Midmar Land Management Plan Review

Initial Statutory and Public Consultation

June 2024

Key Features

**Timber production** will likely stay a key focus in this area. We’ll need to restructure older forest blocks and keep adding new broadleaf and conifer woodland. As there’s been a lot of felling in this area recently to clear up after Storm Arwen, we’ll mostly be focusing on restocking felled areas in this plan period and thinning out younger crops to improve the timber quality in the future.

**Broadleaf** species only make up 3% of the total tree cover in this forest, well aim to raise this to at least 5% within the next ten years.

Several small **watercourses** start in the forest and eventually flow into the River Don. These rivers are important for wildlife and as sources of drinking water. We’ll focus on improving riverbank habitats and keeping them connected.

We’ll also improve how the forest fits into the **landscape**. That means softening the forest edges and avoiding rigid, geometric shapes when planting.

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

There are **historic features** throughout the forest, including trackways, old stone dykes and boundary stones. We’ll take care to protect these during forest operations.

There are areas of **ancient woodland** and some areas are classed as **long-established woodland of plantation origin**. We’ll assess these sites and manage them using the latest guidance.

Location and Landscape

The current Land Management Plan expired on 20 January 2025. There aren’t any other active schemes in place.

Midmar lies in eastern Aberdeenshire near Echt. The land includes broad, rolling slopes rising from around 100 to 450 metres. The area is mostly rural with a low population.

The surrounding landscape is classed as Upland Farmland. It also includes conifer plantations, open moorland and patches of native broadleaves. Some forest edges are highly visible from the nearby B9119 public road and the surrounding towns and villages to the north.

Most of the mature trees in the eastern side of the block were planted in the early 1950s, with some areas of Scots pine remaining from the 1930s. The western side of the block was mostly established with conifer crops in the 1960s and 1980s. The whole plan area covers about 572 hectares.

Soils

The soils here vary, from banket bog and peaty rankers on the higher plateaus to humus podzols to brown earth and surface water gleys on the lower reaches. There are also large areas of podzol and ironpan soil types. This makes the area suitable for a mix of forestry types. Productive conifers grow well with the best choice of species for the soil type present and broadleaves do best on the better-drained soils and riparian areas.

We’ll assess any areas with peaty soils to see whether they’re better suited to restocking or peatland restoration.

Woodland Description

## Age Class

The current age class distribution of the crops within the plan area is shown below. A large area is still waiting to be restocked. That’s partly because some major planting is due to start this year. Storm Arwen also caused damage that needed large felling operations, and we’re now preparing those areas for restock.

Figure 1: current age class coverage.

Table 1: current age profile.

| **Age Profile** | **Area (ha)** | **Area (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Establishment (0-10 years) | 46.6 | 8% |
| Thicket (11-20 years) | 32.1 | 6% |
| Pole Stage (21-30 years) | 35.1 | 6% |
| Mature High Forest (31-60 years) | 136 | 24% |
| Old High Forest (61+ years) | 141.3 | 25% |
| Open Ground/Felled Awaiting Restock | 181 | 32% |
| **Total** | **572.1** | **100** |

## Species Coverage

Sitka spruce is the most common tree species, making up three times more coverage than the next most common species, Scots pine. We’re currently failing to meet the UK Forest Standard (UKFS) target for broadleaf coverage, at 3% instead of the 5% target. Managed open space accounts for 12% of the total LMP area.

When we choose new planting mixes, we’ll aim to keep diversifying the species, especially in wetland areas. We’ll use productive conifers where they suit the soil and site, and native broadleaves to help improve riverbank habitats. Our target will be to increase broadleaf coverage to above the minimum 5% UKFS requirement within this plan period.

Figure 2: current species.

Table 2: current species.

| **Species** | **Area (Ha)** | **Area (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sitka spruce | 186.8 | 33% |
| Scots pine | 64.1 | 11% |
| Norway spruce | 47.9 | 8% |
| Larch | 33.4 | 6% |
| Lodgepole pine | 33.4 | 6% |
| Mixed Broadleaves | 18.4 | 3% |
| Mixed Conifers | 7.1 | 1% |
| Open Space | 66 | 12% |
| Felled awaiting restock | 115 | 20% |
| **Total** | **572.1** | **100** |

Hydrology

Midmar includes the sources of several small watercourses. Most of these streams flow to the north-east and eventually reach the River Don

Because these streams are small and make up a tiny percentage of the broader catchments, they’re unlikely to have a major impact on the wider river systems. But we’ll still 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, but people do use the forest tracks for walking, cycling and horse riding. The forest is frequently used by local dog walkers and there are several informal downhill mountain bike routes present.

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 old dry-stone walls, boundary stones and cairns. 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
* rare plants
* areas of afforested bog

Midmar includes 24.8 hectares of forest designated as ancient woodland and 297.1 hectares of long-established woodland of plantation origin (LEPO). These sites have been wooded since at least 1750 or 1860. We’ll assess their potential and manage them using the most up-to-date guidance.