Forest and Woodland Strategy

for

Aberdeenshire & Aberdeen City



June 2005

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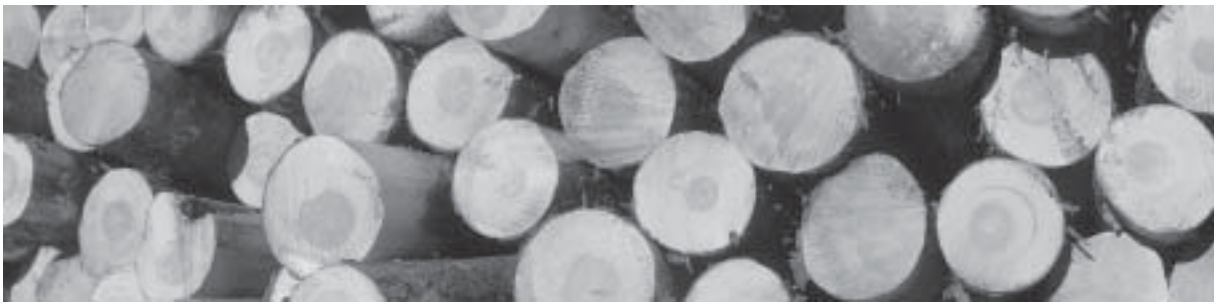


INTRODUCTION

People in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City are very fortunate to live in an area with a rich variety of trees, woods and forests. People enjoy and benefit from woodlands. Woods and forests are important not only in economic terms but environmentally, socially and culturally. Forestry is an important part of the rural economy, providing employment directly in timber management and production and indirectly in associated business including tourism. Woodland areas, composed predominantly of native species, are particularly important for biodiversity and landscape. The woodlands around Aberdeen City and towns and villages in Aberdeenshire may not have high biodiversity value, but are important to the local community for recreation and landscape. Appendix 1 provides an overview of forests and woods in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City.

The development of this Forest and Woodland Strategy has provided a way for people to contribute ideas for the future of our woods and forests. This Strategy has been developed in partnership with forestry and other interests and with the community.

The following policies and initiatives provide the background that has directed the development of this Strategy. The Strategy aims to support these policies and initiatives.

Scottish Executive Guidance and Policy

This Strategy aims to support 'Forests for Scotland – The Scottish Forestry Strategy', (Scottish Executive 2000), which centres around 5 key directions: -

- To maximise the value to the Scottish economy of the wood resource becoming available for harvesting over the next 20 years
- To create a diverse forest resource of high quality that will contribute to the economic needs of Scotland throughout the 21st century and beyond
- To ensure that forestry in Scotland makes a positive contribution to the environment
- To create opportunities for people to enjoy trees, woods and forests in Scotland
- To help communities benefit from woods and forests

In addition to this, Scottish Executive Circular 9/1999 'Indicative Forestry Strategies' provides current guidance on the purpose and content of the Strategy.

The Scottish Executive is a member of the 'UK Forest Partnership for Action' (2002). Developed prior to the 2002 World Summit on sustainable Development, this is a new partnership of Government, business and environmental groups which aims to promote sustainable development in the forestry sector.

Sustainable Forest Management

At an international level commitments on forest management were agreed at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. This commitment is expressed nationally in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (1999), which promotes sustainable forestry. The UK Forestry Standard (1998) puts this into policy with which woodland managers must comply. It sets out the criteria and standards for the sustainable management of all forests and woodlands in the UK. The Standard includes a series of six guidance notes addressing issues from general forest practise through to planting and managing small woodlands.

Climate Change

Forestry may be able to contribute to meeting our targets on Climate Change. It is thought that increasing forest cover will help to meet reduction targets for CO_2 through increased growth rates, but it is accepted that further research is needed on the effects of afforestation. Forests should, however, be recognised as important carbon sinks.

Other Initiatives

Other key initiatives to which the Strategy contributes including UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans and Local Authority Access Strategies are considered in the relevant sections of the text. The Cairngorms National Park Authority intends to produce a Forest Plan or Strategy for the Park area in due course and will use the aims laid down in this Strategy as a starting point for the Aberdeenshire area of the Park.

DEVELOPING THE FOREST AND WOODLAND STRATEGY

Consultation on the development of a new Indicative Forestry Strategy for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire began in March 2002 with the publication of 'An Indicative Forestry Strategy for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City : Consultation on Issues and Opportunities (2002)'. Three workshops were held to provide a forum for discussion and the consultation document was widely circulated.

A Technical Group comprising representatives from statutory and voluntary agencies including SNH, FCS, FTA, NFUS and RSPB used these consultation responses to develop the 'Finalised Forest and Woodland Strategy for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City (June 2003)'. This current document has been updated with comments received on the Finalised Strategy. Consultees during this process included the forest industry, local community groups and community councils, environmental interest groups, government agencies and other groups including landowners, farmers, fisheries and access interests. Common points, raised during both stages of the consultation process are noted below.

Consultees felt that the Strategy should:

- Raise the profile of our woodlands as a major asset for environment, employment, tourism and health.
- Promote the local economy by supporting a diverse forest industry in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City, supporting in particular the development of local value added processing.
- Encourage the management and restructuring of existing woodlands to improve timber quality and bring about positive improvements in environment and landscape.
- Encourage the creation of a multi-purpose forest resource with woodlands for production, recreation, access and biodiversity.
- Provide opportunities for the development of community woodlands.
- Guide the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) approval process and the Councils response to SFGS proposals as a statutory consultee.
- Guide Council policy on timber procurement and usage and requirements placed on developers.
- Guide Council policy on woodland planting and management.
- Draw in funds for specific woodland issues identified as priorities.

FOREST AND WOODLAND STRATEGY FOR ABERDEENSHIRE AND ABERDEEN CITY

KEY AIM - To ensure the sustainable management of the woodlands and forests of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City, creating a balanced landscape where woodlands and forests; add to people's quality of life and well being, contribute to the local economy, provide opportunities for recreation and tourism and protect and enhance biodiversity and the environment.

This means:

- encouraging multi-benefit forestry in new planting and through re-structuring
- balancing forestry against other land uses
- protecting sensitive areas; and
- identifying priority areas for expansion of a variety of forest and woodland types

This Strategy provides a framework for woodland development and management over the coming years. It is hoped that all agencies and organisations involved in the consultation process will now recognise this Strategy and contribute, where appropriate, to the aims and actions.

The Strategy has been developed at an Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City wide level and at a strategic scale of mapping. It is not prescriptive, and is not intended as a detailed (site based) planning tool. It outlines a framework for future forestry development and re-structuring and highlights particular types of woodland and the broad areas where these are appropriate. Map 1 should be seen as a guide, indicating areas where different types of planting may be appropriate. Each proposal for woodland management or planting will still be judged and developed on an individual basis, following established Forestry Commission Scotland guidelines.

The policy framework for planting and management is now well established and controlled through the UK Forestry Standard and other FCS guidelines. The Strategy, therefore, avoids repeating policy statements that are already laid down in these documents. The focus instead is on action that the Local Authorities, together with other partners, can take to meet the aim of sustainable forestry in North East Scotland. The aims and actions in each section concentrate on issues that the Councils, together with other partners, can influence and act on. Where possible these actions link into and contribute to existing projects and strategies.

Although this is not a planning document, as woodland planting and management is outside planning control, this Strategy will be incorporated as an amendment to the Structure Plan (North East Scotland Together) at an appropriate time. The Strategy will also be periodically reviewed to fit in with forthcoming Structure Plan reviews.

The following sections explore the main issues associated with management and planting of our forests and woodlands. For each issue aims are clearly stated with actions, which must be taken forward to work towards these aims. The aims address the priorities identified during the consultation process and also support the priorities identified in the Scottish Forestry Strategy.

1. MANAGING AND RESTRUCTURING EXISTING WOODLANDS

With some important exceptions it is desirable that the majority of our existing woodlands and forests remain under tree cover. Restructuring will allow the gradual improvement of those forests that were planted with wood production as the overriding objective. This process leads to increased diversity of species and structure, improving landscape, creating wildlife habitat, opening-up areas for access or to protect archaeological features. Stewardship Grants (under the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme) offer payments for management to improve timber quality, reduce deer numbers, enhance native woodlands, improve woodland biodiversity, enhance landscape, develop alternative systems to clear felling and develop facilities for informal recreation. It appears that this greater commitment to management under the SFGS is increasing support for appropriate management and re-structuring.

Local priorities for management and restructuring have been identified as: -

- Restructuring extensive Scots pine stands to develop stands of mature trees with potential for regeneration
- Restructuring large, even-aged coniferous forests (Sitka and Norway spruce)
- Exploring the potential to restore Ancient Woodland Sites planted with exotic conifers
- Management to improve timber quality
- Exploring alternatives to clearfell
- Implementing long-term planning through Forest Plans
- Improving management of broadleaved woodlands for habitat and amenity (see section 4 and 6.2)
- Improving management of urban/amenity woodlands for access and recreation (see section 9)
- Improving management of shelterbelts (see section 6.2)

1.1 Extensive Scots pine stands

Scots pine should be managed for maximum benefit to wildlife and landscape, whilst allowing timber production. Managing Scots pine to maximise the extent of mature well-spaced trees will allow for a well-developed ground shrub layer. This aims to increase the area of habitat for UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species in key areas for woodland biodiversity. Limitations on managing in this way include poor financial returns from Scots pine thinnings and mature timber and pressure from deer numbers. Scots pine stands and even some areas of old Caledonian forest are too dominated by pine and would benefit from increased tree species richness, particularly of appropriate broadleaved species.

1.2 Large, even-aged coniferous forests

As even aged monoculture is felled this can be replaced with a more diverse woodland. This process should be a particular priority in areas of sensitive landscape. As plantations are felled it should be a requirement of replanting that re-structuring is carried out. Re-structuring should aim to increase diversity, creating and managing open space and forest wetlands, incorporating appropriate broad-leaved planting and planning for maximum long-term retentions.

1.3 Planted conifers on ancient woodland sites

About three quarters of Scotland was once forested but both native broadleaved and pine woodlands have been reduced to a tiny fraction of their former extent. Much of our lowland woods had been cleared by mediaeval times, followed by considerable timber extraction from the highlands in the 18th century. Many ancient woodland sites have been planted with non-native conifers.

Opportunities to restore these ancient woodland sites, to create semi-natural woodlands should be explored. Ancient woodland sites, which retain remnants of their original character are unique and should be given priority for restoration and protection.

1.4 Management to improve timber quality

Management to improve timber quality is of key importance if a diverse market is to be developed for our timber. In some areas economic constraints mean that timber that has reached optimum condition for harvesting is not being cut and thinning programmes are being curtailed. The threat is that these woodlands are being forced by economics into a cycle of management by wind-throw, rather than by silvicultural practises. In future, conditions must be created to ensure improved management for timber quality. This is considered further in section 8.

1.5 Exploring alternatives to clearfell

Alternatives to clearfell aim to allow continuity of woodland species whilst the process of felling and restocking is ongoing. Alternatives to clearfell include continuous cover or other irregular silvicultural systems such as group felling limited to areas of a size needed to achieve satisfactory regeneration. Alternatives to clearfell need to be looked at critically as such areas can be very similar to clearfell in ecological terms if not managed appropriately. If planned appropriately alternatives to clearfell can bring considerable benefits, avoiding some of the visual, landscape and environmental impacts of clearfell and enhancing woodland biodiversity.

1.6 Forest Design Plans

Forest Design Plans document and plan the felling and restocking of Forest Enterprise Woodlands over a 35-year period. They are being produced for all state owned forests. Forest Plans are the equivalent for the private sector, and have been developed for 30 private estates so far. In the process of the preparation of these Plans, there is scope for an extensive consultation exercise and community involvement in planning future forestry operations. Consultation needs to be effectively managed to take in people's views, without resulting in an overly drawn out or costly process. The use of Forest Design Plans and Forest Plans is welcomed as a mechanism for looking at a whole forest, setting longer-term objectives through the use of longer plan periods and involving people in this process.

Scots pine thinned for timber production

Restructuring to increase diversity of species, restocking with mixed oak, rowan and conifer

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
RS1	Encourage woodland management to maximise the potential for economic, environmental and social benefit.	Promote uptake of Stewardship Grants for improving timber quality, reducing deer numbers, enhancing native woodlands, improving woodland biodiversity, enhancing landscape, developing alternatives to clear-felling and developing facilities for informal recreation.	**FCS**
RS2	Encourage development of Forest Plans/ Forest Design Plans as the core-planning document for all woodland management.	Ensure affective consultation with the community and relevant agencies is carried out in preparation of these plans. Encourage all managers of medium and large forests to develop Forest Plans. All Forest Plans should incorporate multiple use aims.	**FCS**, **FE** FCS Consulte-es(SNH, RSPB,LA, SEPA)
RS3	Explore options for restoring planted ancient woodland sites.	Survey and evaluate planted ancient woodland sites (as identified by Woodland Trust). Identify and prioritise sites with existing value for restoration and restore sites as they become available.	**LA** NENW NESBReC WT, FCS, LBAP
RS4	In areas of high biodiversity encourage the adoption of silvicultural systems that take proper account of wildlife and landscape.	Prevent large scale felling of mature stands of Scots Pine. Retain diverse mature stands of well-spaced Scots pine and encourage a well-developed shrub layer.	**FCS** FCS Consulte-es (SNH, RSPB, LA)
RS5	Encourage long-term retentions	Recognise the value of retaining mature stands of Scots pine and explore systems of funding to allow stands of mature trees to be retained.	**FCS**/**LA** RSPB, SNH

Alternatives to clearfell should be explored

Kirkhill Forest managed by FE, Forest Design Plans are used to plan out felling and restocking in FE managed forests.

2. CREATING NEW WOODS AND FORESTS

Identifying priority areas where woodland expansion might be targeted is a key role of this Strategy. Looking at the whole forest resource in the North East, it should be possible to achieve benefits to landscape, habitat and recreation whilst producing commercial timber. Whilst expecting a range of proposals for new planting to come forward, specific types of new planting are encouraged by this Strategy to work towards the aims identified. Although woodland is an important feature of the North East, the total area of woodland (14%) is low compared with many of our European neighbours where woodland cover is often greater than 30%. This Strategy encourages expansion of our woods and forests in line with Strategic Map 1 and the priorities listed below.

NEW PLANTING ENCOURAGED BY THIS STRATEGY:

- Agricultural diversification to create well designed productive forest
- Expansion of native pine woodland
- Creation/ expansion of semi-natural woodland following UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priorities (also see section 4)
- Expansion of native riparian/ floodplain woodland (see section 4)
- Creation and expansion of woodland close to settlements and community woodlands (see section 7)
- Reinforcing, extending or establishing new woodlands around new developments
- Linking existing woodlands and increasing size of existing woodlands
- Creation and expansion of shelterbelts (see section 6.2)

It is hoped that these priorities will provide a focus for new planting through funds available under the SFGS. The table below shows which category in Strategic Map 1 is appropriate for specific types of woodland listed. All proposals, whichever category they fall into, will be considered on an individual basis, depending on site conditions and following established FCS guidelines.

	Categories in Strategic Map		
Priorities for Expansion	**Preferred**	**Sensitive**	**Unsuitable**
Agricultural diversification to create well designed productive forest	X		
Expansion of native pinewood	X	X	X
Creation/expansion of semi-natural woodland following UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan priorities	X	X	X
Expansion of native riparian/floodplain woodland	X	X	X
Creation and expansion of woodland close to settlements and community woodlands	X	X	X
Reinforcing, extending or establishing new woodlands around new developments	X		X
Linking existing woodlands and increasing size of existing woodlands	X	X	X
Creation and expansion of shelterbelts	X		

2.1 Agricultural diversification to create new woodland

The retention of key agricultural areas is essential to provide a stable rural community. Forestry can however, allow farmers to diversify their business. In their response to the consultation the NFU Scotland welcomed increased forestry activity as a diversification option for farmers. The introduction of Land Management Contracts integrates forestry and agricultural support on farmland. This allows farmers to create and manage woodland on their farms within the context of planning the management of the whole farm. The effect of diversification on tenant farmers needs to be considered as tenant farmers may not benefit from woodland creation projects and may lose productive land as a result.

Since 1998 over 4,000 ha of new productive woodland has been established to the north and east of the A96 as part of the Grampian Forest Challenge Fund. This area is primarily agricultural with relatively little tree cover. The Challenge Fund provided an economic incentive to farmers to widen their activities by creating new woodland. This has promoted well-managed productive forests whilst encouraging multi-benefits, such as, access and creation of wildlife habitat. With the introduction of the SFGS the Challenge Fund has been replaced by a locational premium directed towards encouraging diversification from agriculture into forestry. The Grampian Forest Challenge was directed by the Grampian Forest Forum. Arrangements for the Locational Premium will be guided by the members of the recently established Regional Forestry Forum.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
NP1	Promote appropriate sites within the preferred area in Map 1 for agricultural diversification by appropriate woodland planting.	Draw in funding from forestry and agricultural sources for the establishment and management of appropriate woodlands within the preferred area identified in Map 1. Use the membership of the Regional Forestry Forum (RFF) to guide the detail of requirements for the locational premium.	**FCS/LA** RFF NFUS

2.2 Expanding Native Pinewood

Upper Deeside has benefited from the Native Pinewood Challenge Fund. 'A Forest Habitat Network for the Cairngorms (1998)' indicated that over 30% woodland cover in the Cairngorms would allow the forest habitat to function as an extensive, well-connected forest. Despite the Challenge the Deeside Forest is still some 2% or approximately 1,600 ha below this threshold. This minimum target of 30% woodland cover requires natural regeneration and may also involve the restoration of ancient woodland sites which have been planted with non-native conifers. Expanding native pine woodlands will result in regeneration on some moorland sites, this must be balanced with maintaining large blocks of moorland habitat. Connectivity of woodland habitat is essential to provide extensive habitat for species such as woodland grouse. In addition good quality pine would allow a continuity of supply to provide a commercial market. There are however a number of problems in establishing woodland cover in this area. Conditions are difficult for woodland expansion and development of any woodland is a long-term commitment. Grazing pressure is high and a serious reduction in deer numbers is required. Finance is also a factor as these woodlands are unlikely to repay their costs in economic terms.

Sitka Spruce planted under the Grampian Forest Challenge Fund

Expanding native pinewood by natural regeneration

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
NP2	Increase native woodland in upper Deeside by at least a further 2% (approximately 1,600 ha) primarily through natural regeneration.	Assess whether the SFGS provides sufficient funding levels to achieve this. If not promote locational premium to meet this aim.	**FCS** LA SNH

2.3 Creation of semi-natural woodland

In support of the aims and actions outlined in section 4, this Strategy encourages large-scale creation of semi-natural woodland. The Scottish Forestry Alliance had recently launched a landmark project for Aberdeenshire at Darrochwids near Huntly. This project will re-create 300 ha of semi-natural woodland and open ground habitat. The project has involved a partnership between Forest Enterprise, RSPB, BP and the Local Community. This large-scale creation of semi-natural woodland is likely to bring considerable benefits to community and environment in future. It is hoped that this will act as a demonstration of the benefits of large-scale native woodland creation. By endorsing this project this Strategy aims to encourage similar scale projects in other suitable locations. The local community has been very supportive of the Darrochwids project, which is helping to develop an enjoyment and understanding of woodlands in the community.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
NP3	Encourage large-scale creation of semi-natural woodland and associated open ground habitat.	Use Darrochwids project as a model and case study to encourage 2 further landscape scale semi-natural woodland and associated open ground creation projects in the life of this Strategy. Focus one of these projects on native pinewood.	**FCS** LA SNH NENW

2.4 Reinforcing, extending or establishing new woodlands around new developments

Landscaping and woodland planting can make a vital contribution to the establishment of a new development in the landscape and can also make a significant contribution to natural heritage, access and recreational opportunities. Within the planning process there is an opportunity to ensure best practice in terms of landscaping around new developments. There is also an opportunity to develop new woodlands around development through planning gain.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
NP4	Ensure landscaping proposals for new developments take account of and fit in with existing woodlands	Enforce landscaping requirements as set down in the Aberdeenshire Local Plan and the Aberdeen City Local Plan.	**LA**
NP5	Develop new woodlands and link existing woodlands around new developments with green corridors and buffer zones	Take forward opportunities for management of existing woodlands, creation of woodland links and development of new woodlands through planning gain and areas designated for 'Projects' in the Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Local Plans.	**LA**

2.5 Linking existing woodlands, increasing size of existing woodlands

This is primarily geared towards expansion and linking of semi-natural woodland as detailed in section 4.4. This can also be important for commercial woodland. Locating new Scots pine plantation close to existing plantation, for example, to create large blocks, allows future clear felling or selective felling to have a lesser ecological impact.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
NP6	Increase connectivity and size of existing woodlands and forests	Encourage planting that links and adds to existing woodlands. Concentrate this in particular to semi-natural woodland but also consider for non-native planting.	**FCS** LA

Launch of the Darroch Wids native woodland creation project - November 2002

Red deer stag in pine woodland

3. DEER MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOREST RESOURCE

Deer are natural woodland dwellers. In their natural state they live in or use woodlands for much of the year. With no natural predators grazing pressure from high numbers of wild deer is one of the main threats to young trees and the expansion and regeneration of many of our woodlands. Deer management is, therefore, fundamental to forestry. Defending new plantations or regeneration areas against deer incurs substantial costs for fencing, which itself can create problems for birds and visual amenity. At inappropriate densities deer cause damage to the natural heritage and agriculture as well as to trees.

We need to bring deer numbers down to a level which is ecologically sustainable and compatible with the restoration of native woodlands, natural regeneration, and management using alternatives to clearfell. This in turn should lead to a better quality deer resource. As deer are free ranging, deer management needs to be co-ordinated at a level above that of the individual estate. Adjacent estates may not always share the same management objectives, leading to problems in co-ordinating management. Where appropriate culling levels cannot be achieved, reliance on fencing with its attendant disadvantages is the only alternative. The use of bird friendly enclosures should be encouraged in locations close to core woodland grouse areas.

Deer Management Groups aim to provide solutions to fully integrate deer management with local land use objectives. If managed correctly deer can be viewed as a valued asset, bringing a wide range of economic, social and environmental benefits both locally and in the wider public interest. Deer management plans should provide the basis for delivering defined and agreed objectives for local deer populations. On several estates land managers and stalkers are taking firm and sustained action to reduce deer populations, this is no easy task and requires an ongoing commitment.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
DM1	Reduce browsing pressure to promote development of diverse woodland habitat, protect forestry and natural heritage interests	Work with DCS to identify areas where deer are a major barrier to natural regeneration and explore ways of managing a reduction of deer numbers in these areas. Survey and quantify damage caused by deer and structure a deer control policy accordingly. In conjunction with deer management groups and other interests identify areas where serious damage is occurring to woodlands as a result of deer numbers. Take action through Deer Management Groups to control deer numbers in these areas. Promote uptake of the reducing deer numbers option under the SFGS Stewardship Grant. Particularly target uptake to areas identified above. Ensure forest design incorporates sufficient open ground/deer lawns. Ensure consideration of forestry objectives in Deer Management Plans. Highlight the benefits of reduced deer numbers to politicians, decision makers and the community. Encourage close liaison between forest and open hill managers to coordinate deer management.	**DCS** Deer Manage-ment Groups, SRPBA, FCS, LA, SNH, RSPB, NFUS

4. NATURE CONSERVATION, PROTECTING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

4.1 Safeguarding protected sites

Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City have a rich and varied natural heritage to which our forests and woodlands contribute considerably. This includes many sites of international, national and local importance. International sites include those protected under the Habitats and Species Directives, which make up a network of 'Natura' sites across Europe. At the local level District Wildlife sites are an Aberdeen City local conservation designation, which provide for access and education. Sites covered by natural heritage designations have been included in Map 1 as sensitive. Being included in the sensitive category does not exclude forest management or planting, as many of these sites are designated for their woodland interest. Planting and management in these areas must be compatible with the interest of the area.

4.2 Protecting and Restoring open ground habitats and the wider natural heritage

To safeguard and enhance the wider natural heritage outside designated areas, the sensitivity of certain habitats to forestry must be recognised. In open habitats, such as wetlands, species rich grasslands and lowland raised bog, tree planting would have an entirely negative effect and should not take place. For bogs, this is supported by a clear policy statement from FCS that afforestation will not take place on peat. Removal of plantations from semi-natural open ground habitats (deforestation) where successful restoration of habitat, such as areas of moorland, is possible should be considered a priority.

The North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC) has been established to keep a record of habitats and species. Although the data held at NESBReC cannot be considered exhaustive, checking forestry applications against NESBReCs records should provide an additional safeguard to ensure that proposals for planting do not conflict with open ground habitats and associated species. The habitats and species listed in Appendix 2 have been identified as potentially threatened by woodland expansion. Checking NESBReC reports against this list should provide a useful constraints check for those planning or advising on woodland expansion.

Restoring open ground habitats, clearfelling of exotic conifers from a wetland

Open ground habitats including wetlands should be maintained and enhanced

4.3 Encouraging appropriate planting and management

Woodlands and plantations provide essential habitat for many uncommon and declining species. Woodland management can have an enormous influence on these species. Coniferous plantations are often composed of even-aged stands, predominantly of a single species and are generally low in biodiversity. Some planted woodlands are, however, of conservation value for threatened species. Twinflower (UK Biodiversity Priority Species) has declined with the loss of native pinewoods and many of its remaining sites are in old pine plantations. Birds including the Scottish crossbill, capercaillie, black grouse and goshawk may occur in plantations, which can also provide a home for red squirrels. Old stands of pine, larch and birch on Donside and birch woodland in the Deveron valley are of considerable importance for biodiversity.

Although many woodland species benefit from woodland expansion, others suffer from inappropriate planting and forest management. The use of ploughing and drainage in cultivation and roading methods for harvesting can damage soils. Establishment by natural regeneration or using minimum cultivation may, therefore, be the only acceptable option on some soil types in areas sensitive for biodiversity.

In many existing forests restructuring is taking place in areas around watercourses and wetlands to improve water quality and enhance habitat. Woodland managers are increasingly considering how open ground, watercourses and edges in forests can be managed to bring benefits to biodiversity. The Forestry Commission has produced a wide range of guidance documents on managing for nature conservation, including specific forest practice guides addressing the management of semi-natural woodlands. Biodiversity will often benefit from an increase in the locally native component in our forests. Within each forest the design should allow semi-natural habitats to be widespread and interconnected and harvesting and planting plans should be such that woodland species are allowed to survive.

4.4 Protecting and expanding ancient and semi-natural woodland

The dynamic nature of landscapes and ecosystems, combined with potential change as a result of climatic and other human-induced factors require a broad approach to woodland conservation. Whilst climate change may cause some species to increase in abundance or range, the existing risk of loss of more vulnerable species, such as capercaillie, will increase. Changes in land use causing the fragmentation of habitats can prevent species moving in response to climate change. Planning future planting and management, therefore, needs to take account of pressures on vulnerable species.

Caledonian Pine Forest Native Woodland

Oakwoodland a UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat

Safeguarding existing native woodlands and buffering and extending semi-natural habitats to increase their core area and to connect isolated patches is increasingly important. Areas round or linking semi-natural remnants and on suitable former ancient woodland sites should be prioritised for expansion. Particularly in central and coastal areas of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City semi-natural woodland is composed of small, often isolated pockets. There is considerable potential to form habitat networks by expanding, linking, or re-establishing linkages, between these areas. This should include creation of woodland edges, woodland streamsides and rides and wet and dry glades to increase the range of species deriving benefit. Colonisation of planted native woodland is usually a slow process. Forest habitat networks are important in allowing movement of species that would otherwise be isolated on islands of suitable habitat. Species such as capercaille and Scottish crossbill that are able to rapidly colonise areas of new woodland will, in particular, benefit from this woodland expansion.

4.5 Contributing to UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans

All woodland owners and managers should be encouraged to take account of Biodiversity Action Plans in their management and planning. Appendix 3 provides a summary of UK and Local Biodiversity priority habitats and species associated with woodland in this area. Woodland managers should be encouraged to consider incorporating measures for these species and habitats when designing woodland projects. It is hoped that this Appendix will be of use when developing proposals under the SFGS Stewardship Grant for improving woodland biodiversity.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans have been developed for a number of woodland habitats and species and further plans are being drafted. The Wood Pasture and Parkland Plan recognises the value of mature/veteran trees particularly in relation to lower plants (fungi, lichen, mosses). The North East Scotland Red Squirrel Species Action Plan (SAP) calls for the identification of core red squirrel protection areas. Woodland planting and management in these areas should take particular note of the needs of red squirrels, with species choice to avoid favouring grey squirrels. The UK Action Plan for capercaillie calls for further expansion in native pine woods (addressed in section 2.2). Although a local plan has not yet been prepared, oakwoods and oak-ash woods in valleys are noted as being neglected in the north east and should be encouraged on the right sites.

Red Squirrel, UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species

Black Grouse, UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
NC1	Protect and enhance sites or areas adjacent to international, national and local nature conservation sites.	Within and adjoining sites of nature conservation importance woodland planting, management and restocking proposals will need to complement the environmental objective of the designated site.	**SNH** LA, FCS
NC2	Protect Open Ground Habitats and prevent adverse impacts on biodiversity.	Follow FCS guidelines on proportion of open habitat required in planting. Creative use of this open habitat for species rich grassland or wetland should be encouraged. Working in partnership with FCS establish a system for all SFGS applications to be checked against the database held at the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC) and for the information produced by NESBReC to be circulated to all consultees during the application process. Treat areas of semi-natural habitat and areas where species listed in the UK and LBAP are reported by NESBReC as sensitive. Check NESBReC reports against list of species (Appendix 2) and habitats potentially vulnerable to forestry.	**FCS** LA, NESBReC, SNH, RSPB
NC3	Promote enhancement of biodiversity.	Encourage woodland managers to integrate management to enhance species and habitats inparticulary those listed in Appendix 3 under the SFGS Stewardship Grant.	**FCS** SNH, LA
NC4	Safeguard, extend and enhance areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland.	Collect/analyse data on the native woodland resource in the area to establish how much woodland of each NVC type remains in the area with an indication of habitat quality. Use this information to target types of woodland for expansion and enhancement of habitat quality. Expand native woodland around existing core native/ ancient woodland areas. To include areas around and linking existing semi-natural woodland (woodland SSSIs, SINS and Natura sites and Ancient Woodland Inventory Sites). Create links between isolated areas of ancient or semi-natural woodland through the development of habitat networks.	NESBReC, NENW, FCS, FE, SLF, NFUS, WT
NC5	Contribute to the Red Squirrel SAP.	Ensure detail of core red and grey squirrel areas is held by NESBReC and is considered in the development of proposals for management and planting.	NESBReC, FCS
NC6	Contribute to the wych elm SAP.	Ensure sanitation felling is carried out as necessary. Promote inclusion of wych elm in planting schemes.	**LA** FCS
NC7	Protect priority habitats and species.	Ensure EAs include analysis of potential impacts on LBAP and BAP habitats and species.	FCS, LA

5. MAINTAINING WATER QUALITY and ENHANCING RIVER CATCHMENTS

5.1 Improving Riparian Habitat

Any forestry scheme which adjoins or incorporates watercourses of any size should be designed to create and enhance wildlife habitats associated with burns and rivers. Appropriate riparian planting with native species, including willow and alder, can greatly enhance our watercourses. They contribute to the health and productivity of adjacent rivers, burns and lochs and associated species. Riparian woodlands and buffer strips can make a considerable contribution to reducing run-off from agriculture and acidic run-off from the open hill. Development of semi-natural floodplain woodland can assist in water management, creating flood storage zones, which also provide valuable habitat. Broader riparian zones and planting of riparian woodland specifically for river health and habitat creation is a key aim of the Riparian and Wet Woodland Biodiversity Action Plan, which this Strategy supports.

It is recognised that inappropriate forest management and design can be a contributing factor in reduced water quality and habitat. As plantations are re-structured to meet new guidelines there is an opportunity to restore natural habitats in riparian zones and improve water quality. In addition to improving watercourses there is potential to create and manage wetland and open water habitats within forests. The FC 'Forests and Water Guidelines' require standards of good design to be applied along water margins and should be followed. The guidelines also promote the concept that woodlands should be designed to hold water and can have a role in flood alleviation. The Strategy encourages the expansion of riparian and floodplain woodland primarily composed of native species. In support of this aim creation of riparian woodland is now a realistic option under SFGS funding.

Open ground habitats along watercourses are also of great importance. Sections of our riverbanks are one of the last strongholds for wildflower meadows. Riverbank grassland beside small tributaries provides habitat for the water vole, a rapidly declining mammal, which has a stronghold in particular in the Ythan Catchment and the upper reaches of the Dee and Deveron. Each application for riparian planting must be carefully assessed to ensure it is not at the expense of an existing habitat or species of importance. In creating new riparian woodland existing riverbank paths, rights of way and access points for water-based recreation should be incorporated as part of the scheme.

Riparian woodland improves river health and biodiversity

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
FW1	Promote semi-natural native species floodplain woodland at appropriate sites	Prevent planting of commercial conifers on floodplains and river terraces. Under the SFGS riparian woodland option encourage the development of a medium to large scale flood plain native broadleaved woodland scheme to act as a demonstration on the benefits of floodplain woodland for flood alleviation, biodiversity and landscape. Ensure siting is appropriate from a catchment management and landscape point of view.	**FCS**, FCS Consultees(SNH, RSPB, LA, SEPA)
FW2	Promote appropriate development and restoration of semi-natural riparian woodland	Promote uptake of SFGS riparian woodland option for areas along watercourses. Target Buchan, the Don, Deveron and Bogie with sections of well-designed riparian woodland.	**FCS,** SEPA, LA
FW3	Link this Strategy to Catchment Management Plans as they are developed and to River Basin Management Planning	As Catchment Management Plans are developed, ensure this Strategy is used to identify areas where woodland could make a positive contribution to water quality and riparian habitat. Ensure forest interests are represented on River Basin Management Planning Groups during the progress of the Water Framework Directive.	**SEPA** Catchment Management Plan Groups
FW4	Protect important open ground riverside habitats and species	Ensure all proposals for new riparian woodland creation are checked against the NESBReC database for conflict with known areas of open ground habitat and important species (particularly species rich grassland and water vole).	**FCS,** FCS Consultees(SNH, RSPB, LA, SEPA)

5.2 Riparian Planting in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

A large area of Aberdeenshire has been designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ - June 2002). In the NVZ action plan proposals to alleviate the problems of nitrate pollution entering ground or surface water include the creation of buffer zones within 10m of water courses where spreading of organic manures is prohibited. One option may be to plant riparian woodland under the SFGS riparian woodland option in these zones. This would provide many environmental benefits, but will only be successful if the level of funding is enough to encourage farmers to take up this option.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
FW5	Promote planting of appropriate native species riparian woodland to improve water quality and riverine habitat in NVZs.	Ensure uptake of riparian habitat option under SFGS. If uptake is limited put in place measures to stimulate uptake.	**FCS/SEERAD** LA, SEPA, SNH, NFUS

6. RENEWING LANDSCAPES

Woodland is very much a feature of the landscape. The landscape is enhanced by a range of woodland features, including native woodlands, amenity woods, shelterbelts and the policy woods associated with large estates or designed landscapes.

The FCS provides advice on appropriate landscape design. Advice on local landscape character is available in the Aberdeen City Landscape Strategy and Aberdeenshire's Strategic Landscape Assessments for major settlements. SNH Landscape Character Assessments can be used to inform the planting process, they provide guidance for local reference on acceptable change to landscape. If the degree of planting in any area exceeds the capacity of that landscape to accommodate change, the intrinsic landscape character will be altered. The degree to which new planting is acceptable will depend on planting design and how well this fits with the existing landscape character. A reasonable balance of land use is compromised when any further change would significantly impoverish the natural heritage or landscape character of an area. In all cases new woodland should be sited and designed to complement existing land use.

Successive new plantations can have a negative effect on landscape. Some areas may have a particular sensitivity in landscape terms so that planting in these areas may not be appropriate. It is important to recognise and maintain the balance between open landscape features, such as moorland or agricultural land and woodland.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
RL1	Respect Landscape Character.	Ensure that all new planting reflects local landscape character.	FCS, SNH, LA

6.1 Designed Landscapes

Designed Landscapes provide an important historic resource and make a considerable contribution to the scenery of Aberdeenshire. These landscapes often incorporate woodlands and other natural features which have been retained for their amenity or sporting value. The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes is currently being extended and several additional sites have been identified in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. For the purposes of this Strategy locally significant designed landscapes identified by the Local Authorities but not currently appearing on the inventory will be treated as if designated Designed Landscapes. Funding for long-term management, maintenance and restoration of Designed Landscape and policy woodlands is available through the SFGS, which provides 90% funding for these sites.

Mither Tap Bennachie, a varied landscape

New Woodland should be sited and designed to complement existing land use

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
DL1	Respect historic Designed Landscapes	Design Landscape are included within the sensitive category for new planting. Ensure new planting within Designed Landscapes reflects the character and spirit of design.	**FCS,** FCS Consultees (SNH,RSPB, LA, SEPA)

6.2 Shelterbelts

Shelterbelts are characteristic features of much of the North East landscape. The high cost of management and the low financial returns have left many shelterbelts fragmented and semi-derelict, at risk of being lost completely. Although many shelterbelts are in some way enclosed by fencing or drystane dykes, most require repair to make them stock proof. A high proportion of shelterbelts are therefore suffering from grazing and browsing damage. Many sites have a high potential for management, with opportunities for regeneration and planting with proper stock proofing measures. Only by bringing these shelterbelts into active management will their long-term survival be assured. There are opportunities under the SFGS for creation and management of shelterbelts. These include the option to 'Improve the Diversity of the Farmed Landscape' and to carry out 'Landscape Improvement' under the SFGS Stewardship Grants. However, as both of these options offer 60% of costs it may be necessary to secure additional funds to progress the aim below.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
SB1	Work with landowners and partners to develop a programme for the restoration and management of the North East's important shelterbelts	Promote options for funding shelterbelt creation and management under SFGS. If funding under SFGS is found lacking develop a funding package (SEERAD, ACP, FCS, LA) for management of existing shelterbelts and planting of new shelterbelts in accordance with the recommendations made in 'A Restoration Strategy for NE Scotland's Mature Broadleaved Shelterbelts', Grampian Woodlands Project (June 2000).	SEERAD, ACP, FCS, LA, NFUS

Shelterbelts are an important feature of the North East Landscape

7. ARCHAEOLOGY

Since 1987 a process of notification from the Forestry Commission to the Local Authority archaeologists has ensured the provision of information and advice on archaeological sites within proposed forestry schemes. This enables the Forestry Commission to abide by its policy not to grant aid planting on sites which archaeologists believe to be significant.

While many sites have already been recorded, there are still others which are as yet undiscovered. These can lie in upland areas, where there has been little or no archaeological survey, or in existing woodland where conditions make it difficult to survey. Sites which are considered to be of national importance are legally protected as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). Many other sites do not yet have this statutory protection but are on a non-statutory Register of Sites likely to be of National Importance. The 'Forests and Archaeology Guidelines', produced by the Forestry Commission provide information on how to manage archaeological sites within a woodland and how to gain archaeological information and advice.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
AR1	Enhance our valuable archaeology through sensitive planting and management.	Identify and prioritise sites where re-structuring would benefit archaeological features. Ensure restructuring incorporates the protection of archaeological features. Identify sites where interpretation of archaeology can be incorporated into woodland interpretation and woodland walks. Secure funding for surveys for potentially important areas.	**LA/FCS**

8. SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Aberdeenshire Council's Economic Development Strategy (2001-2007) has a strategic objective, 'to create a rural economy that can adjust to the restructuring of rural industries and services'. 'Roots for Growth : A strategic framework for action for the Scottish Forest industries' (Scottish Enterprise) highlights the need for the development of local markets and products. It is hoped that the actions below will contribute to the delivery of both these strategies by contributing to developing a sustainable and diverse forestry sector in the North East. This means minimising the tonnage of poor quality, unprocessed timber leaving and maximising the value of trees and the forest industry locally.

Small scale woodland enterprises include charcoal burning.

Mobile Saw Bench

8.1 Adding Value Locally

The forest industry contributes significantly to the economy of this area and has the potential to play a greater role in sustaining the rural economy in future. Forestry and wood processing provides approximately 1330 jobs in forest management, logging, saw milling, wood manufacturing, nurseries, harvesting and haulage. The major products from our forests range from raw timber in the form of small roundwood to sawlogs, fencing supplies, and fire wood, to processed timber including laminates, flooring and timber frames for house building. There is scope for developing niche timber markets for local pine and birch, such as specialist furniture. In addition to mainstream timber production, there are also considerable downstream economic benefits in timber processing, recreation management and tourism. In addition to the key forestry sectors, small-scale initiatives including craft making, woodturning, charcoal and firewood production are operating locally. Woodlands do not have to be large to support an income, even small woods can be profitable if value is added locally. The contribution to the local economy that visitors to the forest make should also be recognised.

There are a number of issues which need to be addressed to allow future development of the available resource. There is currently no outlet for processing small roundwood in this area. Being sited away from the main users of small roundwood results in high haulage costs making roundwood un-economic and difficult to market. Timber prices are currently low, partly as a result of cheaper imports from the Baltic States, the strength of the pound and the increase in use of recycled timber and paper.

8.2 Local Processing and Use

The processing industries are fairly well developed in the north east. James Jones sawmill in Moray is advanced in UK terms but is largely geared for processing Sitka and not Scots pine or birch. James Jones in Aboyne primarily processes Sitka but also deals with pine. NEXFOR at Dalcross in Moray takes small round timber to produce Orientated Strand Board (OSB) and is the only plant of its kind in the UK. International Paper at Inverurie currently imports all its pulp from out with Scotland and much of it from out with the UK. In order to maximise the potential for the existing forestry cluster to expand, or to attract additional processing, suitable sites are required for future developments. There is a need to create specialist infrastructure to support the industry. In addition to identifying potential sites for new facilities this could include the development of e-commerce and training courses and centres for different branches of the industry.

Promoting the use of locally grown timber in local development projects, including major public sector developments, will help to provide employment in rural areas, sustaining rural communities. New planting schemes could be encouraged to consider the scale and species appropriate for a specific end use. Although trees are very much a long-term investment there seems little point in planting trees commercially without some sense of where future markets might be, even though there are bound to be changes in these markets. The domestic market and the larger construction companies should be targeted to promote use of local timber and timber derived building materials. This requires high performance product solutions to dispel concerns about the quality of domestic timber.

Stewart Milne Timber Systems are developing the use of locally grown and sawn material in timber framed houses. They already use boards from NEXFOR at Dalcross and beams and timber for frames from James Jones in Aboyne and Forres. Although the bulk of timber used in Stewart Milne construction comes from forests in Finland and Sweden, 10% is currently home grown from the local market and this percentage is likely to rise.

Changes to building regulations which require better insulation standards are likely to mean that larger cross-sectioned timber will be incorporated into timber framed houses. Scottish timber is capable of providing the necessary strength at these greater cross sections. The problem then comes in a lack of saw milling and curing capacity to allow consistent supply to major building firms. So in addition to improving quality we also have to develop processing facilities.

8.3 Sustainable Wood

The sustainability of wood production is becoming both a marketing advantage as well as a potential trade barrier. Forest certification is, therefore, of growing importance. Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen produces a significant amount of timber that carries the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Pan European Forest Certificate (PEFC) label. The considerable investment in time and finances by forest managers that goes into achieving certification should be recognised. Certification can provide a marketing and promotion advantage, in addition to a guarantee of good environmental management in the forest. Promotion of certified timber must be linked to education and awareness raising about the life cycle benefits and sustainability benefits of timber as a material. The public must have easy access to information on products from local timber to be able to consider this as an alternative.

Tree Nursery

International Paper's Mill at Inverurie

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
E1	Promote the North East as a suitable location for future development of a wide range of forestry and biomass products.	Identify, secure and promote, through development plans, a range of well-connected and serviceable sites for forestry sector developments	**LA**
E2	Promote small-scale forest-based initiatives, such as woodland co-ops, to support rural development and local enterprise	Facilitate local processing and woodland industry by identifying and securing suitable sites for facilities close to woodlands within development plans. Ensure potential investors in timber infrastructure and processing will be welcomed to the area. Local Authority to explore support for set up of a pilot woodland co-op. Explore option for promoting log or timber constructed houses using local timber.	**LA** SEG
E3	Establish a programme to increase the use of home-grown and preferably locally sourced timber.	All partners to include wood in development of sustainable purchasing policies. Include guidance on use of local timber in building through Index 21 (sustainability index for development). Promote use of FSC and PEFC labelled timber through the use of Index 21. Develop one major infrastructure project that uses locally grown timber for building material as a demonstration project by 2007. Promote the further development of quality locally grown timber and timber products for building to allow competition with other sources.	**All Partners** **LA** SEG FTA
E4	Continue to support the Grampian Woodlands Company (GWCo) and NEFIG in promoting and raising awareness of the quality and availability of local timber for use in the construction market.	GWCo to establish and promote a web based resource inventory of local timber products and users by 2005.	**GWCo**
E5	Support local sawmills, aiming to increase their turnover.	Economic Development to explore opportunities for supporting and developing small local sawmills. Encourage new sawmills with associated drying and processing capacity.	**LA** NEFIG FTA SEG

8.5 Renewable Energy

The lack of suitably sized and valued markets for low to mid grade timber has been identified as a serious economic constraint to the management of many neglected woodlands. If the value of the timber resource is not maximised it will remain in part unharvested and unmanaged. Developments in wood fuel (combined heat and power), using local timber have been identified as one potential use for small roundwood and other forest residues. A new market outlet for small roundwood within Aberdeenshire should be developed as a matter of priority, with emphasis on wood fuel or possibly pulp production on an appropriate scale. This aims to link to the Aberdeenshire Green Energy Strategy, which has wood fuel as one of its focuses. Developers should refer to this Green Energy Strategy for further details and site proposals.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
E6	Facilitate the development of appropriate combined heat and power plant/s or other processes to utilise forest residues and stem wood, including small roundwood and birch.	Development proposals for medium to large new developments to include an assessment of the potential for using wood fuel for district heating and hotwater at the design stage. Councils to facilitate 2 new developments using wood fuel by 2007. Raise community awareness of benefits of woodfuel heating and hotwater systems through exhibitions, presentations etc. Set up a group to take forward woodfuel opportunities and the establishment of wood fuel plant/plants. Plant should be located close to the existing timber resource where possible and should be combined with industry or infrastructure that can make appropriate use of the heat produced (activated charcoal, ethanol production, sawmill, pulpmill etc). Identify and secure suitable sites for woodfuel projects within development plans and the Aberdeenshire Green Energy Strategy. Set up small-scale woodfuel pellet production facility in Aberdeenshire as a demonstration.	**LA** FCS SEG
E7	Facilitate the development of appropriate small-scale wood fuel projects for heating homes, community halls, schools, swimming pools, quarries etc.	Set up a programme to convert oil burners used in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Council's own public and community facilities and industrial sites to wood burners, target to top consuming boilers at first step. Encourage major wood processing companies and other industries to carry out similar boiler conversions. Target local boiler and Aga makers to develop wood burning models.	**LA** SEG FCS

8.6 Transport and Extraction

The transport of raw and processed timber is a significant issue in the north east both economically and environmentally. As much of the woodland in Aberdeenshire is relatively remote, access is often along small public roads and over historic bridges not designed for heavy traffic. In many cases timber traffic effects local communities and alters the character of rural roads. The best solution to timber transport problems is to use local timber in local industry, thus reducing transport needs. Processing of timber at source effectively reduces haulage costs by adding value and also supports local jobs and markets. Where timber has to be transported out of the area opportunities for rail and sea transport should be explored further.

To facilitate necessary timber transport a network of agreed routes for extraction has been identified. These routes are strengthened and maintained to standards required to provide suitable infrastructure for timber haulage. This requires good working relationships between the industry, Forestry Commission and the Roads Authority, and considerable investment. To reduce transport costs, suitable processing facilities need to be distributed across the region wherever the product is grown. Emphasis should, therefore, be placed on creating local processing facilities and local markets and reducing the need for timber transport rather than increasing spend on updating timber transport routes.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
TR1	Take pressure off road transport.	Develop key transport links and points (rail and sea), linking into the network of agreed timber transport routes. Support the work of the North East Scotland Rail Freight Development Group.	**LA** FCS, FE, SEG
TR2	Improve integration of the rural transport infrastructure with the requirements of the forest industry.	Ensure new woods are located close to agreed routes or appropriate roads for future agreed routes. Grampian Timber Transport Group (GTTG) to create a code of practice for management/ maintenance of forest roads and extraction routes. Ensure sufficient funds are available for maintaining the rural road system.	**GTTG** FCS, LA
TR3	Reduce the need and distance for timber transport.	Seek solutions to long haulage routes to timber processing markets. Explore potential to haul timber and residues with lower moisture content. Promote and support the development of further local processing facilities.	**GTTG** FCS, LA, SEG
TR4	Seek improvements from the Scottish Executive on the regulation of forest extraction. Seek wider powers to improve timber transport mechanisms.	Seek methods of enforcing use of agreed routes. Secure wider powers for the Local Authority in decision making on timber routes. Secure greater investment in the rural infrastructure and roads in particular. Explore alternative pavement systems on appropriate timber haulage routes.	**LA** FCS, SEG, GTTG

8.7 Management of Birch Woodland

Birch woodlands dominate the existing broadleaved resource in Aberdeenshire. These areas have historically been under managed, with little value placed on their timber. Despite this local resource a significant amount of birch is imported every year. The Grampian Woodlands Project undertook a comprehensive survey of birch woodland (Grampian Woodlands Birch Survey - 2000) to determine the extent, location, quality and quantity of this wood resource and to estimate the potential for sustainable annual production. The survey identified 2,900 hectares of birch woodlands as appropriate for active management for timber production.

An effort needs to be made to increase the market demand for local birch and to increase the volume and quality of the timer available. Strong market demand and increasing timber value would result in the area of actively managed woodland expanding with improvements to the quality of the material being produced.

Improving timber quality in birch woodlands could lead to a decrease in habitat quality. The change from a variable structure and density, combined with the removal of the woodland understory could, for example, reduce shelter and cover for birds. A move towards management for timber quality must therefore be balanced with maintaining areas of semi-natural birch woodland primarily for biodiversity.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
BW1	Encourage management of appropriate birch woodlands for production of commercial timber with appropriate SFGS funding.	Promote uptake of Stewardship grant option for improving birch timber quality. Develop the use of local birch in local processing industry.	**FCS**
BW2	Encourage production of additional products from birch, such as charcoal.	Through initiatives such as the Grampian Woodlands Company continue to promote small-scale woodland enterprise.	**LA** FCS SEG
BW3	Ensure large areas of birch woodland are maintained and managed primarily for biodiversity.	Encourage further expansion of birch woods. Identify key areas of birch woodland to be maintained for biodiversity to include SSSI and Sites registered as Ancient (of semi-natural origin) in the Ancient and Semi-natural woodland inventory. Explore management techniques which allow sustainable timber production from birch woodland, encouraging commercial use whilst protecting biodiversity. Expand the birch woodland area. Explore possibilities for regeneration and planting of new birch woodlands for production of quality timber.	**FCS** SNH LBAP

Timber haulage puts considerable pressure on rural roads and relies on suitable infrastructure

Birch Woodland

9. SUPPORTING COMMUNITY WOODLANDS

9.1 Woodlands Around Towns

The value of approaches into villages and towns is often attributed to existing hedgerows, drystane dykes and woodlands. The settlements in Deeside and Donside, in particular, are enhanced by their woodland settings. Aboyne, Banchory and Ballater would lose their attractive character without their woodlands and forests. Woodlands, around settlements, need to be protected from inappropriate development and actively managed. The newer and continually expanding settlements such as Portlethen and Westhill are, in contrast, more exposed in landscape terms. New woodland could considerably enhance the settings of these areas and other new developments.

Woodlands around towns create recreational and social opportunities, enhancing amenity as well as setting. These woodlands can be particularly important for communities experiencing pressure from development. Woodland creation projects may be possible through planning gain to provide planting to integrate new housing with the surrounding landscape. The development value of land around settlements will often prevent new woodland being considered in areas near towns. New woodlands should, therefore, be incorporated into planning for land use around settlements by identifying areas for community woodlands, such as areas designed for 'Projects' in the Aberdeenshire Local Plan (see section 2.6).

It is important that new urban fringe woodlands are within easy walking distance, along appropriate access routes, for the bulk of the people in the settlement which the woodland is designed to serve. The settlements listed below have been identified as priorities for development of new urban edge woodland. This does not exclude other settlements from further woodland creation it simply prioritises settlements which currently have limited accessible woodland.

Areas with greatest requirement for development of new urban edge woodland:

Cove
Northfield/Mastrick
Bucksburn
Dyce
Kingswells
Peterhead
Fraserburgh
Ellon
Maud
Strichen
New Pitsligo
New Deer
Macduff
Turriff
Newmachar
Inverurie
Insch
Oldmeldrum
Portlethen
Westhill
Inverbervie
Tarves

SFGS aims to 'Improve the Quality and Setting of Urban Areas'. It is through this funding option, in addition to planning gain that we hope to take new woodlands in the areas above forward.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
CW1	Support use and improved management of existing woodlands. Promote new woodlands in and around the settlements identified above as a priority. Where practicable link these projects to existing access routes and to strategic landscaping sites as identified in the Aberdeenshire Local Plan and the Aberdeen City Local Plan.	Encourage the development of community partnerships to manage woodlands around towns for maximum community benefit. Encourage uptake of the FCS Woodlands In and Around Towns (WIAT) grant for management of existing woodlands. Secure funds through SFGS and if necessary apply for additional locational premium to develop new urban woodland projects.	**FCS/LA** ACP

9.2 Community Woodlands

Consultation responses emphasised the need to support and develop community involvement in new and existing woodlands. Community involvement in forestry is important in the development of a woodland culture. Forests designed and managed with the community in mind and with community involvement can build a more intimate relationship and sense of stewardship. Local communities need to be involved in the planning of these woodlands. This requires a willingness from the community to participate constructively in managing and protecting woodlands. Community wood does not necessarily mean community ownership but can for example be negotiated use and management of existing FE or privately owned woodlands. Re-structuring may provide an opportunity for community involvement in planning and could also trigger transfer of a woodland to community management.

Community woods should not be seen just as amenity sites, but also as sources of raw materials for the community and business community. They can provide opportunities for development of woodland co-ops and small-scale industry. In addition to providing improved facilities for recreation, education and access to the environment close to settlements. In Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City about 20 small woodlands have been established under the Community Woodland grant scheme. The Community Woodland at Newseat, near Inverurie provides a successful example. This woodland is a key recreation site for the local community and has widespread support. In Aberdeen City Cove Community Woodland, for example, is owned by the City Council and managed with input from the local community who make regular use of the site. Community groups in Aboyne and at Woodhead (near Fyvie) have recently acquired areas of woodland, which will be managed by local people for a range of benefits.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
CW2	Establish successful community woodland projectsinvolving new or existing woodlands.	Develop a programme to encourage community involvement in woodland management, for example through Ranger events, training and open days at existing community woodlands and promotion of WIAT for existing woodland. Identify where there is community interest in woodland projects, work with communities in developing these projects. Assist local communities in developing and managing community woodlands by providing necessary resources.	**FCS/LA** ACP Community Councils

9.3 Trees and Woodland Strategy for Aberdeen City

Aberdeen City Council are preparing a trees and woodland strategy to guide new woodland planting around the city. This should be considered as a detailed plan which will fit within the aims of this Strategy.

9.4 Community Consultation

Although it may not be recognised, forestry plays an important role for many communities in this area. Forests provide employment and recreation opportunities as well as adding to the character of the area and providing shelter. It is one of the roles of the Local Authority to seek and incorporate the views of the community in responses to forestry proposals on which the Councils are consulted. Although there are opportunities for communities to comment on individual planting schemes and forest plans, these opportunities are not often exploited and members of the community may not be aware of planting proposals that may affect them. The Scottish Forestry Strategy calls for an increase in dialogue between local communities and the forest sector. Although this Strategy has been developed with input from members of the community and from several Community Councils the proposals are strategic in nature and individual planting applications will continue to raise significant issues at the local level. FC together with the industry and Local Councils should work to improve effectiveness of consultation and discussion with local communities.

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
CW3	Encourage community involvement in forestry.	Ensure Community Councils are notified of all forestry proposals and are consulted on any proposal which is likely to have a significant affect on the community. Set size and proximity criteria for significant affect. Mechanism for consulting community councils to be agreed between FCS and LAs. Ensure FE consults the local community, through the Community Council, on plans for planting and felling in forests that are used for recreation.	**LA/FCS/FE** Community Councils, Community Groups

New development can be greatly enhanced by woodland planting

Settlement with wooded edges

10.SUPPORTING EDUCATION, RECREATION and TOURISM

The diverse landscape of the area attracts visitors all year round and provides wonderful opportunities for recreation and tourism. Forests and woodlands are particularly valuable for access and can accommodate a variety of activities. Forests provide for cross-country skiing, orienteering, birdwatching, mountain biking, equestrian events and walking on routes and trails, many of which are public rights of way. Access in woods is often most valued around towns and villages. Forest Enterprise managed woodlands, such as Tyrebagger, Counteswells, Blackhall Forest/Scolty, Pannanich, Denlethen, Bennachie, and Dunnottar all have high visitor numbers.

Aberdeenshire Council's Countryside Access Strategy guides the Council's approach to the development and management of countryside access, aiming to work with landowners and farmers to develop and seek funding for appropriate access, where this is mutually acceptable. Aberdeen City is currently developing an access strategy that is likely to also encompass this aim. The Scottish Rights of Way Society has entered into an accord with the Forestry Commission under which the Commission has agreed to take steps to re-open old routes identified by the Society as rights of way, where significant public use is likely to result. These routes may have been lost or affected in the course of past forestry operations. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act creates new opportunities for countryside access. When planning new woods and forests existing rights of way should be taken into consideration and incorporated into proposals. When developing new routes opportunities for linking woodlands with wooded corridors along routes should be considered. Providing woodlands within walking distance or on public transport routes from settlements is also a priority.

Many of the benefits provided by forests and woodlands, in terms of recreation and tourism do not provide direct income for the owner and it should be recognised that the owner may incur costs such as maintenance of paths and bridges. In providing opportunities for people to enjoy forests we need at the same time to give a better insight into the possibilities and limitations of forest management. A deeper understanding of a working forest will help to develop the relationship between communities and forest managers, helping people to see that well-managed change in woodlands and wooded landscapes will bring positive benefits. The Scottish Outdoor Access code contains advice on responsible access in forests in relation to forest operations such as felling and new planting and should be used to guide those using forests for recreation and those providing access in forests.

Woodlands provide great opportunities for recreation

Sculpture trail in Tyrebagger Forest

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
REC1	Promote woodlands as a recreational and educational asset	Encourage and support owners in opening their woods and welcoming people. Provide grant to support and encourage this. Provide way marking and interpretation to encourage and guide visits. Include interpretation of appropriate archaeological, natural and forest management features. Encourage creation of woodland habitat along the core path network as it is developed.	**LA** SNH, FCS, SRPBA
REC2	Exploit the opportunity to combine the promotion of woodland-based recreation and tourism with wider promotion of Grampian's Forest industry.	Continue to develop and hold a range of 'Treefest' type events.	**FCS** LA, SNH, SEG
REC3	Recognise forests as an educational resource	Use SNH/ Local Forest Education Initiative (FEI) funding to develop provision for school visits. Promote forest visits as part of the school curriculum, taking advantage of the woodlands around settlements. Encourage better usage of existing FEI materials. Provide support for the FEI through involvement of appropriate Council staff and funds.	**FEI** SNH, LA, SEG
REC4	Minimise loss of amenity through FE woodland disposals.	Promote good access and management provision as part of woodland sales. Ensure community are properly consulted on woodland disposals.	**FE** FCS, LA

11. MONITORING THIS STRATEGY

Ref.	Aim	Actions	Partners (Lead in Bold)
MR1	Explore options for using the Regional Forestry Forum to enable action, monitoring and sharing information on taking forward this Strategy.	Explore options for using the Regional Forestry Forum to monitor this Strategy.	**RFF**
MR2	Set up a system of indicators to monitor the progress of this Strategy.	The following indicators are suggested for monitoring progress of the Strategy towards sustainable forestry. 1. Forest Biodiversity - Change in woodland bird populations, RSPB to provide bird indicators, from breeding bird atlas. 2. Proportion of local timber production being utilised by markets within the region. 3. New Planting and natural regeneration by category of priority identified in section 2. 4. Number of urban edge woodlands successfully established. Develop further indicators to include an indicator for each section of the Strategy.	**LA/FCS**

Organisations inputting to the Strategy – The list below includes those who responded to the initial consultation/ attended workshops/ technical group meetings and/or responded to the draft Strategy.

Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire Council
Aberdeenshire Environmental Forum
Bell Ingram Ltd
Birse Community Trust
Buchan Countryside Group
Bucksburn Community Council
Christie Elite
Crannach Management Group
Deer Commission Scotland
Drummuir Estate
Dunecht Estates
Finzean Community Council
Forest and Timber Association
Forest Enterprise
Forestry Commission Scotland
Forvie Tree Nursery

Fyvie, Rothienorman and Monquhitter Community Council
Grampian Woodlands Company
Invercauld Estate
Inverurie Angling Association
Land Management (Scotland) Limited
Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership
Macaulay Institute
Macrobert Trust
Marchfield Ecology
Mid Deeside Community Council
National Farmers Union Scotland
Newmachar Community Council
North East Enterprise Trust
North East Native Woodlands
Ramblers Association
Ross Partnership
Royal Society For the Protection of Birds
Scot Ways – Scottish Access and Rights of Way Society
Scottish Agricultural College
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Smiths Gore
Sports Scotland
Tarves Community Council
Tillhill
Torphins Community Council
University of Aberdeen
Woodland Trust Scotland

ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	Aberdeen Countryside Project
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
CNPA	Cairngorm National Park Authority
DCS	Deer Commission Scotland
DED	Dutch Elm Disease
EA	Environmental Assessment
FCS	Forestry Commission Scotland
FE	Forest Enterprise
FEI	Forest Education Initiative
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FTA	Forest and Timber Association
GWCo	Grampian Woodlands Company
LA	Local Authority/ies
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
NEFIG	North East Forest Industries Group
NENW	North East Native Woodlands
NES	North East Scotland
NESBReC	North East Scotland Biological Records Centre
NFUS	National Farmers Union Scotland
NVC	National Vegetation Classification
NVZ	Nitrate Vulnerable Zone
PEFC	Pan European Forest Certificate
RFF	Regional Forestry Forum
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAP	Species Action Plan
SEG	Scottish Enterprise Grampian
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SFGS	Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SRPBA	Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
WT	Woodland Trust

Appendix 1
ABERDEENSHIRE AND ABERDEEN CITY FORESTRY FIGURES

The Forest Resource

Timber planting throughout the latter part of the 20th Century has resulted in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City having approximately 92,000 ha of woodland, which represents over 14% of the total land area. The forest resource varies from around 18% cover on Deeside and Donside to less than 7% in Buchan. Recent planting as part of the Native Pinewood Challenge (1998-2000) has contributed to an expansion of the Deeside Forest with over 400 ha of native pine woodland established by planting and natural regeneration. The woodland area in upper Deeside now extends to some 24,500 ha which comprises 28% of the land in this area below 600 m. The Grampian Forest Challenge Fund resulted in over 4,000 ha of new planting, predominantly in the Banff and Banff and Buchan areas between 1998 and 2002 and over 9.5 million invested in new planting.

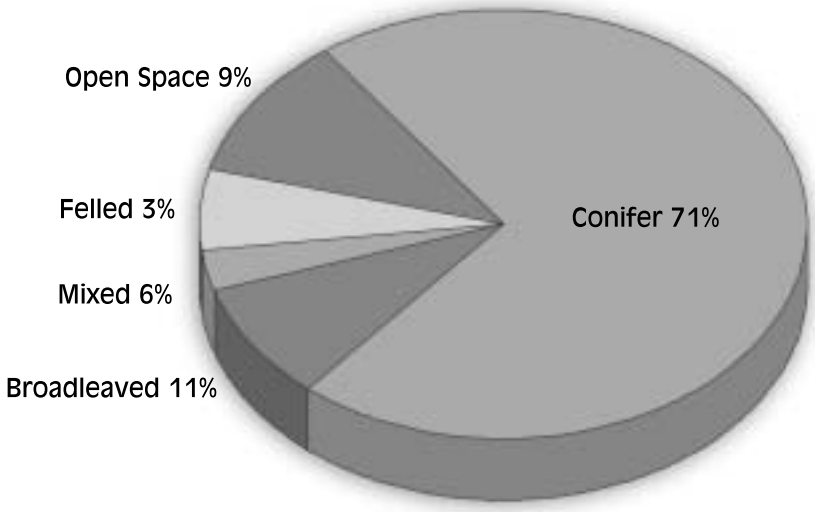
The table below shows a breakdown of forest type and ownership in the North East.

Forest Type	Forestry Commission Scotland Ownership		Other Ownership		All ownerships	
	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%
Conifer	25,762	87.4	41,200	65.2	66,963	72.3
Broadleaved	471	1.6	9,373	14.8	9,844	10.6
Mixed	569	1.9	4,684	7.4	5,253	5.7
Felled	1,528	5.2	752	1.2	2,280	2.5
Open Space	1,157	3.9	7,141	11.3	8,298	9.0
Total	**29,488**	**100.0**	**63,150**	**100.0**	**92,653**	**100.0**

Table 1 Areas of Woodland >2ha by Forest Type and Ownership

Source: National Inventory of Woodlands and Trees, Forestry Commission 1994 updated with FCS woodland disposals to 2001. Other Woodlands include those owned by private individuals, partnerships, trusts, business interests, Local Authorities, departments and agencies other than FCS.

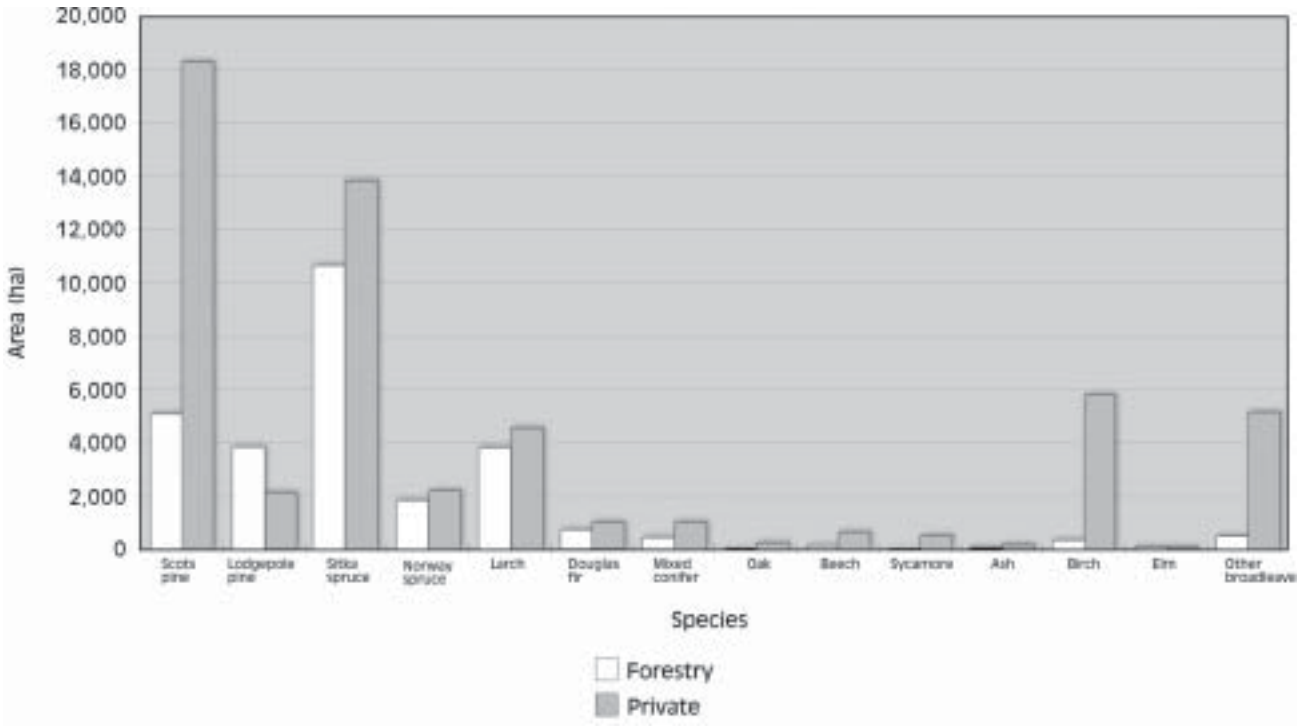
Figure 1 – Forest Type by Area – All Woodland



Species Composition

Fig 2 shows the area of the principal species in NE Scotland. The predominance of Scots pine reflects the importance of the Deeside Forest. The main commercial conifer is sitka which represents 29% of total forest cover. Sitka is the highest yielding and highest value commercial species in this area. Broadleaved planting has risen significantly in recent years. This is in accordance with Government policies promoting a greater diversity of species and greater consideration of environmental benefits of planting species ecologically situated to a particular site. The main broadleaved species is birch which covers over 6,000 ha representing 48% of all broadleaves and 7.6% of total forest cover.

Fig 2 – Area of woodland in the Structure Plan area by principal species and ownership



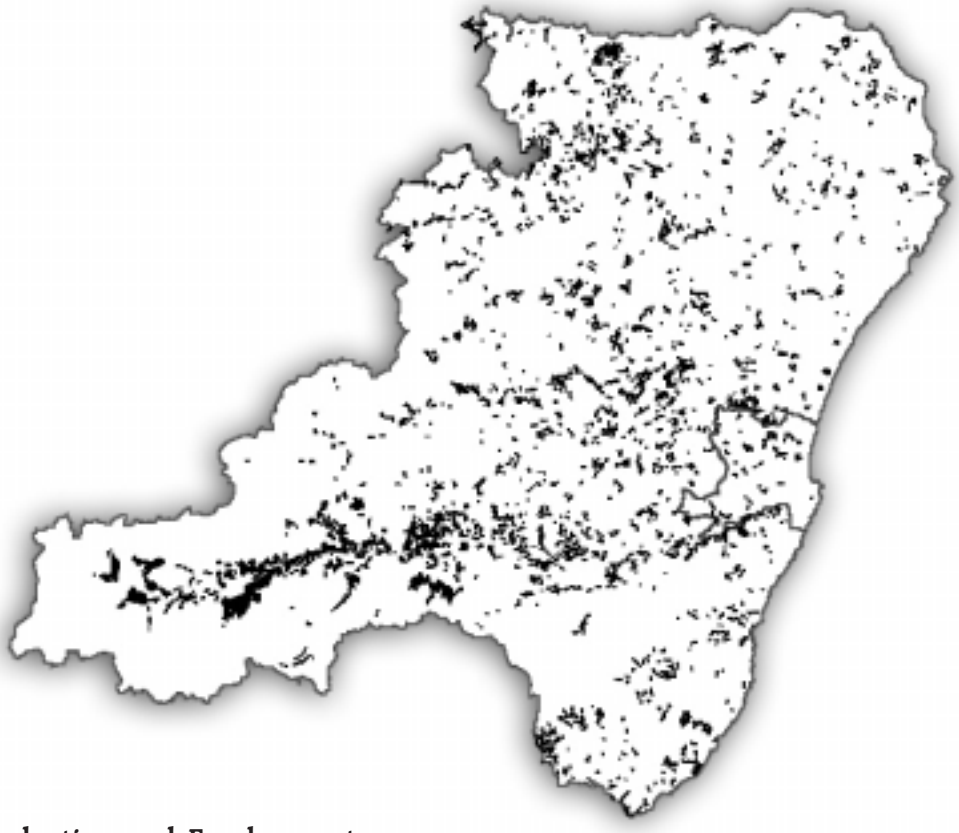
Source: National Inventory of Woodland and Trees, Forestry Commission Scotland 1994 updated with FCS woodland disposals to 2001.

Ancient or semi-natural woodlands now cover just over 3% of the land area in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen (Figure 3 - Natural Habitat Survey 1985). Native pine woodland in the Deeside Forest, along with its companion the Forest of Spey, is unsurpassed in Britain. Together these forests occupy 5% of the land area of Scotland, yet contain 25% of the present native woodland area.

Broadleaved woodlands are distributed all over the North East but are particularly suited to the lower ground. The commonest type of broadleaved woodland is dominated by birch. Most broadleaved woodlands contain a mix of species. Bird cherry, gean, wych elm, hawthorn, rowan, hazel, ash, alder and a number of species of willow are common native species, while beech and sycamore are the commonest non-native species.

Figure 3: Coverage of semi-natural woodland in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen

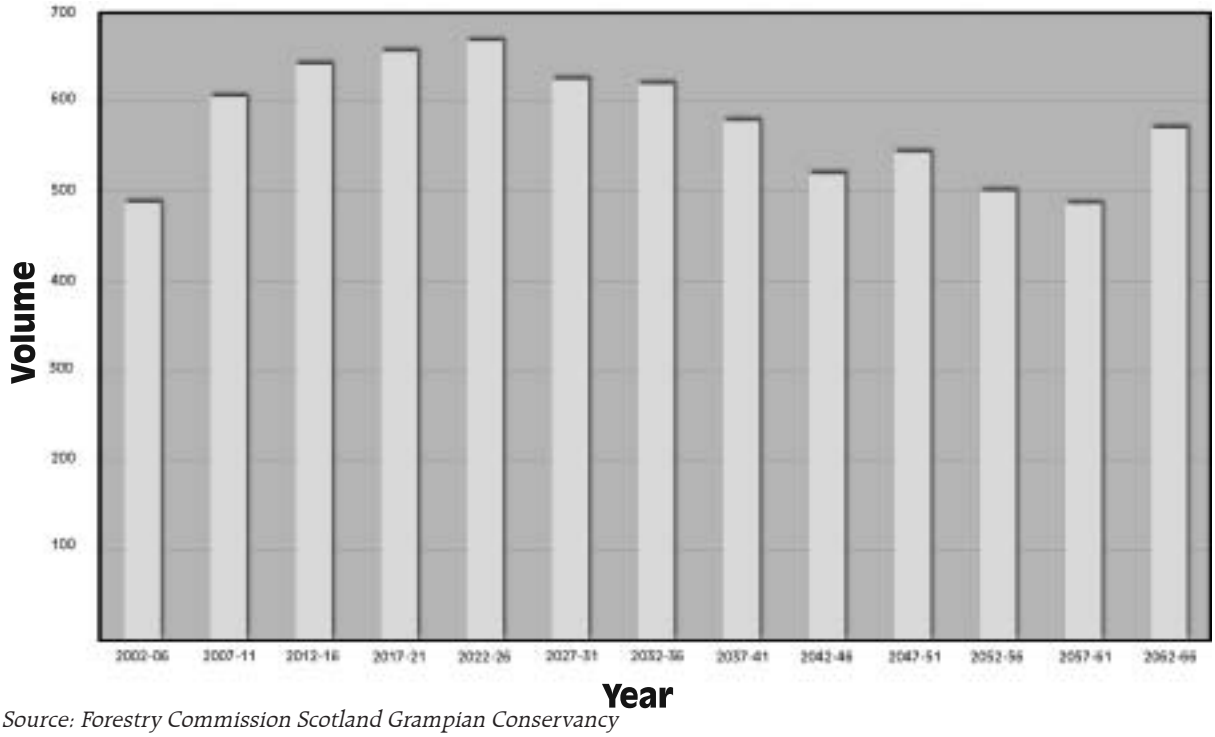
Source: Grampian Natural Habitat Survey 1985



Timber Production and Employment

Timber production in the area is currently less than 400,000 tonnes per year. This is forecast to almost double over the next ten years (Fig 4) as a significant proportion of the resource reaches maturity and becomes available for harvest. As Figure 1 shows the timber resource is predominantly coniferous, resulting in an increase in soft wood available for extraction.

Figure 4: Estimated Timber Available for Harvest 2002-2066



Source: Forestry Commission Scotland Grampian Conservancy

Appendix 2
HABITATS AND SPECIES POTENTIALLY THREATENED BY WOODLAND EXPANSION

Habitats

These are habitats of biodiversity importance that might be threatened by inappropriate afforestation, or indeed any afforestation at all. This could occur by active planting or passive regeneration, either intended or unintended. While the most obvious risk is that of direct replacement by woodland, there are potential indirect threats; such as changes to the hydrology of wetland habitats by afforestation near the site or isolation of open habitats if surrounded by woodland. In some cases, a decision may need to be made as to whether the likely woodland expansion (if native) is of greater ecological benefit than the retention of the open ground. There are no correct answers in such situations and each site should be considered individually. However, the habitats below should at least be considered as threatened when woodland expansion seems likely.

HABITAT	EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL THREATS
Raised bog	Direct habitat loss: Consequent dependent species loss: Modified hydrology
Blanket bog	Direct habitat loss: Consequent dependent species loss: Modified hydrology
Reedbed, fen, carr, marsh, swamp	Direct habitat loss: Consequent dependent species loss: Modified hydrology
Floodplain grazing marsh	Direct habitat loss: Consequent dependent species loss: Modified hydrology
Mesotrophic/oligotrophic lochs	Modified hydrology
Semi-natural acid, mesotrophic and calcareous grasslands	Direct habitat loss: Consequent dependent species loss
Maritime grassland and heath	Direct habitat loss: Consequent dependent species loss
Upland heath (moorland) including serpentine	Direct habitat loss: Habitat fragmentation: Consequent dependent species loss
Montane habitats	Direct habitat loss: Consequent dependent species loss
Lowland heathland	Direct habitat loss: Habitat fragmentation: Consequent dependent species loss
Native Woodland Habitats	Loss or degradation of biodiversity value of existing native woodland when brought under intensive management as commercial woodland.
Sand dunes and shingle	Direct habitat loss: Consequent dependent species loss

Species

This section does not consider species that might benefit from woodland expansion (see Appendix 3). As above, in some cases a decision has to be made that weighs the possible colonisation by one group of species against the possible loss of some of the species below. The list is in no way definitive, particularly for invertebrates and plants, but includes some **UK BAP priority species (normal font)** and other species of concern, *including Local BAP priorities (italics).* It does not include species living in habitats unlikely to experience woodland expansion. In many cases, ecological impacts are likely to be complex and unpredictable, and the precautionary approach should be adopted, especially when planning open ground retention and management.

SPECIES	EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL THREATS
Mammals	
Water Vole	Direct/indirect modification of watercourses and associated foodplants
Brown Hare	Loss/modification of open habitat
Otter	Loss/modification of habitat/disturbance
Pipistrelle Bat	Loss/modification of feeding habitat
Water Shrew	Loss/modification of wetland and open water habitat
Birds	
Skylark	Loss/modification of open habitat
Linnet	Loss/modification of open habitat
Reed Bunting	Loss/modification of wetland habitat
Corn Bunting	Loss/modification of open habitat
Tree Sparrow	Loss/modification of open, scrubby habitat
Grey Partridge	Loss/modification of open habitat
Golden Eagle	Loss/modification of open habitat feeding range
Twite	Loss/modification of open habitat
Yellowhammer	Loss/modification of open, scrubby habitat
Hen Harrier	Loss/modification of open habitat, nesting and feeding range
Kestrel	Loss/modification of open habitat feeding range
Snipe	Loss/modification of feeding and nesting habitat
Grasshopper Warbler	Loss/modification of habitat
Curlew	Loss/modification of open and wetland habitat
Golden Plover	Loss/modification of open nesting and feeding habitat
Water Rail	Loss/modification of wetland habitat
Redshank	Loss/modification of open habitat
Barn Owl	Loss/modification of feeding habitat
Lapwing	Loss/modification of open and wetland habitat
Dunlin	Loss/modification of open and wetland habitat
Merlin	Loss/modification of feeding habitat
Amphibians and Reptiles	
Common Toad	Loss/modification of wetland habitats
Palmate Newt	Loss/modification of wetland habitats
Adder	Loss/modification of habitat
Slow Worm	Loss/modification of habitat
Invertebrates	
Great Yellow Bumblebee	Loss/modification of open habitat
Northern Brown Argus	Loss/modification of open habitat
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Loss/modification of woodland edge habitat
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Loss/modification of habitat
Large Heath	Loss/modification of habitat
Small Blue	Loss/modification of habitat
Dingy Skipper	Loss/modification of habitat
Kentish Glory	Loss/modification of natural birch habitat including regenerating birch
Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoth	Loss/modification of open habitat
Northern Blue Damselfly	Loss/modification of wetland habitat

Vascular plants	
A range of montane plant species, if at low altitude	Loss/modification of habitat
Marsh Clubmoss	Loss/modification of open habitat
Pillwort	Loss/modification of wetland habitat
Yellow Marsh Saxifrage	Loss/modification of wetland habitat
Arable weed species	Loss/ modification of open habitat
Mountain Everlasting	Loss/modification of open habitat
Autumn Gentian	Loss/modification of open habitat
Field Gentian	Loss/modification of open habitat
Fragrant orchid	Loss/modification of open habitat
Early purple orchid	Loss modification of open and woodland habitat
Small white orchid	Loss/modification of open habitat
Meadow saxifrage	Loss/modification of open habitat
Zigzag Clover	Loss/modification of open woodland/scrub habitat
Cowslip	Loss/modification of open, and open woodland habitat
Bearberry	Loss/modification of open, and open woodland habitat
Coralroot orchid	Loss/modification of open, and open woodland habitat

Lower plants	
A range of montane bryophyte species, if at low altitude	Loss/modification of habitat

Fungi	
Fungi of Montane habitats	Direct Loss of Habitat *Some very specialised fungi exist in montane habitats*
Fungi of semi-natural acid, mesotrophic and calcareous grasslands.	Direct Loss of Habitat *Several groups of fungi indicate good quality semi-natural grassland these include waxcaps (Hygrocybe), pink spored (Entoloma), fairy cups (Clavariaceae) and earth tongues (Geolossaceae).*
Fungi of maritime grassland and heath	Direct loss of habitat *Coastal grassland can support a range of semi-improved grassland species as described above.*

It is hoped that this list will encourage forest owners and manages to take a close look at what is found on sites they are managing and to promote the conservation of biodiversity as part of good management practice. At sites with high existing biodiversity, often indicated by a range of different habitats and species, careful consideration of planting proposals is required.

Appendix 3: KEY WOODLAND HABITATS AND SPECIES

This table provides a summary of UK and Local Biodiversity woodland habitats and woodland associated species for North East Scotland. This is not an exhaustive list and omits, for example, species which are very localised in distribution and species which have a greater stronghold in other areas. The table aims to provide a guide for woodland managers when developing proposals under the SFGS Stewardship Grant for improving woodland biodiversity.

Habitat				BAP status	Status of Habitat; Threats
KEY HABITATS					
Lowland Wood Pastures and Parkland Trees				UK Priority Habitat	Status - Scarce in North East Scotland (NES), associated with estate grounds, important for mature deciduous trees (oak, beech, elm) and associated lower plants and grassland; Threats - reduced grazing, conversion to agriculture or forestry.
Upland Oakwood				UK Priority Habitat	Status - Very scarce in NES, important for rich animal and plant communities; Threats - overgrazing, invasion by non-native species, past losses to conifer plantation.
Wet Woodland (Riparian and Wetwoodland Local Action Plan)				UK Priority Habitat	Status - Condition deteriorating, many important small/ isolated areas remain; Threats - drainage, conversion to agriculture, overgrazing.
Birch Woodland				UK Priority Habitat	Status - Most extensive deciduous woodland in NES, important for many woodland birds also Kentish glory and cousin German moths (also in other woodland especially pine); Threats - over grazing restricting regeneration, fragmentation, lack of management.
Riparian Woodland (Riparian and Wetwoodland Local Action Plan)				Local Priority Habitat	Status - Scarce, often isolated patches, important as only remaining woodland in some areas, important for freshwater ecosystems; Threats - overgrazing, lack of regeneration, conversion to agriculture.
Scrub				Local Priority Habitat	Status - Widespread, important for a range of declining bird species particularly in lowland agricultural areas.
Native Pine Woodland				UK Priority Habitat	Status - NES very important for this habitat (predominantly Deeside), important habitat for numerous priority species; Threats - over grazing preventing regeneration.
Habitat	**Group**	**Scientific name**	**Common name**	**BAP status**	**Status of species; Habitat; Threats**
KEY SPECIES					
Broad leaved woodland (included in Local Farmland Action Plan)	Bird	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*	bullfinch	UK Priority Species	Status - Common breeding species, seed eating bird, low densities NES, NES important in Scotland, declining in GB, declining in NES; Habitat - thickets dense deciduous woodland, scrub, young plantations, moorland edge; Threats - loss of hedgerows, intensification .
Broad leaved woodland (included in Local Farmland Action Plan and Subject of Local Species Action Plan)	Vascular plant	*Ulmus glabra*	wych elm	Locally Important Species	Status - Despite relative resistance to Dutch Elm Disease (DED) most trees outside Scotland have been killed, NES remains a stronghold.
Broad leaved woodland	Lichen	*Bacidia incompta*	a lichen	UK Priority Species	Status - Formerly widespread from S England to NES, declining; Habitat - basic bark (elm); Threats - pollution, felling parkland and wayside trees, DED.
Broad leaved woodland	Lichen	*Caloplaca luteoalba*	orange-fr-uited elm-lichen	UK Priority Species	Status - In sharp decline, areas with <750mm rainfall; Habitat - mature elms and soft calcareous rock; Threats - loss of elms (DED), pollutants.
Mixed woodland (included in Local Farmland Action Plan)	Bird	*Muscicapa striata*	spotted flycatcher	UK Priority Species	Status - Summer visitor, small proportion of UK population in NES, greater proportion of Scottish population, suspected current decline in NES; Habitat - mature trees, lowlands; Threats - habitat degradation, weather.
Mixed woodland (included in riparian and wet woodland plan)	Vascular Plant	*Corallorhi-za trifida*	coral-root orchid	Locally Important Species	Status in NES unclear, may be declining but under recording suspected. Habitat - Damp peaty or mossy ground under trees or shrubs in woods, scrub or dune slacks (Stace, 1997).

Habitat	Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	BAP Status	Status of Species; Habitat; Threats
Mixed woodland (included in Riparian and Wet Woodland Local Habitat Action Plan)	Fly	*Lipsothrix ecucullata*	a cranefly	UK Priority Species	Status - Under-recorded; Habitat - seepages in damp woodland; Threats - pollution, drainage, clearance.
Aspen woodland	Fly	*Hammersc-hmidtia ferruginea*	a hoverfly	UK Priority Species	Status - Endangered species, Dinnet and Dee valley only records in Scotland; Habitat - native pinewoods, aspen woodland, including pine and birch woodland with aspen, larvae require standing or fallen dead and dying trees ; Threats - loss of aspen woodland.
Birch woodland	Moth	*Endromis versicolora*	Kentish glory	UK Priority Species	Status - Much scarcer than previously, restricted to the highlands of Scotland, increased in NES; Habitat - open birch woodland, larvae feed on birch and alder ; Threats - lack of regeneration, young regenerating birch is essential.
Birch woodland	Moth	*Paradiarsia sobrina*	counsin German	UK Priority Species	Status - Much of range in NE, local distribution in birchwoods, pine and other woods, prefers blaeberry fieldlayer with young birch or sallow; Threats - lack of regeneration due to overgrazing.
Birch woodland	Vascular plant	*Melampyru-m sylvaticum*	small cow-wheat	UK Priority Species	Status - Central Scotland, one site N England, stable, decline recorded in NES since 1970; Habitat - birch woodland in ravines and glens; Threats - tree felling.
Birch woodland	Lichen	*Parmelia septentrion-alis*	a lichen	locally important species	Status - Important in Eastern Highlands, UK found in 17 10km sq, NES found in 10 10kmsq; Habitat - Birch Twigs.
Native pine woodland	Mammal	*Sciurus vulgaris*	red squirrel	UK Priority Species	Status - Well distributed in NES, declining but not in Scotland; Habitat - mixed woodland pine; Threats - competition from grey squirrel, habitat destruction.
Native pine woodland	Bird	*Loxia scotica*	Scottish crossbill	UK Priority Species	Status - Endemic UK; Habitat - Caledonian pinewoods, mature plantations; Threats - loss of suitable habitat, fluctuations related to food supply.
Native pine woodland	Bird	*Tetrao urogallus*	capercaillie	UK Priority Species	Status - only in Scotland, declining; Habitat - Mature Scots pine forest; Threats - habitat deterioration, predation, weather, deer fences.
Native pine woodland	Bird	*Tetroa tetrix*	black grouse	UK Priority Species	Status - Resident breeding species, widely distributed in western NE; Habitat - open moorland, open forest and woodland edge habitats; Threats - loss of habitat, decline in scrub woodland, through heavy grazing and burning, deer fence collisions.
Native pine woodland	Butterfly	*Boloria euphrosyne*	pearl-bordered fritillary	UK Priority Species	Status - Notable species 31-100 10km sq in GB, in decline since end of 19th C; Habitat - open woodland & forest clearings; Threats - changes in management.
Native pine woodland	Vascular Plant	*Linnaea borealis*	twinflower	UK Priority Species	Status - More or less confined to NES, scarce in NES; Habitat - native pinewoods, old plantations, mountain habitats; Threats - loss of native pinewood, harvesting timber.
Native pine woodland	Vascular Plant	*Juniperus communis*	juniper	UK Priority Species	Status - Common and widespread in western NES; Habitat - birch and pine woods, moorland.
Native pine woodland	Fungi	*Sarcodon imbricatum-etc.*	threatened hydnelloid fungi (14 species)	UK Priority Species	Status - 15 species, hotspot Linn of Dee; Habitat - pinewoods.
Wet and Riparian Woodland (Own Local Species Action Plan)	Mammal	*Myotis daubentonii*	Daubenton's Bat	Locally Important Species	Status - Scarce in NE, further survey required; Threats - inappropriate bridge repair and tree surgery, decline in quality of riparian habitat.

Further information on the above habitats and species:

UK Action Plans - www.ukbap.org.uk

Local Action Plans - www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk

Local information on habitats and species - www.nesbrec.org.uk

Appendix 4
STRATEGIC MAP 1: OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW PLANTING

All proposals, whichever category they fall into, should be considered on their individual merits. Foresters should be guided by site conditions and sensitivities. This relies on effective constraints checking and on the detailed knowledge and experience of those who develop and comment on proposals to guide new planting and re-structuring.

The following four categories are identified on Strategic Map 1. The categories of 'Potential' and 'Sensitive' as defined in Circular 9/1999 have been merged and are defined as 'Sensitive'. This approach is intended to reduce unnecessary complexity in the indicative map.

Preferred areas for a wide range of forest and woodland types

Areas with greatest scope for a wide range of forestry objectives. Well-designed proposals which meet the UK Forestry Standard and other FCS guidelines on design will be appropriate in these areas. Outside the preferred areas large scale planting of non-native species is unlikely to be appropriate.

Sensitive Areas

Areas with significant sensitivities including major strategic interests of natural or cultural value. In sensitive areas there are opportunities for a range of forestry proposals accepting that the scale and objectives of proposals must not compromise the sensitivity. Sensitive areas are, therefore, suitable for specific types of woodland in keeping with the sensitivity. Woodland management in these areas should be carefully planned to meet the objectives and sensitivities of the area.

Areas shown to be important for UK and Local Biodiversity habitats and species should be considered and treated as sensitive during the consultation process.

Unlikely Areas for Woodland

Areas considered to be unlikely for woodland due to factors such as settlements, altitude, habitat or cultural sensitivity. This includes Natura 2000 sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest not notified for woodland interest and raised and blanket bog. These are areas where planting either cannot or should not take place. There are the following two exceptions to the unlikely category:

- Native woodland in the uplands. There may be appropriate sites for expansion of native woodland using appropriate techniques in upland areas. This is illustrated by the fact that there is already existing woodland in the 'unlikely' area in upper Deeside.
- Urban Woodland within Settlements. Built-up areas are included in the unlikely category. This does not preclude opportunities for expanding woodland and tree planting within settlements.

Existing Woodland and Forest

Data from the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (Forestry Commission 1994) and Woodland Grant Scheme New Planting and Natural Regeneration Datasets (Forestry Commission Scotland 2005).

Categories for mapping	Preferred	Sensitive	Unsuitable
Built up areas			X
Altitude Data – above 600m			X
Scheduled Ancient Monuments		X	
National Nature Reserves		X	
RSPB reserves		X	
Scottish Wildlife Trust reserves		X	
Ramsar Sites		X	
SSSIs non-woodland			X
SSSIs Woodland		X	
Natura sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) (non-woodland)			X
Natura sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) (Woodland)		X	
Sites of Interest to Natural Science		X	
Cairngorms National Park		X	
District Wildlife Sites		X	
National Scenic Areas		X	
Local Nature Reserves		X	
Designed Landscapes		X	
Ancient Woodland Inventory Sites		X	

The table above details the constraints that have been mapped in each category.

Photographs by: Aberdeenshire Council, Forestry Commission Scotland, Grampian Woodlands Company, Scottish Natural Heritage, North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Ian Francis (RSPB), North East Native Woodlands.

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