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Jonathan Taylor
Technical Support Team Leader
North West Operational Services
Natural Resources Wales

25th September 2017

Dear Jon

Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Newborough Forest Management Plan amendment

Thank you for consulting the Strategic Assessment Team (SAT) on the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Newborough Forest Management Plan (FMP) amendment. Our comments are made in the context of our role under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Note that these comments relate only to the HRA aspect of the FMP, and only in relation to activities proposed in the area covered by the amendment. They do not relate to the appropriateness of any other aspects of the FMP or the proposals it contains.

Please note that this response will be published on the Natural Resources Wales external website.

In summary, we agree with the conclusion that the FMP amendment is not likely to have a significant effect on European sites when considered alone or in combination with other plans and projects, and that appropriate assessment is not required in this instance.

We provide our comments below:-

1. Our overarching comment is that we welcome and support your commitment to HRA. In addition, we welcome the discussion that has taken place between Forest Planners, the local Conservation Technical Specialist and ourselves.



2. We note that the amendment area lies within the Y Twyni o Abermenai i Aberffraw/ Abermenai to Aberffraw Dunes SAC.
3. We note that the amendment is to clearfell a 4ha block of conifers, the removal of all above-ground tree material, including brash, the installation of perimeter fencing and introduction of grazing animals to maintain short vegetation. After up to 4 years of hydrological monitoring it is proposed (subject to any revisions approved under future Forest Resource Plans and corresponding HRAs) to remove grazing animals and to restock with Atlantic Dune Woodland in accordance with the FMP, defined as broadleaf woodland of downy birch *Betula pendula*, oak *Quercus petraea*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. Hydrological monitoring will continue during this time.
4. We note that the establishment of the restocking will be subject to an adaptive management approach, whereby future management of this area will be determined through the relevant Natural Resource Management Plan of that period, or, in its absence, future Forest Resource Plan, informed by the results of this trial and in the light of contemporary scientific evidence, and both subject to HRAs (or whatever SAC assessment process may replace it post-Brexit).
5. We also note that in the unlikely absence of a Natural Resource Management Plan or Forest Resource Plan, the restocking will be reviewed within 5 years after planting, and its retention or removal, informed by the results of this trial and in the light of contemporary scientific evidence, determined on whether or not it is impeding the European site achieve its conservation objectives.

We hope that you find these comments useful, but if you would like to discuss any of these points further please do not hesitate to contact Roger Matthews via the Strategic Assessment mailbox at strategic.assessment@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Howard Davies".

Howard Davies
Head of Governance and Planning