8 FORESTRY

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This Chapter of the EIA Report evaluates the effects of the Proposed Development on forestry and woodland. The woodlands considered are a predominantly coniferous plantation called Netherton Woodland at Harthill in North Lanarkshire.

8.1.2 This Chapter is structured as follows:

- Legislation, policy and guidance;
- Assessment methodology and significance criteria;
- Scoping responses and consultation;
- Baseline conditions;
- Assessment of potential effects;
- Assessment of cumulative effects;
- Mitigation measures;
- Residual effects and
- Summary.

8.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP)[1]

8.2.1 In parallel with Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029[2], National Planning Framework 4[3] and Climate Change Plan: third report on proposals and policies 2018-2032 (RPP3)[4], there is a strong presumption against permanent deforestation unless it addresses other environmental concerns. In Scotland, such deforestation is dealt with under the Scottish Government's CoWRP. The guidance relating to the implementation of the policy was revised and updated in February 2019.

8.2.2 The purpose of the policy is to provide direction for decisions on woodland removal in Scotland. The policy document lays out the background to the policy, places it into the current policy and regulatory context, and discusses the principles, criteria and process for managing the policy implementation. The following paragraphs summarise the policy relative to the Proposed Development.

8.2.3 The principal aims of the policy include:

- to provide a strategic framework for appropriate woodland removal; and
- to support climate change mitigation and adaptation in Scotland.
- The guiding principles behind the policy include: There is a strong presumption in favour of protecting Scotland's woodland resources; and Woodland removal should be allowed only where it would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits. In appropriate

[1] The Scottish Government (2009) The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal. Edinburgh

[2] The Scottish Government (2019) Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029 Available at https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-forestry-strategy-20192029. Accessed on 28/10/2022

[3] The Scottish Government (2023) National Planning Framework 4. Available at https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/pages/1/ Accessed on 23/02/2023.

[4] The Scottish Government (2018) Climate Change Plan: third report on proposals and policies 2018-2032 (RPP3). Available at https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-governments-climate-change-plan-third-report-proposals-policies-2018/. Accessed on 28/10/2022

cases a proposal for compensatory planting (CP) may form part of this balance.

8.2.4 Woodland removal, without a requirement for CP, is most likely to be appropriate where it would contribute significantly to:

- enhancing priority habitats and their connectivity;
- enhancing populations of priority species;
- enhancing nationally important landscapes, designated historic environments and geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- improving conservation of water or soil resources; or
- public safety.

8.2.5 Woodland removal, with CP, is most likely to be appropriate where it would contribute significantly to:

- helping Scotland mitigate and adapt to climate change;
- enhancing sustainable economic growth or rural/community Development;
- supporting Scotland as a tourist destination;
- encouraging recreational activities and public enjoyment of the outdoor environment;
- reducing natural threats to forests or other land; or
- increasing the social, economic or environmental quality of Scotland's woodland cover.

8.2.6 The consequences of the policy are stated as:

- minimising the inappropriate loss of woodland cover in Scotland;
- enabling appropriate woodland removal to proceed with no net loss of woodland -related public benefits other than in those circumstances detailed in the policy; and
- facilitating achievement of the Scottish Government's woodland expansion ambition in a way that integrates with other policy drivers (such as increasing sustainable economic growth, tackling climate change, rural/development, renewable energy and biodiversity objectives).

8.2.7 Addressing the policy requirements can be met through changes to forest design, increasing designed open space, changing the woodland type, changing the management intensity, or completing off site compensation planting.

UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) (2017)[5].

8.2.8 The UKFS is the reference standard for sustainable forest management across the UK, and applies to all woodland, regardless of who owns or manages it.

8.2.9 The standard ensures that international agreements and conventions on areas such as sustainable forest management, climate change, biodiversity and the protection of water resources are applied in the UK.

8.2.10 The UKFS outlines the context for forestry in the UK. It sets out the approach of the UK governments to sustainable forest management by defining requirements and guidelines and providing a basis for regulation and monitoring - including national and international reporting.

[5] Forestry Commission, (2017) UK Forestry Standard The governments' approach to sustainable forestry, Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard. Accessed on: 28/10/2022

8.2.11 This document covers key different elements of sustainable forest management:

- biodiversity;
- climate change;
- historic environment;
- landscape;
- people;
- soil; and
- water.

Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018[6]

8.2.12 The Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 came into force on 1 April 2019, repealing the Forestry Act 1967. The Act made new provisions regarding Scottish Ministers' functions in relation to forestry and land management

8.2.13 Establishment of two agencies: Scottish Forestry and Forestry and Land Scotland Scottish Forestry (SF) and Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) are the two agencies that the Scottish Ministers are creating to deliver their forestry and land management functions.

8.2.14 SF is the agency with responsibility for the regulations on exemptions and dealing with felling and restocking provided a new regulatory regime to support the effective implementation of the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act

Use of Trees Cleared to Facilitate Development on Afforested Land – Joint Guidance from SEPA, SNH and FCS[7]

8.2.15 The Joint Guidance describes trees as a resource, the use of forestry material from felled trees on site and the treatment of land for ecological improvement using forestry material.

NatureScot Guidance: Bats and Onshore Wind Turbines - Survey, Assessment and Mitigation - Revised August 2021[8]

8.2.16 The Eurobats guidance recommends a 200m buffer around woodland areas. There is, however, currently no scientific evidence to support this distance in the UK and it is recommended that a distance of 50m between turbine blade tip and nearest woodland (or other key habitat features such as wetlands etc., is adequate mitigation in most, lower risk situations. Exceptionally, larger buffers may be appropriate, e.g. near major swarming and hibernation sites. The longevity of wind farms should also be taken into account and the maximum growth, or management, of woodland and other relevant habitat features considered in their planning.

North Lanarkshire Council Woodland Action Plan 2008[9]

[6] The Scottish Government (2018). Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2018/8/contents/enacted

[7] SEPA (2014) Use of Trees Cleared to Facilitate Development on Afforested Land – Joint Guidance from SEPA, SNH and FCS Available at: https://www.google.com/search?q=Use+of+Trees+Cleared+to+Facilitate+Development+on+Afforested+Land.Accesses on 28

[8] NatureScot (2021) Available at: www.nature.scot/doc/bats-and-onshore-wind-turbines-survey-assessment-and-mitigation Accessed on: 28/10/2022

[9] North Lanarkshire Council (2014) Woodland Action Plan. Available at: /www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/Biodiversity_action_plan_-_Woodland.pdf Accessed on 28/10/2022

8.2.17 Prior to the conifer plantations of the 20th century, North Lanarkshire had only 4.2% woodland cover. During the 1980's there was a large amount of coniferous planting, significantly increasing the woodland cover. The importance of native woodlands has been recognised and a subsequent increase in predominantly native planting.

The focus of the Woodland Action Plan is to provide continuity for the future following the positive changes which have resulted through the various grant schemes.

8.3 Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

Scope of Assessment

8.3.1 This section considers effects:

- on the total woodland cover both within the Site and in context to the overall woodland; and
- and the changes to the forest structure within the Site and in context to the overall woodland.

Study Area

8.3.2 Netherton Woodland is a privately owned and managed woodland which extends to 104.96 ha in total. The woodland, centred around Netherton Farm, is located near Harthill, North Lanarkshire and lies to the north of the M8 motorway and Harthill services.

8.3.3 The Study Area consists of 50.70 ha woodland within the Site.

Survey Methodology

8.3.4 A desk study survey was carried out using forestry sub compartment data provided by the forest owner/agent, publicly available web based information including, aerial imagery, Scottish Forestry Map viewer and Scottish Government open data for Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) and Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS).

8.3.5 A forest survey walkover was carried out in March 2022. The survey undertaken acts as ground truthing against the compartment maps supplied. Tree heights were estimated using a clinometer and tape. A visual assessment of tree health and vigour was undertaken.

8.3.6 Forest ground conditions and cultivation at establishment were noted along with current management activities such as drains maintenance, thinning or felling and replanting.

8.3.7 The tree height assessment, together with observations on cultivation, soil strength and waterlogging assist in predicting adjacent wind throw should felling take place.

8.3.8 Photographic records were also taken and are included in Technical Appendix 8.1

Assessment Methodology

8.3.9 The criteria for the assessment of effects on forestry are based on the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP) and the 2019

implementation guidance and the standards set out in UK Forestry Standards (UKFS).

8.3.10 In particular, the CoWRP implementation guidance for woodland removal with or without a need for CP states the following:

- There is a strong presumption against the removal of UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority woodland types including ancient, semi-natural woodland (ASNW), ancient woodlands planted with native species, long-established woodlands of plantation origin (LEPO) with significant biodiversity interest, or well-established semi-natural priority woodland types.
- There is slightly more flexibility applied to other woodlands of lower biodiversity value, including semi-natural woods established within the last 25 years or so and recently planted native woods. Also, non-native Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) with very few remnant ancient woodland features.
- Woodland removal without a requirement for compensatory planting includes; enhancing priority habitats and their connectivity, enhancing populations of priority species, enhancing nationally important landscapes historic environment and geological SSSIs, improving conservation of water resources, improving conservation of soil resources or public safety.
- Woodland removal with a need for compensatory planting includes helping Scotland mitigate and adapt to climate change.

8.3.11 UKFS is the reference standard for sustainable forest management in the UK. The standards for the planning, design and sustainable management of forests and woodlands in the UK use an approach based on internationally recognised science and best practice.

8.3.12 The elements of sustainable forest management within UKFS are:

- Forests and Biodiversity;
- Forests and Climate Change;
- Forests and Historic Environment;
- Forests and Landscape;
- Forests and People;
- Forests and Soil; and
- Forests and Water.

8.3.13 The UKFS includes guidelines associated with each of these seven elements, which in turn enable an assessment to be made as to whether the relevant requirements of the UKFS have been achieved.

Assessment Limitations

8.3.14 The forest sub compartment data is provided by the forest owner/manager. These schedules describe the position at planting regarding species and planting year. The detail in the schedules do not include yield class assessments and wind hazard class assessments. There may be some minor inconsistencies within the schedules and mapping but nothing which undermines the overall assessment and some adjustments have been made based on the available aerial imagery.

8.3.15 Forests and woodlands are subject to both human and natural influences such as fire, wind, and pests and diseases which may change the woodland structure over time.

8.4 Scoping Responses and Consultation

8.4.1 Throughout the scoping exercise, and subsequently during the ongoing EIA process, relevant organisations were contacted with regards to the Proposed Development. No responses were received regarding forestry and woodlands.

8.5 Baseline Conditions

8.5.1 Newton Woodland, the Forestry Study Area, consists of unplanted ground, coniferous plantation with broadleaved mixtures. Nearly-native woodland is present within the Site, however it is outwith the Development area. Further areas of native woodland are contained within the woodland. The woodland species are illustrated in the Forestry Baseline **Figure 8.1**.

8.5.2 The forestry compartment schedule states that the total Newton Woodland area is 104.96 ha. This was approved for planting through a Woodland Grant Scheme, WGS 3, in April 2001 and has the planting year in the same year.

8.5.3 Netherton Woodland is not at a stage where felling is planned as a matter of the forest cycle. Given the planting year of 2011 and the current growth rate this may not be until around 2040. Accordingly there is no Forest Plan approved by Scottish Forestry in place at this time.

8.5.4 The breakdown of species is presented in Table 8- and is summarised as 40.95 ha coniferous woodland, 31.42 ha broadleaved woodland and 32.59 ha of open ground.

Table 8-1: Description of woodland by area (ha)

Description	Area (ha)	Species included
Coniferous mixture	12.45	SS, HL, SP
Larch mixture	6.39	HL, SP,BI
Pine mixture	1.39	SP, BI
Sitka spruce mixture – improved	20.62	SS, HL, BI
Sitka spruce mixture – non improved	0.10	SS, HL, BI
Broadleaved mixture	18.64	CAR, BI, AH, OK, SY, NOM, HAW, ROW, BE
Native mixture	12.78	CAR, BI, AH, OK, ROW
Open Ground	32.59	
Total	**104.96**	
Abbreviations		
Ash (Fraxinus excelsior)		AH
Common Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)		CAR
Beech (Fagus sylvatica)		BE
Birch (Betula pubescens)		BI
Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna)		HAW
Norway Maple (Acer platanoides)		NOM
Oak (Quercus petraea)		OK
Rowan (Sorbus aucuparia)		ROW
Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus)		SY
Sitka spruce (Picea sitchensis)		SS
Hybrid larch (Larix eurolepsis)		HL
Scots pine (Pinus sylvestris)		SP

8.6 Assessment of Potential Effects

Construction and operational effects

8.6.1 Tree felling would be required to facilitate construction and operation of the Proposed Development. While track design generally follows forest rides of sufficient width for the required access track, some felling is required for the swept path on bends.

8.6.2 The two wind turbine locations require felling for the associated hardstanding and infrastructure. The approach, through design, would be for a keyhole approach where felling is minimised for the Proposed Development without further felling for wind resource or wind firm edges. Further tree felling is required for the environmental stand-off area in accordance with NatureScot Guidance: Bats and Onshore Wind Turbines.

8.6.3 The Proposed Development Wind Farm Felling Plan is shown in **Figure 8.2**. This illustrates the total area to be felled for access tracks and turbine layout. The total area of felling is 6.65 ha. This includes 5.58 ha coniferous crop planted in 2001 and 1.08 ha of native mixture woodland also planted in 2001 as Table 8-2 Description of felling for the Proposed Development by planting year and area (ha).

8.6.4 The tree crop is of sufficient timber size where all harvested timber will be exported off site to the wood processing industry. Therefore, there is no requirement for forestry waste management.

Table 8.2: Description of felling for the Proposed Development by planting year and area (ha)

Description	Planting year	Area ha
Coniferous plantation	2001	5.58
Native mixture	2001	1.08
Total		**6.65**

Sensitivity of Receptors

8.6.5 The sensitivity of the woodland removal for the Proposed Development is based upon the CoWRP implementation guidance as a hierarchy of importance in Table 8-3.

Table 8-3 Framework for Determining Sensitivity of Receptors

Sensitivity of Receptor	Definition
Very High	Sites designated for their woodland features (habitats) or woodland-related species under EU or national designations. Including; • ancient, semi-natural woodland (ASNW), • ancient woodlands planted with native species, • long-established woodlands of plantation origin (LEPO) with significant biodiversity interest, or • well-established semi-natural priority woodland types.

Sensitivity of Receptor	Definition
High	Semi- natural woods established within the last 25 years or so, and recently planted native woods; • Non-native Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) with very few remnant ancient woodland features; • Other woodlands supporting EU or UK priority species reliant on woodland.
Medium	Woodland removal will enhance; • priority habitants and their connectivity, • populations of priority species, • nationally important landscapes and improve; • conservation of water resources • conservation of soil resources or • public safety
Low	Woodland removal will help Scotland mitigate and adapt to climate change.
Negligible	The proposed development is listed as Open Ground within the woodland or forest area.

Magnitude of Impact

8.6.6 The magnitude of potential impacts, Table 8-4 below, is determined by the scale of woodland loss to enable the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

Table 8-4: Framework for Determining Magnitude of Effects

Magnitude of Effects	Definition
High	>40 ha would result in a fundamental change to the woodland.
Medium	>15-40 ha which would result in a material, partial loss or alteration of character of the woodland.
Low	>0.1 ha-15 ha would result in a slight, detectable, alteration of the baseline condition of the woodland.
Negligible	<0.1 ha would result is a barely distinguishable change from the woodland baseline conditions.

Significance of Effect

8.6.7 The sensitivity of the woodland and magnitude of the predicted woodland loss are used as a guide, in addition to professional judgement, to predict the significance of the likely effects. Table 8-5 summarises guideline criteria for assessing the significance of effects.

Table 8-5: Framework for Assessment of the Significance of Effects

Magnitude of Impact	**Sensitivity of Receptor**				
	Very High	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Negligible**
High	Major	Major	Moderate	Moderate	Minor
Medium	Major	Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
Negligible	Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

8.6.8 Given that the Proposed Development avoids the area of nearly native woodland within the Site and requires the total woodland loss of 6.65 ha of plantation woodland the Significance of Effect is considered Negligible.

8.7 Assessment of Cumulative Effects

8.7.1 On the basis that the overall forest resource will be maintained in line with CoWRP and UKFS, no cumulative effects are anticipated.

8.8 Mitigation Measures

8.8.1 Through design, the felling requirements have been minimised for the turbines within Netherton Woodland, in particular through the keyhole design and access tracks utilising open ground within the woodland. Design of layout has avoided the NWSS areas of woodland.

8.8.2 In accordance with CoWRP, there is a requirement to provide compensatory planting. Following this guidance, the Applicant is committed to providing compensatory planting for 6.65 ha. Woodland creation would require approval by SF and will meet the requirements of UKFS.

8.9 Residual Effects

8.9.1 Taking into account compensatory planting, there would be no residual effects to the forest resource.

8.9.2 Netherton Woodland will, in future, develop a UKFS compliant Forest Plan which incorporates the Proposed Development.

8.10 Summary

8.10.1 This Chapter of the EIA Report provides an assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on forested areas within the Site boundary. All areas of woodland to be felled are of a tree size suitable for timber harvesting. The proposal is for a fell a keyhole design to minimise the area of permanent woodland loss. With adherence to UKFS and timely CP there is no adverse effect to forestry. The total area of woodland affected are summarised in Table ***8-***8-6.

Table 8-6: Summary Area Statement

Forest areas affected	ha
Permanent felling for infrastructure, tracks and bat stand-off which will not be restocked.	6.65
Compensatory Planting	6.65