

16th August 2021

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Secretary
Tweedsmuir Community Council

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Dear Sir/Madam,

**Hopekist Forest Plan
Scoping – August 2021**

As woodland managers for Hopekist Forest we have been tasked with creating a long-term forest plan which will detail the management objectives and proposed operations for the next 20 years. Part of this process involves a scoping exercise whereby interested parties (statutory consultees, community councils etc) are invited to comment on the woodlands and raise any issues that may relate to the management of the woodlands. This email is your invitation to participate in the scoping process and you are given 28 days to respond in writing.

Scottish Woodlands Ltd has attached a Scoping Information Pack including a location map and a concept map also indicating current species. The Scoping Information Pack includes a basic outline of the woodland holding and proposed management objectives. We would be grateful if you could review these documents and inform us of any issues that should be incorporated into the plan by no later than the 13/09/2021. The feedback we obtain will be incorporated into a Scoping Report that once completed needs to be approved by Forestry Commission Scotland. Once the Scoping Report is approved, we will move on to create the long-term forest plan.

If you choose to participate in the scoping process you will be invited to view the completed Scoping Report and the subsequent long-term forest plan, once approved by Scottish Forestry.

Yours sincerely,



**Luke Venter
Forest Manager**



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Hopekist Forest

Long-term Forest Plan Scoping Information August 2021



Hopekist Forest: View eastwards from public road.



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The Scoping Process

Under the Scottish Rural Development Programme approval has been sought to prepare a Long Term Forest Plan for Hopekist Forest, near Stobo in the Scottish Borders. The aim of the plan will be to outline the proposals for felling, replanting and other management over the next 20 years.

The initial scoping stage is a consultation carried out with organisations and individuals who may have an interest in the forest. The list includes neighbouring property owners and tenants, community councils, relevant departments within Scottish Borders Council, relevant statutory bodies, and any other interested parties. Scoping provides an opportunity for comments and contributions to be made regarding the future management of the woodlands in question.

If you would like to comment on the proposals, please reply to the address given below or by email by 5pm on Monday 17th September 2021. Once the scoping exercise is complete a Scoping Report will be created which records all comments and the issues raised, and where appropriate, how these are to be integrated into our approach towards managing these woodlands.

Woodland Summary & Prior Management

Hopekist Forest is a single contiguous woodland block with an area of ca. 240ha. The forest has been managed under a *no-thin* regime to date, with only limited felling having occurred within the larch and mixed larch stands in order to manage *Phytophthora* disease outbreaks. A large proportion of the forest is at or nearing economic rotation age.

Hopekist Forest does not, and never has had, any formal forest plan applied to it. Two felling licences are presently active, one for thinning and the other for felling, with expiry dates of September 2024 and October 2021 respectively. These licences have largely not been exercised, with only the aforementioned larch felling operation (ca. 2.2ha, felled to waste) having been carried out. The removal of larch from the mixed species northern stands has functioned somewhat as a light thinning, although this effect can be considered coincidental to the primary objective of disease management. No restocking of the felled-to-waste area has yet occurred, with the restock prescription for this component to be outlined within the upcoming forest plan.

The respective species proportions are shown in tabular format in *Appendix 1*. The entire forest was planted in 1984 and 1985, giving it an age class of 31-40.

Site-specific Physical Characteristics

The dominant soil types are peaty gleyed podzols and brown earths, with the peatier areas tending towards the gentler slopes. Terrain is moderately steep with some very steep sections around sykes. The climate is cool and wet. Nutrient cycling appears to be more efficient than assumed by the Ecological Site Classification (ESC) model, typically resulting a higher than indicated Soil Nutrient Regime (SNR).

The Land Capability for Forestry (LCF) score for the site is 6, indicating very limited flexibility for trees. This rating is debatable, as indicated by the presence of a wide range of non-native conifer species within the woodland with a yield class range of 12 – 26 (i.e. adequate to good) for these species. In terms of wind exposure, the DAMS scores range from 13 – 15 (i.e. moderately exposed).

Management Objectives

The management objectives which allow the long-term vision of a sustainably managed, biodiverse, and economically productive woodland to be fulfilled are as follows:

- Manage the forest on a sustainable basis in accordance with the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) standard and the UK Forestry Standard.
- To programme harvesting of areas as close to the economic optimum as site factors will allow.
- Provide for conservation and biodiversity, focusing on defined areas where management will afford the most significant gains, for example riparian corridors.
- To enhance the aesthetic value of the forest by addressing landscape issues of shape, diversity and age structure.
- Safeguard archaeological and other protected features

Restructuring will be carried out via clear felling and replanting. There is no evidence to suggest that establishment would be feasible through natural regeneration. This, combined with the forest being moderately exposed, and the low quantities of extant natural regeneration, indicate that Hopekist Forest is not a suitable candidate for continuous cover forestry.

The woodlands are intended for inclusion within the Scottish Woodlands Ltd Certification Group Scheme.

In keeping with UKWAS, areas will be set aside as Natural Reserves (minimum intervention areas) and Long-term Retentions (woodlands retained for longer than their usual economic rotation). Long-term retentions will typically be located in areas of high landscape value, sheltered sites, or high biodiversity value areas such as riparian broadleaves. Natural reserves will be mostly wooded areas with low commercial value, or discrete areas retained as standing deadwood.

A location map and a concept map are attached; the concept map outlines the main factors that will be considered during creation of the forest plan.

Contact Details

Please return all written responses to the postal or email addresses provided below by the end of day on 17/09/2021:

Luke Venter
Forest Manager
Scottish Woodlands Ltd
Priorwood
High Road
Melrose
TD6 9EG

luke.venter@scottishwoodlands.co.uk

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to get in touch.

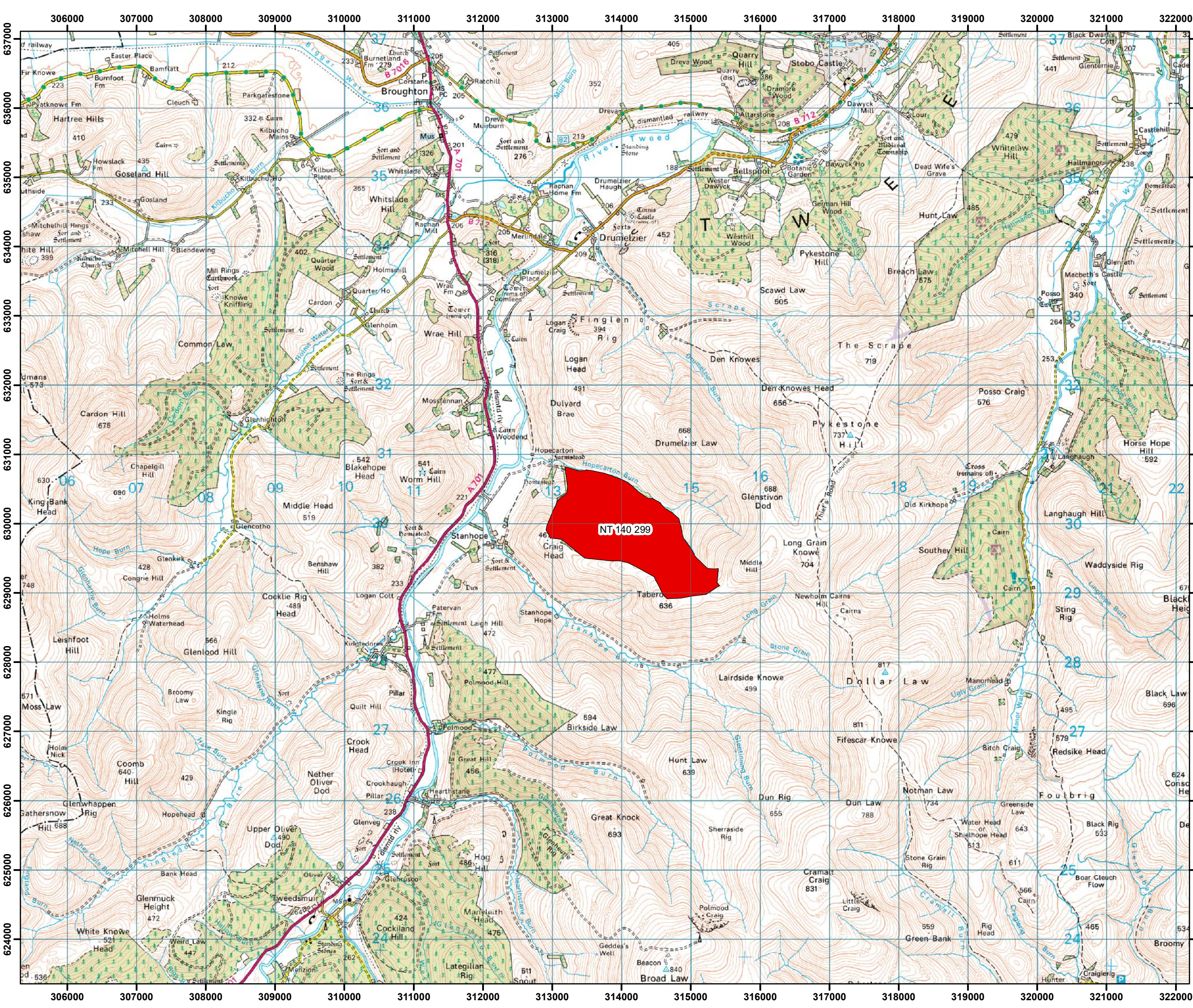
Attached Maps: Location Map
 Concept Map (incl. current species layout)

Appendix 1:

Species	Area (ha)	Proportion
SS	152.37	63.5%
OG	59.55	24.8%
HL	9.05	3.8%
DF	5.24	2.2%
LP	4.86	2.0%
SP	2.91	1.2%
NF	2.55	1.1%
Fallow	2.23	0.9%
JL	1.19	0.5%
MB	0.07	0.0%

240.02

Table 1: Areas and proportions of species and open ground.




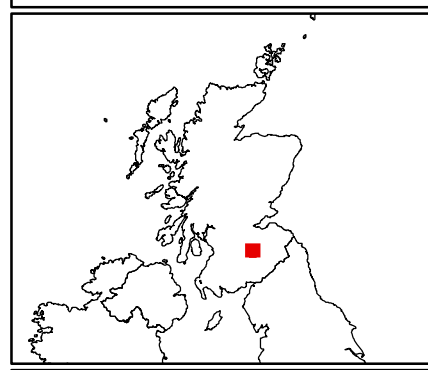
Hopekist Forest Plan Location Map

BRN: 161153
MLC: 68/152/0066
App. No: 21FGS59085

Created On: 13/08/2021 (LV)

Legend

 Hopekist Forest



Scottish Woodlands Ltd
Research Park, Riccarton
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1:50,000
Scale Correct at A3

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