



Cushnie Long Term Plan Review

Initial Statutory and Public Consultation

September 2026

Key Features

- Timber production will remain the main use of the forest. We'll continue to harvest, thin and restock trees to support a sustainable timber supply and help the forest adapt to future challenges.
- Parts of the forest were badly affected by Storm Arwen. Some areas still have windblown trees and access issues. We'll look at ways to reshape these areas and improve access where practical.
- Burns, riverside habitats and private water supplies run through the forest. We'll protect water quality and take account of these features when planning forestry work.
- Important open habitats, including upland heath, are found across the forest, especially around Pressendye. We'll keep these areas open and look for opportunities to improve links between habitats.
- The forest includes areas of Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin (LEPO) and other sites of ecological interest. We'll review these areas and consider opportunities to improve their environmental value.
- Small areas of deep peat are present across the forest. We'll review these sites and consider the most suitable long-term management, which may include forestry, wet woodland or peatland restoration.
- The forest supports several priority species. We'll continue to protect these species and their habitats.
- Although there are no formal visitor facilities, local people use the forest for walking, horse riding and other outdoor activities. We'll continue to support responsible public access and aim to reduce disruption during forestry operations.
- The forest is a prominent feature in the local landscape. Future felling and restocking will aim to create a more varied and resilient woodland that fits the surrounding landscape.
- The forest has a network of roads and tracks that supports forestry operations. We'll consider opportunities to improve access where this helps woodland management and timber transport.

Location and Landscape

Cushnie is about 8km south-west of Alford in Aberdeenshire. The forest covers around 1,260 hectares and sits within a wider landscape of farmland, open hills and commercial woodland. It remains an important source of timber in the area.

The forest stretches across rolling hills, upland ridges and sheltered valleys. Ground levels range from about 250 metres to more than 600 metres above sea level around Pressendye and the surrounding high ground.

The forest is a prominent feature in the local landscape and can be seen from nearby roads, homes and surrounding hills. Open ground, watercourses and farmland help break up the woodland and create a varied landscape.

Large areas of open habitat, including upland heath, are found on higher ground. These areas are important for wildlife and help link the forest with the surrounding moorland.

As we plan future felling and restocking, we'll take account of the shape of the land, important views and the character of the local landscape. We'll aim to create a forest that continues to support timber production while providing a varied and resilient woodland for the future.

Soils

The forest has a mix of soil types, including mineral soils, wetter ground and areas of deep peat. These conditions vary across the forest and influence which tree species grow best in different locations.

Many parts of the forest are well suited to productive conifer forestry. Sitka spruce grows particularly well across much of the area and is likely to remain an important species. Scots pine and other conifers are also suitable on some sites.

Higher and more exposed areas tend to have wetter soils and lower tree growth. These conditions can make forest operations more difficult and increase the risk of windblow.

We've identified several areas of deep peat within the forest. We'll review these sites as part of the Long Term Plan and consider the most suitable future management. This could include productive forestry, wet woodland or peatland restoration.

When planning harvesting and restocking, we'll take account of soil conditions, water quality and long-term forest resilience. Less productive areas may also provide opportunities to improve habitats and habitat links across the forest.

Woodland Description

Age of the Forest

Much of the forest is made up of mature trees, with more than 40% of the woodland over 30 years old. At the same time, around one third of the area is currently open ground or awaiting restocking following harvesting and windblow, including damage caused by Storm Arwen.

Younger woodland makes up a smaller proportion of the forest. This reflects the way the forest was planted and managed in the past.

The large areas awaiting restocking give us an opportunity to create a more varied forest. Over time, we'll aim for a wider mix of age classes to help make the forest more resilient to windblow, pests, diseases and climate change while continuing to produce timber.

Figure 1: current age class coverage.

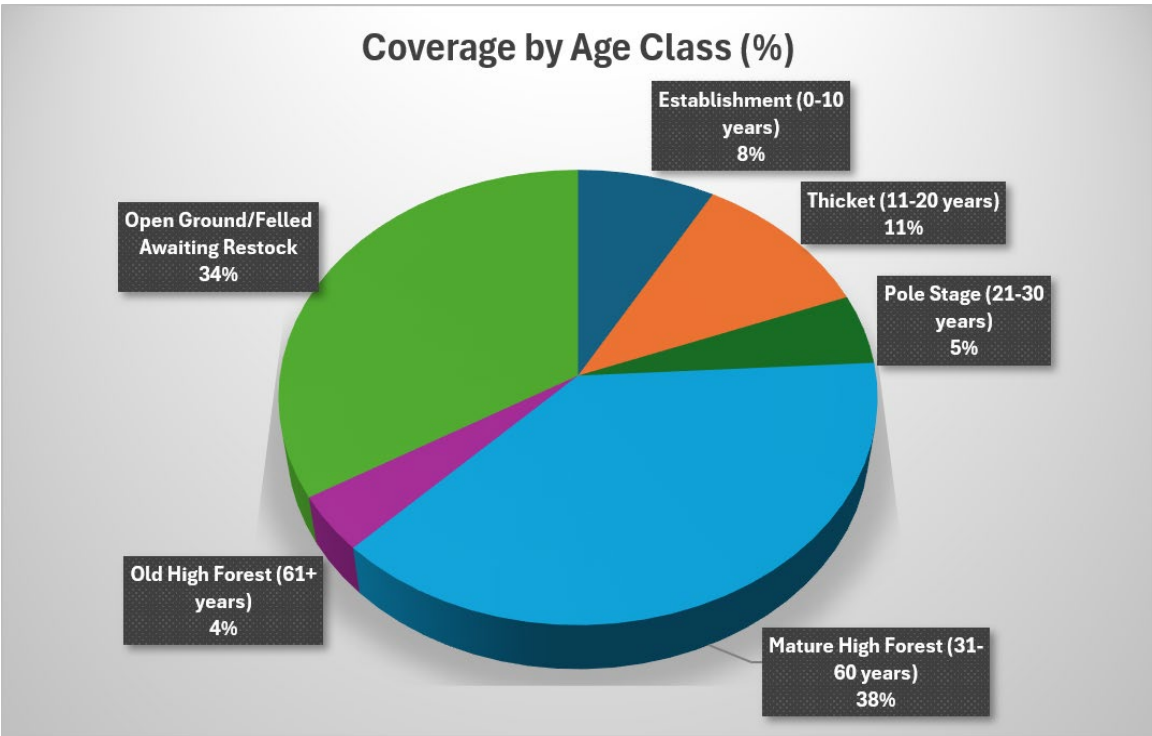


Table 1: current age profile.

Age Profile	Area (ha)	Area (%)
Establishment (0-10 years)	103	8.2
Thicket (11-20 years)	138.8	11.0
Pole Stage (21-30 years)	62.6	5.0
Mature High Forest (31-60 years)	484.1	38.3
Old High Forest (61+ years)	50.8	4.0
Open Ground/Felled Awaiting Restock	424.4	33.6
Total	1263.7	100.0%

Tree Species

Sitka spruce is the most common tree species in the forest and will continue to play an important role in timber production. Other conifers, including Scots pine, larch and Lodgepole pine, are also found across the forest.

More than a third of the forest is currently open ground or awaiting restocking. These areas provide opportunities to shape the future forest.

Native and broadleaved woodland currently covers only a small part of the forest. As we restock harvested areas, we'll look for opportunities to increase woodland diversity where site conditions are suitable. This may include more broadleaved trees, additional conifer species and improved habitat links along burns and forest edges.

Timber production will remain the main purpose of the forest, but we'll aim to create a more diverse and resilient woodland for the future.

Figure 2: current species.

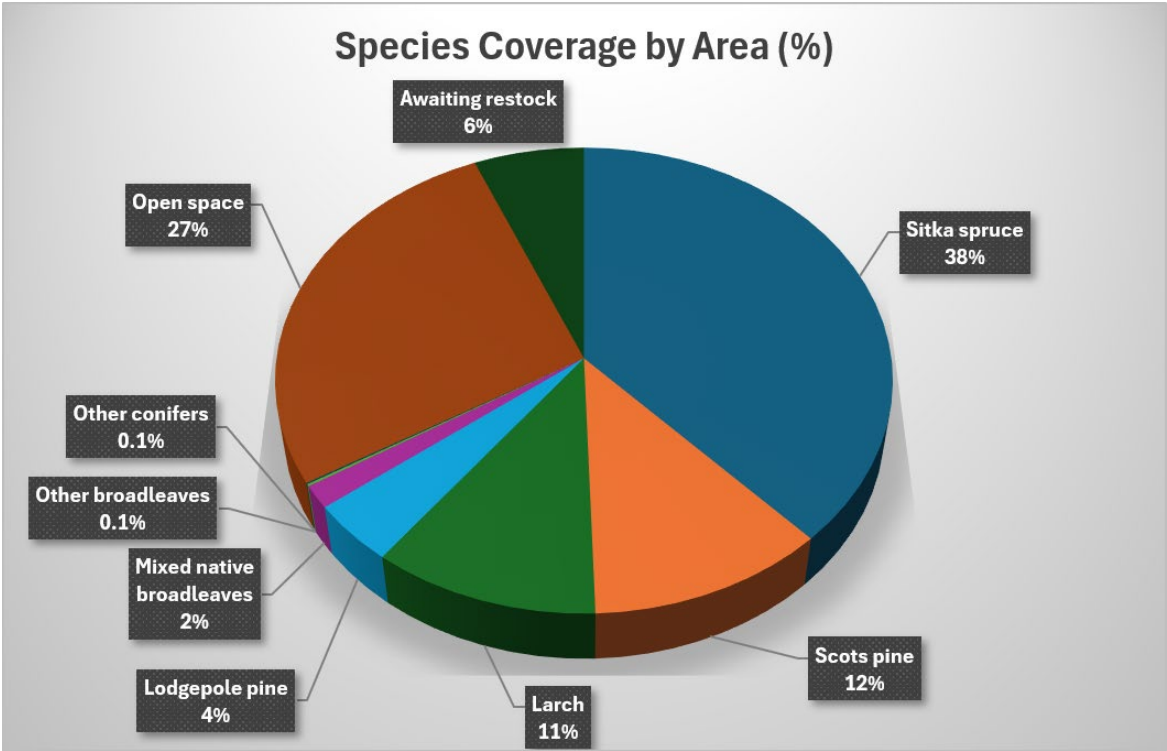


Table 2: current species.

Species	Area (Ha)	Area (%)
Sitka spruce	479.6	38.0
Scots pine	145.4	11.5
Larch	137.8	10.9
Lodgepole pine	53.5	4.2
Mixed native broadleaves	20	1.6
Other broadleaves	1.8	0.1
Other conifers	1.2	0.1
Open space	344.5	27.3
Awaiting restock	79.9	6.3
Total	1263.7	100.0%

Water and Wetland Habitats

Burns, small watercourses and wetland areas run throughout the forest. Most of these drain into the River Don catchment and provide important habitats for wildlife. They also help connect different parts of the forest.

Many watercourses flow through sheltered valleys with a greater variety of native plants than the surrounding woodland. We'll continue to protect these areas and look for opportunities to improve riverside habitats through future forest design.

Protecting water quality is an important part of forest management. We'll plan harvesting, restocking and road works carefully to reduce impacts on watercourses and maintain natural drainage.

Several private water supplies are located within or near the forest. We'll work with local landowners and residents to identify these supplies and make sure they're protected during forestry operations.

Some areas of deep peat, wet ground and wetland habitat may also offer opportunities for peatland restoration or wet woodland creation where appropriate.

The forest also contains a small number of ponds, including the pond at Scar Hill, which provide additional wildlife habitat.

Private Water Supplies

Several private water supplies are located within and around the forest. These supplies provide water to nearby homes and properties, and some may be connected to springs, burns or pipelines within the forest.

We'll continue to work with local residents and landowners to improve our understanding of water supply locations and infrastructure. This will help us take account of them when planning forestry operations.

Protecting private water supplies will be an important part of the Long Term Plan. We'll consider water supplies when designing harvesting, restocking and road works, and put appropriate safeguards in place where needed.

All forestry operations will be planned to protect water quality and reduce the risk of damage to water supply infrastructure.

Public Access and Recreation

There are no formal visitor facilities or waymarked trails within the forest. Most people use the forest for informal recreation, including walking, horse riding and enjoying the outdoors.

Local riding groups regularly use forest roads and tracks, and the forest is also valued by nearby communities for everyday access.

Several rights of way and other established access routes pass through the forest. We'll take these routes into account when planning future forestry work.

We want to maintain responsible public access while managing the forest for timber production. There are currently no plans for major new recreation facilities.

Forestry operations can sometimes cause temporary disruption. Where possible, we'll keep routes open and provide diversions or information to help people use the forest safely.

We'll continue to provide access in line with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Historic Environment

The forest contains a range of historic features, including former farmsteads, enclosures, cairns and hut circles. These features help tell the story of how the area was used in the past and are an important part of the local landscape.

We'll review existing records during development of the Long Term Plan to make sure known historic sites are identified and protected.

We take account of historic features when planning forestry operations such as harvesting, restocking and road works. Where needed, we'll use measures to avoid damage to archaeological sites and other heritage features.

In some areas, restructuring the forest may improve the visibility and condition of historic features that are currently hidden by trees.

We'll continue to protect the historic environment while managing the forest for timber production and other benefits.

Biodiversity

The forest includes a mix of woodland, open ground, wetlands and riverside habitats that support a wide range of wildlife. These habitats add to the environmental value of the forest and surrounding area.

As we develop the Long Term Plan, we'll look for opportunities to improve habitat links across the forest. This may include managing open ground, enhancing riverside habitats and increasing woodland diversity where site conditions are suitable.

Open habitats on higher ground are an important part of the forest landscape. We'll continue to protect these areas and avoid tree planting where it would reduce their environmental value.

The forest also contains areas of Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin (LEPO). We'll review these sites and consider opportunities to improve their ecological value where appropriate.

We'll continue to take account of wildlife and sensitive habitats when planning forestry operations. Where needed, surveys will help us identify environmental features and put suitable protection measures in place.

Managing deer populations will remain important for successful restocking and the establishment of a wider range of woodland habitats.

Our aim is to balance timber production with environmental benefits, creating a more diverse and resilient forest over time.