

APPENDIX 1

Paper No. 2 - 10/298/CP

Drumguish Wood

Woodland Management Scheme

Locus

Drumguish Wood is an irregular strip of woodland extending to about 9.6 acres (3.9 hectares) on the West side of the village of Drumguish, 3 miles from Kingussie. To the South is the farm of Killihuntly and on the North, a private road leading up Glen Tromie to Gaick and an unadopted access road leading up to Drumguish. This unadopted access road forms part of the Badenoch Way and is intended to form part of the extension to the Speyside Way.

History

Drumguish Wood was part of Invereshie Estate which was purchased by the Forestry Commission in about 1952. At that time the Wood largely comprised mature European larch planted about 1840, with a small area of indigenous Scots Pine.

In 1976, the Forestry Commission “clear felled” about six acres of larch and the timber was used for boatbuilding on the Moray coast.

In 1993, the Wood was purchased by my wife and myself, principally to maintain the amenity of the village of Drumguish.

In 1994, we commissioned a Report from Miriam Baines, then of Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and on the basis of that Report we entered into an Agreement with the the Forestry Commission under the Woodland Grant Scheme. In accordance with that Scheme, we planted about 2,500 trees in the Spring of 1995.

Description

Drumguish Wood comprises seven separate areas – identified from North-east to South West.

- 1) About 0.5 acre principally of mature Larch (planted about 1840) and also a few mature Scots Pine.
- 2) About 6 acres which was clear felled in 1976, but leaving a number of isolated mature Scots Pine.
- 3) A narrow strip of grassland, leading to
- 4) An enclosed area of 17 mature Scots Pine
- 5) Two adjoining ponds, on the site of natural springs, identified on OS maps as the Fuaran an Lagain Leith
- 6) 2.85 acres principally of mature Larch (planted about 1840) and also a few mature Scots Pine.
- 7) 0.07 acre of herb rich grassland.

The principal access is a gate at the North east of the site leading into area 1. There is also a gate to area 3.

Miriam Baines Report – commissioned in 1994

This Report was largely concerned with area 2, namely the six acres which were clearfelled in 1976. Ms Baines observed –

The ground vegetation and location of the site would indicate that the native woodland type is the eastern version of the Sessile Oak - Downy Birch - Dicranum Moss Woodland. In this, downy and silver birch are dominant, but Scots pine, rowan, sessile oak and juniper also form a part.

The site has a ground layer consistent with that described in the woodland descriptions with evidence of blaeberry, wavy hair grass, moss, and heath bedstraw among the plants present.

The Report recommended that the area be planted under the Woodland Grant Scheme as a native woodland. In this connection, the following advice was given –

Because the woodland is strictly for amenity and wildlife value, and not for timber, the planting rate of 3m spacing (1,100 trees per hectare) should be acceptable by the Forest Authority. They also allow 20% open space and 10% shrubs to be included in the scheme. I would however, advise that to get a woodland which truly approximates to open birch woodland, the trees should be planted at an average density below this and a pro rata grant should be applied for. 80% density would allow additional open space. As with all native woodlands, the spacing should be irregular, with relatively dense clumps of trees separated by spaces. The clumps should largely be composed of the same species and should vary in planting density.

The recommended species were as follows

Scots pine - *Pinus sylvestris*

This is a minor component of birch woods but important in the area as it close to native pine woods. Being a conifer, it must be planted at a higher density than the broadleaves. The trees should be concentrated in the hollows, but also dispersed elsewhere.

Downy birch - *Betula pubescence*

This is the major component of birch woods. The sub species, *pubescence* is common in eastern birch woods. Birch will grow very densely, if conditions are right, and self thin at a later stage. It would be advisable to grow some birch clumps at a greater density than average.

Silver birch - *Betula pendula*

In drier, lower sites in the area, silver birch are likely to be a major component of native birch woods. It would be best to plant these in the drier areas (i.e. knolls), where downy birch is less likely to succeed.

Sessile oak - *Quercus petraea*

Birch woods naturally merge with oak woodlands in lower altitudes. Planting some would retain the character of the birch woodland yet create wildlife diversity. Oak

is a particularly beneficial tree for wildlife. Plant oak patches to the bottom of the slope and on the outside edge of the woodland.

Rowan - *Sorbus aucuparia*

Rowan is a very characteristic component of birch woods and has a high wildlife value due to the berries it produces. It should form open patches among the birch in the centre parts of the woodland.

Aspen - *Populus tremula*

Although aspen is generally known as a tree of wet sites with poor soils, it will also grow in drier sites, often in shrub form. Plant in hollows and away from other species.

Juniper - *Juniperus communis*

This is the dominant shrub of upland birch and pine woodland. It does not tolerate shading so should be planted on the knolls, in patches with open ground around. Avoid rabbit burrow areas as juniper is particularly susceptible to rabbit damage.

Protection – the advice was as follows -

All trees should be protected by 1.2m tree shelters securely tied to stakes. I would strongly advise that Scots pine is placed within 1.2m mesh/net tubes, as they do not grow well in solid tubes. The other trees should be fine in solid tubes, but because of the problem that foresters have found with trees blowing over as they emerge from these tubes, particular care should be taken to secure them. All tubes should be placed well away from existing rabbit holes as rabbits will try and burrow beneath the tubes. Dig all tubes well into the ground as this will give the trees some protection against this. The juniper should be placed within rabbit netting which is dug into the ground and secured.

In relation to the existing areas of mature larch (areas 1 and 6), Miriam Baines observed that this was of “significant landscape and wildlife value (larch is beneficial for red squirrels)”.

She also commented that the pond area would provide a habitat of high wildlife value. In relation to area 7 (of about 0.07 acre), she observed that this small area of grassland would provide a habitat of high wildlife value. She added that the presence of abundant Lady’s bedstraw indicated that it is herb rich grassland and she advised that this area should be retained as open ground and not be subject to tree planting.

1995 planting

Following advice given to us by the Forestry Commission, we entered into a programme of planting in March and April 1995. All our trees were of local origin and were supplied by Christie-Elite Nurseries of Forres.

The approximate number of trees that we planted in area 2 were as follows

500 Scots pine	400 Rowan
700 Downey birch	30 Aspen
600 Silver birch	150 Juniper
150 Sessile oak	

In accordance with the advice which we were given, we did not plant any trees in the centre of the area.

We also planted a small number of mixed trees in the narrow strip (area 3)

Visual impact

Drumguish Wood presents itself as an integrated area of mixed woodland with grass “roads” giving easy access throughout. Most of the area comprises glacial deposits of sand and gravel, providing excellent drainage, even after periods of snow or heavy rain.

There are about 350 mature larch trees and about 30 mature Scots pine. They all appear to be in good condition. The trees which were planted in 1995 are also healthy. We have had significant losses of the juniper, caused by the fungus *fomes annosus*, with further damage from the deep snows of the 2009/2010 winter; but the juniper that remain are growing well and will be sufficient in number to provide a balance in the woodland. In recent years, there has been significant regeneration of larch, Scots pine, birch and rowan, and some of the aspen are producing young shoots at a significant distance from their parent tree. The areas of blaeberry are increasing and there are small areas of young heather, particularly on the South west slope.

Richard Perry, the naturalist, lived in Drumguish for three years from 1944. His *In the High Grampians* published in 1948 contains a chapter about the area beyond the ponds, and he refers to nine or ten recumbent and grotesquely contorted mountain pines. Four of these pines *pinus mugo* still survive.

Wildlife

The Wood has a healthy population of red squirrel, and indeed there are indications that notwithstanding the severe winter of 2009/2010, the numbers of red squirrel are on the increase. There is no indication that they do any damage – even to newly planted trees. There are resident roe deer, and red deer regularly pass through. For reasons which are uncertain, the population of rabbit has decreased significantly. The other mammals which are seen from time to time are fox, stoat, pine marten and wild cat.

A pair of buzzard regularly nest in the larger larch wood, and this probably contributes to the decline in the rabbit population. Crossbills are regular visitors. Two bird boxes situated above the ponds have been used by golden eye duck and the ponds are visited by a family of mallard and a dipper. Goldcrest frequent the juniper. The crested tit is also seen and may nest in the woods.

We have refrained from felling any of the dead pine trees which are still standing, and they are used by several pairs of the great spotted woodpecker.

Prior to 1976, there was capercaillie in the woods and blackcock in the surrounding area, but there has been no recent sighting of either of these birds.

Future management

Our object is to conserve Drumguish Woodland as a mixed woodland consistent with typical native woods, thereby enhancing the amenity of the immediate area and providing a habitat for wildlife.

In working towards the foregoing, my wife and I each spend at least 20 hours each week in the woods.

Over the next two to three years, we shall continue with our work in

- (1) Replacing the 1.2 metre protectors, which are now deteriorating, and re-staking where necessary.

With the exception of the Scots pine, all the trees planted in 1995, were protected with "Tubex" protectors. Many of the trees have now burst out of these protectors – often leaving a soft bark which is quickly stripped by the roe deer. Other protectors have deteriorated to an extent that the deer can destroy them sufficiently to access the soft bark. We are now using plastic netting (similar to the netting which protected the Scots pine) to replace these Tubex protectors.

- (2) Protecting selected young trees which have self seeded.

With the reduction of the rabbit population, there has been a corresponding increase in the numbers of self seeded trees. Most of these trees are attacked by the remaining rabbits or the deer in the autumn. Before that stage, we identify suitable trees which will contribute to the integrity of the woodland and these trees are protected and staked before the onset of winter.

- (3) Pruning lower branches of the trees which were planted in 1995.

The lowest lateral branches seriously restrict the view through the woodland and make it extremely unpleasant to walk through the wood. The lower branches – up to a height of about 6ft are accordingly being lopped, either with cutters or a small chain saw.

- (4) Thinning out poor specimens where they are overshadowed by healthy trees
- (5) Re-planting in strategic areas to maintain the integrity of the wood as a whole.

This is generally done in the early spring before the ground dries out.

In the meantime, we shall also continue with day to day maintenance, which includes -

- (1) Collecting windblown timber and brush and disposing of same.

It is appreciated that in some forests, there is a policy of leaving fallen timber where it lies, and allowing it to decay naturally. However, with the Drumguish Wood, where the considerations are principally of amenity and wildlife, the decision was taken to keep the forest floor clear.

Over the last 17 years, relatively few mature trees have fallen. In contrast, every storm results in windblown larch. This requires sawing the larger branches, which are kept for firewood, and removing the brush to an open part of the Wood for burning when the conditions are suitable.

- (2) Cutting the grass roads around the wood.
The grass roads extend to about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile and they are cut 4 – 5 times each year to maintain the high amenity of the woodland.
- (3) Repairing the dry stone walls on the South side of the woodland.
There is a dry stone wall along the whole length of the South side, a total of about $\frac{1}{2}$ of a mile - bordering both that part of the Badenoch Way and the road leading up Glen Tromie to Gaick. The wall is probably about 150 years old. From time to time, a section collapses, usually on to the road. I am fortunately skilled in dry stone walling and I repair these sections where necessary.
- (4) Cleaning the ponds of weeds.
At one time, the cattle from Killihuntly Farm came down to the natural spring - Fuaran an Lagain Leith – and the area was little more than a slurry pit. The ponds are an integral part of the woodland.
- (5) Sawing up and removing the occasional fallen trees.
- (6) Maintenance and repair of tools and machinery, particularly the tractor and chain saws.

New building

Until this year, we attempted to store all the equipment for the Wood in our domestic garage. This was becoming increasingly unsatisfactory; and on 1 September 2009, an Application was made to Highland Council for “Agricultural Notification” for a Machinery Storage Shed. Approval of Prior Notification was granted on 29 September 2009. The accompanying note recorded that the Approval related to siting, design and external finishes and that “planning permission is granted by the Generally Permitted Development (Scotland) Order 1992 as amended for the building on the basis that it is reasonably necessary for forestry purposes”.

The site chosen for this building was in the centre of area 2 where there had never been any new planting. The site is at some distance from the unadopted access road leading to Drumguish but adjacent to one of the grass roads. For security reasons, we preferred a site which is visible from our own house, but only the roof of the building can be seen from neighbouring houses in the village.

The building work commenced around December 2009 and was largely completed by April 2010.

Our intention throughout is that the building is to be used for forestry purposes only, and we unreservedly accept the following condition which has been proposed by the Cairngorm National Park Authority –

The use and occupancy of the store/bothy hereby approved is restricted for woodland management purposes (ie. Not for use for any other unrelated purposes), and the store/bothy hereby approved shall be retained in the same ownership of the Drumguish Woodland in

perpetuity, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.

Landscaping

When the foundation for the new building was being prepared, an area of about 18 x 23 metres was cleared of turf. This area has since been levelled to provide a strip of between three and five metres around three sides of the building with a turning area about 11 metres deep to the front. Because the subsoil is glacial sand and gravel, it provides a firm foundation even in wet weather without the need to apply any hard core. There is already evidence that this cleared ground is being naturally seeded with grass and it is expected that within two to three years, this whole area will indeed revert to grass.

The turf that was lifted has been placed around the site to form a continuous embankment of between one and four metres wide.

To the immediate south of the site, there is a fine specimen of an aspen and two self seeded larch trees. A number of substantial silver birch (which were planted in 1995) lie close to the north side and on the east, there is a copse of juniper.

It was considered that the site would be enhanced by planting some Scots pine and in May 2010 about 15 trees (1 – 3 years old) were planted and suitably protected. It was recognised at the time that this was rather late to plant, and notwithstanding much watering, most of these trees have been lost. It is therefore intended to replant (using trees not more than 60 cm in height) in March 2011. The foregoing plan is now submitted to the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority.

We therefore accept the following condition which has been proposed by the Cairngorm National Park Authority –

The development shall be landscaped and maintained in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted to and approved by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. The scheme shall indicate the siting, numbers, species and heights (at the time of planting) of all trees, shrubs and hedges to be planted and shall ensure: -

(a) Completion of the scheme during the planting season next following the completion of the development, or such other date as may be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.

(b) The maintenance of the landscaped areas in perpetuity in accordance with the detailed maintenance schedule/table. Any trees or shrubs removed, or which in the opinion of the Planning Authority, are dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within five years of planting, shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

John Barton

Drumguish Woodlands
2 October 2010.