Forestry and Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus Fearann Alba

Bin and Deveron Woods Land Management Plan Review

Initial Statutory and Public Consultation

February 2026

Key Features

Timber production will remain the key focus in this area. Most of the forest area is currently managed via clearfell systems but opportunities to expand the areas managed under Low Impact Silvicultural Systems will be explored as part of the plan renewal. These systems also produce a reliable source of timber via well timed thinnings and group fellings.

The Bin forest is a well-used **recreational hub** for the local community. We'll continue to provide access to all forests within the plan area, as set out in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

There are two **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** within the plan area, one of which is also designated as a **Special Area of Conservation (SAC).** There is also another SSSI which, although not within the plan area, runs along the boundary of one of the outlier blocks. We'll continue to manage and protect these sites using the latest guidance and in agreement with NatureScot.

Many blocks within the LMP area form the catchment for significant **watercourses,** such as the river Deveron, which eventually flow north to the Aberdeenshire 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.

Forests within this LMP area form important features in the local **landscape**, particularly for people travelling along the A96 and Aberdeen to Inverness rail line. Ensuring felling and restocking operations are designed to maintain the current landscape value will be an important consideration in some areas.

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

There are many **priority species** resident within the plan area, protecting these species and improving their habitats where possible will be an important consideration in the new plan.

Location and Landscape

The current Land Management Plan expired in September 2025. There are no other active woodland management schemes in place.

Bin and Deveron Woods are located in western Aberdeenshire, centered around the Deveron River valley (central grid reference: NJ 5018 4382). The plan area consists of a loose cluster of twelve woodland blocks, with South Balnoon located further east away from the river corridor. Together, the woods cover a total area of approximately 2,270 hectares.

The woodlands sit within a predominantly agricultural landscape and are generally surrounded by farmland and rough grazing. Most of the blocks are small to medium in size and are reasonably visible within the local landscape. The wider area is rural in character with a low population density.

The forests form an important part of the East Region landholding and are identified as a key location for:

- producing high quality timber
- creating functional habitat networks
- accommodating a significant number of visitors
- supporting local community use

Soils

Due to the dispersed nature of the woodland blocks, there is a wide range of soil types across the plan area.

Kinnoir and the Bin are underlain by soils of the Insch Association, including brown earths, peaty gleys, humus-iron podzols and gleys. These soils typically have high nitrogen availability.

South Balnoon is dominated by soils of the Foundland Association, primarily humus-iron podzols with some brown earths, peaty gleys, peaty podzols and peat. These soils generally have medium nitrogen availability.

Peaty soils will be assessed for their potential to be actively restored to peatland habitat as part of the plan renewal process.

This mix of soil types provides suitable conditions for productive conifer forestry when species are matched appropriately to site conditions. There is also good potential for broadleaves on better drained soils and along riparian corridors.

Woodland Description

Age Class

The current age class distribution of the crops within the plan area is shown below. There is a relatively even spread of age classes present, reflecting the long-term sustainable forest management which has taken place here.

Figure 1: current age class coverage.

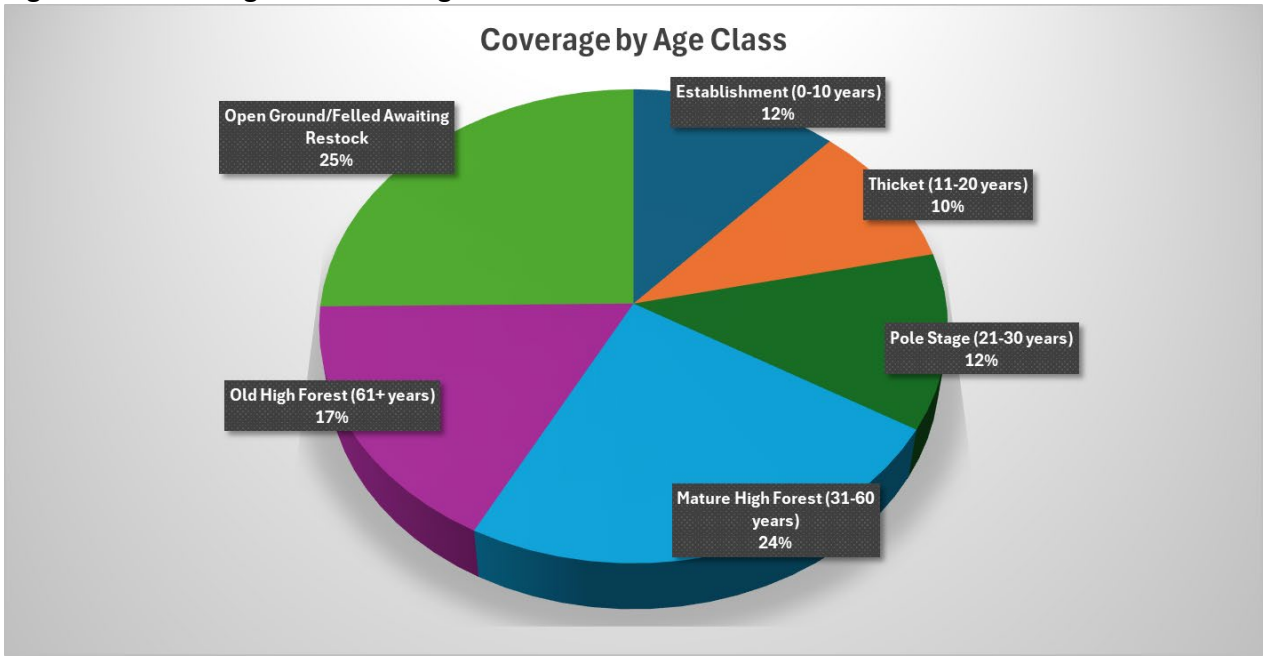

Table 1: current age profile.

Age Profile	Area (ha)	Area (%)
Establishment (0-10 years)	266.3	11.7%
Thicket (11-20 years)	223	9.8%
Pole Stage (21-30 years)	271.9	12.0%
Mature High Forest (31-60 years)	549	24.2%
Old High Forest (61+ years)	388	17.1%
Open Ground/Felled Awaiting Restock	571.8	25.2%
Total	**2270**	**100**

Species Coverage

Sitka spruce is the most common tree species, followed by mixed native broadleaves, which are comprised mostly of oak and birch with other minor components. We're currently meeting all UKFS targets for broadleaf coverage, species diversity and open space.

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.

Figure 2: current species.

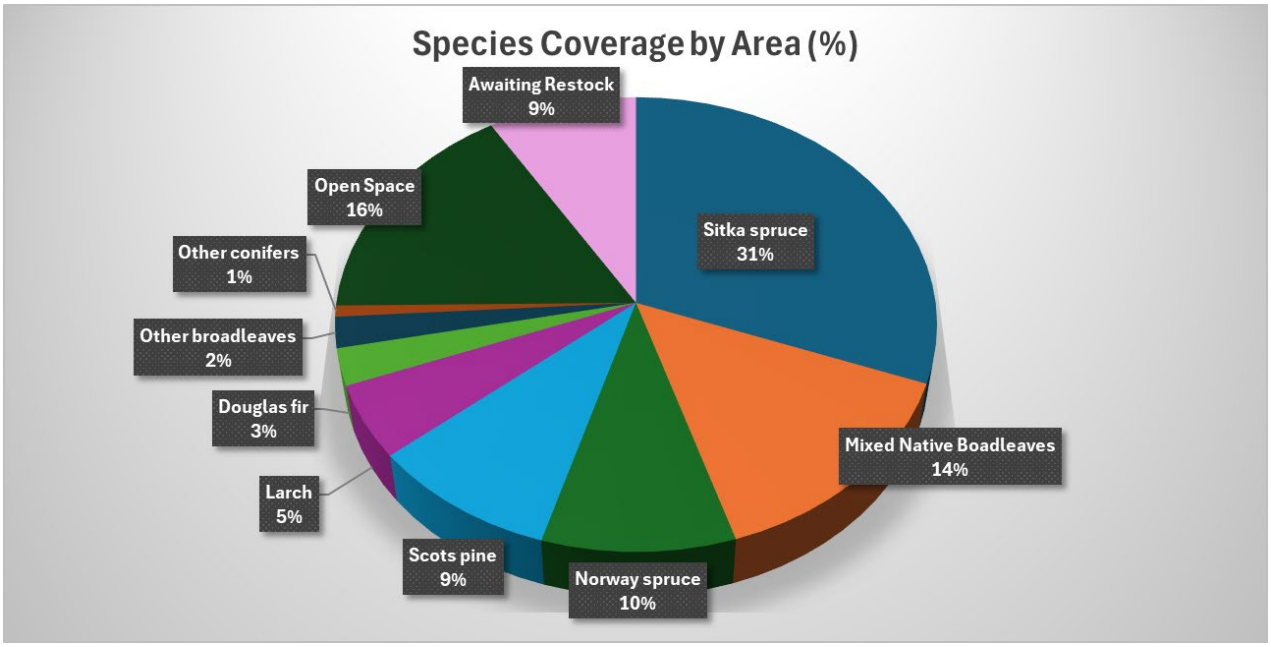

Table 2: current species.

Species	Area (Ha)	Area (%)
Sitka spruce	695.7	30.7%
Mixed Native Broadleaves	328	14.5%
Norway spruce	216.3	9.5%
Scots pine	212.6	9.4%
Larch	118	5.2%
Douglas fir	59.4	2.6%
Other broadleaves	50	2.2%
Other conifers	17.9	0.8%
Open Space	372.8	16.4%
Awaiting Restock	199	8.8%
Total	**2270**	**100.0%**

Hydrology

The woodland lies within the catchment of the River Deveron and its tributaries. The river supports important Atlantic salmon populations and is of high ecological value.

A number of burns and minor watercourses flow through the woodland blocks and form important riparian habitats. These will continue to be protected through appropriate buffers and operational controls in line with the Forest and Water Guidelines.

Forest operations will be planned to protect water quality, maintain natural drainage patterns and safeguard downstream water users.

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 woodland blocks are used regularly by local communities for informal recreation, including walking, cycling and horse riding.

The Bin block currently contains a number of waymarked walking routes, which are promoted through Forestry and Land Scotland publications. These include:

- Queen Tree Trail
- Ferny Knowe Trail
- Gallon of Water Trail

Public car parking and site information is provided off the A96, with additional informal parking at several forest access points.

Other blocks do not have formal waymarked routes but are well used by local residents who are familiar with the woods and forest road network. Public access is supported under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

The town of Huntly lies approximately two miles from the Bin and Kinnoir blocks and has a population of around 4,500. The villages of Cairnie, Ruthven, Rothiemay and Glass surround the plan area, along with a number of scattered farms and rural properties.

Historic Environment

There are no Scheduled Monuments within the plan area.

However, a number of other heritage features have been identified and recorded, including:

- former farmsteads
- boundary dykes
- enclosure banks
- wells
- clearance cairns

These sites are recorded within Forestry and Land Scotland's heritage records and will be protected through the use of operational buffers and careful harvesting and restocking design. All operations will follow the UK Forestry Standard Forests and Historic Environment Guidelines.

Biodiversity

Forestry and Land Scotland supports delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy through the management of Bin and Deveron Woods by:

- encouraging natural regeneration
- planting a wider mix of tree species
- improving woodland structure and understorey
- strengthening habitat connectivity

The forest must remain productive and continue to store carbon, but will also be designed and managed to improve habitat quality and ecological networks at a landscape scale.

The plan area also supports a range of Biodiversity List and FLS Key Species.

Large areas of the woodland are designated as **Long-Established Woodland of Plantation Origin (LEPO)**, meaning the land has been continuously wooded since at least 1750 or 1860. These areas will be assessed and managed in line with current guidance.

Statutory Designations

Two statutory designated sites lie within the plan area.

Mortlach Moss SSSI & SAC - a base-rich fen designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation. The site was last assessed as being in a favourable condition and un updated site management plan will be created and agreed with NatureScot as part of this renewal process.

Bin Quarry SSSI - a geological SSSI designated for its exposure of the Huntly–Knock igneous intrusion. The site was last assessed as being in a favourable condition and un updated site management plan will be created and agreed with NatureScot as part of this renewal process.

Whitehill SSSI – a fen and lowland grassland designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest is also located adjacent to the Whitehill block within the LMP area. Operations within this block will take into account potential impacts to the SSSI when they reach the operational planning stage.