prevent river siltation

Ian Robinson: Large un-planted buffer zones already exist so this won't be a problem

Mary Gough: Mary enquired if there were drains running into the watercourses

Ian Robinson: The area was shallow ploughed prior to planting so most drains have disappeared. Buffers will be put in place along with silt traps in the drains/watercourses and brash mats to stop silt entering watercourses

Jennifer Lampert: Jennifer asked where the new plantings will be

Ian Robinson: Alongside the watercourses

Jennifer Lampert: Jennifer then asked if this would help to prevent siltation

Ian Robinson: Ian responded by saying not really as siltation will occur prior to re-planting

Ian Hall: There will be flexibility during the felling to prevent these things happening

Jennifer Lampert: Jennifer asked if the EIA show which areas are being felled and when they will be felled

Ian Hall: Ian replied; to an extent. The estate will use flexibility and timing; the wet areas will be harvested in the summer

Elaine Rigg: Elaine asked if the estate is continuously felling, will the estate take into account nesting birds and squirrels etc

Ian Robinson: Ian told the group flexibility will be used. We know where birds will nest so these areas will be avoided during the nesting period. The forestry isn't a good squirrel habitat but there is a potential red squirrels could be present amongst the Lodge Pole Pine. The area hasn't been identified as a reserve like Keilder or Kyo

Mark Wilkinson: Mark told the group viable populations could be in that area but the red squirrel reserves were about targeting limited resources and that forests such as Threestoneburn could still be important habitat.

Ian Hall: Ian explained the estate has been dedicated to the environment in the past and had planted hedges, put the estate into stewardship agreements as well as actively feeding red squirrels at Lilburn Towers

Mark Wilkinson: Mark agreed that Sitka Spruce wasn't the best species for red squirrels but reiterated the area could carry a population

Mary Gough: Mary asked if there was a deer population and suggested they would move to the surrounding areas

Ian Robinson: Ian agreed deer would be on the move after the felling of the forestry

Ian Hall: Ian told the group the estate would look into deer protection for new plantings in the area, especially those new plantings around the Dodd

Mary Gough: Mary asked what type of vegetation was present prior to the forestry being planted

Ian Hall: Ian had spoken to an old shepherd who had once worked there. The shepherd said it was the best hill farm in north Northumberland with approximately 65-70% heather cover

Mary Gough: Mary enquired if Ian thought the regeneration would be quite fast

Ian Hall: Ian said he thought it would be, as there was heather growth alongside the rides in the forestry. The correct felling operation, grazing and sheep management will all affect how quick the regeneration would be

Elaine Rigg: Elaine asked how the stumps and brash will be disposed of

Ian Hall: The estate are looking into different systems. Brash will probably be taken away, depending on market value and the different felling techniques used. There is a possibility of mulching or stump removal and the possibility of bull dozing stumps into the old furrows. This would help bilberry and heather regeneration as the peat would be disturbed

Elaine Rigg: Elaine noted the estate had been lucky at Wooler Common as there was little in the way of Sitka Spruce regenerating, and asked if the Sitka Spruce at Threestoneburn was seeding

Ian Hall: Ian answered yes it was

Elaine Rigg: Elaine asked if there could be a re-seeding problem at Threestoneburn

Ian Robinson: Ian told the group this wasn't likely to be a problem as a combination of grazing and mulching should stop regeneration recurring

Mary Gough: Mary enquired how the estate would manage the rights of way

Ian Robinson: There are 2 footpaths coming in from the south east running towards the house and joining the bridleway. There is a possibility to harvest without affecting footpaths but some will be temporarily closed at times of year for safety during felling. After the felling is complete, the area will be "right to roam"

Phil Warren: Phil told the attendees the project would be great for the Black Grouse in the area. There would be disruption for some species but there will be more benefits for the typical cheviot species. There will be new broad leaf plantings and a mosaic of different habitats in the area will be created

Ian Hall: Ian described how there had been an increase in the numbers of Black Grouse at Langleeford following the planting of woodland after the felling of Wooler Common

Ian Robinson: Ian showed a map of the Langleeford area. Light green showed the replacement planting and dark green showed the areas of existing woodland. He thought it wasn't a coincidence that there was an increase in the numbers of Black Grouse in the area at the same time as the new plantings

Jennifer Lampert: Jennifer thought it would be interesting to see the new areas of replacement planting

Ian Robinson: there could be 4 types of planting, riparian planting within the forest boundary, riparian planting on neighbouring land, broadleaf planting on improved land and mixed woodland planting. All four types would be on land owned by Lilburn estates.

Ian Hall: The existing areas of open land around the house provided a habitat due to the old grasses. These will be kept as they are, and not re-

planted. These will be used to hold livestock at certain times of the year

Jennifer Lampert: Jennifer asked if buildings would be needed and how many sheep will there be

Ian Hall: Sheep amounts will be dependent on growth, wetness etc. Some times of the year will justify a higher stocking density than others. There will be flexibility in the amount of sheep grazing the hill. No buildings will be needed - just a set of sheep pens

Elaine Rigg: Elaine pointed out that otters were present in the forestry and artificial holts had been built in the past

Ian Robinson showed the attendees where the holts were located on the maps

Elaine Rigg: Elaine suggested care would be needed whilst harvesting around these areas

Ian Robinson: Scottish Woodlands have had surveys under taken by Gordon Simpson and John Steel regarding the sites. They also know of the key sights for conservation including birds, otters and amphibians. These will be worked around and they will be identified on the ground to make contractors aware. The otters should have minimal disturbance due to the existing buffers

Mary Gough: Mary said she had seen copies of the article 39 reports on the wildlife within Threestoneburn

Ian Robinson: Scottish Woodlands know of these areas of habitat improvement and care will be taken around them

Mary Gough: Mary asked how the archaeological features and stells will be protected

Ian Robinson: These features have been identified along with the stells. These features will be marked and trees will be removed without damaging them

Ian Hall: Tony Hume will monitor the project weekly to make sure stells, watercourses etc aren't damaged

Ian Robinson: Key features will be marked on maps and on the ground prior to harvest to help protect these features

Elaine Rigg: Forest enterprise submitted plans to the National Park prior to felling. Their contractors would stop harvesting if they thought they had found an unknown archaeological feature. Could it be possible Threestoneburn could have a similar agreement?

Ian Robinson: Yes - we also did this at Wooler Common

Mark Wilkinson: Mark informed the group there was a possible siting of a Pine Martin

Ian Robinson: Ian was unaware of Pine Martins in the forestry

Neil Dixon: Neil had only ever seen one in Northumberland at Pallinsburn

Ian Robinson: The forestry was a potential habitat

Neil Dixon: A survey had been carried out 10 years ago but there were no sightings

Mary Gough: John Birks of the Vincent Wildlife Trust has this data

Ian Hall: Ian reiterated the estate would work with the National Park, the Forestry Commission and neighbours and asked for their support in taking the project forward. If they had any questions or problems they should get in touch with the estate. Scottish Woodlands are doing the EIA and will be looking into the questions and alternatives. The estate hopes to take the project forward as quickly as possible and appreciates there will be some disturbance to some of the parties here today

Mary Gough: Mary asked how the minutes will be circulated

Ian Hall: Everybody will receive a copy of the minutes and Timothy Matthewson was asked if he has everyone's contact details

Timothy Matthewson: Timothy confirmed he had everyone's details

Ian Robinson: Ian told the group the bird and flora surveys were likely to be carried out in June/July so the EIA couldn't be completed until the results from the surveys were back

Mrs Allgood: Mrs Allgood asked when the estate would like to start the project

Ian Hall: Ian replied as soon as possible but the estate still needed to decide who will be contracted to do the job as well as getting permission from the relevant bodies

Mrs Allgood: Mrs Allgood enquired if it would be this year or next year

Ian Hall: Hopefully this year

Margaret Brown: Margaret raised the point of the need for 3 bridges and lay byes on the Dodd road, which would be a big job and they didn't want to be left with these. Margaret also pointed out there will be a lot of people coming to see the felling of the forestry

Stephen Shell: Stephen urged the estate again to look at the South Middleton route as there's likely to be a road between the forestry and South Middleton for future management

Brendan Callaghan: Brendan explained the EIA was a statutory process. The Forestry Commission needed a statement outlining the proposed plans. An EIA was needed to show the affects on squirrels, carbon emissions, communities etc. The purpose of today's meeting was to check to see what negative impacts there may be; on otters for example. As a consequence someone may have to look at the otter holts and these may have to be worked around. Alternatives to community interference will be needed. The Forestry Commission will advertise the statement and will prepare a response – these will be advertised in papers etc. This is a rigorous process and the timescale will increase if the statement hasn't been prepared properly or alternatives have not been considered

Ian Hall: Ian thanked everyone for attending

Meeting closed at 3.25pm