



Please complete this form to find out if you need consent from Forestry Commission Scotland, under the **Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017**, to carry out your proposed forestry project. Please refer to Schedule 2 Selection Criteria for Screening Forestry Projects under [Applying for an opinion](#). If you are not sure about what information to include on this form please contact your [local Conservancy office](#).

Proposed Work							
Please put a cross in the box to indicate the type of work you are proposing to carry out. Give the area in hectares and where appropriate the percentage of conifers and broadleaves							
Proposed Work	select	Area in hectares	% Conifer	% Broad-leaves	Proposed work	select	Area in hectares
Afforestation	<input type="checkbox"/>				Forest roads	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Deforestation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1048	100		Forest quarry	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Location of work		West Sutherland Forest, By Rosehall					

Description of Forestry Project and Location
Provide details of the forestry project (size, design, use of natural resources such as soil, and the cumulative effect if relevant). Please attach map(s) showing the boundary of the proposed work and other known details.
<p>This EIA is for a priority habitat restoration project, which would restore flushed and unflushed BLANKET BOG, and UPLAND HEATH, both wet and and dry types. The area of the project will total 2696 Ha of which 1048 will be forest to bog involving the removal of tree crops and the remainder will be 1648 Ha of improvements to currently open ground. The methods for restoring the BLANKET BOG would include installing peat dams, stump flipping and ground smoothing, and possibly back fill trenching, depending on further inspection.</p> <p>FLS has carried out approximately 4,000 ha of peatland restoration involving deforestation since 2014. Methods have been developed by adopting practices used by other organisations such as Forest Research and Scottish Power Renewables, improved upon, and progress monitored over this time.</p>

Provide details on the existing land use and the environmental sensitivity of the area that is likely to be affected by the forestry project.
The current land use is a mix of tree cover and open space, gross area of 1048 Ha, made up of a net tree cover of approximately 95% and open space of 5%. There are significant areas of unproductive, windblown, dead, diseased and failed crop with low yield classes of 6-8. The underlying geology even where peat is more shallow within the restoration area contributes to a very low nutrient regime.



There are numerous watercourses running alongside and through the proposed bog areas.

The peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland are well understood to be a resource of global significance for biodiversity and carbon storage as well as contributing significantly to the regional landscape and it's cultural heritage.

Afforested peatlands have been a sensitive environmental topic receiving even more scrutiny since the Climate Emergency was announced by the First Minister in April 2020 and Highland Council declared a biodiversity emergency a month later. These proposals are supported by the Scottish Peatland Strategy, the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the Scottish Forestry Strategy.

The literature supports the supposition that poor growing trees such as the LP on these sites are probably acting as a net carbon source, once the oxidation of the soils are taken into account. Arguably, the end use for electricity generation by burning undermines the carbon balance further when taking account of lengthy haulage distances. The recently published Scottish Government Environmental Strategy supports using the precautionary principle to protect these sites.

The sites were so wet and nutrient poor that the less demanding LP was planted previously (when Sitka spruce which is more demanding for nutrients was planted it was heavily fertilised or often failed to thrive), and it is very likely that a second rotation of any suitable species would not achieve a carbon positive balance at these sites over the next rotation.

There is an urgency to extract the standing timber to ensure that the carbon captured in the trees is stored, before it degrades and releases carbon back into the atmosphere. The proposed project will ensure that the function of the carbon storage in the peat soil is secured, by counteracting the modifications made at time of afforestation (drains, ploughing).

### Description of Likely Significant Effects

Provide details on any likely significant effects that the project will have on the environment (resulting from the project itself or the use of natural resources) and the extent of the information available to assist you with this assessment.

Restoring the area to peatland will have positive local impacts. It will enhance the biodiversity value of the area since various peat types will support a range of peatland habitat types, both unflushed and flushed BLANKET BOG, along with UPLAND HEATH (more likely dry heath developing into wet heath over the long term).

It will also secure the carbon store within the peatland soil, and possibly a modest carbon capture function. A further key significant effect is the anticipated improvements on hydrology and water quality in the adjacent River Oykel SSSI/SAC.

Include details of any consultees or stakeholders that you have contacted in order to make this assessment. Please include any relevant correspondence you have received from them.

FLS environmental team - peat probing undertaken in the area to highlight areas of deep peat.



FLS open habitat ecologist- overview of site indicates site would be restored as blanket bogs (flushed/unflushed), and dry/wet heath (see above for details).  
SEPA, SNH and RSPB have been fully consulted and their responses are available in the External Consultation Log - Appendix 1.  
The FLS resilience Manager and Forest Research Hydrologist have been involved in the drawing up of these proposals.  
Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust and the Benmore Estate have also been consulted for their input and expressed support for the proposals.

### Mitigation of Likely Significant Effects

If you believe there are likely significant effects that the project will have on the environment, provide information on the opportunities you have taken to mitigate these effects.

None. Please note that much of this area could not be afforested if current regulation had been applied, since it would not comply with UKFS or Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

A water monitoring project in partnership with SEPA, Forest Research and Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust has been launched to monitor both the long term effects of this change of land management and to identify any negative impacts during operations. This will contribute valuable empirical data to assist managers.

### Sensitive Areas

Please indicate if any of the proposed forestry project is within a sensitive area. Choose the sensitive area from the drop down below and give the area of the proposal within it.

Sensitive Area	Area
Deep peat soil	900
Select...	
Select...	
Select...	
Select...	

### Property Details

Property Name:	West Sutherland Forest, Rosehall		
Business Reference Number:	-	Main Location Code:	-
Grid Reference: (e.g. NH 234 567)	NC 3390 0336	Nearest town or locality:	Rosehall, By Lairg
Local Authority:	Highland Council		



Owner's Details			
Title:	Mr	Forename:	Graeme
Surname:	Prest (on behalf of Scottish Ministers)		
Organisation:	Forestry and Land Scotland	Position:	Regional Managerr
Primary Contact Number:	01313705871	Alternative Contact Number:	
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Address:	Tower Road, Smithton, Inverness		
Postcode:	IV2 7NL	Country:	Scotland
Is this the correspondence address?	No		

Agent's Details			
Title:	Mr	Forename:	Neil
Surname:	McInnes		
Organisation:	Forestry and Land Scotland	Position:	Planning Forester
Primary Contact Number:	07814370047	Alternative Contact Number:	
Email:	neil.mcinnnes@forestryandland.gov.scot		
Address:	The Links, Golspie Business Park, Golspie, Sutherland		
Postcode:	KW10 6UB	Country:	Scotland
Is this the correspondence address?	Yes		

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GLS Ref number:	