



**Aberdeenshire
Forestry and
Woodland Strategy**
Planning advice
PA2023-01

September 2023

This planning advice sets out the approach that is taken towards the contribution of trees and woodlands towards climate change, timber and business development, amenity and the environment. Through the identification of specific objectives and actions it supports the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 Policy E3 Forestry and Woodlands.

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Executive Summary

The Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2021 ('the Strategy') is one of a series of documents prepared to support the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 (ALDP). It provides further information on the relevant policies set out in the ALDP and how to apply them. The Strategy also reflects national policy and is closely aligned with Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 to 2029.

Based on extensive input from a wide range of stakeholders, the Strategy presents the key issues and opportunities in relation to forestry and woodlands in the region. In doing so it aims to inform the location, design and management of these highly valued features of our lives and landscapes. It covers both 'rural' and 'urban' issues and focuses strongly on integration between different land uses.

After five years of operation, we can already see significant coordination and cooperation between forestry and woodland interests in achieving common goals

The Strategy's Vision is that:

The forestry and woodlands of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan area are resilient to the effects of climate change, protect and enhance the environment, habitats, species and local culture, benefit and support the local and national economy and are valued and enjoyed by people, both residents and visitors.

Review of the strategy shows that this vision remains strong and appropriate

The Strategy is split into themed sections within which the key issues and opportunities in relation to its 10 aims are outlined. Many of these issues are long-term in nature, and on which a short-term evaluation will only reveal the foundations of future success.

Theme 1 Climate Change and Tree Health aims to:

- Aid trees and woodlands' resilience to the negative effects of climate change and tree disease
- Promote trees and woodlands as a means to aid Scotland in mitigating and adapting to climate change

Theme 2 Timber and Business Development aims to:

- Support expansion of Aberdeenshire's woodland coverage in line with Scottish Government targets
- Promote and support the forest and timber industry

Theme 3 Communities, Development, Access and Health aims to:

- Strongly protect and enhance trees and woodlands in the planning and construction of built development
- Promote and support woodland's role in providing opportunities for community development, education and recreational access

Theme 4 Environment, Landscape and Historic Assets aims to:

- Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances environmental quality and biodiversity
- Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances landscape and historic assets

The Strategy presents a revised map of **Preferred Areas for New Woodland Creation**, identifying where new woodlands could go, in order to maximise benefits and promote integrated land use.

Part 1: Introducing the Strategy

Why does Aberdeenshire need a Forestry and Woodland Strategy?

1.1 Aberdeenshire is home to a rich diversity of forests and woodlands which provide significant economic, environmental and social benefits. It is important that this resource is sustainably protected, managed and enhanced. To this end Aberdeenshire Council has developed this Strategy to highlight the key issues and opportunities in relation to forestry and woodland creation and management across the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan region in forthcoming years.

1.2 Because of the long-term nature of forestry and woodland issues the strategy must look to the future, twenty years hence and more. While new Issues and opportunities will arise over this period it is anticipated that many of the actions advocated by the strategy will be persistent. Opportunity must be taken to periodically review the strategy to assess the actions taken on existing issues and what new actions need to be done. This document represents a review of the Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2017.

1.3 The Strategy responds to, and is shaped by, a range of national policies and strategies, notably Scotland's Forestry Strategy, the Scottish Land Use Strategy and National Planning Framework 4. Further detail on key policy influences can be found in Part 3.

1.4 There is considerable political uncertainty currently (post-Brexit adaptation, changes to the statutory planning system and updates to the climate change policy for example) and it is likely that political changes will have knock on effects on aspects such as the grants available for forestry planting, for example. Scotland's Forestry Strategy is new and there have been significant changes in the policy and governance of forestry in Scotland, with some aspects of guidance still to be produced. Even with this uncertainty it is appropriate to roll forward the Forestry and Woodland Strategy, first published as supplementary guidance to the 2016 Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan with minor updates. That Strategy was judged as still relevant and fit-for-purpose and significant revisions were considered risky given the uncertainties.

What status does the Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy hold?

1.5 The Strategy is one of a series of documents prepared to support the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 (ALDP). It has informed and provides further information on the application of relevant policies set out in the ALDP, principally at Policy E3 Forestry and Woodland. Linking the Strategy to the ALDP means that it covers the area of Aberdeenshire outwith the Cairngorms National Park (see Map 1).

1.6 In Policy E3 the themes of the Strategy are stated and, as a result, are part of the statutory development plan for the area. Where appropriate, the Strategy will be used by the Council in determining planning applications. Developers should consider it when bringing forward development proposals. The Strategy should be referred to where development proposals could result in the loss of trees. Likewise, the Strategy should be used to identify opportunities within development sites, through the provision of open space, to create and/or enhance areas of trees or woodland. Development proposals should seek to contribute towards the aims of the Strategy through the delivery of opportunities identified in it.

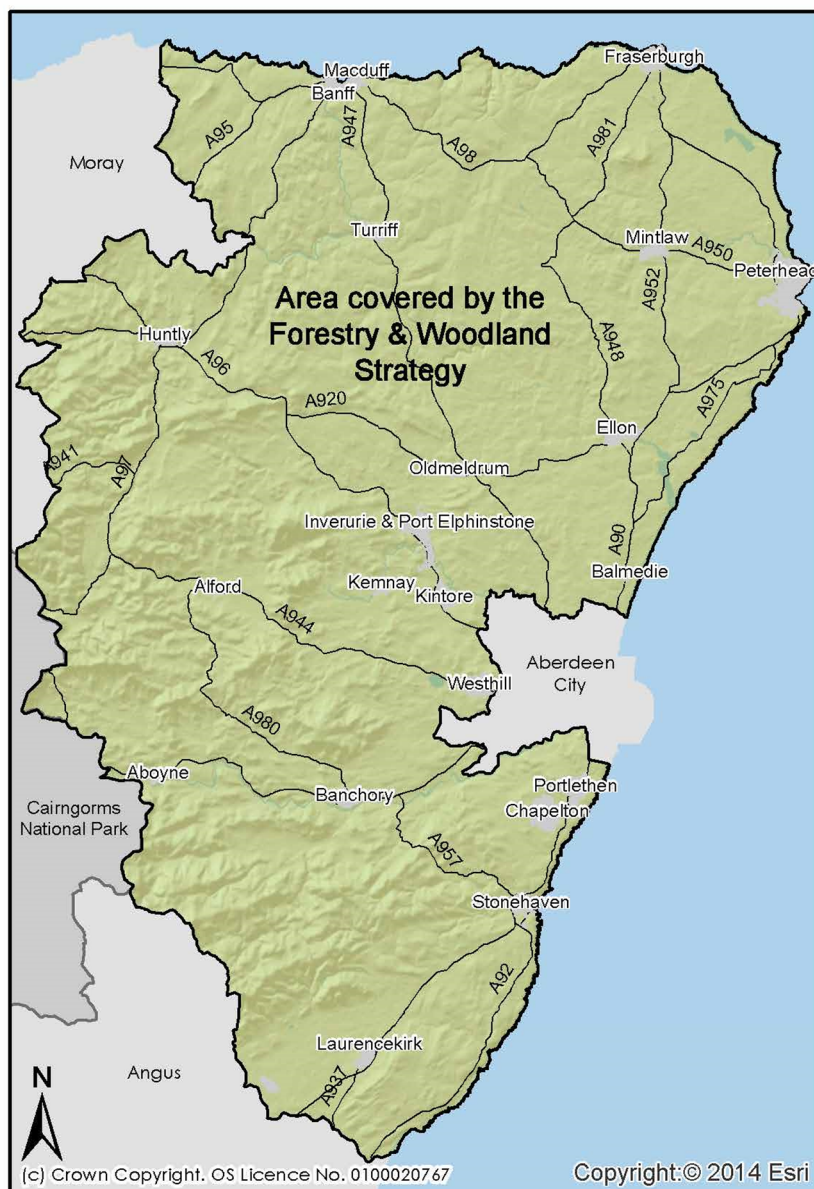
1.7 The Strategy has a wider influence than just on land use planning decisions. It also influences the work on land owned and managed by the Council and partnership processes it is involved in.

1.8 The Strategy influences and reflects the work of partner agencies, the forest industry, landowners and land managers more widely in tackling the key issues and furthering the opportunities that it identifies.

1.9 The Strategy's map of Preferred Areas for New Woodland Creation will influence the woodland creation elements of the Forestry Grant Scheme (see Part 5). However, the map is indicative, and a key message of the Strategy is that, in all cases, proposals for new woodland creation should be accompanied by a robust site assessment process.

1.10 The development of the Strategy has been guided by the Scottish Government document 'The Right Tree in the Right Place'. As a continuous process extensive engagement has taken place with a wide range of stakeholders including the forest industry and communities. The Strategy continues to benefit from their input.

Map 1: Area covered by the Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy



What approach does the Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy take?

1.11 The Strategy presents the key issues and opportunities in relation to forestry and woodlands in the region. In doing so it aims to inform the location, design and management of these highly valued features of our lives and landscapes. It covers both 'rural' and 'urban' issues and focuses strongly on integration between land use types.

1.12 The Strategy responds to Scottish Government targets to address the Climate Emergency through the expansion of woodland cover, bringing together policy, guidance and local opinion in a map of preferred areas for new woodland creation.

1.13 The Strategy and its mapping aim to be high level and strategic. It is a guide and does not override, but should be integrated with, local/site-based decision-making in relation to woodland planting and management.

1.14 The Strategy's Vision is that:

The forestry and woodlands of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan area are resilient to the effects of climate change, protect and enhance the environment, habitats, species and local culture, benefit and support the local and national economy and are valued and enjoyed by people, both residents and visitors.

1.15 In order to achieve this vision, the Strategy has 10 aims, reflected in the Local Development Plan, and all of which are further explored in the themed sections. The aims or themed sections are in no particular order and are all seen as being of equal importance in achieving the vision. The aims are:

- Aid trees and woodlands' resilience to the negative effects of climate change and tree disease
- Promote trees and woodlands as a means of mitigating and adapting to climate change

- Support expansion of Aberdeenshire's woodland coverage in line with Scottish Government targets
- Promote and support the forest and timber industry
- Strongly protect and enhance trees and woodlands in the planning and construction of built development
- Promote and support woodland's role in providing opportunities for community development, education and recreational access
- Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances environmental quality and biodiversity
- Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances landscape and historic assets
- Maximise the benefits of new woodland creation
- Promote integrated land use

Part 2: Forestry and Woodlands in Aberdeenshire

Woodland Cover

2.1 Forestry and the woodlands of Aberdeenshire are a significant resource. Scottish Government datasets¹ indicate there to be 91,794 hectares of woodland in the ALDP area at the time of publishing. This is 18.8% of the total ALDP land area and is similar to the Scottish national average (~ 19%). Through Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 - 2029 the Scottish Government aim to increase overall woodland cover in Scotland to 21% by 2032, achieved by planting 10,000 ha in 2019/20, 12,000 ha per year from 2020/21, 14,000 ha per year from 2022 / 23 and 15,000 ha per year from 2024/25.

2.2 Woodland cover in the ALDP area is greatest in the catchments of the Dee, Don and Deveron, with less woodland in the more intensive agricultural areas of Buchan and the Mearns. Map 2 shows woodland in the region at the time of publishing.

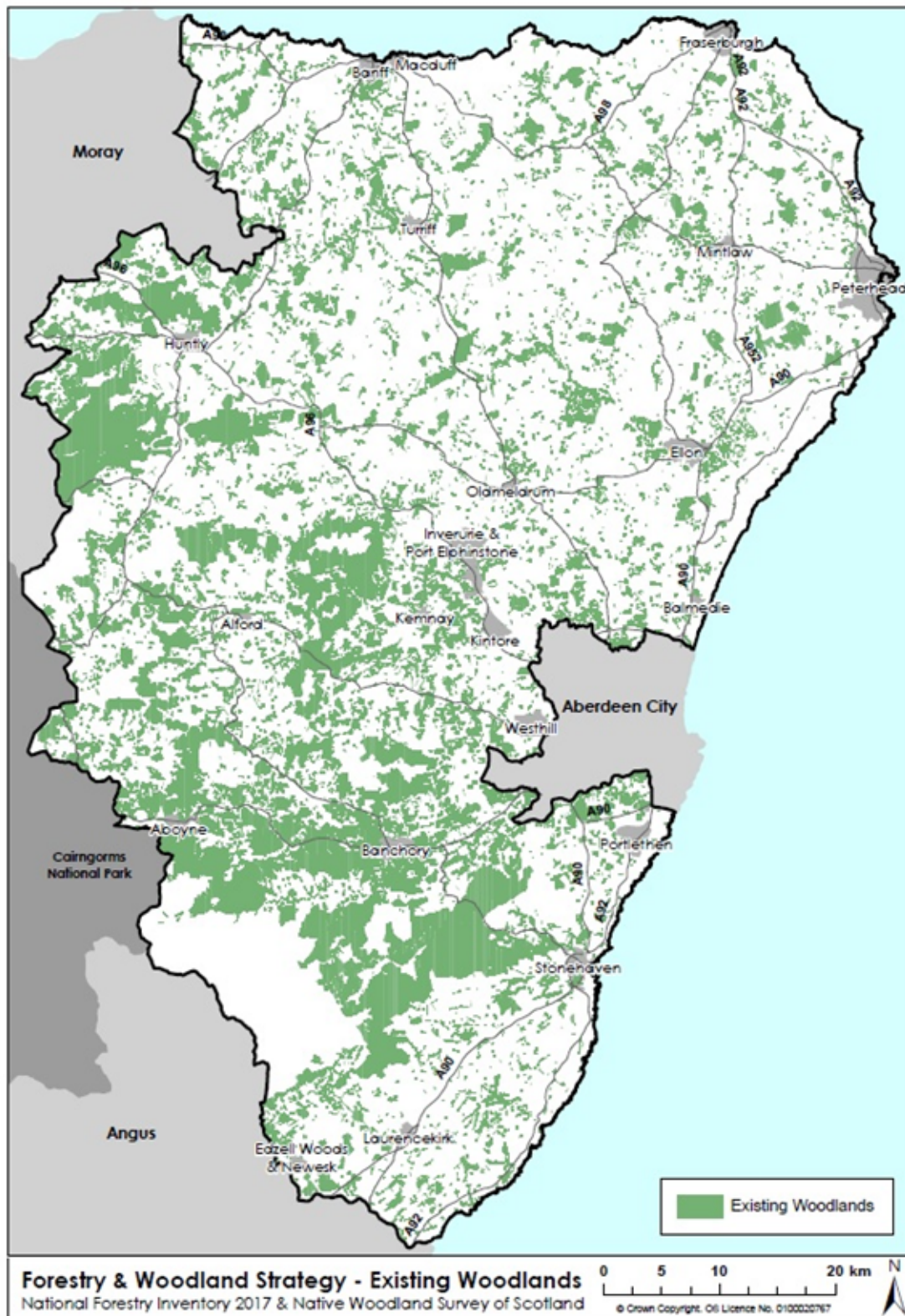
Woodland Types

2.3 Most woodlands in the region are predominately composed of commercial conifer species. In common with the overall totals for Scotland, approximately 60% of 'commercial' woodlands are in private ownership with 40% being publicly owned. A relatively high proportion, in comparison with the rest of Scotland, are made up of Scots Pine. However, Sitka Spruce is the most significant timber crop species.

2.4 Areas of semi natural woodland are more extensive on Deeside and upper Donside than in other parts of the region. Of particular significance in these areas is native Scots Pine woodland or 'Caledonian Pinewood'. Native woodlands are highly valuable assets providing habitat for a range of nationally and internationally important species and biodiversity generally.

¹ National Forest Inventory 2017 combined with the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland

Map 2: Woodland cover



Economic Benefits

2.5 Nationally, forestry is calculated to be worth one billion pounds a year to the Scottish economy, supporting 25,000 jobs. With Aberdeenshire's extensive commercial forests and the presence of numerous sawmills, for example, it is likely to make a significant contribution to these figures. Forests also make a significant indirect contribution to tourism and recreation employment.

2.6 Timber production volumes in Aberdeenshire are currently rising. However, forecasts for the region² suggest a dip in harvested timber volumes around 2027, presenting an issue for the industry. However, the forecasts also suggest a rise after this date to levels which exceed production prior to this predicted dip as more forests reach maturity.

Social and Environmental Benefits

2.7 Woodlands in the region are an important recreational, educational and amenity resource, valued by residents and visitors alike who make use of the extensive access provision many woodlands have. Although relatively small in area currently, some woodlands in the region are in community ownership.

2.8 Trees and woodland are important elements in urban landscapes, providing habitat and amenity as well as other 'services' such as air quality benefits and cooling. Trees and woodlands can also remove and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, assisting efforts to reduce overall emissions. In addition, forests and woodland are critical for the conservation of a range of high priority species covered by national targets.

² NFI 25-year projection of timber availability in the Aberdeenshire Council Area

Part 3: Key Policies and Processes that have influenced the Strategy

3.1 The Strategy takes account of a wide range of policies, processes, plans and legislation.

The **Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 to 2029** which provides an overview of contemporary Scottish forestry, presents our 50-year vision for Scotland's forests and woodlands, and sets out a 10-year framework for action.

Roots for Further Growth (2018), an economic strategy for Scotland's forest & timber technologies sector to 2030

The **Land Use Strategy** published by Scottish Government initially in 2011 and subsequently revised in 2016, which sets out principles of sustainable land use and promotes an integrated and inclusive approach to land use planning and management and the **Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy Pilot** which explored regional implementation of the Land Use Strategy.

The **Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2004**, the **2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity** and **Scotland Biodiversity and Route Map to 2020** which identify the environmental, social and economic value of Scotland's environment while setting out key steps to protect it and to maximise the multiple benefits it delivers. Local context and priorities are provided by the **North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Partnership**.

The **Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009**, and **Climate Change Plan 2018 to 2032** which set targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and creates an overarching model for adapting to climate change.

The **National Planning Framework 4** which supports increasing Scotland's woodland resource and the creation of green networks and **Scottish Planning Policy** which sets out national planning policies for operation of the planning system including the production of development plans. Further detail on the interaction between woodland and the planning system is provided by **Scottish Government's**

Policy on the Control of Woodland Removal which supports woodland removal only where it would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits.

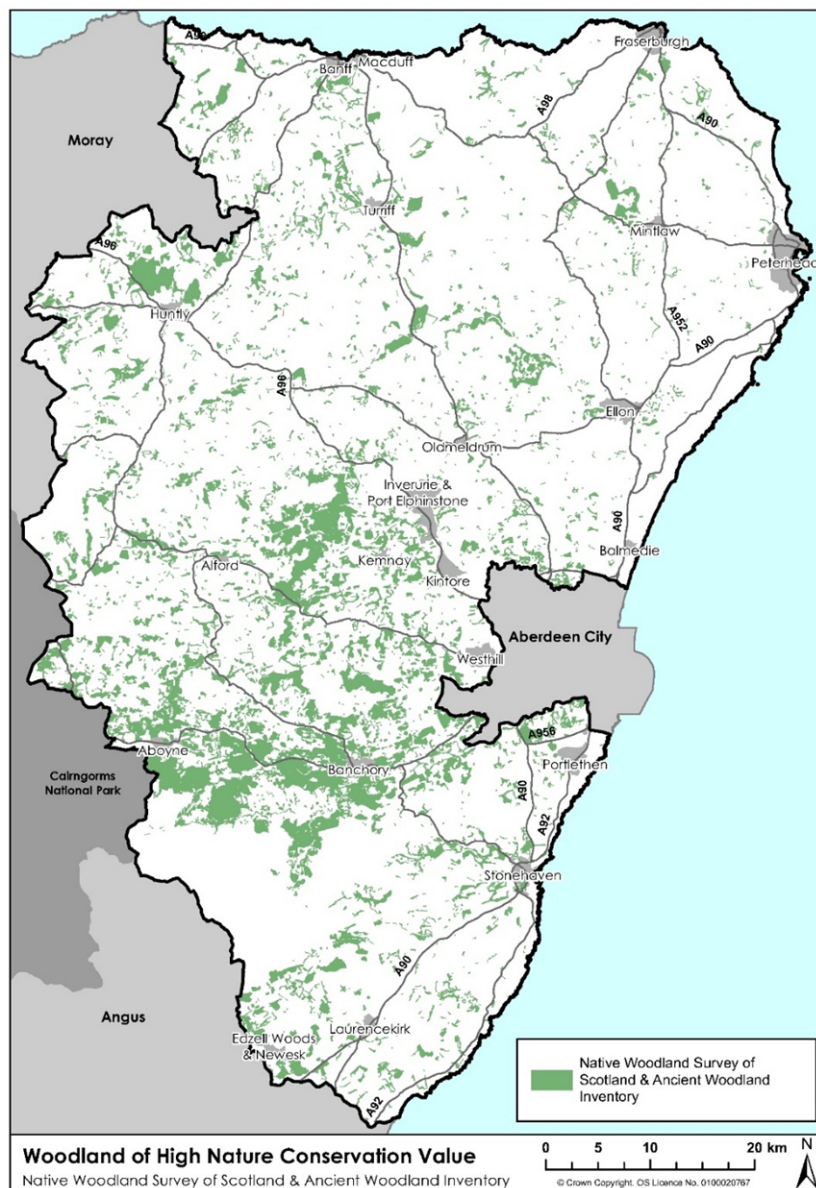
The ***Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan 2020*** which identified increased woodland planting in the region as a significant opportunity and promoted the creation of green networks within and between settlements.

The ***Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023*** refers to this Strategy. The Strategy compliments the Local Development Plan providing further detail specifically on Policy P3 Forestry and Woodlands

Part 4: Woodlands of High Nature Conservation Value

4.1 The Strategy identifies some woodland types in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan area as having High Nature Conservation Value. These woodlands have been identified using the Ancient Woodland Inventory and the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland which identifies all native woodland across Scotland with an area greater than 0.5 hectares. Map 3 below shows these woodlands of High Nature Conservation Value for the ALDP area.

Map 3: Woodlands of High Nature Conservation Value



4.2 All of the ALPD areas' forests and woodlands will provide some biodiversity value. However, those comprised of predominately native species will, on average, provide higher nature conservation value. In particular, old woodlands with a long history are likely to provide most value. The woodlands mapped above will vary in their age, predominant tree species and condition.

4.3 These woodlands of High Nature Conservation Value are recognised and protected through ALDP 2023 policies E1 Natural Heritage (Paragraph E1.4). The

proposal's public benefits must clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site. In all cases, impacts must be suitably mitigated against. In all cases, impacts must be minimised through careful design and mitigation measures. There is a strong presumption against removing ancient semi-natural woodland or Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). Where such woodland is present on or beside a development site, proposals should be designed to seek to accommodate and protect the woodland rather than remove it in part or entirely. Detailed maps of the Native Woodland Survey for Scotland and the Ancient Woodland Inventory are available at <https://forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/scottish-forestry-map-viewer> and <https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/> (search for Ancient Woodland Inventory) respectively.

4.4 Resilience to climate change is a key issue for these woodlands of High Nature Conservation Value. The full impact of climate change on our area are far from clear. However, woodlands in poor condition and those that are small, isolated and fragmented are likely to be particularly susceptible to the effects of climate change. The interaction between climate change and tree disease also poses a threat to our native tree species. As is identified below, this strategy aims to expand our woodland resource, increase species diversity and woodland resilience, and recognise the disease threat.

Part 5: Themes - Issues and Opportunities

5.1 The Strategy is structured around the 4 themes identified below. However, it is recognised that they are interrelated and that there are many issues which cut across them.

- Theme 1: Climate Change and Tree Health
- Theme 2: Timber and Business Development
- Theme 3: Communities, Development, Access and Health
- Theme 4: Environment, Landscape and Historic Assets

5.2 Each of these themes is dealt with in turn but are in no particular order. The key issues in relation to each theme are highlighted and opportunities are identified, again these are not in any order, and are of equal importance. It is not the aim of the Strategy to cover every issue and opportunity of relevance, but to highlight the most significant for the region in trying to achieve the Strategy's aims.

Theme 1: Climate Change and Tree Health

Theme 1 Issues:

- Although the precise effects are uncertain, climate change will have an impact on Aberdeenshire
- Predictions do suggest that to our winters will become milder and wetter, summers warmer and drier. It is also likely that 'extreme' weather events will become more frequent – increasing the frequency and intensity of heavy rain and strong winds for example
- The climate could change significantly in the period between the planting/germination of a young tree and it reaching maturity
- Tree pest and disease issues are already prevalent in Aberdeenshire. Global trade, tourism and a highly mobile population leave our woodlands increasingly vulnerable to new pests and diseases
- Climate change may make Aberdeenshire more 'hospitable' to some tree diseases and, also 'stress' trees making them more susceptible to health issues.
- With recognition of that there are a balance of factors that influence the net carbon impacts of woodland and forestry growth, their contribution to sequestering carbon, particularly from fast growing conifers, cannot be denied and must be part of the solution.
- Changes proposed by Government to regulate heat production in all buildings to zero-carbon generation will provide opportunities for biomass powered heat networks but may remove the opportunity for building-based biomass heating systems for new build, and by 2035, all existing buildings.

Theme 1 Aims:

- ***Climate Change and Tree Disease:*** Aid trees and woodlands' resilience to the negative effects of climate change and tree disease
- ***Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption:*** Promote trees and woodlands as a means of mitigating and adapting to climate change

Local Development Plan Policy:

- **Policy C1 Using Resources in Buildings**

- Reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and energy efficiency measures are required for all developments through the installation of low and zero carbon generating technologies
- An energy statement is required to demonstrate how this reduction will be achieved.
- **Policy C3 Carbon Sinks and Stores:**
 - Protects woodland from disturbance or destruction from development due to its carbon storage benefits
 - Allows for compensatory planting for any woodland loss associated with development so as to maintain the carbon balance
 - Supports woodland developments that will capture and store carbon long term, beyond the current targets for net zero emissions.

Theme 1 Opportunities:

Aim	Opportunity
Aid trees and woodlands' resilience to the negative effects of climate change and tree disease	1. Climate change predictions should be built into woodland planning processes, adaptive management will also be required
	2. To increase resilience, a greater diversity of tree species and management practice is required
	3. The forest industry, including processors, need support and encouragement in accepting a greater diversity of timber species
	4. Local sources of young trees should be supported and encouraged so as to reduce potential health impacts from imported tree stock
Promote trees and woodlands as a means	5. New woodland creation, as well as appropriate management of existing woodland,

of mitigating and adapting to climate change	should be promoted as a means of off-setting carbon dioxide emissions
	6. New woodland creation should avoid peat rich soils and, where appropriate, removal of historic plantings on bogs and other peat rich habitats should be explored
	7. Open spaces and publicly owned land should be used to integrate trees and woodlands into communities to provide shading, cooling and filter air pollution. Woodland can also be planted in order to reduce maintenance costs and carbon dioxide emissions associated with more intensive management of open space
	8. The opportunities for trees and woodlands to reduce flood risk should be further promoted where appropriate
	9. Support and advice on planning and appropriate management should be provided to woodland owners to help them contribute to secure long-term zero and low-carbon wood fuel and high-quality timber supply. Forest certification should be encouraged.

Theme 2: Timber and Business Development

Theme 2 Issues:

- Scottish Government targets, through Scotland's Forestry Strategy, are for increased woodland coverage - new woodland needs to be located in places where it delivers multiple benefits and avoids significant impacts
- In addition to woodland expansion, there can be significant social, environmental and economic gains from improved management of existing woodland
- Forestry and agriculture are seen by too many as separate disciplines and as a result the benefits of greater integration are not always realised
- Forestry and woodland related businesses contribute to Aberdeenshire's economy and provide jobs in rural areas yet are often undervalued or not well understood. It is a missed opportunity that the UK continues to import the majority of its timber needs.
- Timber transportation can damage the public road network, particularly smaller, rural roads. There are legislative powers to recoup roads maintenance costs from timber businesses
- Although timber production is currently rising,, production forecasts for the region suggest a dip around 2027, with recovery to higher levels than present after this date. Timber processors require a stable supply to grow their businesses
- There can be tensions between traditional forestry practice and the need to provide public access
- There are new and competing markets emerging for wood fibre – notably biomass powered heat networks, insulation and engineered timber products for the construction sector
- In common with a number of rural industries, there is a significant skills shortage and a lack of young entrants into forestry
- Some small woodland owners may not be aware of the latest forestry and woodland issues, opportunities and guidance

Theme 2 Aims:

- **Woodland Expansion:** Support expansion of Aberdeenshire's woodland coverage in line with Scottish Government targets
- **Forest Industry:** Promote and support the forest and timber industry

Local Development Plan Policy:

- **Policy PR1 Protecting Important Resources** supports opportunities for new woodland creation and/or enhancement, which are in line with this Strategy

Theme 2 Opportunities:

Aim	Opportunity
Support expansion of Aberdeenshire's woodland coverage in line with Scottish Government targets	1. The expansion of woodland in the region is strongly encouraged with a focus on multi-functionality – delivering wood products along with environmental and social benefits.
	2. In order to maximise the benefits of new woodland creation, careful planning and management is required. This Strategy identifies preferred areas for new woodland creation (see Part 5) but emphasises the need for site-based decision making and consultation. All of the potential impacts of new plantings need to be considered.
	3. Prime agricultural land (Macaulay Land Capability for Agriculture classes 1, 2 and 3.1) should not be planted with new woodland. Planting on class 3.2 land should be carefully considered in order to ensure overall benefit. However, options to better integrate woodlands in predominately agricultural areas should be encouraged, e.g., hedges, shelterbelts, grazed

	woodlands and riparian woodland are all strongly encouraged on appropriate sites.
	4. A greater cooperation between all relevant parties is required in order to increase integration between agriculture and forestry. Bringing existing farm woodlands into management is an example of an action which can benefit both farmers and the forest industry.
Promote and support the forest industry	5. All those in the forest industry need to continue to tell the 'good news story' of wood and describe how essential wood products are to our lives. It also needs to highlight the economic contribution and net zero credentials of forestry and describe the diverse opportunities for working in the sector.
	6. Means to ensure a stable timber supply and, potentially, to mitigate the forecasted 2027 dip in timber production should be explored urgently.
	7. Timely consultation and effective partnership working on timber transport will be promoted in order to protect and maintain the public road network.
	8. Funding options for the maintenance and the public road network for timber businesses and other users should be explored.
	9. Forestry and woodland related educational courses and training require support from all

	stakeholders, so they are maintained and where possible, expanded.
	10. Greater support should be given to smaller and niche forestry and woodland related operations and wood product producers as a means of encouraging new entrants into the sector.
	11. Opportunities for the use of forestry co-products for biomass-powered heat networks and other uses (e.g., insulation) should be promoted.
	12. A means of sharing information with, and between, small woodland owners should be created.
	13. Productive management of broadleaf woodland should be encouraged. Appropriate and sensitive management will be required to realise these benefits without significant impacts.

Theme 3: Communities, Development, Access and Health

Theme 3 Issues:

- Woodland loss to development is an on-going issue in the region
- Scottish Government's Policy on the Control of Woodland Removal results in a presumption in favour of woodland protection. Only where there are significant public benefits should woodland removal be approved. There is a strong presumption against the removal of important woodlands, for example Natural sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Conservation Sites, Ancient Woodland, Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites and Long-Established Woodland of Plantation Origin, for the purposes of development
- Local Development Plan site allocation is important in protecting woodlands
- Scottish Government community empowerment legislation further strengthens the case for greater community involvement in the planning and management of woodlands
- Scotland has significant health challenges related to inactivity. Woodlands are one of Aberdeenshire's most important recreation resources. However, there are challenges for woodland owners in managing access

Theme 3 Aims:

- **Built Development:** Strongly protect and enhance trees and woodlands in the planning and construction of built development
- **Communities and Recreation:** Promote and support the woodland's role in providing opportunities for community development, community food-growing and recreational access

Local Development Plan Policy:

- **Policy PR1 Protecting Important Resources:**
 - Identifies that developments would not normally be approved where they result in the loss of, or serious damage to, trees and woodlands of significant ecological, recreational, historical, landscape or shelter value. Development which damages this resource will only be approved where there is significant overriding public interest

- Requires any development which damages or results in the loss of trees and woodland, approved due to overriding public interest, to minimise damage to existing trees and protect existing or potential ecological networks. It also requires compensatory planting in such cases
- **Policy P2 Open Space and Access in New Developments:**
 - Requires all new developments to be accompanied by adequate public open space appropriate to the standards shown in the Aberdeenshire Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
 - Encourages community woodlands
 - Identifies that open space contributions will only be acceptable where arrangements for their establishment and maintenance have already been agreed

Theme 3 Opportunities:

Aim	Opportunity
Strongly protect and enhance trees and woodlands in the planning and construction of built development	1. Siting of new development will be guided by the development plan in order to avoid areas of woodland in all but exceptional cases. Where woodland is lost, there should be a focus on maintaining and increasing woodland habitat connectivity.
	2. The open space requirement on new developments should be a key means of integrating new and existing trees and woodlands into communities. Opportunities for the creation of orchards, in line with the Aberdeenshire Food Growing Strategy, should be explored. Further information can be found in the existing Aberdeenshire Open Space Strategy and given greater prominence in its anticipated review.

	3. Masterplans and design briefs are an ideal opportunity to identify new woodland creation and linkages through/around sites and to promote woodlands with multiple objectives e.g., amenity, recreation and biodiversity.
	4. In cases where compensatory planting of woodlands lost to development will be required, pre-emptive planting will be strongly encouraged. Long-term Woodland Management Plans will be secured for any compensatory planting.
	5. The appropriate planting of trees and woodlands in existing public open space and other publicly owned land should be implemented as a means of delivering a range of social and environmental benefits as well as potentially reducing maintenance costs.
	6. The proposed dualling of the A96 road and other major infrastructure projects represent opportunities to extend woodland networks and create green corridors.
Promote and support woodland's role in providing opportunities for community development, education and recreational access	7. Responsible public access to woodlands should be maintained and encouraged.
	8. Council owned woodlands will be managed in order to deliver multiple social and environmental benefits. Appropriate woodland will be brought into the Woodland In and Around Towns Scheme.
	9. Proposals for appropriate woodland recreational developments, for example purpose-

	built mountain biking facilities, should be encouraged.
	10. Community involvement in woodlands should be further encouraged and supported. Ownership is a good opportunity. Lets, leases and management agreements should also be made available as an alternative to full ownership.
	11. In addition to paths within individual woodlands, paths which link woodlands should be encouraged.
	12. Existing initiatives have shown how woodlands can be an excellent place for learning for people of all ages. Such initiatives require support and encouragement.
	13. Greater effort is required in getting all sectors of society regularly accessing woodlands. Education and public transport initiatives which facilitate this should be encouraged along with public access to new and existing woodland within walking distance of communities and schools.
	14. Partnership working with a range of sectors currently less engaged in woodlands, such as health and education, should be strongly encouraged.

Theme 4: Environment, Landscape and Historic Assets

Theme 4 Issues:

- National targets to halt the loss of biodiversity have been missed and biodiversity overall continues to decline
- Woodlands in the region support a wide range of habitats and species, careful and targeted management is required in order to benefit the environment
- New woodland creation has the potential to benefit the natural environment but also impact on pre-existing biodiversity
- Historically, woodland planting has damaged some important habitats in the region
- Landscapes and historic assets are important culturally and economically for the region. They can be damaged by inappropriate woodland management and creation. Landscapes also change naturally over time.

Theme 4 Aims:

- **Environment and Biodiversity:** Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances environmental quality and biodiversity
- **Landscape and Historic Assets:** Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances landscape and historic assets

Local Development Plan Policy:

- **Policy PR1 Protecting Important Resources** supports opportunities for new woodland creation and/or enhancement, which are in line with this Strategy

Theme 4 Opportunities:

Aim	Opportunity
Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and	1. Important natural heritage assets previously damaged by woodland planting, such as bogs or Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS), should be restored where this is feasible.

enhances environmental quality and biodiversity	2. Sites protected for nature conservation should achieve 'favourable condition' or 'favourable conservation status'
	3. Important 'open ground' habitats, such as wetlands and semi-natural grasslands along with important concentrations of breeding wading birds, should be protected from inappropriate tree planting.
	4. Riparian woodlands are important and have benefits which cut across all themes. Existing woodland should be protected and opportunities for new riparian woodlands should be encouraged and supported where appropriate.
	5. Woodland planting using species and provenances suited to the local environmental conditions and climate, e.g., locally native species, should be strongly encouraged.
	6. Forest certification and the use of lower impact forestry management systems, such as continuous cover forestry, should be encouraged across the region, on suitable sites.
	7. Forestry and woodland management and creation must support Water Framework Directive, River Basin Management Planning, flood risk management aims and protect Drinking Water Protection Areas, in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard
	8. Woodland creation and management should not increase, and where possible should reduce, diffuse

	<p>pollution impacts on the water environment.</p> <p>Positive management includes blocking inappropriate drainage and restoring bogs</p>
	<p>9. Forestry and woodland management practice should contribute to the effective management of lowland deer to ensure that increased woodland cover does not result in increased damage to crops, woodland, nuisance and hazard, particularly from Roe Deer</p>
	<p>10. Woodland planting and management plans should be designed to conserve nationally and internationally protected habitats and species and improve habitat networks</p>
	<p>11. Woodland owners and managers should be encouraged and supported in tackling invasive non-native species issues and increasing woodland's resilience in order to reduce opportunity for their spread</p>
Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances landscape and historic assets	<p>12. Woodland planting and management should protect and enhance historic assets including scheduled ancient monuments, gardens and designed landscapes and battlefields</p>
	<p>13. Woodland planting and management should be appropriate to landscape setting. Landscape Character Assessments and other relevant datasets can help to inform this</p>

	14. The loss of skills and knowledge of estate/wood pasture type woodland should be addressed
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Part 6: Mapping of Preferred Areas for New Woodland Creation

6.1 The aims in mapping preferred areas for new woodland creation are to:

- maximise the benefits of new woodland creation
- promote integrated land use

6.2 Scottish Government targets are for increased woodland cover. The Strategy supports increasing woodland cover in the ALDP area. However, this woodland needs to be carefully sited and planned in order to maximise its benefits and minimise impacts. It must integrate with existing land uses and respond to the needs of communities. Integration with the plans and strategies of areas adjacent to the Local Development Plan area is also important and work is on-going to ensure this.

6.3 The map of Preferred Areas for New Woodland Creation on the following page uses a four-tier classification system to indicate where woodland creation would be suitable:

1. **Preferred**

No significant constraints have been identified based on this high-level analysis and there may be opportunities for new woodland creation

2. **Potential**

Macaulay Land Capability for Agriculture 3.2 class land where no other significant constraints have been identified. Woodland planting can be beneficial here, but the value of any agricultural uses needs to be considered

3. **Sensitive**

Areas with one or more significant constraints, such as prime agricultural land (Macaulay classes 1, 2 and 3.1) or sites protected for nature and/or heritage. Woodland planting in these areas may have benefits but needs to be very carefully considered and planned

4. **Unsuitable**

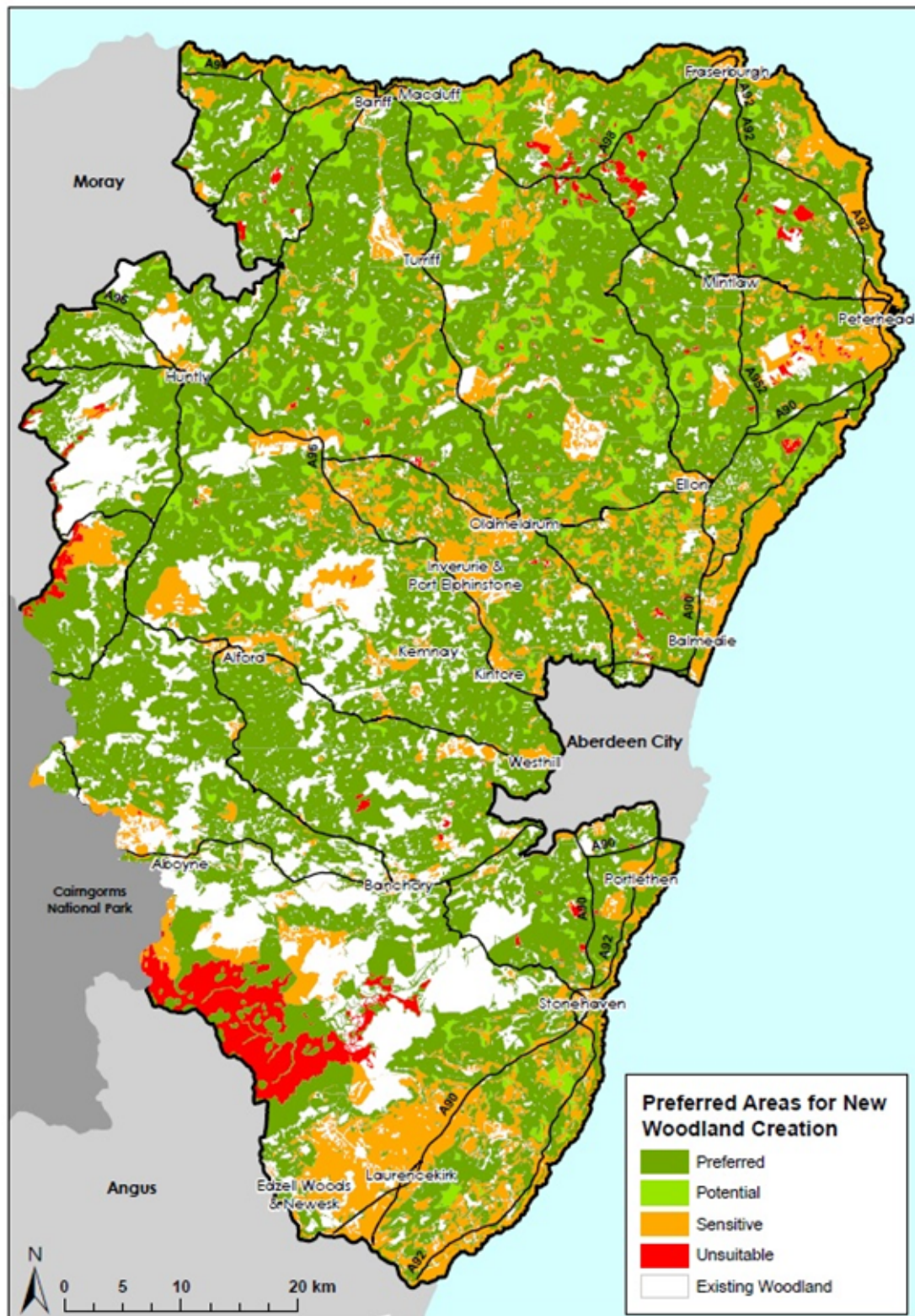
Carbon rich soils where tree planting is not suitable

6.4 The map also shows existing woodland.

6.5 The map is available as a GIS file at a 1:25,000 scale. Further information on the mapping can be found in Appendix 1.

The map is **indicative**, based on a regional scale analysis and using best available data. Any new woodland proposal which falls within a 'preferred' area will not automatically be given permission by Forestry Commission Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council in relation to built development, or any other public body. Equally, a woodland proposal in an area identified as 'sensitive' will not necessarily be refused permission. It is crucial that in all cases of new woodland creation, there is a robust site-based analysis to identify the merits and potential impacts of creating woodland. This assessment should take account of all relevant social, economic and

Map 4: Preferred Areas for New Woodland Creation



Part 7: Taking Action

7.1 The Strategy highlights the key issues and opportunities in relation to forestry and woodlands in the ALDP area. It is an aid to the delivery of multiple benefits from land use planning and management. The Strategy's themes identify a number of opportunities which should be taken forward. These have been gathered based on extensive consultation with a wide range of people and organisations from across the area.

7.2 Some of the opportunities can be furthered by individuals or organisations alone. These include the Council and partner agencies but also all those involved in the forest industry as well as individual communities. With targeted action by all those with a stake and with influence, it is felt that many benefits can be realised.

7.3 However, many of the actions require a coordinated response and, overall the Strategy promotes a joined up, integrated, partnership approach to the management and creation of woodlands, avoiding narrow sectoral approaches. Partnerships such as the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership and the Dee Catchment Management Partnership provide good models for this approach. These groups and others are encouraged to explore what this Strategy says and to consider if they can work on the key issues identified.

7.4 Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Forestry will carry out a yearly monitoring process on the Strategy and where there are issues requiring to be addressed or opportunities which are not being progressed, action will be directed through the Strategy's Management Group. A periodic review of the Strategy, based on the results of this monitoring, will be undertaken.

Appendix 1: Further Information on the Mapping of Preferred Areas for New Woodland Creation

The map of Preferred Areas for New Woodland Creation has been created using a series of information layers. These layers are listed below and the way in which they are used in the map is described.

Constraint Type	Information layer	How used in map
Existing woodland	National Forest Inventory Scotland 2017	Existing woodland - out with analysis for new woodland creation
	Native Woodland Survey of Scotland	Existing woodland - out with analysis for new woodland creation
Agricultural land	Macaulay Land Capability for Agriculture class 3.2 land*	Potential but can be upgraded to Preferred by Opportunity layers
	Macaulay Land Capability for Agricultural prime land (class 1, 2 and 3.1)	Sensitive
Cultural heritage	Aberdeenshire Designed Landscapes and Gardens	Sensitive
	Scheduled Monuments (with 20m buffer)**	Sensitive
	Battlefields	Sensitive
	ALDP Settlement Boundaries***	Sensitive

Urban area and proposed development	ALDP Opportunity Sites***	Sensitive
Natural heritage sites	National Nature Reserves	Sensitive
	RAMSAR sites	Sensitive
	Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Sensitive
	Special Areas of Conservation	Sensitive
	Special Protection Areas	Sensitive
	Local Nature Conservation Sites	Sensitive
Wetlands	Scottish Wetland Inventory	Sensitive
Carbon rich soils	SNH Carbon and Peatland Map 2016	Unsuitable

Opportunity type	Information layer	How used in map
Adjacent to settlements	1km buffer around settlements identified in the 2023 Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan	Upgrades class 3.2 land to Preferred due to benefits
Woodland habitat networks	500m buffer around existing woodland	Upgrades class 3.2 land to Preferred due to benefits
Natural Flood Management	SEPA Natural Flood Management opportunities for run-off reduction (medium and high potential)	Upgrades class 3.2 land to Preferred due to benefits

	SEPA Natural Flood Management opportunities for floodplain storage (medium and high potential)	Upgrades class 3.2 land to Preferred due to benefits
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* All other Macaulay Land Capability classes above 3.2 (i.e., 4.1 to 7) are considered as 'preferred' where no other constraints exist.

** The 'Sensitive' rating is given to Scheduled Monuments is a means of identifying the 20m buffer round these sites as sensitive to new woodland planting. The actual monuments themselves, which in the main are too small to show on the map, will be unsuitable for tree planting.

*** Settlements and Opportunity Sites as defined as 'Sensitive' rather than 'Preferred' to prevent large scale woodland creation in areas identified for built development. However, the Strategy strongly encourages the integration of trees and woodlands into urban areas and new developments.



For more information on the Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2023
contact:

ldp@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Forestry and Woodland Strategy

Planning and Economy Service

Aberdeenshire Council

Woodhill House

Westburn Road

Aberdeen

AB16 5GB

