

Woods for Nature

Annual Progress Report for 2009/10

This report summarises progress in implementation of Forestry Commission Scotland's Biodiversity Programme for 2008-2011. The programme was published in August 2008 and it included a commitment for FCS to publish an annual report on progress.

A summary of quantitative progress measures is set out in Table 1. The items in red also contribute to Scottish Forestry Strategy indicators for biodiversity. Table 2 contains a summary of our action in 2009/10 for each activity in the Programme.

Table 1 Summary of key progress measures for 2009/10

<i>Improve condition of designated sites</i>	<p>Percentage of designated woodland features which are favourable or unfavourable recovering at 31/3/10 was 69%.</p> <p>Of 146 designated woodland features that are privately owned and currently unfavourable, 22 had RDC schemes approved and 52 have schemes at proposals stage.</p> <p>On the NFE 95% of all designated features were favourable or recovering at 31/3/10</p>
<i>Lead the delivery of targets for native woodland habitats</i>	<p>Targets progress</p> <p>a. Native woodlands put into management to improve condition: 782 ha (annual target 6000 ha). Cumulative progress from 2005/6= 12.2kha (45% of target)</p> <p>b. Non-native PAWS put into full restoration to native woodland: 582 ha (annual target 1000 ha). Cumulative progress from 2005/6= 3.0kha (67% of target)</p>

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

	<p>c. Expansion of native woods: 2353 ha (annual target 4500 ha). <i>Cumulative progress from 2005/6 = 10.5kha (52.5% of target)</i></p>
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Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

<p><i>Maintain and enhance remnant features on ancient woodland sites</i></p>	<p>Area of PAWS under assured long term management: total area at 31/03/10 was 35,500 ha. (no change from 2008/09)</p>
<p><i>Enhance or restore priority open and wood pasture habitats</i></p>	<p>Areas of work on NFE to restore or improve open habitats 48 ha. (in addition to 1448ha for designated sites) Grant support for creating open habitat: 4 schemes approved (£32k).</p>
<p><i>Action for key species in Scottish woodlands</i></p>	<p>Action for capercaillie on NFE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predator control: 10510 ha • Habitat improvement: 286 ha* • Fence removal: 500m • Lek counts: 37 leks <p>60 cocks at leks (59 in 2008) <i>* Work at another 1142ha had indirect benefits</i></p> <p>Action for black grouse on NFE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predator control: 17042 ha • Habitat improvement: 598 ha* • Fence removal/markings: 10250m • Lek counts 131 leks <p><i>* Work at another 1081ha had indirect benefits</i></p> <p>Action for red squirrel on the NFE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Grey squirrel culling and monitoring: 3.6 FTE staff and 215 squirrels culled</i> • <i>Took red squirrel habitat into account in over 50 Forest Design Plans</i> • <i>Presence/absence monitoring and pre-operational drey checks in all areas with red squirrels present.</i>

Action for pearl-bordered fritillary on the NFE

- *Habitat improvement 577ha*
- *Habitat survey 50 ha*
- *Stock fence for grazing 500m*
- *Population monitoring 5 forests*

Action for chequered skipper on the NFE

- *Habitat improvement 44ha*
- *Population monitoring 4 forests*

Action for juniper on the NFE

- *Survey: in 10 forest areas*
- *Promote natural expansion/ regeneration: 37ha trees felled and juniper included in several plans*
- *Planting juniper to diversify existing woods: 3k plants in 7 forests*
- *New planting of juniper 11.6k plants in 3 forests*
- *Propagation: seed collected from sites in 6 districts*

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

<p><i>Promote deer management in private woodlands</i></p>	<p>Woodland areas supported by deer management planning grants = 90,621 ha (an increase of 25% since 2008/09).</p>
<p><i>Promote biodiversity enhancements for planted conifer and mixed woods</i></p>	<p><i>Restructuring grants for other conifers (planting with species other than SS) = 765 ha under Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS), plus £ 630k RDC grant applications approved.</i></p> <p><i>Low impact silvicultural systems (LISS) grants approved for 48ha.</i></p> <p><i>Long-term forest plans funding was approved in year for 61,407ha.</i></p> <p><i>Approximately 27% of NFE is now managed with conservation and enhancement of biodiversity as a major objective</i></p>
<p><i>Control of invasive non-native species</i></p>	<p>Area of rhododendron removed with grant support: 144 ha. Rhododendron control on NFE: £785K spent in year.</p>
<p><i>Complete 2/3 of the fieldwork for the Native Woodlands Survey of Scotland by 2011</i></p>	<p>Total surveyed is over 50% of overall project area target. Area surveyed in year: 127k ha.</p>
<p><i>Information reporting our biodiversity action</i></p>	<p>Overall FES spend 09/10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Income £0.27m (£0.8m in 08/09)</i> • <i>Expenditure £4.65m (£4.6m 08/09)</i> • <i>Net spend £4.38m (£3.8m 08/09).</i>

Table 2: Summary of progress for each activity in 2009/10

Actions in bold italics contribute to the quantitative measures in Table 1. And those in red contribute to SFS indicators

Progress colour code: green = good progress; yellow = some progress but limited in one or more aspects; red = no progress; grey = not scheduled to start until 2010/11.

Programme Activity	Actions in 2009/10	Progress rating
Objective 1: Help to halt the loss of biodiversity and reverse previous losses through targeted action for Species and Habitats		
Lead implementation of the Scottish Protected Woodlands Programme to improve the condition of designated woodland sites	<p>1. Percentage of designated woodland features which are favourable or unfavourable recovering at 31/3/10 was 69% <i>(An increase in areas classed as recovering by suitable management has been offset by some other sites losing condition between periodic assessments by SNH).</i></p> <p>2. FCS has led promotion of grants to private owners for sites classes as unfavourable, working with SEARS partners: owners have now been contacted for all (146) sites. Twenty two of these have had RDC applications accepted for management to address unfavourable features, 52 have proposals under development and 33 have been re-assessed as favourable or recovering. The remaining sites will be the focus of further persuasive action. This is good progress given the complex issues involved in many designated sites.</p> <p>On the NFE 95% of all designated features were favourable or recovering.</p>	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

Programme Activity	Actions in 2009/10	Progress rating
<p><i>Work with SNH to prevent or reverse damage caused by woodland to non-woodland designated sites</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On the NFE, at least 1448 ha of various open habitats were improved through grazing and removal of tree regeneration in and adjacent to designated open habitats. 2. Prioritisation for restoration from forest to bog to benefit the Flow Country SAC/SPA was carried out in partnership with SNH, FR and RSPB. 	
<p><i>Lead the delivery of targets for Scotland's native woodland habitats</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Targets progress 2009/10* <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Native woodlands put into management to improve condition, Total = 782 ha (annual target 6000 ha) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -FES 467 ha -grant support 315 ha. (area paid) Cumulative progress from 2005/6= 12.2kha (45% of target) b. Non-native PAWS put into full restoration to native woodland Total = 582 ha (annual target 1000 ha) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -FES 580 -grant support 2ha (SFGS) No data for RDC Cumulative progress from 2005/6=3.0kha (67% of target) c. Expansion of native woods Total = 2353ha (annual target 4500 ha) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -FES 1089 ha -grant support 1264 ha (paid) Cumulative progress from 2005/6 = 10.5kha (52.5% of target) <p><i>* There is now an increased demand for grants which is reflected in areas approved and applications submitted; this will appear from 2010/11 in terms of payments.</i></p> 	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

Programme Activity	Actions in 2009/10	Progress rating
	<p>2. FES are developing a strategy for increasing the area of native woodlands on the NFE.</p>	
<p><i>Promote or carry out management of ancient woodland sites to maintain and enhance their remnant features</i></p>	<p>1. Area of PAWS under assured long term management: total area at 31/03/10 was 35,500 ha. (no change from 2008/09), of which NFE area is 20,000 ha. This is estimated to be 60% of the total PAWS area.</p> <p>2. FES have issued guidance to staff on Management of Ancient Woodland Sites.</p>	
<p><i>Take opportunities to enhance or restore priority open and wood pasture habitats, and publish proposals for the NFE</i></p>	<p>1. Grant support for creating open habitat: 4 schemes approved (£32k).</p> <p>2. Areas of work on NFE to restore or improve open habitats: 49ha of forest was restored to upland heathland (Other areas improved/restored were in designated sites: see above).</p> <p>3. A plan for Lowland Raised Bogs on the NFE is well advanced: 144 sites mapped and over 60 lowland peatland sites have been assessed for restoration potential.</p>	
<p><i>Develop and implement programmes of action for six key species in Scottish woodlands, to identify the actions we will take</i></p>	<p>1. Published 3 species programmes for juniper, pearl-bordered fritillary, and chequered skipper, as well as technical guidance on how to help these species using RDC grants.</p> <p>2. Capercaillie</p> <p>Action for capercaillie on NFE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predator control: 10510 ha • Habitat improvement: 286*ha 	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

Programme Activity	Actions in 2009/10	Progress rating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fence removal: 500m</i> • <i>Lek counts: 37 leks</i> <p><i>60 cocks at leks in 2009 (59 in 2008)</i> <i>*Work at another 1142ha indirectly benefited capercaillie.</i></p> <p>3. Black grouse</p> <p><i>Action for black grouse on NFE</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Predator control: 17042 ha</i> • <i>Habitat improvement:598 ha*</i> • <i>Fence removal/marking: 10250m</i> • <i>Lek counts:131 leks.</i> <p><i>*Work at another 1081ha indirectly benefited black grouse</i></p> <p>The numbers of cocks at NFE leks declined in 2009 cf 2008 which seems to be part of a national trend.</p> <p>Considerable RDC funding is going to black grouse management; data is limited but most of this is supporting moorland management rather than in woodlands.</p> <p>4. Red squirrels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red squirrel strongholds consultation completed. Responses broadly endorsed all proposed sites covering 100,000 ha of forest, with further work needed to finalise boundaries and develop guidance. • Published guidance on using SRDP grants to support red squirrels. • We are partners in south Scotland and north Scotland conservation projects, including grey control on NFE (see below), support for project officers and promoting grey control support from SRDP grants. Grey squirrel control grant schemes worth £299k were approved under SRDP by March 2010 to benefit red squirrels, mainly in the squirrelpox 	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

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	<p>zone in south Scotland.</p> <p>Action for red squirrels on NFE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Grey squirrel culling/monitoring: 3.6 FTE staff and 215 squirrels culled</i> • <i>Monitoring of presence/absence in all districts, and pre-operational drey checks at all sites with red squirrels present.</i> • <i>Widespread habitat improvement through design planning taking red squirrels into account in over 50 design plans.</i> <p>5. Pearl bordered fritillary and chequered skipper butterflies</p> <p>Technical guidance on support using SRDP published.</p> <p>FCS, SNH and Butterfly Conservation funded a project officer to advise case officers, NFE staff and land managers on both species. 2 RDC schemes with CS and PBF approved and 1 near submission (increasing RDC interest developing with advice given for 17 private sites). 25 days of advice, survey and training delivered to NFE staff.</p> <p>Action for pearl bordered fritillary on NFE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Habitat improvement 577ha</i> • <i>Habitat survey 50 ha</i> • <i>Stock fence for grazing 500m</i> • <i>Population monitoring 5 forests</i> <p>Action for chequered skipper on NFE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Habitat improvement 44ha</i> • <i>Population monitoring 4 forests</i> <p>We are developing population monitoring methods which are not easy for butterfly species given fluctuations in activity due to weather conditions.</p> <p>6. Juniper</p>	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

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	<p>Seminar held by FCS, FR, Plantlife and SNH to promote juniper conservation and especially seed collection and propagation. Plan developed with FC nurseries manager for juniper propagation hedges to be created from seed collected on NFE.</p> <p>Action for juniper on NFE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey: in 10 forest areas • Promote natural expansion/ regeneration: 37ha trees felled and juniper included in several plans • Planting juniper to diversify existing woods: 3k plants in 7 forests • New planting of juniper 11.6k plants in 3 forests • Propagation: seed collected from sites in 6 districts 	
<p><i>Work with Scottish Biodiversity Strategy partners to identify how to cater for other priority species within woodland habitats and through wider land use policy</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We worked in the SBS Woodland Ecosystem Group to identify and prioritise conservation needs for the 169 UK priority woodland species found in Scotland. 2. A 3 year FCS/Plantlife advisory project concluded: a suite of advisory guides to lower plants were produced as well as training courses, site visits and reference material published online. 	
<p><i>Work with FR to implement and refine the HARPPS decision support system</i></p>	<p>HaRRPS is being extended and enhanced by FR following user feedback in 2008/09.</p>	
<p><i>Help enhance recording of information on the distribution of species</i></p>	<p>A monitoring plan is being developed for the 6 key FCS species on the NFE.</p>	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

Programme Activity	Actions in 2009/10	Progress rating
<i>Promote and implement best practice for protected species</i>	FCS published a suite of guidance notes on forest operations and European protected species (Bats revised edition, plus new guides for otter, wildcat and great crested newts).	
<i>Work to help enhance information, awareness and protection of high biodiversity value woodland in the development planning system</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Woodland removal policy: detailed guidance published and we worked to increase awareness and implementation by planners and developers. 2. FCS is helping to lead the Central Scotland Green Network programme. Initial development was carried out in 09/10. 3. Continued support for implementation of habitat network projects in Edinburgh & the Lothians and Glasgow & the Clyde Valley. 4. Promotion and training for planning staff for use of the Native Woodlands Survey of Scotland (NWSS) in initial areas with reports published: South Ayrshire and E Renfrewshire. 5. Guidance published on NWSS website includes uses for planning. 	
Objective 2 Broader action for landscapes and habitats		
<i>Work with others to promote opportunities for collaborative deer management under the SRDP</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Woodland areas supported by deer management planning grants area approved under RDC = 90,621ha (71944 SFGS, 18677ha in RDC), an increase of 25% since 2009/10. 2. Contributing to the joint working process with SNH and DCS for designated sites with deer problems 	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

Programme Activity	Actions in 2009/10	Progress rating
<i>Target our deer management effort on the national forest estate to reduce biodiversity impacts from deer</i>	Ongoing. Effort focussed specifically on enhancing biodiversity in key native woodland areas.	
<i>Work with SNH and FR to develop and test decision support tools to help users develop forest habitat network plans</i>	FCS published a guidance note and a set of GIS maps to help users to develop native woodland habitat networks	
<i>Promote woodland expansion and restructuring to strengthen forest habitat networks through forest planning for private and NFE woods</i>	Consultant study carried out assessing how RDC native woodland creation schemes are contributing to habitat networks. This showed considerable linkage to networks but room for improvement.	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

Programme Activity	Actions in 2009/10	Progress rating
<i>Work with stakeholders to embed FHN plans into Indicative Forestry Strategies, planning policy guidance and development plans</i>	FCS is working in partnership with local authorities, SNH and FR to develop and refine network plans, especially in the Central Scotland Green Network project area.	
<i>Promote biodiversity enhancements for planted conifer and mixed woods</i>	<p>1. Restructuring grants for other conifers (planting with species other than SS) 765 ha paid under Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS), plus £630k of RDC funding approved during the year.</p> <p>2. Low impact silvicultural systems (LISS) grants approved for 48ha.</p> <p>3. Long-term forest plans funding was approved in year for 61,407ha.</p> <p>4. Approximately 27% of NFE is now managed with conservation and enhancement of biodiversity as a major objective (FES performance indicator).</p>	
<i>Promote biodiversity planning according to published best practice in all types of new planting schemes</i>	A project to develop guidance to help plan woodland expansion to accommodate biodiversity value of open habitats was started together with SNH and wider stakeholders.	
<i>Develop proposals for increasing the area of native species on the national forest estate</i>	FES developing a native woods strategy (see earlier) and area of native species is now a performance indicator (current value 10.1% of NFE).	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

Programme Activity	Actions in 2009/10	Progress rating
<i>Develop guidance to enhance biodiversity in conifer plantations, urban woods and brownfield planting schemes</i>	Scheduled for 2010/11 (Forest Development Programme project).	
<i>Work with partners to tackle invasive non-native species affecting woodlands</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rhododendron has been tackled on designated sites on the NFE where it was identified as a reason for unfavourable condition. Total budgeted expenditure was £785k in year. 2. Grants: we were successful in proposing enhanced rates of grant support for native woodlands, areas with rhododendron control strategies and difficult sites. Increased interest in grants now developing. 144 ha of rhododendron removed in 09/10. 3. We helped develop the policy approach and Scottish Government proposals for legislation on non-native species (WANE Bill consultation). 	
<i>Develop an exemplar regional project for rhododendron control in Argyll and Bute</i>	Replacement FCS rhododendron project officer appointed in Argyll and we are now partners in a new Highland rhododendron control project managed by Highland Birchwoods.	
<i>Contribute on the NFE to population control of grey squirrels in key areas to benefit red squirrel populations</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employed trapper team in south Scotland project to control the spread of squirrelpox, and carried out local control in Grampian (Deeside); both helping deliver the Scottish grey squirrel control strategy. 2. Developed a method of monitoring both species at feeders which is being used to assess efficacy of control. 	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

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<i>Lead development of an exemplar forest landscape restoration project</i>	1. Project to develop concepts and cases studies to develop in 2010-11. 2. Loch Katrine restoration project progressing well and is a good example of large scale restoration of native woodland.	
<i>Work with nurseries and collectors to enhance the supply of Scottish sourced planting stock</i>	1. Registration of seed stands: 70 potential seed stands have been identified for native species on NFE. No further action in 2009/10: registration requires survey work in 2010/11. Grant support (Land Managers Options) for management or registration of seed stands: 2 cases recorded in 2009/10 2. Workshop on seed sources for quality broadleaves held by FCS in February 2010.	
Objective 3 Increase awareness/public enjoyment of biodiversity		
<i>Review with partner organisations our needs and capacity to help people enjoy the environmental aspects of woodlands and identify priorities for the future</i>	A workshop was held with the Forest Education Initiative in May 2009 to test techniques for teachers and countryside rangers to explore biodiversity using woodlands. FEI published the outcome on their website. Follow up workshops planned in 10/11. (Review of capacity no longer intended).	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

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<i>Promote active engagement in wildlife conservation tasks as part of voluntary work on the NFE</i>	<p>Local volunteers of all age groups have been involved in several wildlife conservation and watching projects, eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huntly Peregrine falcons, • Glentress Ospreys, together with Kailzie Gardens and RSPB; • David Marshall Lodge Ospreys; • Mull White-tailed Eagles, with RSPB, SNH and Mull and Iona Community Trust; • Knapdale beavers, with SWT and RZSS. 	
<i>Seek opportunities to develop wildlife watching on the NFE</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knapdale beaver re-introduction project (FCS is host partner). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refitted the information point at Barnluasgan, with information on beavers and the project in partnership with Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. • Opened a beaver detective trail with interpretation points around Loch Coille-bhar. One of the beaver families has built an impressive dam and lodge near the trail. 2. Otters at Kylerhea, Wester Ross. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refitted otter watching hide and installed a marine mammal interpretive trail. 	
<i>Review with partner organisations our provision for ecology and conservation issues within our Woods for Learning programme</i>	The need for this task will be considered in 2010/11.	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

Programme Activity	Actions in 2009/10	Progress rating
<i>Help to develop communications messages and campaigns to promote understanding of biodiversity amongst the public</i>	<p>1. FCS was involved in preparations to promote the International Year of Biodiversity - working alongside partners such as SNH and SRPBA.</p> <p>2. The Communications team produced 33 press releases related to forestry and biodiversity during the year, with a good range of local and national coverage, including: red squirrel strongholds, UKBAP species, cattle grazing, voles, herons, eagles, ospreys, rare mountain plants, NWSS, woodland creation, orchards, rhododendron and ground nesting birds.</p>	
<p>Objective 4 Improve knowledge of biodiversity and integrate into decision- making</p>		
<i>Help produce and promote new UK Forests and Biodiversity guidelines and train our staff</i>	Consultation on draft suite of guidelines was held in 2009/10; final publication scheduled in 2010/11.	
<i>Publish advice on the implications of climate change for biodiversity policy and the role of native woodlands in mitigation and adaptation</i>	Not yet started. Will start in 2010/11.	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

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<i>Help develop guidance for applicants to target SRDP measures to achieve the best biodiversity outcomes in woodlands</i>	Done in 2008/09.	
<i>Develop Forest District Biodiversity plans and enhance the assessment and recording of biodiversity features throughout the NFE</i>	Done in 2008/09	
<i>Publish a Woodland Grazing Toolkit to advise land managers</i>	Toolkit completed and grant approved in the year (launch and training were held in spring 2010).	
<i>Complete 2/3 of the fieldwork for the Native Woodlands Survey of Scotland by 2011 and publish initial reports</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total surveyed is over 50% of overall project area target. Area surveyed in year was 127k ha. 2. The first reports were published in December 2009 and we developed a web browser, training courses, and guidance notes for users. (A launch event was held in May 2010). 	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

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<i>Work to ensure that the next NIWT project meets Scotland's needs, and that fieldwork is underway by 2009</i>	Done. Final method for the GB wide National Forest Inventory (the successor to the National Inventory of Woodlands and Trees- NIWT) includes key biodiversity evidence base to monitor and inform delivery of the SFS.	
<i>Review and influence FC funded biodiversity research programmes to meet Scotland's needs</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. FCS has influenced priorities for funding of FR biodiversity research through Programme Advisory Groups (PAGs). 2. During 2009/10 FCS participated in specific PAG workshops on research needs for genetic conservation, landscape ecology and native woods programmes and a GB woodland birds research workshop. 	
<i>Promote new research on climate change and biodiversity, converting plantations to native woods and landscape scale indicators</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some elements underway (eg conversion to native woods) further effort needed to develop other parts. 	
<i>Develop and report a suite of Scottish indicators for woodland biodiversity</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indicator suite developed in 08/09. 2. A 3-year BTO Woodlands Birds Index project was completed in March 2010, jointly funded by FCS and SNH. 80 additional squares were sampled annually and 6 species added to the national birds index. 	

Woods for Nature Progress Report 2009/10

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<p><i>Improve information systems for reporting our biodiversity action</i></p>	<p>1. FES performance measures approved and implemented including biodiversity measures.</p> <p>2. New accounts implemented for biodiversity action on NFE: Overall FES spend 09/10: Income £0.27m (£0.8m 08/09) Expenditure £4.65m (£4.6m 08/09) Net £4.38m (£3.8m 08/09). Total spend was split as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated sites native woods £0.44m • Designated sites other £0.23m • Priority habitats native woods £1.03m • Priority habitats open £0.35m • FCS Bio Prog species £0.71m • Other UKBAP species £0.35m • Other biodiversity £1.5m. <p>3. Information for activity supported by grants is not yet sufficient to consistently determine the outputs being achieved.</p>	
<p><i>Enhance our guidance on management planning and survey and monitoring methods and implement on the National Forest Estate</i></p>	<p>Ancient woodland management guidance (see entry for native woodland habitats in Objective 1 above) has added to earlier work in 08/09.</p>	