



Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion Request Form

Please complete this form to find out if you need consent from Scottish Forestry, under the **Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017**, to carry out your proposed forestry project. Please refer to Schedule 2 Selection Criteria for Screening Forestry Projects under [Applying for an opinion](#). If you are not sure about what information to include on this form please contact your [local Conservancy office](#).

Proposed Work							
Please put a cross in the box to indicate the type of work you are proposing to carry out. Give the area in hectares and where appropriate the percentage of conifers and broadleaves							
Proposed Work	select	Area in hectares	% Conifer	% Broad-leaves	Proposed work	select	Area in hectares
Afforestation	☐				Forest roads	☒	1.82
Deforestation	☐				Forest quarry	☒	0.5
Location of work		Rhu, Argyll and Bute					

Description of Forestry Project and Location
Provide details of the forestry project (size, design, use of natural resources such as soil, and the cumulative effect if relevant). Please attach map(s) showing the boundary of the proposed work and other known details. The proposed new forest road is located within both Highlandman & Torr Woodland and Letrault & Stuckenduff Woodland Creation, located 1.5 km north of the village of Rhu. The woodland is accessed from Rhu via Station Road, passing Torr Farm, and onto the existing forest road network. The proposal is to create 360 m (0.2 ha) of new road to allow woodland creation operations at Letrault & Stuckenduff (284 ha), and timber harvesting and extraction within Highlandman & Torr (281 ha). The new road will adjoin the existing road network within Highlandman & Torr, which is currently in very good condition, and a turning area will be created at the end, made to FC specification (min. 11 m radius). It will have an average width of 5.5m to create a minimum running surface of 3.4 m. Stone for the base will be won on site from the existing borrow pit, located at NS 277 854. Should additional borrow pits be required, these will be small (0.1-0.3 ha) and positioned within 50 m of the centre of the road line marked on the map. Capping stone (MOT Type 1) will be bought in from a nearby roadstone quarry. An additional 2,950 m (1.62 ha) of road will be created as a formation only to enable access by ATV and 4WD vehicles to the rest of Letrault & Stuckenduff for woodland creation and maintenance operations. This road will be formed to full FC specification with turning radii, formation width, topside ditches regularly culverted under the formation. This formation will be topped with base stone where required, which will be won on site, as described above. The concept is to provide access for establishment and maintenance of the woodland, without the larger cost of stoning and capping roads which will not be used for timber extraction until first thinning in the early 2040s.

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The site as a whole is sloping from 70 m to 350 m a.s.l, and is highly visible in the landscape from Rhu, Helensburgh and the Rosneath peninsula. Current vegetation is dominated by Sitka spruce within Highlandman & Torr (P year 1980) with the proposed roadline running through a ride, and semi-improved grassland, heath and bracken in the woodland creation area.

Borrow pits will be reinstated, or at least landscaped, using material excavated through road cutting and from the turf, topsoil and subsoil during uncovering the borrow pit. Where possible, small borrow pits will be incorporated into the road to create the track itself, passing places or turning circles. This will be carried out at the same time as repairs or within two years of excavation.

Both design and specification will follow guidance from the Timber Transport Forum, Forestry Commission Road Specification and SNH Constructed Tracks in the Uplands. Care will be taken as to the position of the road to minimise the impact on the local landscape. The width of the road from ditch to ditch will be a maximum of 13m of flat areas with two ditches; 8.75m on cross slopes with only a top-side ditch. On flat ground the road width will be, from outside edge to outside edge, a 2m wide ditch, a 2.25m buffer, a 5.5m layer of larger crushed aggregate with a narrower 3.4m width of finer crushed stone to form a wearing surface, a 2.25m buffer, and a final 2m wide ditch. A typical cross section of a forest road with specific widths has been submitted as part of the SOR. During forestry operations, all relevant legislation will be adhered to protect both the species present and the environment.

As per The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (v7.4), the installation of 6 large diameter culverts to cross the burns leading out onto the hillside have been registered with SEPA (CAR/R/5004067). Ongoing monitoring of the property, roads and silt traps, will be carried out as part of routine maintenance, i.e. inspecting and clearing silt traps etc. where/when required.

Rhu and Shandon Community Council have been contacted (29th June 2022 and subsequent correspondence by email throughout 2022 to summer 2023) to inform them of plans to import c. 53 lorry loads of stone into the forest in winter August 2023 using the access at Pier Road and Station Road, Rhu. It has been agreed with SF that this stone will be imported under the strictures of the existing TTMP.

SWL have engaged with R&SCC to keep them abreast of plans throughout 2022 and 2023; this engagement will continue before and during the construction of the road and formation spurs.

An Application for Prior Notification (21/02614/PNWAY) was received by Argyll and Bute Council on 08/12/21 and as no determination was issued by 5th January 'the proposal can proceed in accordance with the details submitted in your application.' SWL have tried to contact A&BC to ask if more detail is required but have not yet received a response (as at 23 Aug 23).

Provide details on the existing land use and the environmental sensitivity of the area that is likely to be affected by the forestry project.

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Current land use is forestry within Highlandman & Torr where felling and restocking operations conforms to the approved forest plan (case no. 4891982).

Letrault & Stuckenduff is currently used as rough grazing land, however, there will be a change in land use to forestry on commencement of woodland creation operations, as per approved application 21FGS62925-001.

There are no statutory designated sites within the boundary or surrounding area. Two non-statutory designated sites, Aldownick Glen and Highlandman's Wood (Local Nature Conservation Areas), lie near to the scheme, with the road running accros several tributaries that form the Aldwonick Burn. These small watercourses will be crossed by large culverts and their integrity protected by adherence to Forest and Water Guidelines.

The course of the proposed road is initially on a wide grassy ride between two commercial forestry compartments; once it crosses the border between Highlandman's Wood and Letrault farm it traverses a mosaic habitat of grassland, boggier areas dominated by Juncus vegetation and heathery knolls.

Surrounding land use is dominated by rough grazing land, semi-improved grassland and open hill. The West Highland railway line runs along the lower boundary of the site.

Soils across the site are classified as a mixture of brown earths, peaty gleys, peaty gleyed podzols and peat. The highest parts of the site are considered Class 1 peatland, with Class 2 peatland extending down to around 220m a.s.l. Areas of deep peat (>50cm) have been identified and mapped.

Description of Likely Significant Effects

Provide details on any likely significant effects that the project will have on the environment (resulting from the project itself or the use of natural resources) and the extent of the information available to assist you with this assessment.

Population

The local residents, represented by Rhu and Shandon Community Council, will see an increase in road traffic as stone and machinery is brought onto the site.

As proudction of timber from the new woodland creation comes on stream, there will be an increase to timber volume being hauled out of the forest on the existing access. The woodland creation consisits of roughly 150ha of productive timber expected to grow at YC16, so a crude estimate of 72,000t of timber seems reasonable. This would be felled in four 5-year phases of 18,000t each, which would be added to the existing volume being hauled out of the neighbouring Highlandman's Wood.

Cultural Heritage

There are 2 known archaeological features close to the proposed road line: three small possible cairns and a small possible circular earthen bank feature. Damage to these features may occur.

Soil

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Soils across the area are a mixture of brown earths, peaty gleys, peaty gleyed podzols and peat. The roadline crosses through areas considered to be Class 2 peat. Erosion and diffuse pollution could occur during roading works.

Biodiversity

There are no records of European Protected Species on site. Three black grouse lekking sites are present within Letrault. The local community report the presence of Otters in Aldwonwick Glen, whose presence could be negatively impacted by road building operations, especially those crossing watercourses.

The road crosses areas of 'Highly Dependent' and 'Highly Dependent, mosaic' Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs) and could negatively impact groundwater flow within these habitats and disrupt flow to those below the roadline.

Landscape

The site is sloping and highly visible in the landscape from surrounding settlements and from the Rosneath peninsula.

Water

There are several small watercourses running through the site, feeding into the Aldownick Burn and Gare Loch. There is a risk of diffuse pollution from roading work and chemical pollution from fuel storage and fuel spillage. There are no known private water supplies on or close to the boundary of the site. A chain of three reservoirs lies downstream of the proposed burn crossings; these are legacies of an old scheme that supplied Row/Rhu with water. The scheme was made redundant in 1967 by the connection of the town to the supply from Loch Sloy and the reservoirs are now disused.

Access

There are high levels of public use along the existing internal forest road network and footpaths within Highlandman & Torr. There is currently little or no public usage within Letrault & Stuckenduff. Extending the road network is highly likely to encourage public usage of Letrault & Stuckenduff.

Include details of any consultees or stakeholders that you have contacted in order to make this assessment. Please include any relevant correspondence you have received from them.

Redacted

Mitigation of Likely Significant Effects

If you believe there are likely significant effects that the project will have on the environment, provide information on the opportunities you have taken to mitigate these effects.

Population

All movement of plant and stone onto and from the site will be undertaken in line with the existing TTMP which was agreed with the community council before the previous phase of harvesting from Highlandman's Wood in 2018.

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The increased volume of timber being hauled on Pier Road/Station road in the future will be managed under a TTMP to be agreed with key stakeholders including R&SCC.

Cultural Heritage

Known archaeological sites will be buffered by minimum 5 m open ground, as well as being marked out during roading works to ensure they are protected. All machine operators will be walked along the roadline and have the areas of archaeological interest and their marked buffers pointed out to them. SWL Guidance 5.03 Planning Work on or near archaeological or historic sites' has been supplied to SF as part of this SOR and will be followed throughout the roading operation. Machine operators will use georeferenced maps which will display all site constraints including archaeology. If any unrecorded features are discovered, they will be protected and reported to the appropriate authority. The roadline will breach a stone dyke in the vicinity of NS 2728 8598; a qualified archaeologist will be engaged to agree the precise crossing point and to supervise the operation on the ground.

Soil

All operations will adhere to UKFS Forest and Water Guidelines and follow best practice to avoid diffuse pollution and minimise the risk of erosion. The roadline has been chosen to avoid areas of deep peat as far as possible, while maintaining the woodland creation objectives of maximising timber production.

There is a section of approx. 200m of road where peat may have to be crossed (survey points on this section returned peat depth >50cm). This section (between NS 2731 8656 and NS 2721 8671) will be floated on a geogrid laid directly onto the surface vegetation, with aggregate material placed on top of this. A separation layer geotextile may be placed on top of this aggregate before capping to prevent the ingress of fines into the the geogrid/aggregate layer, which will preserve its structural integrity. This method will preserve the peat under the road in its anaerobic state and therefore retain its sequestered carbon. The SNH/FCS Report 'Floating Roads on Peat' is a useful source of information on this topic, and the contractor engaged for the work has experience of working on peaty ground. A method statement for Floating Roads will be distributed to contractors and is supplied to SF as part of this submission.

Biodiversity

The proposed roadline does not cross the black grouse lekking sites, which have in any case been designed out of the scheme following consultation with RSPB at the design stage. Work will be undertaken outside the breeding season.

A walkover survey will be carried out prior to commencement of roading works to identify presence of European Protected Species. If identified, all sightings will be recorded, further surveys may be required to prevent disturbance and mitigation measures will be agreed.

In the case of otters, the surveyors are to read and survey in accordance with SWL Guide 5.04 Planning Work near Otters, supplied to SF as part of this submission. If any sign is noted during pre-operational surveys specialist advice will be sought and works paused until a resolution is reached and agreed with SF.

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The roadline was selected to enable future timber haulage from the productive areas of the woodland to take place efficiently. As a result, the road is constrained by maximum gradients negotiable by lorries and as a result of this, the road crosses several GWDTEs. All areas of identified GWDTE habitat will be crossed in accordance with CONFOR's 'Practice Guide of Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems'. Excavations greater than 50cm will be avoided and where possible, the coarse aggregate sub base will be laid directly onto the vegetation without disturbance (as per the Peat Guidance above). Where this is not possible, a series of culvert pipes will be laid at regular intervals under the road to enable groundwater to flow downslope under the road without undue disturbance.

The roadline crosses the Aldownick Glen LNCS. The associated series of photographs supplied to SF as part of this submission show the line of the road first through Highlandman wood (photos 1-7) then out onto the open moor on Letrault and Stuckenduff land (photo 8). The roadline in the existing wood runs along an existing forest ride, crossing three burns and associated open ground. Areas of bracken, heather and juncus rush are crossed. On the open hillside a mosaic pattern of habitats including drier heathy ridges and lower-lying wetter terrain are crossed before the formal road terminates at a turning circle beyond the LCNS.

Landscape

The proposed new road within Highlandman and Torr will have minimal visual impact due to the mature spruce that screens it from the surrounding area. Cpt 20 of Highlandman & Torr provides most of the screening function from Roseneath and will not be felled until 2030 at the earliest (Phase 4 of current LTFP). A small area of Cpt 20 will be felled in the next two years (anticipated winter 2023/24) by which time the batters and ditches will have had a chance to re-vegetate. At this point, where the roadline leaves Highlandman & Torr and crosses into the new woodland creation on Letrault Farm, it sits well back from the steeper ground and visibility from Roseneath is difficult.

Within Letrault & Stuckenduff the road line will be designed to minimise its visual impact in the landscape by following SNH Constructed Tracks in the Uplands guidance. Its visibility will reduce over time as the young trees grow up around it. Local stone will be used to closely match the current stone used for the forest road in Highlandman & Torr.

The initial work will take place Summer 2023, after which traffic on the roads will reduce and the batters and ditches are expected to 'green over' and merge into the landscape. The upper half of the road is above the convex slope and is not visible from sea level. In 5-10 years time the woodland will have grown to 2m or more and at this point will obscure almost all of the roadlines.

The steepest slope that the road traverses is 15 degrees. Forming this road using 'cut and fill' will result in a height gain of 2m from the bottom of the topside ditch to the top lip of the batter. Given the fine-grained shist-derived soils on site, the batters will be angled at no greater than 1 in 2 (50%), in accordance with the Forestry Commission Road Specification. At the point described above the batter will extend 4 linear metres into the hillside to achieve the necessary 2m vertical rise. This relatively gentle angle will prevent scouring of the soils by water running off above the batter and will encourage rapid revegetation on these fertile and south facing slopes.

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If the batters do not revegetate within the first two years any bare areas will be assessed for potential hydroseeding- this will take place in spring 2025 if necessary.

Due to the convex nature of the site topography, the proposed formation will not be visible from Helensburgh or Rhu. The lower 'spurs' of the formation will be visible from the Roseneath peninsula until they too re-vegetate and are obscured by the growth of the trees. The spurs are to be retained as formations in perpetuity, to be upgraded and stoned in the future (early 2040s) to facilitate extraction of thinnings then the main clearfell timber. Permission for this upgrade will be sought closer to the time as an Application for Prior Notification from Argyll and Bute Council.

The residents of Roseneath and Clynder will be most visually impacted, but the road has been designed and will be constructed to minimise this visual impact as far as possible. Recent large clearfell forestry operations in neighbouring Highlandman's Wood and on the far (i.e Clynder) side of the Gare Loch give some wider context to this road construction as part of a working rural landscape.

Water

All operations will adhere to UKFS Forest and Water guidelines. The culverting of the six burns to take the main road onto the hillside has been registered with SEPA (CAR/R/5004067). These culverts will measure 12m x 900mm to cope with high rainfall events and prevent the overlying road being washed away. The cuverts are to be laid directly onto the stream bed and then built up with larger rocks giving way to smaller aggregates. Six smaller culverts will be required on the lower 'spurs' and will be installed in accordance with F&WGs and SEPA GBRs.

Silt traps will be installed on the approach to areas deemed sensitive i.e. as the roadline nears watercourses. There traps will be monitored by machine operators during the construction phase (minimum twice a week) and this frequency will increase during and after high rainfall events. Once the construction is complete, ground preparation contractors, planter and forest managers will monitor and record the condition of the traps each time they pass. Monitoring to take place in accordance with SWL Guid 6.04 Monitoring Water Quality, supplied to SF. In the event of a chemical or diffuse pollution incident, all work will cease and the incident will be reported to SEPA, Scottish Water and Scottish Forestry.

Access

Non-motorised public access will be permitted in accordance with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. This is likely to increase significantly on completion of planting and roading operations.

Sensitive Areas

Please indicate if any of the proposed forestry project is within a sensitive area. Choose the sensitive area from the drop down below and give the area of the proposal within it.

Sensitive Area	Area
Deep peat soil	0.022

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Select...	
Select...	
Select...	
Select...	

Property Details			
Property Name:	Highlandman & Torr		
Business Reference Number:	163 948	Main Location Code:	75/314/0030
Grid Reference: (e.g. NH 234 567)	NS 279 844	Nearest town or locality:	Rhu
Local Authority:	Argyll and Bute		

Owner's Details			
Title:		Forename:	
Surname:			
Organisation:	Redacted	Position:	Owner
Primary Contact Number:	Redacted	Alternative Contact Number:	
Email:			
Address:	Redacted		
Postcode:	Redacted	Country:	UK
Is this the correspondence address?	No		

Agent's Details			
Title:	Redacted	Forename:	Redacted
Surname:	Redacted		
Organisation:	Scottish Woodlands Ltd.	Position:	Forest Manager
Primary Contact Number:		Alternative Contact Number:	
Email:			
Address:			
Postcode:		Country:	
Is this the correspondence address?	Yes		

Office Use Only	
GLS Ref number:	