



Scottish
Forestry
Coilltearachd
na h-Alba

Perth & Argyll Conservancy
Upper Battleby
Redgorton
Perth
PH1 3EN

Email: panda.cons@forestry.gov.scot

Tel: 0300 067 6005

www.forestry.gov.scot

Conservator: Matt Young

VIA EMAIL

Mike Page
Ruthvenfield Road
Inveralmond Industrial Estate
Perth
PH1 3EE

Our Reference – Highlandman and Letrault

20 February 2025

Dear Mr Page,

The Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

I refer to your application at Highlandman and Letrault by Rhu, Helensburgh for our Screening Opinion as to whether the work you are proposing (3.43 hectares of forest roads) is an EIA project and will require EIA consent.

We are required to provide a Screening Opinion under the above Regulations as to whether the work you are proposing is an EIA project and will require EIA consent.

Background

A further, revised Screening Opinion Request (SOR) was received by Scottish Forestry on 22 January 2025 and included the following attachments:

- L&S EIA SOR Roads/Tracks on GWDTE – Map 1 (Guidance) - 22 Jan 25
- L&S EIA SOR Roads/Tracks on GWDTE – Map 2 (Site specific) - 22 Jan 25
- L&S EIA SOR Roads/Tracks on deep peat – Map 3 - 22 Jan 25
- L&S EIA SOR Roads/Tracks on archaeology – Map 4 - 22 Jan 25
- L&S EIA SOR Access and culverts – Map 5 - 22 Jan 25
- Typical road section forest road diagram undated
- 3.06 Roding Operations - Floating Road (Scottish Woodlands protocol)

The proposal relates to 3.43 hectares of forest roads made up of 1.33 hectares of full specification forest road (1019m in length and 13.5m wide) and 2.10 hectares of ATV/4x4 track (2621m in length and 8m wide).

Scottish Forestry is the Scottish Government agency responsible for forestry policy, support and regulation

S e Coilltearachd na h-Alba a' bhuidheann-ghnìomha aig Riaghaltas
na h-Alba a tha an urra ri poileasaidh, taic agus riaghladh do choilltearachd



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

However, the applicant has already built the full length (1.33 hectares) of full specification forest road and 0.1 hectares (120m) of ATV/4x4 track. Map 5 – Access and culverts shows the roads and track already built and the tracks yet to be built.

The operations already carried out were the subject of two EIA Enforcement Notices:

- SFEIAN03 – EIA Enforcement Notice, served on 10 November 2023 requiring the applicant to stop all work and *"Within 90 days, provide professional archaeological advice to Scottish Forestry, which sets out how archaeological features such as drystone and earthen dykes will be protected and adequately mitigated during the forest road construction works."*
- SFEIAN04 - EIA Enforcement Notice, served on 9 February 2024 requiring the applicant to stop all work, *"prepare a plan of works to remediate the failures in the works previously carried out to ensure that diffuse pollution will not occur on either part of the site identified above, and submit the plan to Scottish Forestry Perth & Argyll Conservancy for approval" and "Once the plan of works is approved by Scottish Forestry; by 28 March 2024, to carry out the works to the specification and timeframes within the approved plan."*

The applicant has fully complied with both enforcement notices, which deal with the EIA aspects of those works and Scottish Forestry is satisfied that the forest road and the short section of ATV/4x4 track has now been constructed to the standards set out in the Timber Transport Forum's guidance on *"The design and use of the structural pavement of unsealed roads - Revised 2020"* and NatureScot's guidance on *"Constructed tracks in the Scottish Uplands - Revised 2013"*.

<https://timbertransportforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/The-design-and-use-of-the-structural-pavement-of-unsealed-roads-Revised-2020.pdf>

<https://timbertransportforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SNH-Publication-2013-Constructed-Tracks-in-the-Scottish-Uplands.pdf>

In the revised SOR, the applicant includes those works within the request. However, an EIA Screening Opinion can only deal with works yet to be carried out and therefore the works we approve in this Opinion relate only to the 2.00 hectares of ATV/4x4 track yet to be built. As set out above, we are satisfied that the road and track building operations carried out to date are now to a sufficient standard and we anticipate no future likely significant effects resulting from these construction works.

We provide information on the road and track already constructed in this screening opinion as context.

Full specification forest road

The forest road built sits within the footprint of the route originally proposed as forest road in previous iterations of this screening opinion request and in the woodland creation screening opinion for Letrault and Stuckenduff woodland creation.

The detailed specification of the forest road already built is contained within the revised SOR and a sketch representation can be viewed in the document *Typical road section diagram* contained within that request.

Approximately half of the road has been built within Highlandman's Wood and the other half within the adjacent new woodland creation site at Letrault Stuckenduff. As part of that

construction, a T shaped turning point was created within Highlandman's Wood near the boundary with Letrault Stuckenduff.

Six large diameter culverts put in place during the forest road construction have been registered with SEPA (CAR/R/5004067) as per The Water Environment (controlled activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011.

As required, the applicant submitted a Prior Notification to Argyll & Bute Council on 8 December 2021 (21/02614/PNWAY). No determination was issued by the council or further information sought by them from the applicant within the regulatory 28 day period (or since).

ATV/4x4 track specification

The applicant will create 2.00 hectares of ATV track as shown in Map 5 – Access and culverts EIA SOR. The ATV/4x4 tracks proposed, largely sit within the footprint proposed in previous iterations of the SOR for the roads and tracks and the SOR for the woodland creation itself but changes have been made to the location of parts of the tracks on the front face of the proposal to minimise impacts on *Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs)*. This is more fully considered below.

As set out above, a short section of ATV/4x4 track has already been created and was dealt with through the second enforcement notice.

The overall ATV track length subject to screening is 2,521m (2.00 hectares). The purpose of the track is for access to the woodland creation site for establishment and maintenance.

The specification for the track is set out in the SOR.

Three large culverts are identified for installation along the ATV track and will be installed in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard (Forests and Water) and the General Binding Rules. These will be registered with SEPA prior to work commencing.

The topside drains will be regularly culverted underneath the track to safely place water on the downside from the track and silt traps will be installed at areas which are identified as sensitive such as on the approach to watercourses.

Borrow pit specification

Stone for the construction of the base of the forest road already built was won from the existing borrow pit within Highlandman's wood at NS 277 854 with capping stone brought in from an offsite quarry.

Stone for the creation of the ATV tracks will be taken from the existing borrow pit or from additional, small borrow pits. If required, these will be around 0.1 hectares and sited within 50m of the centre of the mapped roadline. Any such pits will not create a combined impact of more than 1 hectare over a five year period.

The creation of borrow pits below the one hectare threshold do not require the approval of Scottish Forestry. If the applicant wishes to create further borrow pits beyond that threshold then they should submit a SOR to Scottish Forestry.

EIA considerations

Population

Timber haulage and machinery movement

There will be a small number of low-loader movements associated with bringing machinery onto site to build the ATV/4x4 tracks. The applicant should notify the community council in advance of operations or lorry movements commencing. The applicant has no plans to bring further loads of road stone onto site from external quarries.

In the longer term, it is the applicant's intention to convert the ATV/4x4 track to a forest road specification to allow timber from thinning and harvesting to be easily removed from site. However, that construction work would be the subject of a SOR at that point in the future (in the early 2040s) and is not considered here.

In terms of future timber volumes harvested and the consequent timber transport, it is estimated that the Letrault and Stuckenduff woodland creation would generate around an additional 53,000 tonnes of timber, commencing in 2058 and spread over a 20 year period. A spreadsheet produced by the applicant for the woodland creation SOR (and provided alongside this screening opinion) sets out the likely timber volumes for the existing forest and the new woodland over time. This shows that although additional tonnage is being transported, the total volume from both the existing and new woodlands can still be accommodated within the terms of the existing Timber Transport Management Plan (TTMP) "*Highlandman's Wood (Rhu to the Dumbarton Arrochar (A814) Gareloch Road)*".

Of course, the timber volumes transported well into the future will be subject to the timber transport management plan agreed at that time.

There were some exploratory discussions on the potential for an alternative timber haul route that would avoid timber traffic going through Rhu but these did not bear fruit. However, this issue should be looked at again as part of the renewal of the forest plan for the adjacent Highlandman & Torr long term forest plan in 2026, and in further plan renewals, and should be considered when a long term forest plan comes forward for Letrault & Stuckenduff.

We are satisfied that there will be no likely significant effect from track construction and future timber transport.

Access and recreation

There is good use of the existing internal road network and footpaths found within Highlandman and Torr by the general public. Currently there is low level public usage within the Letrault and Stuckenduff woodland creation area; the extension of the road and the creation of new tracks is highly likely to encourage greater public usage of the area, providing some additional public benefit.

Operational notices and signage will be installed prior to, and remain in place during, operational works to ensure those taking access in the area are aware of safety considerations.

We are satisfied that there is no likely significant effect arising from Access and recreation.

Cultural Heritage

Prior to commencing operational works, the applicant had not comprehensively identified, recorded or protected the archaeological features on the woodland creation site, including on the forest road footprint. Damage was caused by the applicant to a number of archaeological features by ground preparation operations.

As a result of the second Enforcement Notice, further archaeological survey has been carried out, professional advice given as to appropriate protection for the archaeological features, and remedial works carried out to minimise the impact of damage caused by operational works. This additional survey and remedial work has now been carried out to the satisfaction of Scottish Forestry.

For the proposed ATV/4x4 track, all archaeological features adjacent to the tracks or borrow pits will be buffered as professionally advised and marked out on the ground.

For the construction of the ATV/4x4 track, the on-site operatives will also use georeferenced maps, which include the archaeology and other site constraints and which will serve as a further safeguard. The Scottish Woodlands internal guidance note 'Quest Guide 5.03 Planning Work on or Near Archaeological or Historic Sites' must be followed.

The ATV/4x4 track proposals will breach stone dykes at NS 27280 85995 and NS 27099 85716; these points, where the proposal will cross the features, have been inspected by a qualified archaeologist and have been deemed appropriate due to not having a significant effect on the known cultural heritage resource. A written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), dated 2023 and produced by Guard Archaeology outlines how the breach of the dyke will be supervised with the purpose of establishing the presence, extent and nature of any significant archaeological remains. This WSI is to be followed during the construction of the tracks at these crossing points where the dykes will be breached.

If any unrecorded features are discovered they will be protected and reported to the appropriate authority.

Following the above, we are satisfied that any likely significant effects on cultural heritage have been mitigated.

Soil

Peat

On site, soils have been recorded to be brown earths, peaty gleys, peaty gleyed podzols and peat. Deep peat has been identified and mapped as set out in the &S EIA SOR Roads/Tracks on deep peat – Map 3 - 22 Jan 25. An approximate 200m of the track roadline (NS 2731 8656 and NS 2721 8671 crosses deep peat (>50cm depth) and this has the potential to cause erosion of the soil and diffuse pollution. On this section, the ATV/4x4 track will be floated on the peat following the methodology set out in the SOR to aid the preservation of the peat under the road in an anaerobic state and, as such, minimise carbon loss.

Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems

The proposed ATV/4x4 track will cross areas of GWDTEs. Following discussions with Scottish Forestry, the applicant consulted their independent botanical surveyor Andy McMullen, who has extensive experience with GWDTEs, to review the detailed location of the proposed ATV/4x4 tracks in the context of the groundwater dependant habitats on site. The applicant has revised the detailed location of the tracks to minimise the impact on GWDTEs, following the advice of

Andy McMullen. This further revised Screening Opinion Request is for this revised track layout. Maps 1 and 2 highlight where the proposed tracks cross the GWDTEs.

Where the tracks do cross areas of GWDTEs, the tracks will be constructed in accordance with CONFOR's 'Practice Guide of Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems'.

<https://www.confor.org.uk/media/246950/practice-guide-on-ground-water-dependent-terrestrial-ecosystems.pdf>

This guidance was a joint collaboration between the forestry sector, SEPA and Scottish Forestry.

Excavations of greater than 50cm will be avoided. Where possible the coarse aggregate sub base will be laid directly on to the vegetation without disturbance. 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 without undue disturbance.

As a result of this proposed approach re peat and the further review of the track layout re GWDTEs, any likely significant effects on soil have been mitigated.

Biodiversity

European Protected Species

No European Protected Species have been identified on the site. Otters have been identified in Aldonwick Glen as highlighted by the local community. A walk over survey of the site will be carried out prior to commencement of the further works to identify the presence of any European protected species in the area. If any European Protected Species are identified, further surveys may be required or mitigation put in place for their protection.

Black Grouse and other breeding birds

The applicant is aware of the range of breeding birds found on site and others using the site for foraging. Species include black grouse, hen harrier, merlin and short eared owl. The applicant has committed to not carrying out the proposed ATV/4x4 track construction during the bird breeding season.

Landscape

Although not visible from Helensburgh or Rhu, much of the woodland creation area is visible from the Rosneath peninsula. The upper reaches of the ATV/4x4 track are not visible from sea level due to the convex nature of the terrain. The lower ATV/4x4 tracks on the front face of the forest are the most visible proportion of the proposal.

A landscape appraisal was carried out for the woodland creation EIA screening and Scottish Forestry found that the proposal would not have a significant effect on the landscape, following an iterative process, which saw significant changes to the design and use of species.

Whilst the tracks on the front face of the forest will initially be visible, their footprint is relatively small and the ground around them has already been planted.

If the batters created during the construction of the tracks do not revegetate within the first two years, hydro-seeding, or a similar technique, will be employed on any visible section. Their

visibility will be partially mitigated when the batters revegetate and then will be obscured in 5-10 years by the surrounding growth of the newly planted trees.

The impact of the new tracks will be small, at a distance, and only for a relatively short time period whilst the track batters revegetate and the trees grow up around them. As such there is no likely significant effect on the landscape.

Water

There are several small watercourses across the site which feed into the Aldonwick Burn and Gare Loch. There is a risk of diffuse pollution from construction works as well as fuel storage and spillage from the machines. There are no known private water supplies on or close to the boundary of the site. A chain of three reservoirs lie downstream from proposed burn crossings but these reservoirs are now disused.

Remedial work on the new forest road and the upgraded farm track was carried out following the second Enforcement Notice to protect the relevant watercourses.

All operations for the ATV/4x4 track will adhere to the UK Forestry Standard (Forests and Water).

Three larger (1200mm) and numerous smaller culverts will be installed during the construction of the ATV/4x4 tracks. The larger culverts will be registered with SEPA as required. Silt traps will be installed at areas which are identified as sensitive such as on the approach to watercourses.

During construction operations, the drains, traps and relevant watercourses will be monitored by the machine operators and the Forest Works Manager during the construction phase as set out by the applicant in the SOR. In the event of a chemical or diffuse pollution incident, all work will cease and the incident will be reported to SEPA and Scottish Forestry.

The mitigation put in place means there is no likely significant effect on the water environment.

Conclusion

After careful consideration of this proposal, I conclude that the project (the construction of 2ha of ATV/4x4 track) will not have a significant effect on the environment and therefore consent will not be required.

Work in relation to this forestry project is expected to start within 5 years and be completed within 10 years from the date of this letter. If you have not started any of the work identified in this screening opinion within 5 years from the date of this letter but still wish to proceed with the project, then please advise us. We will screen the proposal again to decide whether your project requires EIA consent under these Regulations.

Yours sincerely



Matt Young
Conservator