Forestry and Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus Fearann Alba

Newcastleton Forest
Framework for Recreation Investment

December 2024 - version 1.7

Contents

1.0 **Executive Summary**

Developed in partnership with the local community and key stakeholders, this concept framework aims to shape the recreational development of Newcastleton Forest as a key visitor destination in the South of Scotland.

Managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), this concept framework serves as a template for investment in recreational facilities whilst maintaining the commercial forestry role of the forest.

Photo: Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland

Aims of the framework

The framework aims to offer development opportunities that enhance the visitor experience through several key objectives:

- Investment in Recreation Infrastructure: Significant improvements to trails, signage, car parks, and facilities to cater to a diverse range of visitors, including adventure seekers, family groups, and easy recreationalists.
- Promote Accessibility and Inclusion: Ensuring that trails and facilities are accessible to people of all abilities to create an inclusive environment.
- Economic Growth and Sustainability: Stimulating the local economy by attracting more visitors and creating business opportunities whilst balancing recreational use with forest conservation and commercial forestry operations.

Key Highlights

- Trail Development: There are potential opportunities to further develop additional mountain bike paths and long-distance trails to meet international standards for adventure and safety.
- Infrastructure Improvements: Enhancements in signage, car parks, and toilet facilities to address current gaps and improve the overall visitor experience.
- Accommodation Options: Exploration of potential accommodation facilities, including low-cost camping models, to attract a wider range of visitors.
- Stakeholder Feedback: Positive feedback on potential improvements, with some concerns about multi-use trails and windfarm impacts. Recommendations include emphasising trail improvements and creating horse-specific trails.

Partnership and Collaboration

A successful implementation of the framework hinges on a collaborative approach:

- Partnership Approach: Cooperation between local communities, public bodies, third-sector organisations, and commercial businesses is crucial. This partnership is essential for securing funding, gaining planning approvals, and ensuring the long-term viability of the projects through a sustainable management model.
- Funding and Resource Allocation: While FLS will continue to manage the forest for commercial purposes, additional funding from various partners is necessary to realise the framework's vision. This involves developing business cases and securing investments from a range of stakeholders including consideration for whole life cycle costing and ongoing maintenance.
- Community Involvement: Engaging local communities in the planning and implementation process to ensure developments meet local needs and foster a sense of ownership.

Conclusion

Through targeted investments, strategic partnerships, and a focus on accessibility and inclusivity, the framework aims to enhance the visitor experience while supporting the local economy and preserving the natural environment. Achieving this vision will require a sustained partnership approach, with FLS managing the woodland for commercial forestry and collaborating with various stakeholders to secure funding and deliver the potential projects.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the framework

A framework for investment can mean different things to different people and organisations. This document offers a framework for future investment in recreation and visitor services for the communities and visitors of Newcastleton Forest and its links with the Kielder area. This framework looks at the outdoor recreation tourism offer, in an area encompassing FLS land, public land, community land and private ownership, to identify future aspirations for the visitor market and the visitor product offer. The framework will also look at key services which are desirable within the visitor offer, considering accommodation, retail, catering and welfare. The framework goes beyond mountain biking and considers the broader outdoor tourism offer in Newcastleton and the forests in Kielder.

To deliver the framework, it will require partnership between communities, public bodies, third sector and commercial businesses. The framework will create a range of recreation development opportunities. These development opportunities can only be realised if planning approval is obtained, funding and business cases are approved and a sustainable management model is in place. There is no guarantee that any of these proposals will be delivered. This framework aims to set a clear vision for the future recreation and tourism offer, to help guide partnerships, funding bids and business cases.

Although FLS is a large landowner in the South of Scotland, we recognise that we need to work collaboratively with communities, businesses and public bodies, to achieve wider success for the rural economy.

2.2 Policy framework

The FLS mission is to look after Scotland's forests and land, for the benefit of all, now and for the future. We therefore take long term planning very seriously, ensuring our resources are best allocated to contribute to improving the environment, economy, health and wellbeing of the nation in a sustainable way. Our Corporate Plan gives overall direction to the work that we do in managing Scotland's national forests and land. It is supported by our Business Plan which sets out how we will achieve the objectives identified in the Corporate Plan. Our Visitor Strategy and our Community Strategy further detail how we will work with and within our communities and develop our overall visitor offer.

All of our land management is carried out to meet the standards and requirements of the UK Forestry Standard – the UK's reference standard for managing forests sustainably. It is carried out under Land Management Plans approved by Scottish Forestry, the Scottish Government's agency responsible for forestry policy, support and regulations. A land management plan sets out how we intend to manage a specific area of land for a period of ten years. Usually, the area covered by a plan is a forest or woodland, but it will often include open areas, too. The current Land Management Plan for Newcastleton can be found on our web site. The Newcastleton Forest Framework for Recreation Investment has been developed using all these documents. In addition, local development plans and development guidance have been considered.

2.3 Background to Newcastleton Forest

Newcastleton Forest is 2,376 hectares of forest located in the south of the Scottish Borders, immediately east of Newcastleton village (Figure 1). Newcastleton Forest is part of Scotland's forests and land, owned by Scottish Ministers on behalf of the nation and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS).

Newcastleton Forest is part of the network of 7stanes mountain bike destinations in South Scotland. This network was created around 20 years ago, and this plan aims to reimagine the visitor offer. The link between the forest and the community at Newcastleton is very important. The community highly value the forest both in terms of their own health and for the economic impact that tourism brings to the area. The community are very active, having developed proposals for land they have acquired. FLS and the Newcastleton community want to work together to create a complementary visitor offer.

One of the special aspects of Newcastleton forest is its location on the Scotland England border. The forest borders England adjacent to Kershope and Lewisburn Forests in Northumberland, with long distance routes to Kielder Forest and Kielder Water.

The forest is largely a commercial forest and this will continue. The forest has also been subject to repeated windblow events in recent years, which impacts safe access to the forest. The plan considers greater flexibility of the trail network to help reduce the rural tourism impact of forest operations.
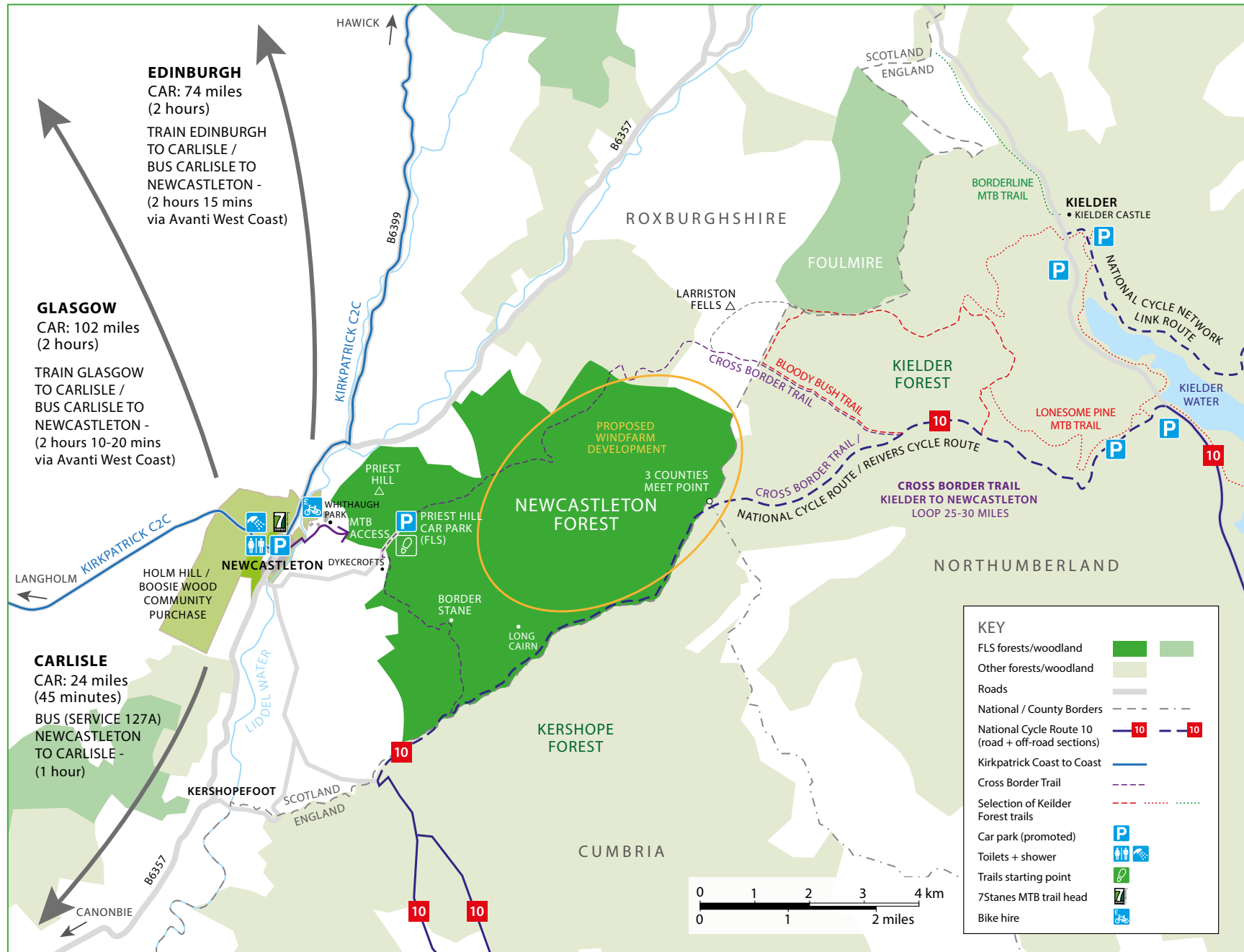
Figure 1: Map of the current forest area, in context of village and Kielder Forest.

3.0 Concept Aim and Objectives

3.1 Concept Aim

The FLS forests and land will be the destination of choice for exploring the countryside and enjoying outdoor recreation across the south of Scotland. We will collaboratively create and sustainably manage a high quality, diverse and inclusive portfolio of visitor infrastructure and recreational opportunities that meet the needs of our communities and visitors to the region. Working in partnership with the public, private and charitable sectors we will activate the forest estate to support the rural economy and regional tourism ambitions, as a multi-use visitor destination.

3.2 Key Objectives

1. Reinvigorate the forest into a premier visitor destination. Link Newcastleton Forest with Kielder Forest to establish a seamless, extensive outdoor experience for engagement with nature and adventure.

2. Develop and maintain trails and facilities that are accessible to people of all abilities, ensuring a wide range of recreation and exploration opportunities are available to everyone.

3. Invest in the enhancement of mountain bike and long-distance trails, ensuring they meet top international standards for adventure and safety.

4. Encourage and strengthen partnerships amongst public bodies, local communities, businesses, and environmental groups, to support the concept's long-term sustainability and success.

4.0 **Stakeholder Engagement**

FLS National and Regional teams collaborated to reach a wide range of stakeholders during the concept consultation phase.

For the first consultation, we created a map and introductory text for stakeholders to respond to (including 14 options to consider), which was available to view online and in person. A second, easier to read version was created for children and young people.

Each of the following groups was asked the same questions. The precise wording varied, depending on the audience, but aimed to capture the same feedback. Around 65 separate contributions were received.

After analysing the answers to the first consultation, we undertook a second site visit to Newcastleton Forest with that specific feedback in mind. We created new visuals (maps and annotated aerial photos) for a second round of consultation, contained in Appendix 2.

External stakeholders consulted:

• Newcastleton and District Community Trust
• Newcastleton and District Community Council
• South of Scotland Enterprise
• South of Scotland Destination Alliance
• Scottish Borders Council
• VisitScotland
• British Horse Society Scotland
• Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland
• Scottish Outdoor Recreation Alliance members
• The Kennel Club

Internal stakeholders consulted:

• South region (including visitor services, planning, mountain bike (MTB) specialists, environment, community)
• National teams (including civil engineering, commercial development, environment, heritage and landscape architect)

Individuals/businesses:

Members of the public attended in-person drop-in sessions at Buccleuch House in Newcastleton on Thursday 29 February to Saturday 2 March 2024 and, for the second round, on 26 and 27 April 2024. Some feedback was fed directly into Survey Monkey, some was captured on hard copy forms, then transferred to the online version. Any annotated maps have been saved and included in collated feedback.

Online stakeholders targeted:

• Members of the public (locals, visitors, interested parties)
• Young people attending the local Newcastleton youth group.
• Primary school pupils at Newcastleton Primary School.

Stakeholder feedback summary (first round):

What do you like about the proposal/what other opportunities are there?

- 36% of respondents simply commented that they liked the concept.
- 13% liked/saw opportunities in improved cross-border trails and collaboration.
- 13% liked/saw opportunities in multi-use trails.

There was a wide range of other responses, notably 7% liking the idea of better linkage between the village businesses and the forest, 6% seeing the opportunity in Stay the Night (or another low-cost camping model) and 5% pointing out the opportunities in [sustainable] destination marketing and development.

What have we missed?

- 14% of respondents felt we hadn't emphasized trail improvements enough.
- 13% were looking for more horse-specific trails and 9% other horse-specific facilities.
- 11% wanted us to look at creating play features (and another 4% 'fun').
- 11% wanted more about cross-border/links with Kielder.
- 20% asked for a range of in-forest improvements such as benches, shelters, signage, dog bins, access for mobility scooters.

What concerns do you have about the proposals?

- 37% expressed concern about the multi-use trail proposal and/or potential of user conflict.
- 10% were concerned about trails: maintenance and technical trail development.
- 10% simply stated that they were worried about the windfarm.
- 8% are worried that the multi-use trails will dilute the MTB offering.

Who do we need to consult and partner with?

Stakeholders suggested around 30 groups or organisations with whom they thought we should work. While we are already in contact with many of them, there are a number of interesting new contacts on the list.

We also asked a final 2 questions:
Do you have any other comments about the proposal?
Do you have any other comments about Newcastleton Forest?
The responses varied immensely and have been fed mostly into 'concerns' or 'opportunities'.
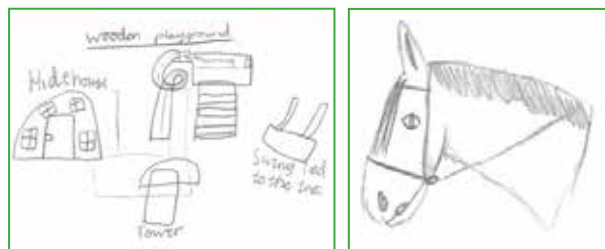
Drawings from Newcastleton Primary School during the first phase of consultation.

Stakeholder feedback highlights (second round):

We received 14 items of feedback (half from members of the public, half from external stakeholders).

Likes: positive feedback about the potential trails (links to Kielder, accessible trail, gravel trail, MTB trail improvements, loops); car park improvements; camping spot; toilets; sculptures/artworks

Dislikes: multi-use approach; camping spot; car parks; not enough MTB trails

Other comments: importance of motorsports; horse box parking; Bloody Bush is missing from proposals; windfarm use of tracks; public transport; future stakeholder involvement.

Using the term 'informal camping' may need to be clarified. There's clearly some confusion with what that entails (it does not include the use of motorised vehicles).
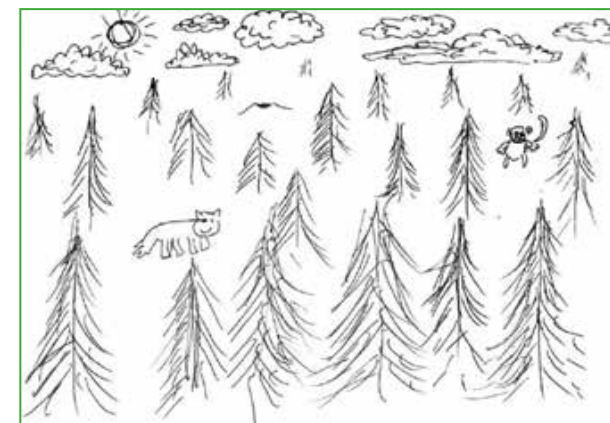
5.0 Needs Analysis

5.1 Assessment of the current facilities and offering

Walking trails

Ponds Trail
Moderate trail grade - ¼ miles / 0.5 km - Allow ¼ hours
Mixed woodland around the ponds on Whithaugh Burn, with ample opportunities to sit and take in the flowers and wildlife.

Viewpoint Trail
**Moderate trail grade - 2 ¼ miles / 3.6 km -
Allow 1½ hours**
Trail leads up through spruce trees to great views across Liddesdale from Priest Hill. Recent windblow clearance has opened up more views. There is an Iron Age earthwork fort and a wildlife hide. The condition of the hide is OK. It's questionable if the fort is worth promoting.

Hanging Tree Trail
**Strenuous trail grade - 2 ½ miles / 4.0 km -
Allow 1½ hours**
Trail runs along the drove road past the settlement of Belshiel, then returns through an area of well-established woodland, but it is quite a closed experience with few views. A radio mast is due to be installed on the top section. It passes the 500-year-old farm of Pouterlampert and there is short detour to see the Hanging Tree, which still stands but is unsafe.

Priest Hill Trail
Strenuous trail grade - 3 miles / 4.7 km - Allow 2 hours
This trail is a full circuit around Priest Hill and down to the banks of Liddel Water. The circuit is a good walk with changing views, particularly on the back section over the valley and Border hills. It has a different feel to the other trails, being more open, but back sections are more enclosed. It can be combined with the Priest Hill trail to make a longer route.

MTB trails

Blue Route: Grade – Blue: Moderate - 6 miles / 9.7 km
Starts from the village on a long steep road climb to get to more interesting biking sections. Moving the MTB trail start/finish to village changed the whole dynamic of the trail, particularly the previous exhilarating finish at Dykecrofts. Trail is described as a fun singletrack for all the family and perfect for beginners or families. However, the trail is a mix of short and long road climbs interspersed with sections of singletrack and the description is perhaps misleading. There are stunning views on various sections of the trail.

Red Route:
Grade – Red: Difficult - 14 ½ miles / 23.4 km
Trail shares a lot of the same route as the blue, so blue riders might have red riders alongside. The trail is described as fast and furious with fast and narrow singletrack through the forest and around an adrenaline pumping route. With all the short and long forest road sections, mixed with singletrack, this is perhaps misleading. The real fun begins at the Dykecrofts area but there are too many forest road sections linking the singletrack sections. Once the trail reaches Swarf quarry descent there are numerous fun singletrack sections. The new Hidden Valley sections add to the overall experience.

Car park provision

Newcastleton Forest has a small (8-10 cars) aggregate-surfaced car park (Priest Hill) approximately 2 miles from the village next to the white trail around nice river features – ([Figure 1](#)). There is an information board with trail map next to this car park. Access is by the mainly tarmac unclassified road at the southern end of the village with the last approx. 400m on forest track (in need of re-surfacing April 2024). This car park is currently free of charge despite the Newcastleton visitor offer meeting the criteria for charging.

The cycle trailhead was moved to the centre of the village, Douglas Square, in 2013, when a new bridge was built over the river, shortening the walking and cycling route to Priest Hill and the mountain bike skills area built at the same time on Whithaugh Park land. The local community were keen that visitors start and finish their visit in the village for local economic benefits. Douglas Square and the surrounding streets can accommodate approx. 60-100 cars free of charge.

7stanes Information board, Newcastleton village square

At the time of the bridge and cycle trail head relocation, FLS sold their previous visitor buildings at Dykecrofts (Figure 1) to a private owner. Many local people, particularly dog-walkers, still drive to the top of the hill above Dykecrofts and park in the informal laybys next to the tarmac road to walk. This location is also where the red mountain bike trail crosses the road before an exciting, challenging section of downhill red route popular with bikers.

Public Transport

Telford's coaches run regular services (1-3 per day) to Newcastleton from Carlisle and Hawick (expect Sundays). Coaches currently don't accept bikes. The railway line does not run through Newcastleton.

The strategic case for the Borders Railway extension from Tweedbank to Hawick, Newcastleton and onto Carlisle has been agreed by the UK Department of Transport and Transport Scotland. A £10 million full infrastructure study can begin once local partners – including the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, Scottish Border Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland Council, Cumbria County and Carlisle City – submit an updated business case (May 2024).

Active Transport

Reivers Cycle Route (Whitehaven to Tynemouth)
Using the Reivers Cycle route, cyclists can travel from Carlisle or Kielder to Newcastleton. The 171 route avoids busy roads and brings you through some stunning scenery. For full details of the route go to sustrans.org.uk.

Cross Border Trail (Kielder to Newcastleton 30 miles)
This 17½ mile (28 km) cross country trail, starting from Kielder Castle Forest Park Centre in Kielder to Newcastleton and back, is ideal for well-prepared walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. Way markers with purple arrows will take you round the trail – the trail on the Scotland side is waymarked in one direction only - anti clockwise. You should allow 9 hours to walk the route.

Facilities

A public toilet and shower are available in Newcastleton village just off Douglas Square on Langholm Street next to the Fire Station. The shower is free of charge but the toilet is chargeable (30p - coin only) and open between 7 am and 6 pm on a timer. Other toilet provisions are connected to local pubs, cafés and accommodation. There is one sign on the main street pointing to the toilet in each direction but once parked, this is not clear. Neither the toilet or shower are currently accessible.

Newcastleton has one pub, two cafés, a post office, cash point and two convenience stores. There is an unmanned (community-run) fuel forecourt (pay by card) and a garage and an EV charging point (with no rapid charging).

There is no public toilet, bike wash or EV charger on FLS land. Bikes can be hired from Whithaugh Park – see accommodation. Bike storage facilities can be found at a number of accommodation providers in the village.

Leisure, sports and play facilities can be found in Newcastleton village and Whithaugh Park provide a wide range of activities.

Accommodation

For the size of village, Newcastleton has a relatively wide range of accommodation: 13 listed self-catering properties, including a newly refurbished bunk house in the centre of town with bike store provision, two B&Bs, two hotels/pubs (one closed until further notice – as at April 2024), a 3 acre touring caravan and camping site open all year. There is also a 192 bed log cabin-style group accommodation and activity centre run by a Christian charity at Whithaugh Park, which has a focus on supporting young people and mainly accommodating schools and youth groups, although they also take bookings from the general public. Whithaugh Park facilities include a large sports hall, indoor, heated swimming pool, all-weather sports pitch, 30 instructed activities, a 300m twin zip wire and mountain bike hire.

Entrance to Whithaugh Park development

5.2 Visitor Demographics

Progressive Partnership, a market research company, were commissioned to undertake user research for the 7stanes centres in 2022.

The on-line survey was self-completion and self-selecting which means the sample should not be taken as representative of all visitors to Newcastleton. It may however indicate which groups were most motivated to be involved in the discussion about the future of Newcastleton Forest.

Summary of demographics from the Newcastleton survey (76 responses)

Those visiting Newcastleton as their most recent trip were most likely to be:

• Men (75%)
• From socio-economic groups AB (57%)
• Aged 35-44 (39%)
• White (91%)
• Without long-term health conditions, disabilities or infirmities (86%)
• From Scotland (53%)
• Have no children under 16 in the household (53%)

Gender

The respondents were 75% male : 20% female, which is not necessarily representative of all visitors, but does reflect the gender profile of respondents from the other 7stanes centres.
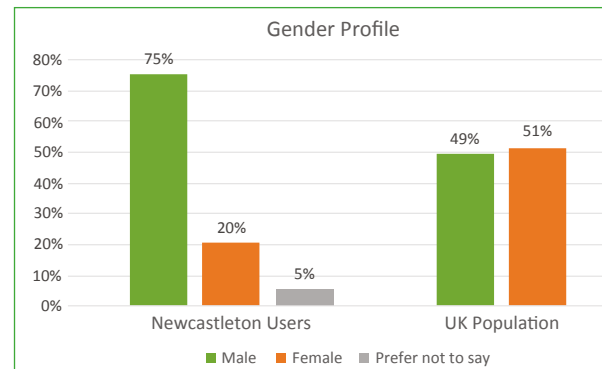
Figure 2: column chart showing Newcastleton and UK gender profiles.

Age

65% of respondents were aged 35-54, slightly more than the overall 7stanes figure of 59%.
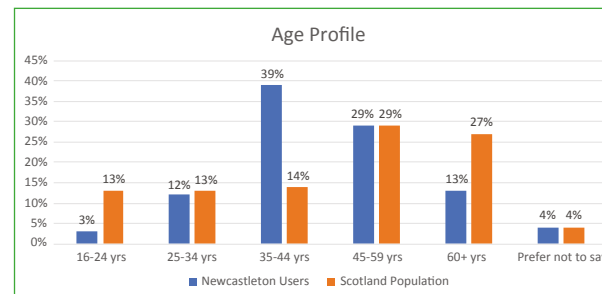
Figure 3: column chart showing age profile of respondents compared to Scotland population.

Socio-economic groups (SEG)

Socio-economic groups are based on data on a person's main type of activity, occupation, occupational status and industry.

More than half of the respondents were from SEG – AB which reflects the respondents from the other 7stanes centres.

Socio-economic Grading Table

| Grade	Definition	Newcastleton Users	Scotland Population
AB	Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupations	57%	19%
C1	Supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial, administrative and professional occupations	20%	31%
C2	Skilled manual occupations	17%	24%
DE	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, unemployed and lowest grade occupations	6%	26%
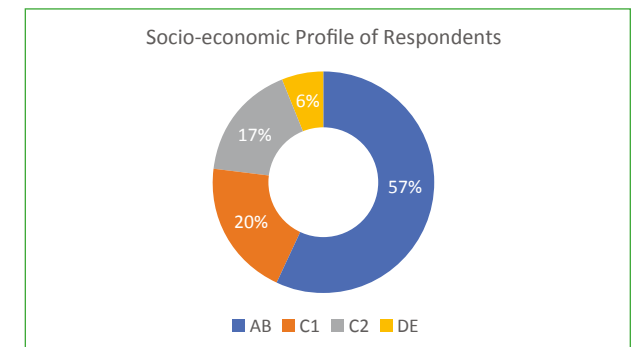
Figure 4: table giving description of each social grade and showing SEG for Newcastleton users

Ethnicity

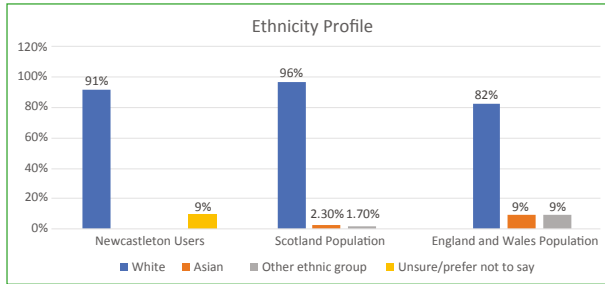91% of respondents were white, which reflects the responses from the other 7stanes centres.

Figure 5: column chart showing ethnicity profile of respondents compared to Scotland and England & Wales populations

Health

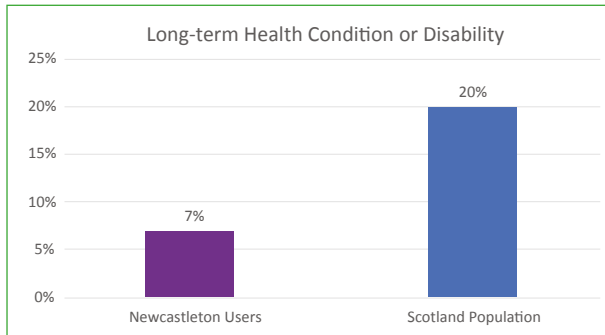7% had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting 12 months or more.

Figure 6: column chart showing percentage of Newcastleton users with a long-term health condition or disability compared to Scotland population

Currently live

53% of respondents were from Scotland, however 41% were from England, which is currently a significant market for Newcastleton, due to its proximity to the Scotland/England border.
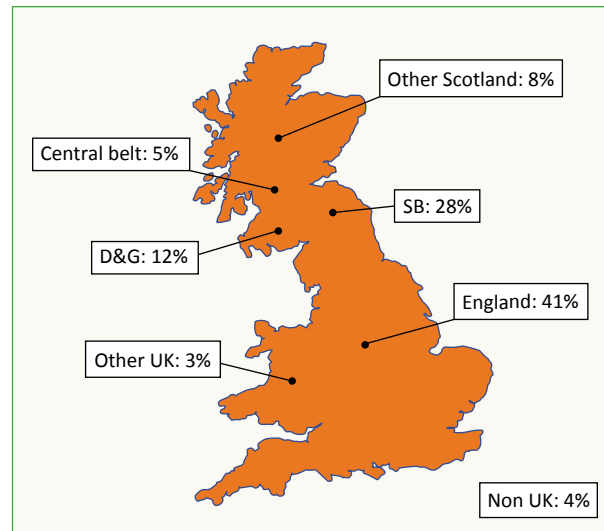
Figure 7: Map of UK showing where Newcastleton users live

Family life cycle

Of the 47% who had children under 16 in their household: 14% were under 5 yrs, 64% were 5-12 yrs and 44% were 13-16 yrs.
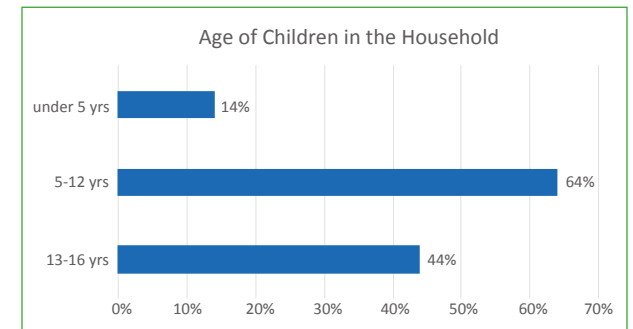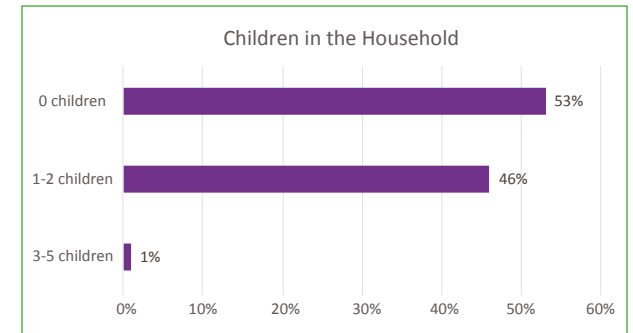
Figure 8: Bar chart showing number of children in the household and age of children in the household

5.3 Target Audiences

FLS uses a behavioural segmentation model to group visitors. This is the process of sorting and grouping visitors based on the behaviours they exhibit. Using the FLS model, the following target audiences have been identified for Newcastleton:-

1. Adventure Seekers
2. Family Groups
3. Easy Recreationalists

Adventure Seekers

Adventure Seekers are looking for an active trip where they can enjoy outdoor activities that energise them. They are most likely to visit in pairs or small groups and are generally visiting without children for a short to medium break and are looking for mid-range accommodation.

Challenges with this group:
• Lack of knowledge about the range of activities available
• Put off by unreliable weather

Family Groups

Family groups are looking for safe outdoor environments with a range of options and good amenities. They are most likely to plan visits carefully in advance and take recommendations from family and friends. Looking for good accommodation.

Challenges with this group:
• Balancing the different needs of all family members

Easy Recreationalists

Easy Recreationalists are looking for relaxation, fresh air and easy exercise experiences. They are most likely to be return visitors and like easy trails and good scenery. May have their own motorhome.

Challenges with this group:
• Encouraging them to visit new places, not just their favourite.

Behaviour characteristic	Purpose of visit	Looking for	Likes	Avoids / dislikes	Most likely to:
The Adventure Seeker	• An active holiday/trip • Having fun • Escape the weekday life	• A challenge, but with controlled risk • Information & inspiration about outdoor activities • Good signposting • Mid-range accommodation • Value for money • Good café/pub	• Living life to the full • A sense of adventure • Trying new things • Seeing new places • Suggestions for other well planned activities	• Easy trails	• Living life to the full • A sense of adventure • Trying new things • Seeing new places • Suggestions for other well planned activities
Family Groups	• An active break where they can enjoy the outdoors as a family • Their trip will leave them feeling energised, exhausted and wanting to go back • To create happy memories	• Lots of space and a mix of outdoor things to do • Safe, clean & welcoming environment with good amenities e.g. parking, toilets, cafes, picnic tables • Accurate 'how to get there' information • Good accommodation • Value for money & free activities • Good photo opportunities • Buggy friendly locations and activities	• Well-presented options, services and choices • Mountain biking and other outdoor activities • To pack a lot into their holiday • To know what's in store - predictability • Information about other local facilities/activities	• Activities that are too risky • Hassle – disjointed services and options • Closed facilities • Dirty / vandalised facilities	• Plan carefully in advance • Visit during school holidays & at weekends • New & existing visitors • Be regular outdoor visitors • Take recommendations from family & friends • Spend money locally on food/ accommodation
Easy Recreationalist	• Relaxation • Fresh air • A bit of exercise	• Well maintained facilities • Good directions & parking • Opportunities to connect with wildlife and nature • Easy to access activities	• Easy trails • Good scenery • Clear information and options • Age appropriate content	• Strenuous walking • Crowds	• Be return visitors • Local to the area • Have favourite places • Have a campervan • Generate word of mouth: good or bad

Figure 9: table showing the full behavioural characteristics of the audience segments

6.0 Market Analysis

6.1 Trends in mountain biking and the wider activity sector

Mountain biking has broadened to include cross country, downhill, gravel cycling, Enduro, trials etc. Bikes have improved suspension, braking, tyre technology and e-Bike motors, enabling them to negotiate more extreme terrain. These developments are increasing the accessibility of the sport.

The term mountain bike is increasingly less accurate as the sport and activity now has an established set of sub-segments with identifiable consumers, trails and cycles. The technology improvements have also helped to promote sub-sector specialisation that combines trails with cycles e.g. gravel trails and e-bikes. The latter has the potential for significant growth particularly with more mature and wealthier audiences.

Data on the appeal of the sector is identified in the GB resident overnight trips data and spend for activities that were part of their visit to Scotland.

In 2019, GB domestic overnight visitors took 290,000 trips, where adventure sports were part of the trip, contributing £112 million in expenditure. Other activities that were part of a trip included:
• Mountain biking which constitutes some 166,000 trips
• Road cycling which constituted some 193,000 trips

However, walking and hiking remained by far the most popular activity with 1.6 million trips involving a long walk, hike or ramble (more than 2 miles). Some 2.7 million trips involved a short walk or stroll (up to 2 miles or 1 hour). For this reason, a mixed portfolio of recreation offers should be part of the 7stanes development.

The GB Travel Survey data below provides the source material and offers useful comparison material.

GBTS 2019 - All activities undertaken on trip to Scotland			
	Trips (Millions)	Nights (Millions)	Spend (£millions)
All tourism - 2019	13.810	46.413	£3,200
Short walk/stroll – up to 2 miles/1 hour	2.679	11.742	£848
Long walk, hike or ramble (minimum of 2 miles/1 hour)	1.602	7.287	£534
Swimming (indoors or outdoors)	0.801	3.481	£240
Cycled – on a road/surfaced path	0.193	0.789	£93
Boating/sailing/water sports - inland (e.g. canoeing, motor boat, canal boating)	0.097	0.464	£60.80
Boating/sailing/water sports - on or by the sea (e.g. canoeing, surfing, jet ski)	0.235	0.882	£99
Running, jogging, orienteering	0.594	2.228	£211
Mountain biking	0.166	0.928	£45
Horse riding, The GB Travel Survey pony trekking	0.249	0.743	£61
Adventure sports (e.g. skiing, snowboarding, rafting, canyoning)	0.290	1.114	£112

GB Travel Survey 2019 Trips, Nights and Expenditure related to activities (Source: UKTS 2020)

Figure 10: table showing activities on trip to Scotland

In terms of wider activity trends, VisitScotland and other research sources confirmed that:
• Adventure Tourism remains a catalyst for recovery post-COVID;
• Both soft and hard adventure tourism have shown increased popularity. Hard adventure generally refers to high risk activities that require some training or

experience before undertaking. Examples would include rock climbing, ice climbing, caving etc. Soft adventure is relatively safe and requires limited experience or training. Examples of soft adventure would include Safari, Kayaking, fishing etc. This is due to greater interest in the outdoors, health and the popularity of activities such as cycling, running and open water swimming;
• In Scotland, Adventure Tourism has real potential to drive economic benefit;
• Such trends will hopefully contribute to improvements in well-being and recreation opportunities for local residents;
• The growth in domestic (UK) tourism (staycations) provides opportunities for communities to display their credentials as these host destination(s) may be seen as a location for adventure tourism. However, this has to be caveated by respect for the environment(s) for all to enjoy.

The key relevant developing Adventure Sports trends include:
• Personalisation and packaging of offers often in collaboration with other suppliers to provides a 'total package' for consumers to easily purchase.
• The importance of authenticity, allowing relevant destinations to reflect values that are helping to shape the future of travel and tourism.
• The importance of families as key domestic consumer groups who are increasingly wanting both hard and soft activities.
• The importance of engagement and marketing through electronic communication and social media
• The importance of personalisation in communications and sales.

In more mainstream publications; Conde Nast (10 trends that will shape travel in the future | CN Traveller)

noted the important growth of what they termed 'rough cycling', (which incorporates gravel cycling and e-bikes) as an important growth trend.

The Scottish Household Survey (2022) records 12% of people participating in cycling (at least of 30 minutes' duration); this is the same as in 2019. Participation is greater amongst educated, middle income groups.

Although UK and Scottish policies favour sport and active lifestyles for all, there is still potential for significant improvement. The Statista Cycling in the UK report (2020), recorded trends previously identified by FLS on cycling and mountain biking. Most notably:

- The growth in sales and value of new bikes in the UK (2007-2020).
- The growth in expenditure on bicycles 2011-2021.
- The growth in participation in cycling as a leisure activity by individuals and families for leisure purposes.

These statistics must be treated with care. The figures do not take into account multiple cycle ownership, therefore linking cycle sales with increased participation may not be accurate.

6.2 Benchmarking against similar destinations

The 7stanes face increased competition from other providers in both Scotland and more widely in the UK.

Competitor benchmarks
- Bike Park Wales
- Tarland Trails
- Whinlatter in the English Lake District

In these destinations, the importance of a customer focused approach to managing the facilities and highly effective marketing is clear. The ability of these

destinations to appeal to a wide range of cyclists, as well as to other leisure customers is also evident. Also notable is the marketing focus towards families and those new to cycling, plus an emphasis on care and maintenance of trails.

The following competitor benchmarks are also highlighted as they are rural and offer more than just mountain biking:

- Glenlivet Estate
- Laggan Wolftrax
- Cairngorms
- Kielder Forest

It would be inaccurate to group all mountain bikers together as the diversity of current demand has potential benefits for the future development of the 7stanes. The growth of gravel, e-bikes etc. has happened since the original development of the 7stanes and holds part of the necessary response to increased development. Facilities that focus on family and mixed ability user groups will contribute to growth and broadening of appeal.

6.3 Gap Analysis

Performing a gap analysis for visitor facilities and services at Newcastleton involved assessing the current state of trails and infrastructure and identifying the gaps between the current offer and the offer required to meet the objectives outline below.

Objectives and Standards:

The agreed objectives for Newcastleton Forest are to:
1. Reinvigorate the forest as a premier visitor destination. Link Newcastleton Forest with Kielder Forest to establish a seamless, extensive outdoor experience for engagement with nature and adventure.

2. Develop and maintain trails and facilities that are accessible to people of all abilities, ensuring a wide range of recreation and exploration opportunities are available to everyone.
3. Invest in the enhancement of mountain bike and long-distance trails, ensuring they meet top international standards for adventure and safety.
4. Encourage and strengthen partnerships among public bodies, local communities, businesses, and environmental groups to support the concept's long-term sustainability and success.

Key Areas for Analysis:

Signage
Trails network
Car parks
Toilet facilities
Potential accommodation options
Links with Newcastleton village
Links with Kielder Forest

Summary of Facilities

Walking Trails
There are currently 2 x moderate walking trails and 2 x strenuous walking trails.

Mountain Bike Trails
There is currently a blue and red mountain bike trail.

Car Parks
Priest Hill is the only formal car park in Newcastleton Forest. It is situated approximately 2 miles from the village of Newcastleton.

Toilet Facilities
There are no toilet facilities within Newcastleton Forest, the nearest public toilets are situated within Newcastleton village.

Visitor Accommodation Provision
There is currently no formal visitor accommodation within Newcastleton Forest and no Stay the Night campervan sites. The nearest formal accommodation is in Newcastleton village.

Links with Newcastleton Village
The cycle trailhead is situated within Newcastleton Village at the main square, approximately 2 miles from Priest Hill car park. There is also free parking at the main square.

Links with Kielder Forest
There is currently a cross border trail between Newcastleton Forest and Kielder Forest.

Benchmarking criteria for evaluating facilities and services

Condition of trails
The walking trails' surface is mostly soft and grassy and can become boggy and muddy in sections. The Hanging Tree Trail is currently closed due to windblow, as is the red mountain bike trail.

The MTB trail waymarking and tiles are in a bad state of repair and outdated. They need audited and replacements planned, and the waymarking itself refreshed, updated (with new grading) and replaced.

Safety
The blue mountain bike route starts from the village on a long steep road climb and shares the route with cars and other road users. The blue and red mountain bike trails share sections of the same trail. The mountain bike and walking routes intersect, which could have safety implications.

Accessibility
There are currently no easy access trails, no dedicated disabled park bays at Priest Hill car park and there are no toilet facilities within Newcastleton Forest. Public transport and active travel options are currently limited (see active travel section).

User experience
Signage would benefit from a review looking at improving visitor navigation and orientation on approach to, in and around the site.

Throughout the area (including Newcastleton village) and the trails, information and orientation panels are either out of date, not relevant, in the wrong place or badly degraded and need a review to put a requirements/replacement plan in place.

Both the red and blue mountain bike trails have limited sections of singletrack and long road climbs. The red mountain bike trail finishes with a long forest road section back to the village which lacks the expected excitement of a red route.

Usage levels
The current users of Newcastleton Forest are predominately male (75%), aged 35-54 (65%) and more than half are from the socio-economic grades AB.

Gap Assessment
This assessment compares the standard and range of current Newcastleton Forest facilities with the desired standards required to meet the four objectives outlined earlier.

Signage
To attract new visitor groups, the quality of waymarking on trails in terms of positioning, clarity and definition of route requires reviewing and planning to improve the

experience on the ground and give new and existing visitors confidence they will not get lost.

Walking trails
To appeal to a wider market, developing an easy access trail is recommended. Multi-user trail options should also be considered to appeal to broaden the appeal.

Viewpoint, Priest Hill and Hanging Tree trails
These trails intersect with MTB routes, possibly difficult to reroute to avoid this, so some more obvious warning and mitigation is required to improve the visitor experience.

MTB Blue route
Perception is the current offer doesn't work that well as an experience for the intended users. Could the balance be improved with increased singletrack and less road sections?

MTB Red route
To extend the appeal to the adventure seeker market, the red route should be reviewed to include less forest road and more single track.

Long-distance route
The current cross border trail could be extended and more made of the border area which is definitely a unique feature of Newcastleton Forest. This could be a key attraction for the adventure seeker market.

Toilet facilities
To be a welcoming and accessible destination for all visitors, a toilet facility within the forest should be considered.

7.0 **Environment**

Ecology

As with all potential development or projects, any possible impact on protected species and habitats must be considered in detail. Through consultation with external stakeholders, FLS staff and the local community, development opportunity suggestions have been submitted, discussed and presented which could have the potential to increase visitor numbers to Newcastleton Forest, improving the visitor experience of those visiting and staying in the area.

The planning process will look at the practicalities surrounding the development and the long-term sustainability of any new features. Importantly, where it relates to environmental impact, the site-specific plan will look at the area of focus in great detail. Only at that time will meaningful comment be possible, relating to the impact the specific development opportunity in question will have on the wildlife of that area.

At the time of writing this framework, there have been no immediate concerns raised regarding these small-scale trail and facility improvements or that they would have any negative impact on the wildlife and habitats of Newcastleton. However, if visitor numbers were to increase significantly, particularly in areas of the forest that are little visited at present, there could be the potential for a negative impact on species found in these quieter areas of the forest. Future planning of the trail network needs to remain mindful of this and due to the timeframe this plan covers, be aware that the situation on the ground may change.

Built heritage

Built around 6000 years ago, the early Neolithic Clyde cairn of Langknowe (Scheduled Monument 2154; NY 5272 8621) is the only archaeology of significance within Newcastleton Forest. It may have been one of the first buildings to have been constructed in and around Newcastleton, and is certainly the oldest to still survive. There are historical records of the cairn having been investigated around 1850 and in 1870, although nothing of note was found. Little of the monument remains visible now, and it is best appreciated from the air; a possible curved façade can be traced in the North end, indicating that the footings of a segmented burial chamber may lie hidden within the mound, its entrance in the centre of the façade. The cairn is set within a large open heather-covered clearing.

The early Neolithic Clyde cairn of Langknowe Scheduled Monument, located near Priest Hill

Dark skies

Kielder Observatory is located in the Northumberland Dark Sky Park close to Newcastleton Forest. This internationally recognised designation celebrates the dark skies of Northumberland and is close enough to be considered within the Newcastleton Forest Framework for Recreation Investment.

There are other dark sky designations across the south of Scotland and in principle could be connected to Newcastleton through a multi-day adventure marketing initiative. For example, a dark sky themed gravel riding week that takes riders from Kielder Observatory/ Forest through to Newcastleton, onward to Moffat, the Dark Sky Town, before reaching the boundary of the Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park in the west of Dumfries and Galloway.

With the dark skies of Northumberland on the doorstep of Newcastleton, there could be further opportunities to develop dark sky themed events in/ from Newcastleton, which could encourage visitors to stay overnight and increase their dwell time in the area.

Holm Hill

The community own an important section of land called Holm Hill. It is important that any detailed plans for Newcastleton Forest consider the community plans at Holm Hill so there is an integrated visitor offer.

8.0 **Framework Concept**

8.1 Trail Network Development

Mountain Bikers are an important audience to Scottish Borders, representing around 30% of the visitor and community use. [It's worth noting that, elsewhere in Scotland, including Dumfries and Galloway, mountain bikers are only 8% of forest visitors]. It is important that the future trail network works for both mountain bikers and the other 70% of visitors to the area. The potential trails network proposed (Figures 11, 12 and 13) contains a mixture a dedicated mountain bike trails but also multi-user and long-distance trails suitable for a broad range of user groups.

Skills Progression
Developing mountain bike skills through trail design could involve creating a core red route skill level mountain bike trail with optional easier and harder sections. These trails should include longer routes around the most technical features, allowing less skilled riders to navigate the path. Concurrently, more advanced technical features should be incorporated to challenge seasoned riders, pushing their skills towards the higher end of the red route. This thoughtful design balances accessibility with progression, catering to individual rider needs and facilitating skill development through varied and well-constructed trail elements.

Long Distance Trails
The long-distance trail network aims to encourage multi-day stays in both Newcastleton and Kielder villages, to boost the local economy through use of the existing overnight accommodation, food and retail. The potential trail largely builds on the existing national cycle network (NCN route 10), Bloody Bush trail and the cross-border trail. Variations are proposed to these routes to provide circular routes up to 50 miles, with shorter options created. The core idea is to provide a range of routes that could be completed over one, two or three days.

The routes predominantly use a forest road network with short sections of linking trail. Focusing on a forest road network not only helps with the financial sustainability of the routes, but also opens it up to a broad user group including mountain bikers, gravel cyclists, ultra runners, adaptive cyclists, long distance walkers and horse riders. It is important that any future route design and marketing is created with these broad user groups in mind.

Although the routes are based on previously agreed long distance routes, it will be critical at the project stage that variations are agreed with the relevant landowners, including Forestry England and Forestry and Land Scotland.

One of the critical parts of the long-distance route network is providing better marketing, waymarking and facilities on the route. The routes are not well known, even locally, and more could be done through site signage and marketing to provide a clearer visitor journey.

As part of the long-distance routes, it is important that they have an element of fun and that they provide variety. With ongoing forest re-structuring at Newcastleton (felling and replanting) the site will have a changing mix of views over time. There is also the potential to use art installations to add interest and a sense of collection through the route.

Art Installations
FLS proposes to explore the use of art features that add a sense of fun to the cross-border heritage between Scotland and England. One idea is to have cattle and/or sheep to represent the idea of the Border Reivers with livestock being stolen (The History of the Border Reivers). Cattle sculptures could be designed and hidden through the forest to encourage a sense of exploration and discovery. Equally, there are other historical and cultural stories associated with this area of Scotland to inspire art, which could be developed in other areas or throughout the forest. There may be value in one very large iconic sculpture that helps promote Newcastleton as a visitor destination (e.g. Angel of the North, The Kelpies, Glenfinnan Monument, Wojtek the Bear). An artist's brief will be required before developing this idea further. It is important that any design should have minimal maintenance.

Multi User Trail
From Newcastleton village we are suggesting a potential Multi-User Trail approach. The trail connection from the village to the forest is important but there are two issues; it is too steep for many users and offers a relatively poor first visitor experience. It is suggested that a multi-user route should have a more accessible link after the bridge crossing (more switch backs) and, rather than follow the road through Whithaugh Park, a new trail is created through the woodland to Priesthill Knowe.

The multi-user trail could then create a loop towards Priesthill, which is one of the key visitor destinations within the forest. The trail could be designed to contour the slope to minimise gradient change to make the route as accessible as possible to the majority of visitors.

FLS's ambition is to explore how the multi-user trail could create a variety of opportunities to engage users with different skills and interests through optional features such as small jumps, rock gardens and berms following mountain bike trail design principles. The path could also include other low impact and low maintenance structures, which could be used by mountain bikers, runners, horse-riders, children playing or for dog parkour.

We aim to create pathways that serve a broader audience without sacrificing the engaging elements of mountain biking design. Our concept includes wider trails to accommodate groups with mixed abilities, where all users can share the route harmoniously. Alongside safety and inclusivity, the development opportunity could offer exciting optional features for those seeking to test their abilities.

Red Mountain Bike Trail
The current red mountain bike trail has a high proportion of the route on forest roads. The framework suggests redeveloping the route so it is mostly off forest roads on purpose-built trail. Increased use of single track will help improve the visitor experience for mountain bikers and give additional flexibility for sustainable forest management.

The red route would have optional levels of technicality within its grading, to help improve the accessibility of the route. The framework has suggested a revision of the red route to include Priest Hill, which is one of the core parts of the visitor experience.

Blue Mountain Bike Trail
No changes are proposed to this existing route.

White All Ability Route
Providing a more accessible offer is an essential part of the vision of the framework. We are suggesting extending the existing 400m white route to make it a longer approximately 1.5 - 2km loop. It is important the trail is built to be suitable for wheelchairs. The location is beautiful, next to a series of ponds and a stream to give a great wildlife and play experience for visitors.

Connected to the improvement in the trail is the upgrade to the Priesthill car park through the creation of blue badge permitted car parking closer to the trail.

Trail Design Principles

1. Trails should be built with an 'invest to save' principle, to ensure the long term financial sustainability of the trail network. Material choice and design features should be chosen to minimise future costs. Whole life-cycle cost modelling should be based on a maintenance schedule of 25 years.

2. Trails should be built considering long-term impacts of climate change, with the expectation that we will experience more extreme storm events. Drainage needs to be designed with 1 in 200-year storm events as a minimum and where pragmatic, should be designed for 1 in 1000-year storm events.

3. The white and multi-user trails should be built to be as accessible as possible using Outdoors Accessibility Guidance | Paths for All

4. The long-distance trails will look to predominantly use existing forest roads and trails to ensure best value of the network. The long-distance trails should influence woodland future roadside design for improved visitor experience.

5. Any 'top of grade' trail features must be designed to be visible to visitors and have a pre-qualifying feature, so that they have no nasty surprises and have the opportunity to choose an alternative route or adjust their speed appropriately.

6. If the multi-user trail has a steeper faster descent, then consider splitting the route, so that slower users do not come into conflict with faster users.

7. Where possible, as-dug trails or local stone material should be used to reduce the carbon footprint of construction and reduce environmental impact of imported materials.

8. The trails are part of a working commercial forest; route and design should consider flexibility to allow forest management and harvesting.

9. The location of trails on the masterplan are for guidance only and will need ground-truthed, based on the above principals and landowner agreement.

8.2 Car Parking and Transportation

Car parking
The first concept consultation suggested expansion of the current Priest Hill car park, to improve accessibility to the forest for those unable to manage the distance/route from the village – Blue Badge and parent and child parking. Currently, the gradient and camber of the path to the white route next to this car park makes this route inaccessible for some. Re-design of the car park, closer to the white route, would increase accessible parking and accessibility of this trail. Additional parking capacity could also provide a couple of horse box spaces. As per other FLS forest car parks, a parking charge (with annual passes for regular users) provides a sustainable income to help maintain FLS visitor facilities. Charging and price point can also help

manage capacity or encourage parking in free car parks, such as in the village.

Our ambition is to help others deliver events in Newcastleton through engagement with partners and event organisers. Events have the potential to attract new visitors to the area, for the event and as repeat visitors, providing a potential boost to the local economy. There is the opportunity here to create a balance of events (small, medium and large) for a range of activities; including, but not limited to, mountain biking, running, car rallies and motorcycle events. To further support the current events market (mainly cycling/MTB events) and the future events market, there might be the potential for an events car park to be developed above Dykecrofts at Castlehill (Figure 14 - 3). In addition, there may be other non-FLS land in the village which may have the potential to be purchased or hired for events parking.

The Newcastleton and District Community Trust are also planning car parking, walking and cycling trails on their community-owned land at Holm Hill (Figure 1), so any provision developed by the community at this location should be taken into consideration.

The verges of the FLS entrance at Florida (Figure 14-4) are currently being used informally. In response to the demand from the local horse community and the easy flat access in from the B6357, a dedicated horse box car park could be developed at this location giving consideration to the timber haulage use of the forest road.

Public transport:
FLS will continue to work with the Community Council, Scottish Borders Council and SOSE to encourage the maintenance and improvement of services.

Active travel
In accordance with FLS Corporate and Visitor Services strategies, FLS promotes the use of active travel throughout its forests and land, with details for each forest location published on its web destination pages.

8.3 Facilities

FLS supports the development of accessible public toilet facilities in the village to be available free of charge via a radar key. In addition, FLS would support the upgrading of the payment system to allow card payments and 24/7 access to toilets and showers. There may be an opportunity for a bike business to include a bike wash or a chargeable bike wash.

There is the potential for a further accessible, gender neutral, single stall, eco toilet to be developed at the Priest Hill car park. In addition, following the development of trail and car park improvements, there could also be potential for a seasonal catering facility at this location. Simple, easy to maintain, natural water play could be developed around the river and pool areas alongside the white trail.

In order to maintain the focus on visits starting and finishing in the village and in order to ensure they are managed sustainably, it is envisaged that these facilities could be developed and managed by the local community.

FLS supports the provision of dog waste bins at key locations in collaboration with the local community and council where funding can be sustained. FLS will continue to work closely with the Kennel Club, VisitScotland and other stakeholders regarding dog fouling education campaigns.

8.4 Accommodation

There is evidence of some demand for informal campervan facilities in the area, due to campervans already parking in the Priest Hill car park or on Whithaugh Park land. This informal, chargeable provision could be developed at Priest Hill car park as part of the current FLS Stay the Night scheme or elsewhere as a community or business investment.

The area suggested for potential events/overflow parking at Castlehill (Figure 14-3) might also be suitable for accommodation, perhaps for the Dark Sky market.

Additionally, to support the long-distance walking, cycling and horse riding routes along the Scotland/ England border, formal or informal camping sites could be developed. Consideration should be given to the location of these sites to avoid disturbance to local residents and to avoid easy access for use as 'party camping' sites. As with the development of any camping area, the risk of littering and fire has to be carefully considered and accompanied by guidance.

Any development in the border area needs to consider security and rural crime concerns. We will continue to work with the community, police and partnerships against rural crime, with the aim of minimising criminal activity and maximising safety and security in Newcastleton Forest.

POTENTIAL UPGRADES AND NEW TRAILS

Potential new trail areas have been identified with cross hatches. The exact trail line will be determined through a planning application process.

POTENTIAL TRAIL 1: KIELDER 50 MILE ROUTE

The route could potentially have shorter sections to encourage overnight stays in both Kielder and Newcastleton. It could use existing promoted and non-promoted forest road network and would be suitable for gravel cycling, endurance horse riding, adaptive riders, ultra running and long distance walking. The existing promoted routes include Sustrans 10, Bloody Bush Trail, Cross Border Trail and Kielder Lakeside Way. The route could offer informal camping along the Scotland / England border, potentially adding a key attraction to the route.

POTENTIAL TRAIL 2: KERSHOPE 18 MILE ROUTE

This potential gravel route would primarily use existing forest road, but could require a new 500 metre section of trail between Scotch Knowe and Lazy Knowe. The route could be started at Kershope Bridge (car park development would be needed), Cuddyshall Bridge car park or from Newcastleton (via forest or Sorbietrees road).

POTENTIAL TRAIL 3: FOREST ROAD CONNECTION

These trails could potentially provide a set of gravel route options for wheel, foot or hoof within Newcastleton Forest. They could also provide diversion options during periods of timber harvesting or road construction. Gradient would need to be carefully managed to ensure routes are as accessible as possible.
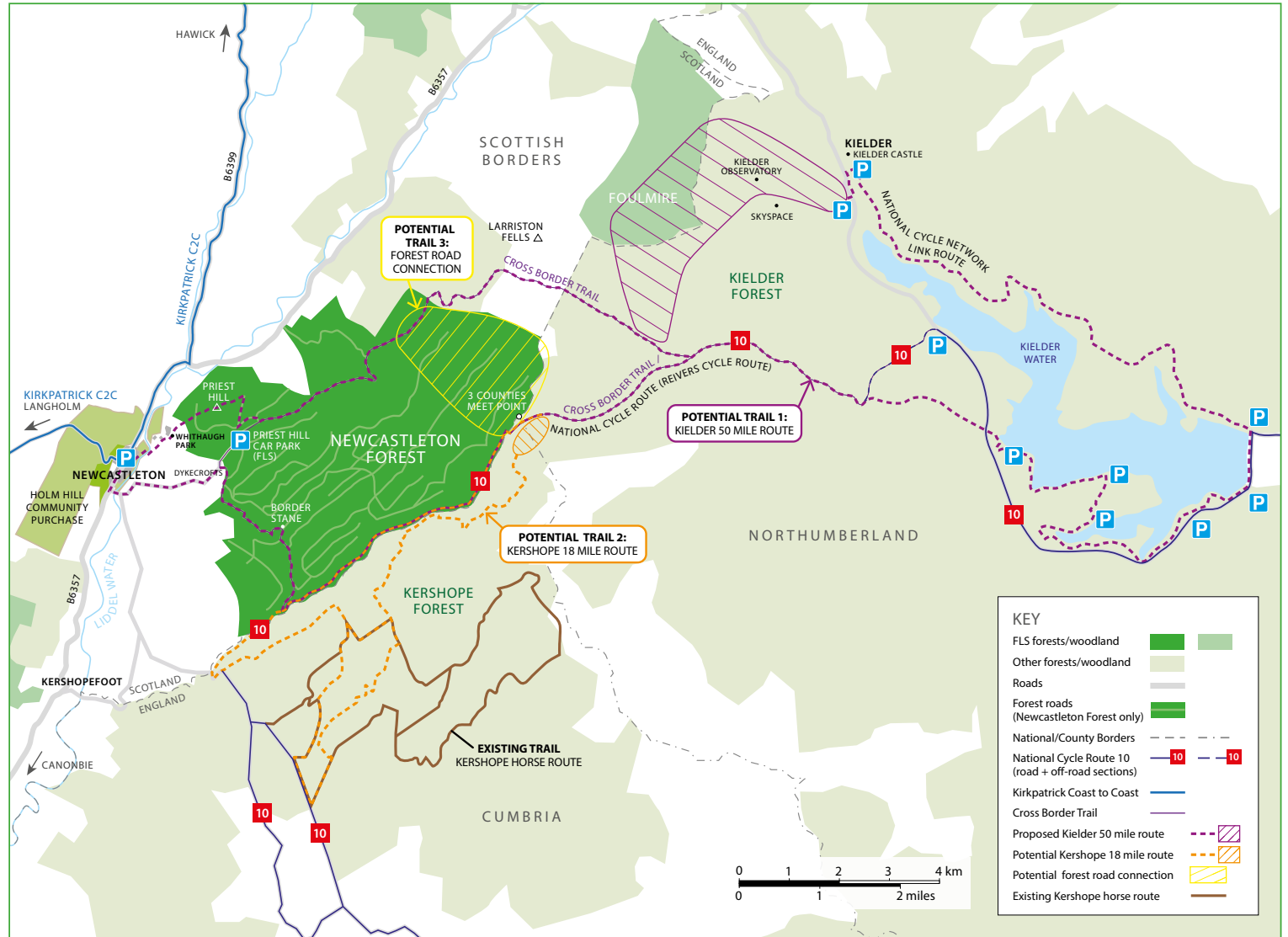
Figure 11: Potential long distance trails

POTENTIAL UPGRADES AND NEW TRAILS

Potential new trail areas have been identified with cross hatches. The exact trail line will be determined through a planning application process.

POTENTIAL TRAIL 4: REVISED RED MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL

Potential revision of the red route to take it off forest roads onto bespoke mountain bike trails. Any sections that are top of grade would have an easier opt-out opportunity alongside. Small sections of black could be created to encourage rider progression. The route could be altered to include Priest Hill. Mapped route is indicative and would require detailed design and planning approval.

POTENTIAL TRAIL 5: MULTI-USER TRAIL

Improved and additional sections seeking to minimise gradient would make this route as accessible as possible to walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The route would be wide, with good sightlines. The trail could have optional technical features such as berms, rock gardens, jumps. The route would be designed as an introductory route for a broad visitor group to enjoy the views from Priest Hill. Potential new sections on Whithaugh Park ground would help improve visitor experience and reduce gradient change. Mapped route is indicative and would require detailed design and planning approval.

BLUE MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL

No revision is suggested.

KEY

- FLS forest/woodland
- Other forests/woodland
- Current promoted car parks
- Current village MTB access
- Rivers
- Roads
- Forest roads
- Current blue MTB trail
- Current red MTB trail
- Potential multi-user trail
- Potential red MTB trail
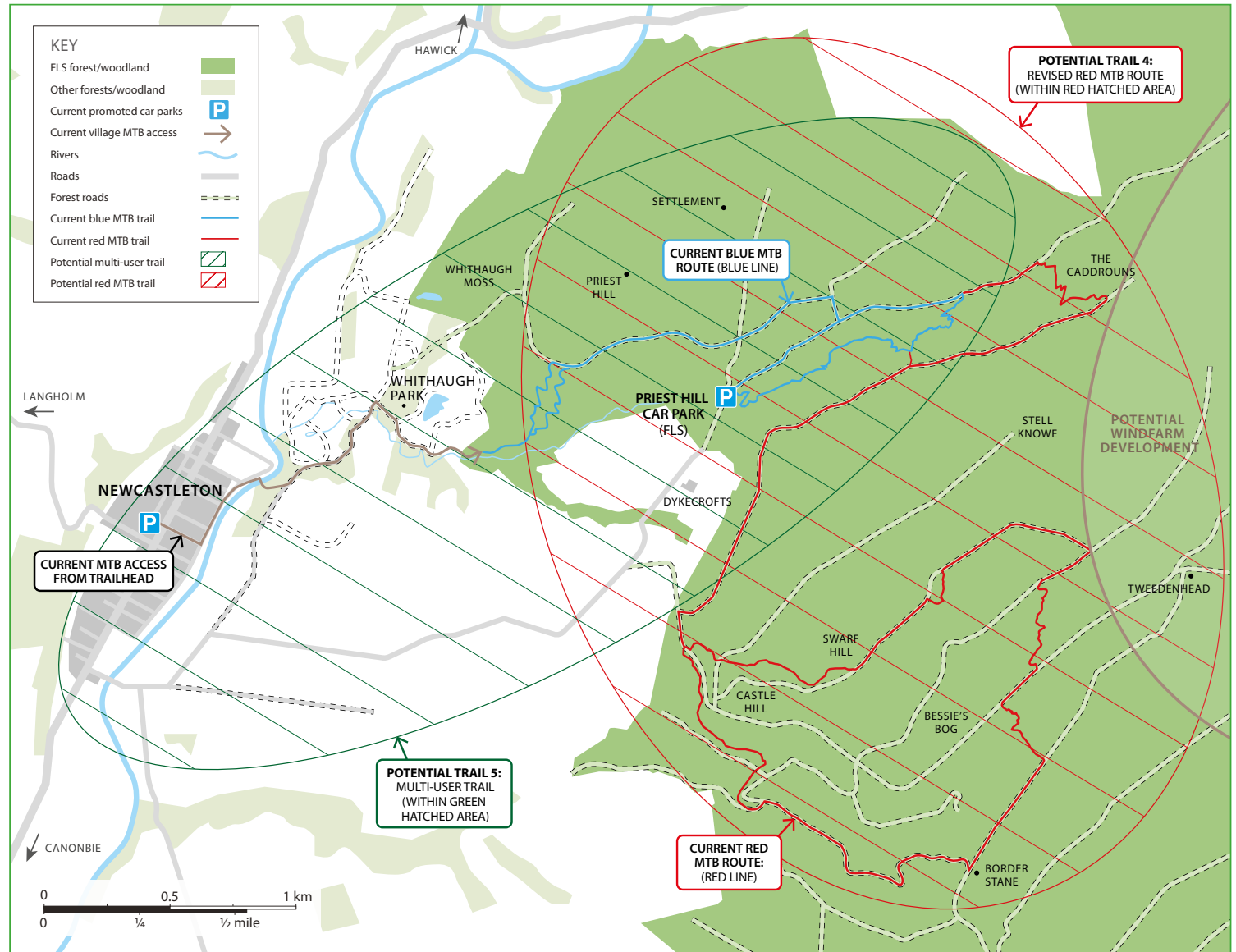
Figure 12: Potential Newcastleton Forest core trails

POTENTIAL EXTENDED ALL ABILITY TRAIL

Potential expansion of the Ponds Trail from 400m to 1.5 - 2km along Whithaugh Burn. The site is good for wildlife watching and play. Play would have a water theme.

The exact route would require detailed design and planning.

POTENTIAL CAR PARKING EXPANSION AREA

• Enlargement to existing car park footprint.

• Lower level, could help with elevation for the All Ability trail.

• Potential for horsebox parking.

Expansion areas conceptual only. All approved concepts will be subject to feasibility and business case. Car park would need to be moved away from forest road or forest road diverted.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

• Potential to provide compostable / eco-friendly, gender-neutral toilets.

• Potential for mobile catering business opportunity.

• Potential for focus on accessible and low-cost nature play around the car park and along the All Ability trail.

CURRENT EASY
ALL ABILITIY TRAIL

POTENTIAL TRAIL 6:
EXTENDED ALL ABILITIY TRAIL
(WITHIN WHITE HATCHED AREA)

POTENTIAL CAR PARK EXPANSION
(PINK HATCHED AREA)

0   400m   800m   1200m
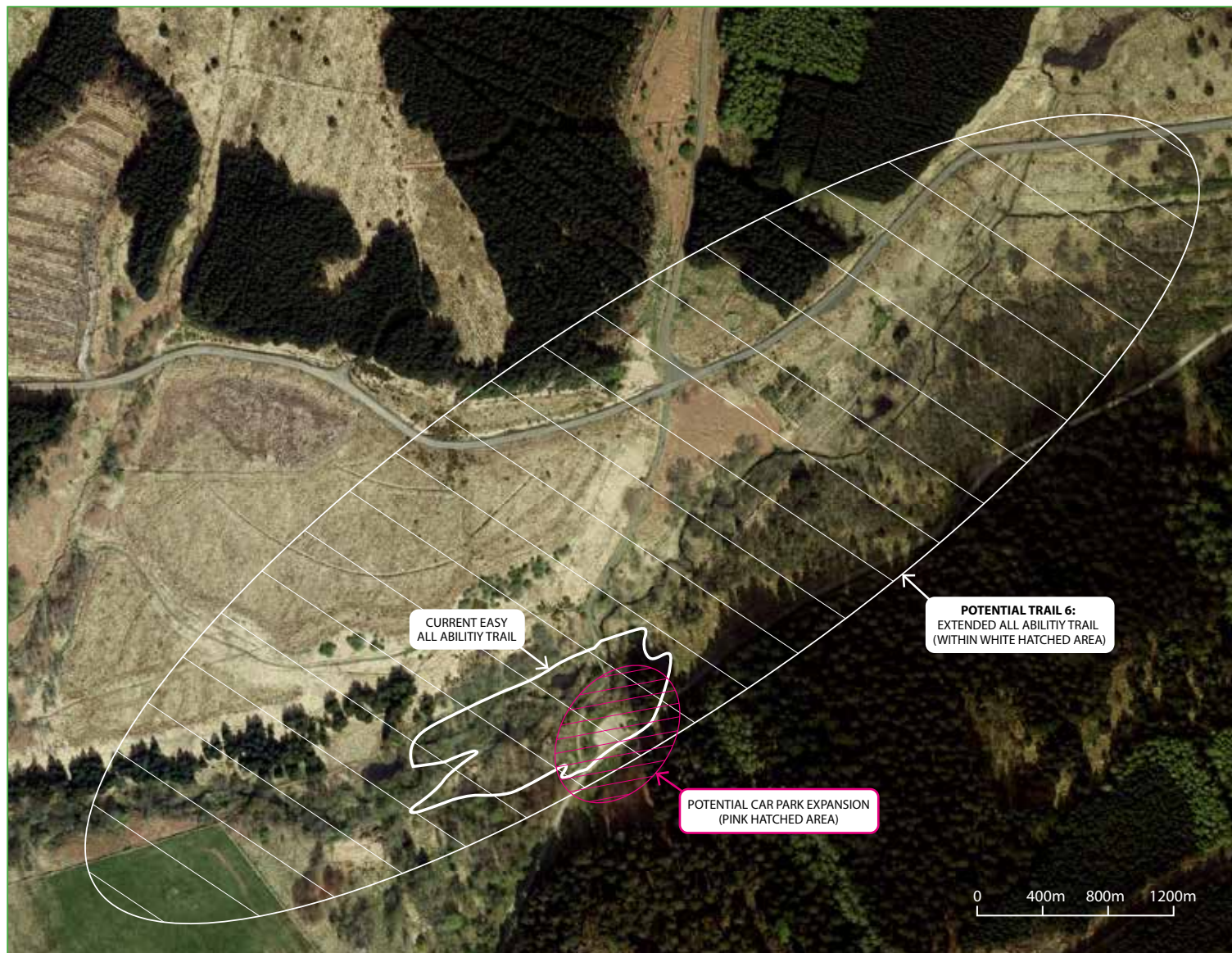
Figure 13: Potential Priest Hill All Ability trail and car park expansion

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

① NEWCASTLETON VILLAGE CAR PARK

Improvements to toilets (accessibility, card payments, opening hours, number of toilets and showers and signage) could increase appeal of village start/finish.

A bike wash/bike business/facilities could increase appeal of village centre to cyclists.

② PRIEST HILL CAR PARK (FLS)

Potential for facilities development at this car park to enhance the visitor experience and provide income. Potential to expand and improve car parking .

③ CASTLE HILL (FLS)

Potential for development for events parking or overflow parking. Potential for commercial accommodation pods/Dark Sky pods.

④ FLORIDA (FLS)

Potential location for parking for horse riders - possibly small scale car park for two horse boxes, although entrance currently used as timber haulage access.

POTENTIAL ART INSTALLATIONS

To strengthen the visitor experience, and provide a glimpse into the history of this location, a large scale art installation could be considered. This would provide an engaging, playful, shareable and memorable part of the Cross Border Trail, creating an excitement that encourages future visitors to visit and seek it out.

The focus for the installation could be the cattle smuggling of the Reivers, which is known to have been common practice in the area, and other historical themes. The installation could be designed to be thought provoking and create a sense of discovery using a series of large focal points along the Cross Border Trail, with a heightened focus around the footbridge crossing point (NY 5606 8830) where visitors cross the border.
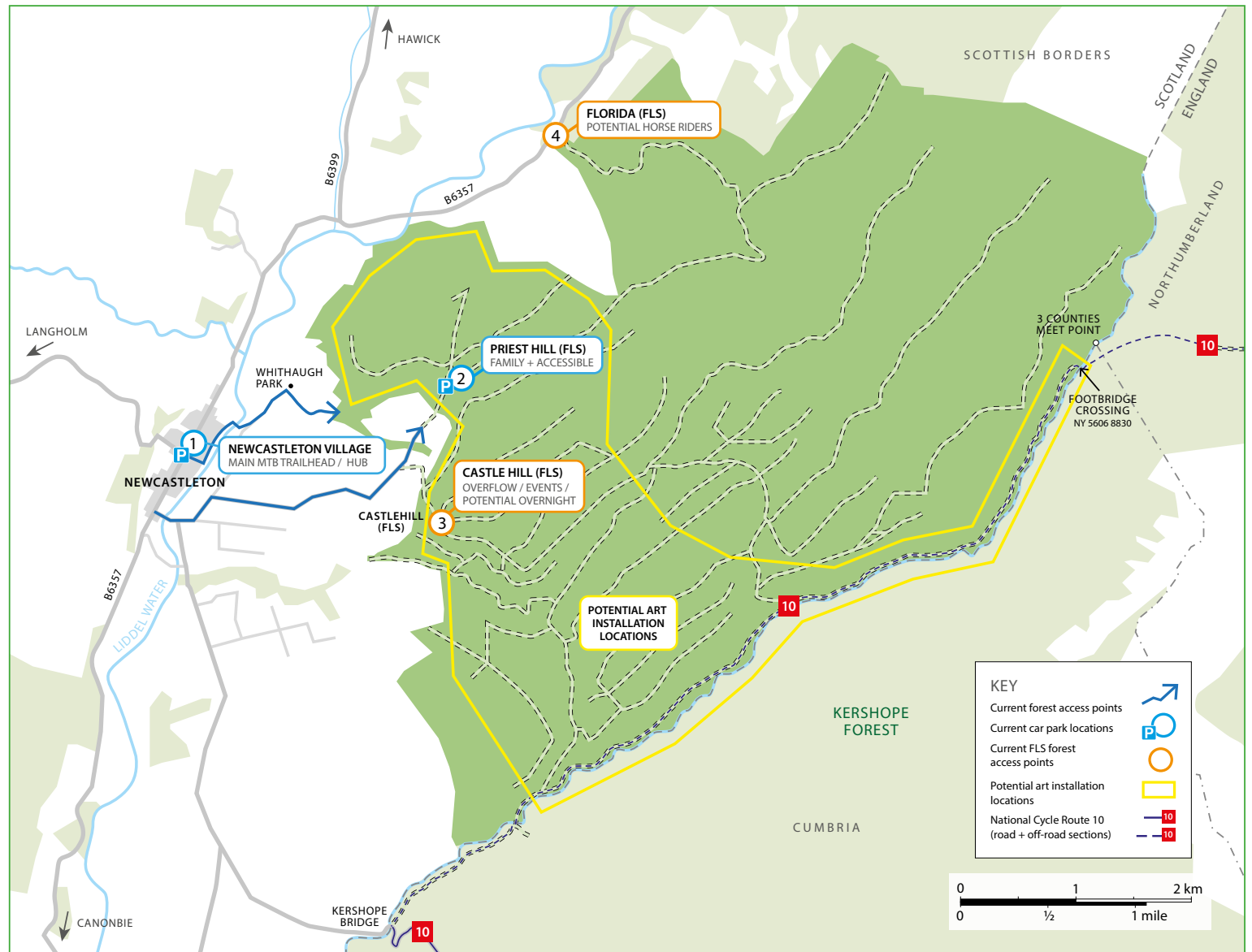
Figure 14: Potential car parking development

9.0 Investment and Funding Framework

As outlined in detail in Section 3, this Framework for Recreation Investment seeks to establish a financially sustainable, economically viable range of development opportunities that supports local communities, preserves the environment, and reinvigorates the forest of Newcastleton into a tourism destination for the future. It aims to support and complement the economic growth objectives of Scottish Borders Council Economic Strategy 2023 and the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024, by attracting increased visitor numbers to support local business and creating new tourism and recreation business opportunities.

Availability of funds in order to progress the development opportunities will be subject to a detailed business case process, a sustainable management plan, internal approvals and successful external funding bids. It is anticipated that following successful approvals, approximately £1M will initially be invested at Newcastleton through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

FLS welcomes speculative enquiries from interested parties to develop these ideas and may tender or market some opportunities. Due to the importance of supporting the local economy in Newcastleton, community consultation is key before any business opportunity is marketed more widely, allowing sufficient time for the local community to consider and note interest.

10.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Newcastleton Forest Framework for Recreation Investment will be reviewed regularly by the FLS South Region Visitor Services team, consulting with partners and community as appropriate. There is no requirement for review updates to be formally published or consulted on.

11.0 Accessibility, Contacts and Further Information

If you need to view this framework in a different format like accessible PDF, large print, easy read, audio recording or braille or would like any further information email:
enquiries.south@forestryandland.gov.scot

Appendix 1: List of Policy Documents and Policies

Scottish Borders Council:

The Scottish Borders Local Development Plan (LDP) – adopted 22 August 2024

Scottish Borders Economic Strategy 2023

Forestry and Land Scotland:

Corporate Plan

Business Plan

Newcastleton Forest Land Management Plan

Visitor Strategy

Community Strategy

Key resources:

National Planning Framework 4

South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy

- part of the Regional Economic Strategy

Contact details and further information:
Scottish Borders Council - Planning Policy and GIS
Address: Council Headquarters
Newtown St. Boswells
Melrose
TD6 0SA
Telephone: 01835 825010
Contact Planning Policy and GIS

Contact details and further information:
Forestry and Land Scotland
Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
Inverness
IV3 8NW
Web: forestryandland.gov.scot
Email: enquiries.south@forestryandland.gov.scot

Appendix 2: Consultation Visuals

FLS National and Regional teams collaborated to reach a wide range of stakeholders during the concept consultation phase. That consultation consisted of:

• Stakeholder workshops
• Community workshops
• Questionnaire

Consultation poster, feedback form and visuals from public consultation 1

Appendix 2: Consultation Visuals

Consultation poster, feedback form and visuals
from public consultation 2