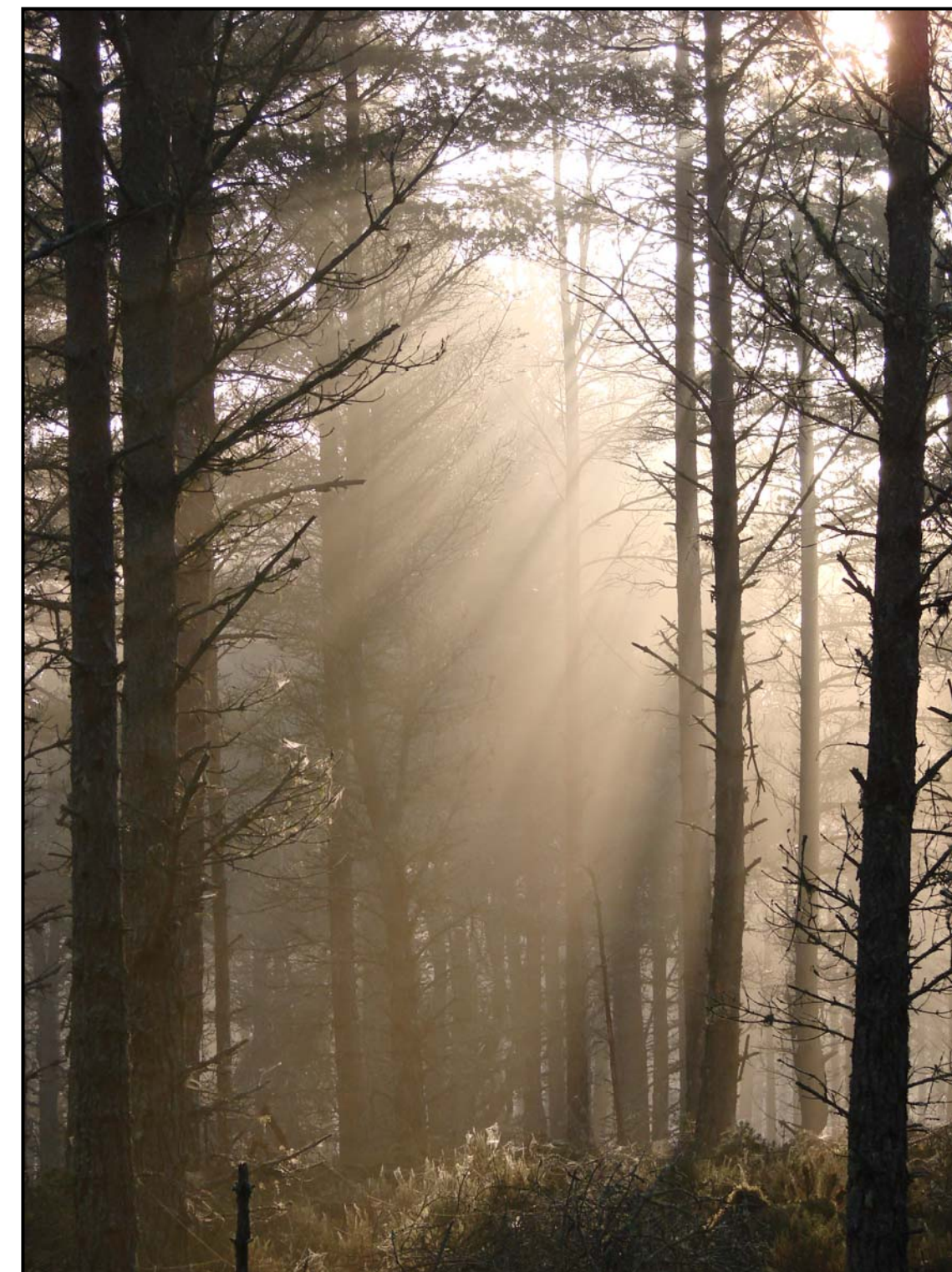


2.0 Analysis of previous plan

A scoping meeting was held on 2nd May 2013 involving key Forest District staff, to analyse the aims of the previous plan and to agree objectives for the FDP brief. More detail of this meeting can be found in **Appendix 4 – Internal Scoping**. Subsequent meetings were held in with key FD staff following the drafting of the FCS National Strategic Directions document. The previous plan’s objectives were broadly similar across the four areas and this is one of the reasons that the plan area merger has been undertaken. The key objectives for each plan area are detailed in the table below:

Forest > Objective	Morangie 030/516/083	Scotsburn 030/516/288	Struie 030/516/287	Morrish More 030/516/248
Timber production	Development of ATC	Development of ATC	Development of ATC	Use of ATC DNB crops reduced
Biodiversity	Manage SSSI's Protect capercaillie Restore PAWS	Manage SSSI's Protect capercaillie Restore PAWS	Restore and expand ancient woods.	Restore and expand ancient woods.
Water quality	Comply with guidelines	Comply with guidelines	Comply with guidelines	Comply with guidelines
Heritage	Ensure each SAM has a plan and work within guidelines	Ensure each SAM has a plan and work within guidelines	Increase interp and access to Fort site.	N/A
Landscape	Use ATC to increase diversity. Enhance the view from Dornoch Bridge (Morangie Face)	Use ATC to maintain forest cover and increase age diversity.	Use ATC to increase age diversity. Enhance the NSA by using ATC.	Use ATC to maintain forest cover and increase age diversity.
Social	Communicate with consultees & stakeholders.	Communicate with consultees & stakeholders.	Communicate with consultees & stakeholders.	Communicate with consultees & stakeholders.
Recreation	Maintain current facilities.	Increase useage by the public if resources allow.	Increase useage by the public if resources allow.	Reduce motorbike use and consider beach link path.



Sunlit pine crop in Lamington Forest Photo G Findlay FCS

Original Plan Objective	Did plan implementation meet the objective?	Does the objective remain desirable or achievable?
<p>Timber production – develop the use of ATC (use of low impact silvicultural systems designed to increase age and species diversity)</p>	<p>Two natural events occurred during the previous plan period that significantly altered management across the plan area. In 2005 and 2006 gales caused widespread windthrow across the forest and DNB infection spread rapidly through some areas resulting in crop decline and mortality. Timber production programmes have therefore altered considerably, with felling being driven largely by approved amendments. Thinning programmes were delayed to allow full recovery and marketing of timber from operations associated with these events.</p>	<p>The objective of increasing the area under LISS (ATC) remains as an important target. The decline of crops infected with DNB is difficult to predict and although clearfell must remain as the preferred method of treatment, soils and climate are suitable for expansion of LISS. ‘Conversion’ is still at a relatively early stage given crop ages so the full benefit to forest structure will only be partially realised in the next plan period. As the FDs production profile settles volume from thinnings and other ATC sources can be reprogrammed.</p>
<p>Timber production – reduce areas of DNB-infected crops.</p>	<p>Approved amendments have largely allowed NHFD to manage infected crops in a systematic fashion. Large areas of declining crops have been harvested before timber was unrecoverable. Annual surveys continue and will allow management to respond appropriately, reducing programmed felling where crops either recover or cease to decline.</p>	<p>Forest health remains one of the major challenges for management and planning to reduce the areas of infection - pathogen host – is crucial in the absence of biological or chemical control methods. However this is only suitable because annual intensive surveys allow management responses to remain flexible, informed and appropriate.</p>
<p>Biodiversity – maintain or enhance the status of SSSI’s.</p>	<p>All SSSIs and Natura 2000 sites are in favourable condition, however the status of capercaillie is not improving with the reasons for this not clearly understood.</p>	<p>Not only a legal obligation but a key aspiration, continuing to protect the designated sites in our care will remain a priority of management.</p>
<p>Biodiversity – restore PAWS, enhance and expand native woodland areas and enhance capercaillie habitat.</p>	<p>Work is well under way in terms of felling across PAWS areas, due largely to windblow/forest health issues. A full PAWS survey of the plan area has been undertaken and identified full restoration as the priority. We now have the information to make appropriate proposals for NVC woodland types. Much work was undertaken to enhance capercaillie habitat including baseline survey, cotton grass planting, fence removal and marking, small scale habitat works and extensive predator control.</p>	<p>Again a legal obligation but a key aspiration, continuing to enhance habitat for woodland grouse species and general biodiversity gain will remain a priority of management. As ATC programmes begin again the forest structure will become more diverse and the increase in broadleaf woodland will also benefit important species. Given Morangie’s new status as a red squirrel stronghold the need to consider habitat improvement is even higher than previously.</p>
<p>Water Quality – comply with the Forest and Water Guidelines.</p>	<p>The operations conducted during the period all complied with the Forest and Water Guidelines relevant at the time. During the period the fifth edition of guidelines was published by FCS as part of the suite of documents supporting the UK Forestry Standard.</p>	<p>One of the policy areas that has developed most over the plan period, riparian and aquatic habitat protection is now recognised as a major contributor to climate change mitigation and in the Highlands plays a significant role in the local economy. A full review of proposals is appropriate and the former targets are now recognised as too limited.</p>
<p>Heritage – ensure SAM plans are reviewed and work towards improving the access and interpretation for Dounie Fort.</p>	<p>All SAM plans within the plan areas have been reviewed and the required work has been undertaken in line with Historic Scotland approvals. In addition the FD Environment team have adopted a new GIS based recording system to allow improved identification and management of all heritage sites. During the period a joint project with the Edderton community saw the construction of a £30k trail up to Dounie Fort including interpretation and a car park. This was funded by the</p>	<p>The target of having 100% SAM plan coverage remains appropriate to allow the implementation of appropriate conservation work. Improving interpretation will be challenging under current financial restrictions however where a need can be identified and suitable external partners found it should remain as a desirable target.</p>

	community who tapped into windfarm community benefit funding.	
Original Plan Objective	Did plan implementation meet the objective?	Does the objective remain desirable or achievable?
<p>Landscape – Use ATC to introduce species and age diversity and enhance the Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area.</p>	<p>For reasons previously stated, the full ATC programme was not undertaken and felling coupe shapes were largely driven by management responses to windthrow and forest health. Where possible coupe boundaries were shaped to reduce their impact on the landscape.</p>	<p>The proximity of the plan area to the Dornoch Firth National Scenic area and the place it occupies centrally, surrounded by centres of population and encircled by the A9 and the B9176 – two major tourist routes means that landscape improvement should remain as a high priority for future management.</p>
<p>Landscape – Improve the ‘Morangie Face’ view, looking south from the Dornoch Bridge.</p>	<p>As stated above, the plan was not fully implemented in regard of this objective as managing the impact of natural events took precedent.</p>	<p>The prominence of the forest in the view from the south bound carriageway of the A9 around the Dornoch Bridge means that this target remains relevant</p>
<p>Social – communicate and consult with stakeholders.</p>	<p>The Morrich More plan and the Struie Forest plan both had mid term reviews during the plan period and the appropriate level of consultation was undertaken. In addition, when amendments were required the level of consultation determined by conservancy was undertaken. However this is another area where policy and practice are developing and improving. We recognise that we should be striving to consult and include an increasing number of stakeholders not only during planning consultations but throughout the life of the plan. The work with the Edderton community to construct recreation facilities and the achievements made in consultation with the Fishery Boards in terms of riparian woodland planning are examples of good practice adopted by the FD. Morangie has been the site of increasing education and social inclusion programmes for the past five years including work with Tain High School and Invergordon High School on Rural Skills programmes and work with offender rehabilitation programmes such as APEX Scotland.</p>	<p>An area of development we are seeking to increase our interaction with communities and this target is now too limited in scope. It will be fully reviewed and updated in this plan.</p>
<p>Recreation – Maintain current facilities and increase public useage as resources allow.</p>	<p>Work to construct new trails and car parks at Aldie Burn, Dounie and along part of the Scotsburn Drove Road were undertaken during the period and further improvements to the car park at Aldie Burn are currently under way. Aldie Burn will be upgraded to a Fieldfare Trust specification of all-ability access shortly. The trail at Tain Hill was also resurfaced and improved. Although budget restrictions saw the ending of the popular tePooka Theatre event, other events have been introduced including the now annual ClicSargeant Memorial Cycle attracting over 300 participants.</p>	<p>Resources available for the development of recreation facilities, and the running of public events, is severely restricted at present and budgets may be cut further. However opportunities for partnership working remain and where recreation does not compromise the status of designated species or habitats this objective will remain as appropriate. We will look at ways of working with the community at Tain to expand access to Morrich More and Tain via Moss Road.</p>
<p>Recreation – reduce use of Morrich More by unauthorised motorbike users.</p>	<p>During the period patrols were increased and a number of offenders were reported to the police. In addition the police undertook several site visits and patrols at FD request. A national TV broadcast was also made on STV news to highlight the issue and a press article in the Press and Journal newspaper followed.</p>	<p>Resources to deal with this type of offence have diminished, however where opportunities arise the FD are committed to reducing all anti-social behaviour across the Estate. As a specific target in future plans it is now less relevant.</p>