Forestry and Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus Fearann Alba

Newtyle Land Management Plan Review

Initial Statutory and Public Consultation

July 2024

Key Features

Timber production will likely stay a key focus in this area. Large parts of the forest are currently being managed under Low Impact Silvicultural Systems which produces a reliable source of timber via well timed thinnings and group fellings. Other areas of Newtyle which aren't suitable for managing using these systems will be phased for clearfell operations when they are most commercially viable.

There is a large area of **peatland restoration** planned for Romach Hill to help deliver our climate change mitigation commitments. Delivering this scheme and carrying out any maintenance on the recently completed restoration at Bogawood will be a key outcome for the next plan period.

Broadleaf species only make up 4% of the total tree cover in this forest, well aim to raise this to at least 5% within the next ten years.

Newtyle forms the catchment for some **watercourses** which eventually flow north to the Moray coast. These rivers are important for wildlife and as sources of drinking water. We'll focus on improving riverbank habitats and keeping them connected.

There **are private water supplies** in the forest and nearby farmland. We'll need to record them and make sure their catchments are well protected.

There are large areas of **long-established woodland of plantation origin** within the plan area. We'll assess these sites and manage them using the latest guidance.

There are many **priority species** resident within Newtyle, protecting these species and improving their habitats where possible will be an important consideration in the new plan. **Capercaillie** returning to the woodland in areas where they were once resident would be an excellent indicator that our approach is working.

Location and Landscape

The current Land Management Plan expired on 12 February 2025. There aren't any other active schemes in place.

Newtyle Forest is in Moray, a few miles south of Forres. The land rises steadily from around 50m at the northern end to 300 metres at the summit of Romach Hill to the South. The forest also features a deep, steep sided valley with Romach Reservoir, a large historic drinking water source,

situated in the base. The LMP area consists of one large forest block, with an area of roughly 720 hectares.

In the northern end of the block, at lower altitudes, the surrounding landscape is dominated by agriculture but is also relatively heavily forested. As the altitude rises to the south, agriculture, forestry and rough grazing still dominate the landscape but areas of open moorland also form some of the adjacent land use. The majority of the forest is not particularly visible to the surrounding populations, although Romach Hill forms part of the horizon when looking south from parts of Forres and sections of the A96 trunk road. The area is mostly rural with a low population.

The majority of the mature trees present in the forest were planted over a 20 year period between the mid-1930s and 1950s and mostly consist of Scots pine and Larch. There are also areas of forest established in the 1980s and 1990s which have a higher proportion of species such as Sitka spruce and Douglas fir present.

Many areas of Lodgepole pine were felled during the previous plan period in an effort to combat the increasing threat posed by Dothistroma Needle Blight. Much of this area has been identified as suitable peatland restoration activities.

Soils

The soils here vary from banket bog and peaty gleys on the higher altitude areas on Romach Hill, transitioning to a patchwork of surface water gleys, podzols, iron pans and brown earths in the central section of the forest. The northern end of the forest is dominated by typical podzols, with patches of podzolic brown earths.

This makes the area suitable for a mix of forestry types. Productive conifers grow well when the best choice of species for the soil type present is selected and there is the potential for broadleaves to be established on the better-drained soils and riparian areas.

The peaty soils in the block have been assessed and areas suitable for peat restoration identified and programmed for delivery in the next few years. Other areas of shallower peat which were felled in the previous plan period should be replanted with native species where possible.

Woodland Description

Age Class

The current age class distribution of the crops within the plan area is shown below. This is an unusual commercial forest, with roughly half of the plan area classified as Old High Forest. This reflects the large areas of predominately Scots pine which is currently managed under Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS) where the next generation of trees are allowed to develop under a mature canopy or in small clearfelled patches.

Figure 1: current age class coverage.

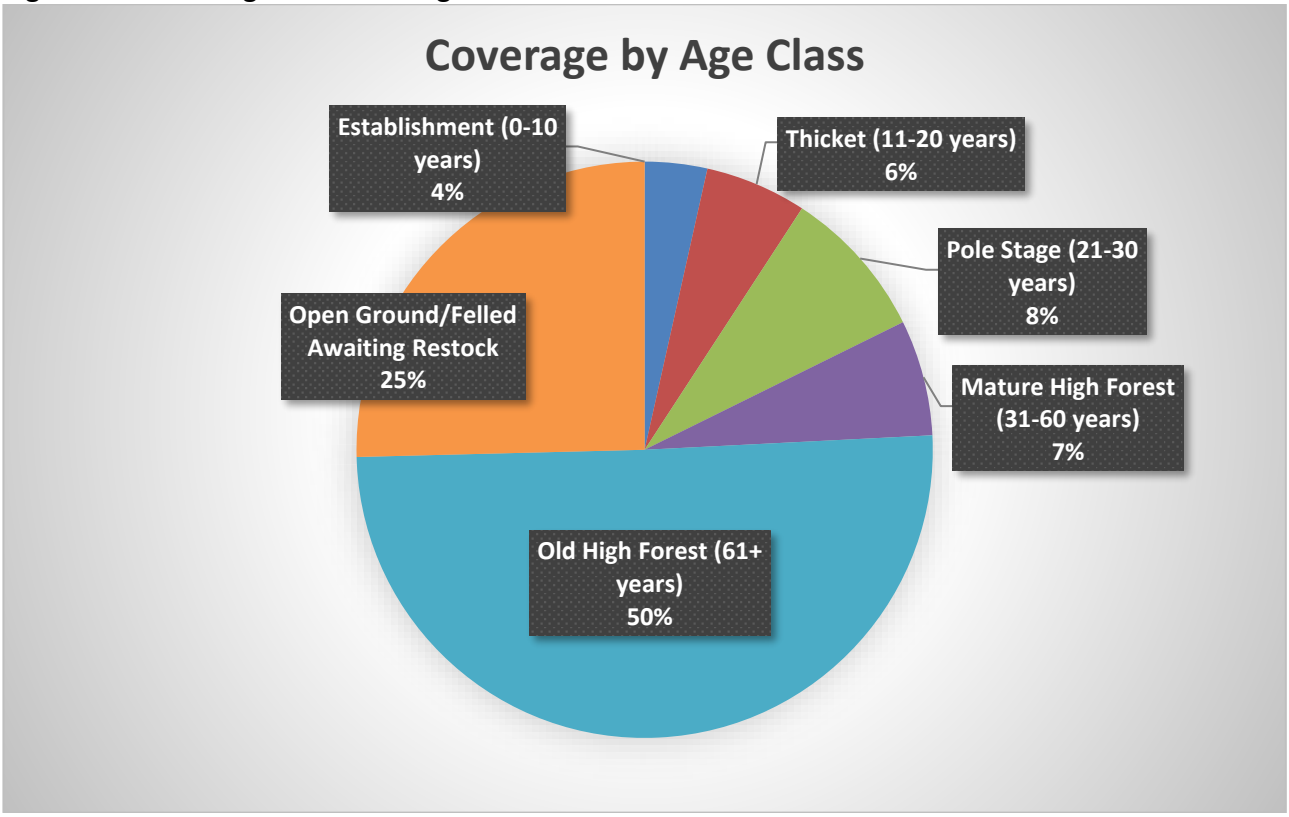

Table 1: current age profile.

Age Profile	Area (ha)	Area (%)
Establishment (0-10 years)	25.4	3.5%
Thicket (11-20 years)	40.7	5.7%
Pole Stage (21-30 years)	61.1	8.5%
Mature High Forest (31-60 years)	46.3	6.5%
Old High Forest (61+ years)	361.2	50.4%
Open Ground/Felled Awaiting Restock	182.1	25.4%
Total	**716.8**	**100**

Species Coverage

Scots pine is the most common tree species, making up three times more coverage than the next most common species, Larch. We're currently failing to meet the UK Forest Standard (UKFS) target for broadleaf coverage, at around 4% but this is offset by the environmental benefits of the large areas of peat restoration currently underway or planned to be delivered imminently.

When we choose new planting mixes, we'll aim to keep diversifying the species, especially in wetland areas and around our peatland restoration sites. We'll use productive conifers where they suit the soil and site, and native broadleaves to help improve riverbank habitats and buffer other important habitats. Our target will be to increase broadleaf coverage to above 5% within this plan period.

Figure 2: current species.

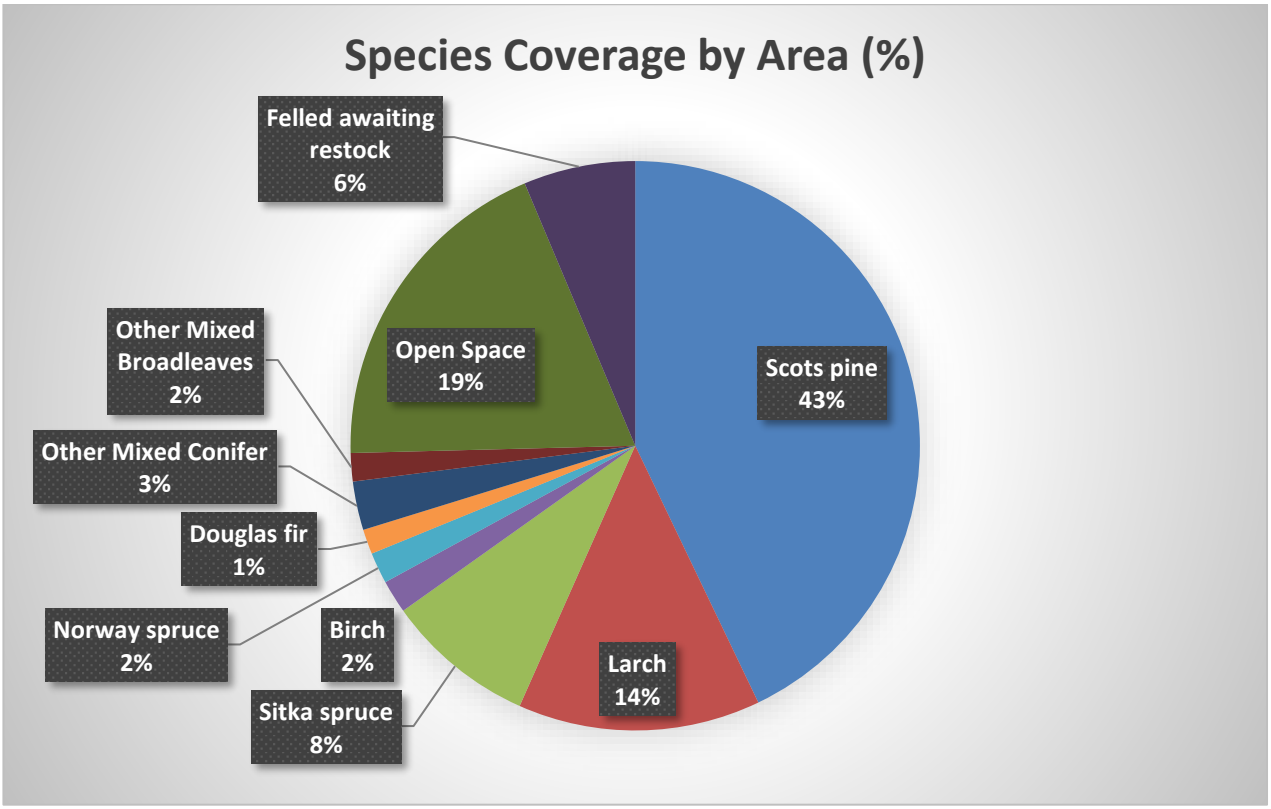

Table 2: current species.

Species	Area (Ha)	Area (%)
Scots pine	307.4	42.9%
Larch	98.7	13.8%
Sitka spruce	61	8.5%
Birch	13.5	1.9%
Norway spruce	12.7	1.8%
Douglas fir	10.1	1.4%
Other Mixed Conifer	19.8	2.8%
Other Mixed Broadleaves	11.5	1.6%
Open Space	136.6	19.1%
Felled awaiting restock	45.5	6.3%
Total	**716.8**	**100.0%**

Hydrology

Newtyle forms part of the catchment for two locally important watercourses: Altyre burn, renamed as the Mosset burn as it passes through Forres en route to Findhorn Bay, and Black Burn which flows east before joining the River Lossie near Elgin.

Romach Reservoir, which feeds Black Burn, was historically a main water source for Forres but is now a back-up reserve, with some water supply infrastructure still in place. We'll take care to protect water quality during any forestry work.

Private Water Supplies and Associated Pipelines

There are private water supplies (PWS) in the forest and on nearby land.

PWS users are responsible for looking after their own supply. But where FLS manages the land, we also share the duty to protect water sources and supply networks like pipes, tanks and channels.

We'll follow national water guidance. This means a 50-metre buffer around water sources, and a 20-metre buffer (10 metres each side) for pipelines. These buffers will be kept open, though we may include up to 20% native broadleaves.

If a water source is shallow or surface-fed, we'll map the catchment, avoid using heavy machinery nearby, and manage brash heaps with care.

Public Access and Recreation

The area isn't a recreation hub, particularly when compared to nearby Culbin Forest, but people do use the forest tracks for walking, cycling and horse riding. The Dava Way, which passes through the forest for a section of roughly a mile, is a popular walking and cycling route, running between Forres and Grantown-on Spey.

Romach Reservoir is increasingly becoming popular for water sports such as wild swimming and paddleboarding, although it is not easily accessible, which prevents high volumes of recreational users.

We'll continue to support public access under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Historic Environment

There aren't any scheduled monuments in the plan area, but we've identified some old farmsteads, small holdings and their ruined infrastructure such as wells and bridges. We'll protect these features using site buffers and careful operational planning.

Biodiversity

We're supporting the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy by:

- helping forests regenerate naturally
- planting a wider mix of tree species
- improving woodland cover and understorey
- connecting forest habitats and other land uses

Our forests need to stay productive and continue storing carbon. But we'll also design and manage them in ways that improve biodiversity and help wildlife move through the landscape.

We've recorded several Biodiversity List species and FLS Key Species across the plan area. These include:

- birds of prey
- red squirrels, pine martens, found throughout the forest
- badger setts
- areas of afforested bog

The vast majority of Newtyle is designated as long-established woodland of plantation origin (LEPO). That means that the area has been wooded since at least 1750 or 1860. We'll assess the forest for its potential and manage it using the most up-to-date guidance.