



Spey Mouth Long Term Plan Review

Initial Statutory and Public Consultation

June 2026

Key Features

Timber production will remain a key focus for the Spey Mouth forest area. Much of the forest is currently managed using Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS), supported by thinning and selective felling. Clear felling will continue to be used where required to maintain a sustainable timber supply and improve forest structure.

The Spey Mouth LTP area is a well-used **recreational resource**, particularly for walking and cycling. We will continue to provide access in line with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, focusing on maintaining a simple and sustainable network of forest roads, key routes and viewpoints.

The forests lie alongside the **River Spey**, which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). These designations place important restrictions on operations, particularly in relation to water quality and protected species. We will continue to manage these areas in line with agreed guidance.

There are significant areas of **peatland**, including Gow Moss and Moss of Cairnty. These areas will be assessed for restoration, with work prioritised where it is practical and supported by funding.

The forests form part of a wider habitat network, supporting a range of **priority species**. Management will focus on protecting designated sites, improving habitat condition and strengthening connectivity across the landscape.

There are areas of **long-established woodland and semi-natural habitat**, particularly associated with riparian zones and PAWS sites. These will be managed using low intervention approaches where appropriate.

The Spey Mouth forest blocks are prominent features in the local **landscape**, particularly around well-used viewpoints and along the Spey corridor. Forest design will aim to improve landscape fit over time through careful felling and restocking design.

Location and Landscape

The Spey Mouth collection of forests are located near Fochabers in Moray and cover approximately 4,000 hectares. The area is bordered by the River Spey to the west and is split by the A96 and A98 transport routes.

The forests sit within a predominantly rural landscape, with agriculture and tourism forming key parts of the local economy. The Speyside Way runs along the western edge of the Ordiequish and Cairnty blocks, contributing to their importance as a visitor destination.

The forests are generally seen as a backdrop within the wider landscape, with most views being internal or from nearby roads. Localised viewpoints, such as the Hill of Mulderie, are more visually sensitive and will be considered carefully in forest design.

Soils

The forests are underlain by a mix of soil types, including:

- nutrient-poor soils such as podzols and peat
- wetter soils associated with gleys and peatland
- more fertile soils in localised areas such as river valleys

These conditions are generally well suited to conifer forestry, particularly Scots pine and Sitka spruce. Peat soils will be assessed to identify areas suitable for restoration.

Woodland Description

Age Class

The forest is currently dominated by older woodland, with around half of the area in the “old forest” category (60+ years). There are relatively smaller areas of younger woodland.

This age structure reflects past management and will be gradually rebalanced over time through thinning, felling and restocking to create a more even spread of age classes, particularly with the development of an understory in areas managed under LISS systems.

Figure 1: current age class coverage.

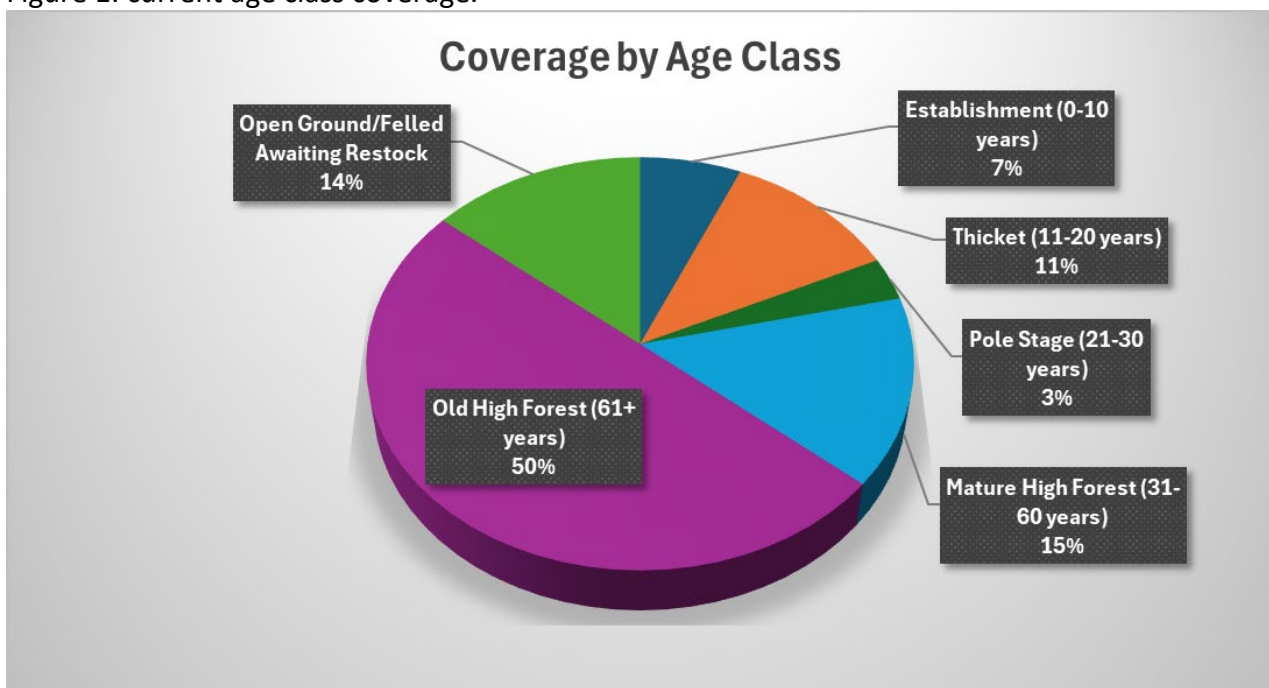


Table 1: current age profile.

Age Profile	Area (ha)	Area (%)
Establishment (0-10 years)	265.1	6.6%
Thicket (11-20 years)	463.2	11.5%
Pole Stage (21-30 years)	134.8	3.3%
Mature High Forest (31-60 years)	597.3	14.8%
Old High Forest (61+ years)	2021.4	50.0%
Open Ground/Felled Awaiting Restock	563.6	13.9%
Total	4045.4	100.0%

Species Coverage

Scots pine is the dominant species across the forest, covering nearly half of the area. Other key species include Sitka spruce and larch, with smaller areas of broadleaf woodland.

Future planting will:

- increase overall species diversity
- make better use of native broadleaves in suitable areas
- improve resilience to climate change and disease

Figure 2: current species.

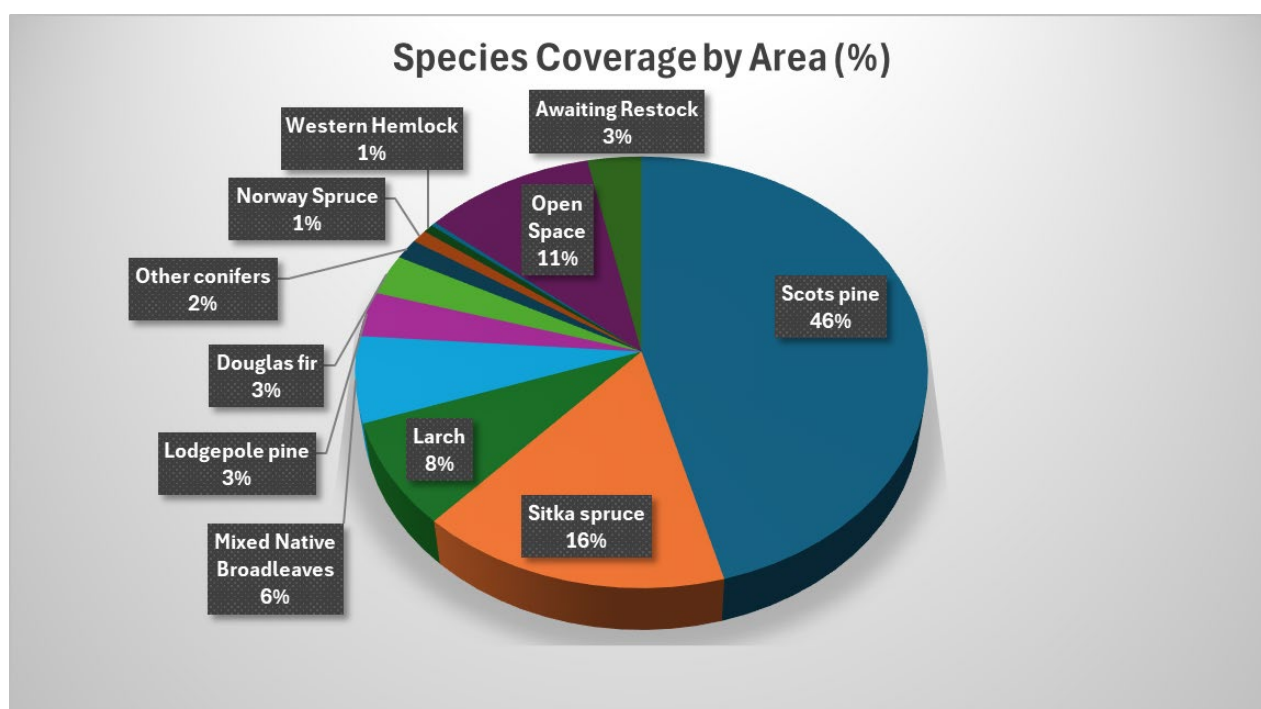


Table 2: current species.

Species	Area (Ha)	Area (%)
Scots pine	1850.9	45.8%
Sitka spruce	649.7	16.1%
Larch	319.7	7.9%
Mixed Native Broadleaves	261.1	6.5%
Lodgepole pine	137.5	3.4%
Douglas fir	123.7	3.1%
Other conifers	61.6	1.5%
Norway spruce	39.5	1.0%
Western Hemlock	25.2	0.6%
Other broadleaves	12.7	0.3%
Open Space	428.8	10.6%
Awaiting Restock	135	3.3%
Total	4045.4	100.0%

Hydrology

The plan area lies within the catchment of the River Spey, which is of national and international importance for wildlife and water resources.

Numerous burns and watercourses run through the forest. These provide important habitats and will be protected through:

- riparian buffer zones
- careful planning of forest operations
- compliance with Forest and Water Guidelines

Operations will be designed to protect water quality and maintain natural drainage patterns.

Private Water Supplies and Associated Pipelines

There are private water supplies within and around the forest area.

We will:

- identify and map known supplies
- apply appropriate buffer zones
- protect water sources during forest operations

Management will follow national guidance to safeguard both water quality and infrastructure.

Public Access and Recreation

The Spey Mouth area is widely used for informal recreation, including:

- walking
- cycling
- outdoor events

Access is supported by a network of forest roads and established routes, including connections to the Speyside Way.

The approach to recreation will focus on:

- maintaining core access infrastructure
- supporting a safe visitor experience
- adapting provision over time where needed

For mountain biking, the primary focus will be on the Winding Walks Skills Area. The wider network of mountain bike trails will be de-formalised but remain open for access, with continued use supported through a community-led approach.

Historic Environment

The forest contains a number of recorded heritage features, including historic structures and archaeological sites.

These will be protected through:

- operational buffers
- careful planning of forestry activities
- adherence to the UK Forestry Standard guidelines

Biodiversity

Spey Mouth supports a range of important habitats and species.

Management will focus on:

- protecting designated sites
- improving woodland structure and diversity
- enhancing habitat connectivity
- controlling invasive non-native species

The forest is also part of a wider ecological network associated with the River Spey, supporting species such as salmon, otter and freshwater pearl mussel.

Statutory Designations

Several statutory designations apply within or adjacent to the forest, particularly along the River Spey corridor. These include:

- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- wider international designations within the river system

All forest operations will be planned and delivered in line with these designations and relevant guidance.