

## Project Proposal

Business Reference Number:	██████████	Case Number:	20FGS50223
Application name:	Totachocaire Native Woodland Creation		

## Introduction

The Woodland Creation Operational Plan allows you to show that you have carefully considered all of the relevant impacts and effects that the work you are proposing might have on the environment, and where appropriate the measures you intend to take to mitigate any adverse effects.

The Operational Plan, including the issues log at Annex 2, can be used to record any pre-application work completed ahead of submitting your woodland creation application (e.g. discussions with stakeholders, site assessment results, etc.).

The Woodland Officer will take account of the details you have given in this Plan when they assess your application and it will also help them to decide on a score for your application.

## General Details

You must complete this Woodland Creation Operational Plan and submit it with your Forestry Grant Scheme Woodland Creation application.

The amount of supporting information you give will depend on the scale, location and nature of your application. You should give sufficient detail so that we can properly assess the work you propose. Your local Scottish Forestry (SF) [Conservancy office](#) will be able to provide you with further advice about this.

Please note that the Woodland Officer who will assess your application may request further information or clarification about the details you give in this Operational Plan, especially those that may have an environmental impact on the site.

***When you have completed your Woodland Creation Operational Plan, save the document to your computer and then upload to your on-line application.***

## General Assessment

The information in your Operational Plan should be based on a thorough assessment of the site. Please complete the following:

Describe the management objectives for the site.

The management objectives of the work proposed under this application are as follows:

- Establish native broadleaf woodland over parts of Totachocaire Farm considered suitable for native tree establishment and growth;
- Establish productive broadleaves over previously improved grazing fields for future timber and fuelwood supply, making use of the productive potential of the ground;
- Help mitigate the impacts of climate change through carbon sequestration;
- Help meet the Scottish Government's target to increase woodland cover by 10,000 hectares per annum;
- Release habitats from successional arrest caused by livestock and deer grazing;
- Improve ecosystem value for local flora and fauna;
- Improve visual and aesthetic appeal of the local landscape and provide opportunity for future public enjoyment;
- Support rural development through local businesses and diversification.

Provide a description of the planting site.

Totachocaire Farm sits just to the north of Dunvegan Castle and its policy woodlands, accessible via the C1229 Dunvegan - Claigan public road. The total holding is around 550ha of which approximately 245ha is proposed as suitable for native tree establishment and growth. An outlying block exists to the south, where some smaller scale (7.6ha) native tree planting is proposed to enhance an area of land with higher public access interest (see appended location map).

Located on the north western tip of the Isle of Skye, the weather at Dunvegan is strongly influenced by the sea which makes the summers cool, the winters mild and the climate wet. Wind is a consistent feature of local weather and one of the key constraints to woodland establishment. Ground lying above an altitude of 160m a.s.l. at Totachocaire generally becomes too exposed for the majority of our native tree species. The exception to this may be where topographic shelter exists, i.e. lee slopes or natural gullies. Exposure coupled with declines in soil fertility with increases in altitude as decomposition slows is the main reason for the disparity between gross size and net plantable area at Totachocaire.

The larger site (237ha) extends from around the C1229 public road on the eastern banks of Loch Dunvegan across gently sloping ground to steeper crags and knolls of Creag a'Mhill to the north-east, running north-east into Glen Suardal. The planting site rises from <10 m above sea level in the west to a high point of 160 m. Much of the central and northern areas of the site consist of moderately sloping ground, with

steeper slopes on occasional crags and ridges near the public road and on higher ground of Creag a'Mhill.

The smaller site (approximately 7.6ha) is located adjacent to, and north of, the A863 and A850 junction in Dunvegan. The site is moderately sloping to a height of approximately 70m above sea level and is dominated by grassland communities utilised as grazings or for recreation and tourism.

The majority of the proposed enclosure area consists of a mosaic of dry and wet dwarf shrub heaths, acid grasslands, blanket and shoulder mires, and slopes dominated by bracken. Large areas of the study site have been grazed by sheep and cattle, with historical evidence of drainage of vegetation for conversion to grassland (e.g. rig and furrow). Neutral grasslands are present across areas historically improved for agriculture. The fields near Totachocaire farm buildings and in the block at Dunvegan village have been subject to more recent improvement and re-seeding. The location, extent and floristics of the existing vegetation was surveyed and the resulting report used to distinguish areas suitable for native broadleaf planting option (W9/17/18), native upland birch option where wet heaths were dominated by NVC M15 communities (W4), and areas suitable for productive broadleaf growth (improved/neutral grassland).

As suggested by the vegetation types, soils range from mineral brown earths around farm buildings to peats of varying depth and in places with underlying gleys or podsol. Underlying parent materials are basalt and spilite which give the soil a red colour in places.

Semi-natural woodland is rare within the site and confined to the fragments along fringes of the site boundary that are adjacent to larger woodland or plantation boundaries. Here the canopy is dominated by downy birch and alder with occasional hazel, silver birch and rowan. Beech, sycamore, oak, hazel and a variety of exotic conifers all grow well in the adjacent Dunvegan Castle woodlands.

Several sites of archaeological interest exist across the development area, these largely relate to post-medieval agriculture in the form of farmsteads, shielings, dykes, enclosures, and rig and furrow remains. All sites of archaeological interest will be preserved within open ground in the scheme design as per the archaeologists recommendations.

Provide details of discussions with neighbours, local communities and consultees. For Community Councils and neighbours please evidence who was contacted, date and method of contact used (e.g. meeting, leaflet drop, letter etc.) Where reasonable, you may just identify street names (e.g. larger urban areas).

Statutory stakeholders including Historic Environment Scotland, SNH & RSPB were contacted in the pre-application phase for site specific issues including bird sensitivities and planting in the vicinity of archaeological sites. See Annex 2 Issues log for further detail. A brief meeting was had (21/04/20) with the owners of Old Suardal house, to the north of the scheme, with follow up map sent by email for further

comment. The local community council were written to 11/05/2020 to commence the consultation process. A 'drop-in' style community meeting was planned but was switched for written correspondence due to COVID-19 outbreak.

You must carry out a site-based assessment of soil and vegetation to match species choice with the particular site. Refer to ([ESC-DSS](#)) during this process.

List the site surveys undertaken to inform tree species selection. For example: soil survey, soil depth survey, vegetation survey.

Phase 1/NVC Survey

Terrestrial ecology survey

Peat & soil depth survey

Please indicate the climatic suitability of the site for the tree species you have chosen. Use the [Scottish Forestry Map Viewer](#) - see the 'FGS Climatic Site Suitability' data.

W17 (*Quercus petraea* – *Betula pubescens* – *Dicranum majus* woodland) – while a small area is shown as suitable, the majority of the planting area is either recorded as Marginal or Unsuitable on the Map Viewer. The most demanding and limiting species commonly found in W17 may be Sessile oak. The proportion of downy birch to oak may be increased to reflect site constraints and make the species mixture better suited to this specific site (see notes under W9 below). Birch, hazel and rowan can be found growing on exposed seaward faces in the surrounding landscape, often with a scrubby canopy and where inaccessible to grazing.

W9 (*Fraxinus excelsior* – *Sorbus aucuparia*– *Mercurialis perennis* woodland) – Very Suitable or Suitable across the entire planting area. While the planting of Ash has been restricted due to the presence of Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) across the country, this woodland type has been included as other species commonly found under W9 would be expected to do well across the planting area. Areas proposed for planting under the 'Native Broadleaf Woodland' funding option therefore comprise a mixture of the species commonly found under W9/17 & 18 depending on micro-site suitability.

W18 (*Pinus sylvestris* – *Hylocomium splendens* woodland) – Shown as Suitable across the entire area apart from some higher ground and peaty/boggy areas.

W4 (*Betula pubescens* – *Molinia caerulea* woodland)- Very Suitable or Suitable across the entire planting area.

Broadleaves – Generally shown as unsuitable on the Scottish Forestry Map Viewer but site specific soil fertility and topographic shelter, which won't be picked up by the broad scale underlying mapping on the Map Viewer suggests a part of the planting site will be suitable for productive broadleaf growth. This is further backed by the mature and impressive growth of beech, oak, ash and sycamore in the surrounding woodlands. The sites proposed for this option are previously hay fields surrounding Totachocaire Farm buildings.

Woodland Strategy: Describe how your proposal fits with the Local Authority woodland strategy.

The planting area is recorded as ranging from Preferred, Potential to Potential with Sensitivities within the Highland FWS. The latter designation has largely been issued

to areas adjacent to Loch Dunvegan which is a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to the population of Harbour seals it supports. Woodland creation is not anticipated to have any negative impact on the SAC. The particular landscape and tourism impact of development in this area may also be a sensitivity. Retention of viewpoints has been a key consideration in putting together this woodland creation operational plan, providing mitigation against this sensitivity.

If applying for the productive conifer options please use the Timber Transport Forum – [Agreed Routes Map](#) and confirm the sites timber route classification i.e. agreed, consultation, severely restricted, excluded or no classification.

n/a

If applying for the Native Woodland options please use the 'Native Woodland Habitat Network' map in the 'FGS Target and Eligibility' folder on the [Scottish Forestry Map Viewer](#) and describe the habitat network zones your application is within i.e. primary, secondary or out with the habitat network.

The southern portion of the application area lies within the secondary zone of the native woodland habitat network (due to proximity to existing Dunvegan Castle woodlands). The northern portion lies out with the habitat network but the existence of aspen, hazel and other species growing along the roadside northwards towards Loch Suardal suggests that planting will bolster local native woodland habitat connectivity.

## Sensitive Areas & Potential Impacts

### **Sensitive Areas:**

- National Nature Reserve or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- National Park
- World Heritage Site
- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- National Scenic Area
- Natura sites – Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Area of Conservation (SPA)
- Land on which there is a Nature Conservation Order
- Deep peat soil

### **Potential Impacts:**

- Population & Human Health
- Biodiversity
- Land, Soil, Water, Air, Climate
- Material Assets, Cultural Heritage, Landscape

List any **Sensitive Areas** and any **Potential Significant Impacts** relating to your site, including appropriate mitigation (**refer to Annex 1**). Detail any surveys completed to inform this assessment.

*For complex cases the Issues Log (**Annex 2**) can be used to record this instead.*

*(Scotland's Environment Web Land Information Search*

*<https://www.environment.gov.scot/maps/land-information-search/> is a useful resource which may help you identify some of the constraints within your site).*

Please Refer to Annex 2 Issues Log

***Please ensure that any maps or survey reports that have been produced to support your application are uploaded to the online application system.***

## Management Operations

### All Applications

Having assessed the site please provide information about how you are going to establish the new woodland.

**Ground Preparation:** Describe the method that you will use, including dimensions. Where you propose multiple ground preparation techniques then you must identify these on a map.

In areas accessible to machinery, individual planting spots will be created by invert hinge mounding or short shallow drain mounding (2 - 3 m length) for both the native woodland and native upland birch woodland creation areas. For the improved fields where the broadleaf woodland creation option is proposed, a continuous moulder will be used to create raised planting positions. A ripper tooth, either mounted to the moulder or separately, will be used to reduce soil compaction from previous agricultural use and improve rooting depths. Where v-drains are installed they will comply with Forests and Water Guidelines, that is to say not exceed 2 degrees and be disconnected from watercourses.

The creation of individual raised planting spots (30cm x 50cm) should help reduce competition from weeds in the first year and increase mean soil temperatures, aeration and nutrient availability by improving conditions for decomposers. Hinge mounding will be avoided as it often results in the pooling of water next to young trees. The mounding operation proposed will give the planting a more natural appearance by avoiding the creation of straight lines brought about by ploughing. Where the ground is too steep for machine access or too sensitive, hand screefing will be employed to create planting positions.

Mounding densities will be varied when in proximity to riparian corridor, rocky outcrops, or upper planting boundary/moorland transitions. The objective of varying the density will be to create a more natural woodland edge, with reducing density to the relevant landscape feature. This will be achieved within the requirement to maintain a planting density of 1600sph overall. Buffer zones will also be kept around existing trees and shrubs (e.g. willows) on site, using the aforementioned method, helping maintain the value of these stands to migrant passerines. Any previously unidentified areas of deep peat that are discovered during ground preparation will be avoided by operator.

**Drainage:** Identify any existing drains/watercourses and provide information relating to new drains.

Several man-made drains exist through the site, showing previous attempts to improve the quality of grazing. Surface water may be controlled by the creation of v-drains on productive areas only. As this is a predominantly native woodland scheme the intention will be to match tree species to site conditions as opposed to the reverse. The latest Forest and Water Guidelines will be adhered to throughout the cultivation and establishment period.

**Protection:** Describe how the site will be protected. For example: fencing, tree guards/shelters and pest management.

Append a deer management plan if required. You should refer to the [Deer Management Best Practice Guide](#) and the [Joint Agency statement on deer fencing](#). You may be asked to submit a checklist from the Joint Agency guidance (May 2010).

Prior to planting, a new deer proof fence will be erected to north, east and western boundaries of the site as per the route shown in the appended fencing map. A deer fence already exists to the southern boundary and new deer fences will be tied into this existing line to reduce overall length of 'new' fencing required. An excerpt map has been appended to the application documents showing the line of the fencing to the east of the C1229 public road. Where possible the fence has been kept well back (>10m) to reduce visual impact and for safety purposes (reduced potential for deer/sheep collisions). The main views from the C1229 are looking west over the Loch and to the castle, these views will remain uninhibited.

For the southern block, all boundaries apart from that running adjacent to the public road will be deer fenced. A new stock fence will be erected along the public road side to facilitate easier public access, reduce visual impact and because this boundary has much lower deer pressure. Given the proposals to leave some boundaries open, culling is also proposed for the few deer that may access the enclosure. All walking paths/lines of desire will be kept open with pedestrian gates installed as per the attached fencing map. If the stock fence and culling isn't keeping deer browsing, fraying or bark stripping damage to <10%, the fence will be upgraded to deer height in consultation with Scottish Forestry.

The improved fields proposed for the broadleaf planting will comprise good habitat for voles once grazing and agricultural activity has ceased. Saplings will therefore be protected by vole guarding to prevent girdling/browsing damage.

The boundaries of the planting compartments will be marked out using bamboo canes and tape from GPS shapefiles. Archaeological sites indentified during the pre-application survey will have buffer zones marked out as per archaeologists recommendations to ensure they are conserved.

**Planting; please provide the following:**

- Species to be planted and percentage of each. (Please use the components area table to record hectares planted).
- Describe the nursery stock and planting method to be used.
- Confirm if you will be planting vegetatively propagated Sitka spruce.
- For native woodland creation specify the [Seed Source Zone](#).

WC Option: Native Broadleaf (based on mixture of W9/17/18, according to micro-site conditions, see page 4):

NMB	Spp %	Spp Area	Tree No	SPH
Downy birch	40	26.34	42144	1600

Rowan	10	17.56	28096	1600
Sessile oak	10	8.78	14048	1600
Scots pine	10	8.78	14048	1600
Hazel	5	4.39	7024	1600
Aspen	5	4.39	7024	1600
Hawthorn	5	4.39	7024	1600
Bird Cherry	5	4.39	7024	1600
Eared willow	5	4.39	7024	1600
Alder	5	4.39	7024	1600
Designed OG		13.76	0	0
	100	101.56	140480	

## WC Option: Native Upland Birch (NVC W4):

Upland Birch	Spp %	Spp Area	Tree No	SPH
Downy birch	60	51.71	82742	1600
Eared willow	15	12.93	20686	1600
Grey willow	15	12.93	20686	1600
Hawthorn	5	4.31	6895	1600
Alder	5	4.31	6895	1600
Designed OG		10.43	0	0
	100	96.62	137904	

## WC Option: Broadleaves

Broadleaves	Spp %	Spp. Area	Tree No	SPH
Sessile Oak	25	8.3	25653	3100
Sycamore	10	3.3	8275	2500
birch	55	18.2	45513	2500
wild cherry	10	3.3	8275	2500
Total	100	33.1		
<i>NMB/OG</i>		3.81		
Downy Birch	40	1.4	2310	1600
Alder	25	0.9	1444	1600
Rowan	10	0.4	578	1600
Hawthorn	25	0.9	1444	1600
Designed OG		4.0	0	0
Total	100	40.89	93491.0	

Under the native broadleaf planting model, species have been proposed based on the initial habitat surveys. On dry heaths where calluna dominates and podsols can be found, such as the west facing slopes of Creag a' Mhill, Scots pine will be planted. Oak, cherry, hazel, aspen and birch will be focussed on the better grassland/bracken-heath habitats which overlie mineral soils where nutrient availability is expected to be higher. Eared willow, birch and rowan will be planted on exposed upper edges where planting densities will be varied to create a more natural looking woodland/moorland transition. Plant spacing will also be varied elsewhere, within the overall requirement for 1600 stems per

hectare. The reason for this is both to take advantage of micro-site conditions (e.g working around small wet patches, see FC guideline 112) and create a more naturalised woodland structure which will benefit local bird populations (as requested by RSPB – see Annex 2). As set out under the 'Ground Preparation' section, scrub species (e.g. willow) already growing on site will be given buffers to permit natural regeneration and retain passerine interest associated with them. GWDTE's have been mapped out of the planting design.

The Native Upland Birch model will be employed where wet dwarf shrub heaths currently dominate (largely NVC M15 vegetation), but soil and drainage following ground preparation should be sufficient for tree establishment and growth. As with the native broadleaf model plant spacing will be varied to suit ground conditions and future woodland structure.

The Broadleaf planting model is proposed for lower fields, previously used for silage and grazing around Totachocaire Farm buildings. The 4 main species will be sessile oak, wild cherry, birch and sycamore, with small areas of native broadleaves established around watercourse margins (<10% of option area). The sycamore will be established on western planting edges, the objective for this species is not only to establish future productive broadleaf woodland, but some shelter from salt-laden air for oak and softer species also proposed for planting. Sycamore has already naturalised in the surrounding woodlands where it grows well. The Sessile oak will be established in groups (rough indication, 0.5ha – 1ha), covering 8.3ha total, with birch and cherry planted in the matrix between these groups. The dominance of birch will be increased as the ground increases in altitude (circa 50m altitudinal difference across planting area).

Native broadleaf planting stock will be sourced from seed zone 104/5 where available. Productive broadleaf stock will be sourced from improved seed sources where available. If unavailable then alternative provenances will be agreed with local Forestry Commission staff according to the guidelines set out in the FC Guidance Note: "Seed Sources for Planting Native Trees and Shrubs in Scotland". Scots pine from North Central biochemical region will be used and from seed grown on at an approved DNB inspected nursery.

All planting will be manual with trees planted on the lee side of mounds to prevent desiccation and well firmed in. Plants may be a mixture of cell grown and bare root depending on provenance availabilities at the various commercial Scottish tree nurseries. Species such as Hazel are rarely available in significant quantities from seed zone 104/5. The percentage of Hazel in planting mixtures has therefore been reduced to help ensure proposed species mixtures remain practically achievable.

Forest and Water Guidelines and the UKFS will be adhered to during all operations.

**Maintenance:** Describe the maintenance regime for the site (e.g. monitoring,

weeding, beat-up, etc.).

In the absence of grazing, grass and weed growth on the lower more fertile soils is expected to be profuse and require control. Weed growth in these areas will be controlled chemically in spring and summer for the first 2/3 growing seasons. Other maintenance operations will include the replacement of trees which have died shortly after planting to ensure final stocking densities are reached, vermin control and fence maintenance.

**Fertilisation:** Where applicable, describe the proposed fertiliser regime e.g. application rate, timing, etc.

On the poorer organic soil types young trees may be fertilised to hasten establishment. Fertiliser will be applied at time of planting using a slow release tree fertiliser such as Albacote (10g/tree). The need for further fertilising will then be assessed by foliar analysis during the growing season. Subsequent fertiliser applications would be made in May with a forestry NPK mix.

**Other:** Please include any other silvicultural detail here.

Gorse will be removed where restricting tree planting and establishment and harbouring herbivore populations (potential rabbits/hares).

## Annex 1

### **Assessment of Potential Impact**

Please use the following guidance to assist with describing any potential significant impacts and any mitigation which is proposed:

- **Population & Human Health:** Detail any discussions which you have had with neighbours, local communities or other stakeholders and explain how this has influenced your proposal. Explain what public access is currently undertaken on the site and what provisions you plan to make to continue or improve this in adherence with the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#).
- **Cultural Heritage:** Indicate what survey work has been undertaken and describe how archaeology will be protected.
- **Soil:** Provide an accurate assessment of the soil on site and describe how you will manage the quality of the soil including any effects from erosion and compaction.
- **Water:** Detail the nature of the likely impacts on water bodies or water supplies from your activities and how you will mitigate these impacts.
- **Air:** Detail the nature of the likely impacts on air quality or the impacts on light provision.
- **Biodiversity:** Detail the nature and extent of high value habitats such as those listed on the [Scottish Biodiversity List](#) and describe how you will protect these habitats. Detail the nature of the likely impacts on wildlife from your activities and how you will mitigate these impacts. Refer to [European Protected Species](#) for guidance.
- **Landscape:** Provide details of how the impact on the landscape has been assessed and how the application has been designed to minimise any impact.
- **Climate:** Provide details on the vulnerability of the project to climate change and how this impact was mitigated.
- **Land:** Does your application have an impact or an effect on prime agricultural land (defined as land use classes 1, 2 and 3.1), or the local land use balance with agriculture?  
Detail the nature of the likely impacts on agriculture from your activities and how you will mitigate these impacts and integrate with forestry.  
You should refer to the [Guidance About Woodland Creation on Agricultural Land](#), located in the further information and technical guidance section of the [FGS woodland creation](#) web page.
- **Material Assets:** Identify and describe all built and natural assets that are relevant to the site and which could be adversely impacted by the proposal e.g. utilities, minerals. Describe any mitigation proposed for these features.

### Annex 2 Issues Log

Issue (include date and raised by)	Applicant's Comments	FCS Comments	Agreed Mitigation	Status (Open, Closed)	Significance of Impact (High, Medium, Low)
e.g. Archaeology – Scheduled Monument at NS123456. HES, 23/10/16.	e.g. Scheme design includes OG to buffer Scheduled Monument as per UKFS. [REDACTED] 25/10/16	e.g. Applicant has taken on board HES feedback and designed the scheme in accordance with best practise. [REDACTED] 27/10/17.	e.g. 20 metre OG buffer around SAM.	e.g. Closed	e.g. Low
<b>Population &amp; Human Health</b>					
<p>Stakeholder consultation should include the local community and residents directly affected. Grass/bracken fields in Dunvegan village with informal public access paths between roadside war memorial, St Mary's churchyard SAM and viewpoint on crag. [REDACTED] 4/10/19</p> <p>[REDACTED] Chair Dunvegan CC. 9/05/2020. Would comment that public access is really important for many local folk and for the benefit of the tourism industry. So it is important that quality footpaths and access are maintained and are consulted on as the plan moves forward</p> <p>Neighbours at Old Suardal. [REDACTED] 14/05/2020 &amp; 29/5/2020.: concerns on machinery access along access track and potential for damage. Would like to review views/areas to be kept open as plans progress in front of house. Service lines pointed out – water supply, telephone, and electricity.</p> <p>Totachocaire farmhouse views to be retained to front. Hugh Macleod 02/03/2020.</p>	<p>All public access paths and 'lines of desire' have been kept open and considered in the woodland and fencing design. Pedestrian access points have been considered on the hill ground to permit future public access through deer fences.</p> <p>Community Council contacted 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and feedback highlighted the importance of at least maintaining the current quality of access. A letter and map explaining the woodland creation plans was delivered by hand to all households directly adjoining the southern planting area (Dunvegan village). While the applicant had a few discussions with neighbours on the doorsteps, these were around what type of trees etc would be planted and no requests for alterations were received, either during initial or final consultation.</p> <p>Heavy machinery will not be permitted along access track. Service lines &amp; water supply have been retained within open ground in all plans following survey. Once COVID restrictions lift a site meeting will be undertaken on final views to be kept open, only small changes anticipated based on previous correspondence and surveys.</p> <p>Area of open ground has been mapped in front of house following a field survey to retain views to [REDACTED]s Tables &amp; Loch Dunvegan.</p>	<p>CC and individual neighbour consultation by hand delivered letter agreed with SF. Consult access officer to ensure existing formal and informal access routes maintained.</p>	<p>Planting to be held back from all existing paths and access points installed in new fencing to ensure potential for access remains unhindered.</p> <p>Heavy machinery will not be permitted along access tracks. Service lines have been retained within open ground in all plans following survey</p> <p>Designed open ground has been planned into designs to retain key views from residential properties within planting scheme boundaries</p> <p>The Old Suardal water supply was pointed out by [REDACTED] and has been mapped then given a buffer zone from mounding and establishment operations, as agreed with the neighbours on site.</p> <p>No issues were raised from the community council following initial feedback on keeping access routes open. Similarly, no issues were raised by neighbours directly adjoining the scheme when letters were hand delivered to households looking over/adjoining the southerly planting area.</p>	Closed	High

<b>Cultural Heritage</b>					
<p>A walk-over archaeology survey and early contact with HES is required. [REDACTED] 4/10/19</p> <p>Historic environment Scotland – 16/01/2020. [REDACTED]. See neighbouring column.</p>	<p>Archaeological walk-over survey and report commissioned and completed November 2019 (AOC, 2019). Advice and buffers were recommended for all sites of interest (total 65 sites identified) by the archaeological consultants and these have been incorporated into the woodland design. At least the minimum buffer recommendation has been used in every case, but in some scenarios buffers have been increased to further preserve the settings of archaeology. Report uploaded to project documents and site photos will be made available on request.</p> <p>Historic Environment Scotland consulted 10/01/2020 and responded (Oliver Lewis) 16/01/2020: "As you have highlighted, the proposed planting surrounds a scheduled monument, and therefore your planting scheme needs to take cognisance of the monument and its setting. The scheduled monument is 'SM 9249 St Mary's Church and Burial Ground, Dunvegan' – see <a href="http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM9249">http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM9249</a> for details.". The response goes on to give site history and recommends revisiting the proposals for the southern blocks of planting to allow the key inward views towards the monument from Dunvegan village to be retained. The use of photos to demonstrate view retention was recommended.</p> <p>Applicant responded with revised designs and plans 28/05/2020</p>	<p>Buffers to protect all point and linear archaeological features identified in survey. Compliance with recommendations following consultation with HES with regard to SAM in cpt 2</p>	<p>For the prehistoric hut circles (sites 5a-b), buffer zones of 20m have been implemented as per recommendations, and for all other settlement sites (1-2, 7-9, 11, 13-16, 18-24, 26-27 &amp; 65) buffer zones of 10m have been employed as recommended. Buffer zones of 5m have been used for the dykes, enclosures and clearance cairns. No mitigation is recommended for areas of rig and furrow. Around concentrated settlement sites the buffer zones have been expanded well over 10m recommended to preserve access.</p> <p>An area of open ground was designed along the southern boundary of the outlying planting area to ensure key views of the SAM remain open. Photos illustrating this have been appended to the project documents</p>	Closed	Medium
<b>Soil</b>					
<p>Soils vary from mineral brown earths to deep peat. [REDACTED] 4/10/19</p>	<p>Peat depth survey commissioned and completed 05/02/2020. All areas of deep peat removed from planting design/mapped as OL. Soil depth map appended to project documents.</p>	<p>Peat depth survey deep peat areas and any additional areas subsequently identified to be identified for ground preparation operator.</p>	<p>All areas of deep peat (&gt;50cm deep) removed from planting design and mapped as Other Land (OL). Deep peat found during ground prep to be avoided by operator.</p>	Closed	High
<b>Biodiversity</b>					
<p>EPS such as otter, bats likely so pre-commencement surveys advisable. RSPB to advise on bird survey/impact regarding upper planting boundaries and</p>	<p>A base-line terrestrial ecology survey was commissioned and completed 05/02/2020. This survey was for protected species including otter, wildcat, badger, red squirrel &amp; pine marten. No signs or shelters of</p>	<p>EPS survey and protection, bird survey/mitigation to be agreed with RSPB. GWDTEs to be identified by vegetation survey and protected.</p>	<p>No signs or shelters of protected mammals were identified during the field surveys. The potential future presence of species such as Otter has however been considered in the planting design by way of protecting and</p>	Closed	High

<p>deer fencing alignment (fencing boundary will be routed over the hill from Glen Suardal to the Totachocaire burn). [REDACTED] 4/10/19</p> <p>RSPB consulted on 14/10/2019 and [REDACTED] responded 17/02/2020. Several points for consideration were raised, summarised (shortened in places or brevity) as follows:</p> <p><b>Sea Eagle</b> – known to nest in adjacent woodland. Any forestry related works within 750m of known nests sites to be discussed with RSPB. Should there be a breeding pair in the woodland, it would be necessary to avoid works in the 750m radius visible zone from the forest edge during the breeding season (1st February – August) as these birds are sensitive to disturbance in this area, particularly during the breeding season. The woodland establishment in itself is not an issue for the sea eagles, merely the timing of planting and management operations in the disturbance zone.</p> <p><b>Golden eagles</b> - The proposed planting lies within the 5km core of the golden eagle territory on this peninsula. While the lower ground planting is unlikely to have a significant effect on their hunting territory, the line of the fence on the upper part of the hill gives cause for concern</p>	<p>protected species were recorded during field surveys.</p> <p>The surveyors also recorded base-line information on the location, extent and floristics of the existing vegetation. A vegetation map was created using the National Vegetation Classification and Phase 1 classification to identify and map the habitats. Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) were mapped and have been removed from the planting design.</p> <p>In follow up to RSPB reply, a site meeting was proposed and held on 02/03/2020 [REDACTED] RSPB). A walk over allowed lines of deer fencing to be discussed and the following points taken away:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fence lines – we walked the upper fenceline due to concerns over collision risks and agreed to vary the line at the top of Glen Suardal (to roughly follow a stream not around the top of crags). RSPB explained the way golden eagle and other bird's of prey known in the locality (merlin, hen harrier etc) hunt over such hill ground and the threats deer fencing can pose in this regard. For the upper section of fencing we agreed bird strike marking should be installed to reduce collision risk;</li> <li>• Tree species composition – desire to see oak in productive broadleaf areas and include some berry bearing trees;</li> <li>• Acid grassland/dry heath – desire to keep some pockets left open to benefit heathland specialists. Such pockets are also ideal native broadleaf planting sites and often under mapping threshold of 0.25 ha and therefore explanation given in operational plan text;</li> <li>• Some low-density scattered planting in riparian zones would enhance conditions for insects and the bird species which rely on them;</li> <li>• Areas of low lying, poorly drained peat and marsh (GWDTE's) to be kept</li> </ul>		<p>enhancing riparian zones using combinations of open ground and native broadleaves.</p> <p>Results of the vegetation surveys have been used to create the woodland creation maps and select most appropriate planting options. Where wet heath/M15 NVC's communities dominate the planting model has been altered from the general native broadleaf to upland birch woodland. GWDTE's have been removed from the planting design where relevant.</p> <p>Forest establishment and maintenance operations will be planned to avoid the bird breeding season where possible. Where this can't be avoided and works are within the previously outlined proximities (e.g. 750m of sea eagle nest) to known nests, RSPB will be consulted.</p> <p>Upper fence-lines have been altered based on walk-over with RSPB. While reducing collision risk this will also increase the available acid grassland/dry heath habitat at the top of Glen Suardal for hen harriers (by way of additional area excluded from planting design). Bird strike markers will be installed on upper fence-lines as requested.</p> <p>Low lying, poorly drained peat and marsh has been either mapped out of the planting design as OL or protected within designed open ground where previously considered suitable for planting. Areas of existing tree growth has similarly been mapped out of the design. These actions should mitigate the impact of the planting scheme on waders and moorland edge migrants.</p> <p>Rocky outcrops will be kept open, being unplatable in any case.</p>		
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<p><b>Hen Harrier</b> - aware that there has been a pair of hen harriers breeding in the northern extension of this proposal around the headwaters of the Suardal Burn. Hen harriers are one of our rarest raptors and a species of high conservation concern. They nest in open areas of deep heather and although not incompatible with native woodland development of this nature, it would be important to maintain open ground around the nest site to retain this important interest.</p> <p><b>Wading bird species</b> – Low lying, flat, peaty &amp; wet areas are important for wading bird species, including breeding and wintering snipe and woodcock (the latter species has undergone severe long-term decline). We strongly recommend that these damp areas are maintained as open ground, particularly as they are unsuitable for woodland. Golden plover feed (and possibly breed) on the wet flushes on the open top and shoulder of Creag a’Mhill which appears as unplanted ground in the proposal map created in August 2019 which is welcome. Maintaining this as open ground is crucial to retain the habitat on which they this species depends. However, the fence line to the east of the open ground may present a collision risk</p> <p><b>Twite</b> – The crags on Creag a’Mhill are used by breeding twite, a species whose status has changed from amber to red on account of the severe long term declines in numbers. Maintaining an open aspect around the crags and ensuring they remain so when any trees have established is crucial to retain the open moorland</p>	<p>open to benefit waders;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rocky outcrops and crags should be kept open to benefit species such as Twite.</li> </ul>				
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habitat they require					
<p><b>Natural regeneration</b> - existing scrubby areas are important for migrant moorland edge species such as the whinchat, a species which has undergone &gt;50% decline in the past two decades. Maintaining open ground around the marshy area and the adjacent willow scrub and bracken would retain this habitat for this red-listed species.</p>					
<b>Landscape</b>					
<p>Likely visual impact from Dunvegan village &amp; the public road north with more distant views across Loch Dunvegan from Colbost and Totaig. Lower roadside fence alignment will have to balance optimum enclosure of regeneration with landscape visual impact and road safety. LT line runs parallel to public road along western boundary D. Planting holdback required to maintain views from the house at Old Suardal &amp; Totchocaire. ■■■■■ 4/10/19.</p>	<p>Fencing design avoids deer fencing adjacent to public road to Claigan via use of deer grids and wider scale estate deer fencing plan.</p> <p>Photo layover of planting impact in south block (by Dunvegan village) have been appended to the application documents showing how mitigation proposed may look in future years.</p> <p>See comments under 'Population &amp; Human Health' with regards to viewpoints from residential properties which have been maintained under agreement with owners.</p> <p>Views to the planting area from Colbost and Totaig are distant and given the native planting proposed are hard to model. The planting design follows landscape design guidance by keeping hilltops and crags open/working with the landform.</p>	<p>Cpt 1 landscape impact limited to public roadside views from the minor public road north of the Totachocaire burn to Suardal – keep back from roadside and avoid corridor effect.</p> <p>Cpt 2 landscape impact to be mitigated from village and public road by SAM buffer and stock fencing along roadside. All paths and internal views to be maintained.</p>	<p>Fence-lines and planting designs have been planned to avoid disrupting key views from public roads and commonly visited viewpoints. For example, views from NG241501 back towards Dunvegan Castle have been kept open by avoiding planting the lower side of the road and using deer grids instead of fencing. This will have a financial impact on the project but will mitigate against potential negative landscape impacts in what is a key area for tourism on the island.</p> <p>Views from residential properties will be kept open in consultation with property owners.</p> <p>The planting design follows landscape design guidance by keeping hilltops and crags open/working with the landform.</p>	Closed	High
<b>Material Assets</b>					
<b>Water</b>					
<p>Neighbours at Old Suardal. ■■■■■ 14/05/2020 &amp; 29/5/2020. Service lines pointed out – water supply, telephone, and electricity.</p>	<p>The Old Suardal water supply was pointed out by ■■■■■ (during site meeting) and has been mapped then given a buffer zone from mounding and establishment operations, as agreed with the neighbours on site.</p> <p>The watercourse channel feeding the supply is naturally protected by steep bankings and existing willow growth but care will be taken</p>	<p>Mitigation for Old Suardal water supply to be agreed on site by applicant with householder. Water guidelines to protect all Totachocaire and tributaries.</p>	<p>The Old Suardal water supply was pointed out by ■■■■■ and has been mapped then given a buffer zone from mounding and establishment operations, as agreed with the neighbours on site.</p>	Closed	High

	not to disturb the stream or cause siltation through strict adherence to the Forest and Water Guidelines (current edition).				
<b>Air</b>					
<b>Climate</b>					
Highest exposure DAMS 19-21 on upper slopes with SE-SW aspects; DAMS 17 on more sheltered NW aspects in Glen Suardal. [REDACTED] 4/10/19.	Planting has been kept under 160m a.s.l even though soils and ground above this altitude may support native tree establishment and growth. The reason for this being to reduce risk of exposure being too high to permit successful tree establishment and growth. Sycamore is proposed as a shelter species within broadleaf planting areas to help softer species establish under potential salt-laden winds.	Wide variety of non-native broadleaves for climate resilience in productive zone. Buffers for natural regeneration around all existing seed sources required.	Most exposed areas removed from the planting design such that only 245 ha of the 550ha farm area is being proposed for planting. On more exposed areas of planting the tree species composition will be altered to lower growing, hardier broadleaves more capable of establishment and growth (e.g. eared willow, hawthorn, downy birch)	Closed	Med
<b>Land</b>					
Sites range from ex-improved fields at south east end, through W9 W17 W18 on mid slopes to W4 wet heath. Altitude range is sea level to 150m. NVC survey will determine relative extent of NB & NUB options. Some bracken & gorse treatment required. [REDACTED] 4/10/19	NVC/Phase 1 surveys carried out and appended to project documents. The results have been used to distinguish areas suitable for Native broadleaf planting – W9, 17 & 18 or W4 wet heath where M15 NVC types were prevalent. Where mixtures of wet and dry heath were recorded, the dominant NVC type was used to attribute the ground to native broadleaf or upland birch planting options. This survey also mapped GWDTEs and peatlands which have been kept out of the planting design.  Gorse & bracken stands were mapped and will be treated (cut or sprayed) to permit tree planting and establishment.	WEAG appraisal required as formerly livestock grazing on class 5.1 improved grassland.	Agricultural impact assessment by applicant uploaded online demonstrates loss of agricultural land not significantly adverse. NVC survey results have been used to inform the most suitable future native broadleaf woodland type for planting. Where poorer wet heaths were recorded (M15), planting proposals were altered from the Native Broadleaf to Native Upland Birch planting option.	Closed	Medium