Forestry

Relevant Policy and Guidance

The forestry proposals would be prepared in accordance with the current industry policies, best practice and guidance including, but not limited to:

- Dumfries and Galloway Council (2014). The Dumfries and Galloway Forestry and Woodland Strategy.

- Forestry Commission Scotland (2009). The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal.

- Forestry Commission (2017). The UK Forestry Standard: The Government's Approach to Sustainable Forestry.

- Forestry Commission Scotland (2019). Guidance to Forestry Commission Scotland staff on implementing the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal.

- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (2013). SEPA Guidance Notes WST-G-027 "Management of Forestry Waste".

- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (2014). LUPS-GU27 "Use of Trees Cleared to Facilitate Development of Afforested Land.

- The Scottish Government (2012): Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

- The Scottish Government (2014a). Scotland's Third National Planning Framework (NPF3).

- The Scottish Government (2014b). Scottish Planning Policy.

- The Scottish Government (2016). A Land Use Strategy for Scotland.

- The Scottish Government (2019). Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 - 2029.

- UKWAS (2018). The UK Woodland Assurance Standard 4th Edition.

Baseline

A desk-based assessment reveals no woodland designations affecting the Site. Very small areas are identified as core areas of the Native Woodland Integrated Habitat Network. The Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) identifies these woodlands primarily as upland birch woodland. Further parts of the woodlands are classed as Primary and Secondary Zones under the Native Woodland Integrated Habitat Network as potential areas for native woodland expansion. The commercial woodlands are in the production phase, with ongoing felling and replanting of mature woodlands.

Proposed Additional Baseline Work

A further desktop assessment would include the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS); the National Forest Inventory (NFI); aerial photographs; Forestry Land Scotland (FLS) sub compartment database; Scottish Forestry databases; and current Policy, Legislation and Guidance.

A field survey would consist of a walkover of the Site to verify and update baseline data as necessary and to identify any opportunities for on-site compensatory planting.

The forestry baseline would describe the crops existing at the time of preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report. This would be compiled from the desk-based assessment and field surveys. The output would be the production of finalised baseline data including any forestry constraints, species, planting year, felling and restocking proposals and other relevant data. This baseline data, in particular the restocking plan, would be used for comparison against the development forestry proposals.

Potentially Significant Effects

In the UK there is a strong presumption against permanent woodland removal, unless it addresses other environmental concerns or where it would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits. In Scotland, such woodland removal is dealt with under the Scottish Government's 'Control of Woodland Removal Policy' (2009). The purpose of the policy is to provide direction for decisions on woodland removal in Scotland. It is essential that the requirements of the Control of Woodland Removal Policy are addressed within the EIA Report. The integration of the proposed Development into the existing forest structure will be a key part of the development process.

There is potential for changes to the forest structure resulting from the proposed Development, with consequential implications for the wider felling and restocking plans across the forest area. Areas of woodland may need to be felled for the construction and operation of the proposed Development including for access tracks, turbine locations and other infrastructure. The potential effects would be changes to the structure of the woodlands, which may result in a loss of woodland area. This would be addressed through a redesign of the existing forest including, for example, the use of designed open space; alternative woodland types; changing the management intensity; or the provision of compensatory planting within the Site or on an alternative site.

The resulting changes to the woodland structure and any requirement for compensation planting to mitigate against any woodland loss would be considered in the context of the Control of Woodland Removal Policy and in consultation with Scottish Forestry.

The baseline data and comparison against the development forestry proposals will also be used to provide information on the use of forestry wastes that are to be retained and reused at the Site. The proposed reuse of forestry wastes would be quantified and justified.

The analysis of the changes to the commercial forestry and information of forestry wastes will be presented as a separate technical appendix to the EIA Report. The environmental effects of the proposed Development related forest felling and restocking would be assessed in the relevant chapters of the EIA Report, including Ecology; Landscape and Visual; Hydrology and Hydrogeology; Ornithology; and Traffic and Transport.

Matters to be Scoped Out

The changes to forests as a result of the proposed Development are regarded as site specific and it is considered that there are no cumulative forestry issues to be addressed.

Consultee Questions

- Do consultees agree with the proposed methodology and scope of the forestry assessment?

- Do consultees have any information, particularly with reference to any new guidance, which should be taken into account within the forestry assessment?

- Please confirm any additional requirements that you consider should be included in this element of the EIA, that have not been covered in this fact sheet.