Scottish Forestry
Coilltearachd na h-Alba

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.

For more information on EIA Screening, refer to Scottish Forestry's 'Environmental Impact Assessments for Forestry Projects' (2021) guidance document and 'Schedule 2: Selection Criteria for Screening Forestry Projects' under the "Applying for an opinion" section for more detail on the information you should provide in this form. If you are not sure about what information to include on this form, please contact your local Conservancy office.

Project Details

Provide details of the gross project area and composition i.e. the project boundary to include all unplantable ground and sensitive areas retained in open ground within the boundary. You must also provide a map which defines the gross area boundary.

Designed Open Ground (DOG) is plantable land left unplanted for design reasons or to avoid or prevent significant negative impacts. Other Land (OL) is unplantable land e.g. scree, extensive deep peat, lochs and other waterbodies, existing woodland.

The definition of 'native' and 'non native' refers to Scotland as a whole, not to specific areas of Scotland and irrespective of management objectives.

Proposed* Work	Gross Project Area (ha)	Non Native CON (ha)	Native CON (ha)	Non Native BL (ha)	NBL (ha)	DOG (ha)	OL (ha)
Afforestation	76.6		16.6		39.9		20.1
			22%		52%		26%
Deforestation	53.0	36.2					16.8
		68%					32%
Forest Roads							
Forest Quarry							

*SF Use Only:
For recording afforestation species figures in Casebook Pre-App case type:
Conifer = Non Native CON + Native CON figures as shown in above table
Broadleaves = Non Native BL + NBL+ DOG + OL figures as shown in above table

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 forestry projects presented within this EIA Screening Opinion Request Form are proposed within FLS' 'Achnashellach Long Term Plan 2026-2036' *(to which this SOR document forms an appendix). Map 10 of the LTP illustrates all component afforestation and deforestation project areas. Further itemised detail relating to these areas is given in sections 2.7 (afforestation) and 2.8 (deforestation) of the Long Term Plan's (LTP's) main text document.*

AFFORESTATION Sixteen discrete areas of Open Ground are currently being colonised by naturally regenerating native broadleaved trees. Left un-checked (as is proposed) this will ultimately result in sixteen discrete new native woodland areas – ranging in size from 1.1 to 12.2 ha in size (see Map 10). This succession is made possible by the presence/proximity of seed-bearing native trees coupled with low enough deer browsing impacts to allow successful woodland establishment. This is made possible by FLS' estate-wide deer control instigated primarily to allow natural regeneration of native woodland on areas of clearfelled non-native coniferous woodland for PAWS and CPI conservation and expansion (see LTP Appendix 9: Deer Management Plan).

DEFORESTATION Two areas of non-native conifer-afforested ground are proposed for peatland restoration. In both areas, non-native conifers will be removed – either by mulching *in situ* of failed or checked trees or felling and forwarding trees of sufficient size for biomass recovery where viable - and a subsequent single-pass drain blocking and ridge-furrow smoothing operation will be undertaken to reinstate the natural water table and anaerobic bog functionality. Analysis and decision-making underpinning these proposals is presented in the LTP's Appendix 7.

- Sgurr a' Gharraidh plateau (gross 38.5 ha)- 100% deforestation/peatland restoration.
- Coulin Road (gross 17.7 ha) - 100% conifer removal for 14.5 ha peatland restoration and 3.2 ha restocking (NVC W4 *Betula pubescens – Molinia caerulea* woodland) where a more significant gradient (and drainage character) will support Peatland Edge Woodland (minimum 1,600 stems/hectare). Net deforestation is consequently 53.0 ha.

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

The entire FLS landholding lies within a local authority Local Landscape Area 'Strathcarron, Monar and Mullardoch' – designated on account of its exemplary and characteristic Highland (Wester Ross) landscape composition. The afforestation proposals comprise sixteen discrete areas that are (either) infilling with native woodland along riparian zones or else expanding native woodland along or above the current treeline. These proposals are not considered to be creating any areas of seemingly artificial (i.e. geometric) or incongruous expansion of woodland cover. The deforestation proposals are removing areas of afforested non-native woodland (albeit significantly checked or failed in parts) located above the natural treeline. Consequently woodland removal and rewetting to restore naturalised bog conditions and character are again complementary to the landscape aesthetic.

LTP Appendix 10 (Landscape Visualisations) illustrates the anticipated, expanded woodland cover and extent as seen from a number of common vantage points and bares out this assertion.

AFFORESTATION - All areas of native woodland regeneration are currently classified in FLS' sub-compartment database as Open Ground and are located adjacent to established or establishing restocked/regenerating native woodland. FLS Environment staff have undertaken walkover surveys

(September 2026) of all regenerating ground to ensure ongoing afforestation is not located upon designated open ground habitat (or with designated component flora or fauna) and to assess for the presence of priority species or habitat on the Scottish Biodiversity List ('SBL' as updated to 09/12/25). There are no designated habitats or species. The only SBL priority habitat is Wet Heath and only priority species Scottish primrose. There are no heritage features in the regeneration areas.

DEFORESTATION/PEATLAND RESTORATION. Both areas were originally ploughed and planted - predominantly with Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine for timber production - in three separate phases: 1966, 1972 and 1987 on a mosaic of predominantly Peaty Surface Water gleys, Peaty podzolic ironpans and Eriophorum/Calluna blanket bog (35/35/30% respectively; James Hutton 1:250k classification). None of the affected current ground or vegetation/habitat carries an environmental designation or has any known archaeological features. There are no private water supplies downstream of watercourses that traverse through or originate within the restoration areas.

The restoration process aims to reinstate the functionality of these predominantly peat-based, open ground habitats set within a wider landscape of open ground hills/ridges above the natural treeline of Glen Carron. Restoration will be initiated by either excavator-based access for whole-tree mulching *in situ* of predominantly failed or checked non-native conifers or else by conventional shortwood harvesting to fell (or shear) and remove trees where stem diameter is sufficient to warrant viable recovery of biomass for onward processing/use. The follow-on re-wetting operation utilises tracked excavator-based machinery to undertake furrow smoothing and drain blocking and has the potential to compact wet soils and disturb peat-forming vegetation and disturb soils/peats in waterlogged hollows and mires. Ground smoothing of historically ploughed ground has the potential to deposit peaty sediments into drains and ultimately on into downstream watercourses.

The restocking proposed for the lower 3.2 ha margin of the westerly restoration area will be undertaken using excavator-based hinge mounding and planting (minimum 1,600 stems/hectare).

Potential diffuse pollution from these operations is the main environmental sensitivity during operations. Permanent watercourses flowing through both restoration areas are tributaries of the river Carron which has resident and breeding salmonids and freshwater pearl mussels. A longer term sensitivity is the potential of nutrients released from decaying mulched material leaching into nearby watercourses with consequent impacts on downstream biota and ecology. The restoration ground contains no designated vegetation/habitat. Black grouse habituate the open hill (above the FLS boundary) but there are no known leks within at least 1 km of the restoration areas.

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.

AFFORESTATION: As all new native woodland is establishing by natural processes (seed dispersal, germination and establishment) there are no management operations that may in themselves have potentially negative environmental impacts. The former may persist within regenerating open native woodland composition (on account of limited potential for native tree seed recruitment) or else be lost due to shading or altered groundwater conditions. Scottish primrose is synonymous with all upland native broadleaved woodland types and therefore likely to survive (at worst) and thrive (at best) within establishing native deciduous woodland.

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.

All proposals are contained within FLS' draft Long Term Plan "Achnashellach 2026-2036" and, as such, have been consulted on with neighbouring residents, estate owners, interest groups: deer management groups, local fisheries trust, Mountaineering Scotland, Wester Ross Biosphere, local community trust as well as the community council and all other statutory stakeholders (Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot, SEPA, the Highland Council's forestry, roads, archaeology and access officers). No contrary opinions were expressed to the proposals. A final 28-day Public Register consultation (undertaken during SF consideration and approval of the LTP) represents one further and final opportunity for stakeholders to raise concerns or objections directly with the forestry regulator.

Prior Notification is still to be made to the Highland Council planning authority for the peatland restoration proposals in line with local authority regulations for forest development works and within the Local Landscape Area (Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch). FLS will work within any conditions stipulated in confirmatory correspondence.

Avoidance and Prevention 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 avoid and prevent significant negative impacts.

AFFORESTATION – As described in 'Likely Significant Effects' section, FLS do not anticipate any significant negative environmental impacts through the natural establishment of native woodland in these areas.

DEFORESTATION - Use of a comparatively light (maximum 8-tonne) excavator to undertake drain blocking and furrow smoothing will minimise unwanted compaction of peat/soils and lower-plant-rich wet heath vegetation on both access routes and operation sites. This methodology has already proven successful on other FLS peatland restoration sites in the Skye and Lochalsh area (FLS Kinloch Hills/Kyle Farm: 2019, 2020, 2023 & 2025; Glenelg/Ardentoul: 2025/26; Glen Udalain, S. Strome 2025/26). Both tree mulching and ground smoothing/drain blocking phases will be done as single pass operations to limit unnecessary ground disturbance and/or compaction. Ground smoothing of old furrow/ridges will only be undertaken after temporarily blocking main drains from the site to minimise sediment risk to downstream watercourses.

Operations will be undertaken during the habitually drier months (May-October) with operations paused during periods of prolonged rain that could result in surface water flooding and sediment flow risk in excessively waterlogged operating conditions.

All peatland restoration contract work will be let and supervised to rigorously enforce UK Forestry Standard (FC's "Managing Forest Operations to Protect the Water Environment" and "Forests and Water": sixth edition) AND NatureScot-endorsed FLS Environment Guidance Note 5: Managing for freshwater pearl mussels during harvesting operations re-fuelling and working within the vicinity of open water and on wet and waterlogged soils within the catchment of these watercourses.

Mulched tree chip material will be dispersed to avoid any discrete piles of chips (with higher localised nutrient leaching potential) and all chips to be kept away from drain edges.

FLS Environment staff will undertake walkover surveys of all ground within the peatland restoration areas - and the access routes to and from these areas - prior to operational works to ensure there are no resident, seasonally resident or scheduled species or associated features (i.e. otter couches/holt sites, pine marten dens) at risk. FLS routinely monitor the estate for presence and movement of scheduled raptor species and black grouse presence/seasonal activity and operations will comply with

seasonal operating constraints as stipulated in FLS specific species guidance (see LTP Appendix 11 for full list of pertinent guidance literature).

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 (ha)
Deep Peat Soil	53.0
Choose an item.	
Choose an item.	
Choose an item.	
Choose an item.	

Property Details			
Property Name:	FLS Achnashellach		
Business Reference Number:		Main Location Code:	
Grid Reference: (e.g. NH 234 567)	NH 0300 4900	Nearest town or locality:	Lochcarron
Local Authority:		The Highland Council	

Owner's Details				
Title:	Mr	Forename:	Christopher	
Surname:	Marsh			
Organisation:	Forestry and Land Scotland		Position:	Planning Forester
Primary Contact Number:	07917 790703		Alternative Contact Number:	
Email:	chris.marsh@forestryandland.gov.scot			
Address:	FLS North Region office, Tower Road, Smithton, Inverness			
Postcode:	IV2 7NL		Country:	Scotland
Is this the correspondence address?	Yes			

Agent's Details				
Title:		Forename:		
Surname:				
Organisation:			Position:	
Primary Contact Number:			Alternative Contact Number:	
Email:				
Address:				
Postcode:			Country:	
Is this the correspondence address?	Choose an item.			