

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

Application Reference Number	14NP0088
Description / Site Address	Forestry Determination in respect of proposed road 425m in length for timber extraction purposes at Gleedlee Forest, approximately 650m North of Heathery Hall, Tasset, Northumberland
Last date for decision	30 October 2014

Proposal

This application comprises of a request to the local planning authority for whether prior approval is required for additions to a forestry track under Part 7 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995.

The proposal will involve the creation of a 425 metre track to the west of a public highway that runs north-south, to the east of Heathery Hall and Gleedlee Forest. The track will be constructed from crushed hard stone on sandstone on firm ground and upon brush mats on soft ground. The purpose of the proposed track is to allow timber to be extracted from Gleedlee Forest.

Planning Policy

N/A

Relevant Planning History:

Nil

Summary of Consultations/Representations

NNPA Landscape & Forestry Officer: No objections.

The requirement of this forest road is to enable the extraction of forestry timber from the Gleedlee Forestry Plantation. These trees were planted for the purpose of extraction and it has been ascertained from a site visit that the proposed development will not affect any notable trees or hedges on or adjacent to the application site.

The nearest publically accessible receptor sites for this proposed development is Tasset Byway Open to All Traffic 46 that runs along the north eastern boundary of the plantation. Gleedlee plantation is also bordered on its north western and north eastern sides by 'Access Land' although the use of this by members of the public is thought to be somewhat limited. Further afield the development site will be seen from the minor county road that runs between Burnbank and Diamond Cottage when travelling in a northerly direction, although this is approximately 1.5km away. Set within the Border Moors and Forests National Character Area, Moorland Forestry Mosaic Landscape Character Type and Kielder, Wark and Redesdale Landscape Character Area, this proposed development is in keeping with

the nature of development that one might expect in this area of the National Park and specifically within this forestry plantation.

Whilst there is likely to be a short term disturbance caused by the felling and haulage of the timber derived from the Gleedlee forestry plantation, the proposed development of this forestry track on its own would not have a significant effect upon the landscape character of this part of the National Park. In terms of the effect that this proposed development may have on the views of the National Park, it is accepted that the track is likely to be visible initially, post felling from adjacent receptor sites as well as from the Burnbank and Diamond Cottage minor county road located to the south of the site. However, standing less than 1 metre high, the track will after five to ten years post restocking, once again be hidden from view within the emerging tree crop such that its presence will only be noticeable by the gap in the planted area creating a linear break in the developing tree canopy. It will remain largely hidden from view and screened by the forestry crop.

The proposed development will not have a significant effect upon the landscape character or views of this part of the National Park.

Comments were also made regarding the wider timber extraction and distribution route beyond the track that is the subject of this application, which are not relevant considerations when considering this proposal.

NNPA Access/Recreation Officer: The new forestry track will join and travel along the dual status route the U5049 Unclassified County Road/Byway Open to All Traffic 46 in Tarsset Parish.

There are **no objections** to the proposals on the condition that the Public Right of Way in the vicinity is protected throughout. The planned works must have no effect on accessing this route. No action should be undertaken to disturb the surface of the path, obstruct the path or in any way prevent or deter public use of the path without the necessary legal diversion or closure order having been made.

NNPA Ecologist: No objections.

There are no records of significance in the woodland itself relating to this track application. The Tarsset Burn local nature site is approximately a kilometre away, but it is not considered that this track proposal will impact on that site.

NNPA Historic Environment: No objections.

Assessment

The relevant issues for consideration are whether the proposal is reasonably necessary for forestry purposes and impacts caused by the siting and means of construction of the private way on:

- *Landscape and tranquility;*
- *Protected species and/or habitats;*
- *Cultural heritage;*
- *The public rights of way network;*

As this is a prior approval application, the scope of issues that can be considered is limited to the consideration of the siting and means of construction of the track itself. Matters such as wider impacts on the highway network due to a proposed distribution route along the

public highway network, for example cannot be taken into account in the Local Planning Authority's decision.

Due to the location of the development, the Local Planning Authority has also screened the application under the EIA Regulations, due to the location within a sensitive area.

Need for Forestry Purposes

To benefit from permitted development the proposal must be reasonably necessary for the purposes of forestry. It is clear that the access track is proposed to enable timber extraction for forestry purposes.

Impact on Landscape (from siting and means of construction)

The National Park's Landscape and Forestry Officer has provided comprehensive comments on the potential landscape impacts of the proposed track and concluded that there will be no significant landscape impacts arising from the proposed track. While the track is likely to be visible following deforestation, it is expected that the area would be replanted, which would remove the track from view over time.

The landscape and visual impact of the National Park would not be harmed by the siting and means of construction of the track.

Impact on Protected Species and Habitats (from siting and means of construction)

NNPA's Ecologist has assessed the proposal and has confirmed that the siting and construction of the track will not have an adverse ecological impact.

Impact on Cultural Heritage (from siting and means of construction)

There are no known heritage assets that would be affected by the proposed track. NNPA's Historic Environment Officer has confirmed that he has no objections in response to the consultation.

Impact on Rights of Way (from siting and means of construction)

NNPA's Access and Recreation Officer has indicated that the proposed track will join a byway. No objections are raised providing that there is no disturbance to the surface of the path, obstruction or prevention of accessing the right of way.

Conclusion

The proposed new forestry track would constitute permitted development under Part 7 of the GPDO. The siting and means of construction of the track itself would not have a significant impact upon the landscape or tranquility of the National Park, or on sites of nature conservation importance, or heritage assets. For these reasons it would not be appropriate for the National Park Authority, as local planning authority, to request further details of the siting and means of construction for further assessment of the proposed works.

RECOMMENDATION

That prior approval is **NOT REQUIRED**.

	Signature	Date
Planning Officer		
Development Manager		
National Park Officer		