



Fife Woods Forest Design Plan Brief

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1. Background Information

The Fife Woods Forest Design Plan covers three Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) woodlands within Fife – Benarty, Cardenden & Cullaloe.

- Benarty covers approximately 60 ha, and lies between Loch Leven and Loch Ore, Cardenden covers approximately 139 ha, and is bisected by the A92 dual carriageway running from Dunfermline to Glenrothes, and Cullaloe covers approximately 35 ha, and is situated immediately west of the A909 running from Cowdenbeath to Burntisland.
- Previously, all three sites were covered by individual Forest Design Plans. However, given the similarities between the three in terms of climate, soils and current woodland composition the opportunity is being taken to amalgamate them into one single plan.
- Current woodland cover is generally fairly consistent across the three sites, at around 90%, although the makeup varies somewhat (Benarty is split approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ conifer/ $\frac{1}{4}$ broadleaves, Cullaloe is $\frac{2}{3}$ conifer and at Cardenden the split is roughly 50:50).
- Ground conditions are generally good, with well drained, relatively fertile soils for the most part. Steeper slopes are a potential issue (in terms of operational access) on all three sites.
- The prevailing warm, moist climate is conducive to good tree growth for a broad range of species, and all three woods are relatively sheltered and hence potentially suitable for thinning. Climate change predictions suggest that Fife will become generally warmer and drier, which may result in an expansion of the range of suitable species that can be grown (especially broadleaves) but could also see some species which presently grow well (e.g. Sitka spruce) become less suitable due to the increased risk of drought.
- Dothistroma Needle Blight (DNB), a disease causing premature needle defoliation, has affected pine trees on all three sites, with Corsican pine in particular being badly affected.
- Thinning and/or felling operations have been undertaken at all three sites over the last ten years, although operational access issues (primarily due to steeper slopes) have resulted in some planned operations being deferred. The current age and structure of the woodlands is such that the main operational focus over the next ten years will be thinnings, and the intention is to move away from a clearfell approach towards lower impact silvicultural systems (e.g. CCF) wherever feasible.

- The main biodiversity focus is the potential of all three woodlands as red squirrel habitat, although there is also significant potential to broaden the overall biodiversity value of the woodland through the envisaged thinning operations and moves toward CCF. As a non-native invasive, *Rhododendron ponticum* has been an issue in Cardenden in the past, although a previous programme to remove it has largely been successful, and management is now chiefly targeted towards monitoring and occasional follow-up spraying to control new seedlings.
- Benarty, and to a lesser extent Cullaloe, are prominent in the wider landscape, whereas Cardenden is generally most significant at a closer scale in the sections of woodland in close proximity to some of the neighbouring residential areas.
- Both Benarty and Cardenden are partially designated as WIAT (Woodlands in and around Town), and this is reflected in their relatively high levels of recreational usage. Although the situation has improved over the last few years, anti-social use (primarily fly-tipping, fires, illegal motorbike use, drinking dens and poaching) can still be an issue.
- There are various elements of known archaeological interest (both scheduled and non-scheduled) across the three sites.
- Deer numbers within the woodland are low due to ongoing active management, although they are relatively high in the surrounding area.

2. Strategic Priorities

The work of FES is guided by the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006, which sets out seven Key Themes:-

- Climate Change
- Timber
- Business Development
- Community Development
- Access & Health
- Environmental Quality
- Biodiversity

From this Strategy, Scottish Lowlands Forest District prepared the Scottish Lowlands Forest District Strategic Plan 2009-2013 which draws on the most important strands of the Key Themes relevant to the forest areas we manage and sets out the policies and objectives under which other District plans are prepared and monitored.

In preparing the Brief and Objectives for this Forest Design Plan (FDP), issues were grouped under these Key Themes and assessed for their importance. Those relevant are set out in Table 1 below.



Table 1. Relevant issues under the SFS Key Themes

SFS Key Theme	Issues assessed as relevant by staff team for the Fife Woods FDP	Scottish Lowlands Strategic Plan Reference
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapting to Climate Change with site suited species choices and habitat connectivity Forest designs will include good riparian management 	1.05, 1.10
Timber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productive forestry with quality timber production (conifers and broadleaves) Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS) Thinning and niche marketing Maximise the use of improved and site suited growing stock 	2.02, 2.06, 2.07, 2.08, 2.12, 2.13
Business Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of skills projects Income diversification, including consideration of agriculture, mineral workings Contribute to rural development through the use of local suppliers and contractors where possible 	3.01, 3.03, 3.05, 3.07, 3.10, 3.13, 3.14
Community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a community engagement approach that considers the immediate neighbours, key users groups and the wider area. Support the development of a Central Scotland Green Network Ensure forest thresholds are well maintained and signposted Involve local communities and stakeholders in the forest design planning process Encourage local schools to include visits to nearest woodlands 	4.02, 4.04, 4.05, 4.09, 4.10, 4.17
Access & health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woods in and around Towns (WIAT) initiative Work with Communities, Council and Police to manage antisocial behaviour Make woodlands more accessible, support core paths and protect public rights of way 	5.02, 5.04, 5.08, 5.09, 5.10
Environmental quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comply with all relevant FC regulations and guidelines Landscape prominence Use LISS for detailed management of the local landscape Suitable protection of scheduled and unscheduled monuments 	6.01, 6.03, 6.06, 6.07, 6.08
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native woodland (LEPO) and potential to expand Use LISS in native woods and other suitable areas Control invasive plant species (rhododendron) Increase structural and tree species diversity during restructuring Consideration of important species e.g. red squirrel, badger, bats, butterflies, nesting birds Ongoing deer management 	7.01, 7.02, 7.04, 7.05, 7.06, 7.16

3. Draft Management Objectives

Following the analysis above, Table 2 sets out the Brief and Objectives agreed for developing the management proposals for Benarty, Cardenden and Cullaloe.

Table 2. Initial Brief and Objectives for developing management proposals

Brief	Objectives
Maintain productive potential and develop existing woodland to contribute to carbon capture targets and increase diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain productivity through sound silvicultural practice including Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS). (e.g. Continuous Cover Forestry) • Plant broadleaves for timber production where site conditions are suitable • Include productive conifers where appropriate in the landscape • Suitable pest management to ensure success of planting and regeneration • Select species using Ecological Site Classification principals to maximise productive potential and develop resilience to climate change
Work with current and potential users of the site to improve recreational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain clean access points and develop improved access facilities for foot, horse and cycle • Develop contacts with local communities
Preserve important landscape and historic features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve the most important views within the site and enhance where possible • Protect known historic features
Increase biodiversity value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the diversity of open and native woodland habitats to benefit existing species such as Red Squirrel • Protect and expand forest habitat networks and priority habitats • Control Rhododendron (Cardenden)
Increase community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage partnerships and volunteering • Engage local schools (Forest School) • Maintain an attractive woodland • Reduce anti-social behaviour