



# Under Burnmouth Forest Design Plan Brief - version 1

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## 1. Background and key information

**The project** – This is a woodland expansion project that will help to support delivery of the Scottish Forest Strategy.

**Location** – The site extends to 91 ha and this is an extension to Buccleuch Estates Ltd and the National Forest Estate at Tinnisburn Forest. It is located a few miles to the South of Newcastleton village near to the small community known as Whisgills.

**Context** – Although the actual land is owned by Buccleuch Estates Ltd, FCS will lease the land and undertake woodland expansion to the standards set out in the UK Forest Assurance Scheme. FCS will manage the woodland alongside its other National Forest Estate. This site sits immediately adjacent to Tinnisburn Forest (National Forest Estate). In 10 years, once established the site will revert back to Buccleuch Estates Ltd.

**Land use** – Currently lower grade agriculture. Largely unimproved grassland much of which has been ungrazed for the past few years. Proposal by Buccleuch Estates Ltd and Dumfries and Borders FCS to change the lower grade land to forestry and retain the better quality land nearer to the public road in agriculture.

**Elevation & Aspect** – The site sits 120m and 200m above sea level. It faces North and East and therefore benefits from some shelter from predominate South Westerly winds.

**Soils** – Much of the site includes surface water gley soils. The steeper slopes nearer to watercourses tend to be brown earths. There are some areas of flushed blanket bog. A full soil survey will be undertaken to inform species choices and ground preparation.

**Access** – Access to the site is good with a high specification single track forest road leading through the main part of the site. This road is shared with residents at Whisgills, the existing National Forest Estate at Tinnisburn and also the agricultural land beyond Whisgills. This access route has a good link to the B6357 road which is a preferred timber transport route.

**Environment** – There are a number of key water courses that have potential for riparian woodland and enhanced water management. There are a few heritage features on the site including old cottage site and some relatively modern stone walls from the last century. There are no formal designations. A full survey will be undertaken prior to design.

**Landscape** - As mentioned above the road leads through the site and as such the site acts as a gateway to Whisgills community and the wider forest at Tinnisburn. Small scale landscape design will be important including scalloping and species diversity near to the road. The site can be seen in a larger landscape from further South on the B6357 and from neighbouring vantage points on

the public road across the valley. Forest design will be important including the eastern planting boundary and the area in the proximity of the community at Whisgills.

**Biodiversity** – There is important Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland just to the North of the site with a rich lower plant community. The woodland includes oak, ash, birch and Alder. There is opportunity to expand this native woodland site.

**Social** – As the land is currently enclosed with fences and dykes for agricultural purposes there are few opportunities for easy access. The removal of some of the fences and gates will offer improved access opportunities although it is not intended to provide formal recreation facilities.

**Geology** – To be noted – in Tinnisburn there is fractured underground geology including fissures and sinkholes.

## Key drivers for design and draft management objectives

### Primary Management Objectives

#### Climate Change

##### Adapting to climate change – a resilient forest.

Climate change brings threats and uncertainty to the future management of land and forests. There will be an increased risk of damaging pests and pathogens. Changes in storm frequency and intensity may increase risk of windblow, while drier and warmer summers may lead to drought and drought crack of timber. Tree species should be well suited to the site (soil and climate), and resilient to pests and diseases. A wider range of tree species and consideration of future coupe shapes and design will increase its ability to cope with climate change.

##### Adapting to climate change – Protecting the environment and the public.

Good woodland design including riparian buffers can help in flood management and water quality. Well planned and managed operations following forest and water guidelines will keep water quality high.

##### Mitigation for climate change

Mitigation is achieved by storing carbon in forest ecosystems and in timber products. This site at Under Burnmouth is a woodland creation site and as such the trees that grow and the timber products that follow will be “additional” to current forest areas thereby increasing the opportunity for carbon storage.

**Management objective: Create woodland at Under Burnmouth to lock up carbon and help maintain water management through creation of riparian buffers.**

#### Timber

The soils and climate at Under Burnmouth are very well suited to high yielding spruces (Sitka Spruce and Norway Spruce) and to a lesser extent Scots Pine (given its limited yield capability). All of these species are very well suited to processing in the construction timber industry. Demand for this timber is high. During the design other species will also be considered but it is emphasised that construction grade timber production is a primary management objective of this site.

**Management Objective: To establish and grow trees capable of yielding high quality logs for construction grade timber**

## Secondary Management Objectives

### Key theme: Biodiversity

On the South side of Tinnis burn there is significant potential for expanding and strengthening the native woodland which could, in time, mirror the Ancient Semi Natural Woodland on the North side of the burn. The focus of the native woodland planting should be in this area. The other water courses that flow across the project area should also be buffered by permanent native woodland including species such as oak, birch and alder. Through creation of these permanent native woods this will help to create a long permanent network of habitats that will help support a wide range of important species.

There are potentially some areas of Priority Open Habitat on the site and this will be further explored during the site analysis and development of the plan. If found these areas will largely be protected and excluded from planted provided that the plan can ensure a way of maintaining their quality into the future.

**Management Objective: Strengthen and expand the native woodland in Tinnis burn.**

### Community

Given the proximity of the housing at Whisgills there is potential impact to some degree by the woodland creation project and a key component of the design process is to understand the needs and aspirations of the local community and this can best be achieved by consultation early in the process and through ongoing communication. Once understood, the designer can aim to build the issues into the design plan where they are compatible with the other management objectives. Examples of mitigation design would include tree species diversity and landscape consideration near to the dwellings and access road. Safeguarding the asset of the access road will be important.

**Management Objective: During design engage with the community to understand their aspirations and, where compatible with the wider management objectives, build this in to the forest plan.**

### Access

The road running through the site is the only vehicular access to the community and for the ongoing forestry in the wider Tinnisburn Forest. The plan will include design to protect this access and to consider how best to harvest and extract future timber given the constraints of the power line and the numbers of private vehicle users on the access road. With the removal of many of the field fences this will create opportunity for informal public access although there is no plan to

include formal recreation facilities. Gaps in the planting will allow for informal access on foot, on cycle and on horse.

**Management Objective: Maintain the current road access and allow informal access under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.**

## Environment

The permanent native woodland will help protect and buffer the water quality in Tinnis Burn which leads into the Liddel water and then into the Esk. The buffering function will also potentially slow the flow of water and assist in reducing downstream flooding.

There are few signs of archaeology on site except a number of dykes probably from the last century. There are records of an old cottage. During the design process further exploration will be made and any important features that are found will be protected and excluded from planting.

Small scale landscape near to Whisgills and on the main access road and larger scale landscape when viewing the site from public roads will be important factors in the design.

Deer are an ongoing threat to young trees and consideration of protection will be made including the option to deer fence. Open access on the road will be maintained.

**Management Objective: To design the woodland to protect and enhance the environment.**



## Appendix 1: Analysis and Concept Map