

Owner's Statement for Forestry Shed Application at Pandy Woodland

As the owner of the Pandy Woodland, I am committed to enhancing both our local biodiversity and the economic benefit to the local community through sustainable forest management practices. The proposed second forestry shed is a strategic extension of these ongoing efforts, intended to update our existing infrastructure to better match the scale of our conservation activities and timber production, which has expanded considerably in my period of tenure.

The new shed will primarily serve as a secure shelter for forestry machinery, providing much-needed safe storage for various plant and equipment used in harvesting operations and habitat restoration.

Owing to unresolved and ongoing access constraints, and partly as a result of a denied application for road access, the ability to safely secure all machinery on-site, allows us to have plant remain for longer spells, reducing disruption and traffic through Pandy village, which is a key driver of this application. Without this shed, our machinery is left open to the elements, where it is at risk of being damaged or poses a risk to trespassers who are endemic to the site. A series of recent burglaries and trespassing incidents have brought this risk to the fore. The visual impact of this is also a cause for concern. The only alternative is to store machinery off-site and bring it through the residential areas more frequently and at addition expense.

I note that from an external perspective, the requirement for a second shed, after the first was granted in 2020, may lead one to question if a second is reasonably necessary. I acknowledge the point, and would only highlight the changing scale of operations since the original shed was applied for. Since that work, the area under management has increased ~50%, and the operations on site have expanded and include a longer chain of processing than is typical, again in consideration of local disruption.

We hold in inventory: an excavator-winch (20 tonnes); an excavator harvester (15 tonnes); a tractor and timber trailer, a flatbed trailer, road vehicle, and various attachments for forestry, such as an auxiliary winch; splitting and cutting equipment; and various ancillary hand tools such as chainsaws. The point is that this inventory is reasonably necessary for the existing operations at Pandy woodland, and that it is clear they cannot be adequately stored entirely in the existing shed. The capacity across the 2 sheds, would solve this, and leave a slight reserve to preclude any future need to build or alter structures.

In terms of the building location being in a "Wildlife Area", and that being given as justification for further information, so be it. However, on reflection we can consider any rural setting, be it farmland or forest is by definition a wildlife area. The shed location was selected in part to limit the visual and environmental impact, such as choosing a dark roof and timber cladding, in keeping with the original shed.

The footprint of the new shed is on land that is already graded and suitable for the purpose. What is this land not? It is not a sensitive habit area. It is not a forested area. It is not in an

AONB, nor is it in a SSSI, nor is it near a water course, or residents, or public roads. All said, as woodlands go, there is an absolute minimum of designations and sensitivities in the chosen location, it can not reasonably be considered a home to wildlife as a graded stoned area and its value to the ecology of the site of the whole is significant in what it can provide.

Furthermore, any hypothetical risks of broad or severe environmental impacts have been mitigated in the existence of the original shed, which has shown to have caused minimal impact to wildlife. If real or perceived downside risks to a building in a similar location are a concern - we have the original shed to demonstrate these risks in reality are low and acceptable. Otherwise, we'd have already seen material detriment to wildlife, which is clearly not the case and is therefore self-evident.

I further note under "Reasons" given for prior approval, that the LPA understood that no felling licence is in place on Pandy Outcrop. That is certainly not the case. While the felling period has elapsed on the current license - this does not return Pandy Outcrop to a dormant state by any means. We estimate between 500 and 750 tonnes of felled trees remain on site and have yet to be processed. After this is processed and removed, we still have active planting operations and of course, the area under that is under license is but a minority of the mature commercial timber on the site as whole. The new building is intended to serve the long term management objectives of the site as whole - not simply to complete a single felling licence.

This stood timber is in an advanced/critical cycle of growth and must be removed shortly and replaced with native hardwoods. This alone is my strongest case for increased Biodiversity at Pandy woodland. The net outcome of my forestry operations is to restore PAWs areas to ASNW and is simply the highest possible outcome from the environmental perspective.

Often it is the case that short term disruption is acceptable in return for larger long term benefits, and I would highlight Pandy Woodland as just such a case. We have a substantial commercial clearfell operation to execute before this woodland can realise its potential - and that involves large machines and long term operations. It is in this context that I apply for storage facilities. It can be deferred, but not stopped without massive ecological consequence in the long term.

On principle, to the degree I am prevented from sensibly addressing this major and growing risk to vast areas of the site's canopy and soil stability, I should be not held responsible for the consequences of being prevented from attending to the long term and higher order problems, or from delivering the correct solution in the shorter term.

If I have been given legal and moral responsibilities/obligations for this land - I should also be given the equivalent rights and freedoms to cure its strategic problems via the economical and safe harvesting of mature commercial trees. I would like to be genuinely supported and understood in this endeavour.

If the overall outcome of the planning and regulatory processes are that as owner of Pandy woodland, I'm expected to passively preside over a looming collapse of the forest, and

discouraged and dissuaded from restoring it in the correct and usual manner, then I question the purpose of regulation and policy writ large as in my case it appears to drive towards realising the opposite of its stated aims. Prioritising the first order impact of operations over the second order effects of leaving thousands of tonnes of conifer in place until it is blown over seems to me to be a tragic and avoidable outcome I'd do everything to avoid.

In terms of my previous applications, I also acknowledge that this background context is not always easily available to the LPA, or is easily captured in the minimum requirements for a prior notification process. I intend to address this in the future by preparing a Forest Management Plan with NRW, in which the site's strategic aims are defined, stakeholders engaged, and future works are accounted for and considered as part of that highest level process.

In so doing - I hope that the LPA can see these and all future works as part of a coherent and agreed upon long term plan with community and regulator support. This is to say, on the approval of a FMP this year - there will be no self contained applications for works as they would fall under such a management plan.

Overall, the new shed will facilitate more efficient safer, and less disruptive timber production processes, which is a significant local economic driver. Sustainable timber production underpins not only local employment in forestry but also supports ancillary industries such as local sawmills and carpentry businesses. It aligns with the objectives set forth in our upcoming Forest Management Plan (FMP), which maintains the balance between economic activities and conservation.

In conclusion, the addition of this second forestry shed is a pivotal step in advancing our management objectives. It supports our dual goals of ecological integrity and sustainable local economic development, ensuring that Pandy Woodland continues to be a model of responsible forest stewardship and an asset to the area.

Ben Conway 1st May 2024