

From: [redacted]@silviculture.co.uk>
Sent: 10 June 2025 16:10
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Stobo Hope Forest EIA Scoping Meeting Minutes Draft for comment

Caution! This message was sent from outside NatureScot.

Hi [redacted]

They have been finalised, but are with SF for the final stamp.

Cheers

[redacted]



[redacted]
Woodland Creation Manager

 [redacted]
 [redacted]@silviculture.co.uk
 www.silviculture.co.uk

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From: [redacted]@nature.scot>
Sent: 10 June 2025 15:49
To: [redacted]@silviculture.co.uk>
Subject: RE: Stobo Hope Forest EIA Scoping Meeting Minutes Draft for comment

Hi [redacted]

This s probably my memory failing me, but have the final minutes been sent out yet?

Thanks

[redacted]

[redacted] | Operations Manager | National Operations South
[@nature.scot](mailto:[redacted]@nature.scot)

From: [redacted]@silviculture.co.uk>

Sent: 14 May 2025 09:42

To: [redacted]@forestry.gov.scot>; [redacted]@forestry.gov.scot

Cc: [redacted]@forestry.gov.scot; [redacted]@gillespiemacandrew.co.uk;

[redacted]@stantec.com>; [redacted]@stantec.com>; [redacted]

[redacted]@truenorthrealassets.com>; [redacted]@truenorthrealassets.com>; [redacted]

[redacted]@silviculture.co.uk>

Subject: Stobo Hope Forest EIA Scoping Meeting Minutes Draft for comment

Dear Stakeholder,

Thank you for attending the EIA Scoping Meeting for Stobo Hope Forest on April the 15th.

Please find attached the draft minutes for your comment / approval.

Please respond to me by COP Friday 30th of May with your comments.

Kind regards

[redacted]



[redacted]

Woodland Creation Manager

[redacted]

[redacted]@silviculture.co.uk

www.silviculture.co.uk

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Tha am post-dealain seo agus fiosrachadh sam bith na chois diomhair agus airson an neach no buidheann ainmichte a- mhàin. Mas e gun d' fhuair sibh am post-dealain seo le mearachd, cuiribh fios dhan manaidsear-siostaim no neach- sgrìobhaidh.

Thoiribh an aire airson adhbharan gnothaich, 's dòcha gun tèid sùil a chumail air puist-dealain a' tighinn a-steach agus a' dol a- mach bho NàdarAlba.

From: [redacted]@euroforest.co.uk>
Sent: 21 July 2025 12:34
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]@forestry.gov.scot; [redacted]@forestry.gov.scot; [redacted]@stantec.com; [redacted]@gillespiemacandrew.co.uk
Subject: Stobo Hope Forest Scoping Meeting Minutes
Attachments: Stobo Scoping Meeting Minutes Final_Redacted.pdf

Caution! This message was sent from outside NatureScot.

Dear Consultee,

I apologise for the delay in getting the finalised meeting minutes to you. Please find them attached.

Kind regards



[redacted]
Woodland Creation Manager

[redacted]

[redacted]@euroforest.co.uk

<https://www.euroforest.co.uk/silviculture>

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STOBO HOPE FOREST

EIA Scoping Meeting Minutes

Stobo Village Hall
Tuesday 15th April 2025

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Meeting Attendance

| Name | Organisation | Email |
|------------|--|-------------------------------------|
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| [REDACTED] | South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project | [REDACTED] |
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| [REDACTED] | Local resident | [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | Local resident | [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | New Leaf Forestry | [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | EJD Forestry | [REDACTED] |
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Apologies

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|------------|---|-------------------------------------|
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| [REDACTED] | Local resident | |
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| | Stobo community Council | [REDACTED] |
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| | Butterfly conservation trust | scotland@butterfly-conservation.org |
| | Upper Tweed Community council | secretary.utcc@gmail.com |
| [REDACTED] | Local resident | |
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Welcome and introductions

██ at Scottish Forestry, formally opened the meeting at gave an overview of the agenda followed by a summary of the EIA process and the issues relating to Stobo Hope Forest.

There was a brief introduction by everyone present.

████████████████████ Summary of the EIA

Forestry and EIA regulations have been in force for over 20 years, with several changes leading to the current standard. Scottish Forestry work for Scottish Ministers and screen projects under the regulations to decide if afforestation projects will have a likely significant impact on the environment.

Stobo Hope Forest was screened under the regulations and in 2023 Scottish Forestry gave the opinion that the project was not likely to have significant effect and an Application for EIA Consent was not required. Following a Petition for Judicial Review by the Stobo residents Action Group, the screening opinion was set aside in 2024 by the courts. As forestry operations had already begun, an Enforcement Notice was served on the applicant (True North) in September 2024 to cease works. A Statement of reasons to accompany the Enforcement Notice was served on the applicant in February 2025. Scottish Forestry concluded in their Statement of Reasons that the following issues were EIA issues and that therefore the Stobo woodland creation project was an EIA forestry project that required their consent:

- Landscape and visual amenity – concern of over spraying
- Biodiversity impact – concern of over spraying
- Landscape and visual amenity – concern of unauthorised tracks
- Soil and water – concern of unauthorised tracks

████████████████████ explained these issues will form part of EIA report – Meeting aims to begin the process of determining what else should be considered an EIA issue – an issue that could have a significant environmental effect. Explained that today's aim is not to decide impact but to raise issues. Scoping opinion will be produced by Scottish Forestry after the production of a Scoping Report by the applicant (which captures the issues raised at this mtg) to decide what issues should be covered in EIA report. Purpose of today's meeting is to discuss the issues, any information already available and what additional information or survey will be needed for the EIA Report

████████████████████ – Asked to clarify if statement of reasons outlines issues to be considered ██████████ said that the SoR identified a number of EIA issues, but the purpose of this meeting was to discuss whether there were any other issues which should be included I the EIA Report. ██████████ explained the original Screening Opinion Request (SOR) has been quashed and we are required to consult with consultees before we can make scoping opinion.

████████████████████ – Question as to what baseline level before initial spraying is or what the site is like now – ██████████ stated that we would be able to look back to the original surveys as well as recommissioned new ones, which in part will look at the impacts caused by e.g. the over-spraying.

Stobo Hope Forest Overview

██████████ gave an overview of Stobo Hope Forest from the initial concept to the final concept design, covering surveys completed during the initial screening process, works completed to date and surveys which have been re-commissioned as part of the new scoping screening process. The presentation slides will be made available via the applicants' website: www.stobohopeforest.co.uk

The Concept plan for Stobo Hope Forest is a mixed productive woodland composed of:

- 512ha of non-native commercial conifer species (50% of the scheme area)
- 144ha of native conifer and broadleaves (14% of the scheme area)
- 360ha of open ground (36% of the scheme area)
- 4km of new basic forest tracks
- 5.9km of existing track upgrades
- 15.3km of deer fencing

At the time the scheme received an Enforcement Notice, the following works had been completed:

- 286.6ha of commercial conifer species planted
- 31ha of native conifer and broadleaves planted
- 1.6km of basic forest tracks completed
- 3.2km of existing track upgrades completed
- 15.3km of deer fencing completed

To date re-commissioned surveys include:

- Black Grouse survey
- Vegetation survey
- Breeding bird survey
- Protected species survey
- Cumulative impact assessment (ecology)
 - Black Grouse survey will include the whole site plus 1.5km around the leks plus 500m site buffer.
 - Breeding bird survey will include the whole site plus 500m.
 - Protected species will be walks across the site.

All surveyors qualified and industry professionals (CIEEM).

- ██████████ has requested that the specification and methodologies of the surveys are made available for comment.

Landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA)

Scottish Forestry confirmed that an LVIA will be required that the baseline for all surveys will be the condition of the site prior to the works undertaken. Scottish Forestry has decided there are likely significant impacts on landscape and visual amenity from the over-spraying and these impacts will be in scope for the LVIA as well. Previous surveys undertaken prior to works are already available along with surveys from adjacent projects.

████████████████████ The LVIA must consider any effects to both the National Scenic Area and the Special Landscape Area. Unforested areas are listed as a special quality of the Special Landscape Area and there is a concern over the cumulative impact with this scheme and adjacent schemes. There must be a balance between forested and unforested areas. On the visual aspect, the LVIA must be fully detailed and upscaled from previous survey. Consideration of the viewpoints needs to be reassessed. After noting that effects on the NSA and SLA must be considered: “There are likely to be direct and indirect effects on the NSA.” After noting there must be a balance between forested and unforested : “Now there are proposals for other forestry projects, there is lots of existing. With what is proposed I do have a concern that the special qualities of the NSA will no longer be there.”

██████████, **NatureScot** commented that NatureScot wished to be involved in agreeing the specification for the LVIA. He would like to receive information on the potential impacts on Protected Species.

██████████ asked to for the Stobo Residents Action Group landscape architect to be involved in discussing the specification too.

██████████ commented that the baseline must be prior to any works already done, you can't consider existing works as part of the baseline.

██████████ agreed that specifications will be discussed and agreed. Harrowhope (to the east) – Broughton Hope (west) - Dreva Hope, and Ladyurd – will all be included in the LVIA as part of any cumulative assessment. Changes in the existing forestry will also be considered.

- *It was agreed that the baseline for all surveys must be the condition of the site prior to works.*
- *It was agreed that the LVIA also needed to look at the impacts from the over-spraying and track construction.*
- *It was agreed that cumulative impacts must be considered.*

Biodiversity

██████████ **RSPB** – Black Grouse is their main issues with 7 males on the main lek site (12% of the borders population) and there are birds on adjacent lands. Populations can fluctuate but where Black grouse populations have declined elsewhere this populations continues to remain stable. The previous thoughts and comments from the RSPB still stand and it was accepted that the applicant did take on some of the suggestions, however it was felt that it stopped short of the full desires¹ of the RSPB. Volunteers have been on site and noted the Black Grouse are still on site and RSPB would like to see an expansion of the suitable habitat as the existing habitat has been affected by the spraying and trees already planted. This would include maintaining the original open ground suggested during the previous consultation including management of the habitat. RSPB would like maps of the work done around the leks and any observations of habitat changes.

██████████, **RSPB** – raised the issue that 50% of the site was planted despite Judicial Review being imminent. ██████████ felt this point was outside the scope of this meeting as the initial screening is no longer in place and an Enforcement Notice was issued. ██████████ noted that the situation around the trees that are already planted would be resolved when Scottish Forestry's decision on the project was made, after the public consultation on the EIA Report.

██████████ – his main concerns are the LVIA and biodiversity loss. Comparing the new surveys with the surveys previously undertaken is important. He has doubts about the Black grouse survey and the general bird survey, in particular the timings which would affect results. He would like to see the survey methodology. Tree planting not the only answer to carbon sequestration and should not be viewed as such.

██████████, **Raptor group** – There is a pair of Golden Eagles in the area and it's hard to know how they are affected without the satellite tracking data being available and analysed. It is known that female eagles will hunt up 6km in breeding season, males even wider. All things get considered in isolation, but 14% habitat lost across Scotland from both wind farms and forestry. There has been a 21% habitat loss in the Scottish Borders. Loss of open ground is an issue on this scheme for birds like kestrel and afforestation is a factor as their favourite habitat is rough grassland. Merlin populations declined by 13% between 1993 and 2008. Continuing strong decline; 2022 survey (Scotland) shows only 38% of home ranges were occupied. Heather recovery is important habitat for Merlin and Hen Harriers. Merlin have not been monitored in recent years, but the raptor group will provide any information they have available. There has been a 31% decline in Hen Harrier The data (2023 survey), shows that Harriers populations (Scotland) were 16% down on 2004. South of Scotland: Harriers were 64% down on 2004. The Species Framework showed an average of 4.6² successful pairs in recent years and while persecution does play a part, habitat loss does too.

South of Scotland Golden Eagle Partnership - Golden Eagles satellite tag data is available and will be provided. The partnership are keen to contribute to the process and assessments around GE and the project. Within living memory there has always been a breeding pair in this area of Southern Scotland. There are also some translocated sub adults from the Outer Hebrides that are forming new territories in the area. Current nest sites are known, but this information is restricted due to risk of persecution. Scottish Forestry are aware, or can be made aware, to assist in the scoping process. Methodology of the historic bird survey modelling has shown that new dynamics needs to be considered and the cumulative impact of this and adjacent schemes must be considered by Scottish Forestry. Noted that the area around Stobo is an important hunting ground and has been for 100s of years. Existing female "Roxy" and mate use Stobo as a hunting ground and Roxy is

¹ GWCT were the consulted competent authority for Black grouse with advice from RSPB taken under consideration and modifications to the design made in alignment with their suggestions.

² the Species Framework for Hen Harrier was a report (the then SNH) showing amount of suitable habitat in various parts of Scotland). The 4.6 successful pairs figure comes from the data submitted (to the National Raptor Monitoring Scheme) by the Lothian & Borders Raptor Study Group.

not translocated. Also noted a new Male “Hamlet” who has established a new territory around Stobo with a mate. This territory is known but will not be disclosed due to potential persecution.

██████████ commented that open ground raptors such as Kestrel and Golden eagle should be considered in the new scoping report.

██████████ commented that the scoping report will include any mitigation measures to be agreed with Scottish Forestry with additional requirement as identified by stakeholders.

Ecology

██████████, ██████████ based in Peebles and ██████████. A paper available from independent ecology ██████████ (which draws heavily on ██████████ comments) concludes that an EIA should be considered. ██████████ is happy to hear of the new survey work being undertaken, and stresses that all areas are sampled fully and not selective as in previous surveys. Best practice survey guidance must be followed with both Scottish and English guidance being relevant. Scottish Forestry have to ensure that all habitats and species are assessed. He has supplied documents which set out what the key receptors are and further elements which will have an impact on those receptors:

- SAC/SSSI – River Tweed
- Habitats of Principle Importance – purple moor grass and rush pasture, upland flushes, fens and swamps, upland heathland, montane scrubland – habitat loss from roads, drainage, evapotranspiration, shading from forest planting, management and future management of unplanted habitats to keep them open, impacts of deer exclusion, displaced deer causing higher grazing pressure on adjacent land. Sitka spruce rain effect of habitat on site/off site.
- Species of Principle important – adders, common lizards, skylark, curlew, other waders, snipe, black grouse, osprey (no work or maintenance during the breeding season), Ring ouzels, peregrine falcons. Raptor viewpoint and breeding bird surveys done correctly not extra work. Butterflies are on site, brown hare and historic records of mountain hare, bat species on site.
- Peat loss and CO2 emissions, there should be no planting on deep peat. Exposure on 2 hectares of 30cm deep peat emits more carbon than 1ha on 50cm deep peat
- EIA should consider the carbon already locked up in semi-natural habitats on the site and how much of this will be released/captured during scheme establishment, harvesting and subsequent restocking (further mounding). A comparison of carbon budgets for Status quo, proposed scheme, long-term broadleaved woodland so the EIA can demonstrate that alternative approaches have been considered and why these were discounted.
- Raptor Group – the osprey has moved nest sites and the issue of disturbance must be considered as a cause.
- Mitigation – the hierarchy of mitigation must be followed as set out in the CIEEM guidelines on environment impact and Scottish Forestry’s own EIA guidance 2021. There is concern that mitigation presented is not sufficient for what is lost, and mitigation is not possible to cover everything lost on this site.

██████████ responded to several points:

- Osprey disturbance and existing planting being too close is a UKFS compliance issue and will be discussed with the applicant.
- Scottish Forestry are happy to share information on peat with group – current guidance in Scotland is that peat of up to 50cm can be planted on. This is on the basis of well-established and published research on the forest carbon cycle.

██████████ previously commented that NatureScot do not consider the River Tweed SAC/SSSI in scope. His Priority is landscape and visual impacts

██████████ – Stobo is an unusual case. In Scotland, the threshold for an EIA in a National Scenic Area is 2 hectares³. By not carrying out an EIA Scottish Forestry have brought terrible harm to valuable ecology and Special Landscape Areas. Landscape, ecology and hydrology have already been impacted, and schemes cannot be tweaked to make it suitable – a full EIA will show that a scheme on this scale is not suitable for the location. Following a Freedom of Information request, ██████████ has supplied Scottish Forestry with several reports, written by experts and asks for their consideration in the screening process. A summary of the report conclusions is given below.

- Ecology – most of the mitigation does nothing to avoid, prevent or reduce harm – retaining some priority habitat does not mitigate what has been lost. Scottish Forestry must assess the impact of planting on what the baseline assessments included.
- Landscape – ██████████ – demonstrates the landscape change proposed with a very high probability that the afforestation scheme will give rise to transformative negative effects and this must be considered on a cumulative scale.
- Archaeology – ██████████ concludes the proposals will have a significant impact on areas of archaeological value and must be included in the EIA screening. Ancient cultivation terraces and ridge should be considered from the historical data.
- Hydrological – there will be a change to run off rates and volumes, which may have undesirable effects on ground water, especially during construction and at development sites – water flow and water quality should be considered.
- Soils – noted evidence of planting on deep peat

It was noted these reports were passed to True North/Euroforest Silviculture late on Monday 14th 2025 and have not been reviewed by the True North team.

██████████ - requested that any evidence of mitigation not happening as agreed or evidence of works inside the agreed buffers e.g. intrusion into archaeological buffers should be passed to Scottish Forestry (with locations) for further investigation.

Requested evidence of the planting on the deep peat.

Archaeology

██████████ There are 4 scheduled monuments and 1 historic monument on site. Designated assets have been rightly identified and there has been some open space mitigation. Updated lidar data may be relevant as part of the scoping process. Open space needs to be considered cumulatively where they cross borders with adjacent schemes. An EIA specialist from the HES Southern case work team should be included in any EIA scoping process. He also hasn't seen the comments from ██████████ about potential damage and asked for them to be shared with himself.

██████████ asked if there were any changes since the SBC Archaeology report was submitted to Scottish Forestry? ██████████ replied there were no changes unless updated lidar data adds additional HER sites of importance.

³ ██████████ noted that the threshold over which an EIA had to be assessed was 2 ha where part of the scheme is within an NSA. This scheme is 350 times that threshold. ██████████ comment that an EIA was not automatically required.

Climate change and carbon sequestration

████████████████████. They are currently going through the process of woodland creation and climate is an issue that needs to be considered, more trees are required to capture carbon. If we don't tackle climate change, any plans for biodiversity etc are unlikely to have a long-term success. The UK is building an expensive carbon capture plant on Teesside to store CO2 under the North Sea. But we already have had a 'carbon capture plant' in the form of Kielder which for years and at a fraction of the cost converts carbon into timber to offset against fossil fuel products, something that CCS does not do. We should not lose sight of this.

██████████, **Confor** – The climate change net zero 2050 target is not an interim target, it is an important point to prevent a tipping point and we must achieve as much as possible before then – fast growing conifer is important for that. The Climate Committee recently increased its tree planting advice as an important factor for carbon storage. One third of Scotland's Forest industry is in south Scotland and is important for the economy. The availability of timber is predicted to reduce by the middle of the century if we don't increase cover now. There is an impression that productive conifer is increasing across the country as part of woodland creation schemes, but this is untrue. A recent NatureScot report indicates that there has been a significant increase in broadleaf planting with only 0.7% increase in conifer – this includes Scots Pine and shows a reduction in other conifer species.

██████████ asked if the socioeconomic benefits are of interest to Scottish Forestry?

██████████ responded that Scottish Forestry has a role as a regulator and that socioeconomics is not considered as part of the EIA, which is environmental and social only, not economic. Scottish Ministers will be interested in the socioeconomic benefits. ██████████ accepted that a chapter covering socioeconomics under the EIA headings of Population/Human Health would be acceptable and provide useful context.

██████████ suggested that the social aspect should include employment.

██████████ commented that we must also consider the effect climate change is having on existing habitats too and tree planting is not the answer to everything.

Deer Management

[REDACTED]. He asked if deer management plans had considered the issue of displacement of deer within the valley following the installation of the deer fence and asked for a consultation for future commercial felling with neighbouring forest managers.

[REDACTED] – deer were culled heavily prior to the deer fence being placed and continue to be culled.

- 66 shot to date (64 Sika, 2 Roe)

[REDACTED] – he would like it noted that the deer fence has been cut that may be the result of criminal activity.

[REDACTED] – they have also had deer fences cut at Altarstone

[REDACTED] – here to listen.

[REDACTED] – he is happy with the scheme.

Other comments

██████████ – this is a local group interested in the impact of what has happened, and which surveys were done and will be done. The children would like to be involved if possible⁴, they are the future and everything happening will affect them more than anyone. How can public be confident that Scottish Forestry will make the right decision given what has happened previously.

██████████ – he wasn't involved in the first proposal and screening. Scottish Forestry now have different personnel who were not involved in the project previously and this scoping exercise will consider every issue afresh. SF have suitable inhouse experts for most aspects including Species ecologist and a landscape architect. both of whom are well respected in their respective disciplines. If there are any shortfalls in expertise, SF may then approach third party organisations to assist in providing specialist advice Scottish Forestry are legally obliged as the regulatory authority to approach this in an impartial and professional manner.

██████████ – would like confirmation that the cumulative impact of all neighbouring schemes would be considered. ██████████ confirmed cumulative impact would be considered.

██████████ – he is here to observe and understand the impacts. To see how the meeting works and with the possibility of using a similar for agricultural schemes.

██████████ – ██████████ – she has seen an improvement in biodiversity since the sheep were removed from ██████████. What is Scottish Forestry's approach to native broadleaves taking account of climate change, e.g. Kew Gardens are looking at more suitable species for future years.

██████████ ██████████ Scottish Forestry are looking at opportunities for alternative species for planting, however, current forecasts suggest that climate changes won't be as acute as e.g. southern England and that it may be possible for the existing genetic variability in native tree populations to adjust to the changing climate.

██████████ – how is Scottish Forestry you going to approach the damage already done and any habitats affected.

██████████ – any evidence of damage will be assessed through the EIA Report e.g. the over-spraying, unauthorised track and all the issues will be considered when we make our EIA decision.

██████████ – asked for confirmation that no work will be done during this process. ██████████ confirmed that the Enforcement Notice does not allow work to continue with some exceptions e.g. to remediate any impacts caused by the operations. This is an ongoing issue in the court process so we are limited in what we can say

██████████ – Scottish Forestry are aware there is a need for maintenance of the works carried out to keep the status quo of the site as it is at the minute, this would be minimal and there would be no chemical application. ██████████ noted that Scottish Forestry couldn't comment as this was currently part of the court process.

██████████ confirmed that the applicant would be pleased to accommodate this request.

Applicant responses

██████████ - We will set out the surveys to be conducted and include methodology to allow stakeholders to comment, with any alterations made as necessary. In relation to heather management, there has been no significant effect from the spraying and alternative methods of establishing Sitka spruce on heather sites are being discussed within the industry.

██████████ – the topics identified today are all what we expected to be considered within the EIA, and additional surveys will be undertaken as required. It has been interesting to listen to everyone's comments and understand the issues to be considered during the EIA screening proposal. LVIA, Biodiversity, Hydrology, Deep peat, Cultural heritage, Human Health along with the cumulative impact will likely form the main topics in the EIA Report. We will clarify the topic areas to be both scoped in and scope out of an EIA Report. Those proposed to be scoped out will have justification provided in the Scoping Report.

██████████ – ██████████ reports will be included in the scoping process.

██████████ - was happy for everyone's input. He is confident that what True North are building and growing are for the benefit of everyone. In relation to the carbon sequestration, he wanted to confirm that True North are not selling carbon credits for Stobo Hope. His door is open for further conversations with any of the stakeholders.

██████████ - asked if ██████████ would consider a project similar to the Wild Heart Expansion Project. ██████████ is very happy to have a conversation, but he has a ██████████, who are the owners of Stobo, to make a return on their investment.

██████████ – the minutes from today's meeting will be sent out for comment, following which could Scottish Forestry consider set out a timescale for providing scoping opinion. The previous screening opinion took a long time, and a timescale would be beneficial to everyone.

A suggestion of two weeks for comments on the minutes was agreed in principle.

██████████ ██████████ noted that Scottish Forestry had a EIA processing agreement template, the purpose of which was to agree timescales along the process between SF and the applicant, and that SF would be happy to agree one of these.

Written responses in absentia

Correspondence in Absentia has been received from:

Scottish Borders Council, Access

Scottish Borders Council, Ecology

Scottish Borders Council, Landscape/Archaeology – both were also in attendance and comments recorded.

Scottish Water

Historic Environment Scotland

All responses will be publicly available to view via the applicant's website.

Closing statement

Following this meeting, the minutes will be circulated for agreement and the applicant will produce a scoping report. Scottish Forestry will decide which matters are relevant for the EIA and which are not in their Scoping Opinion – guidance will be given to the applicant for the areas to be addressed in the EIA report. The applicant will then carry out necessary surveys to help inform the EIA report that they will develop and submit to Scottish Forestry. Once Scottish Forestry is satisfied that the report fulfils all the guidance, they will publicise and consult on the EIA report through the public register process. On receipt of the further comments from consultation SF will consider all the information and decide on the project.

Scottish Forestry will share a timeline for the project moving forward. Surveys are time of year dependent with reports following; therefore, it is likely to be autumn before the reports are available.

The Scottish Forestry EIA page holds some information on this project although this does not include everything. This is an issue Scottish Forestry are aware of, and an IT upgrade is planned to allow more information about projects to be included on their website. These improvements will take place over the next 18 months – 2 years but the initial upgrades will take place this summer. In the meantime, the applicant's website will be updated to include all relevant information.

Updates can be sent out via email – it was confirmed those present are happy to be contacted this way.

Appendix 1– comments in chronological order

Borders DMG – [REDACTED] was invited to speak – He wants to see scheme approved and had no further comment.

[REDACTED] **Borders DMG** was invited to speak – He raised the issue of damage to the deer fence and he thinks that needs to be addressed as it has happened on adjacent fencing and should be considered vandalism.

[REDACTED] – No comments, here to observe on behalf of Borders DMG

[REDACTED] **NS** – Invited to speak - Landscape and visual impacts should be considered– protected species surveys may be necessary – This area does not contain designation so slightly different. Raised concerns on baseline surveys and glyphosate – this could change results and findings.

[REDACTED] **SRAG** – Baseline should be considered as site condition prior to works done and is significant – should not be assessed purely on current site condition. 200ha NSA – Is transformative landscape change – LVIA should be looking at it in relation to change of original landscape.

[REDACTED] – Advice from NS landscape architect is survey should be done on baseline – agreed and requested that have conversation about SLQ's and exact scope of landscape assessment is appropriate.

[REDACTED] - Asked what NS thinks about track and herbicide – NS replied they expect baseline to be considered before completion of herbicide application and track development.

[REDACTED] **TN** Asked what SF baseline opinion is – [REDACTED] stated that we have access to surveys prior to work being carried out and adjacent survey work which can supply baseline info.

[REDACTED] **SRAG** – Compared situation to retrospective planning permission – stated that original surveys should be assessed as well as recommissioned ones.

[REDACTED] **RSPB** invited to speak – Primary engagement was black grouse – comments still stand from initial response – recognise agents made changes but thought changes were not enough to maintain adequate habitat for black grouse and they were not happy with it. Confirmed she was not aware work had already been carried out. Volunteer has been surveying on PROW. Recommended expanding habitat for grouse in new proposals. 45%-60% to sustain a population within 1km of a lek site – highlighted that is required with 1.5km not the whole site. Highlighted connectivity is important, and they want to see a scheme that delivers on this. Highlighted current population on site – 7 males lek site – survey work to be completed – in 2022, 277 males were recorded across southern Scotland. In 2023, 176 males recorded. Site supports 4-5% of SS population. Population is declining. Took over lek survey responsibility from SUP last year. 2nd biggest lek site in the borders.

[REDACTED] **TN** – Requested list of surveys and methodology of each survey to be shared and agreed – encourages RSPB to share relevant information.

[REDACTED] **SRAG** and **SSGEP** also interested to see methodology of surveys.

RSPB – [REDACTED] – Invited to speak - Raises concerns about judicial review timing – [REDACTED] impressed that we should look forward and the conversation moved on.

[REDACTED] **SRAG** – Noted that if consent is refused that planted trees will be removed.

Local Resident – Baseline conditions must be considered as prior to any works – specifically in relation to black grouse.

██████████ – North Harrowhope ██████████ – Invited to speak - If we don't tackle climate change, any plans for biodiversity etc are unlikely to have a long-term success. The UK is building an expensive carbon capture plant on Teesside to store CO2 under the North Sea. But we already have had a 'carbon capture plant' in the form of Kielder which for years and at a fraction of the cost converts carbon into timber to offset against fossil fuel products, something that CCS does not do. We should not lose sight of this.

██████████ – Local forest school ██████████ – Invited to speak, interested in the impact of glyphosate spraying – request for involvement in projects that happen locally – interest in involvement with survey administration. ██████████ confirmed he would be happy to invite involvement with future works.

Local Resident – Biodiversity change and loss and landscape impact concerns – importance for survey methodologies – doubts over black grouse surveys – question of timing and quality of surveys.

██████████ – Invited to speak, eagles gps data should be requested for relevance – ██████████ at SUP. Female eagles will hunt up to 6km in breeding season – site is affected for foraging – 14% loss of GE habitat in Scotland – Acknowledges issues are considered in isolation. 21% habitat loss in the borders. Biggest impact loss of open ground – effect of kestrel, merlin ect. 65% decline in kestrel numbers of EIS data.

██████████ asked what kestrel favoured foraging habitat is – speaker answered that rough grassland was. ██████████ asked if speaker (raptor study group) had any data – speaker said site has not been monitored in recent years. Penvalla was merlin site for many years – not recently seen though. ██████████ asked if raptor group has commented previously - speaker said he was not aware of scheme. Hen Harrier potential for return due to degraded habitat – shared statistics on hen harrier number loss for habitat. Should read " The Species framework report showed habitat for 50 pairs (Harriers) in Lothian & Borders - the last 5 years have averaged 4.6 successful pairs.

██████████ stated that GE is likely to be an EIA data and SF have reviewed GET model to show potential use patterns – pair close by does have a satellite tag.

██████████ **TN** – Queried if Hen harrier/Merlin/Kestrel surveys should be completed – announced that these birds weren't included in screening opinion. ██████████ confirmed expectation that all these birds should be considered within scoping report and mitigation measures. – ██████████ stated that EIA consultation will bring these issues in into scope – SANDY Telfer TN said they need to know this during scoping.

██████████ – Scottish Borders Council – Invited to speak - Main concerns landscape and visual impacts of proposal regarding NSA and SLQ's – effects should be assessed. Likely to be indirect and direct effects on NSA. SLA - concerned about balance of unforested and forested areas – key qualities of SLQ designation is more open ground. Concerns over removal of special quality due to cumulative effect of other schemes. Visual aspects – full- LVIA more appropriate than currently done LVA – viewpoints need to be re-examined. ██████████ stated that in house SF landscape architect will work out landscape assessment specifications.

██████████ asked if his landscape consultant can be involved in the prescription of methodology for landscape assessment within house SF consultant. ██████████ agreed that this was acceptable.

SSGEP speaker – Can provide satellite data – would like to be involved in methodology for protected species and cumulative impact survey. Area has been important hunting ground historically. Confirmed pair Roxy and mate use site as hunting ground – not a translocated eagle. Pair hamlet and mate forming new territory – translocated from Hebrides. Confirmed both pairs are satellite tracked.

██████████ TN asked if nest location site can be shared.

SSGEP speaker confirmed nest location can be shared – ██████ stated that SF biodiversity adviser will be brought in to help. ██████ confirmed after scoping opinion is given SF will be in touch to request data. GET new updates to model may provide different conclusions so this should be considered. Concerned that cumulative impact has not been considered.

██████ – ██████ – Raised point that EIA was advised by himself at early stage based on landscape. Glad to hear about additional survey work. Independent ecologist has produced a paper highlighting the following:

Survey guidance regarding 100m buffer to work should be followed during any work as it wasn't last time. SF should ensure that species and habitats of importance are assessed based on full survey information. Their paper sets out key receptors and what potential impacts might be and how they will be assessed. SSSI/SAC River Tweed highlight importance to understand impact. Purple moor grass and rush pastures – GWDTE, mountain heaths and willow shrubs, upland fens and swamps, upland heathland. ██████ asked if there was montane scrub on site – speaker said small pockets. Direct impacts of habitat loss, impacts of drainage, impacts of surface water, shading of habitats that are left open, highlighted its not enough to keep habitat open – habitat should be actively managed – risks of displaced deer higher grazing off site. Impact of SS rain on and off site – species of interest, reptiles, adders, lizards, birds, skylark, curlew, waders, oyster catchers, snipe – mentioned that timing of bird survey was poor and skylark may have been missed - 2nd largest BG lek site in Scottish borders. Osprey breeding site – highlighted importance of adhering to appropriate buffers around osprey nests. ██████ stated that he will sit down with applicant to ensure UKFS compliance – ██████ then explained what the UKFS is. Expect application to be compliant.

Raptor group rep asked if anyone knew that the osprey had moved – ██████ asked if that data could be shared.

██████ – Peregrine falcons will be foraging over the site. SS don't produce good foraging ground for PR. Specific surveys for each species won't be required if bird surveys are done properly to best practice guidance. Raised bat species.

██████ – Invited to speak - LEPO – pine roundels should be surveyed and buffered more. Added that they were originally positioned to be seen from Stobo house – part of designed landscape.

██████ – Raised impact of peat loss – 50cm for forestry. Impressed that 2ha of 30cm peat contains more peat than 1ha of 50cm peat.

██████ agreed to share peat guidance from FR with ██████ and ██████

██████ – Interested to compare commercial forestry scheme 30-50 years after planted – and native schemes in long term. Cumulative impact – mitigation questions the use of this term – mitigation hierarchy – mitigation should avoid adverse effects on the environment – statement taken from SF EIA guidance in 2021. Concerned that mitigation in issues log is not technically mitigation as mitigation means prevention not limiting of loss. Does not believe that mitigation is possible on this site to an extent that is appropriate.

██████ – 2ha – Threshold on sensitive sites. Initially an EIA wasn't required and that has allowed terrible harm to be done on NSA landscape based on planting/mounding. Believes archaeology has been destroyed, and deep peat has been planted on. Nature Scot made is clear that SLQ's would cause significant impact – this was ignored by SF. Highlighted impacts on site are already happening. Believes that EIA decision should be NO – supported this by specialist reports on various issues. FOI info sent to experts to provide scoping reports – vast majority of mitigation does not avoid or prevent harm – retaining some priority habitat is not sufficient mitigation. Landscape – ██████ – produced scope of landscape – probability to cause significant adverse landscape and visual effects. Effects are arising from transformative nature of proposals. Unlikely that minor design alternations would result in mitigation. Archaeology scoping –

commissioned professional to produce scoping on scheme – serious impact on archaeological assesses – destroyed by planting – archaeological resource within the site should be fully assessed. Hydrological requirements – scoping note which lists all receptors that should be assessed – run off rates and volumes – soil erosion//silt /ground water.

asked if scoping reports mentioned can be shared. agreed – scoping report for archaeology – no regard for archaeology have been given.

– SBC – Invited to speak deals with both designated and non-designated items. Concerns – always like more acknowledgement of archaeology. SAM under remit of HES. Open space afforded to significant archaeology. LIDAR info may be helpful and there has been more up to date information. If archaeology is an EIA issue a specialist HES team will be covering the issue. 152 sites within Clyde survey, 1 historic designed landscape.

– refers to original screening – SF said that archaeology has confirmed that no significant impact on so does SBC change their stance from their initial consultation response. confirmed this.

– CONFOR – climate change net zero – 2050 target in place to avoid tipping point for climate change. Evidence available is that fast growing conifers lock up carbon – climate change committee recently increased its WC target based on other sectors not hitting targets– SOSE 1/3 Scotland's forestry industry is based in the South of Scotland – 11-12,000 jobs. Availability of timber is due to fall – schemes which provide timber are important. Nature Scot report shows– 60% increased of BL planted and 7.7% increase of conifer planted including Scots pine. Net reduction in fast growing conifers in Scotland since the year 2000.

asked if climate would be an interest to SF in screening opinion – role as a regulator to consider – will SF be interested in addressing socio/economic benefit - explained that economic is not within EIA scope.

flagged that social/population includes employment.

– SUP – Invited to speak emphasise cumulative landscape and visual impact – emphasising wider community of Tweeddale.

– Tilhill forestry – Invited to speak – Have deer management plans been considered and deer displacement? Would appreciate consultation on timber extraction route.

asked what deer population on site is like. – it was high, 100+ to begin with, heavy shooting has been in place on site.

Altarstone speaker – concern about deer fencing vandalization – concerns about deer impact on their site.

– **RPID** – Woodland Expansion Advisory Group. Keen to know how over spraying will be dealt with and how EIA's work in general. Here to observe process mainly. No comments on the scheme.

–) – Has seen improvement in biodiversity on her ownership since removal of sheep 2 years ago – no formal surveys been completed to evidence. still has 5 ha remaining to plant this season. Concerns over limited variety of BL trees that are legally allowed to be planted in grants. responded that SF resilience route has been published recently which works towards improvements.

– Restore Nature – note taking for colleagues. No comments.

██████████ – how can we be assured that SF are competent to carry out these EIA opinions. – internal experts – ecologist, landscape expert, statutory consultees. Independent consultants will be used for more complex issues. Discussed duty of civil servants to be impartial.

Local resident – Damage done by herbicide – how will that be addressed – ██████████ followed up and said that impact will be addressed within EIA report. SF will either approve, refuse or approve with conditions.

██████████ **from RSPB** asked for map of work completed so far. Asked to request information about Ladyurd. Request SF to share information of this scheme

██████████ - **Nature Scot** – Reminded the applicant may need to obtain licenses and they should be requested if relevant.

██████████ - How to deal with impact of consequence – wants to confirm difference in use of herbicide or heather – ██████████ affirmed.

██████████ – Stantec to produce EIA. Constructive meeting, they will be preparing EIA statement. Normal to include health/socio/economic within final report. LVIA expected to produced. Work in transparent way. Introduced ██████████ – landscape, visual, hydrology, ecology, deep peat, cultural heritage. Climate change/human health/cumulative impact. Need to clarify what should be scoped out of EIA during scoping report.

██████████ – thanked people for coming – Confident in what we can deliver something Stobo and community will be proud of. Intends to impact carbon capture. Clarifying not selling carbon credit scheme. Offers people to get in touch.

██████████ - 35 days to prepare scoping opinion – wants to agree timescale to provide scoping report and agree timescale of comments to be given.

██████████ **addressed** woodland creation time commitments – minister guidance – legal requirement for 35 days. Policy position/legal position. Requested that SF give parties 2 weeks to reply. Draft scoping opinion – 2 weeks for comments – then updated draft based on comments.

Outline of proposals by applicant

Applicant talked through initial concept of proposal. Pre survey concept discussed. Applicant showed very first edition of species map – due diligence began – engaged with CC, stat bodies, survey and assessment – extended phase 1, breeding bird, protected species survey, peat survey. Biggest issues – NSA, black grouse, JBW.

Brought through 12 drafts before final plan was developed. Explained details of proposals in number e.g. length of tracks and fences. Applicant then showed species map that was approved and exactly what has been planted on site so far.

██████████ asked where road was on map – applicant explained. Clarified main issues are NSA and spraying impact on landscape and ecology and track issues.

Applicant explained exactly what proportion of site has already been planted and mounded. Applicant confirmed all surveys will be uploaded to Stobo website in coming days.

Listed recommission surveys – Black Grouse, Phase 1 NVC, Breeding Bird survey, Protected Species survey, Cumulative Impact survey. Explained that CIEEM recommended 3 years is a lifespan of a survey. ██████████ asked applicant to share summary of Black Grouse survey – 1.5km lek observations for Black Grouse.

Someone asked – will same ecologists use same ecologists as last time – agent confirmed yes same company but different people.

██████████ asked if anyone has issue with scope of survey work that they could raise it now. ██████████ agreed and it was discussed that specs of surveys would be shared by agent to give people chance to comment.

██████████ acknowledges climate change but do not ignore wider biodiversity considerations alongside.

██████████, would ██████████ consider sale of the site to the Wild Heart project, native project – ██████████ replied that a conversation would be had ██████████.

Comments in Absentia

To be put on website comments from Scottish Water, SBC access and HES to be circulated.

Conclusions

██████████ explained how the process will run, scoping agreement, scoping report, EIA production and formal consultation period where comments will be considered. SF will then decide whether to approve, refuse or approve with conditions to the project. Helpful to have consultation deadline to provide deadline for interested parties.

Expectations for surveys – Surveys to be completed by late summer – Autumn.

Local Resident – can someone guarantee no work will be carried out in the meantime?

██████████ confirmed no work will be carried out due to enforcement notice, but ongoing court proceedings cannot be discussed.

██████████ – explained that the applicant was currently seeking permission to carry out the maintenance work in the form of weeding and beating up that was needed to protect the life of the trees already in the ground – the work would be unintrusive and would not involve the use of herbicide – if it is authorised then it would only be this necessary maintenance work that would be carried out pending the outcome of the EIA process.

██████████ asked for ideas on the best way of updating people regarding the proceedings.

██████████ - Page for EIA projects that shows publications. Headline given. ██████████ addressed that IT systems are to be improved so we can demonstrate transparency within schemes. Moving towards planning portal type system to share information for schemes.

██████████ ██████████ – confirmed that meantime the applicant’s website would be used for the purpose of publishing updates on the EIA process

██████████ Nature Scot – Would like to discuss with EIA consultants exactly the scope of the LVIA – scoping conversation to be had. Specific technical details to be addressed.

██████████ then closed the meeting having thanked the participants for their respective contributions.

List of actions to follow Scoping Meeting

- Sharing of reports from [REDACTED] to interested parties
- Uploading of comments in absentia, along with reports submitted for the meeting alongside meeting minutes.
- Applicant to prepare minutes and send to Scottish Forestry for approval before sharing with the wider group.
- Applicant to draft scoping report when prepared
- Scope the potential for the involvement of local forest school in the process.