

EIA Screening decision proforma

Business details			
Business reference number	[REDACTED TEXT]	Name	[REDACTED TEXT]
Main location code	[REDACTED TEXT]	EIA ID	2025-004

Proposed works details				
Location CPH	[REDACTED TEXT]	Type	Non improved / Semi natural / sensitive land	Y
Location name	[REDACTED TEXT]		Restructuring above thresholds	N/A
Grid reference	NX315677		Drainage	N
Nearest Town	Newton Stewart		Irrigation	N
Description of proposed works	Cultivation of three fields as follows: Establishment of a forage crop for winter grazing for 1-2 years before reseeding with a grass mix. The fields have been managed by a tenant (now retired) who grazed them with sheep and cattle with minimum fertiliser/lime inputs in recent years. The proposal is to spray off the existing grass and discing to establish the forage crop. Bracken treatment is also required in field B. The cultivated areas will receive inputs of lime, fertiliser and manure.			

Initial check (LPIS, PastMap etc)	comments
Are any significant earthworks proposed within 25m of a railway or classified road? (If yes refer customer to LA planning department, and reject screening application)	No
Does the project involve creating new tracks, or any other action that would require planning permission or approval from LA planning, or fall under Forestry EIA regulations? (if yes refer customer to LA planning or FS, and reject screening application)	No
Does the proposed work involve removing earth/rock from farm unit? (If yes refer customer to LA planning and SEPA, and reject screening application)	No
Does the proposed work involve infilling depressions or hollows with material not from the immediate area? (If yes consult with SEPA)	No
Check designations and cross compliance layers, and PastMap. Are there monuments close to the proposed works? (If yes consult with HES for scheduled monuments, and LA archaeologist for non-scheduled monuments)	Field A (NX/32033/66187) – no issues within FID Field B (NX/32725/65549) – Historic Environment ref MDG14722 (see Fig 1 below) Field C (NX/33766/65778) – no issues within FID
Does the project involve any Semi-natural / uncultivated / sensitive areas, or potentially affect any habitat, landscape, or wildlife species (If yes, consult with NatureScot)	Field A – Whole FID is covered by the Area Naturally Kept layer and the northern site is within the Peatland Layer on RP&S. The latter also lies within 300m of River Bladnoch SAC. Field B - Whole FID is covered by the Area Naturally Kept layer and there is a small area of the proposed cultivation at the east within the Peatland Layer on RP&S. Field C – Borders the River Bladnoch SAC. Whole FID is covered by the Area Naturally Kept layer and there some cross-over of the proposed cultivation area and the Peatland Layer on RP&S at the SW.

Does the project potentially effect the water environment, pose a pollution risk, or potentially have any other effects under SEPAs remit? (if yes consult with SEPA)	Field A – the northern area of proposed cultivation includes a stretch of stream/ditch which drains into Barfad Loch Field C – the proposed cultivation borders part of the River Bladnoch SAC.
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Check if proposals breach thresholds
Works within sensitive area – no threshold applies.

Check EIA tracker for previous projects at location
N/A

Local Authority Planning consultation	
Our questions	N/A
Reply	

Historic Environment Scotland / Local Authority Archaeologist consultation	
Our questions	Do you have any concerns over these proposals?
Reply	HES – no potentially significant impact on historic environment identified so no reason to consider the proposals to be EIA development LAA – I do not consider that a full EIA will be required for historic environment issues. The Council's Historic Environment Record (HER) notes a number of undesignated historic environment assets within the proposed areas and would recommend that appropriate mitigation is undertaken. This could involve micro-siting to avoid adverse impacts, or a recording survey undertaken by an archaeological contractor prior to the loss of the features. I attach a copy of the HER mapping (see Fig 2 below)

NatureScot consultation	
Our questions	Do you have any concerns over these proposals?
Reply	McNeill Estates. Reference [REDACTED TEXT] Application for Screening Decision Thank you for organising a joint SGRPID/NatureScot site visit to [REDACTED TEXT] at [REDACTED TEXT] near Newton Stewart to look at their proposals for reseeding/intensification to be considered under the EIA (Agriculture) Regulations. During that visit we met with the owner, [REDACTED TEXT], who accompanied us throughout Field A and B and provided insight into his plans to manage the land. Summary of Proposal: The proposal is to spray off the existing grass, disc fields and plant forage crop and in 2 years to reseed with a grass mix. There are three fields (A, B and C) where this management is proposed, and they each have very different characteristics. The proposals only apply to parts of each of these fields and not the whole units (LPIDS). Summary of Field Observations: Field A Killynock (also referred to as unit 36 - Grid Reference NX320601) The field has a mosaic of habitats with two drumlins forming the high ground and streams and bog on the lower ground. The reseeding in this area is proposed on the two drumlins but was not proposed on the intervening areas of the less intensively managed and uncultivated habitat. [REDACTED TEXT] informed us that he had been advised by his [REDACTED TEXT] Advisor that it would be acceptable to spray and reseed the drumlins providing he did not plough or "break" the land and that he could do this prior to awaiting the decision of any EIA process. It is the NatureScot opinion that this was the wrong advice to have been issued. It completely undermines the whole process of the EIA to assess potential impacts prior to any decision. The reseeding works therefore, proceeded prior to the joint agency visit and without any prior consultation or discussion of their impacts. When we arrived on site, we had to view the proposed works as detailed in this "Application for Screening Decision" after they had actually taken place. At the time of our visit, therefore, both Drumlins in Field A had already been sprayed off and resown with forage crop. That made the assessment tasks much harder as we needed to search for evidence of what had been there previously. There are two different drumlins in Field A and each will be discussed separately.

With regard to the north-western drumlin, when we inspected the sprayed areas, the original vegetation could still be seen in some places where the spraying had been incomplete. That was sufficient to confirm that the previous grass sward had been improved grassland.

With regards to the south-eastern drumlin, the sprayed area whilst mostly improved grassland, did include wetter rushy areas that would have at least been semi-natural and are now sprayed and sown with forage crop which appears in part unsuccessful. Spraying was less successful on these wetter areas and recovery to the original habitat is possible. Perhaps a quarter of this drumlin may have been semi-improved prior to the works progressing (mostly in the north-east part of this drumlin). It is difficult to make a more accurate assessment due to the damage that had taken place which is masking what we should have seen. NatureScot would not have had concerns about those previously improved parts of this drumlin being reseeded, but we would have recommended an EIA take place to assess the proposal and are likely to have concluded that the semi-improved or unimproved areas which were perhaps a quarter of the drumlin would not be included in the reseed. Indeed, the attempts to reseed have failed in some of these areas suggesting that the land was unsuitable for the proposal.

- The following paragraph relates to the impacts to both of the Drumlins in Field A. Unfortunately, the manner in which the works were carried out has been damaging to the surrounding area beyond what was originally proposed in the application. The area sprayed and planted with forage crop has extended in places into the previously uncultivated land which should not have happened. This has impacted areas of neutral grassland and acid grassland. A more significant and negative impact has occurred in the application of herbicide as the boom has extended the spray beyond the target area killing a swath of ground in places 8 metres wide of uncultivated species rich ground around much of the edge of the drumlins. This has impacted on what would be considered "uncultivated" species rich grassland and also into the edges of the bog. These species rich edges of the drumlin contained the following species (species rich indicators in bold) - Selfheal, **Tormentil**, Ribwort Plantain, Bracken, **Eyebright**, Sheep's Sorrel, White Clover, Yorkshire Fog, Creeping Buttercup, **Red Clover**.

This activity highlights a fundamental issue such that even when a line is agreed on a map a contractor depending on their briefing may or may not pay sufficient attention to that detail and might feel they are doing the farmer a favour by over spraying and pushing back the natural edge rather than exercising caution and keeping back from the natural habitat. In terms of the consideration of this case and indeed future cases elsewhere, this highlights a strong need for those areas targeted for reseeding/management once agreed to be physically marked and agreed on the ground to ensure that there is no unintended damage that the regulations are in place to avoid.

Summary of Field Observations Field B Drums of Carsebuie (also referred to as unit 56 - Grid Reference NX327655)

Bracken had been cut in field B prior to the visit and [REDACTED TEXT] confirmed that it was less vigorous during our visit than it would otherwise have been. We inspected the area proposed for reseeding and also some adjacent areas to note any contrasts. It was discussed that the field would have had stones removed and been plough many decades previously. That was consistent with our observations that the area was free of stones compared to adjacent areas that had presumably never been ploughed. Given the long timelapse since Field B would last have been ploughed (perhaps as far back as the 1940s) the ground had reverted to semi-natural vegetation. I made the following species list during the visit with "species rich" indicator species highlighted in bold. **Tormentil**, Bracken, Marsh Thistle, Ribwort Plantain, Common Mouse-ear, **Eyebright**, White Clover, **Violet**, Sweet Vernal Grass, **Pignut** (damper area) and Yarrow. There was no evidence of intensive agricultural practices in the field. The whole field would be considered as "unimproved grassland" rather than "improved/semi-improved" on the bases that the sward contained less than 30% of rye-grass, white clover, timothy or cock's-foot as defined in the AECS field sheet for the "Identification of Species-rich Grassland".

Summary of Field Observations Field C - Adjacent to River Bladnoch SAC - (also referred to as unit 79 Grid Reference NX337657)

- This field is a complex mosaic and perhaps not quite as straight forwards as the proposed management map suggests. It also lies adjacent to the River Bladnoch Special Area of Conservation which is an international designation for Atlantic Salmon. Certainly, much of the area proposed for the works is previously improved ground and even a small area of rushy ground within

it holds little botanical interest although there was no evidence of recent intensive management. The species list for the previously improved ground has Yorkshire Fog, Crested Dogs-tail, Common Bent, White Clover, Field Mouse-ear, Sheep's Sorrel, Creeping Thistle, Lesser Stitchwort, Creeping Buttercup, Sweet Vernal Grass, **Tormentil (only one)**, Selfheal, **Bird's Foot Trefoil**, Yarrow (at edge), **Heath bedstraw (at edge)**, **Heath Speedwell**. Whilst there were a few species rich indicators within the proposed management area (highlighted in bold) these were isolated occurrences and often near the edge of the proposed works. Indeed, the whole field would be considered as "unimproved grassland" rather than "improved/semi-improved" on the bases that the sward contained less than 30% of rye-grass, white clover, timothy or cock's-foot as defined in the AECS field sheet for the "Identification of Species-rich Grassland". The remainder of the field would be considered species rich and will be uncultivated. The species rich edge between the field and the River Bladnoch was in the order of 33m wide and therefore, larger than identified in the proposals. Indeed, the complexity of the mix of habitats in the field would necessitate a much more detailed map identifying the area that are previously agriculturally improved from those that are still uncultivated and species rich and the respective quality of the grassland in each of these areas. Any proposal would also need to take into account the width of any appropriate buffer to ensure there is no enrichment of the unimproved areas or destruction through inappropriate spraying as has previously happened. The area for proposed reseeding if it were premitted following an EIA process would need to be marked clearly on the ground. If this is carried out correctly, we would be able to conclude that there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of the adjacent designated site.

NatureScot's Position:

The fields for the proposed reseeding Field A, Field B and Field C are all a mosaic of habitats. The presence of areas of "uncultivated" land within Fields A and C necessitates an Environmental Statement being required as detailed in the guidelines. All parts of Field B proposed for restoration would be considered "unimproved grassland" as would the proposed areas for restoration in Field C and therefore also necessitate an Environmental Statement being carried out as detailed in the Guidance. Parts of Field C (and perhaps Field A but hard to tell given the damage that has taken place) currently proposed for resowing would be considered species rich uncultivated habitat. We accept there are portions of Field A have been agriculturally improved not too far back, an EIA would be required to correctly identify where the interest lay and propose a methodology of how works could proceed without damaging adjacent uncultivated areas by inaccurate resowing of crop and over spraying the unimproved habitat. The picture is complicated in that work had begun in Field A that has already caused damage to uncultivated land that would have been protected by correct application of the EIA legislation. Indeed, those areas that were perhaps most suitable across all three fields for reseeding were in Field A and had already been progressed prior to the site inspection. The remaining areas are more complex and an EIA process would be required to determine if any of the remaining areas are suitable for the proposed works, but it must be noted at this stage that they in their entirety are classified as "unimproved or uncultivated grassland" in line with the guidance.

It is the NatureScot opinion that the advice given to [REDACTED TEXT] to spray off and sow crop on the land was wrong and that no on the ground activity should have begun until the EIA process had concluded. This error has caused damage to the areas of both unimproved and uncultivated grassland habitat where the sowing of crop has extended beyond those areas that would previously have been improved and also over the damper parts of the south-eastern Drumlin that should have been avoided. In addition, the application of herbicide has impacted a much more significant area that would have been permitted. It has covered a swath or previously unimproved grassland grading down slope into bog in a broad band sometime multiple meters wide (up to 8m in places) around much of the Drumlins. Significant damage to previously uncultivated land has occurred. Had the system operated correctly and the client awaited the RPID/NatureScot field visit the advice given would not have permitted the works to progress in that manner.

Our advice to RPID is therefore, that an Environmental Statement needs to be prepared for all of this land on account of the uncultivated or semi-natural land within the areas proposed for reseeding. We would be happy to advise in more detail on the Scope of an Environmental Statement if requested. The EIA would need to consider that damage has already taken place on site when some of the works progressed on Field A prior to the join NatureScot/RPID field visit. Consideration also needs to be given to the wider EIA procedure to ensure that clear advice is given to applicants which will ensure a robust system is in place that does not allow damage beyond the application area as has already occurred in this case.

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SEPA consultation	
Our questions	Do you have any concerns over these proposals?
Reply	I have taken a look at Nature Scots report and from SEPA 's perspective it would appear the activity will not or as in field A where work has been undertaken impact on the water environment. SEPA would therefore have not comment to make on the application or a requirement for an environmental statement.

Scottish Forestry consultation	
Our questions	N/A
Reply	

Outcome			
Full EIA required?	YES		
Statement of reasons for decision	The fields proposed for changes have uncultivated land and semi-natural areas with species-rich indicator species present.		
Deciding officer	[REDACTED TEXT]	Countersigning officer	[REDACTED TEXT]
Date	12/2/26	Date	18/2/2026

Acronyms:

- EIA Environmental Impact Assessment
- FS Forestry Scotland
- HES Historic Environment Scotland
- LA Local Authority
- LPIS Land Parcel Identification System
- SEPA Scottish Environmental Protection Agency

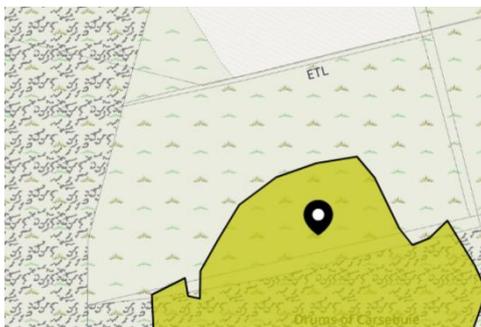


Fig 1 – Field B – NX/32725/65549
 Historic Environment Record: Farmstead, Field System, Ridge & Furrow
 Ref MDG14722: Barfad Fell /Bennan of Barnaich
 (Source: Pastmap.org.uk)

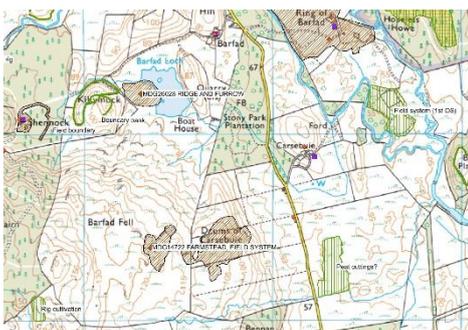


Fig 2 – Historic Environment Record supplied by Local Authority archaeology