



Scottish
Forestry
Coilltearachd
na h-Alba

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By email

Our Reference – 033902112

25 March 22

Dear ██████████

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

I refer to your application Castlehill and Hillpark woodland creation at Kinfauns for 22.43 hectares of afforestation.

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.

I can confirm that the work you propose will require EIA consent for the following reasons:

Background

The scheme is comprised of two separate compartments, one (Castlehill) just north of Kinfauns Castle and centred on NO 150 229 and the second (Hillpark) an area of land to the south of Kinoull Hill and centred on NO 129 221. The Hillpark compartment is mostly obscured from view as it has trees below and above and is close to the Friarton Bridge/Perth interchange on the A90.

The Castlehill compartment is visible from a number of viewpoints and also borders a public road along which there are a number of houses, all currently enjoying views across the Tay. Nine of the houses are on the northern boundary of the site and when consulted, all nine houses expressed concerns about the loss of views, which would result from the planting proposal.

Kinoull hill and Deuchny wood are very popular and highly valued areas for recreation just outside Perth with the value applying to both residents and visitors. The minor road running immediately to the north of the Castlehill planting area is National Cycle Network Route 77.

Our concerns related to the loss of landscape value, loss of householder amenity and reduction in value of the visitor experience. These concerns related to the Castlehill part of the application.

POPULATION

Loss of visual amenity to householder and reduction in value of the visitor experience

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



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The road above the Castlehill area proposed for planting and adjacent viewing points present stunning views over the River Tay for those visiting Kinnoull hill and Deuchny wood and those walking, cycling (or driving) along NCN77. This similarly applies to the nine or more householders who currently have the same view. The view is also important for those on the A90 and for far views from Moncrieffe hill.

The Scottish Government's Land rights and Responsibilities Statement and the related protocol on engagement are relevant to the stakeholder engagement process here. Two principles are relevant and are copied below. In the context of the Statement, public interest should not necessarily be thought of in opposition to private interest. Public interest includes the effect on individuals, who are also members of the public.

Principle 1 - The overall framework of land rights, responsibilities and public policies should promote, fulfil and respect relevant human rights in relation to land, contribute to public interest and wellbeing, and balance public and private interests

Principle 6 - There should be greater collaboration and community engagement in decisions about land.

We recognise that Scottish Woodlands have actively engaged with the local householders to explain their proposal and to ascertain householders' views and have made some attempts to mitigate the concerns raised.

Overall, however, the Castlehill part of the proposal does not provide a balance between private and public benefits because it disbenefits the householders concerned and those using Kinnoull hill, Deuchny wood and NCN77 because of the loss of these exceptional views over the Tay, which are recognised in the LLA. The proposal will have a significant impact on the amenity of the householders concerned and insufficient weight and consideration has been given in the design of the proposal, to the concerns raised by householders and the impact the planting will have on recreational users of the area.

Our conclusion for landscape below is similar.

LANDSCAPE

Both sites in the proposal fall within the Sidlaw Hills Local Landscape Area.

The initial landscape work provided by Scottish Woodlands didn't present the true, likely extent of the landscape impact because of the heights chosen for the trees but our landscape architect has since provided updated views to use in our decision making.

Sidlaw Hills Local Landscape Area – Perth & Kinross Council: Landscape Supplementary Guidance 2020 [LandscapeSG_mar2020.pdf \(pkc.gov.uk\)](https://www.pkc.gov.uk/landscapesg-mar2020.pdf) is described on pages 36-37, including Special Qualities, Forces for Change and Objectives.

The Special Qualities include:

- Important backdrop and setting to the lower Tay and the Carse of Gowrie
- Accessible sport and recreation adjacent to the city of Perth with prominent viewpoints at Kinnoull Hill
- The drama of the cliffs, woodland and tower at Kinnoull Hill, high above the motorway and the cliff extending beyond towards Dundee.

A relevant Objective is:

- Ensure long-term maintenance of policy woodlands and designed landscapes, whether listed on an inventory or otherwise, which make a strong contribution to this area.

We are of the view that the retention of the existing open ground is important in the context of the LLA, including the existing character of the designed landscape and its setting, as well as maintaining prominent views from the area in and around Kinnoull hill.

Kinfauns Castle Inventory Garden & Designed Landscape [KINFAUNS CASTLE \(GDL00240\)](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/kinfauns-castle-gdl00240) ([historicenvironment.scot](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/))

This designed landscape with enclosing hills has been in relative consistent balance since the early 19th century. The **Landscape Character Type 382 – Lowland Hill Ranges** [LCT 382 - Lowland Hill Ranges - final pdf.pdf](#) describes the distinctive wooded hills – which serves to accentuate their height – of Kinnoull, Deuchny and Binn Hills, framing the valley of the Deuchny Burn flowing through the pattern of field enclosures and policy woodland and trees of the designed landscape.

In the Summary it is described as *An important picturesque designed landscape, which plays an important role in the local scenery and provides some of the most significant views in the region, with a Scenic level of Outstanding.*

A 1:25000 map view clearly shows this relationship and relative equal proportion of valley open ground either side of the burn. It is this relationship that the proposals would alter and at maturity the new belt of trees is likely to visually coalesce with the woodland on the hills above (losing that accentuation in height) and the policy woodland to the lower slopes below (see next para).

Although the Inventory of Gardens and Designed landscapes are not Scheduled Monuments, these landscapes nominated for the Inventory are considered important because they represent the very best examples of designed landscapes in Scotland and are of national importance.

FCS Historic Environment Resource Guide for Forest and Woodland Managers in Scotland notes that *'Inclusion of a site on the inventory means that it receives recognition and a degree of protection through the planning system, as a material consideration in the determination of a planning application and in Forestry Commission Scotland (now Scottish Forestry) licensing and grant procedures.'*

Whilst, we acknowledge HES' view that the proposed planting would not have a negative impact on the designed landscape per se (principally we understand because the lower part of the field immediately behind the castle is being left open), we remain of the view that the proposal would negatively impact on the wider landscape context of the long established pattern of field enclosure, policy woodland and trees of the designed landscape.

We also note that the planning team within Perth & Kinross Council did not express concern over the proposal in relation to the LLA. However, we are satisfied that following assessment of all the available information, and with the benefit of specialist landscape advice, that our conclusions are sound.

Conclusion

The Castlehill element of the proposal will have significant adverse effects on landscape, visual amenity and local distinctiveness. We think there is one area where planting would be appropriate, which is at the east end of the site, being the open area sandwiched between 2 existing areas of woodland. We have identified that area in the attached map.

We feel there is also the opportunity to reinforce the bank area, which splits the field in two, with new parkland trees, if this was something that was of interest. We attach an excerpt from the 1st edition OS map for Kinfauns showing the greater prevalence of parkland trees across the middle break in the field, for interest.

There is a live FGS application for this proposal, which therefore cannot progress in its current form. We would be happy to discuss a smaller, revised proposal as described above.

It is recommended that you now contact us to request a Scoping Opinion, which will provide the information that is to be included in your EIA Report.

We must consult statutory consultees during the scoping process, so we recommend you arrange a Scoping Meeting and invite all of the necessary organisations and individuals that may have an interest in your EIA forestry project.

We advise this includes Perth & Kinross Council, Historic Environment Scotland and all the neighbours/local stakeholders, with whom you have already engaged, who can contribute information or may be affected by your proposals. We will be happy to agree a formal list of consultees for the scoping process.

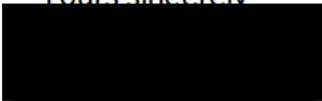
If you do not hold a Scoping Meeting we will still require the following information to consult independently:

- A description of the location of your forestry project
- A map identifying the land
- A description of the nature and purpose of your forestry project and its likely effects on the environment
- Any other information that you wish to provide, e.g. any avoidance, off-setting or mitigation measures.

Guidance on EIA for forestry projects can be found at:

<https://forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/environmental-impact-assessment>

Yours sincerely



Cameron Maxwell
Conservator

Castlehill & Hillpark NWC

Castlehill Species Map
BRN:142097
MLC:89/699/0021

Created On: 23rd Nov 2020

Legend

- DF
- MB
- NMB
- OG
- Deer Fence
- Deer Gate
- Overhead Powerline
- Utilities-Above Ground



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1:5,000
Scale Correct at A3

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