

Population

To be completed post-consultation

Soils

A soil survey has been undertaken, and identified the presence of a relatively wide range of soils, including brown earths, mineral and peaty gleys, peaty podzols, and small areas of rankers and alluvial soils. In addition numerous areas of deep peat were recorded.

All cultivation and drainage works will comply with the Forestry Commission's 'Cultivation of Soils for Forestry' (Bulletin 119) and Scottish Forestry's 'Cultivation guidance for upland productive woodland creation sites'. No ploughing will be undertaken, and all cultivation and drainage works will involve the minimum vegetation and hydrological disturbance thought to be required to achieve the cultivation objectives. Where linear cultivation is proposed, involving the use of tine to break up any ironpan present within podzolic soils, the tine will be lifted at between 80 m and 40 m distance to minimise drainage impacts (the shorter stretches on steeper ground).

Relatively extensive areas of deep peat are encountered in the northern, eastern, and western sections of Stidriggs Farm. The northern areas of peat will be excluded from the application area, as will the eastern and western areas, although these latter areas will be enclosed within the deer fenced enclosure surrounding the planting (to minimise costs and grant requirements). The restoration of the peat bodies in these three locations is being actively explored.

There are also isolated pockets of peat within the application area, primarily but not exclusively in the central and south-western parts of the site. These range in size from over 3 ha to less than 0.1 ha.

All areas of deep peat will be retained as open ground and buffered by open ground to protect their hydrology. No coniferous planting, or any drainage and cultivation works, will occur within 20 m of deep peat. Native broadleaved planting may be undertaken within 10m -20 m of small areas of deep peat, less than 1 ha in size.

The proposed road line has been designed to avoid all areas of deep peat, and the fencelines have been located to avoid crossing deep peat where feasible.

Water

Stidriggs lies with the River Annan catchment, with all of the site draining into the Kinnel Water, which is a major tributary of the Annan. There are ten named burns which rise within Stidriggs; all are very minor features (width <1 m), and all have short lengths, either flowing directly into the Kinnel or into the Broadshaw Burn, its tributary.

Both watercourses rise in the Lowther Hills. The Kinnel Water supports populations of salmon, brown trout and grayling.

SEPA's Water Classification Hub indicates that the Kinnel Water has been in 'good' ecological condition for the past three years, having previously been rated as 'poor'. The Broadshaw Burn has followed a similar pattern.

Concerns raised about possible impacts resulting from increased woodland cover in the Kinnel catchment include:-

- Impact on water yield, increasing low flows and impacting aquatic life
- Impact on flow rates
- Impact on water quality, impacting aquatic life, including salmonids

- Woodland Cover

The Kinnel Water's catchment extends to roughly 5,500 ha. The woodland cover within the catchment has been calculated using data from the National Forest Inventory (NFI) and Scottish Forestry data on recent planting (not captured on the NFI). The table below sets out the information on existing woodland cover, and what impact the addition of Stidriggs has on the figures.

It should be noted that almost 44% of the woodland within the catchment is shown as being 'felled', which is an exceptionally high figure. While it is reasonable to assume that much of the felled woodland will be replanted with coniferous species, some of the felled area will be replanted with broadleaves, or left as open ground. Further it is possible that some of this felled area may be deforested (i.e. not replanted or regenerated) due to inclusion within a windfarm or for peatland restoration. In summary, the base line figure for total woodland cover within the catchment, at 37.3% is undoubtedly an exaggeration.

It should also be noted that while the catchment has most likely experienced a degree of deforestation in recent years, there has been very little planting within the catchment in the last five years or so; estimated at 47 ha.

Current Status				Kinnel Water		Stidriggs	Future Catchment	
Wood. Type	NFI	Recent Planting	Total Woodland	Wood. in Catchment	%	Planting	Woodland	%
	ha	ha	ha	ha	%	ha	ha	%
Bleaved	49.4	9.5	58.9	5425	1.1%	49.7	108.6	2.0%
Conifer	1026.6	37.6	1064.2	5425	19.6%	153.8	1218.0	22.5%
Felled	902.2	n/a	902.2	5425	16.6%	n/a	902.2	16.6%
Totals	1978.2	47.1	2025.3	5425	37.3%	203.5	2228.8	41.1%

Irrespective of the baseline figure, The information suggests that the proposed planting at Stidriggs will cover 1.0% of the total catchment area. Assuming that the given baseline figure is correct, this amounts to a 3.8% increase in the percentage of woodland cover.

Notably, the proposals would result in an 84% increase in broadleaved woodland within the catchment.

- Impact on Yield

Local consultees raised concerns over the impact of the proposals on the Kinnel Water, noting that they believed that the watercourse was experiencing and greater periods of low water levels. The Galloway Fisheries Trust stated that the Kinnel Water, like other watercourses, will be expected to be experiencing drier summers due to climate change impacts.

As noted above the proposals will result in an increase in woodland cover of just under 205 ha, which amounts to 1.0% of the catchment area. Roughly 154 ha of the planting will be of productive conifers. On the basis that, at maturity, coniferous cover will result in a decrease of 20% in water yield, then an overall decrease in water yield within the Kinnel catchment of around 0.2% is forecast. Notwithstanding that overall woodland cover in the catchment is likely to be decreasing, the impact arising from the proposal is thought to be negligible.

- Impact on Flow Rate

As cultivation will generally involve continuous and individual mounding (inverted and raised) and scarification, and that only limited drainage is anticipated, then there will be no significant increase in flow rate resulting from initial implementation works. As the woodland develops, there will be slight decrease in flow rate, as water percolation through the soil increases. This will boost low flow rates in dry periods

- Impact on Water Quality

A number of steps will be undertaken to ensure that the implementation works will not have negative impact on water quality. These are detailed below.

- o All works will adhere to the 'Forests and Water' guidelines and other environmental regulations, as detailed in the Operations Plan.
- o Prior to any cultivation and drainage works commencing, a 'Woodland Creation, Restocking and Drainage Diffuse Pollution Control Plan' will be produced, identifying all sensitive features and the proposed protective and mitigatory measures to be undertaken
- o All contractors will be given pre-start tool box talks covering the 'Diffuse Pollution Control Plan'
- o Much of the planting by the minor watercourses on site will be of native broadleaf character
- o Cultivation and drainage works within the catchment as a whole will be limited to mounding or screefing, with no linear cultivation being undertaken
- o Only a limited amount of drainage works is anticipated
- o Fuel spill kits will be carried in all vehicles at all times

- A minor amount of bracken control will be undertaken within the catchment, involving an overall application of glyphosate at the pre-planting stage on the basis that effective early control will require less herbicide input in the long term.
- Follow up treatment will involve spot or strip treatments of glyphosate, and manual control as required.
- While fertilizer may be applied to the diverse coniferous element or the poorer ground, consideration will be given to the use of fertilizer plugs at the planting stage, so avoiding potential run-off.

While the riparian zone of the Kinnel Water is outwith the application area, the river has numerous tributaries rising within the site. Significant native broadleaved planting is proposed for these smaller riparian area. In the short-medium term, the shading of these tributaries by tree cover will assist in lowering water temperatures, while leaf-fall will boost invertebrate foraging, while adding to these benefits in the medium-long term will be bank stabilisation and the supply of woody debris into the watercourses.

- Private Water Supplies

The Private Water Supply Assessment undertaken by EnviroCentre recorded that Stidriggs Farm and Newbank Farm were served by private water supplies that have catchments within the site. A copy of the Report is contained in Appendix 5, and the catchment areas and intakes are shown on Map 2 – Constraints.

Stidriggs Farm is owned by Annandale and Lochwood Estates, and is currently vacant. The intention is to rent the house out in the future, but prior to this the property will be connected to the public water supply. Given this, no particular mitigation measures are proposed just now, but should the situation change, and the private water supply come into use, then the same mitigation as detailed below for Newbank will be applied.

The catchment at Stidriggs PWS extends to 1.2 ha, and lies entirely within the application site. Assuming that the entire catchment is planted with conifers, the likely demand would be less than 2.5% of the flow exceeded for 99% of the time. The calculations include for a 40% decline in water yield if 100% of the catchment is under coniferous wood as well as a 20% in flows due to climate change (both of these assumptions take a very conservative approach).

The proposals include for 85% of the catchment to be planted with conifers, with 15% being planted with broadleaves. Impact calculations assume that broadleaves have no negative impacts on water yields.

The catchment for Newbank provides water to a domestic property as well as the farm steading; a daily demand of 4,800 litres is estimated. The catchment area is 0.51 ha. Applying the same presumptions to Newbank as used for Stidriggs (i.e. 100% of the catchment under coniferous woodland), the likely demand would be around 14% of the low flow exceeded 99% of the time.

Roughly 40% of Newbanks PWS catchment is outwith the site (as is the intake), and the area within the site will be planted with native broadleaved trees (42.5% of the catchment), or retained as open ground (7.5%). In summary, this suggests that the proposals in their own right will have no negative impact on water supply. However, it should be noted that using the climate change assumption, and that no trees will be planted within the catchment, the likely demand would be around 7% of the low flow exceeded 99% of the time.

- Mitigation Measures

A series of measures will be undertaken to protect the quality of water within Newbank's PWS catchment, as detailed below

- Prior to any cultivation and drainage works commencing, a 'Woodland Creation, Restocking and Drainage Diffuse Pollution Control Plan' will be produced, identifying all sensitive features and the proposed protective and mitigatory measures to be undertaken
- No coniferous planting will be undertaken within the catchment
- No planting will be undertaken within 25 m of the intake
- No mechanical cultivation will be undertaken within 50 m of the intake
- No tracks will be constructed within the PWS catchment
- No drainage will be undertaken within the catchment
- No herbicides or fertilizers will be stored within the catchment
- No herbicides or fertilizers will be applied within the catchment
- No fuel will be stored, or re-fuelling take place, within the catchment
- Visual checks on water quality will be undertaken during implementation works in the locality
- Contact details for the woodland manager will be given to the occupiers of Newbank Farm

Biodiversity - Habitats

A Habitat Survey Report was produced by Cameron Ecology to identify potential areas of habitat interest and to inform the design through the provision of guidance (see Appendix 2).

The Report notes that within the application area, marshy grassland is by some margin the most prevalent habitat (42.5% of the area), with unimproved and semi-improved/improved grass being the next largest (18% and 16% respectively). Wet heath accounts for 10% of the area, with over 5% supporting bog habitats.

The report identifies the key habitats on the farm as a whole, with the most valued habitats shown as red on the constraints map. These habitats are detailed below, together with a note showing how they are treated within the design.

Habitats/NVC Types	Recommendations (Ecologists)	Compliance
<p>Peatlands</p> <p>Including M17, some M15 and M20 as well as flushed area (M6, M15a).</p>	<p>Avoid planting, and buffer with open ground, even if not on deep peat</p>	<p>Most of the peatland habitats are outwith of the application area, but those within it will be retained as open ground. Where these habitats occur on deep peat, a buffer of 20 m will be retained as additional open ground, with no drainage being undertaken. Where the habitats are not on deep peat they will remain unplanted, with a buffer width of 10 m of open ground being maintained (with no drainage or planting being undertaken in the buffer)</p>
<p>Species rich wet grasslands</p> <p>Mainly species rich M23a, with small areas of unimproved natural grassland (MG1c).</p>	<p>Retain as open ground</p>	<p>Most of these areas are in the north of the farm, and on Haw Moss – both of these areas are outwith the application boundary.</p> <p>Where these habitats occur within the application area, they will remain unplanted, with a buffer width of 10m of open ground being maintained (with no drainage or planting being undertaken in the buffer)</p>
<p>Native Woodland</p> <p>Includes Stidriggs Wood (NVC W11) and wooded fringes of Kinnel Water and Whirly Burn (NVC W7).</p>	<p>Retain</p>	<p>The woodland by the Kinnel Water is outwith the application area, but the native woodlands on Stidriggs Hill and by the Whirly Burn will be retained. Native woodland planting will be undertaken around these woodlands, and natural regeneration of native species will be encouraged within the existing glades. Bracken control will be undertaken to facilitate seedling development, and fences will exclude deer.</p>

It is worth noting that a number of small pockets of deep peat recorded during the soils/peat survey were not identified as being of significant habitat value, due perhaps to 'improvements' to their vegetation arising from agricultural management. These pockets of deep peat will be retained in open ground and buffered as per 'Peatlands' above. It is likely that their habitat value will increase in the absence of agricultural grazing.

The report also highlights other habitats as having some biodiversity value; these are shown as amber on the Report's figure 5, and include less diverse wet grasslands (largely M23a) and species poor *Molinia* grasslands (including M25). The Report recommends giving consideration to leaving some of these habitats as open ground, and to planting some with native broadleaves (wet woodland types).

Large areas of 'amber' habitats have been omitted from the application area, while some amber areas within the site will be left open, and significant parts planted with wet woodland (based on NVC4 and NVC7).

The report also identifies opportunities for habitat enhancements. The table below lists these suggested opportunities, alongside information on how these opportunities will be realised.

Identified Opportunities	Proposals
<u>Peatland restoration</u> – peat habitat is being degraded by drainage and regeneration of Sitka spruce	The major areas of deep peat have been excluded from the application area, and restoration opportunities are being actively explored.
<u>Native woodland management</u> – Stidriggs Wood is lacking the recruitment of successor trees and shrubs	The exclusion of stock and deer will aid natural regeneration within the woodland glades, while bracken control will be undertaken to encourage the growth of any seedlings, as well as the spread of appropriate ground flora. See Operations Plan for further details (under 'Other')
<u>Native woodland expansion</u> – notably next to Stidriggs Wood, and where bracken, underlain by bluebells, occurs	The areas around Stidriggs Wood, and the woodland fragments by the Whirly Burn will be converted to native broadleaved woodland, while the establishment of oak/birch woodland will be undertaken on brown earth soils. Roughly 25% of the planting will comprise of native broadleaves.
<u>Native woodland connectivity</u> - linkage between Stidriggs Wood and the Kinnel water woodland strip is recommended	Establishing a connection between the Kinnel Water and Stidriggs Wood is not possible as the intervening land will remain in agricultural use. However, connectivity to the Kinnel Water will be promoted through woodland establishment along the length of the Whirly Burn, and much of the Green Burn. Overall, around 25% of the planting will be of broadleaved species (and almost entirely native in character).

<p>Creation of ponds/scrapes – this could benefit waders and other wildlife.</p>	<p>A series of shallow/seasonal ponds and scrapes will be created within the application area, located in open ground settings set back from the woodland edge, and avoiding habitats of value, archaeological features, and deep peat. Consideration will also be given to similar works outwith the application area, notably on open ground on mineral soils linked to peatland restoration opportunities.</p>
--	---

Biodiversity – Birds

A Breeding bird survey was undertaken in 2023 by Cameron Ecology. The survey covered the entire farm, plus a buffer around the site.

The results for amber and red listed species are set out below, together with an impact assessment and comments.

Species Name/ BoCC status	No. of regs.	Comments (Ecologist)	Impact Prediction
Cuckoo	3	Several individuals noted	Minor negative impact due to impact on meadow pipit (host species)
Curlew	9	Two territories interpreted from the data as shown in Figure 3 (both outwith site)	See below for discussion
Dipper	1	Not recorded in desk study, present on watercourses	No impact (likely to be on Kinnel Water)
Grey Wagtail	3	Watercourses - various locations	No impact
Kestrel	2	Hunting over open ground	Potential negative impact through loss of foraging ground in medium term
Lesser Redpoll	4	Scrubby areas to north	Neutral or minor positive impact
Linnet	3	In bog myrtle in NE	Minor negative impact due to loss of some habitat, although territory outwith application area
Mallard	2	Not recorded in desk study	No impact
Meadow Pipit	-	Commonest open ground bird. Not recorded individually.	Likely decline of 50% due to habitat loss; peatland restoration may be beneficial
Mistle Thrush	5	Spending time in open ground on hillsides	Likely positive impact through woodland creation
Reed Bunting	9	In and around wet grassland areas	Limited negative impact through loss of wet grassland, but wet woodland and open

Species Name/ BoCC status	No. of regs.	Comments (Ecologist)	Impact Prediction
			ground by burns will provide some suitable habitat
Rook	2	Farm buildings	Positive impact in the longer term, including provision of nesting sites
Skylark	138	Shown in Figure 4	Likely decline of 50% due to habitat loss
Snipe	9	Shown in Figure 3 (5 territories)	See below for discussion
Song Thrush	1	Forest edges	Positive impact through habitat creation
Sparrowhawk	2	Display flights from 2 males noted in raptor surveys - both over forestry to N	Positive impact through increase in prey provision
Tawny Owl	1	heard only - forestry to W	No impact; medium term loss of foraging habitat offset by increase in prey
Wheatear	8	around walls throughout	Minor negative impact through loss of open ground
Whinchat	3	3 territories, shown on Figure 4	Minor negative impact; 1 territory outwith site, 1 in peatland restoration area
Willow Warbler	9	abundant in forest edges	Minor positive impact through creation of woodland edges
Wren	14	Stidriggs Wood	Major positive impact through native woodland creation

In addition to impacts on the red and amber listed species present on site currently, there will be impacts on green-listed species. The large majority of the green listed species present on site are likely to benefit, as nearly all of them are woodland/woodland edge species.

The developing woodland and associated open ground will also be suitable for use by a range of species not currently observed on site, including species such as crossbill, woodpeckers, and goshawks.

Waders

The only waders recorded were curlew, snipe, and golden plover, with two territories interpreted for curlew, and five territories for snipe. Golden plover were not recorded as breeding

The BTO's 'Wader Sensitivity map shows a density of 0-1.7 pairs of curlew per km², which would be regarded as being of low sensitivity, with no densities given for snipe or golden plover. However, the Ecology Report notes that the input data for the locality may be less comprehensive than it is elsewhere. The Report concludes that the site is of local importance in terms of Upland Bird Assemblage

Assuming that a buffer width of 100 m was included in the breeding bird survey, the surveyed area was in the region of 540 ha.

The survey recorded two curlew territories, giving a density of roughly 0.4 pairs per ha over the surveyed area. One territory was recorded outwith of Stidriggs Farm, in the buffer zone to the south of League Hill while the other territory was recorded on Haw Moss, which is outwith the application area. The current intention is to include Haw Moss within the deer fence enclosure, and to undertake peatland restoration works.

The two recorded territories are within 200 m of the proposed woodland boundary, and as such would likely be displaced (displacement would also occur if peatland restoration works were carried out during the breeding season). However the territory on Haw Moss sits within an open area of roughly 40 ha with a larger area of open ground to the east, while the territory south of League Hill sits within an open area in excess of 125 ha, suggesting that local displacement is a possibility. The undertaking to carry out predator control (of crows and foxes) will limit predation levels, although it should be noted that there is a high density of badgers in the locality, which will limit the effectiveness of predator control.

The survey recorded five snipe territories; three of these were in the north-west of the farm, in a large area which is excluded from the application, and which is unlikely to be affected by the proposals. Two territories were recorded in the south-west application area, while both lie on the proposed planting footprint, there are extensive and connected areas of open ground in the general area with suitable habitat for breeding snipe, and no negative impact is predicted.

The proposed restoration of the peatlands may benefit wader species in the medium term.

Black Grouse

The breeding birds survey did not record any sightings of Black grouse.

The RSPB confirmed that a lek was recorded ~1.5 km to the south-west in 2018 (on the far side of Broadshaw Forest?), with the nearest more recent record being ~7 km on both the east and the west of the site.

In the light of these results, it is proposed that the enclosing deer fences are not marked, but that marking will be considered if black grouse are recorded within 1 km of the site in the future. The inclusion of significant amount of native broadleaved planting (~25% of the total), at varied spacings, and the large extent of open ground, will create suitable habitat for black grouse in the medium term.

Biodiversity – Protected and Other Species

A Protected Species Survey was carried out in 2023 by Cameron Ecology

- Badgers

Thirteen setts were recorded on Stidriggs and adjoining ground, with the entrance numbers ranging from 1 to 12. Five of the setts are within the application boundary, and three of these are in Stidriggs Wood. The two setts within the proposed planting footprint have a single and two-hole entrances.

The site will be re-surveyed prior to works commencing, and a badger sett disturbance licence will be applied for if required.

Any re-confirmed or newly identified sett will be protected, with no planting within 5 m of any entrances. No machinery will be used within 20 m of any active sett entrances (30 m in breeding season), with all works being undertaken manually. A badger sett disturbance licence will be applied for if required.

Contractors will be briefed on appropriate actions to be undertaken if signs of badger setts are revealed during the course of works.

On completion of the fencing works, and at intervals thereafter, the fence lines will be inspected for signs of badger activity, and badger gates will be fitted at clear entry points.

- Otters and Water Voles

An otter spraint was recorded by the Kinnel Water, but no holt locations were found. The ecological report notes that otters will use the Kinnel Water, and infrequent use of the minor watercourses within the site. No signs of water vole activity were recorded

No works are planned within 20 m of the Kinnel Water, and no negative impacts on otter and water vole are anticipated

- Bats

It is likely that bats forage over parts of the farm, notably along the watercourses and around Stidriggs Wood. The buildings at Stidriggs steady may provide suitable roosts, as may the veteran trees in Stidriggs Wood.

There are no proposals for any works near the buildings, and all veteran trees will be retained. In time the creation of extensive lengths of woodland edge will provide sheltered conditions for foraging.

- Other Species of Interest

Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterflies were recorded on the upper reaches of the Eyre Burn, close to the Forest of Ae. These species are closely associated with marsh violets, which occur in the botanically richer areas of flushed rush pasture, and it may be that these butterflies are present elsewhere on site. Their known location is outwith of the application area, in a large open area that may be included in peat restoration works. Other areas of botanically rich rush-pasture have been identified as being ecologically important (ie red on the constraints map), and have either been omitted from the application area, or retained as open ground.

Other butterflies noted in the Ecological Survey include ringlet, small heath, large skipper, and orange tip.

The woodland design excludes large parts of the survey area from the application area, and within this area, there are numerous open glades and rides, with a variety of orientations. The sheltered conditions provided by the woodland will benefit a range of invertebrates and reptiles.

Landscape - Designations

There are no known landscape designations affecting Stidriggs.

Landscape – Guidance

Stidriggs lies within NatureScot's 'Foothills- Dumfries and Galloway Landscape Character Type (175)' which equates to the 'Foothills' Landscape Character Area (LCA), as defined by the Dumfries and Galloway Landscape Assessment (Land Use Consultants, 1998). There is no guidance given in NatureScot's classification, and the latter document is light on woodland-specific guidance, although it provides some general and specific guidance. This guidance is noted below, in tandem with notes on how the design complies with this guidance

General Guidance	Compliance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Forestry could enhance or at least be appropriate in this landscape. However, the predominant land use is agriculture and should remain so. There is however varying capacity within the identified foothills units to accommodate forestry and woodlands</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Within the wider setting of Stidriggs, pastoral agriculture will remain the dominant land use. While the proposals will increase woodland cover within a 7.5 km radius by 1.2%, the site is of very limited visibility so impact on perceived land cover will be limited.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Planting applications should be assessed against the desirability of preserving the dominance of the agricultural landscape by leaving medium to large scale open areas enclosed within an open pattern of forest i.e. of medium scale, but of linear informal configuration rather than isolated blocks. This might allow a relationship with ridges and valleys.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>The proposal is on a medium scale, involving the creation of roughly 2025 ha of woodland within a 460 ha property.</i> ○ <i>The woodland itself will have a fairly open character due to the extensive amount of internal open ground, notably on the lower ground.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Important access and views to high ground should however be kept open. Many foothills areas contain significant archaeological remains. Any further planting should respect this leaving significantly large areas unforested to allow fully appreciation and understanding of the significance of the sites.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>The key view out from the site is from Stidriggs Hill Fort. Views up and down Annandale, and onto high ground and other hill forest will be maintained.</i> ○ <i>Large areas of ground have been excluded from the application area due to their cultural heritage value.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>The more sheltered valley and depressions of this landscape type support and offer opportunities for semi-natural woodland management and for broadleaf planting. Support should</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Stidriggs Wood, which clothes the northern and eastern slopes of Stidriggs Hill, is an 'Ancient, Semi-Natural Woodland'. It will be retained, protected and brought into management.</i>

<i>be given for proposals that realise these opportunities."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>The proposals include from roughly 50 ha of native woodland planting.</i>
Specific Guidance	Compliance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Seek to maintain large and open areas of land within forest, and to retain the general dominance of agricultural land uses</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Within the wider setting of Stidriggs, pastoral agriculture will remain the dominant land use. While the proposals will increase woodland cover within a 7.5 km radius by 1.2%, the site is of very limited visibility so impact on perceived land cover will be limited.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Seek to achieve an open framework of forest and woodland related to the incised landforms</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>The woodland itself will have a fairly open character due to the extensive amount of internal open ground, notably on the lower ground.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Seek to provide management for semi-natural woodlands and encourage broadleaf woodland planting in valleys integrated with new or existing forests</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Stidriggs Wood, which clothes the northern and eastern slopes of Stidriggs Hill, is an 'Ancient, Semi-Natural Woodland'. It will be retained, protected and brought into management.</i> o <i>The proposals include from roughly 50 ha of native woodland planting.</i>

The 'Landscape Design Guidance for Forest and Woodlands ' (DG Council, FCS, SNH, 1998) does give more detailed and forestry-related guidance for the 'Foothills' LCA, as well as identifying opportunities and constraints. These are noted below, along with a note of how the design complies.

Opportunities and Constraints	Compliance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Opportunities for increasing woodland cover are variable, with moderate potential in some areas. Open agricultural land, however is an important feature in some parts of the Foothills Landscape and should remain the dominant land use.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Within the wider setting of Stidriggs, pastoral agriculture will remain the dominant land use. While the proposals will increase woodland cover within a 7.5 km radius by 1.2%, the site is of very limited visibility so impact on perceived land cover will be limited</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Planting should be avoided in areas where there are particularly striking examples of strong field patterns, with stone dykes and line of trees, and in vicinity of important archaeological sites.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>While there are no striking examples of strong field patterns on Stidriggs, the farm hosts features of regional and national cultural heritage significance. These areas have largely been excluded from the application area, and the design has been modified to mitigate against negative impacts.</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Sheltered valleys and depressions offer opportunities for establishing a predominantly broadleaved and mixed woodland, including the management of existing woodlands. Native broadleaves should be introduced in strategic locations where they will most benefit conservation and amenity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o While there are no major valleys within the site, broadleaved planting has been targeted along the minor watercourses o Stidriggs Wood, which clothes the northern and eastern slopes of Stidriggs Hill, is an 'Ancient, Semi-Natural Woodland'. It will be retained, protected and brought into management. o The proposals include from roughly 50 ha of native woodland planting, with much of this planting being focused on external edges, which will maximize landscape, and biodiversity benefits
<p>Design Guidance</p>	<p>Compliance</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Design and restructure forests to reflect the underlying landform with large-scale, simple shapes and forest margins that taper at open ground. o Recognise transitions between large-scale upland landscapes, where simple extensive forest units would be appropriate, and smaller landscape patterns at lower elevations, where field enclosures dominate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The topography in the south and central parts of the site comprises of medium-scale knowes and hollows; medium-scale planting, of simple mixtures, will be focused on the knowes, with the hollows being the focus of native broadleaved planting and open ground. o The northern part of the site is more diverse in terms of topography and land cover, and the design here is more intimate, with greater species diversity, and with broadleaved planting targeted around watercourses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o It is appropriate to use a relatively low number of species within the extensive forest units in upland zones but at lower elevations, and on internal and lower forest margins, a more varied mix of species is desirable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o As noted above, the woodland design for higher, less visible ground involves using a limited range of species, while significant species diversity will be used on the lower, more visible parts of the site
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Areas of forest and areas of open agricultural land should be sufficiently extensive to reflect the broad scale of the underlying landform; smaller woodland and a more diverse pattern of woodland cover on lower slopes will enhance lower forest margins and help to emphasise local landscape character. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o In terms of Stidriggs Farm as a whole, the retention of open ground has focused on the lower ground (where the best agricultural land and the peatland restoration opportunities lie. o Within the application area, and as noted above, the woodland design for higher, less visible ground involves using a limited range of species dissected by open ground in the hollows, while significant species diversity, including large areas of broadleaved planting, will be used on the lower, more visible parts of the site.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Retain opportunities for extensive, panoramic views, particularly from well – travelled roads and footpaths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o There will be limited impact on views out from the cross-site path, and any views lost along this route are available from other, open stretches. o The key view out from the site is from Stidriggs Hill Fort. Views up and down Annandale, and onto high ground and other hill forest will be maintained.
--	--

Landscape – Visibility

Despite its size, Stidriggs is generally of low visibility. This is in part due to its elevated location above the Kinnel Water, and to higher ground being present to the west. Further, there are a limited number of visual receptors, and these are generally low-key. The location is essentially rural, and the land to the west and north is virtually unpopulated. Even where visual receptors are theoretically present, intervening woodlands and trees frequently limit visibility.

While there is a scattering of houses on the eastern fringes of the site, none have clear views of the site, and there are no settlements of any size with views onto site. While Annandale forms a major transport corridor, there are no views of the site available from the M74 and the west coast railway.

Where available, visibility is largely confined to the eastern-most slopes, and the area around Stidriggs Hill and Wood.

The table below provides a description of key and potential viewpoints, together with a note of the likely impact of the woodland:-

Viewpoint/ Grid ref.	Comments	Impact
The U 316 NT 072996	Clear views over the eastern parts of the site are available from the U 316 road as it descends towards the Kinnel Water. The central skyline is formed by League Hill and Knockilsine Hill, topped by turbines on Harestanes windfarm, with the more distant and higher Lowther Hills visible to the north. Stidriggs Wood is visually prominent, as is the mast on League Hill but most of the site appears to be relatively uniform and open.	Broadleaved woodland will strengthen and expand on the existing woodland on Stidriggs Hill, while a large open area will be maintained around the hill fort, allowing views in and out. Broadleaved woodland on the lower ground will soften the appearance of the Forest of Ae. The new woodland will appear on the skyline to the south, including Scots pine on League Hill, while the exclusion of Haw Moss will prevent the woodland edge from appearing as a linear feature.

<p>The U316/ Annandale Way NT 067988</p>	<p>The south-eastern part of the site is visible from the road, which forms part of the Annandale Way, with League Hill and the slopes of Willie Wilkin's Craig forming the skyline, with no longer distance views being available as side from some turbines. The site, and the farmland 10 the foreground is dominated by open fields of improved and unimproved grasslands, with very limited enclosure, aside from a network of dykes. The margins of Stidriggs Wood are visible to the north.</p>	<p>Broadleaved planting above Stidriggs Wood will reinforce its presence, while broadleaved, and Scots pine planting on the visible face of League Hill will emphasise its presence in the landscape. While the eastern edge of the woodland will occupy a position on the skyline, the exclusion of Haw Moss will reduce its linearity, an]as well as obscuring some of the wind turbines in the distance.</p> <p>The use of small groups of broadleaves on the visible margins of the Sitka spruce will have a softening effect.</p>
<p>Crooked Road/Southern Upland Way NS 063018</p>	<p>The elevated position of the road allows middle distance views onto the northern part of the site, although intervening topography and trees often restricts visibility of the site. The improved grass fields in the lower parts of the farm contrasts with the rough moorland vegetation on the rounded hills above. The hard linear edge of the Forest of Ae frames the site to the west, and numerous wind turbines are visible on the skyline above. Views down the Kinnel Water valley are framed by woodlands, including the remaining fragments of Stidriggs Wood, but generally there is limited enclosure.</p>	<p>The woodland will clothe the higher ground within the site, merging with the adjacent Forest of Ae. Sitka spruce will be the dominant species, but much of it will be hidden from view</p> <p>Open ground retained above the farm steading, by the Kennel Burn, and around Stidriggs Hill Fort will break up the woodland mass, while the use of a range of broadleaved and coniferous mixes will create a high level of visual diversity on the most visible lower slopes.</p> <p>Broadleaves will also be used to reinforce Stidriggs Wood as an attractive feature, and to emphasise the presence of shallow gulleys dissecting the hill slopes.</p>
<p><u>West and South</u></p>	<p>Visibility from the west and south is very limited. The Forest of Ae blocks any views from the west, and hills and woods limit views from lower ground to the south. There is a general absence of visual receptors, most notably to the west.</p>	<p>There will be minimal visual impact on views from the west and south. League Hill, topped by the mast, is the only part of the site that is clearly visible from the south (with no visibility from the west), and then only at a distance. The creation of a stand of Scots Pine on the visible face will emphasise the presence of the hill.</p>

<u>North and East</u>	There are few visual receptors to the north, with views from the M 74, the railway, and Beattock being prevented by intervening topography and trees. Limited and distance views are available from elevated ground to the east, with the Forest of Ae, Harestanes windfarm and the Lowther Hills dominating any such views.	<p>The impact on the view from the U316 to the east of site (described above) provides an indication of the impact from viewpoints much further to the east. When viewed from higher ground in eastern Annandale, the woodland will fit into a mosaic of smaller woods and fields, and will soften the visible edge of the Forest of Ae.</p> <p>The impact on the view from Crooked Road (described above) gives the clearest picture of visual impacts as seen from the north.</p>
-----------------------	--	---

Landscape perspective images have been produced to show the impact on key views (see Visual Impact Perspectives - Appendix 4).

In terms of views out from the site, those from Stidriggs Hill Fort are considered to be key; the impact on these views is discussed under 'Cultural Heritage' below, while the Visual Impact Perspectives (Appendix 4) contains perspective images of the impacts.

While the core path through the site appears to received only low-level use, the design has sought to provide an attractive setting from the short stretch of the route which passes through the woodland.

Cultural Heritage

As noted in the Operations Plan, Stidriggs Farm contains both numerous and extensive features of archaeological interest, including four Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's), and almost 40 features listed on Canmore and the Council's Historical Environment Records (HER). The HER also identifies a number of 'Archaeological Interest Areas' (AIA), and the northern/north-eastern quarter of the farm as being within an 'Archaeologically Sensitive Area (ASA)'. The wider locality also contains a high level of interest, including features which have a relationship to ones within the site, notably prehistoric hill forts and settlements.

A Historic Environment Assessment and Survey was undertaken by Calluna Archaeology to survey and assess the site and the features present (see Appendix 3 for a copy of their Report). The report covered the entire Farm, and also picked up on a few features outwith of the property. The location of the features are shown on Maps 2bi and 2bii, as are the locations of the 'Archeologically Sensitive Area' and 'Archaeological Interest Areas'

The Archaeological Report identified and assessed 130 features, including the 4 SAM's and 38 features recorded on Canmore and in the HER. The table below lists all 130 features and gives their Canmore and HER numbers alongside a brief description and a note of their significance. It should be noted that a handful of sites are outwith of the farm boundary, and that the 'Archaeologically Sensitive Area' has been assigned a number in its own right. The report identified and mapped an 'Extended Area of Archaeological Activity' (EAAA), which covers the northern 60% of the farm.

In the light of the nature and extent of interest, large parts of the farm were excluded for consideration of woodland planting at an early stage. The excluded areas include large parts in the north and north west of the farm. All four of the Scheduled features are outwith the proposed application area, as are 28 of the 38 HER/Canmore recorded features.

The table below lists all of the identified features, and notes their given significance and the archaeologist recommendations for mitigation. It should be noted that the archaeologist placed many of the features within their 'Extended Area of Archaeological Activity', and suggested that the entire EAAA should be excluded from consideration for planting, as should all features within the Council's Archaeologically Sensitive Area.

The right-hand column of the table sets out what mitigation measures have been included within the proposals. When deriving what is thought to be appropriate mitigation, the view was taken that this EAAA and ASA exclusion approach was overly restrictive, and that there is scope for woodland creation within the EAAA and ASA. This view was discussed with the Council's Archaeologist, with an early version of the table below being sent to them for consideration, as well as a site meeting being conducted. Feedback from the Council Archaeologist was then taken into account within the design, with changes being made to the originally proposed mitigation; additional sensitive areas identified by the Council's Archaeologist are shown in red on Maps 2bi and 2bii. This approach was very useful in that the archaeology report didn't provide any mitigation for features within the ASA and EAAA, on the basis that these entire areas would be excluded from consideration.

It should be noted that in some instances, the mitigation included in the proposals exceeds the mitigation measures included in the archaeological report. For instance, the general rule is that a buffer of 10m width should be used rather than the recommended 5 m. Where feasible, features have been set in larger areas of open ground, with access maintained.

Site No.	Status	S'fificance	Description	HEA Suggested Mitigation	Proposal
01	-	Regional	Archaeologically Sensitive Area (Beattock Hill)	It is suggested that this area is excluded from the planting scheme.	Covered below
02	HER/C'more	National	Cairnfield (8 cairns)	This site lies within the Council ASA. See Site 1.	Retained in agricultural use

Site No.	Status	S'fificance	Description	HEA Suggested Mitigation	Proposal
03	SAM	National	Scooped settlement	The Scheduled Area should have an additional buffer zone of 10m to avoid damage. This site also lies within the Council ASA.	Retained in agricultural use
04	HER/C'more	National	Cairnfield (22)	This site lies within the Council ASA. See Site 1.	Retained in agricultural use
05	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	This site lies within the Council ASA. See Site 1.	Retained in agricultural use
06	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	This site lies within the Council ASA. See Site 1.	Retained in agricultural use
07	HER/C'more	Other	Field boundary, bank	This site lies within the Council ASA. See Site 1.	Retained in agricultural use
08	HER/C'more	Local	Four cairns	This site lies within the Council ASA. See Site 1.	Retained in agricultural use
09	HER/C'more	Regional/ Local	Cairns, buildings & enclosures	This site lies within the Council ASA. See Site 1.	Outwith property
10	HER/C'more	National	Iron Age Building; cairn; settlement; scooped settlement	This site lies within the Council ASA. See Site 1.	Retained in agricultural use (believed to refer to SAMs in wider area)
11	HER/C'more	Local	Medieval/19 th century building; enclosure	This site lies within the Council ASA. See Site 1.	Retained in agricultural use
12	SAM	National	Medieval/19 th century; cultivation terrace; building; rig & furrow; cairn; enclosure	No work should take place within the Scheduled Areas without permission from HES. This site also lies within the Council ASA.	Retained in agricultural use
13	HER/C'more	Local	Earth bank and cultivation	This site lies within the Council ASA.	Retained in agricultural use
14	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	These sites lie within the EAAA.	Retained in agricultural use
15	HER/C'more	None	Burnt mound	These sites lie within the EAAA.	Retained in agricultural use
16	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	These sites lie within the EAAA.	Retained in agricultural use
17	HER/C'more	Unknown	Building (medieval/post-medieval)	This site lies within the EAAA.	Retained in agricultural use
18	HER/C'more	Regional	Cairn (kerbed?)	This site lies within the EAAA.	Retained in agricultural use

Site No.	Status	S'ficance	Description	HEA Suggested Mitigation	Proposal
19	HER/C'more	Regional	Hut circle	This site lies within the EAAA.	Retained in agricultural use
20	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	This site lies within the EAAA.	10m buffer
21	HER/C'more	Other	Enclosure; rig & furrow	Site 21 lies within the ASA.	Retained in agricultural use
22	HER/C'more	Local	Stidriggs Farm	No mitigation required.	Outwith property
23	HER/C'more	Local	Cairns	Site 23 lies within the EAAA.	10m buffers/large clearing
24	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	Site 24 lies within the EAAA.	10m buffer
25	SAM	National	Settlement; fort	No works should take place within the Scheduled Area without the permission of HES.	Retained in agricultural use
26	HER/C'more	Local	Rig & furrow	Site 26 lies within the ASA	Retained in agricultural use
27	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	Site 27 lies within the ASA	Retained in agricultural use
28	HER/C'more	Local	Cairnfield	Site 28 lies within the ASA	10m buffer around all cairns/larger clearing (0.25 ha)
29	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	Site 29 lies within the ASA	10m buffer
30	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	Site 30 lies within the ASA	10m buffer
31	SAM	National	Burial cairn?	Site 31 lies within the ASA	Retained in agricultural use
32	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	Site 32 lies within the ASA	Retained in agricultural use
33	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	Site 33 lies within the ASA	Retained in agricultural use
34	HER/C'more	Regional	Enclosure; building; scooped settlement	Site 34 lies within the ASA	20m buffer/larger clearing RA
35	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	It is suggested that there is no planting along the sides of the stream.	Retained in agricultural use
36	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	It is suggested that there is no planting along the sides of the stream.	Retained in agricultural use
37	HER/C'more	Local	Structure	A buffer zone of 5m from this potential pre-Improvement structure is suggested.	10m buffer

Site No.	Status	S'fificance	Description	HEA Suggested Mitigation	Proposal
38	HER/C'more	Regional	Burnt mound	It is suggested that there is no planting along the sides of the stream.	Set in large area (0.5 ha) of open ground, open to edge
39		Local	Cairn/?building	A buffer zone of 5m from this potential pre-Improvement structure is suggested	Retained in agricultural use
40		Local	Track	EAAA	5 m buffer on edge
41		Local	Cairn	EAAA	10m buffer
42		Local	Quarry	ASA	10m buffer open to edge
43		Local	Drystone wall	-	5m buffer – not mapped
44		Other	Earth bank	EAAA	5m buffer – not mapped
45		Local	Cairn (clearance)	EAAA	10m buffer open to edge
46		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
47		Local	Sheepfold	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
48		Local	Cairn (clearance)	EAAA	10m buffer
49		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	10m buffer
50		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	10m buffer
51		Local	Cairn	ASA	10m buffer
52		Other	Earth bank	EAAA	10m buffer open to edge
53		Other	Earth bank	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
54		Regional	Circular enclosure	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
55		Local	Sheep shelter	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
56		Other	Earth bank	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
57		Local	Cairn (clearance)/?quarry	ASA	10m buffer
58		Other	Earth bank, enclosure	EAAA	10m buffer
59		Local	Cairn (clearance)	EAAA	10m buffer/open to edge
60		Local	Cairn (clearance)	EAAA	10m buffer/open to edge
61		Local	Circular feature/quarry?	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
62		Regional	?Burial cairn	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
63		Local	Cairn (clearance)	3m buffer	10m buffer
64		Local	Sheepfold	5m buffer	10m buffer
65		Local	?Cairn	3m buffer	Retained in agricultural use
66		Local	Cairn	EAAA	10m buffer
67		Local	Cairn	3m buffer	10m buffer
68		Local	Quarry	-	no action
69		Local	Sheep pen	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
70		Other	Earth bank	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
71		Local	Revetted wall	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
72		Local	Cairn	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
73		Regional	Burial cairn	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
74		Local	Cairn	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
75		Local	Linear cairn/?building	ASA	Retained in agricultural use

Site No.	Status	S'fificance	Description	HEA Suggested Mitigation	Proposal
76		Local	Cairn	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
77		Local	Cairn	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
78		Local	Cairn	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
79		Local	Cairn (robbed?)/stook base?	EAAA	Outwith property
80		Local	Oval-shaped enclosure	Buffer zone of 5m.	Retained in agricultural use
81		Local	Cairn (clearance)	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
82		None	Drain	-	Retained in agricultural use
83		Local	?Building	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
84		Local	?Building	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
85		Local	?Building	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
86		Local	?Building	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
87		Local	Cairn (excavated?)	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
88		Other	Enclosure	EAAA	10m buffer
89		Local	?Building	ASA	10m buffer/RA
90		Local	Old quarries	-	no action
91		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	10m buffer/open to edge
92		Local	Drystone wall	ASA	5m buffer – not mapped
93		Other	Earth & stone bank	ASA	5m buffe – not mapped
94		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	10m buffer
95		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
96		Other	Earth & stone bank	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
97		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
98		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
99		Local	Footbridge	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
100		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
101		Local	Drystone wall	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
102		Local	?Corn-drying kiln	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
103		Regional	Drove road	EAAA	Part retained in agricultural use/retained with 7m buffer within site -not mapped
104		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	10m buffer
105		Other	Earth bank	ASA	5m buffer not mapped
106		Local	Cairn/?building	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
107		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
108		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
109		Local	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
110		Local	?Building	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
111		Other	Enclosure	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
112		Other	Earth & stone bank	ASA	5m buffer
113		Regional	?Hut circle	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
114		Regional	Large cairn	ASA	10m buffer
115		Local	?Building	ASA	10m buffer
116		None	Gate	-	Outwith property
117		Local	?Cairn	EAAA	10m buffer
118	HER/C'more	Local	Robbed cairn	3m buffer	10m buffer

Site No.	Status	S'fificance	Description	HEA Suggested Mitigation	Proposal
119		<i>Other</i>	Earth & stone bank	3m buffer to either side	10m buffer
120		<i>None</i>	Drainage ditch	-	no action
121		<i>Local</i>	Sheep shelter	5m buffer	10m buffer
122		<i>Regional</i>	Circular feature/?hut circle	5m buffer	10m buffer/ in larger area
123		<i>Regional</i>	Burnt mound	EAAA	10m buffer/large open area
124		<i>Other</i>	Rig and furrow	ASA	Retained in agricultural use
125		<i>Local</i>	Cairn (clearance)	EAAA	10m buffer
126		<i>Local</i>	Cairn (clearance)	ASA	10m buffer
127		<i>Local</i>	Large earth-banked enclosure	EAAA	5m buffer
128		<i>Local</i>	Old gravel pit	-	5m buffer/ on edge
129		<i>Local</i>	Cairn	ASA	Retained in agricultural use/5m buffer
130		<i>Local</i>	Cairn	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use
131		<i>Regional</i>	Possible site of 18 th century settlement	EAAA	Retained in agricultural use

ASA – Archaeologically Sensitive Area (Council Designation)

AIA – Archaeological Interest Areas (tighter Council Designation- not used in table below but shown on maps)

EAAA – Extended Area of Archaeological Activity (Archaeological Consultants designation)

It was also recognised at an early stage that as well as following statutory guidance on protective buffers, the setting of, and views out from, scheduled monuments is important, and consequently extensive discussions were held with Historic Environment Scotland in this respect. Given that the scooped settlement by the Kinnel Water and Eyre Burn (SM12607) and the medieval cultivation and settlement remains by the Fauld Burn (SM12613) were excluded, and remote, from the application area, the main feature of concern was the Hill Fort on Stidriggs Hill (SM10545). Views out from the hill fort to a number of associated features, were considered; with intervisibility between Stidriggs Fort and the following being the subject of intervisibility analysis

- Eyre Burn Settlement (SM12613)
- Beattock Hill Fort (SM4748)
- Knock Hill (SM2197)
- Park Hill (SM10544)

The analysis involved using computer-generated visualisations to show the impact of the proposed woodland growth on views to these features from Stidriggs. While Historic Environment Scotland were unable to attend the site meeting held to discuss the issue, following feedback provided to them by the Council Archaeologist, Historic Environment Scotland confirmed that they were content with the proposals.

Perspective images showing the visual impact on the key views out from Stidriggs Fort are included in Appendix 4 - Visual Perspectives

In addition to excluding land around the Hill Fort from the application area, much of the woodland around the hill fort will be of lower density broadleaved planting; this will provide for a 'softer' setting, and reduce the risk of any damage occurring during harvesting operations

- Further Mitigation

The stated buffer zones around features of archaeological value will be marked out prior to works commencing, using a qualified archaeologist if required. Upstanding features to be avoided will be marked on maps.

No cultivation or planting will take place within 5m of embankments, and upstanding features such as stone dykes.

All contractors will be briefed on the likelihood of encountering historical artefacts during works, and on the procedures to be followed in the event of potential finds. Particular emphasis will be placed on enabling the planting contractors to identify possible artefacts of interest uncovered by cultivation works.

Roads

The farm steading is accessed off the U 316 road, which connects to the A 701 trunk road. The U 316 road is relatively narrow and twisting, and it is classed as a 'Consultation' route on the Timber Transport Map.

There are short stretches of firm track within the site, mostly around the steading, but also extending westwards towards the Forest of Ae.

The timber haul road built to connect the Forest of Ae with the A 701 runs along the southern edge of the site (Annandale Timber Transport Link).

The intention is to use both the existing accesses off the U 316 and the timber haul road for establishment and initial maintenance purposes. In the medium term a forest road will be constructed running north-south between the timber haul road and the existing track near Stidriggs steading. A ~20 m wide corridor has been left open in the design for this purpose, with further open ground located at proposed turning heads and quarries. This ground is shown as 'other land' in the Operations Maps

At the harvesting stage, all timber will be extracted southwards onto the timber haul road, which connects directly onto the A 701. This approach will minimise disturbance to local residents and avoid the potential for damage to the local minor road network.

- Estimation of Impacts

Over the timespan of a single rotation at Stidriggs it is estimated that there would be roughly 2,775 return lorry movements, based on 25 tonne loads, and an average yield of 450 tonnes per ha for the 154 ha of productive coniferous woodland proposed.

While this rotational period may span between 2027 and 2092 it is recognised that timber movement will be concentrated around 2045-2050 (for thinning) and between 2065 – 2080 (for clear-felling).

Once an uneven aged structure is attained at Stidriggs, this would equate to roughly 45 return lorry movements per year.

The Annandale Timber Transport Link primarily serves the forest of Ae, and it is estimated that over the next 25 years, roughly 44,000 tonnes of timber will be removed each year, equating to 1,760 return lorry movements per annum. That said the number of lorry movements in recent years has been higher than average, as the Forest of Ae reached peak restructuring stage as well as felling for windfarm construction. Conversely, figures provided by FLS suggest that around 1,000 lorry movements per year are anticipated between 2026 and 2036

The road also serves much smaller- scale productive woodlands on Annandale Estate, as well as lorries serving Harestanes windfarm. It is understood that there is no cap on the number of lorry movements permitted on the Timber Transport Link.

Recreation

As noted in the Operations Plan, the site is visible from the Annadale Way to the east and the Southern Upland Way to the north, it has connections to a minor public road and the Annandale Timber Transport Link, and is crossed by a core path (on a firm surface) leading through the Forest of Ae to connect to Thornhill.

The farm also hosts features of cultural heritage interest, such as the Eyre Burn settlement and Stidriggs Hill Fort

However, recreational use of the site appears to be at a very low level.

- Protection of Existing Routes

The cross-site core path will remain fully open and unfenced, allowing unfettered access to the archaeological interests at Eyre Burn and Fauld Burn, as well as access to the Forest of Ae. The core path corridor will be maintained as open ground, and the surface will be maintained in a usable condition

- Enhancement of Recreational Use

All-user gates will be installed to facilitate access to Stidriggs Hill Fort and, in the north of the site, to the Kinnel Water.

The proposed construction of a forest road connecting the timber haulage road to the track which serves Stidriggs Farm steading will create a circular, surfaced route which could be used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Directional signage will be erected at the 'recreational' entrances.

Unfettered access will be available throughout the site.