

AGENDA ITEM 5

APPENDIX 2

METHOD STATEMENT



Method statement for mitigation and remedial works for tracks on Dinnet Moor

On behalf of Findrack (Investments)Ltd

Highland Conservation Ltd, Beallach Farm, Jamestown, Strathpeffer, Ross-shire, IV14 9ER

CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND
2. DESCRIPTION
- 3 SPECIFICATION AND METHOD
- 4 WORKMANSHIP
- 5 PROTECTION OF PUBLIC
- 6 CONCLUSIONS

1. BACKGROUND

Dinnet estate lies approximately equidistant from the Deeside towns of Aboyne and Ballater and situated in the valley of the River Dee, which is said to be the gateway to both the Highlands and the Cairngorms National Park. It ranges in elevation from 136m in the valley up to 871m on Morven

The natural and cultural heritage plays an important part in managing the landscape. The estate works to meet the standards associated with national and international designations such as the River Dee SAC and the Muir of Dinnet RAMSAR and SSSI. Furthermore, responsible access is promoted of those taking access.



Findrack (Investments) Ltd is the agricultural tenant over Dinnet Moor, which extends to circa 12,500 acres. Currently the farming operation comprises 1350 ewes with 250-300 hogs and lambs. The strategic aim of the farm business is to build up the flock to 2000 ewes with 400 hogs and lambs.

There are approximately 27 km of tracks on Dinnet Moor. Some track maintenance work was commenced a couple of years ago, but not completed, due to workmanship concerns expressed at the time by the CNPA.”

2. DESCRIPTION

This method statement has been produced to address the planning authorities concerns over track maintenance works previously carried out on Dinnet Moor and is to be adopted and implemented to carry out mitigation/remedial works to a satisfactory environmental standard so as to achieve both a sustainable solution with minimal environmental impact.

The objective of Findrack (Investments) Ltd is to complete the job it started and to ensure, as far as is possible, that there is no need to regularly carry out such repairs again. This will involve re-engineering some sections of road, repairing others and top dressing other sections.

Highland Conservation has a proven track record in the design, construction and maintenance

of hill tracks which are 'fit for purpose' and with a low visual/environmental impact.

We have undertaken construction contracts on the very highest level of designated environmental sites – under both UK and EU legislation. These include Natura 2000, SSSIs, SPAs, SACs, NSAs, NNRs and the National Parks.

Due to the recent weather and snow cover across the sites in question, namely sections 1,2 and 6 as outlined in the planning authority's correspondence 'Application Procedure and Mitigation Requirements by Section', we have been unable to carry out a site visit.

We anticipate that this report should be considered in conjunction with a previous "Fast Track Application" submitted on 1st February 2016 by Findrack (Investments) Ltd seeking permission to carry out immediate and necessary repairs across the track network in order to prevent further and continuing wash outs to the tracks across the moor.

3. SPECIFICATION AND METHOD

Track Surfacing

The tracks will be re-surfaced with 'as won' aggregates graded on site to provide 'fines' for top-dressing. There are a number of existing borrow-pits across the estate where suitable material is available for the final repairs to the tracks.

Where sections require extra side-drains to be installed then there will be an opportunity to win material from the ditches. (see Turf lined ditches). The intention would be to "chamber" the tracks as much as possible rather than to excavate ditches thus reducing the visual impact of the operations.

Aggregates taken from borrow-pits and ditches will be graded for fines to top dress the track as necessary.

Every effort will be made to save and protect existing vegetation (see Landscaping). On some sections of track this will include the turf center of the track and the vegetation that has colonized the ditch lines. Where damage does occur though, it is anticipated that recolonization ought to occur fairly quickly. It should be noted however that the majority of the tracks across Dinnet moor are heavily traffic-ed due to the significant agricultural, forestry and sporting activities carried out across Dinnet moor and so very limited central vegetation is evident.

Landscaping

This element is arguably the most important. All turf and vegetation will be preserved wherever possible and used to re-vegetate the ditch sides, road edges and where practicable a turf center line.

As there will be no turf or organic material won from excavating a tray then any turf that already exists along the center and margins of the track will be saved and utilized wherever practical. Emphasis will be placed on the sensitive handling of turfs. A turf center line will be incorporated into the track, where possible, during re-surfacing works to give the track an 'aged' appearance and to reduce the visual impact of the track over the landscape.

Any borrow-pits will also have the vegetation sensitively removed and stored. Once the borrow-pit has been used it will be re-profiled to match the existing land form and re-vegetated using the stored turf.

Extra turf can be won from the track margins with the remaining edges 'scratched back' to ensure that these areas are not compromised. This method is used extensively on peatland restoration contracts and has proven very successful on designated sites.

Turf lined Ditching

Where ditching is required it will be deployed only where it is necessary to avoid as far as is possible the visual impact of the road/ditch on the landscape. Shaping of roads utilizing cambers will be the favored option.

An excavator will be used to level and shape areas from which materials have been won, ditches need not be of conventional shape, as a more informal effect can be created by forming a more scalloped shape next to the track, this can vary in width and depth in order not to create a linear effect next to the track.

Although there may be scope for some variation in ditch size and shape to reduce visual impact, any such variation must be carefully implemented. It should not be at the expense of increasing the footprint of the works or reducing the area over which there is potential for vegetation recovery. Turfs to be used to line the ditch to promote vegetation recovery and help the ditch blend into the landscape.

Equally important is to ensure that the tracks have adequate and effective drainage and off-lets to ensure that the roads will not deteriorate or wash out in the future. All works will be carefully engineered to ensure that they are capable of withstanding the extreme weather events that we are seeing more frequently nowadays. As previously stated, cambering of road surfaces will be deployed wherever possible to avoid increased ditch works and visual impact.

The priority use of excavated turf and peat which is held together by a matrix of roots is for restoration of the track edges and the ditch.

Remaining turf and organic material can be used for restoration of bare mineral surfaces or for blocking existing ditches if appropriate. Loose organic material which is unlikely to be suitable for other purposes may be spread on existing bare mineral surfaces, again as appropriate.

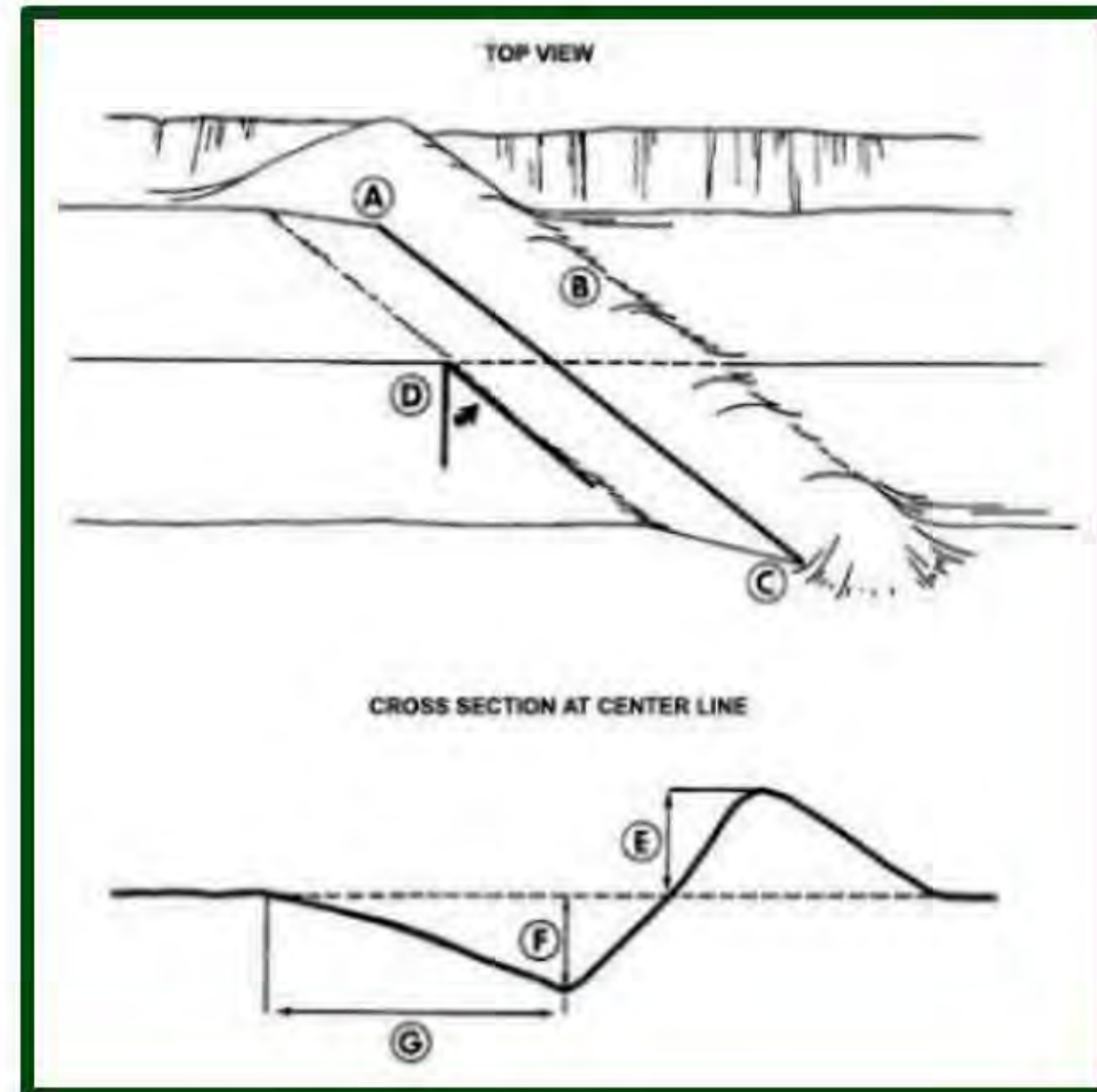
Berms/shedding bars

Where the new track passes through woodland or where there is no drainage there is not always an opportunity to install ditches adjacent to the track without the risk of serious damage to tree roots or destabilization of the upper bank.

These sections will have berms and off-lets installed at regular intervals to reduce the flow of water down the track. A berm is where the camber of the track is emphasized by shaping the aggregate surface at a 45-degree angle to the track at a low point where the water can escape.

The berm can be incorporated as an added defense during extreme weather to help reduce the volume and energy of flows.

It also has the advantage in some instances for traffic calming.



Culverts

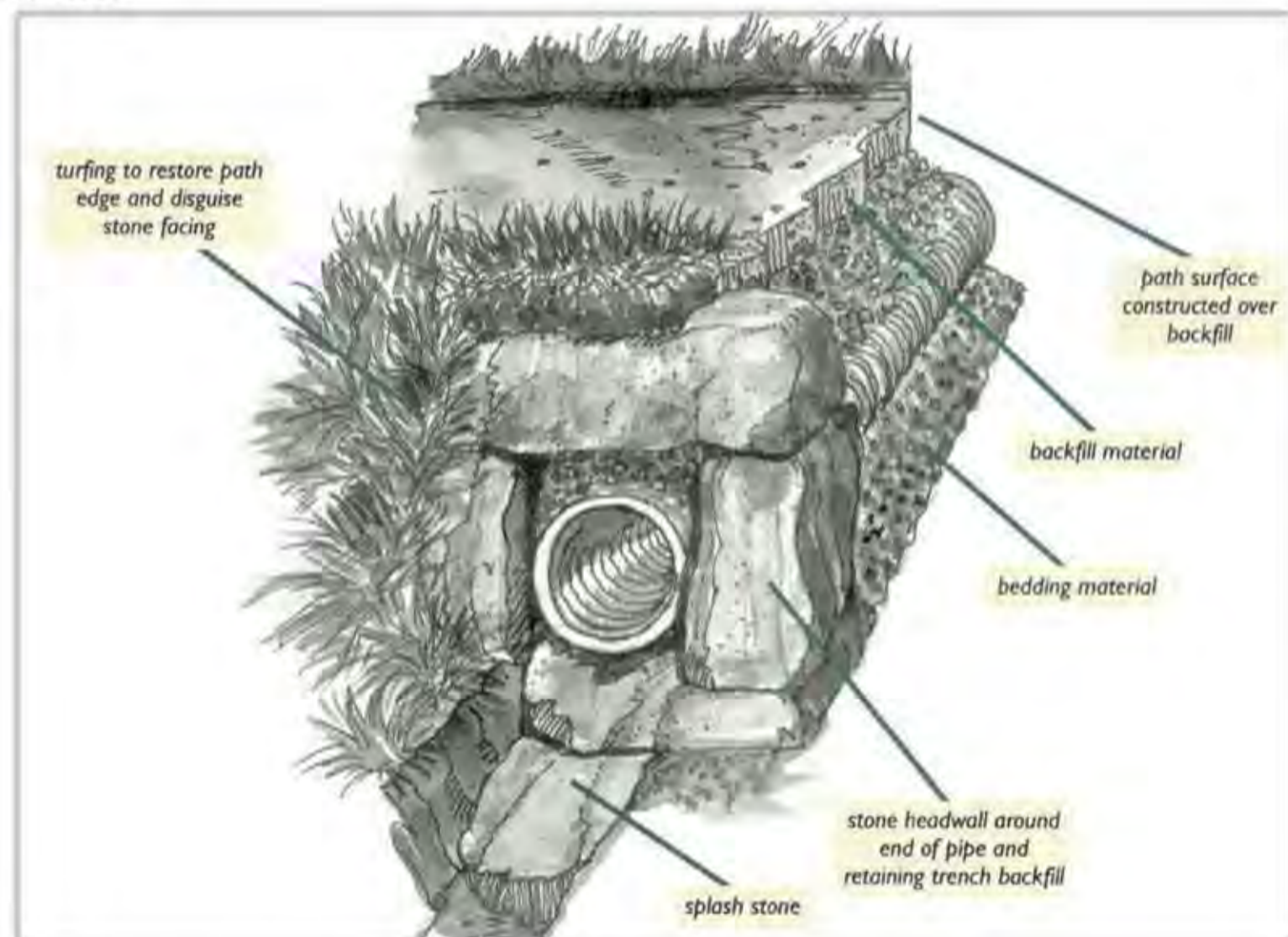
All culverts, where deployed, to be black twin walled polypropylene pipe.

Pipes will be of sufficient diameter to cater for the maximum anticipated water flow from future extreme weather events and will be of sufficient length to overlap each side of the track by a minimum of 500mm.

They should be stone faced with splash plates and if necessary the out-flow water course stone pitched to lower the risk of washout.

Headwalls should be turfed over where possible to ensure pipe is not visible.

The frequency of culverts will reflect the anticipated water flow and the tracks ability to shed surface water and also to accommodate any extreme weather events. Distances between the culverts will be site specific.



4. WORKMANSHIP

In general, all workmanship will comply with the standards and techniques set out in *Constructed tracks in the Scottish Uplands- SNH*.

The works to be carried out are to be executed to a standard that will preserve the integrity of the tracks running surfaces for the future and so that they require only basic but regular maintenance. By doing this it should negate the need to regularly carry out aggressive reconstruction works with the obvious setbacks to the healing process and the resultant visual impact.

The level of landscaping required to successfully complete this project will require some hand finishing works, this is generally associated with sensitive track construction and maintenance.

It is imperative in our opinion that, in order to deliver an environmentally sensitive mitigation and remediation program of works that caters for all user groups, contractors with the necessary level of experience working on designated sites are used to carry out this work.

6

5. PROTECTION OF PUBLIC

Developed site safety plan to be in place and work site signage in place before any work commences.

Viable phone reception is sporadic on site. SPoT Emergency trackers to be carried by workforce at all times.

6. CONCLUSIONS

We have produced this method statement to address the issues raised by Aberdeen-shire Council Planning department to bring the tracks highlighted up to a standard that reflects the will of all parties involved to find a solution that not only blends well into the landscape but

is also 'fit for purpose'.

Also to make certain that this concerted effort to put into good serviceable condition the tracks across the moor once and for all and to ensure that where water routinely finds its way on to the tracks, that it is managed effectively, to prevent further wash outs and damage from occurring, thus reducing the need to have to reinstate the tracks each time, setting back the "healing process".

This statement details the methods needed to restore the tracks through the different terrains encountered on the estate in an environmentally sound way. Sensitive landscaping and a sympathetic drainage regime will go a long way to reducing the tracks environmental impact.

Signed for and on behalf of Highland Conservation Ltd

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the representative of Highland Conservation Ltd.

Date: 02/03/2016