

Garsdale Parish Council

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George Hay

Tilhill Forestry
Underley Business Centre
Kearstwick, Kirkby Lonsdale
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24/11/2014

Dandra Garth Woodland, Garsdale - Forest Management Plan

Response from Garsdale Parish Council to Consultation

The Parish Council wishes to thank Tilhill for submitting the Forest Management Plan for consultation with the stake holders. We trust that this will be the start of an improved relationship between local residents and Tilhill, and believe that we can find mutually acceptable solutions to the concerns that have emerged for the Forest Management Plan.

Following a public meeting on 13/11/2014 to consult the residents of Garsdale, the Parish Council would like to thank George Hay and Stuart from Tilhill Forestry for attending the meeting and explaining their Forest Management Plan. The Parish Council reports the following concerns regarding the plan:

Preservation of Red Squirrel population – Harvesting time

The red squirrel is a protected species. As pointed out at the meeting, red squirrels are vulnerable to disturbance during their breeding season (potentially March – October), and it is an offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) to disturb an active drey.

Tilhill's Forest Management Plan states that felling will take place between August and October. When queried about drays, Tilhill replied that *"We adhere to forestry best practice where we survey the felling area for nests and drays prior to starting. Those identified are marked with a buffer zone. Harvesting will not encroach on the buffer zone."*

The Garsdale residents and Parish Council are concerned that buffer zones would be insufficient to avoid disturbing the red squirrels while nesting, given the concerns regarding wind blow of small isolated sections of trees, the relatively small size of the woodland, and the fact that clear felling would take place all around each buffer zone. Hence we would strongly recommend that the forest management plan is amended to start harvesting at end of September at the earliest.

Preservation of Red Squirrel population – Habitat preservation

At the meeting, it was established that it is not practically possible to fell in more than two sections, due to potential wind blow, and that the intention in the original Forest Management Plan is to fell the second section once the new planting has reached about 2 m height, after an estimated 5 years.

A smaller section of the woodland below the main area will be retained as mature woodland.

However, it then became apparent that a significant part of this mature woodland would also be lost when implementing a 4 m wide track to access the main felling areas with heavy vehicles.

The Garsdale residents and Parish Council are very concerned that clear felling half the woodland, following by clear felling of the remaining half after potentially just 5 years, would not leave sufficient mature trees as food sources and shelter for the red squirrels. Again, it would constitute an offence to deprive a protected species of its habitat. Hence we would strongly recommend that the Forest Management Plan is amended to specify harvesting of section 1 in 2015/16, and section 2 no earlier than 2026 or a minimum of 10 years after section 1, and to retain as mature trees the all outer edges, the split between the two sections, and any other areas with natural resistance against wind blow.

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Track and access through Dandra Garth

Currently the only access to the woodland is by a narrow track passing through a historically important grade 2* listed farmstead.

The following concerns were raised by members of the public:

Permanent widening of the track, or the implementation of an alternative track to accommodate large forestry and timber transport vehicles, could be an eyesore in a national park and area of outstanding natural beauty. Regular access by large vehicles could also cause an unacceptable level of accidental damage to grade 2* listed walls and buildings.

The Garsdale residents and Parish Council are concerned that there appears to have been no dialogue with the YDNP planning department, and would recommend that the Forest Management Plan should as a minimum include a statement from the YDNP that neither planning permission nor Listed Building Consent is required, and a plan for reinstatement of the environment including repair of any accidental damage.

Access to the A684:

The access to the A684 from the current track through Dandra Garth has poor visibility for traffic, particularly coming from the East. The Parish Council would recommend that this is addressed in the plan, and that alternative options for access to the A684 should be considered.

Timber vehicles on the A684

The A684 running through Garsdale is generally narrow with stone walls at both road sides, no verges and blind bends in many places. Several residents have reported near-miss incidents when meeting heavily loaded timber transport lorries travelling at unsuitably high speeds and occupying both sides of the road. The Garsdale residents and Parish Council would recommend that the Forest Management Plan should include a statement that Tilhill has a policy for safe driving, including how this will be communicated in writing to all drivers and subcontractors in regard to travel on the A684.

Furthermore, in 2011 the A684 was reduced to a "consultation route" for timber transport, hence hauliers are now required to consult with the PC and the public about the best times to transport timber and sizes of vehicles. We believe this information should be included in the Forest Management Plan, including a statement that a consultation with Parish Council and the public will take place as required.

Contamination of private water supplies

Residents are concerned that during previous harvesting operations by Tilhill at Whitbeck and Coat Weggs, several water supplies have been contaminated with silt and natural materials. The main concern was that on these occasions, Tilhill initially refused to accept responsibility, causing residents a lot of trouble and in some cases expense, before it was proven that Tilhill was in fact responsible.

At least one private water supply is fed from a source that is likely to originate in the proposed felling area. Any works on the proposed access track could also cause pollution of the main river and affect several water supplies in the area. The Garsdale residents and Parish Council would strongly recommend that a section is added to the Forest Management Plan stating that Tilhill automatically assumes responsibility for any deterioration to private water supplies in the area during the harvesting, and giving a maximum response time for correcting any problems.

The Garsdale Parish Council on behalf of the Garsdale residents can only support the Forest Management Plan, if all the above recommendations are incorporated.


Annette Colton, Chairman, on behalf of Garsdale Parish Council

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