

SDM/PAM

25 January 2021

The Forward Planning Team
Corporate Improvement and Economy
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
NEWTOWN ST BOSWELLS
TD6 0SA

Dear Sirs

**Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS) in Scotland
(proposed for adoption)**

We write to make our written representation to the above proposal on behalf of Northumberland Estates. We note that you have included a large area of the farm, referred to as Upper Kelhope, Wheel Burn and Blythe Water, Soonhope Burn upper, and Longformacus Burn, Soonhope Burn upper, The Howe and Crib Law in your proposal for adoption as a Local Biodiversity Site. We wish to object to this proposal for the following reasons:

1 Lack of Engagement

Whilst we appreciate that this is a consultation process our clients were not notified that the site was being considered at an early stage and therefore were not able to discuss or agree on proposed boundaries.

The designation coverage appears broad brush with inclusion of areas of land that we consider of less ecological value for example strips of woodland planted by our clients around 15 years ago. The areas and land classification currently included can be summarised as follows:

Site	Hectares	Grid reference
Wheel Burn and Blythe Water	82.52	NT567508
Soonhope Burn upper, The Howe	144.28	NT536571
Upper Kelpope	32.84	NT511587
Crib Law	272.18	NT523599
Soonhope Burn upper & Longformacus Burn	118.78	NT536587
Total area:	650.6	

The total IACS registered land, submitted on the 2020 BPS claim calculates that approximately 11% of the farm is covered under the proposal. This is of huge significance to this farming business and we consider that this proposal requires further detailed discussion with our client and specific areas of the farm considered on their own merits rather than what we consider a much broader approach for inclusion.

2 Supporting Evidence not Provided

We have not been provided with any evidence or survey results supporting the inclusion and extend of the BDS area proposed in the Local Development Plan.

We would like to see copies of the recent plant survey which we understand is necessary for a full assessment of the site to be made. Our clients are not aware of any recent surveys being carried out and have not granted access for this.

If historical data has been used we would wish to see copies and the results of the overall scoring system.

Our client is very appreciative of the important ecological value of areas of the farm, but such a widespread area of inclusion is deemed unnecessary and we wish to see the analysis and justification for all those areas included.

3 Protection of Site in Planning Context

As noted above our clients are particularly conscious of the value of the ecological habitat they farm within. They have undertaken significant environmental projects over the years to enhance the existing ecology and to aid this. Much of the ecology that is present on the farm is there because of careful land management practices undertaken by our clients during the last 20 years. They farm with the environment in mind however with such controls imposed it is possible that this designation could deter them from undertaking additional ecological enhancement works in the future. Our clients need to be able to run their farming business to make a profit so that they

can continue to manage the holding as they do. They are constantly balancing farming return and ecological value.

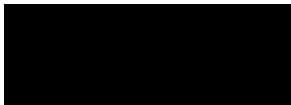
The farm will need to continue to develop in the years to come to meet the needs of the business and there could also be scope for other diversified enterprises which would supplement core farming income. Accordingly, our clients do have concerns as to how the designation could impact on future farm developments such as new farm buildings and woodland planting. In addition, diversified projects such as short term holiday lets or renewable energy schemes as examples.

Inclusion of areas of land that have less environmental value and with greater scope for future development should not be included wherever possible to enable future sustainability of the business.

In summary, we acknowledge the ecological value of parts of the farm however we would like to rationalise the areas covered and would suggest direct engagement with our client along with provision of copies of supporting evidence.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the Senior Surveyor.

Senior Surveyor