Dear Gavin

Thank you for your letter, which has been passed to me for comment.  Scottish Forestry is the principal organisation responsible for forestry regulation.  I am sure you have contacted them already.  NatureScot is asked to advise Scottish Forestry on proposals that affect certain designated sites, namely:

·         Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for areas of national importance for habitats, species and geology

·         Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for areas of European importance for habitats and non-bird species

·         Special Protection Areas (SPA) for areas of European importance for birds

·         National Scenic Areas (NSA) for areas of national landscape importance

·         Wild Land Areas, designated for their wilderness experience

Of these designations, there are no SPAs in the Tweedsmuir CC area, and your boundary extends only slightly into the Upper Tweeddale NSA, north of Stanhope.

The south western portion of the Tweedsmuir Hills SSSI is within your area.  Although the SSSI has virtually no commercial forestry within the boundary, we do comment on fringing proposals to ensure that the nature interests of the Tweedsmuir Hills is not compromised.  This often requires buffers of native woodland to be created between commercial activities and the SSSI boundary.  In recent years we have commented on forestry proposals at Polmood and Hearthstanes.

The other SSSI in your area is the River Tweed, which is also designated as the River Tweed SAC.  Water courses can be significantly affected by forestry activities, but one main aspect of forestry design is again the creation of a sizeable buffer between forestry and river.  Older proposals often lack a buffer, so felling an older forest often provides an opportunity to enhance the condition of forests and adjacent rivers.

The final designation in your area is the Talla – Hart Fell Wild Land Area.  Within your part of this designation there is no commercial forestry, although there are sizeable plantations immediately to the north and west.  Again, if forestry was proposed within or close to this designation we would need to be assured that it would enhance the wilderness qualities of the landscape.

If you want more information about any of these designated sites, please visit our website at <https://sitelink.nature.scot/home>.

Some forestry locations coincide with areas mapped either as Ancient Woodland (none in your area) or Native Woodland, with small pockets occurring between the Fruid Water and Stanhope.  We would always encourage forestry proposals to make areas of native woodland larger, and to join them up to create habitat networks.  Areas of native woodland can be found at the following website:<https://forestry.gov.scot/forests-environment/biodiversity/native-woodlands/native-woodland-survey-of-scotland-nwss>.

From your letter I note your concern about landscape and wider amenity implications of forestry.  I am afraid this is beyond our responsibility.  Scottish Forestry can offer more advice or support.

If you wish to comment on forestry proposals, please get in touch with Scottish Forestry direct.  They may be able to add you to a mailing list to inform you of proposals in your area.  If this is not possible, you can scan forestry proposals on the website (<https://forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/public-registers>).  This website also gives an opportunity to submit your comments on a proposal.

I hope this has been helpful, but please get back in touch if you have any specific questions about the nature interest of any of the sites described above.

Regrds

Stuart

**Stuart Macpherson | Area Officer**

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NatureScot is the operating name of Scottish Natural Heritage.

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