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**Report to Council**

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**Date of Meeting: 14th August 2014**

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**Subject: Proposed Clackmannanshire and Stirling Forestry and Woodland Strategy**

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**Report by: Director of Services to Communities**

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**1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1. This report is to seek approval of the Strategy. It also describes the process undertaken to date.
- 1.2. Once approved, the Clackmannanshire and Stirling Forestry and Woodland Strategy will be published and be the basis for Supplementary Guidance to the Local Development Plan.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Council approve the proposed Clackmannanshire and Stirling Forestry and Woodland Strategy.

**3.0 Considerations**

**Background**

- 3.1. The existing approach to forestry and its interface with the planning system is currently set out in the Indicative Forestry Strategy (IFS) of the Clackmannanshire and Stirling Structure Plan. This has influenced the Council's response to forestry proposals which it has been consulted upon by Forestry Commission Scotland. This is now out of date as both Stirling and Clackmannanshire Council's are moving towards the adoption of Local Development Plans to supersede the Structure Plan. It is also not aligned with the Scottish Forestry Strategy and national planning policy as outlined in the National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy. These documents have changed forestry objectives to combine economic activity with the wider Government objectives for climate change, access, environmental quality and biodiversity.
- 3.2. The Forestry Commission Scotland approached both Councils to support the delivery of a Forestry and Woodland Strategy (FWS) to replace the Indicative Forestry Strategy. With the support of the Central

Scotland Green Network Strategy, consultants were appointed to develop a strategy for the Councils. The Strategy covers the whole of Clackmannanshire, and the Stirling Council area outwith the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. It has been developed against the background of the Councils' planning and environmental policies to provide a strategic approach to woodland planting and felling proposals.

- 3.3. The Strategy replaces the Indicative Forestry Strategy of the Clackmannanshire and Stirling Structure Plan Second Alteration which was developed in line with guidance in Planning Circular 9/1999, and relevant Forestry Commission guidance in the early 2000s. Since its development, the background for considering forestry proposals has undergone a considerable change in terms of environmental sensitivities and legislative regimes. This resulted in the locational guidance in IFS of preferred, potential and sensitive areas for woodland becoming outdated and not aligned with current guidance such as the SPP and the Forestry Commission publication 'The right tree in the right place'. Other significant issues were the emergence of the Central Scotland Green Network as a national development in the National Planning Framework and the designation of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, which has its own woodland strategy.
- 3.4. The Strategy has been developed to provide indicative locational guidance on preferred, potential and sensitive areas for woodlands as well as showing areas unsuitable for tree planting.
  - Preferred - areas of greatest scope to accommodate future expansion of a range of woodland types
  - Potential - areas which offer considerable potential to accommodate future expansion of a range of woodland types but where at least one significant sensitivity exists
  - Sensitive- areas where a combination of sensitivities means there is limited scope for future woodland expansion
- 3.5. These have been developed to take account of a large number of environmental sensitivities including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Areas, geodiversity and biodiversity and cultural assets such as battlefields and designed landscapes, which are detailed in the strategy. The role of woodlands in delivering wider benefits for: health and well being, climate change, access, flood risk management and water quality are highlighted in the strategy. The Councils will take into these issues when responding to Forestry Commission consultations on woodland planting and felling proposals are also highlighted.
- 3.6. The Strategy has been the subject of public consultation, Strategic Environment Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment, which have been taken account of in its development. Additionally account was taken of constraints in relation to aspects such as peat, designated cultural, natural and built heritage assets, landscape character and land capability for forestry.

- 3.7. The significant differences between the IFS and the FWS are listed below .
- IFS was fundamentally orientated towards commercial forestry,
  - IFS while taking account of environmental sensitivities did not include geodiversity or cultural assets such as battlefields,
  - FWS takes account of water quality and flood risk management legislation,
  - FWS takes into consideration climate change issues,
  - FWS takes into account access and health and wellbeing issues,
  - FWS acknowledges the wide role of woodlands have in relation to economic, environmental and social issues.
- 3.8. The majority of the Ochils are considered in the Strategy to be unsuitable for woodlands due to issues such as peat, unsuitable land capability for woodland, and geodiversity. The southern escarpment of the Ochils is classed as a potential area but there are sensitivities such as geodiversity and soil cover that will likely limit any substantial planting in this area. Eastern Clackmannanshire is where the majority of the preferred area is situated.
- 3.9. The Strategy will enable the Council to be more fully engaged in the consultation process and influence the final design of schemes to deliver community benefits through access ,biodiversity, water quality and flood risk. This holistic approach was essentially not possible against the IFS background and should result in woodlands being developed with greater sensitivity to the natural and cultural environment as well as the local community. The strategy will also provide forestry sector parties with guidance on the potential acceptability of their proposals.
- 3.10. It should be borne in mind that the Council's role in the processing of forestry proposals is as a consultee and it is Forestry Commission's role to take a final decision on any proposals.

### **Representations on the Forestry and Woodland Strategy**

- 3.11. Consultations involved a Survey Monkey questionnaire to obtain feedback on the themes in the Scottish Forestry Strategy and their relevance to Stirling and Clackmannanshire, as well as challenges and opportunities. Public meetings and on line consultations on the draft strategy were also held.
- 3.12. There was strong support for access and health, environmental quality and biodiversity to be priorities in both Council areas. Additionally, in Clackmannanshire there was support for using woodlands for education and economic development to create and retain value through local timber processing.

- 3.13. Specific representations on the draft strategy were made by a number of parties including local residents, RSPB, SNH, SEPA, Friends of the Ochils, Scottish Water, Historic Scotland and Stirling Council's Archaeologist. These are outlined below where they have relevance to Clackmannanshire.
- 3.14. Maps are small scale and difficult to use - Comment Strategy will be a web based document and GIS mapping will allow more detailed interrogation.

**Geodiversity is not addressed** - Comment Strategy has been amended to reference geodiversity.

**Request 'Drinking Water Protected Areas' should be included as a 'sensitive' area** - Comment To ensure a consistent approach across Forestry and Woodland Strategies the Strategy Working party agreed that Forestry Commission Scotland should take this issue up at national level.

**Environment benefits of woodland in relation to the water environment, sustainable flood management and soil erosion should be recognised** - Comment Appropriate comments included in strategy.

**Strategy is too long** - Comment Document has been revised and shortened with background details included in appendices.

**Strategy should set out clear principles for the protection and enhancement of the highly valued landscape of the Ochil Hills** - Comment The strategy incorporates strategic guidance, supported by small scale mapping, based on the methodologies detailed in the Strategy and the government policy guidance in the Scottish Forestry Strategy and the Scottish Planning Policy. It is not intended to set out woodland planting potential in specific geographical areas such as the Ochils.

**Strategy will have negative impact on the landscape and seeks to maximise commercial forestry and is not balanced** - Comment The strategy has been developed against the background of government policy to increase woodland cover in Scotland and the Strategy highlights the sensitivities that the Council will consider in responding to forestry consultations which take account of landscape quality, climate change, access and recreation as well as biodiversity. Each forestry proposal will be responded to on the basis of the site's characteristics and its relationship to the themes detailed in the Strategy.

**Lack of detail about Ochil Hills Woodland Park** - Comment Reference to this recreational asset facility is as a general backdrop to the Strategy and if there were any proposals for the woodland park they would not be detailed in a strategic document.

#### 4.0 Sustainability Implications

- 4.1. The Strategy has been subject to a Strategic Environment Assessment and Habitat Regulations Appraisal, see 3.6 above.
- 4.2. The Strategy takes due account of the issues raised by Assessment and Appraisal and the responses from their statutory consultees.

#### 5.0 Resource Implications

- 5.1. The resources for preparing the Strategy are already provided for in the Development Services budget.
- 5.2. Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. Yes
- 5.3. No additional staff resources would be required from Services to Communities and Support Services.

#### 6.0 Exempt Reports

- 6.1. Is this report exempt?

Yes  (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

#### 7.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

- (1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box )

- The area has a positive image and attracts people and businesses
- Our communities are more cohesive and inclusive
- People are better skilled, trained and ready for learning and employment
- Our communities are safer
- Vulnerable people and families are supported
- Substance misuse and its effects are reduced
- Health is improving and health inequalities are reducing
- The environment is protected and enhanced for all
- The Council is effective, efficient and recognised for excellence

- (2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

The Stirling and Clackmannanshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy accords with and supports the Council's key strategies including, the Single Outcome Agreement, the Local Housing Strategy, Local

Transport Strategies, Open Space Strategy and the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

## 8.0 Equalities Impact

- 8.1. Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?  
Yes  No

## 9.0 Legality

- 9.1. It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

## 10.0 Appendices

- 10.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report.

Appendix 1 Stirling & Clackmannanshire Forestry & Woodland Strategy

## 11.0 Background Papers

- 11.1. Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

Yes  (please list the documents below) No

- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Habitats Regulations Assessment

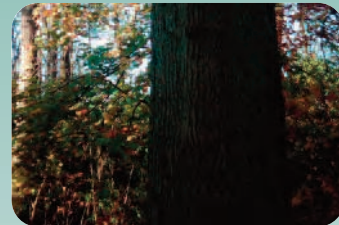
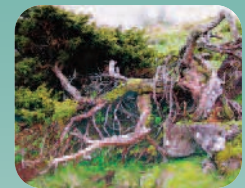
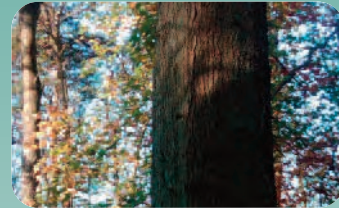
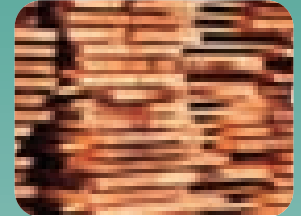
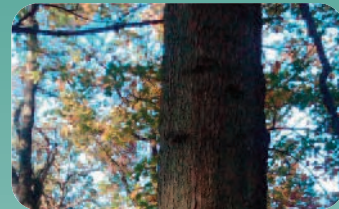
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# STIRLING & CLACKMANNANSHIRE



## Forestry & Woodland Strategy

Supplementary Guidance

June 2014





## STIRLING & CLACKMANNANSHIRE Forest and Woodland Strategy Supplementary Guidance

Published **June 2014** (Stirling Council)

### Further Information



**Stirling Council**

Economy, Planning and Regulation, Municipal Buildings, 8-10 Corn Exchange Road FK8 2HU  
[www.stirling.gov.uk](http://www.stirling.gov.uk)



**Clackmannanshire Council**

Greenfield, Alloa, Clackmannanshire FK10 2AD  
[www.clacksweb.org.uk](http://www.clacksweb.org.uk)



Hillhousebridge, Shottskirk Road, Shotts, North Lanarkshire ML7 4JS  
[www.csgnt.org.uk](http://www.csgnt.org.uk)





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*Appendices referred to in this document have not been included in the published version of the Strategy, but can be viewed online in both Stirling and Clackmannanshire Council’s websites.*



# 1

## Introducing the Strategy

**T**HE TREES, WOODLANDS AND FORESTS of Stirling & Clackmannanshire contribute greatly to the quality of the landscape, environment, biodiversity, cultural heritage and the local economy. They also incorporate, or provide a backdrop to, popular recreation and tourism destinations such as Gartmorn Dam Country Park & Nature Reserve, the Carron Valley Forest and Reservoir, the Ochil Hills Woodland Park, Balquhidderock Wood and Mugdock and Pleun Country Parks.

Given these inherent qualities it is essential to ensure that any future proposals for developing and expanding Stirling and Clackmannanshire's woodlands and forests integrate, in a complimentary and balanced way, with other land uses.

The Stirling & Clackmannanshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy (SCFWS) sets out the Councils' vision, strategy and objectives for the future of woodlands and forestry. It is based around a 40-year vision to 2052, with options for 5 yearly reviews in line with Local Development Plan timescales. Map 1 shows the area covered by the Strategy, and its relationship to the Central Scotland Green Network and the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park (covered by a separate National Park Partnership Plan 2012 – 2017).

The Strategy has been developed by Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils, in partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland and the Central Scotland Forest Trust, and with advice and guidance from a Steering Group comprising a range of other key players including Scottish Natural Heritage and the Community Woodlands Association.

A consultant team comprising RDI Associates Ltd, C J Piper & Co, Chartered Foresters and Land Use Consultants was engaged to develop the strategy and provide professional forestry, GIS and facilitation support. There has been wide ranging public consultation that has helped inform the final version of the document. Consultation responses are summarised in **Appendix I**.

**“The trees, woodlands and forests of Stirling & Clackmannanshire contribute greatly to the quality of the landscape, environment, biodiversity, cultural heritage and the local economy.”**

The Strategy has also been the subject of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which assessed significant environmental effects, and a Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA), which assessed the likelihood of significant effects on 'European' sites, that is Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.

The SCFWS forms a link between forestry and woodland activities and other Scottish Government initiatives aiming to enhance the wide range of economic, environmental and social benefits derived from woodlands and forests. It also provides a strategic framework for the development and expansion of a variety of forest and woodland types across Stirling and Clackmannanshire.

At the broadest strategic level, the purpose of the SCFWS is to provide a local expression of how the national vision and priorities for the protection and expansion of Scotland's forest and woodland resource as set out in the Scottish Forestry Strategy (SFS) will be achieved.

### Definitions

The Strategy uses the following definitions adopted in the Scottish Forestry Strategy:

**Forestry** - the practice of all aspects of tree management, including forest and woodland management, arboriculture, urban forestry and environmental forestry and research, education and training in these fields.

**Forest** - usually applied to a large area of woodland of varied ages and tree species.

**Wood or woodland** – more often describes a smaller area of trees.

**Map 1 Strategy Location**





# 2

## The Context for Forestry & Woodland

### 2.1 National Policy Context

National policy is set by the **Scottish Forestry Strategy (SFS)** (2006), the Scottish Government's framework for forestry up until 2050 and beyond.

It has the following seven themes:-

#### Scottish Forestry Strategy Themes

- 1 Helping Scotland mitigate and adapt to **climate change**.
- 2 Getting the most from Scotland's **timber** resource.
- 3 Supporting sustainable economic growth through the **business development** of the Scottish woodland sector.
- 4 Supporting **community development** to improve quality of life and wellbeing.
- 5 Improving **access** to woodlands, to help improve the **health** of Scotland.
- 6 Protecting the **environmental quality** of our natural resources.
- 7 Helping to conserve and enhance Scotland's **biodiversity**.

The following documents are also relevant:-

**The Scottish Government's Rationale for Woodland Expansion (FCS 2009)**  
**Climate Change Action Plan 2009-11 (FCS 2009)**

**The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal (FCS 2009)**

Any recommendations in this strategy for forest management, forest operations and woodland creation also fall within the scope of existing Best Practices and Guidance, in particular the **UK Forestry Standard** and its associated Guidelines, and **The Right Tree in the Right Place**.

The following Scottish Government planning policy documents are also relevant:

#### **National Planning Framework (NPF)**

Reiterates the objectives of the SFS and the need to plan for the expansion of woodland cover. NPF confirms the need to protect existing woodland and removal

should only be permitted where there are significant and clearly defined public benefits. NPF also promotes green networks and habitat networks. The consequential increase in woodland cover will improve landscape quality, biodiversity and amenity and help to absorb CO<sub>2</sub>.

#### **The Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT)**

is a 'National Development' in the NPF. It aims to restore and improve the rural and urban landscapes of Central Scotland under the following five themes:



Central Scotland  
Green Network Trust

**A Place for Growth** - Creating an environment for sustainable economic growth.

**A Place in Balance** - Creating an environment more in balance to thrive in a changing climate.

**A Place to Feel Good** - Creating an environment which supports healthy lifestyles and well being.

**A Place for Nature** - Creating an environment where nature can flourish.

**A Place to Belong** - Creating an environment that people can enjoy and where they live.

The SCFWS has been developed with a specific aim of contributing to the complimentary aims of the SFS and CSGNT.

**Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)** draws attention to the high biodiversity value of woodlands, trees and hedgerows. Ancient and semi-natural woodland should be protected and enhanced. Development impacts on habitat connectivity should be ameliorated through mitigation measures. Woodland removal should only be allowed where it will achieve public benefit. Planning authorities should consider preparing woodland strategies as supplementary guidance.



## 2.2 National Regulation & Control

Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) manages the national forest estate and is also the Scottish Government's regulatory body for forestry. FCS assesses potential forest projects for their environmental impact, approves and monitors publicly funded woodland proposals and ensures compliance with local and national policies and best practice guidelines. FCS also maintains a [Register of New Planting and Felling](#), [Register of Environmental Impact Assessments](#) and [Registers of Woodland Creation](#) which provide information on key forest proposals.

Forestry activities such as planting and felling are not normally subject to planning controls. Local authorities are, however, consulted by FCS on a range of planting and felling proposals and longer term forest plans and therefore can influence where future woodland expansion should occur and the development of the forest industry within their areas.

Where appropriate the SCFWS will inform the responses from Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils to such consultations.

## 2.3 Local Policy Context

At the local level the SCFWS is informed by the existing plans and strategies of Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils. Account has also been taken of views and comments of local residents, communities and other stakeholders submitted in response to the public consultation.

The SCFWS links with the Councils' [Single Outcome Agreements](#) and [Local Development Plans](#), together with a range of other policy and strategy documents connected to the themes of the SFS. These include:

### For Clackmannanshire Council:

**Community Plan 'Working Together for Clackmannanshire' (2010)** - provides the overall framework in which community planning operates and provides a basis for the Single Outcome Agreement.

**Local Development Plan (LDP)** - published in 2013 for public consultation. The SCFWS will form Supplementary Planning Guidance in association with the adopted LDP.

**Biodiversity Action Plan 2012-2017** - Supports the Council's **Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy (2010)**.

**Economic Development Framework 2008-2018** - provides a focus for economic development in the area and a set of priorities to help Clackmannanshire realise its economic ambitions for 2008 - 2018.

**Open Space Strategy (being finalised)** - supports increased woodland cover in support of CSGN and SFS. This will help to mitigate climate change through the capture, storage and retention of carbon by woodland expansion and promotion of active travel.

**Greening Clackmannanshire (2010)** - provides a framework for action on the local environment and for taking forward the environment theme of the Clackmannanshire Alliance. It aims to enlist everyone's help to care for the physical environment, address climate change impacts and enhance communication and access.

### For Stirling Council:

**Community Plan (2005-2020)** - sets out the local Community Planning Partnership's vision and plan for the future prosperity for Stirling.

**Local Development Plan** . The SCFWS will form Supplementary Guidance in association with the adopted LDP.

**Countryside Access and Recreation Strategy 1999 (and Review 1997-2005)** - this seeks to guide the development, management and promotion of countryside access opportunities.

**Open for Business - Stirling Economic Strategy 2009-13** - this includes a vision and action plan based on the principles of sustainable growth and economic opportunity.

**SGo2: Green Network** – this forms supplementary guidance to the [Stirling Local Development Plan](#). It explains the concept and functions of the Green Network and introduces the Open Space Strategy and its relationship to the Local Development Plan, including Developer Contributions relative to Green Infrastructure.

Additional policy documents are listed in **Appendix II**.