

# Forests for Scotland

## The Scottish Forestry Strategy

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SE/2000/199

Laid before the Scottish Parliament by  
the Scottish Ministers, November 2000.

## Preface

The creation of Scotland's new Parliament has brought opportunities as well as responsibilities. In our Partnership Programme for Government we promised to develop a Scottish Forestry Strategy as the first-ever Government initiative to set an integrated framework for the long-term development of forestry in Scotland.

This Strategy has been developed from an exhaustive consultation process and I am extremely grateful for all contributions to that consultation. After this process of discussion and agreement, I hope that we can now begin the task of practising the principles of the new Strategy.

Forestry is already a major feature in the life and landscape of Scotland and the industry employs 10,000 people. But we can do even better: by maximising value through an internationally competitive cluster of high-technology wood-processing industries; by planting and managing more diverse woods and forests; by tackling specific problems like timber transport and deer numbers; by improving integration with other land uses; and by planting more native trees as well as protecting our woodland heritage. Native woodlands will add to the attraction of the Scottish landscape and help to sustain jobs in rural areas.

With a new Parliament in a new millennium, Scotland has exciting opportunities to develop fresh initiatives. Earlier this year we published "Rural Scotland: A New Approach" and we are developing a new strategy for agriculture. This new Scottish Forestry Strategy addresses long-term issues for a long-term

industry. Moreover, half our forests will be harvested and replanted over the next 25 years. So we have an opportunity to make a real difference by transforming first-rotation plantations into forests with economic, environmental and social benefits – realising this Strategy's vision of Scotland as a land of fine trees, woods and forests.

Half of the UK's forests are in Scotland, but, with just over one sixth of our land area growing trees, Scotland is one of the least wooded countries in Europe. This Strategy points the way towards increasing benefits for Scotland if we plant more trees. Our objective should be to increase Scotland's forests and woodlands towards one quarter of our land area by the middle of this century. But the quality of our woodlands and timber will be at least as important to future generations as our forest area. This Strategy is designed not only to produce timber for Scottish industry, but also to enhance the quality and value of the Scottish landscape.



RHONA BRANKIN  
Deputy Minister for Rural Development  
November 2000



## Executive Summary

The Scottish Forestry Strategy is the Scottish Executive's framework for taking forestry forward, through the first part of the new century and beyond.

### Vision and Guiding Principles

Scotland will be renowned as a land of fine trees, woods and forests which strengthen the economy, which enrich the natural environment and which people enjoy and value. High-quality trees, woods and forests can help make Scotland a better place for people to live and work in and to visit. Increasing confidence in the future of forestry will encourage investment that will benefit current and future generations.

The overarching principle for the Strategy is **sustainability**. Scottish forestry must contribute positively to sustainable development, and meet internationally recognised standards of sustainable forest management. The other principles are:

- **integration:** forestry should fit well with other rural activities in Scotland, such as agriculture, conservation, deer management, fishing, recreation and tourism;
- **positive value:** forests and woodlands should contribute to the well-being of the people of Scotland. This contribution may be in social terms, in economic terms or in environmental terms - and there should be benefits that clearly exceed costs;
- **community support:** forests and woodlands should be managed in ways that enjoy broad public support. Complete agreement might not

always be possible, but there should be mechanisms for participation, for sharing and explaining views, and for working towards consensus;

- **diversity and local distinctiveness:** it is important to protect, manage and enhance the rich and varied range of woodland habitats and species, recognising that different types of forest will provide different benefits and suit different places.

### Context

At present more than one-sixth of Scotland is occupied by woods and forests. This represents about half the EU average. Nearly 90 per cent of these woods and forests have been planted or replanted during the last half-century. Forestry and wood processing now directly provide more than 10,000 jobs. Timber production will double over the next fifteen years: to reap maximum benefit from this increase, it is necessary to meet challenges such as improving timber transport and increasing the market, particularly for construction. The increased harvest will also provide opportunities for significant restructuring, bringing environmental benefits.



Until the 1990s, planting of broadleaves and native Scots pine was insignificant compared with planting of other conifers, but there is now greater emphasis on the establishment of native woodland as part of a balanced approach to woodland expansion. There is also greater attention being given to alternatives to clear felling. Scotland's woods and forests contribute significantly to the quality of life of Scotland's people, enhancing settings - both urban and rural - and providing recreation destinations for more than two million Scots every year.

This Strategy has been developed in the context of wider Scottish Executive policies, including the "Framework for Economic Development" and "Rural Scotland: A New Approach".

The Strategy explains how forests and woodlands can contribute to the economy, conserve the natural heritage and improve the environment, and enhance the quality of life of all communities. It stresses the importance of integrating forestry with other sectors and recognising the multiple benefits that any one wood or forest can deliver.

It then examines opportunities and tensions. Opportunities include creating new woods and forests (where, by continuing the present rate of expansion, about one-quarter of Scotland could be wooded by the middle of the century), increasing forest and woodland diversity, and promoting the benefits of wood as an environmentally friendly raw material and as fuel. Tensions needing to be addressed are the potential impact of forestry on other land uses, local concerns that arise, for example, from areas that do not benefit directly, and payment for non-market benefits.

### Strategic Directions

The Strategy proposes five Strategic Directions for Scottish forestry. They are:

- 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 more people to enjoy trees, woods and forests** in Scotland;
- to **help communities benefit from woods and forests**.



## Priorities for Action

The Strategy also identifies Priorities for Action.

It stresses that much is already happening and needs to continue: indeed many of these current activities are vitally important to the health and value of Scotland's trees, woods and forests. They include important commitments, such as implementing the UK Biodiversity Action Plans. The Priorities for Action highlighted in this Strategy reflect areas where more effort is needed.

Priorities for Action are given for each Strategic Direction. When the Strategy is reviewed, it is the Priorities that are most likely to need updating.

For each Priority, a summary is provided saying why it is a priority, the benefits of action, costs, what needs to be done, who needs to be involved, and examples of indicators of progress.

The proposed Priorities for Action, listed under each Strategic Direction, are summarised on page 6.

## Delivery

Successful delivery of the Strategy will depend upon effective partnership and co-operation - between the private sector, the Scottish Executive, local Government and the voluntary sector. The Strategy is intended as a framework, to help shape programmes and priorities. Inevitably, the speed of progress will depend in part on the availability of resources.

- The Forestry Commission will use its Corporate Plan for Scotland to set out how it intends to take the Strategy forward year by year.
- Other Departments and Agencies of the Scottish Executive will take account of the Strategy when developing policies that may have an impact on forestry.
- The Forest Industries and Scottish Enterprise have published a framework for action, "Roots for Growth".
- During 2001, a baseline statement will be published for monitoring the indicators of progress. The Priorities for Action will be reviewed within five years, and - as a basis for this review - there will be further consultation to assess stakeholder satisfaction with implementation of the Strategy.
- The Strategy identifies "champions", who will stimulate progress in each of the Priority areas.
- A review of the Woodland Grant Scheme and Farm Woodland Premium Scheme will be undertaken to ensure that they are well aligned with both the Forestry and Agriculture Strategies.



## Priorities for Action

### To maximise the value of the wood resource

- Improve competitiveness by developing a strong forest industries network.
- Ensure continuing investment in wood processing.
- Develop the timber transport infrastructure.
- Promote more use of timber.
- Develop products that meet market needs.

### To create a diverse forest resource for the future

- Expand the area of well designed productive forest.
- Improve timber quality through following good forest practice.
- Develop more mixed forests.
- Exploit non-timber outputs and benefits of woods and forests.
- Tackle deer problems.

### To make a positive contribution to the environment

- Improve management of semi-natural woodlands.
- Extend and enhance native woodlands by developing Forest Habitat Networks.
- Increase the diversity of the farmed landscape.
- Aid recovery of acidified rivers and lochs and improve riparian habitat.
- Encourage alternatives to clear-felling.
- Contribute to a radical improvement in the quality and setting of urban areas.

### To create opportunities for more people to enjoy trees, woods and forests

- Provide woodland recreation opportunities near towns.
- Improve availability of information about opportunities.
- Increase forestry's contribution to tourism.

### To help communities benefit from woods and forests

- Create wider employment opportunities.
- Increase opportunities for community consultation.
- Provide opportunities for greater community involvement in forestry.
- Support community ownership where this will bring local benefits.