



ASSET TRANSFER UNDER THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT ACT

Forestry and Land Scotland – Community Asset Transfer Scheme

DECISION NOTICE – AGREED

Forestry and Land Scotland
Commercial Development
Glentress, Peebles
EH45 8NB

To: West Stormont Woodland Group
c/o Tansy, Honeyhole Lane,
Kinclaven, Nr Stanley
Perthshire PH1 4QJ

fls.communities@forestryandland.gov.scot

Interim Head of Acquisition & Disposals
Robin Waddell

By email: contact@weststormontwoodlandgroup.scot

Our ref: 22-23-04NWIP

31 October 2023

This Decision Notice relates to the asset transfer request made by WEST STORMONT WOODLAND GROUP on 19 December 2022, subject to the revised request made by WEST STORMONT WOODLAND GROUP on 4 October 2023 in relation to 155 hectares of land known as Taymount Wood shown on the indicative plan annexed, “the disposal area”.

Forestry and Land Scotland has decided to **agree** to the request.

The reasons for this decision are as follows:

- Forestry and Land Scotland notified the local community of its intention to dispose of Taymount Wood on 21 June 2018. The alternative proposal to an asset transfer to West Stormont Woodland Group would be an open market sale of Taymount Wood.

- West Stormont Woodland Group has set out a clear long-term vision for management of Taymount Wood to contribute to addressing the twin climate and biodiversity crises, and to support nature recovery.
- West Stormont Woodland Group has provided a Woodland Management Plan and identified the resources required to implement that plan.
- West Stormont Woodland Group’s proposal fits with the intention of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 that relevant authorities must agree to a request unless there are reasonable grounds for refusing it.
- This decision takes into account comments made by the CATS Evaluation Panel, which are:
 - the Panel recognises the extensive community consultation carried out on the original request to acquire Taymount Wood and Five Mile Wood, and the publication and circulation to members of the revised proposal for a phased approach to acquire one woodland, Taymount Wood, with the potential to acquire Five Mile Wood in future. The Panel notes that the timescales for a decision limited opportunity for additional community consultation on the revised request and would recommend that WSWG undertakes further consultation with the community on the revised proposal particularly increased ecotourism activity in Taymount Wood;
 - the Panel welcomes the simplified core budget and diversification of income generation activities to address concerns raised by the Panel on the significant long-term external funding gap in the original proposal;
 - the Panel would however highlight the uncertainty remaining over long-term income generation from “Living Forest” Climate & Ecology funding streams which the project is heavily reliant on after Year 5;
 - the level of uncertainty creates a risk that the community benefits identified in the proposal will not be fully realised, however, as WSWG have offered the full market valuation for Taymount Wood with no discount requested, this is not material to the Panel’s recommendation;
 - the Panel welcomes the inclusion in the revised proposal of additional training undertaken by WSWG Board Members, the appointment of Alyth-based KWG Accountancy to provide a financial system and oversight, and WSWG’s plans to establish and test a system of measuring and monitoring its community benefit. In addition that WSWG recognises the need for strategic succession planning to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project.

The attached document specifies the terms and conditions subject to which we would be prepared to transfer ownership of the land to you. If you wish to proceed, you must submit an

offer to us at the address above by 1 May 2024. The offer must reflect the terms and conditions attached, and may include such other reasonable terms and conditions as are necessary or expedient to secure the transfer within a reasonable time.

Right to appeal

If you consider that the terms and conditions attached differ to a significant extent from those specified in your request, you may appeal to the Scottish Ministers.

Any appeal must be made in writing by 27 November 2023, which is 20 working days from the date of this notice, to:

Community Land Team
D Spur
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD

Email: CRTB@gov.scot

Guidance on making an appeal is available at www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/asset-transfer/.