

**ABERDEENSHIRE**  
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN **20**  
Supplementary Guidance

8

**ABERDEENSHIRE FORESTRY  
AND WOODLAND STRATEGY**



APRIL 2017

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## Executive Summary

The Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2017 ('the Strategy') is one of a series of Supplementary Guidance documents prepared to support the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017. It provides further information on the relevant policies set out in the LDP and how to apply them. The Strategy also reflects national policy and is closely aligned to the Scottish Forestry Strategy. It replaces the 'Forest and Woodland Strategy for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City' produced in 2005.

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 focusses strongly on integration between different land uses.

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.*

The Strategy is split into themed sections within which the key issues and opportunities in relation to its 10 aims are outlined.

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 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 map of **Preferred Areas for New Woodland Creation**, identifying where new woodlands could go so as to maximise benefits and promote integrated land use.

## **Part 1: Introducing the Strategy**

### ***Why does Aberdeenshire need a Forestry and Woodland Strategy?***

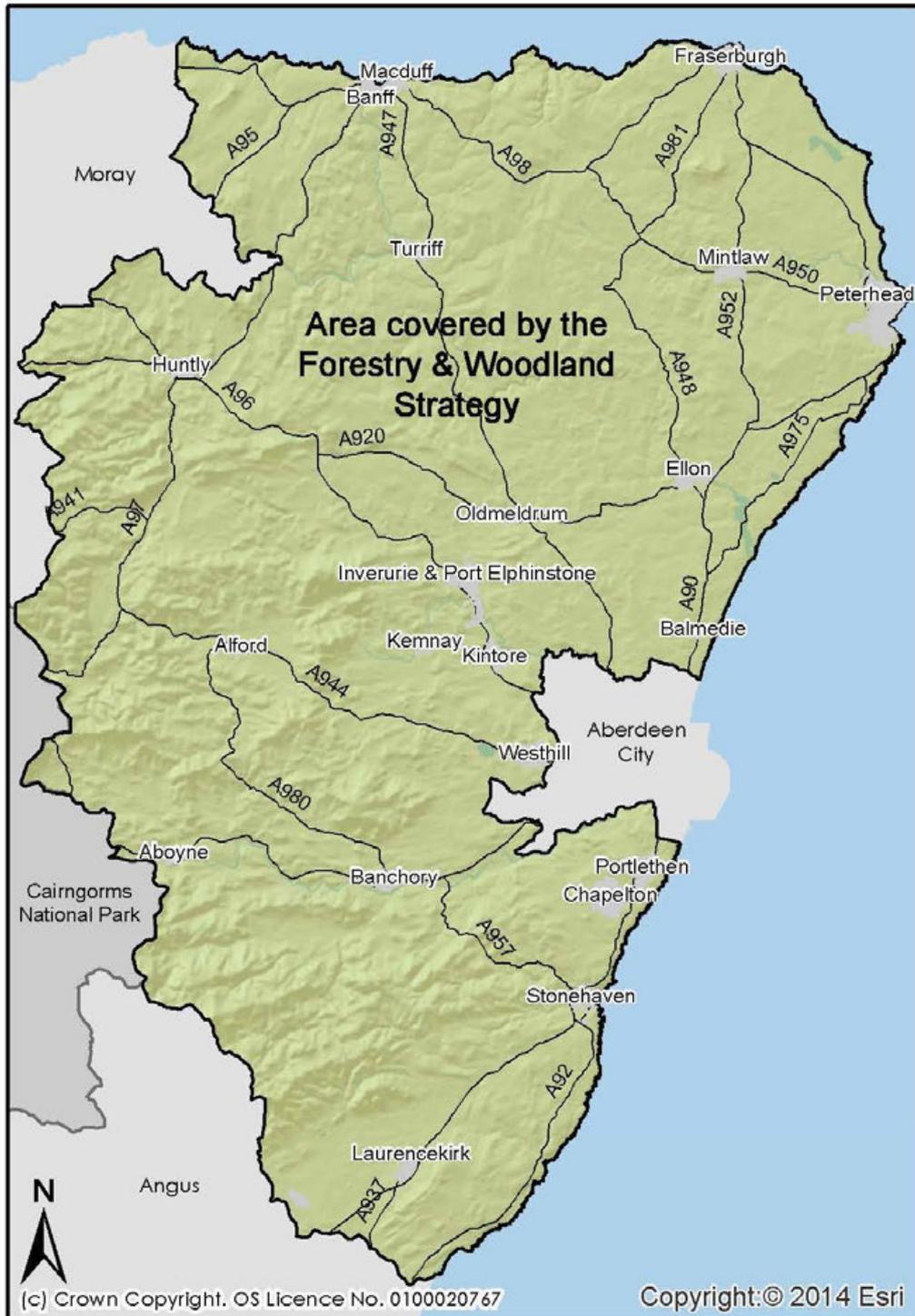
- 1.1 Aberdeenshire is home to a rich diversity of forests and woodlands which provide significant economic, environmental and social benefits. It is important that this resource is sustainably protected, managed and enhanced. To this end Aberdeenshire Council has developed this Strategy to highlight 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 The Strategy replaces the 'Forest and Woodland Strategy for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City' produced in 2005. The majority of the issues and actions identified in 2005 are still important and relevant. However, an update was required as the risks and opportunities, or indeed understanding of them, has changed in some cases.
- 1.3 The Strategy responds to, and is shaped by, a range of national policies and strategies, notably the Scottish Forestry Strategy, the Scottish Land Use Strategy and National Planning Framework 3. Further detail on key policy influences can be found in Part 3.

### ***What status does the Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy hold?***

- 1.4 The Strategy is one of a series of Supplementary Guidance documents prepared to support the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 (LDP). It provides further information on the relevant policies set out in the LDP and how to apply them. Linking the Strategy to the LDP means that it covers the area of Aberdeenshire out-with Cairngorms National Park (see Map 1).
- 1.5 As part of the LDP, 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.
- 1.6 In common with other Supplementary Guidance, the Strategy will be subject to review every five years. However, it looks to the future, twenty years hence and more, bearing in mind the long term nature of forestry and woodland issues.
- 1.7 The Strategy will influence decisions and work on land owned and managed by the Council and partnership processes it is involved in.
- 1.8 The Strategy should influence 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 Scottish Rural Development Programme 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'. Extensive consultation has taken place

with a wide range of stakeholders including the forest industry and communities. The Strategy has greatly benefitted 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 focusses strongly on integration between land use types.
- 1.12 The Strategy responds to Scottish Government targets to expand 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.*

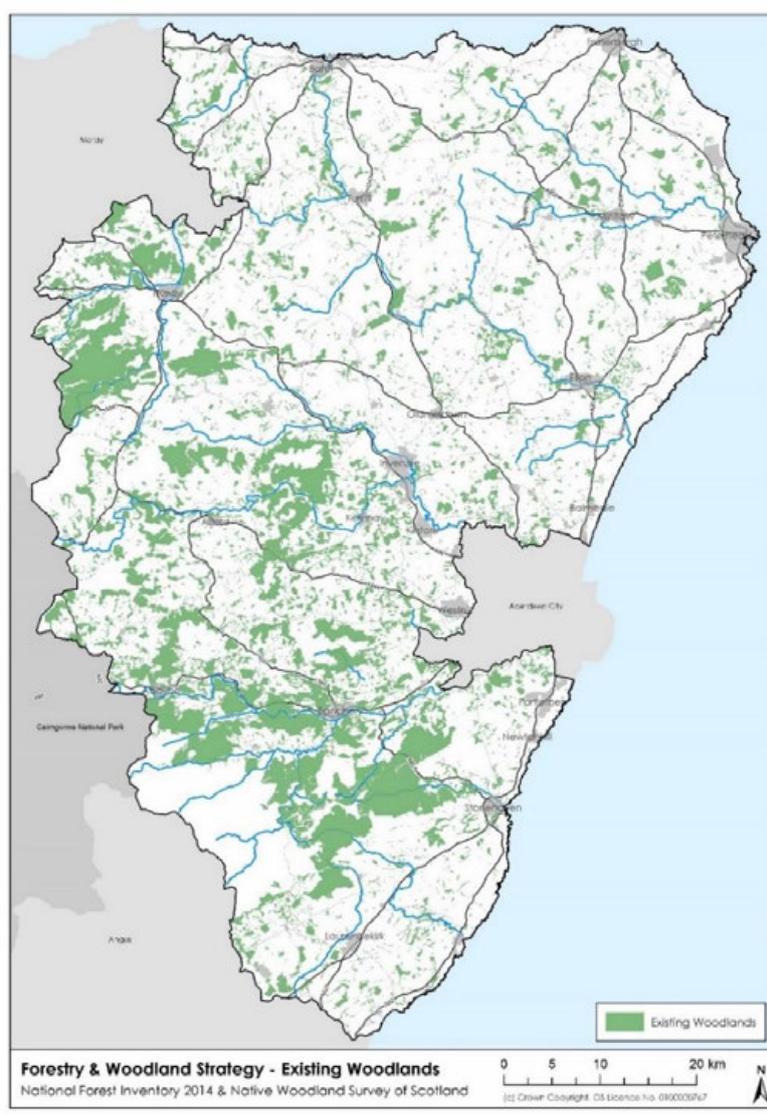
- 1.15 In order to achieve this vision, the Strategy has 10 aims, all of which are further explored in the themed sections. The aims or themed sections are in no particular order and are all seen as being of equal importance in achieving the vision. The aims are:
- Aid trees and woodlands' resilience 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 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 datasets<sup>1</sup> indicate there to be 91,225 hectares of woodland in the LDP area at the time of publishing. This is 18.7% of the total LDP land area, and is similar to the Scottish national average (~ 18%). Scottish Government, through the Scottish Forestry Strategy, has an aspirational target of 25% woodland cover in Scotland by the second half of the 21st century with an interim target of 100,000 hectares of new woodland to be planted between 2012 and 2022.
- 2.2 Woodland cover in the LDP 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.

Map 2: Woodland cover



<sup>1</sup> National Forest Inventory 2013 combined with the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland

## **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.

## **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.
- 2.6 Timber production volumes in Aberdeenshire are currently rising. However, forecasts for the region<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>2</sup> 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. Some of the key influences are listed below. A fuller list of influences are presented separately in the Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report of this Strategy.

The **Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006** which is the overarching strategy for the development and management of Scotland's woodland resource and includes a commitment to increase woodland cover to 25% by the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A subsequent exploration of how to expand woodland cover was undertaken by the **Woodland Expansion Advisory Group**.

The **Land Use Strategy** published by Scottish Government in 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 Adaption Framework** which set targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and creates an overarching model for adapting to climate change.

The **National Planning Framework 3** 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 2014** which identifies increased woodland planting in the region as a significant opportunity and promotes the creation of green networks within and between settlements.

The **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017** to which this Strategy is Supplementary Guidance. The Strategy reflects the policies identified in the plan, providing further detail specifically on forestry and woodlands.

## **Part 4: Themes - Issues and Opportunities**

4.1 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

4.2 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. 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 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

### 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 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

### 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 of mitigating and adapting to climate change	5. New woodland creation, as well as appropriate management of existing woodland, 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

	<p>on bogs and other peat rich habitats should be explored</p>
	<p>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 so as to reduce maintenance costs and carbon dioxide emissions associated with more intensive management of open space</p>
	<p>8. The opportunities for trees and woodlands to reduce flood risk should be further promoted where appropriate</p>
	<p>9. Support and advice on planning and appropriate management should be provided to small woodland owners to help them contribute to secure long-term, local woodfuel supply. Forest certification should be encouraged.</p>

## Theme 2: Timber and Business Development

### Theme 2 Issues:

- Scottish Government targets, through the Scottish 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 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
- 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 rising currently, production forecasts for the region suggest a dip around 2027, with recovery to higher levels than present after this date. Timber processors require 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 for wood fibre – notably biomass
- 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 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. So as 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

	<p>should be carefully considered so as 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</p>
<p>Promote and support the forest industry</p>	<p>4. A greater cooperation between all relevant parties is required so as 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</p> <p>5. All those in the forest industry needs 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 of forestry and describe the diverse opportunities for working in the sector</p> <p>6. Means to ensure a stable timber supply and, potentially, to avoid the forecasted 2027 dip in timber production should be explored urgently</p> <p>7. Timely consultation and effective partnership working on timber transport will be promoted so as to protect and maintain the public road network</p> <p>8. Funding options for the maintenance and the public road network for timber businesses and other users should be explored</p> <p>9. Forestry and woodland related educational courses and training require support from all stakeholders so they are maintained</p> <p>10. Greater support should be given to smaller and niche forestry and woodland related operations and wood product producers as a means of allowing new entrants into the sector</p> <p>11. A means of sharing information with and between small woodland owners should be created</p> <p>12. Productive management of broadleaf woodland should be encouraged. Appropriate and sensitive management will be required to realise these benefits without significant impacts</p>

### 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 woodland's role in providing opportunities for community development 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	1. Siting of new development will be guided by the development plan so as to avoid areas of woodland in all but exceptional cases. Where woodland is lost,

planning and construction of built development	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. Further information can be found in the Aberdeenshire Open Space Strategy
	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 is an opportunity to extend woodland networks and create a green corridor alongside the route
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 so as 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 so as 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 enhances environmental quality and biodiversity	1. Important natural heritage assets previously damaged by woodland planting, such as bogs or Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS), should be restored
	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 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
	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 Forestry Commission Scotland's Forest and Water Guidelines

	8. Woodland creation and management should not increase, and where possible reduce, diffuse pollution impacts on the water environment. Positive management includes blocking inappropriate drainage and restoring bogs
	9. Forestry and woodland management practice should contribute to the effective management of lowland deer
	10. Woodland planting and management plans should be designed to conserve nationally and internationally protected habitats and species and improve habitat networks
	11. Woodland owners and managers should be encouraged and supported in tackling invasive non-native species issues and increasing woodland's resilience so as to reduce opportunity for their spread
Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances landscape and historic assets	12. Woodland planting and management should protect and enhance historic assets including scheduled ancient monuments, gardens and designed landscapes and battlefields
	13. Woodland planting and management should be appropriate to landscape setting. Landscape Character Assessments and other relevant datasets can help to inform this
	14. The loss of skills and knowledge of estate/wood pasture type woodland should be addressed

## Part 5: Mapping of Preferred Areas for New Woodland Creation

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

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

5.2 Scottish Government targets are for increased woodland cover. The Strategy supports increasing woodland cover in the LDP area. However, this woodland needs to be carefully sited and planned so as 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.

5.3 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 in 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 of 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

5.4 The map also shows existing woodland.

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 environmental issues. Also crucial is consultation with communities and other stakeholders on any proposals. It is certainly not suggested that all areas identified as 'preferred' should be planted with trees but that carefully planned new woodlands in these areas could have benefits.

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



## Part 6: Taking Action

- 6.1 The Strategy highlights the key issues and opportunities in relation to forestry and woodlands in the LDP 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 furthered. These have been gathered based on extensive consultation with a wide range of people and organisations from across the area.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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 Grampian Regional Forestry Forum, North East Scotland Local 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.
- 6.4 As a final key opportunity, the Strategy recommends that **a process of action planning takes place**, using the issues and opportunities identified in the Strategy as the starting point. This should create a single action plan with ownership of each action by relevant agencies or organisations. Aberdeenshire Council will discuss this suggested approach with relevant stakeholders such as Grampian Regional Forestry Forum and Forestry Commission Scotland following adoption of this Strategy.

## 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 2013	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
Urban area and proposed development	ALDP Settlement Boundaries***	Sensitive
	ALDP Housing Land Allocations 2016 to 2023***	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	Carbon rich soils (JHI soil carbon data categories 5 and 6)	Unsuitable

Opportunity type	Information layer	How used in map
Adjacent to settlements	1km buffer around settlements identified in the 2016 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

\* 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 as 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 development allocations 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 2017**  
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