



Langholm Moor

**Can this be leveraged for community
& commercial gain?**

Newcastleton & District Community Trust

Jun 17th 2019

A different approach?

What might the outcomes be if **all interested parties worked collaboratively** towards an end game:

CREATING AN ECOTOURISM DESTINATION IN THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND

With aims of:

- Protecting the natural environment, upland farming & local cultures
- Creating a point of difference attract tourism markets; within 3 hours drive time (14million people within the Borderlands catchment)
- Exploiting local expertise to deliver this; land & leisure management
- Delivering a sustainable future for the communities that live and work in Newcastleton & Langholm



BUILDING ON NATURAL & LOCAL RESOURCE

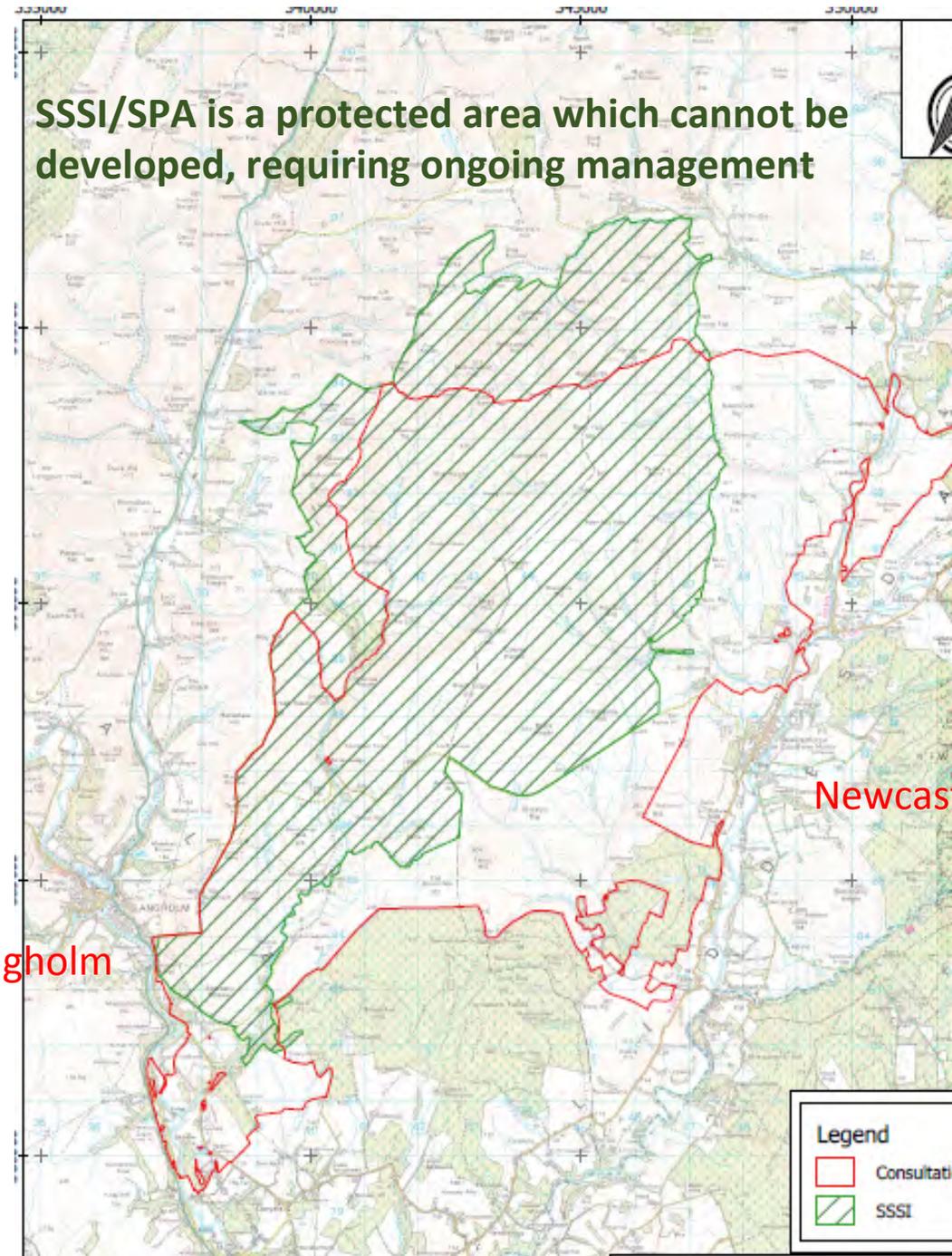
Environmentally, what is at stake?

- 10,000 ha of moorland straddling SBC/D&G border
- Home to a variety of bird species, area of wet/peatland; contributor to climate change; carbon sequestration
- 5 miles of salmon & sea trout on the Esk.
- Moorland Demonstration Project completed
 - assess if grouse be reintroduced in numbers to cohabitate amongst other moorland bird species; Hen Harrier, black grouse and a mix of species/waders.
 - These are thriving, but grouse struggled.
- Required the downsizing of sheep flocks to restore the heather moorland and maintain the peatlands
 - this will continue (grants compensate for this) but needs to be managed given increase in tick population as result of less sheep
- From one perspective the study might be judged to have failed, (volume of grouse) but other species have established with growing colonies
 - 6 or 7 breeding pairs of Hen Harriers (1% UK pop) and other moorland species.
 - An original breeding ground for Golden Eagle -occasional sightings (south of Scotland Eagle project) visiting the habitat; attracted to native woodland with open ground.

Wet/peatlands a significant eco system supporting climate change; flood prevention, peat run off & carbon sequestration

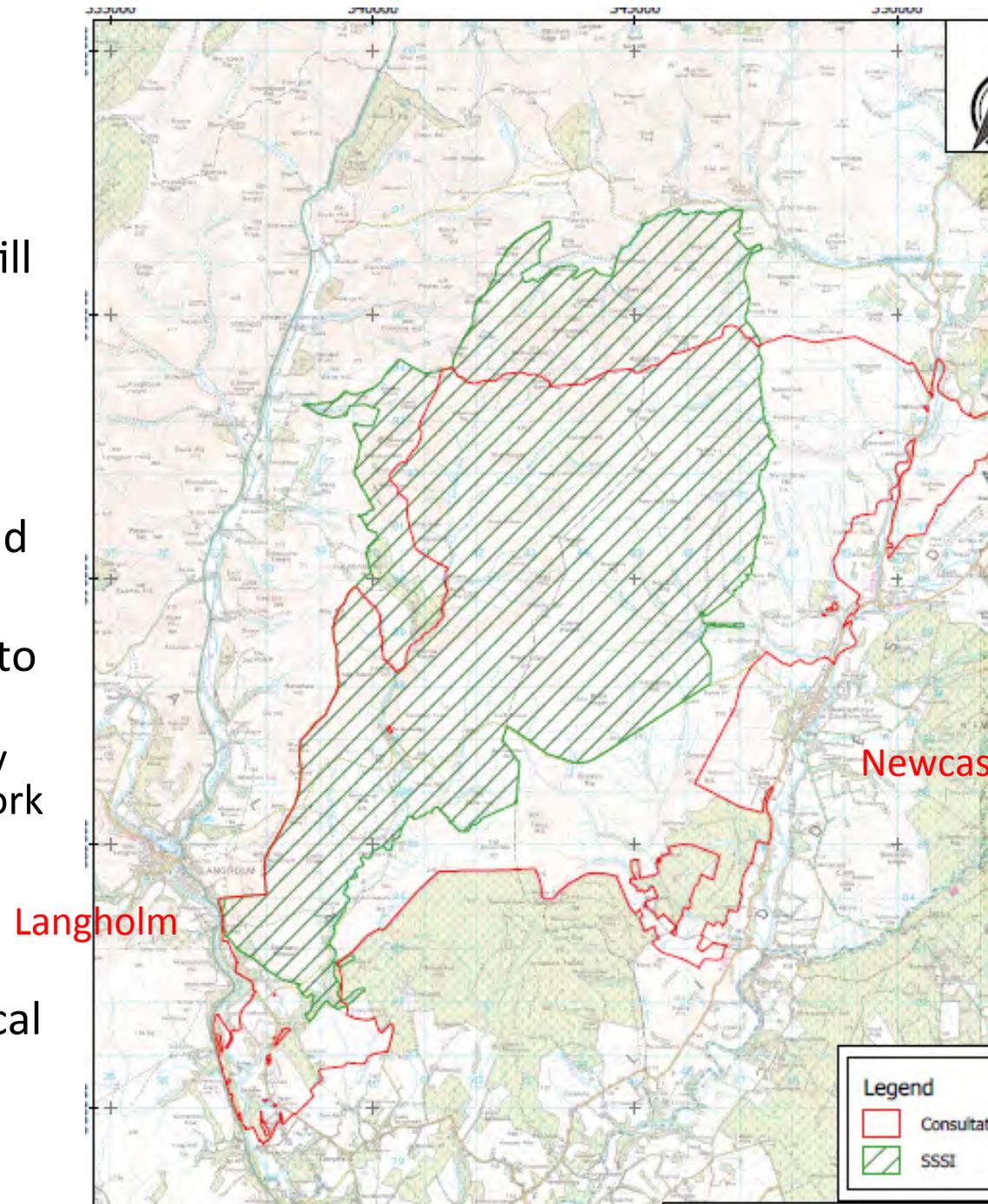
Opportunity for a bird & wild life sanctuary

SSSI/SPA is a protected area which cannot be developed, requiring ongoing management



Commercial or conservation?

- Regardless of ownership the SSSI/SPA will still need to be managed but surrounding land could be developed or planted
- Farming has an uncertain future; EU grants ceasing with uncertain funding streams
- Farming needs to diversify to reduce cost and improve productivity
- An immediate & financially secure option is to plant commercially
 - Currently hugely attractive given the subsidy available and established distribution network
 - Offers inheritance tax avoidance benefits (*public money subsidises tax avoidance?*)
 - *No VAT on Trees either*
- Renewables; wind & solar both options if local grid has the capacity?



Commercial or conservation or both?

- Newcastleton surrounded by trees, not native woodlands - black banks of Sitka Spruce
- Evertown Estate 9k acres sold to James Jones & Son Timber processors to be planted (est 50%)
- Community currently sees **no financial benefit** from trees and **suffers from constant wood waggon traffic**
 - over 300 lorries pr day at peak felling
 - fragile road network dependent on hand outs;
 - Strategic Timber Group supplement local authority investment
- Timber does not create or support **local jobs**
- More timber planting will **stifle community** unless it was properly planned and managed – large ROI over 10-yr period. Long payback but planned cyclically could yield sensible returns in 15 yrs.
- **Moor can provide tourism/eco development meeting growing market; outdoors, active, nature based sectors fastest growing. Ecotourism + active tourism + dark skies + planting + renewables could deliver long term economic gain & protect our eco systems, creating a legacy for future generations**



Newcastleton small but perfectly formed

Q. What have we got? A. Bit of everything for active, outdoors, leisure markets but not enough to secure our future, moor offers that potential

10k users pa 7stanes Mountain Bike Trails

30k feet & pedals pa cross Whithaugh Bridge to/fro Newcastleton forest from centre village

Over 20 businesses providing 92 bedrooms accommodating 390 bed (10k+ bed nights annually) nights for our growing visitor markets. New bunkhouse (+10 beds) will accommodate walking + cycling thru visitor

Seeking Dark Sky status extending visitor season protecting environment & sustaining local business

Largest activity centre/bed capacity Scottish Borders Rock UK; can provide training & fulfilment for the activity sector, we can grow our own.

An established brand, website and social media platforms



A community who believes in its future, who will fight to preserve what we have for our own, and the generations that follow

What's at stake? For Newcastleton, potentially our chance of building a community with a sustainable future

- Debate is needed to engage everyone who lives & works within its surrounds
- Without this, decisions will be taken impacting the local environment and local communities for generations to come
- Newcastleton has been building its own resilience since 2000; creating & delivering local projects to enhance community life
- Designed to serve a local need these projects also serve to widen our appeal, attracting visitors and their tourism £££'s.
- Since 1969, when rail ceased, we have seen decline in jobs, services & amenities.
- We lag behind on local transport provision, broadband & mobile coverage.
- **The only change has been driven by the community with the support of a wide variety of agencies and funders. NDCT are 2 years into our development plan**

WE WANT THE CHANCE TO HAVE THIS DEBATE BEFORE ITS TOO LATE

Newcastleton: Our Development Strategy

- Take ownership of local facilities via Newcastleton & District Community Trust, our registered charitable trust
- Create an environment where new services and facilities can be provided, working with others locally to meet this need
- Work with public sector to lobby for change & investment
- Work with community groups to create a cohesive tourism proposition utilising community assets to maximise ROI
- Work in partnership with social housing providers to develop and acquire own assets. Create assisted housing.

What does the moor give us?

➤ **ECO TOURISM**

- Unique habitats with rare species and colonies being re-established; Moorland bird habitat hen harriers, skylark, red grouse, black grouse, short eared owls & golden plover – Golden Eagle habitat
- Native woodlands – red squirrel habitats, roe deer

➤ **EDUCATION**

- Contributing to climate change; peatlands deliver dual roles preventing flooding through water retention & restored prevents peat run off/water discolouration as well as carbon sequestration

➤ **ACTIVITIES**

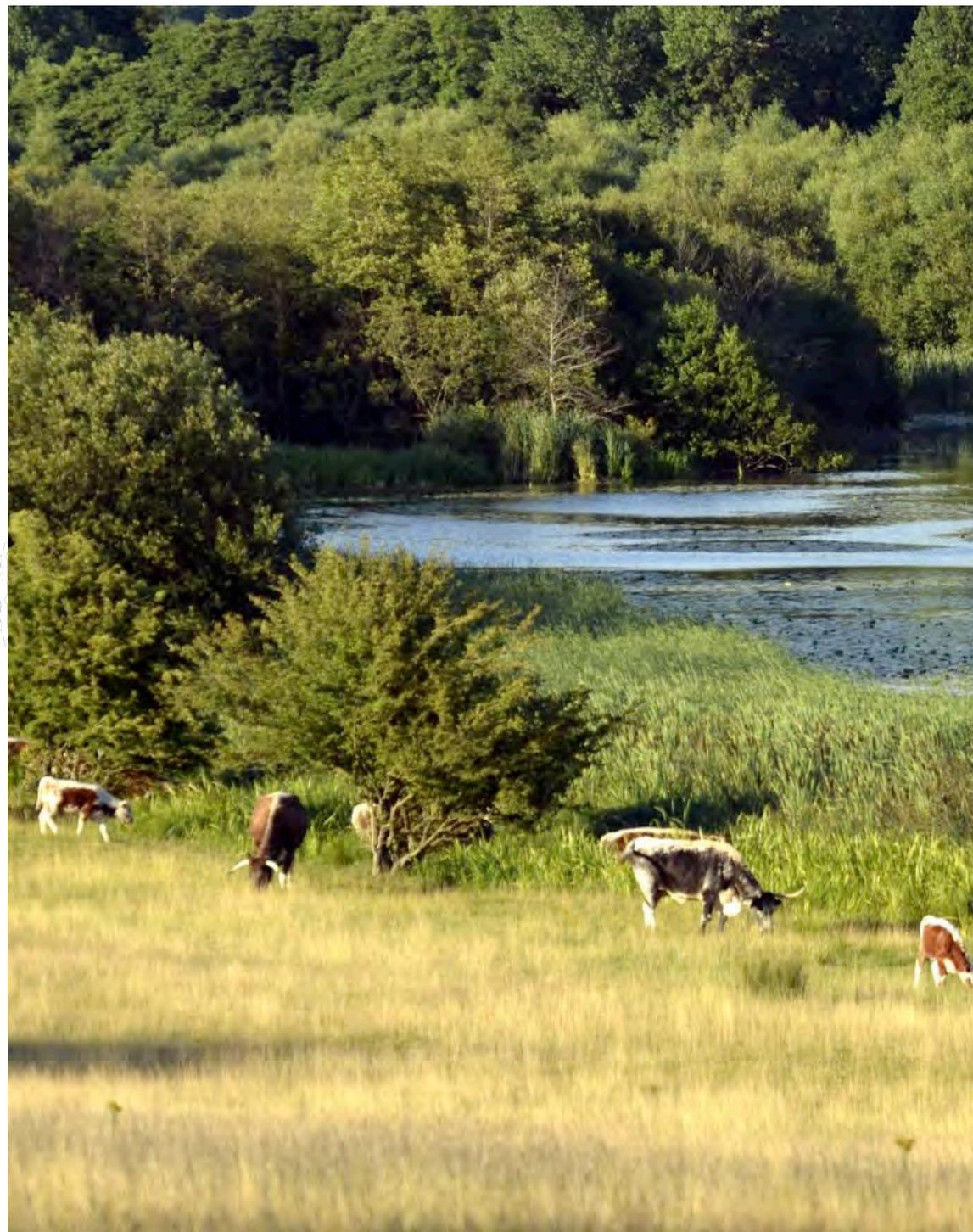
- Walked-up grouse shooting and stalking (commercially viable/helps land mgt)
- Birdwatching (done now but not exploited)
- Dark Sky park (accommodation under the stars)
- Downhill MTB (complement existing trails locally in Langholm & 7stanes)
- Expanded events (Muckle Town, music & culture)

ECOTOURISM

Rewilding Knepp Estate, Sussex

3,500 acres once intensively farmed now rewilded:

- Using animals as drivers of habitat creation & restoration of natural water courses, project seen extraordinary increases in wildlife
- Extremely rare species like turtle doves, nightingales, peregrine falcons & purple emperor butterflies more common species are rocketing
- Knepp Wildland is radically different to conventional nature conservation
 - not driven by specific goals or target species
 - established a functioning ecosystem - nature given freedom as much possible
 - low-cost method of ecological restoration
 - suitable for failing or abandoned farmland
 - supports established nature reserves & wildlife



Knepp – the payoff

- Producing organic, pasture-fed meat from free-roaming herds of animals
- Herds of wild ponies, cattle, deer & pigs roam 3,500 acres of Sussex, driving habitat regeneration
- Vehicle safaris or guided walking tours; profusion of birds, mammals, beetles, butterflies, reptiles, plants & fungi
- Staying in treehouses, shepherd's huts, tents or yurts, or Wildland campsite
- A new farming model generating ecological and financial gains



Fort William Mountain Bike World Cup – over £35m to local economy

- Based in Scottish Highlands
- 20k+ attend over 3 day weekend in June
- Riders & fans enjoy spectacular scenery - moor similar to Highlands
- Opportunity for Scotland to 'pitch' for more legs of the UCI World Cup circuit?
- Further raising South of Scotland as premium destination for MTB?
- Over 8k attendance for the premium event alone
- Calculated to have delivered over £35m to local economy since it started



Kielder Dark Sky Park

Economic benefits generated by Dark Sky commemorate 5th anniversary Kielder Observatory Dec 2018

- 30% of respondents claimed dark skies had a direct impact on business, 57% claimed profit increased in last 12 months due to dark skies, 22% of businesses increased staffing, 26% staff received dark skies training
 - 93% invested their businesses in last 10 years, 13% of these partly or solely due to dark skies
 - Dark Sky key catalyst for businesses, especially within the boundary increasing off-season bookings
 - Biggest financial impact concentrated on businesses closest to the Dark Sky Park but halo opportunities benefit the coast & North Pennines areas outside the designated area.
- **Economic modelling** The economic model based on 2017 STEAM data for Northumberland concluded that dark skies tourism was worth over **£25million to Northumberland, generating in the region of 450 jobs.**
- **Since 2013 when Dark Sky Park was designated approximately £128 million has been generated to the local economy.** There is further potential for this to grow and spread more widely throughout Northumberland.

The Moor will contribute to the overall changes Newcastleton are striving to achieve as a community:

- **Wealthier & Fairer**

- Increased community ownership
- Increased tourism # & £££'s
- Increased # of sustainable businesses
- Increased employment levels
- Fit-for purpose connectivity
- Improved services, facilities & infrastructure

- **Smarter**

- Improved local skills and learning

- **Healthier**

- High quality, efficient, responsive services resulting in improved healthier, well-being & social inclusion
- A more balance population

- **Safer & Stronger**

- Reduction in anti-social behaviour
- More housing mix, choice and availability

- **Greener**

- Improved, accessible local transport

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YES – let's start a conversation

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