

Walkerburn and District Community Council

Secretary: Lesley Thornton, 01896 870251 Email: geoles2@tiscali.co.uk

Forestry and Land Scotland - Management Plan for West Bold, Walkerburn

Full details at:

<https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/planning/consultations/west-bold-land-management-plan>

Read the notes, share this with your friends and consider objecting to it by emailing/writing to our political representatives or to Tom.Harvey@forestryandland.gov.scot (Tom Harvey, Forestry and Land Scotland, Ae Office, Parkgate DG1 1QB).

Our Concerns:

- During lockdown we can't have a proper public consultation. We want a delay.
- This land is actively managed in a small organic dairy, beef and sheep farm. It is a great environment – dykes, species rich grassland, good grazing rotation, tree and hedge planting. FLS get an income from the tenant. We need this type of farming which helps with carbon capture, is good for all species and cuts our food imports. Some day we may not need meat/dairy to feed ourselves but we're not there yet.
- The planting will destroy breeding/feeding grounds for a number of endangered species such as curlew and lapwing. The bio-diversity of the whole valley will suffer – we need to look after invertebrates and insects – dykes and hedges are better than blanket conifers for this.
- The tree species chosen are concerning in terms of carbon capture, disease resistance and wildlife habitat. Many experts believe that block planting of Sitka or European Fir is not sensible and that more than 2 species should be planted in any block for disease resistance. This needs to be discussed.
- This project is driven by finance and by targets set by people with no knowledge of our area. The area is 318 acres of which approximately 250 acres are to be planted. An insignificant amount in national terms but highly destructive to our local bio-diversity.
- Walkerburn is a designed village built from 1854 around woollen mills with workers' blocks of flats and cottages deliberately facing south to Shiel Craig to gain maximum light for health. Planting conifers to darken these slopes negates the 19th century planning.
- Two ancient monuments in the valley will be left largely untouched as will the iron age fort on Shiel Craig but the context of the latter will be completely lost as it is to be surrounded with fir and conifer – a tiny clearing in the middle of tall trees.
- Our heritage needs protection. There have been dairy cattle in this area probably for 6,000 years. West Bold has been farmed for at least 300 years. The hill dykes and small woods are important and this is one of the few remaining areas in the valley where they can be seen in context.

We are not asking for much – merely a pause to allow the local people to have a dialogue with FLS – in this area, many households do not have internet access and can not afford mobile phone plans with large amounts of data – indeed throughout this area there are homes in mobile phone blackspots.

It would be appalling if a plan which will have such an impact on the area was to be rushed through without giving the people affected a chance to discuss it.