

Cairngorms Forests – where next?

Tuesday 28th June 2016, Lonach Hall, Strathdon

Discussion Notes

Discussion and Questions 1

There was no mention of timber production, or saw milling in the presentations.

Timber is a product of ecosystem service. Farm woodland is an income generator, possibly not timber but for wood fuel and biomass. The Timber industry needs to look 40 years into the future to estimate what is needed. Mar Lodge has significant tracts of plantation for production but now have extensive use for biomass, it is an important feature for the estate. It is an important part of the landscape as well as the economy. The FCS locational premium for new planting also includes for commercial plantation. FCS always suggest commercial woodland is a good idea in the right place. The CNP is particularly suited to scots pine or larch at higher densities. Often sporting estates are too inaccessible for it to be useful.

Presentations talked about economics, what is the future for the economical farm woodlands?

Brexit doesn't make a difference at this point. At Kirkton always looking to maximise income from a variety of sources, woodlands is only one of these. Diversification needs to consider a range of activity, including wet land and other habitat improvements. It will be difficult to make a living from just livestock production.

Integration of woodlands and estates will take many years to happen between woodland and sporting interest. It is difficult to talk about in general terms as each estate and owner is quite different. SRDP also dictates specific methods eg fencing for woodland. The NTS won't just go in and fence off the area but they need to trial alternative systems. eg use of small enclosures as well as direct deer management. Smaller woodland blocks could contribute to connectivity but also acts as a focus for deer management. You don't have to just use the block approach

Can you sell wild hunting in wild habitat rather than unnatural habitat?

Mar lodge is still a hunting estate and they spend more on hunting than they receive. The heritage of the estate is field sports and they have to integrate that into the woodland work.

Do forest grant applications need to be on an estate by estate basis or can they be between groups of estates? If so what are the advantages or barriers to this approach?

Yes - it's a good thing and has been operation for a while. Catchment management is a good example. Cairngorms connect initiative is an example of four states working together. SRDP allows for group applications.

Do you considering other benefits other than just ecological, eg carbon sequestration?

A yes, eg PIP project adds organic matter etc as well as connectivity allowing climate change. There is wide range of other benefits, it is not always easy but has to be very specific about objectives for each woodland planted, in some areas there will be dis-benefits and these have to be g

Do the panel see any tension between new woodland and wildland?

Must see the end game in sight. New fencing has always been frowned on but it is seen more pragmatically in areas where there is no seed source. Need to accept that some short term impacts are needed to achieve long term gains.

Discussion and Questions 2

Forest Carbon – carbon payments available for fell/restock of existing woodland, but they are one third of rate for new woodland creation. Payments cease when timber removed from site as carbon benefit deemed to stop at that point (end use of timber unknown).

Could there be similar payments for carbon stored in soil? How does soil storage compare to woodland storage? This is subject of on-going research, could lead to soil being incorporated into Woodland Carbon Code. Also working towards carbon stored in roots and stumps being accounted for, this might improve payments for rotational forestry sites.

What proportion of forestry costs can be supported by Forest Carbon, and how is this determined? 15-30% indicated in presentation. Based on amount of carbon which will be sequestered, calculated from formula involving size, site characteristics, etc, and how much carbon payment is needed to make the project feasible – these two values used in negotiations with funding business to hopefully make woodland creation happen.

David Robertson commended on attention given to productive forestry. Results in income not available from non-productive woodland/regen.

Could beavers have a role to play in Natural Flood Management? Certainly potential for positive impact on NFM but reintroduction of beavers would need to be done very carefully; lots of factors must be considered.

NPPP3 Consultation – Tourism central to all 9 issues? Importance recognised but need to balance tourism with need to diversify CNP economy.

Advice sought on effect of woody debris/large trees in river channels on flooding, best to leave or remove? Site specific, refer to UK Forest and Water Guidelines.

Discussion and Questions 3

Comparisons between pine wood and spruce, are plantations of similar species numbers but of generalist as valuable as native woodlands?

Native woodland is inheritably more valuable but plantations too have some biodiversity value. Need to be clear that we should really focus on native woodlands because they also have rarer species that are in greater need of conservation.

Where we want to be in 2063 is mostly native woodlands according to the CNAP and the NPPP. However the conference is about other types of woodland including plantation. A high proportion of the parks woods are native and this is a special point, or landscape quality, we don't want to lose this starting point. We can build on this and productive woodlands are an important part but we understand that other factors come into play eg disease and commercial timber requirements. Overall the integrity of the native woodlands does need to be kept.

Woodland crofter said that CNPA should be commended for the work of maintaining native species. There is an argument for native species; productivity can be measures in other terms including ecological and other values. We must think of the longer terms

There are lots of non-commensurate benefits including cultural services, health and well-being. Cultural services not just provisioning services.

FCS may advise on occasions that commercial is better for some sites. This depends on the site characteristics. This is involved in the consultation process. They will put forward alternative options. However it depends on what the owners want. FCS rates for support for productive diverse conifer is the best , about 50% more. This can be productive as well as non-productive

What about natural regeneration, it has not been mentioned much on the questions?

Many estates have adopted this method. it has been a conscious decision to manage land in this way. eg Mar Lodge. This too depends on the land managers own intentions. The CNPA supports this approach.

The silvicultural method for managing pine for CCF is still not well understood, would like to see this in the CNP and the plan. Native pine wood knowledge should be improved as we don't know how to do it much way. Clear fell is not the only way to do pine woods but it is generally considered that it is.