

FEARNA STORAGE

Fearna Pumped Storage Hydro Scheme EIA Report

Appendix 9.3 – Indicative Forest Plan Amendments February 2025



Quality Information

Prepared by

Gary Servant
Upland Forestry Ltd.

Checked by

Chris Pasteur

Approved by

Fraser Allison

Revision History

Revision

01

Revision Date

February 2025

Details

Issue to ECU

Authorised

Fraser Allison

© 2025 Upland Forestry Ltd. All Rights Reserved

*Technical Appendix 9.3 - Indicative Forest Plan
Amendments for Glen Kingie Forest and Kingie
Estate Forest*

Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Introduction	4
3. Indicative Forest Plan Amendments – Glen Kingie Forest	5
4. Indicative Forest Plan Amendments – Kingie Estate Forest	6

1. Executive Summary

This appendix examines the implications upon forests and woodlands of the proposed construction of the Southern Access Route (SAR) for the Fearn Pumped Storage Hydro Scheme (the 'Proposed Development') road in relation to two privately-owned forest blocks – Glen Kingie Forest and Kingie Estate Forest.

The construction of the SAR through these forests will involve upgrade of 2.02 km of forest road, the replacement of a bridge over the Kingie River and the construction of 2.5km of new forest road through mature and maturing non-native conifers.

There will be a permanent loss of woodland of 12 ha within Kingie Estate Forest arising from construction of a new forest road, and there will be a permanent loss of 3.3 ha of woodland within Glen Kingie Forest as a result of widening and upgrading the existing forest road.

Each forest has a current approved Long Term Forest Plan in place, and felling for the majority of the conifers required for construction of the SAR is within areas which are scheduled for clear-felling in the period 2022-2027.

Forest Plan amendments will be required to accommodate the proposed area of woodland removal required for the construction footprint of the new road and road upgrade, these may involve amending/extending the period required for the Phase 1 felling, and amending and reducing the area of re-stocking required for the second rotation of woodland adjacent to the SAR.

An extensive programme of Compensatory Planting and biodiversity enhancement is proposed for the development as a whole which will offset the overall woodland removal for the Proposed Development, and which is expected to result in Biodiversity Net Gain. More detail is provided within the **Outline Biodiversity and Environment Management Plan supplied as Appendix 8.7 of the main EIA.**

2. Introduction

This Appendix examines the implications upon forests and woodlands of the proposed construction of the Southern Access Route (SAR) for the Fearn Pumped Storage Hydro Scheme (the 'Proposed Development') road in relation to two privately-owned forest blocks – Glen Kingie Forest and Kingie Estate Forest.

The construction of the SAR will involve upgrade of 2.2 km of forest road, the replacement of a bridge over the Kingie River and the construction of 2.5km of new forest road through mature and maturing non-native conifers.

Each forest has a current approved Long Term Forest Plan in place, and this study will provide details of the indicative Forest Plan amendments which will be required to be approved by Scottish Forestry prior to construction of the Proposed Development of the SAR. The study will quantify the overall area of woodland removal required for construction of the SAR through these forests, and will also provide an indication of the type and quantity of timber which will need to be harvested to allow development of the SAR, and the measures which will need to be taken to minimise the amount of felling waste produced in line with the joint guidance on Use of Trees Cleared to Facilitate Development on Afforested Land.

This assessment has been carried out by Upland Forestry Ltd with input and advice from Chris Pasteur and Fraser Allinson on behalf of Gilkes Fearn Hydro Ltd.

3. Indicative Forest Plan Amendments – Glen Kingie Forest

The study area encompasses the area of proposed upgrade of the existing forest road from the eastern edge of Glen Kingie Forest to the bridge over the River Kingie.

The forest covers a total of 358.38 ha across 10 main compartments and currently comprises almost 100% non-native commercial timber species (Sitka spruce, Lodgepole pine and Hybrid or Japanese Larch) planted between 1970 and 1980. The proposed upgrade to the existing forest road for the Southern Access Route will have an impact on compartments 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the forest, and will require widening of the forest road from 4m currently to an 8m road surface, with the construction footprint requiring felling of a 15m wide corridor on either side of the existing road through mature and maturing conifer crops.

The Long-Term Forest Plan (18FGS29438) was approved by Scottish Forestry in March 2022 and covers the period 2022 to 2032. It includes permission for clear-felling and restocking of the whole of compartment 3 and most of the relevant sections of compartments 1 and 4 within the first phase of the plan (2022-2027). The current timber crop in these compartments is dominated by Lodgepole pine and Lodgepole/Sitka mixtures, with small amounts of larch. The plan indicates a Long-Term Retention of Lodgepole pine on north side of forest road in compartment 1, just north of the current forest road. The forest plan also indicates the need for upgrades to internal forest roads to facilitate forest management operations, and the restock plan also already indicates an increase in the area of open ground to allow for road widening, which will cover much of the planned upgrade required for the SAR.

The length of the proposed new road through Kingie Estate Forest is 2027m, and the gross area of the construction footprint, allowing a 15m buffer on either side of the centreline, is 3.73 ha. The area of the existing forest road surface is 0.43 ha, hence the net area of woodland removal of non-native conifers within Glen Kingie Forest is thus 3.3 ha.

None of the woodland within compartments 1, 2, 3 and 4 is shown as ancient woodland on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, nor is any shown as native woodland or Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) on the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) dataset, nor is any of the forest within the buffer zone of the Caledonian Pinewood Inventory site for Glengarry Pinewood. Potential direct impacts of tree felling on wildlife and protected species will need careful consideration.

Timber to be harvested using conventional mechanised approach, with timber stacked and sold into conventional timber markets by Glen Kingie Forest. All felling to be carried out in compliance with UKFS.

A Forest Plan Amendment will need to be developed by Glen Kingie Forest and submitted for approval by Scottish Forestry prior to construction of the road upgrade through Glen Kingie Forest. This will need to show the permanent loss of 3.3 ha of currently afforested ground for the road upgrade required for the SAR. Although felling of all trees in compartments 1, 3 and 4, and the lower part of compartment 2, is currently approved for the period 2022-2027, it may be prudent to modify and extend the timeline for the Phase 1 felling. If felling can also be limited to the south side of the existing road in compartment 3 – to avoid felling the area scheduled as a Long Term Retention shown in compartment 1 in the Forest Plan – then the main amendment will be the need to make a change to the restocking schedule for all four compartments to accommodate a loss in the area of Sitka spruce restock following harvesting and construction of the widened forest road.

The upgrade of forest road bridges along the SAR through Glengarry Forest will be beneficial for active forest management in Glen Kingie Forest overall, and will increase the resilience and sustainability of the forest into its second rotation.

Proposals for Compensatory Planting relating to this 3.3 ha area of woodland removal, along with all other woodland removal associated with construction of the Proposed Development are provided in more detail within the **Outline Biodiversity and Environment Management Plan supplied as Appendix 8.7 of the main EIA**.

4. Indicative Forest Plan Amendments – Kingie Estate Forest

The study area encompasses the area of proposed new road construction from the bridge over the River Kingie to the western edge of the Kingie Estate Forest (NH088 013).

The forest covers a total of 495.5 ha across 5 main compartments and currently comprises almost 100% non-native commercial timber species (Sitka spruce, Lodgepole pine and Hybrid or Japanese Larch) planted between 1970 and 1980. The proposed construction of a new road for the Southern Access Route will affect compartments 1 and 2 of the forest, and will require felling of a 50m wide corridor through mature and maturing conifer crops.

The Long-Term Forest Plan (20FGS54183) was approved by Scottish Forestry in March 2022 and covers the period 2022 to 2032. It includes permission for clear-felling and restocking of the whole of compartments 1 and 2 (137.3 ha) within the first phase of the plan (2022-2027), and also indicates the need for construction of a new standard forest road for around 1000m through compartments 1 and 2 to enable harvesting and forest management operations. The approved Forest Plan includes proposed restock of clearfelled stands with a mixture of productive conifers and an increased proportion of native tree species. Small areas of windthrow have been noted in some Lodgepole pine stands.

The length of the proposed new road through Kingie Estate Forest is 2400m, and the gross area of the construction footprint, allowing a 25m buffer on either side of the centreline, is 12 ha. The gross area of woodland removal of non-native conifers within Kingie Estate Forest is thus 12 ha, as shown on Figure 1 below. The construction footprint of new road construction will be minimised and optimised to use existing rides and windfirm edges where possible.

None of the woodland within compartments 1 and 2 is shown as ancient woodland on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, nor is any shown as native woodland or Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) on the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) dataset, nor is any of the forest affected within the buffer zone of the Caledonian Pinewood Inventory site for Glengarry Pinewood. Potential direct impacts of tree felling on wildlife and protected species will need careful consideration.

Timber to be harvested using conventional mechanised approach, with timber stacked and sold into conventional timber markets by Kingie Estate. All felling to be carried out in compliance with UKFS.

A Forest Plan Amendment will need to be developed by Kingie Estate and submitted for approval by Scottish Forestry prior to construction of the new road through Kingie Estate Forest. This will need to show the permanent loss of 12 ha of currently afforested ground for the new road construction. Although felling of all trees in compartments 1 and 2 is currently approved for the period 2022-2027, it may be prudent to modify and extend the timeline for the Phase 1 felling. The main amendment will be the need to change the restocking schedules to accommodate the loss of 12 ha of woodland to accommodate the new road corridor, this may also provide an opportunity to increase the area of broadleaves along the lower and riparian edges of the woodland along the Kingie River and the Gearr Garry.

The upgrade of forest road bridge over the River Kingie, and other bridges along the SAR through Glengarry Forest, will 'unlock' active forest management within the 495 ha Kingie Estate forest block which currently lacks adequate bridge and road infrastructure. It will enable more active forest management to begin within the forest - bringing additional timber to market, and will increase the resilience and sustainability of the forest into its second rotation .

Proposals for Compensatory Planting relating to this 12 ha area of woodland removal, along with all other woodland removal associated with construction of the Proposed Development are provided in more detail within the **Outline Biodiversity and Environment Management Plan supplied as Appendix 8.7 of the main EIA.**