



Moray and Aberdeenshire Forest District

Lesmoir

Land Management Plan



Plan Reference No: LMP 50

Plan Approval Date:

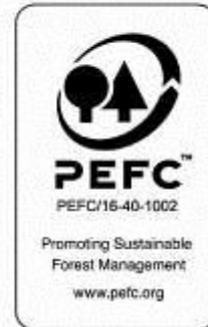
Plan Expiry Date:

We manage Scotland's National Forest Estate to the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard – the standard endorsed in the UK by the international Forest Stewardship Council® and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification. We are independently audited.

Our land management plans bring together key information, enable us to evaluate options and plan responsibly for the future. We welcome comments on these plans at any time.



The mark of
responsible forestry



**FOREST ENTERPRISE - Application for Forest Design Plan Approvals in
Scotland**

Forest Enterprise - Property

Forest District:	Moray & Aberdeenshire FD
Woodland or property name:	Lesmoir
Nearest town, village or locality:	Rhynie
OS Grid reference:	NJ47062810

Areas for approval

	Conifer	Broadleaf
Clear felling	0 ha	0 ha
Selective felling	0 ha	0 ha
Restocking	0 ha	0 ha
New planting (complete appendix 4)	ha	ha

1. I apply for Forest Design Plan approval*/~~amendment approval~~* for the property described above and in the enclosed Forest Design Plan.

2. * I apply for an opinion under the terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (Scotland) Regulations 1999 for afforestation* /~~deforestation~~*/ roads*/ quarries* as detailed in my application.

3. I confirm that the initial scoping of the plan was carried out with FC staff on

Aug 2015

4. I confirm that the proposals contained in this plan comply with the UK Forestry Standard.

5. I confirm that the scoping, carried out and documented in the Consultation Record attached, incorporated those stakeholders which the FC agreed must be included.

6. I confirm that consultation and scoping has been carried out with all relevant stakeholders over the content of the of the design plan. Consideration of all of the issues raised by stakeholders has been included in the process of plan preparation and the outcome recorded on the attached consultation record. I confirm that we have informed all stakeholders about the extent to which we have been able to address their concerns and, where it has not been possible to fully address their concerns, we have reminded them of the opportunity to make further comment during the public consultation process.

7. I undertake to obtain any permissions necessary for the implementation of the approved Plan.

Signed Signed.....
Forest District Manager Conservator

District Moray & Aberdeenshire Conservancy Grampian

Date **Date of Approval:**.....
Date approval ends:.....

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1. Introduction

Refer to Map 1: Location.

1.1 Location

Lesmoir is 65 ha of farm land acquired by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) in 2011 respectively, in open market sales. The site is located in a rural area of Rhynie and is located close to the existing Forestry Commission managed forest of Clashindarroch.

Lesmoir is mainly surrounded by fields, pasturelands and other open areas. It is adjacent to the A941 road that serves a handful of farms and residential properties. This road links Rhynie and Dufftown. It is also located at the bottom of the Tap O'Noth which is a well-known local walking area.



Photo 1: View from / of Tap O' from / of the site

1.2 Setting and Context

Lesmoir lies within a rolling land form which mainly includes improved grazing. The lower parts have been cultivated in the past and therefore, the quality of the soil has been improved with fertilisers.

In terms of the Moray & Aberdeenshire Forest District Strategic Plan, Lesmoir is located in an area identified with potential for:

- improving functional habitat networks;
- the production of high quality timber;

A more detailed analysis of the national and local context for how this site might best support the integrated land management objectives of the Scottish Government can be found in Appendix 1.

□ Moray & Aberdeenshire Forest District Strategic Plan (Public consultation) - <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fesplans>

1.3 Land Management Objectives

The purpose and objectives for managing this land have been identified following a review of:

- the physical context and existing land use;
- the land management objectives already established by statutory bodies;
- the physical capability of the land;
- the locational objectives identified in the Moray & Aberdeenshire Forest District Strategic Plan;
- the views expressed by the public and statutory stakeholders

Analysis of the available information has led to the **primary objectives** for this site which are:

- 1.** To grow a quality timber crop, either conifer or broadleaf, where appropriate;
- 2.** To increase the area of woodland cover using broadleaves where appropriate and to grow these productively if the site conditions allow. We will implement a productive broadleaf strategy to ensure a steady expansion of the broadleaf woodland on Estate where it is compatible with sound silviculture in accordance with the FCS strategic plan. We intend to manage at least a quarter of our expanding broadleaf woodlands to produce quality hardwoods and woodfuel.

Additional **secondary objectives** for the future management of Lesmoir have been identified and prioritised:

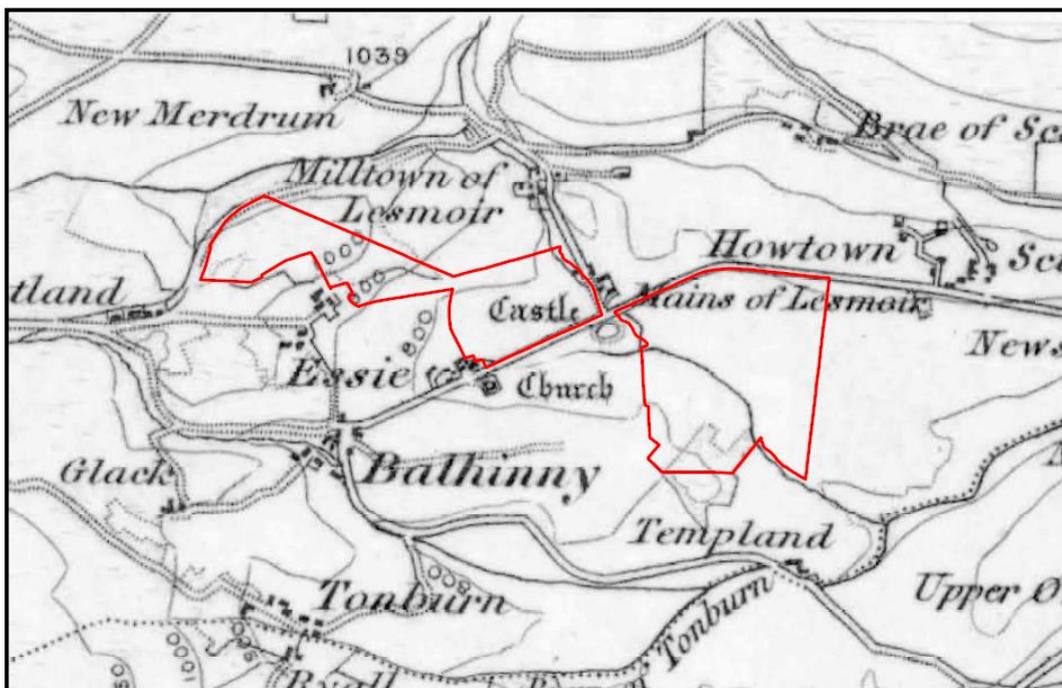
1. Integrate sensitively the new plantation in the landscape.
2. Establishing new riparian broadleaved woodland that will mitigate the effects of diffuse pollution into the river Deveron while retaining access for fishing interests ;
3. Maintaining open space on the hill tops, to reflect the visual prominence of the hill, maintain hill grazing options and views from the access route and also extend the holdings habitat diversity. The information and analysis which follows explains the reasons why these objectives have been identified and prioritised.

2. Background information

2.1 History of the site

Prior to FCS's acquisition of Lesmoir in 2011, this area was mainly permanent pasture and arable lands. When originally purchased Lesmoir did not include any property or outbuildings. The site is therefore completely open.

In the more distant past it is clear from the extracts of the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps published in 1874 the area has been associated with agriculture.

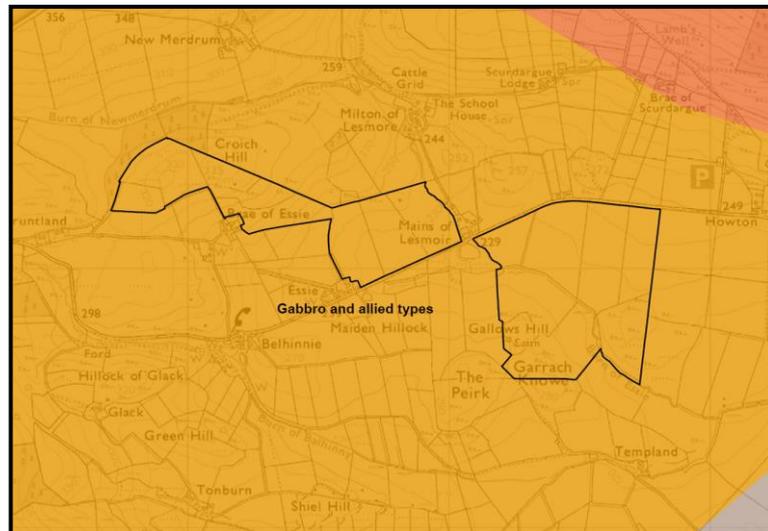


Map 1: Lesmoir, the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps published in 1874.

2.2 Physical site factors

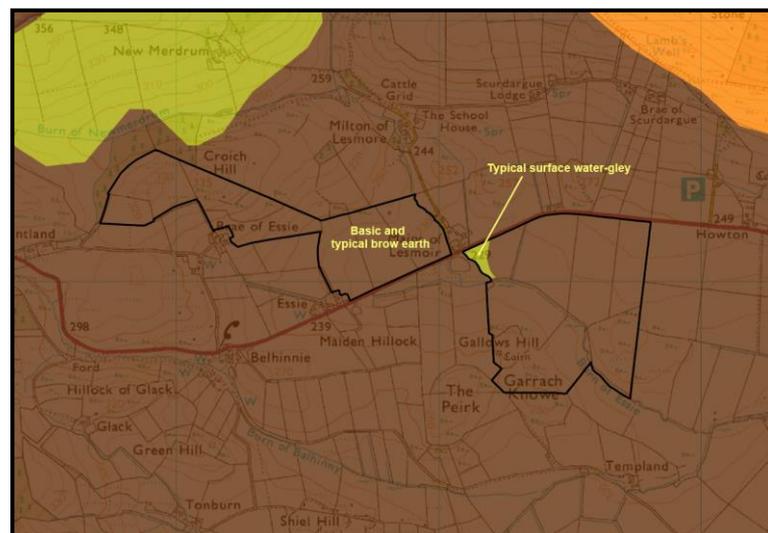
2.2.1 Geology, Soils and topography

Geology - According to the British Geological Survey Geological Map of the UK the plan area is underlain by gabbro and allied rocks. This rock gives rise to overlying soils with high to medium nitrogen availability.



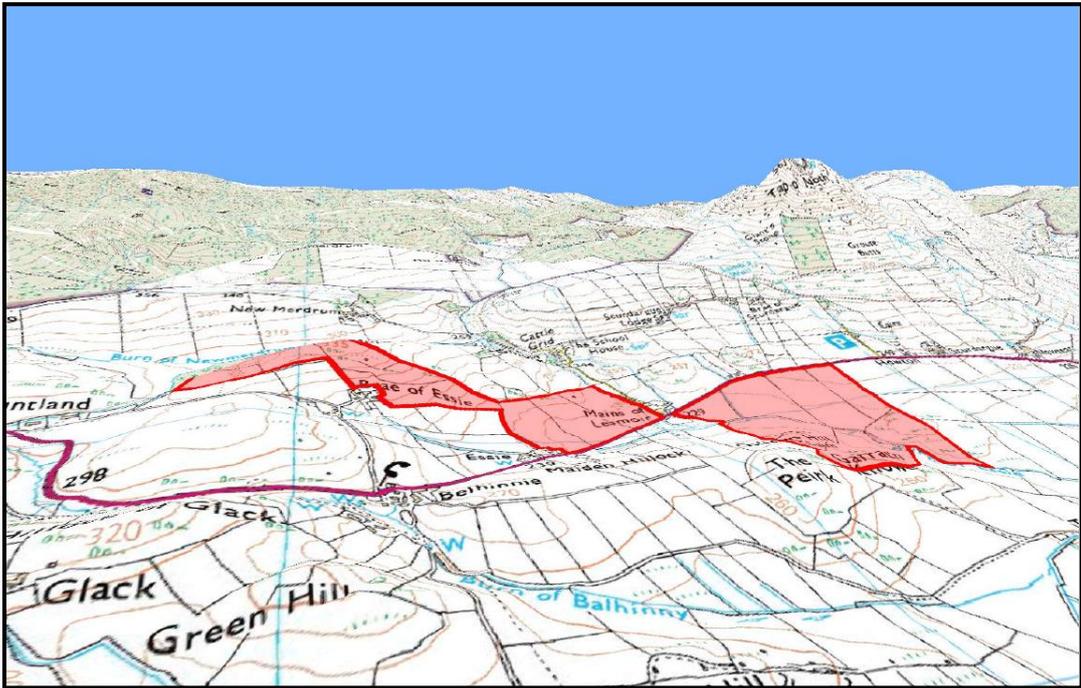
Map 2: Mains of Lesmoir geology. Extracts from British Geological Survey, 50k Geology map of the UK.

Soils – According to the soil survey maps of this land management plan area it is almost completely underlain with brown earth. Parts of the site are also covered with a mixture of peat and brown earth and are therefore slightly drier and poorer particularly at the top of the slopes. A very small area of the site is covered with typical surface water-gley.



Map 3: Soils in Lesmoir; map based on an interpretation of the John Hutton Institute soil maps.

Topography – Lesmoir has an altitudinal range of 220-335 m. The site is all enclosed farmland on level to moderately sloping land.



Map 4: Lesmoir topography

2.2.2 Water

Lesmoir is situated in the catchment of the river Deveron. SEPA has designated this catchment as a priority catchment. "Priority catchments are river and coastal catchments that are currently failing to meet water quality standards, and which will not achieve improved water quality without a focused management approach. The River Deveron catchment has several designations relating to the importance of its waters which, coupled with a range of diffuse pollution effects, make restoring and protecting it a high priority. The main pressures in the catchment include: agriculture pollution, sewage treatment works discharges, septic tanks, morphology and abstraction. "The SEPA publication "Diffuse Pollution Priority Catchment: Technical Summary- River Deveron" is available from SEPA website and contains more details of the issues and how these are being addressed. The land management proposals in this plan (See section 4) will be designed to contribute to the alleviation of the issues raised.

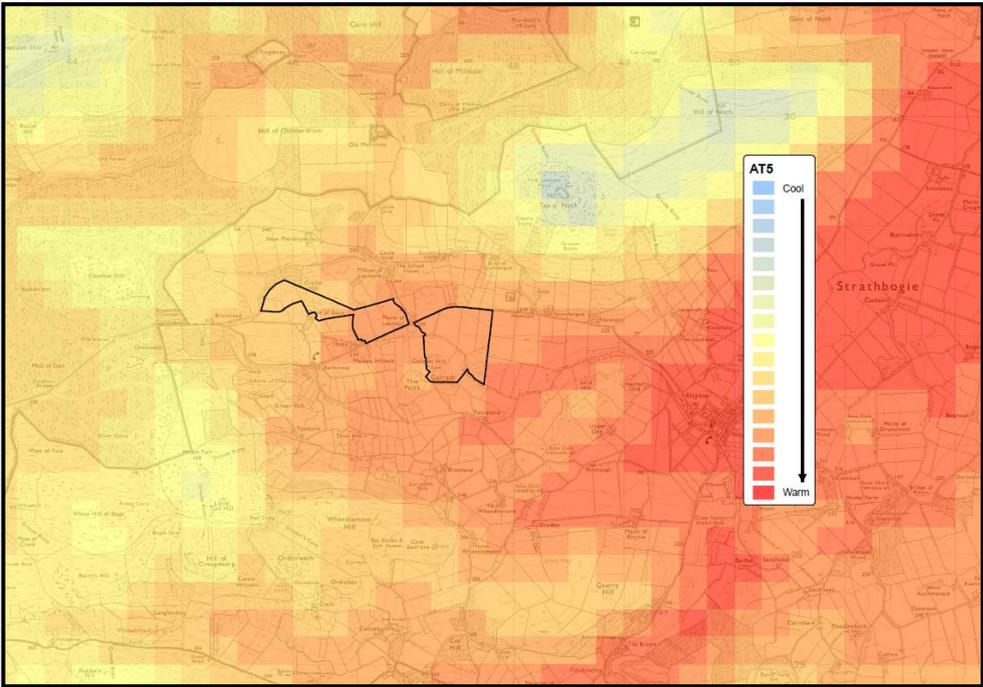
The Burn of Essie runs along and crosses over the site. National policies will be applied in order to protect the water resource and to improve the water quality. These policies can be found into the UK forestry standard guideline, Forest and water.

2.2.3 Climate

According to the Ecological Site Classification (ESC) protocol, the climate at Lesmoir is cool, between wet and moist and mainly sheltered. Four climatic factors are used to define the climate for any given location. These are warmth, wetness, continentality and windiness. Continentality has the least impact so is dropped from the overall climate zone designation.

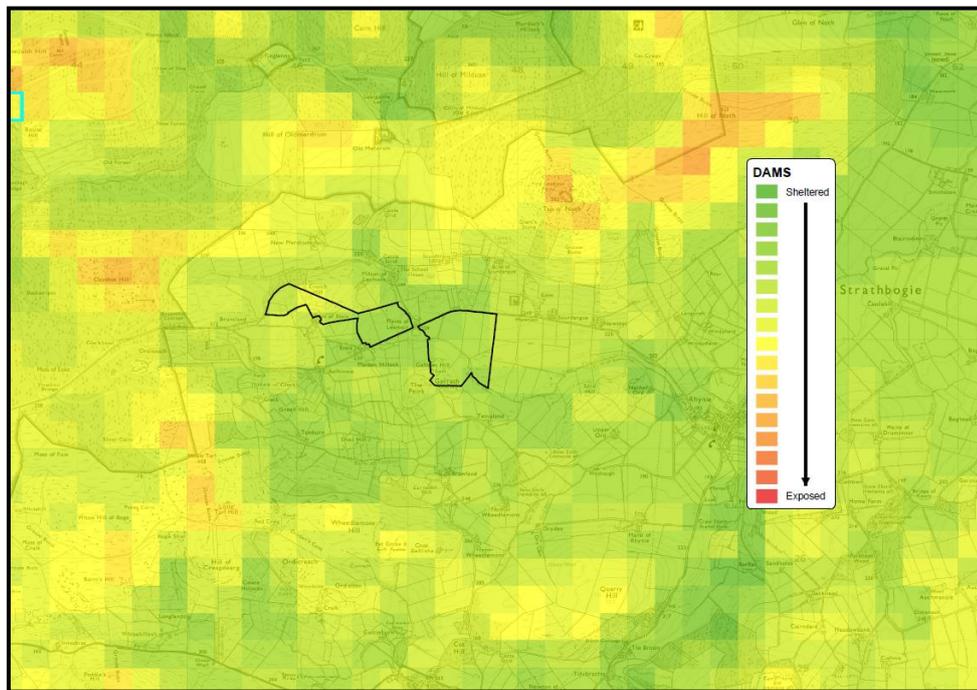
The climate data for Lesmoir from interrogating the ESC is:

	AT5	DAMS	MD
Range	912 - 1032	10 - 14	65 - 91



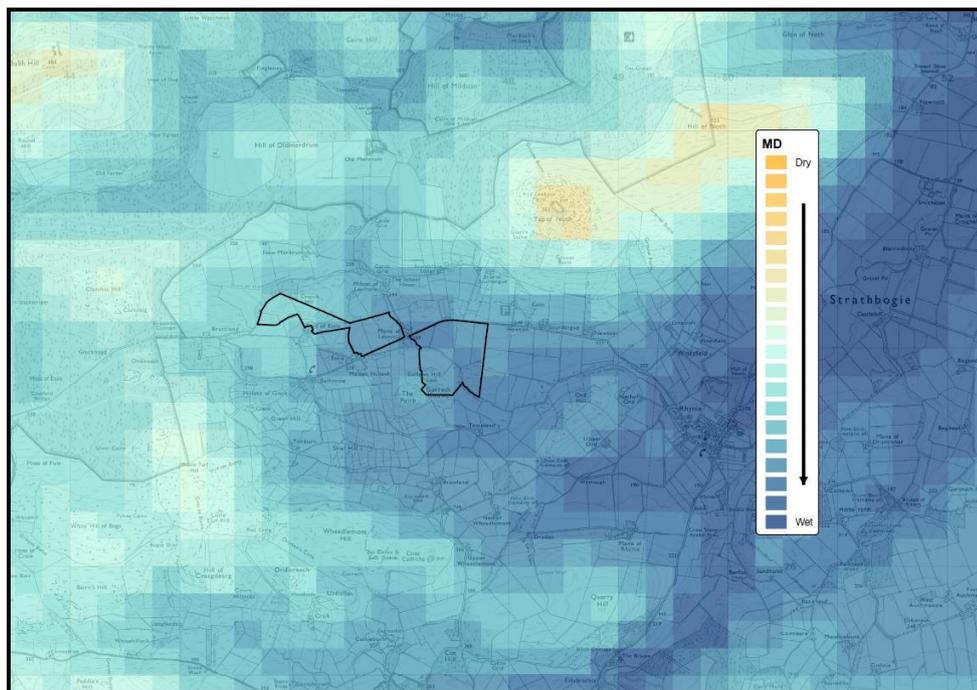
Map 5: Accumulated total of the day-degrees above the growth threshold temperature of 5° at Lesmoir

AT5 is the accumulated total of the day-degrees above the growth threshold temperature of 5°, which provides a convenient measure of summer warmth. The results for AT5 place Lesmoir in the cool zone.



Map 6: Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring at Lesmoir

DAMS is the Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring. This represents the amount of physically damaging wind that forest stands experience in the year. The range of DAMS is from 3 to 36 and windiness is the most likely limiting factor to tree growth at higher elevations in Britain. The results place Lesmoir between being sheltered or moderately exposed site.



Map 7: Moisture Deficit at Lesmoir

MD is the Moisture Deficit for the area. Moisture deficit reflects the balance between potential evaporation and rainfall and therefore emphasises the dryness of the growing season (rather than the wetness of the winter or whole year). These results place Lesmoir on the boundary between the “wet” and “moist” zones.

These results will be used to help assist in the choice of tree species in the land management proposals for the site (see section 4). Each tree species has tolerances for these and other factors and they can be used to identify species suitable for the site conditions.

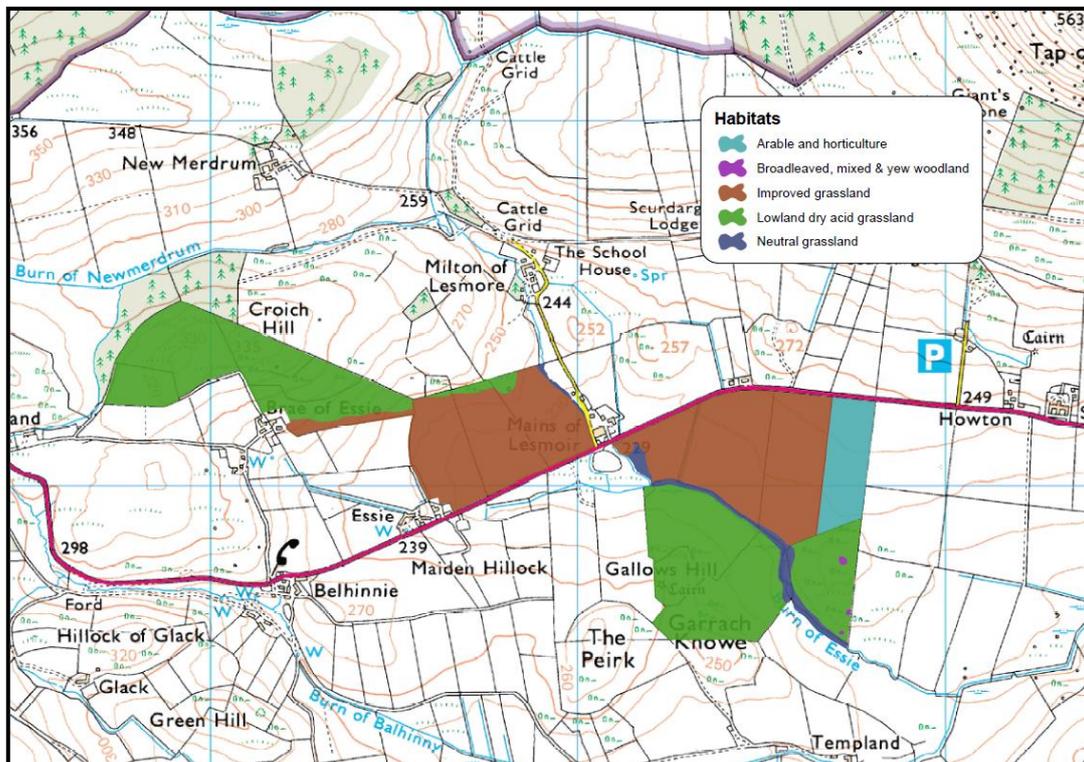
Further information on these criteria and the application of ESC can be found in Forestry Commission Bulletin 124 - An Ecological Site Classification for Forestry in Great Britain.

2.3 Biodiversity and environmental designations

There is no particular biodiversity issue for this site. Both SNH and RSPB have been consulted for the site.

Report of the vegetation of Lesmoir has been undertaken by an ecologist in March 2011, and the report can be seen at appendix 3.

These reports do not identify particular habitat.



Map 8: Habitats in Lesmoir

2.4 The existing land use

There has been a requirement for a better understanding of the inherent capabilities of land in Scotland for a range of different uses, especially agriculture. In the mid 1960s, the Macaulay Institute developed a Land Use Capability (LUC) system which was based upon a series of guidelines that allowed soil maps and other landscape and climatic information to be interpreted into land classification maps. In the early 1980s the LUC system was further developed and became the Macaulay Land Capability for Agriculture (LCA) classification. This is now the official agricultural system widely used in Scotland by agriculturalists, planners, estate agents and others as a basis for land valuation.

The LCA classification is used to rank land on the basis of its potential productivity and cropping flexibility. This is determined by the extent to which the physical characteristics of the land (soil, climate and relief) impose long term restrictions on its use.

Land capable of supporting **Arable Agriculture** (Class 1 to Class 3.1), often referred to as prime agricultural land, is capable of being used to produce a wide range of crops. The climate is favourable, slopes are no greater than 7 degrees and the soils are at least 45cm deep and are imperfectly drained at worst. This land is highly flexible for other uses as well, such as biofuel crops and woodland, although current management may make other options, such as heathland restoration, difficult in the short term.

Land capable of supporting **Mixed Agriculture** (Class 3.2 to Class 4.2), is capable of being used to grow a moderate range of crops including cereals (primarily barley), forage crops and grass. Grass becomes predominant in the rotation in class 4.2, whilst other more demanding crops such as potatoes can be grown in class 3.2. The climate is less favourable than on prime land, slopes up to 15 degrees are included and many soils exhibit drainage limitations.

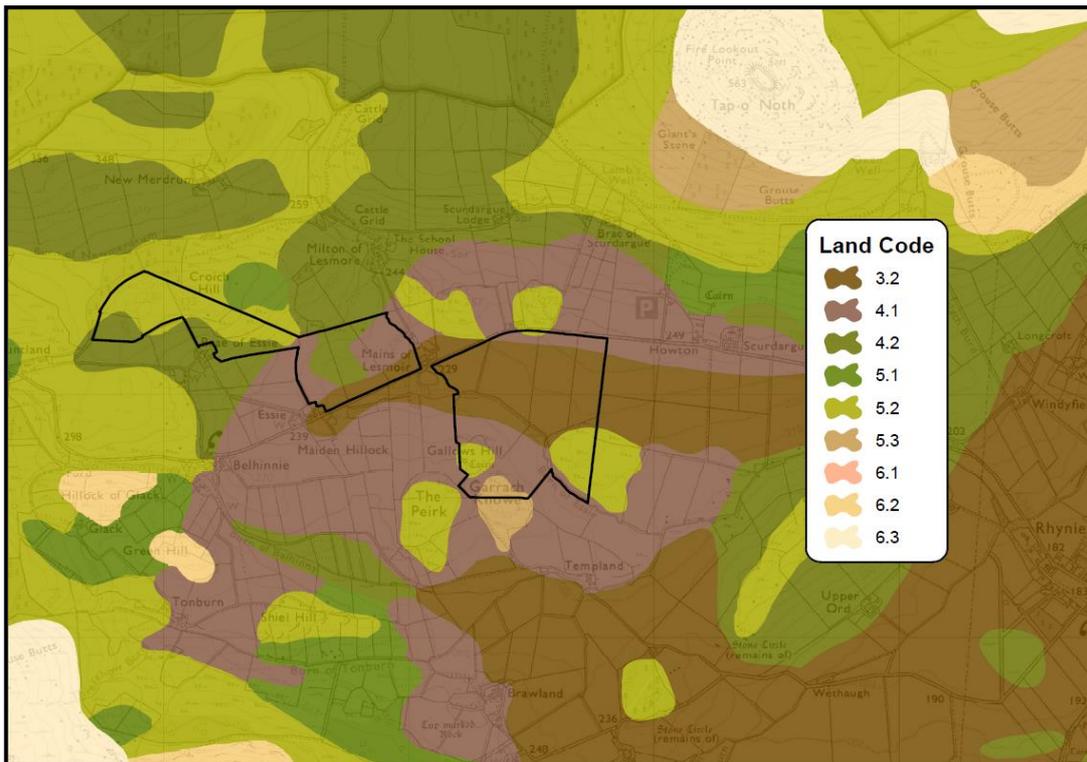
Land capable of supporting **Improved Grassland** (Class 5.1 to Class 5.3), has the potential for use as improved grassland. A range of different limitation types, either operating singly or in combination, can restrict the land capability to this class. These limitations include climate, slope wetness, and often a heterogeneous pattern of conditions that render even occasional cultivation unsuitable. Land which has had this potential for improvement exploited is much more productive than land which remains in its unimproved state.

Land capable of supporting only **Rough Grazing** (Class 6.1 to Class 7), has very severe limitations that prevent sward improvement by mechanical

means. This land is either steep, very poorly drained, has very acid or shallow soils and occurs in wet cool or cold climate zones. In many circumstances, these limitations operate together. The existing vegetation is assessed for its grazing quality (Class 6.1 is of high grazing value for example but class 7 is of very limited agriculture value). Nonetheless, this ground often has a high value, for example in terms of storing carbon in its organic soils and supporting rare species and habitats.

Land classification

The land’s classification according to the James Hutton Institute’s (JHI) 1:50,000 land capability map is shown in the table and figure below.



Map 9: Land capability for agriculture, James Hutton Institute 1:50,000.

Land classification	Lesmoir	
	Area (Ha)	%
3.2	23.77	36.4
4.1	16.38	25.1
4.2	8.86	13.6
5.2	15.03	23.1
5.3	1.16	1.8

Lesmoir is mainly covered by soils with a 3.2 and 4.1 land capability (36.4% and 25.1%). Concerning forestry, this capability allows to grow a wide variety of trees, including broadleaves such as sycamore, oak or beech. It is possible in such soil conditions, to grow quality timber with broadleaves.

When the proportion of the different land capabilities at Lesmoir are compared to the parishes of Rhynie and Auchindoir and Kearn, across whose boundaries the site is located and close to, it is clear that the capability of the land is about average for the surrounding areas. Nevertheless, we can notice that the quality of the lands is slightly better on the site than on the parishes.

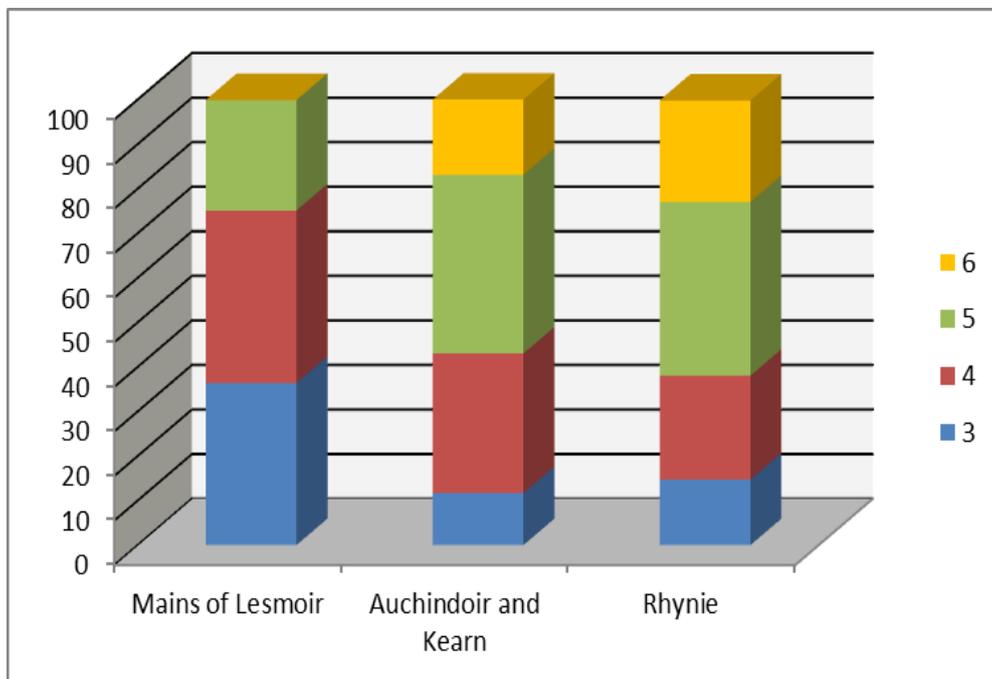
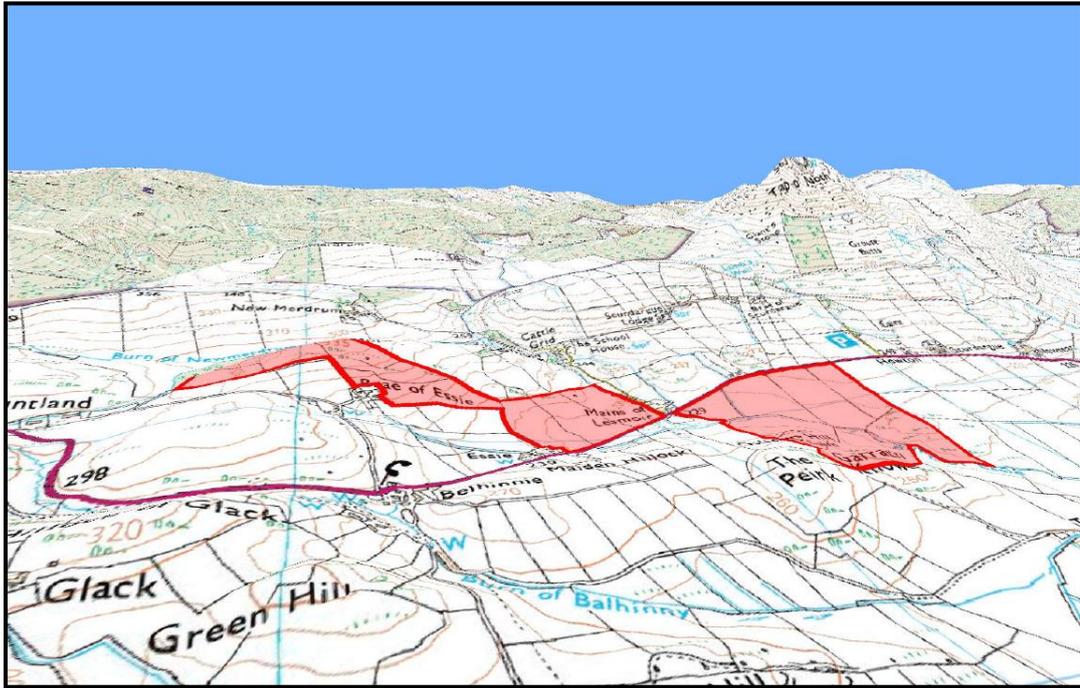


Figure above: Proportion of land capability (according to JHI) in Lesmoir.

2.5 Landscape and land use

2.5.1 Landscape character and value



Map 10: Lesmoir topography.

According to the Moray and Nairn landscape character assessment (LCA) carried out by SNH, Lesmoir lies within an area categorised as farmed moorland edge. This is a relatively small area (approximately 4100 ha) of traditional landscapes of the Highlands as described by SNH. It contains three landscape character areas: it is essentially a transition landscape between the Moorland Plateaux and the Agricultural Heartland and shares many characteristics with both. The area is a remote upland farming landscape where arable fields are mostly absent, and the presence of moorland plateaux presents a looming backdrop to most views. It is generally a small scale landscape characterised by an intricate pattern of fields and woods. Lesmoir is essentially an agricultural landscape where livestock farming within small enclosed fields predominates.

This area has no woodland cover. The main existing woodland is the forest of Clashindarroch. Small and scattered broadleaf clumps, coniferous and shelterbelt blocks woodlands are also present around the site usually as block plantings within the field pattern.

There is a strategy for felling and restocking woodlands that is at an appropriate scale and form, which reduces the existing harshness of plantation when compared to the gently undulating landform. Where there

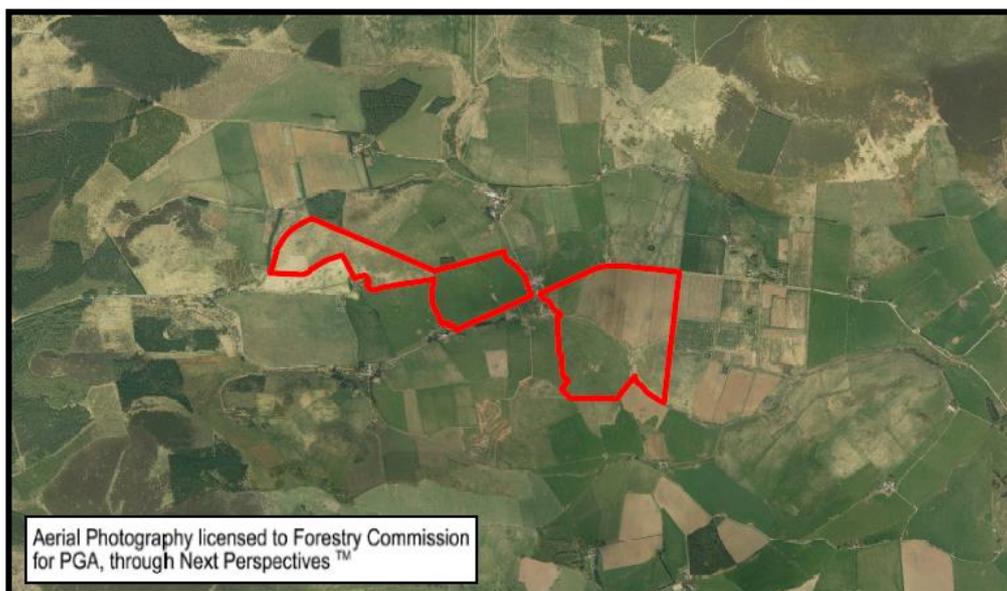
are geometric issues they will be ameliorated by selective felling, extensions of the planted area and the grading of the margins.

Lesmoir is located within a large scale landscape with a simple vegetation pattern and mainly rural population. It is a landscape where visual diversity is somewhat limited. Some forms of landscape change would offer opportunities for enhancement, particularly adding broadleaf woodlands.

It is considered that woodland creation on Lesmoir would improve the overall landscape by increasing the diversity of tree species and age structure and thus diversifying both landscape texture and colour. At a local scale due consideration will be given to the lines of site and shading of neighbouring properties, the road and railway line.

2.5.2 Neighbouring land use

The aerial photograph below shows how Lesmoir is almost completely surrounded by agriculture. Small blocks of woodland are also present along the site.



Map 11: Aerial view of Lesmoir

2.6 Social factors

2.6.1 Recreation

There is no high recreation issue within the site. No paths or tracks cross over Lesmoir.

The main focus for recreation in this area of Moray and Aberdeenshire forest district is at Clashindarroch forest. This area has a number of waymarked walks and mountain bike and skiing trails.

The views from Tap O'Noth and the A941 will be considered. Indeed, Lesmoir is directly located within these views.

2.6.2 Community

The surrounding area is largely made up of scattered homes and farms rather than specific villages. The larger population centre of Keith is located a few miles to the east. Lesmoir is important in regards to the local community due to its proximity to the A941, the Tap O'Noth and the Clashindarroch.

The community councils for this area is the one of Tap O'Noth. Views from these community councils and other members of the local community have been sought during the preparation of the plan. Letters were written to all known neighbours, both contiguous and in the local vicinity, all known local interest groups and statutory consultees.

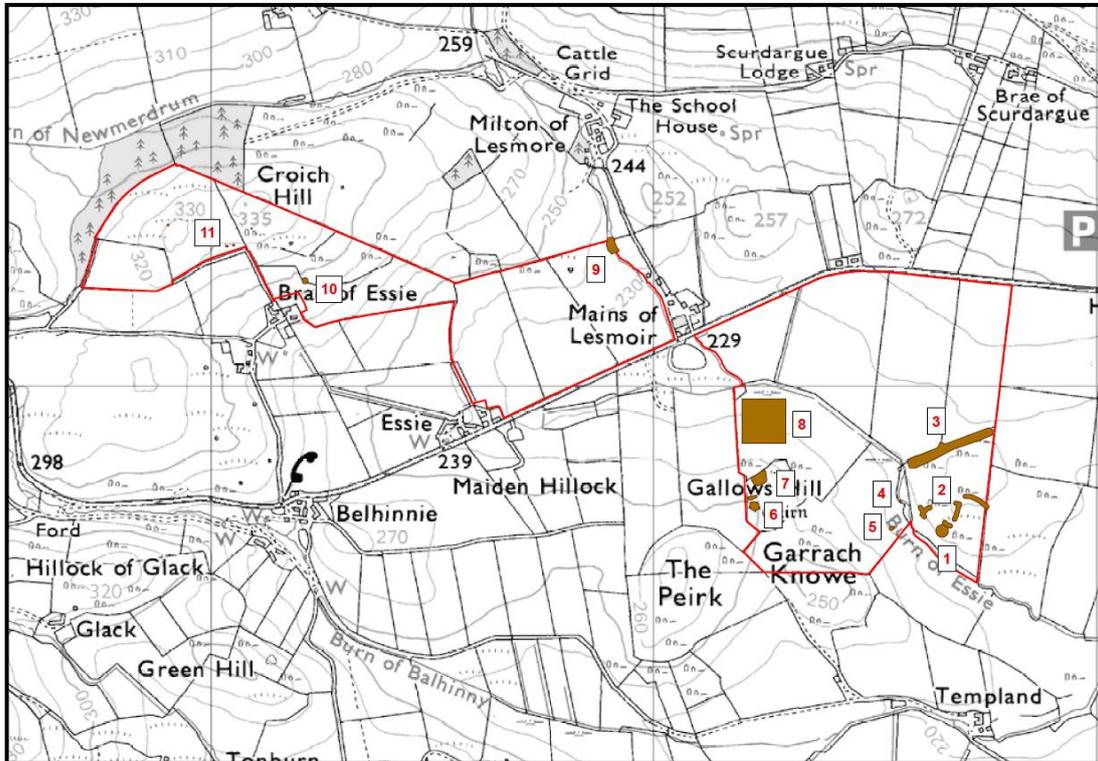
A diversity of opinion has been received during this process and these are all recorded in the consultation record in appendix 2. These have all been considered during the preparation of this plan.

The issues raised during the information gathering process will be taken into account and used to establish the objectives for the site in drawing up the land management proposals (see section 4).

2.6.3 Heritage

According to Historic Scotland's records there is one historic environment asset of national importance. A Cairn is located the Gallows Hill which belongs to the site and is classified as scheduled

monument. A buffer zone of 20 meters between the monument and the new woodland will be implemented in order to protect and conserve the Cairn. There are also a number of non-scheduled monuments which are shown on the map below, and their significance will be taken into account as part of the planning.



ID number	Features
11	Building
3, 6, 8	Cairn
5	Clearance
11	Cup marked stone
2	Dyke
7	House/Enclosure
4	Ford
9	Mill pond, Dam
10	Mound
1	Quarry
7	Standing stone

Map 12: Monuments on the site.

3. Analysis and Concept

3.1 Analysis and concept table

The information gathered in the previous section (2.0 - Background information) has been analysed for its relevance to the plan. This has informed the design concept plan which is based on the land management objectives (section 1.3).

The results of this process are presented in the table below. This has been set out against the national themes of the FES strategic directions document and the issues highlighted in the Moray & Aberdeenshire strategic plan.

Theme-priority	Key Commitments	District specific Action	Analysis	Proposed Action
Healthy (Medium)	We will help the Estate adapt to climate change and become more resilient to pressure.	The District will continually make good use of Ecological Site Classification to closely fit species to sites, and take into account the anticipated effects of climate change.	The climate of the site is predicted to change in the future.	Use the ESC and its' built in predicted future climate models to help guide the selection of species suitable for planting.
	We intend to manage at least a quarter of our expanding broadleaf woodlands to produce quality hardwoods and woodfuel.	We will increase our productive broadleaf resource by planting a further 700ha by 2019. Where economically viable, we will actively manage our broadleaf resource to secure silvicultural improvement and commercial return.	This plan area has been identified as having potential to establishing productive broadleaves, to growing hardwood quality timber and producing woodfuel.	Plant broadleaves and manage them to secure silviculture improvement and commercial return.

Productive	We will support the Scottish Government's woodland expansion policy.	Through appropriate acquisitions, we will help deliver Scottish Government woodland expansion targets in accordance with the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group report.	Lesmoir can contribute to the Scottish Government's woodland expansion target of 10,000 ha per year.	Identify areas where land can be removed from agriculture and planted with trees that will expand the woodland cover in the area.
Cared For	We are committed to maintaining the best open habitats in good ecological condition.	The District will continue to review all open ground management on a regular basis to ensure it is appropriate.	Lesmoir presents some interesting open habitat situated for example around watercourses.	Identify the best open areas for their biodiversity and environmental value; maintain or enhance their ecological condition.
	We will safeguard archaeological sites through our planning and management, and recognise special places and features with local cultural meaning	We will ensure our significant designated heritage assets are managed according to Monument Management Plans agreed with Historic Scotland.	A scheduled monument (Cairn) with a high archaeological value is present within the site.	A 20 meters buffer zone of open land will be left between the cairn and the new plantation.

4. Land Management Proposals

See future habitats and species map

4.1 Existing woodland

A survey of the existing vegetation types at Lesmoir was undertaken in March 2011. No existing woodland has been identified on the site.

However, blocks of woodland are located around the site. These woodlands have been visited in order to identify species growing in the area and also to identify potential species to plant at Lesmoir. Concerning the broadleaf species, beech, sycamore, willow, rowan and alder are growing well around the site. Sitka spruce seems also adapted to the ecological conditions of the area.

4.2 New woodland

New woodland species and plantations will depend on the decision made after public consultation.

Appendices

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Appendix 1 – The national and local context of Lesmoir.

National context

Lesmoir was purchased to support the objectives of the Scottish Government as set out in “**The role of Scotland’s National Forest Estate and strategic directions 2013-2016**”. This document describes the role of and strategic directions for Scotland’s National Forest Estate (NFE).

The NFE is one of the biggest opportunities for the Scottish Government to directly implement the principals laid out in its **Land Use Strategy**. The Land Use Strategy aims to deliver multiple benefits from Scotland’s countryside. Lesmoir, as part of the NFE, provides an opportunity to implement the Scottish Government’s climate change commitments by harnessing the ability of trees to sequester carbon. It can provide additional environmental services including contributing to flood mitigation and ensuring the NFE, and its biodiversity, is robust and able to adapt to future climate change.

Within this context the role of the NFE can be described in terms of the services it has the potential to provide:

- Supporting services such as primary production, nutrient dispersal and cycling;
- Provisioning services such as timber, food (farmed and wild), water, minerals, energy (hydropower, wind energy and biomass fuels);
- Regulating services such as carbon sequestration and climate regulation, flood management, purification of water and air, detoxification of contaminated sites and biological reservoirs for crop pollination and pest and disease control;
- Cultural services around recreational experiences, cultural, intellectual and spiritual inspiration and scientific advancement.

□The role of Scotland’s National Forest Estate and strategic directions 2013-2016

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fesplans>

□Getting the best from our land – A land use strategy for Scotland -

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Countryside/Landusestrategy>

The Rationale for Woodland Expansion □ lays out the Scottish Government’s thinking on how woodland expansion can best increase the

delivery of public benefits from Scotland's land. The document identifies a number of woodland creation priorities for Scotland:

- Helping to tackle greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon sequestration, timber and fuel production.
- Restoring lost habitats and adapting to climate change. Forest habitat networks and new native woodlands.
- Helping to manage ecosystem services. Sustainable flood management and protection of soil and water resources.
- Underpinning a sustainable forest products industry. Consistent and reliable timber supply for timber processing and wood fuel investments.
- Supporting rural development. Supporting local businesses and farm diversification.
- Providing community benefits. Provision of welcoming and well-managed woodlands in and around communities and where health and community need is greatest.
- Enhancing urban areas and improving landscapes. Improving derelict, underused and neglected land, improving degraded or unsightly environments and diversifying farmed landscapes.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a specific duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity and to have regard to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy[□]. That strategy, published in 2004, aims to achieve by 2030 a landscape where, amongst other things: "Organisms can move, feed, reproduce and disperse effectively, and are better able to adapt to changing circumstances of land use and climate change".

Habitat networks are one of the main ways identified to achieve this. Habitat networks are patches of habitat that are physically or functionally connected, so that dependent species are able to move and/or disperse between patches to create interlinked populations. The development of networks should increase the resilience of species populations to threats, which is especially important for species which are slow colonisers and/or those living in small fragmented populations.

- The Scottish Government's Rationale for Woodland Expansion - <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7FWEQ5>
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/05/19366/37239>

Networks should help wildlife adapt to climate change, both by encouraging more robust populations that can survive change in situ, and by making it easier for species to colonise new areas if current sites become unsuitable. The predicted pace of climate change means that networks will need to be developed and functioning over the next few decades to relieve the growing pressures on our wildlife.

As there are no specific national policies for agriculture in Scotland it is difficult to link the management of the agricultural elements at Lesmoir to an overarching national strategy. However the background to the industry is that livestock numbers have been dropping since 2005. This is as a direct result of the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**. With CAP currently under review it is not possible to know what impact this could have on the future for the agricultural industry in Scotland.

Local context

The strategic directions document for the NFE was published in 2013 and lays out in broad terms the story of, nature of, and vision for the NFE. District strategic plans are the next level down in the planning framework. These set out at the district level how different parts of the local NFE will contribute to the national picture. The new **Strategic Plan for Moray & Aberdeenshire District** has recently completed public consultation.

The Strategic Plan for Moray & Aberdeenshire will drive our Land Management Plans (LMP) and integrate varied land management priorities to maximise public benefit, and optimise ecosystem service provision. Ecosystem services include such varied objectives as conserving vulnerable species, to maintaining a supply of timber and biomass, and providing the largest area for recreational provision in Scotland.

SEPA has designated the **river Deveron a priority catchment** . "Priority catchments are river and coastal catchments that are currently failing to meet water quality standards, and which will not achieve improved water quality without a focused management approach. The River Deveron catchment has several designations relating to the importance of its waters which, coupled with a range of diffuse pollution effects, make restoring and protecting it a high priority.

Moray & Aberdeenshire Forest District Strategic Plan (Public consultation) - <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fesplans>

River Deveron Catchment - http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning/dp_priority_catchments/river_deveron_catchment.aspx

The main pressures in the catchment include: agricultural pollution, sewage treatment works discharges, septic tanks, morphology and abstraction.” The SEPA publication Diffuse Pollution Priority Catchment: Technical Summary – River Deveron¹ is available from the SEPA website and contains more details of the issues and how the issues are being addressed. As Lesmoir is located on the banks of watercourses it plays in the improvement of the catchment.

SNH, in partnership with local authorities and other agencies have carried out a National Programme of **Landscape Character Assessment**. This programme aims to improve knowledge and understanding of the contribution that landscape makes to the natural heritage of Scotland. It considers the likely pressures and opportunities for change in the landscape, assesses the sensitivity of the landscape to change and includes guidelines indicating how landscape character may be conserved, enhanced or restructured as appropriate.

Aberdeenshire Council has a **Forest and Woodland Strategy** □

The key aim of the strategy is:

To ensure the sustainable management of the woodlands and forests of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City, creating a balanced landscape where woodlands and forests, add to people’s quality of life and wellbeing, contribute to the local economy, provide opportunities for recreation and tourism and protect and enhance biodiversity and the environment.

This means:

- encouraging multi-benefit forestry in new planting and through re-structuring
- balancing forestry against other land uses
- protecting sensitive areas; and
- identifying priority areas for expansion of a variety of forest and woodland types

□ Forest and Woodland Strategy for Aberdeenshire & Aberdeen City - http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/natural/trees/forest_strategy05.pdf

The section on creating new woods and forests states that:

Identifying priority areas where woodland expansion might be targeted is a key role of this Strategy. Looking at the whole forest resource in the North East, it should be possible to achieve benefits to landscape, habitat and recreation whilst producing commercial timber. Whilst expecting a range of proposals for new planting to come forward, specific types of new planting are encouraged by this Strategy to work towards the aims identified. Although woodland is an important feature of the North East, the total area of woodland (14%) is low compared with many of our European neighbours where woodland cover is often greater than 30%.

Moray Council has recently withdrawn its forestry strategy due to its age and it has no plans to replace it in the short term.

Feedback from **stakeholders and the local community** has been sought via written correspondence.

Letters were written to all known neighbours, both contiguous and in the local vicinity, all known local interest groups and statutory consultees. The results of the feedback received are presented in appendix 3.

Appendix 2 – Consultation record

Statutory Consultee	Date contacted	Date response received	Issue raised	Forest District Response
SNH	21 July 2015 By email	21 July 2015 By email	Thank you for your consultation. We have no issues to raise. Many thanks	
RSPB	21 July 2015 By email	10 Aug 2015 By email	We do not hold records for this area and therefore are not aware of any priority bird species in the areas outlined on the map. However, there is the potential that the site may be used by wading bird species, such as lapwing and curlew which are birds of conservation concern and should be considered in any planting proposals.	The management proposed for the site still includes open spaces with potentially available for wading bird needs.
SEPA	10 July 2015 By post	13 August 2015 By e-mail	Standard template reply received. No specific recommendations for these sites.	UK forestry standards for water will be followed during the planning process and all operations.
Tap O'Noth Community Council	21 July 2015 By post		No reply to date	
Historic Scotland	24 August 2015 By post		Thank you for your consultation which we received on 25 August. We have checked our records and can confirm that the Scheduled Monument known as Gallows Hill Cairn, 460m SSE of Mains of Lesmoir (SM11576), which is now visible as a mound, lies within the boundary of the Mains of Lesmoir land and forest area.	An unplanted area should extend for at least 20m beyond the outermost recognised feature of the site as it is specified in the Forestry Commission's 'Forests and the Historic Environment Guidelines'.
NFUS	10 July 2015 By post		No reply to date	
SGRPID	10 July 2015 By post		No reply to date	

STFA	10 July 2015 By post		No reply to date	
Neighbour	10 July 2015 By post	03 August 2015 By e-mail	<p>Thank you for your notification of your intention to formulate the land management plan for the Mains of Lesmoir. As a resident whose property directly borders the proposed planting area I would value being involved in consultations.</p> <p>Although I have no objection per se, I would appreciate some peace of mind regarding a couple of points. Firstly, our private water supply comes to the surface immediately south of Brae of Essie, is the proposed planting likely to affect groundwater levels? Secondly, what type of tree species and density are proposed, particularly surrounding our property.</p>	<p>The water supplies will not be planted with trees and a buffer zone of open land between the water supplies and the trees will be respected. The quantity of water available will therefore not be affected. Concerning the species, as I have just started to work on the plan I am not able at this stage to know what species will be planted.</p> <p>Nevertheless, a public consultation will take place in the next few weeks in Rhynie. This will be the occasion to discuss this kind of issue with the neighbours and other stakeholders. I will keep you informed about the date of this consultation and it will also be advertised in the local newspaper.</p>
Neighbour	10 July 2015 By post	31 July 2015 By e-mail	<p>I would be grateful if you could keep me informed of your planning in the future. I would like to know where you are intending accessing the planned forest from the road. If you will be including forestry tracks which would be open to the public to walk on. Do you know whether the trees you plant will block mobile phone reception for those of us living on this side of them? As a local resident I definitely would like to be involved in the process.</p>	<p>I will keep you informed about the next stages of the planning process for this area by e-mail.</p> <p>As I have just started the plan, I have no information about the future configuration of the site and therefore, no information about the access yet. A public consultation will be realised in few months. I will let you know about the date. The consultation objective is to discuss the objectives of the plan with the public and the local communities showing drafts of the maps of the future species for example.</p> <p>Concerning the mobile phone reception affected by trees: none of the local houses will be completely surrounded by trees and therefore the signal should not be affected. Furthermore, we carefully consider habitations around our site in our plans and usually leave open spaces around them. This is also one of the subjects which will be discussed during the public consultation.</p>

Appendix 3 - Farm Habitat Survey

SUMMARY REPORT ON THE VEGETATION OF LESMOIR

ABERDEENSHIRE, MARCH 2011

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March 2011

A survey commissioned by Forest Enterprise Scotland

INTRODUCTION

In this survey, commissioned by Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) and carried out on 18th March 2011, the vegetation of Lesmoir Farm, 4 km W of Rhynie, Aberdeenshire, was mapped at the scale of 1:10,000 using the FES UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) classification. The approximate centre of the site is at Ordnance Survey grid reference NJ 469 282. The site has an area of 67 hectares and an altitudinal range of 220-335 m. The site is all enclosed farmland on level to moderately sloping land.

The fieldwork took one day to complete. Physical access around the site was generally easy. There was some snow cover at the time of survey, but this was not so thick or extensive as to prevent the classification of the vegetation. Each mapped vegetation unit (polygon) was given a code number which is labelled on the 1:10,000 map. The FES UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) classification data for each polygon were entered onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I also recorded the appropriate National Vegetation Classification (NVC) communities and presented this information as a separate NVC map and also as NVC codes in the spreadsheet. In the NVC coding a hyphen (e.g. U4b-MG6) indicates vegetation floristically intermediate between two NVC types.

This brief report provides a summary account of the vegetation and botanical interest of the surveyed areas. The 1:10,000 map and the habitat data spreadsheet are provided separately but the map and the main table of habitat codes are also copied into this report for convenience (see Map 1 and Table 1 at end of report).

VEGETATION

Site description

For the purpose of description it is convenient to divide the site into three parts:

1. Western part (mainly acid grassland)

This land occupies part of Croich Hill, rising to 335 m. It is a series of well-drained, gently to moderately sloping fields whose vegetation is mainly acid grassland (U4), and improved grassland (MG6), with very small areas of coarse neutral grassland (MG1). The north-easternmost field also contains many rocks. The U4 acid grassland is mainly of the semi-improved and rather species-poor U4b type, but there is also quite a good extent of more semi-natural U4a and, around and just N of the hilltop, small areas of U4c (containing much *Helianthemum nummularium*) and U4e (with *Vaccinium myrtillus* and *V. vitis-idaea*). The U4a/c/e is mainly on ground with many rocks. The U4b, MG1 and MG6 are on smoother ground with few or no rocks.

Botanical interest here is mostly low, but the U4a, U4c and U4e grasslands are of moderate richness and the U4c includes several plants of rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium*.

2. Central part (mainly improved grassland)

This consists mainly of three fields of species-poor, agriculturally-improved *Lolium perenne* grassland (MG7), but along the northern edge there is rougher, semi-improved U4b acid grassland containing many rocks, and in the north-east there is wetter, rushy MG10a grassland and scattered rocks along the course of a small stream and a small area of coarse neutral grassland (MG1).

Botanical interest here is low.

3. Eastern part (mainly improved and acid grasslands)

This part of the site is species-poor improved grassland (MG6 and MG7) in its northern half, and acid grassland (U4) in the south. The acid grassland varies from rather species-poor and evidently semi-improved U4b on smooth, gently sloping ground, to slightly richer, more semi-natural U4a on gently to moderately sloping ground with scattered rocks. Near the SE end *Viola lutea* was found in some of this U4a.

Damp neutral grasslands with rushes (MG10) and *Deschampsia cespitosa* (MG9) occur in a narrow zone along to the Burn of Essie. There are patches of nettles (OV25) scattered among some areas of U4b grassland and (as OV24) in one place just S of the A941 road. In the NW corner of this part of the site – just S of the farm buildings of Lesmoir – is an area with several mature trees (ash, sycamore and elm) forming a small extent of broadleaved woodland (W8e) and some adjacent artificially disturbed ground.

Botanical interest in this eastern part of the site is mostly low, but the occurrence of *Viola lutea* is of interest.

UK BAP Priority habitats found in this survey

Two UK BAP Priority habitats were seen during this survey:

- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland (NVC U4). Widespread, and most extensive in the western and eastern parts; small extent in the central part.
- Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (NVC W8e). Very small extent just south of Lesmoir farm buildings.

However, it should be noted that the U4 grassland and W8 woodland here could almost equally well be considered not to belong to these two priority habitats. U4 is classed as Lowland Dry Acid Grassland where it occurs in enclosed farmland in lowland situations. Occurrences in unenclosed upland areas are treated as non-priority habitat. Here at Lesmoir the U4 is within enclosed fields but on grounds of location and climate it could equally well be regarded as upland. The W8e is a disturbed example of this woodland NVC type, and is really just a group of trees close to a farm. Its ground habitats include bits of machinery and vegetation with species indicative of ground disturbance (including *Aegopodium podagraria*, *Lamium purpureum* and *Senecio jacobea*).

NVC types recorded in this survey

W8e *Fraxinus excelsior-Acer campestre-Mercurialis perennis* woodland, *Geranium robertianum* sub-community: ash, sycamore and elm trees with some elder, and ground vegetation including *Urtica dioica*, *Dactylis glomerata*, *Galium aparine*, *Anthriscus sylvestris*, *Aegopodium podagraria*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Lapsana communis*, *Lamium purpureum*, *Senecio jacobea* and the moss *Brachythecium rutabulum*. Small extent just S of Lesmoir farm buildings.

W23 *Ulex europaeus-Rubus fruticosus* agg scrub: small patches of gorse scrub; small patches among U4 grassland in the east of the site.

MG1a *Arrhenatherum elatius* coarse grassland, *Festuca rubra* sub-community: coarse, dry grassland with swards of *Dactylis glomerata*, *Holcus lanatus* and smaller amounts of other species such as *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Ranunculus repens* and *Senecio jacobea*. Small areas in the western and central parts of the site.

MG6 *Lolium perenne-Cynosurus cristatus* pasture: improved grassland with abundant *Lolium perenne*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Trifolium repens* and smaller amounts of other species such as *Cerastium fontanum*, *Urtica dioica* and *Dactylis glomerata*. Occupies some fields in the west of the site and just to the SE of Lesmoir.

MG7 *Lolium perenne* leys and related grasslands: species-poor, agriculturally improved swards of *Lolium perenne* with small amounts of other species such as *Ranunculus repens*, *Rumex obtusifolius*, *Senecio jacobea*, *Bellis perennis*, *Trifolium repens* and *Cirsium vulgare*. Occupies fields in the central and eastern parts of the site.

MG9 *Holcus lanatus-Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland: coarse, damp grassland of *Deschampsia cespitosa* and *Holcus lanatus* with other species including *Juncus effusus*, *Rumex acetosa*, *R. obtusifolius*, *Ranunculus ficaria*, *Urtica dioica*, *Anthriscus sylvestris* and the mosses *Brachythecium rutabulum* and *Kindbergia praelonga*. Found along the Burn of Essie in the eastern part of the site.

MG10a *Holcus lanatus-Juncus effusus* rush-pasture, Typical sub-community: damp rushy grassland in which tussocks of *Juncus effusus* grow abundantly with other species including *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Montia fontana*, *Rumex acetosa*, *R. obtusifolius* and *Geum rivale*. Occurs along streams in the eastern and central parts of the site.

U4a *Festuca ovina*-*Agrostis capillaris*-*Galium saxatile* grassland, Typical sub-community: short grassland in which swards of *Agrostis capillaris* contain many other species including *Festuca ovina*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Galium saxatile*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Veronica chamaedrys*, *V. officinalis*, *Luzula multiflora*, *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Conopodium majus*, *Viola riviniana*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Rumex acetosa*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Achillea millefolium* and an abundance of mosses including *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Hylcomium splendens*, *Pseudoscleropodium purum*, *Polytrichum commune*, *Dicranum scoparium*, *Thuidium tamariscinum* and *Hypnum cupressiforme*. Locally extensive in the western and eastern parts of the site.

U4b *Festuca ovina*-*Agrostis capillaris*-*Galium saxatile* grassland, *Holcus lanatus*-*Trifolium repens* sub-community: similar to the U4a described above, but less species-rich (and evidently semi-improved), with little or no *Festuca ovina*, *Galium saxatile*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Veronica officinalis*, *Luzula multiflora*, *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Viola riviniana*, *Hylcomium splendens*, *Dicranum scoparium* and *Thuidium tamariscinum*, and with some *Lolium perenne* and *Trifolium repens*. Widespread and common at this site.

U4c *Festuca ovina*-*Agrostis capillaris*-*Galium saxatile* grassland, *Lathyrus montanus*-*Stachys betonica* sub-community: similar to the U4a described above but with many plants of *Helianthemum nummularium*; found in only one place, on the summit of Croich Hill in the west of the site.

U4e *Festuca ovina*-*Agrostis capillaris*-*Galium saxatile* grassland, *Vaccinium myrtillus*-*Deschampsia flexuosa* sub-community: similar to the U4a described above but with species including many plants of *Vaccinium myrtillus* and *V. vitis-idaea*; found in only one place, on a N-facing slope just N of the summit of Croich Hill in the west of the site.

OV24 *Urtica dioica*-*Galium aparine* community: dense *Urtica dioica* mixed with other species including *Galium aparine*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Lolium perenne* and the moss *Brachythecium rutabulum*; small patch just S of main road to E of Lesmoir farm buildings.

OV25 *Urtica dioica*-*Cirsium arvense* community: patches of *Urtica dioica* mixed with other species including *Cirsium arvense*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Lolium perenne*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Holcus lanatus* and *Cardamine flexuosa*. Small patches among U4b grassland in the east of the site.

OV28 *Agrostis stolonifera*-*Ranunculus repens* community: vegetation containign an abundance of *Ranunculus repens* and *Urtica dioica*, mixed with other species including *Stellaria media*, *Epilobium montanum*, *Heracleum sphondylium*, *Aegopodium podagraria*, *Rumex obtusifolius* and the moss *Brachythecium rutabulum*; small extent in association with MG10a rushy grassland just W of small stream SE of Lesmoir farm buildings.

Disturbed ground: bare ground and stones mixed with dumped material; small extent, just S of Lesmoir farm buildings; flora among stones includes *Geranium lucidum*.

Rock: Rocks scattered among grasslands in various parts of the site.

BIRDS AND MAMMALS SEEN IN THIS SURVEY

Fauna seen during this survey were buzzard, woodpigeon, skylark, meadow pipit, starling, carrion crow, fieldfare, mistle thrush, robin, great tit, blue tit, long-tailed tit, chaffinch and yellowhammer.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT FUTURE MANAGEMENT

If tree-planting is to be carried out here, native tree and shrub species could include the following:

in the areas of U4: oak (either species), birch (either species), rowan, hazel, aspen, hawthorn and juniper

in the areas of MG1, MG6 and MG7: oak (either species), birch (either species), ash, wych elm, rowan, hazel, aspen, hawthorn and blackthorn

in the areas of MG9 and MG10: downy birch, ash, wych elm, rowan, alder and willows

If tree-planting takes place it would be worth considering keeping a zone of 10 m or so width unplanted along the northern edge in the central and western parts of the site, so that when they grow taller the trees do not cast significant shade onto the agricultural land to the north in such a way as to adversely affect agriculture there (e.g. through leading to taller, thicker, coarser grass swards or damper ground more vulnerable to poaching). This need not apply in the east, where the A941 road forms an open zone immediately north of the site boundary.

COMMENTS ON THE SURVEY METHOD

As in previous surveys of this type, these comments were requested by FES as part of the contract.

In general the survey method was found to be straightforward. The habitat classification is a broad one compared with the NVC, and for the most part there were no problems allocating vegetation and habitats to their appropriate types. Vegetation types can vary on a very small scale, so it is not surprising that many of the polygons are mapped as containing mosaics of two or more habitats. Within these mosaic polygons the percentage cover figures for each component can only be estimates: two surveyors would probably each record slightly different sets of percentages.

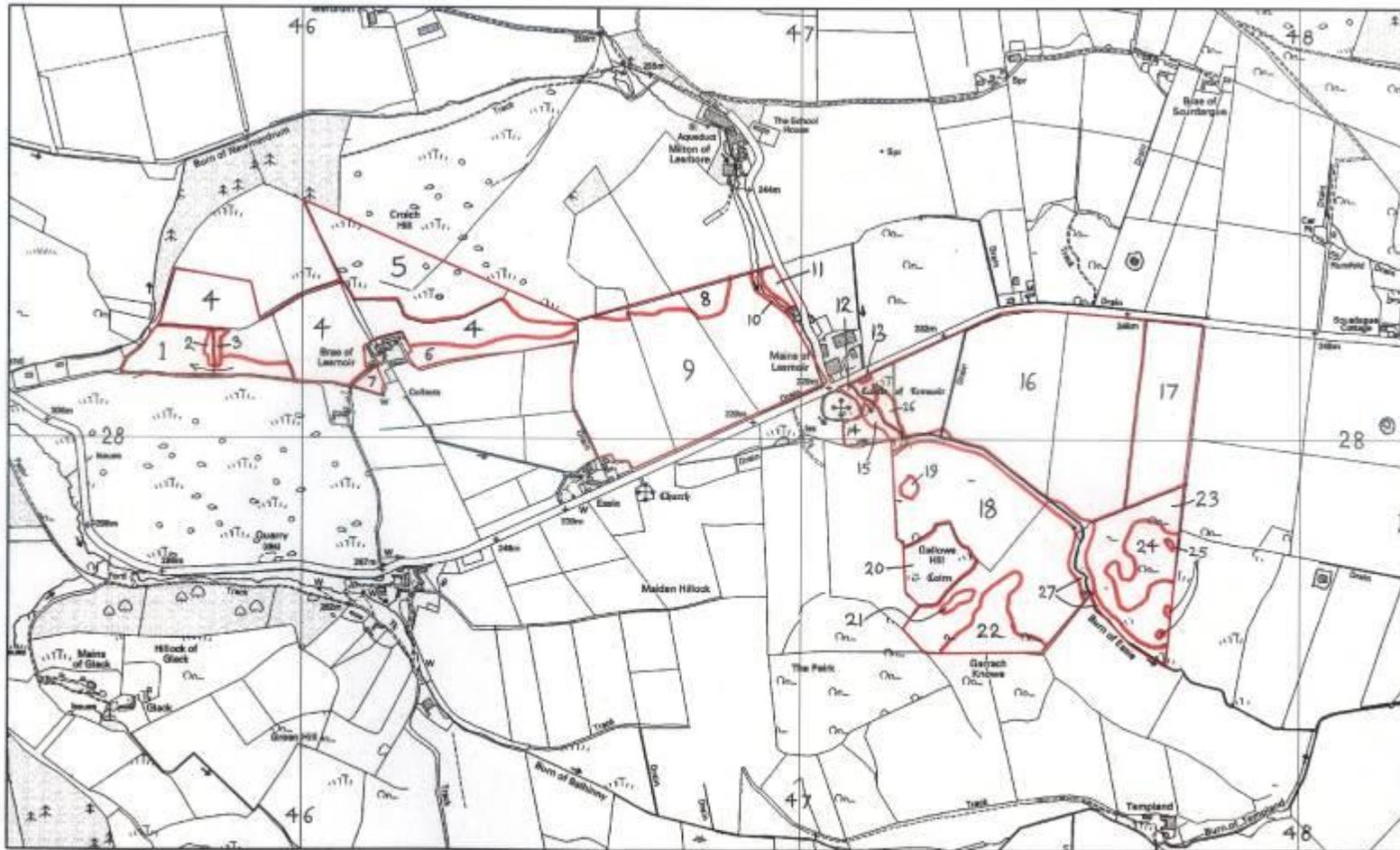
The separation between MG6 improved grassland and U4b semi-improved grassland in the enclosed fields on the low ground was not consistently very well marked. These two grassland types grade into each other here, including intermediate forms. There is also some subtle variation here between MG1 coarse grassland and U4b semi-improved grassland (again including intermediate vegetation).

No aerial photograph was provided by FES, but aerial photography found on the internet (Google Maps) helped to define some vegetation boundaries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This survey was commissioned by Forest Enterprise Scotland. The contract details – including the provision of the base map of the site – were arranged by Philippa Murphy at the FES office at Huntly. I thank Jackie Cumberbirch (FES Conservation Ranger) for accompanying me during the fieldwork;

she and the owners at nearby Milton of Lesmore provided useful information about snow cover and weather conditions in the area during the few days before the survey took place – this was very helpful and prevented me from turning up on an earlier date when there would have been too much snow to carry out the survey properly.




Forestry Commission Scotland
 Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba
 a4 landscape

**MORAY and ABERDEENSHIRE
 FOREST DISTRICT**

Title:

Date :

Scale: 1:10,000

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Map 1 Habitat map of Lesmoir, Aberdeenshire, NJ 469 282. Mapped by Ben Averis on 18th March 2011. Habitat codes for polygons are in Table below.

Table 1 Habitat data for each polygon at Lesmoir, Aberdeenshire, NJ 469 282, 18th March 2011 (for polygon code numbers see Map 1)

Polygon Number	Habitat 1	% 1	NVC 1 (i)	NVC 1 (ii)	NVC 1 (iii)	Habitat 2	% 2	NVC 2 (ii)	NVC 2 (ii)	NVC 2 (iii)	Comments for habitats	Threats to priority habitats (i)	Threat (i) level	Threats to priority habitats (ii)	Threat (ii) level	Threats to priority habitats (iii)	Threat (iii) level	Comments for threats	Management prescriptions
1	improved grassland	100	MG6									Under grazing	Low	Forestry - tree planting	Low			Undergrazing and tree-planting have the potential to lead to U4 becoming taller, losing some small acid grassland indicator species and developing towards MG1, but this 'threat' is not serious because the U4 is of relatively low botanical interest (apart from rockrose on hilltop in W) and classification as this priority habitat is a borderline case - it could almost equally well be regarded as upland acid grassland (non-priority habitat).	If tree-planting takes place it would be worth considering keeping a zone of 10 m or so width unplanted along the northern edge, so that when they grow taller the trees do not cast significant shade onto the field to the north in such a way as to adversely affect agriculture there.
2	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	100	U4b																
3	neutral grassland	100	MG1a																
4	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	100	U4b																If tree-planting takes place it would be worth considering keeping a zone of 10 m or so width unplanted along the northern edge, so that when they grow taller the trees do not cast significant shade onto the field to the north in such a way as to adversely affect agriculture there.
5	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	98	U4a	U4c	U4e	inland rock	2												
6	improved grassland	100	MG6																
7	neutral grassland	100	U4b-MG1																

Polygon Number	Habitat 1	% 1	NVC 1 (i)	NVC 1 (ii)	NVC 1 (iii)	Habitat 2	% 2	NVC 2 (ii)	NVC 2 (ii)	NVC 2 (iii)	Comments for habitats	Threats to priority habitats (i)	Threat (i) level	Threats to priority habitats (ii)	Threat (ii) level	Threats to priority habitats (iii)	Threat (iii) level	Comments for threats	Management prescriptions
8	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	97	U4b			inland rock	3												If tree-planting takes place it would be worth considering keeping a zone of 10 m or so width unplanted along the northern edge, so that when they grow taller the trees do not cast significant shade onto the field to the north in such a way as to adversely affect agriculture there.
9	improved grassland	100	MG7																
10	neutral grassland	98	MG10			inland rock	2												
11	neutral grassland	100	MG1a																
12	LOWLAND MIXED DECIDUOUS WOODLAND	100	W8e								Very small extent, and not typical woodland - mainly mature trees with rather disturbed ground beneath.								
13	other tall herb & fern tall ruderal	100	OV24																
14	built up areas & gardens	100																	
15	neutral grassland	50	MG10a			other tall herb & fern tall ruderal	50	OV28											
16	improved grassland	100	MG6	MG7							Mostly MG7 but in W includes moderately improved U4b-MG6 grassland. Fence running N-S at NJ 4750 2800 is now gone.								
17	arable and horticulture	100																	
18	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	100	U4b																
19	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	50	U4b			other tall herb & fern tall ruderal	50	OV25											

Polygon Number	Habitat 1	% 1	NVC 1 (i)	NVC 1 (ii)	NVC 1 (iii)	Habitat 2	% 2	NVC 2 (ii)	NVC 2 (ii)	NVC 2 (iii)	Comments for habitats	Threats to priority habitats (i)	Threat (i) level	Threats to priority habitats (ii)	Threat (ii) level	Threats to priority habitats (iii)	Threat (iii) level	Comments for threats	Management prescriptions	
20	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	99	U4b	U4a		inland rock	1													
21	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	50	U4b			other tall herb & fern tall ruderal	50	OV25												
22	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	98	U4a			inland rock	2													
23	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	100	U4b																	
24	LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND	98	U4a			inland rock	2													
25	broadleaved, mixed & yew woodland	100	W23																	
26	neutral grassland	100	MG9	MG10																
27	neutral grassland	100	MG9	MG10																