

Contact: Robert Mayhew
Tel No: 01434611539
Email: robert.mayhew@nnpa.org.uk
Date: 9th December 2020

Northumberland National Park Authority
Eastburn, South Park, Hexham
Northumberland NE46 1BS

Richard Pow
Partnerships and Expertise Manager
Forestry Commission England
Room G34, Foss House
Kings Pool
1-2 Peasholme Green
York
YO1 7PX

Dear Richard,

Woodland Creation Grant Application: Wallshield Farm

Further to my previous correspondence in relation to the Wallshield 2 forestry plantation application dated 10th November 2019, 28th April 2020 and 17th July 2020 I can confirm that Members of the Authority have today duly considered the proposals set out in the Wallshield 2 Woodland Creation Grant application, details of which were sent through for consideration on the 20th October 2020.

Firstly, I would like to raise their disappointment in being asked to re-consider a productive woodland application on the same piece of land that was put forward back in 2013 as part of the original Wallshield woodland application. It is understood that this area of land was, following negotiation with the applicant and Forestry Commission, taken out due to the negative effects that a 77 hectare plantation would have on the landscape character, views, ecology and access in this part of the National Park and Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. To see this 33 hectare site now being brought back and being assessed on its own merits rather than as part of the combined 77 hectare Wallshield site, has caused members to raise concerns with the effectiveness of the forestry assessment process.

Members of The Authority took a unanimous decision to objected to the current application to establish a further 33 hectare forestry plantation at Wallshield farm in the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site and National Park.

The grounds for this objection are:

- a) The combined effect that the woodland creation proposals would have, alongside those of the Wallshield 1 scheme, upon the views and setting within the National Park/ Hadrian's Wall landscape, particularly for those receptor sites to the south west on the Pennine Way and Hadrian's Wall Path National Trails; and also from the public rights of way that cross the application site. The proposals are also likely to have

detrimental implications for the neighbouring property of Scotchcoulter to the north, affecting both key southerly views and also on the sense of place, as assessed by the Head of Conservation.

- b) The impact that this planting scheme would have on breeding birds, both on the site and adjacent to it. In particular affecting the long-term abundance and range of the curlew, an IUCN red list near-threatened species as well as a priority species listed under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The proposals would be counterproductive to the numerous funding initiatives being put in place to secure the future of this iconic species within the Hadrian's Wall landscape.
- c) The loss of 21 Skylark territories and impact upon other red listed bird species is also deemed unacceptable, as is the lack of meaningful species diversity in the trees identified to be planted.
- d) The current proposals as indicated on the scheme compartment plan would overplant and obstruct three existing public rights of way and as such is not in keeping with the statutory requirements identified within the UK Forestry Standard.
- e) The loss of 30 hectares of Access Land. Members stated that they did not wish to see the loss of 'Access land' as a result of this forestry proposal, especially if the scheme were to be planted using public funds. Woodland does not meet the definition of 'Open Country' as identified in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. The public's right of open access should be retained by the applicant being asked to dedicate the site under Section 16 of the CROW Act.

The Authority is fully aware of the Government's targets to plant 30,000 hectares of new woodland each year for 25 years across the UK from 2025 and is actively working with others to help contribute towards this, including mapping opportunities for new woodland across Northumberland as part of the Great Northumberland Forest initiative.

It is recognised that commercial forestry is an important part of the rural economy in parts of the National Park but it is a fine balancing act when it comes to ensuring that new forestry proposals are not detrimental to the landscape character, wildlife and special qualities of the National Park that residents and visitors cherish so much.

In the case of the Wallshield 2 application, the Authority feels that the proposal is inappropriate and is likely to have long-term detrimental effects on the landscape, biodiversity and special qualities of the National Park. The scheme is not in keeping with the National Park Authority's aspirations of increasing tree cover in line with the principle of the right tree in the right place.

If a revised planting plan is to be drawn up following this consultation period, the Authority would welcome receiving a copy of this, and finally; if you have any questions in relation to the above matter please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely



Robert Mayhew
Head of Conservation
robert.mayhew@nnpa.org.uk

