

Review of Forest & Woodland Strategy for the Cairngorms National Park

15 March 2017, Boat of Garten

Meeting Report.

1. Introduction

Intention of the meeting was to start the review of the existing Forest and Woodland Framework, which is now 10 years old. The aim was to stimulate discussion on the key areas we need to cover in the new strategy.

2. Review of current framework

Penny Lawson

Full presentation on CNPA website.

Questions & Discussion:

(Michael Bruce) There is probably more woodland expansion than what's shown on the map. What work has the CNPA done to prevent wildfire?

(WBW) CNPA is providing financial and secretarial support to wildfire groups in the CNP. We are open to suggestions on other ways we can provide support. We also put out the message to visitors of the risk of fire through e.g. tread lightly campaign.

(Andrew Heald) Funding of ranger services is key in wildfire prevention.

3. National Policy Context

John Risby

Full presentation on CNPA website.

Questions & Discussion:

(Iain Brodie) Fundamental disconnect between what's said and what's done, delivery on the FE estate -referring to clear fell at Moy.

(JR) Important that everyone's working to the same standards (the whole point of certification). Any large clear felling should have specific reasons.

(Doug Earle-Mitchell) FES was responsible for the clear fell at Moy, which was not done lightly but was carried out in response to significant wind throw.

(Michael Bruce) Mixed woodland – clarify, what's the definition? Productive woodland is hardly mentioned in the previous Cairngorms Forest & Woodland Framework.

(JR) Comes back to owners objectives, but means mix of objectives = mix of woodland, referred to the Ralia example, shown by PL.

4. Private Forestry sector context **Andrew Heald**

Full presentation on CNPA website.

Questions & Discussion:

(Mary Williams-Edgar) 25000 jobs, where does this figure originate from?

(AH) FC report from 2015, Moray Forest & woodland Strategy includes the number of jobs for the area.

(WBW) We intend to let a contract to obtain more up to date and detailed economic figures on forest industries in the National Park.

(AH) Certification works as risk management, but it is expensive. Standards are high anyway. A lot of private estates drop out of certification because they see it as too much hassle...

There is a West/East divide, West – lots of sitka and a need to harvest 12 months of the year and to access as many markets as possible, so certification had a part to play. East – varied crops, some of high value means certification is not always as necessary, and some owners will wait for a strong market.

5. The value of nature for woodlands in the Cairngorms **David Hetherington**

Full presentation on CNPA website.

Questions & Discussion:

(MB) Does DH know the legal status for use of dogs in hunting? His picture shows a hunter with three dogs, in Scotland it is illegal to use several dogs when hunting.

(DH) The picture was merely illustrative to show that hunting for grouse in Norwegian scrub habitat can be productive.

LUNCH BREAK

6. Proposed content of new Cairngorms Forest & Woodland Strategy Will Boyd-Wallis

Full presentation on CNPA website.

Summary:

Purpose of Strategy:

- To provide ambition and vision for the management, creation and restoration of forests and woodlands in the National Park
- National Park Policy on key woodland forestry related issues
- Potentially Supplementary Planning Guidance

Covering 3 Main Themes:

- Rural Development Opportunities
- People and woodlands
- Conservation and Enhancement

The following key issues to be covered in the strategy were briefly outlined for discussion:

Rural Development Opportunities

- Productive forests
- Diversify and expand market
- Local timber processing for local construction
- Non timber products & crafts
- Timber transport
- Species mix
- Agro-forestry
- Wood fuel
- Tourism
- Forest huts, wigwams, glamping
- Forestry sector employment
- Grant funding & incentives
- New entrants & Apprenticeships

People and woodlands

- Promoting value of forests and of woodland creation
- Recreation, access, health & wellbeing
- Enjoyment & understanding
- Community ownership, management & involvement
- Education, training & skills
- Archaeology and cultural heritage
- Wildfire prevention & response
- Housing and woodland

Conservation and Enhancement

- Woodland creation/expansion
- Montane willows, dwarf birch and juniper
- Riparian woodland
- Natural flood management
- Carbon sequestration
- Biosecurity, disease & invasive species
- Diversity of habitat and species mix
- Designated sites
- Ancient woodlands
- Environmental quality & biodiversity
- Habitat networks & connectivity
- Landscape enhancement & open ground
- Wildness and wild land
- Woodland loss
- Integrated landuse: agriculture, grouse, peatland, etc

Mapping

A draft map was shown indicating areas that are preferred or potential for targeting funding incentives. The following points were highlighted:

- Ecologically there is potential to expand woodland or scrub habitat right up to the natural treeline. To target funding we need to narrow this down to where it is needed most and will be most beneficial for many reasons.
- GIS data is not failsafe; maps are indicative of where funding could be targeted.
- There is no 'sensitive' category because even areas mapped as "preferred" or "potential" for woodland may include sensitive sites unsuitable for woodland planting.

Key topics for discussion

- Problem of woodland loss - felling, grazing and burning
- Incorporating peatland conservation
- Species protection on open ground e.g. wading birds
- Grazing management – deer, livestock, hares etc
- Designations – favourable status and allowing natural processes
- Habitat networks - pros and cons
- Ground preparation – mounding
- Wildfire
- Biosecurity, disease and invasive species
- Caledonian Pinewood Inventory - moratorium on planting scots pine
- Agriculture – retaining productive land, cultural heritage
- Mapping

Questions & Discussion:

(Pete Lowe) Any proposal for incentivising or targeting areas which need to be enhanced rather than woodland created?

(JR) This is tricky due to the grant structure. But the FC can help in other ways: support and advice etc.

(Pete Lowe) Should the map be labelled as productive forestry too?

(MB) Statistics: there has been a big expansion in native woodland, but has there been an increase in productive woodland too? And the map – is it showing just native woodland or is it showing productive woodland too? CNPA should give guidance on where non-native woodland could go. The CNPA should carry out a PESTLE analysis on the document. MB foresees a rapid and large change of landuse, the CNPA are not preparing sufficiently for this change. How successful has the F&WS been in creating productive woodland?

(WBW) All the goals for increasing the area of native woodland and productive woodland are linked, some productive woodland can be extremely valuable for biodiversity, we will consider how best to reflect that in the maps.

7. Discussion session

Chaired by Judith Webb

(Brendan Burns) Where is the circular economy? Where's the timber going? When the money comes in to the park, does it go round etc? Would dispute that 25,000 people are employed in forestry nationally.

(AH) Forestry figures are carefully produced and robust. It includes people employed in forest management and primary processing.

(BB) Where is the pine from the East going to go?

(AH) An even production of timber leads to an increase in investment in sawmilling.

(Jamie Williamson) We can't base future industry on current production.

(JR) (Concerning number of jobs) Rural is not defined, the definition depends on your viewpoint. All parts of supply chain...

(IB) Are there furniture producers? Can we produce mushrooms?

(JW) There is a need for machinists and hauliers.

(Scott Wilson) Pest outbreaks, how would that be dealt with? The plan is based on current systems (legal, subsidies), what happens when they change? Will we get a New Zealand-scenario?

(WBW) It is important to think ahead about the risks... 'maximising diversity' (species, age, structure, use) is a good policy to help protect against a range of risks and maximise future opportunities.

(JW) Forestry, Farming have all been grown on incentives. After 2020 Scotland will be skint, what do we do then?

(JR) The Scottish Government has made a commitment to woodland expansion, lasting beyond 2020.

(MB) Risk management needs to be covered in the plan. You could show a range of scenarios. There has been no discussion of deer management. Woodland deer populations will cost more to manage. What about the affordability of deer management in created woodland?

(Jeremy Roberts) RSPB has in the past year given out a free licence to a local stalker to shoot deer in Abernethy woods. The Forest expansion in Abernethy has created more of a habitat type (woodland) which is common in Europe and uncommon in UK.

(Pete Lowe) Should the park strategy have a longer perspective, 20 or even 100 years? These are very long term processes.

(JW) There could be long term strategy and 5/10 year action plans.

(WBW) This was the approach in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan and would be a good thing to do.

(Iain Brodie) You could treat the park as an eco-system where certain parts have different purpose.

(Alan Crawford) Realise there are many different interests to consider. But looking at the UK woodland cover compared to Europe and knowing all the benefits of woodland conservation, could we not be a bit more ambitious?

(Shaila Rao) Totally uninspirational. CNPA need to be more ambitious. You can't always compromise. It may need to be less moorland. Mar Lodge has potential and strong aspirations for woodland but do not want to do fencing. Could there be found incentives for deer control? This is especially significant in Wild Land Areas.

(Davy McCracken) [In response to the draft map showing areas targeting funding incentives for woodland creation, which did not include agricultural inbye land.] How do we best achieve sustainable land management? Not promoting the potential for woodland on farms is creating a hindrance. It will not make it easier to convince farmers to create woodland. Be careful how you present the aims, they need to be connected with other land uses. Think about how we can use trees to create better land management.

(WBW) Very useful to get that feedback both on the vision and the need to include farmland. CNPA do not want to give the impression that we want to see good productive farmland that is also very important for e.g. wading birds being extensively wooded but we do want to give farmers and crofters the opportunity to tap into additional grant funding. We currently have a target to achieve 5000 ha of woodland expansion per year in the National park. This is only 1.1% of the National Park area, but it is realistic at the current time. Achieving the target relies on landowners wishing to create woodland and the moment we are just about on target to achieve 5000 ha but we would like to do more.

(Jeremy R) Cairngorms Connect Partnership represents 60,000ha. The vision is to expand woodland over 200 years.

(Steve Connelly) Optimising potential for existing woodland. There is a large potential for improving what's there. Medium term, production is tailing off. We need to ensure better quality restocking.

(MB) It's about the objective of forestry. If we allow natural restocking, not a lot of it will be productive woodland. Needs vision, multiple objectives and mechanisms.

(JR) The Distinctiveness of the park, Steve makes a good point about management opportunities. The document should enable these processes.

(Doug Mitchell) Long term vision - approach with flexibility- need to be clear about your audience and your goals. This is not just a product for foresters. Try to make it user friendly. Maybe a pocket guide for reference with a second more detailed, in depth document for forestry sector? It needs to raise awareness of the importance of forestry broadly. Make it accessible to the public, education sector, farmers and other non-foresters.

(JW) Need to incorporate tourism, enjoyment and understanding.

(Harry Wilson) There needs to be a distinction and balance between management of existing woodlands and woodland creation. It's not in the new 1% change that the big gains are to be had but in the existing woodland resource.

(SC) Let's make something inspirational.

(JW) Deer fencing has to be included as an option for managing grazing.

(JR) Government money is going towards woodland creation. Separate incentives and priorities for the park – there is other support available. There are also grants for deer management.

(James Nott) Local Authority strategies no longer cover the park. This map needs to cover all the aspects which LA strategies include, eg productive forestry from the surrounding councils documents, not just the factors included in the previous document.

(Chris Piper) At the moment the Highland Council FWS includes the park. There is a need to develop consistent mapping techniques. All local authorities have their own objectives – but they should speak the same language. Important to integrate area strategies so there are no arbitrary changes in woodland type/management at boundary lines.

(Lynn Cassells) We're all responsible for this document. Don't be afraid to tell farmers and crofters to plant trees, we want to. Trees have so many benefits for farms. Ecological tourism is a big opportunity for businesses in the park.

(AH) We get excited about new planting, but restock is where it's at! Remember that this is a communication tool. It could be perceived as "law" very quickly. Climate change... what's our climate going to be like in 200 years? Sitka is moving north and west... It's good if the document promotes partnership. E.g. Cairngorms Connect... Get landowners together to get multiple benefits. We need to get better at sharing information.

(Piers Voysey) Community involvement such as in the Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership, how do CNPA involve local communications in discussion? Perhaps local communities should be invited to comment on how they want to see woodland develop (compare conversations about housing development).

(Harry Wilson) Clear differentiation between: scots pine native woodland, scots pine productive woodland, new native woodland, PAWS. Careful use of terms and definitions. Delivery could be improved. Long term forest plans are increasingly the norm.

8. Next Steps

All of the discussion has been useful and helpful. Some key points to take away include the need to ensure:

- We have a strong long term vision for the future forests in the National Park
- We cover enhancement of existing resource as well as woodland expansion
- We provide clarity on options for developing productive forests
- Farmers and crofters have the opportunity to be included in target areas
- We include analysis of the risks of different approaches to woodland expansion and enhancement of the resource
- We tie in with neighbouring Local Authority strategies

Will Boyd-Wallis offered thanks to all who attended for making it such a useful and productive meeting, the speakers for their presentations, to Penny Lawson for organising, Emma Butler for recording and Beverly Birchwood for the lunch.

Further comments and thoughts are welcome.

CNPA will record the discussions and send a report to all attendees for any clarification.

We intend to have a draft Strategy available for comments by Autumn and a completed Strategy by the end of 2017.

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Attendance list:

Adrian Walker	Allargue Estate
Alan Crawford	Ancient Woodland Restoration/Woodland Trust
Andrew Heald	Confor
Angela Douglas	CNPA Board
Brendan Burns	Burns & Burns
Chris Piper,	CJ Piper & Co Foresters
David Bruce	UPM Tilhill (Glen Clova)
David Hetherington	CNPA
Davy McCracken	SRUC
Doug Earle-Mitchell	Inverness, Ross and Skye Forest District
Drew McFarlane-Slack	Scottish Land and Estates
Emma Butler	CNPA
Emma Gordon	Moray Council
Eoghan Anderson	
Harry Wilson	RTS
Hector Munro	Pityoulish Estate
Ian Brodie	
Ian Hill	Invercauld Estate
James Davidson	Aberdeenshire Council
James Nott	FCS
James Nott	FCS
Jamie Williamson	Alvie Estate
Jeremy Roberts	RSPB
John Risby	FCS
Judith Webb	CNPA Board
Karen Cunningham	RSPB
Laura Miguel Fuster	
Greig Durrant	
Louise Alexander	CKD Galbraith
Lynn Cassells	Lynbreck Estate
Mark Reeve	Moray and Aberdeenshire Forest District
Mary Williams Edgar	Glenlivet
Michael Bruce,	Glen Tanar Estate
Mike Libera	Crown Estate
Mike Strachan	FCS
Neale Taylor	SNH
Paul MacLennan	Alvie Estate
Penny Lawson	CNPA
Pete Cairns	Northshots
Peter Lowe	Woodland Trust
Piers Voysey,	Rothiemurchus Estate
Richard Gledson	Balmoral Estate
Sandra Baer	Lynbreck Estate
Scott McG Wilson	Woodland Consultant

Shaila Rao
Steve Connelly,
Steve Liddle
Tom Cameron,
Will Anderson,
Will Boyd Wallis

Mar Lodge
Cawdor Forestry
Islesman Ltd
Scottish woodlands
Seafield Estate
CNPA