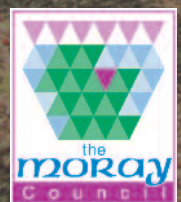


APPENDIX 1

MORAY WOODLAND STRATEGY CALL FOR IDEAS



APRIL 2016



INTRODUCTION

The Council is preparing a Moray Woodland Strategy to guide woodland creation across Moray, support the local timber industry and promote sensitive development opportunities within woodlands. In order to ensure the strategy is reflective of local aspirations for our woodlands, the Council is seeking views from stakeholders across Moray.

This Call for Ideas paper sets out the context for the preparation of the strategy and key questions the Council is seeking input on.

AIMS OF THE STRATEGY

The main aim of the strategy is to expand woodland cover, support the local timber industry and to promote sensitive and appropriate development opportunities within Moray's woodlands. One of the main outputs will be spatial mapping that sets out the opportunities for woodland expansion across Moray. The identification of preferred areas for new woodland creation will be used to target grant support with preferred areas receiving a 10% premium.

The content of the strategy will be informed by stakeholder engagement. It is important to have a strategy that is reflective of the opportunities and challenges affecting forestry and woodlands in Moray. The strategy will be a local interpretation of national priorities that reflects the unique qualities of Moray and demonstrates the importance of the forestry industry. Given the long term nature of forestry and woodland the strategy considers the next 20 years and beyond.

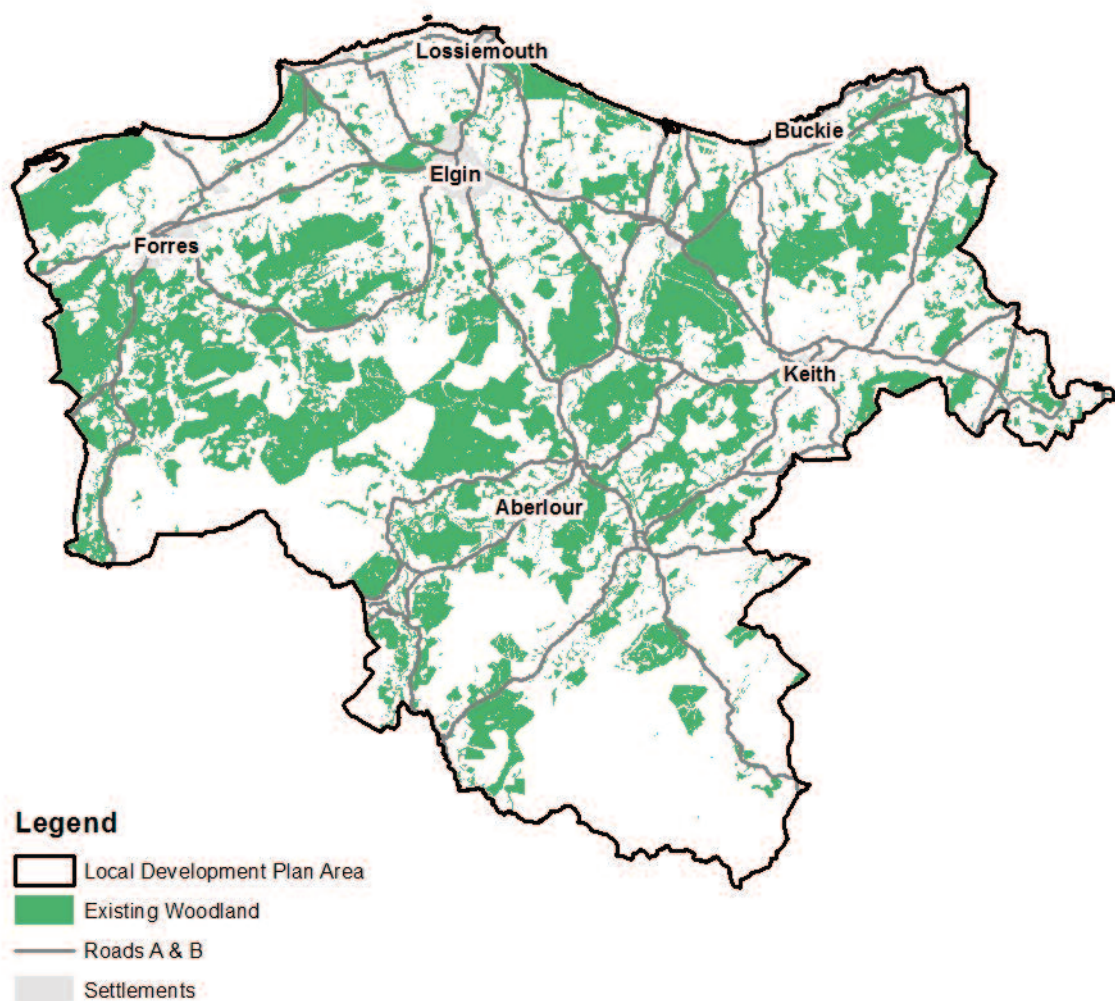
The strategy once adopted will become Supplementary Planning Guidance forming part of the Moray Local Development Plan 2015 and will cover all of the Moray area with the exception of the part within the Cairngorms National Park.



WOODLAND EXPANSION

The Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) National Forestry Inventory estimates that woodland cover equates to approximately 33% of the total land area of Moray (excluding the Cairngorm National Park). This is significantly above the Scottish national average of 18% and contributes significantly to the feel of Moray, with a similar amount of Forestry to the main European countries.

MAP 1: Existing Woodland Cover



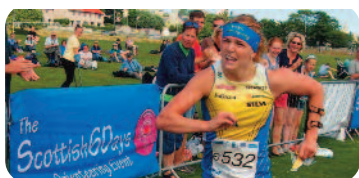
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In order to identify preferred areas for woodland expansion a geographical information systems (GIS) approach will be utilised to map opportunities and constraints to create preferred, potential, sensitive and unsuitable areas for expansion. Constraints mapping is shown in Map 2 in Appendix 1.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

There are a number of opportunities and challenges facing our woodlands. To provide a focus for the preparation of the strategy these have been grouped into key themes;



- Woodland Tourism and Recreational Activities



- Economic Development



- Access and Wellbeing



- Community Ownership



- Environment

Opportunities

Question 1.

What are the key opportunities and challenges facing Moray's woodlands?
Are there issues that should be included that have not been identified?



Woodland Tourism and Recreational Activities

Our woodlands contribute significantly to local tourism, with high quality visitor attractions at Culbin, The Winding Walks, the Spey and Findhorn valleys, Glenlivet and Roseisle, these are special places that should be promoted more widely. The identification of new opportunities or enhanced recreational facilities should be explored and promoted within the strategy. This could include hosting more recreational events like the Scottish Orienteering Championships and promoting forest lodges and hutting sites.

World War 2 fortifications at Roseisle, Culbin and Lossiemouth have great potential as tourist attractions. During the preparation of the strategy the possibilities for this could be explored, to ascertain whether there are interested groups within Moray willing to work in partnership to take this forward. Moray Speyside Tourism is actively pursuing the promotion of the Laich coast as one of the region's distinctive assets, working with the Moray Coast Tourism Group and the Laich of Moray project group.

Recreational activities feature prominently within the Forestry Commission District Strategic Plan for Moray and Aberdeenshire. The strategy offers the opportunity to explore recreational activities within Moray's woodlands and promote projects that will enhance existing facilities like Culbin and Roseisle as key visitor destinations. There are many recreational groups that utilise the woodlands including equestrian, sled dog, orienteering and running clubs that will be invited to contribute to the preparation of the strategy.

Question 2

What opportunities are there to promote and encourage woodland tourism and recreational opportunities within Moray's woodlands?

How could these be supported within the strategy?



Economic Development

Timber Industry

Moray's forests are important in generating income and sustaining local employment. The strategy should support local timber production and processing as an important part of the rural economy. There are tree nurseries located in Moray at Newton, Fochabers and Forres which represent a large proportion of the national market. The strategy could explore how this sector of the timber industry can be supported and the opportunities for the creation of local small scale wood fuel suppliers.

Given the high percentage of forestry cover within Moray, there are opportunities for increased rural employment in forest planning and management, forestry contractors (harvesting), planting contractors, fencing contractors, engineering (harvesting machines and sawmills) and timber transport. There are also significant opportunities for economic development presented by the use of technology in the management, harvesting and processing of forest products. There is also potential for research, both in the nurseries and the woods in Moray in areas such as tree cloning, disease management and forest surveying using remote sensors. Finally, there is also potential for greater use of timber and engineered timber in construction which also contributes to meeting carbon and sustainability targets.

Question 3

What are the key challenges facing forestry and woodland businesses in Moray?

How can the woodland strategy support the local timber industry?



Woodland related businesses



Beyond the timber industry there are other economic development opportunities related to woodland. There are a number of businesses and social enterprises related to woodlands. There are children's nurseries in Moray within woodland settings that specialise in outdoor learning experiences. What are the opportunities to promote local enterprises, businesses and groups like Wild Things, Earth Time and Outfit Moray?

Question 4 What are the economic development opportunities for Moray's woodlands?

Access and Wellbeing



The strategy offers the opportunity to help promote active lifestyles and wellbeing. There are areas of woodland within Moray with significant visitor numbers that are well used by the community. There are a range of Core paths and other community paths throughout Moray's forests in addition to the complement of Forestry Commission leisure routes. The strategy should promote the creation of all access facilities to increase visitor numbers in these locations and across Moray. There are links to NHS Grampian priorities and therefore they will be invited to input into the strategy.

Ongoing management of all these paths continues to be a challenge to keep them useable and accessible and partnerships with local communities could be a way forward to help sustain the paths network.

Question 5 How can the health and wellbeing benefits of woodlands be influenced by the strategy?
How can access to woodlands be improved and maintained in the long term?



Community Ownership/Management



The strategy should explore opportunities for community owned woodlands and small scale community owned renewable projects including wind, hydro and biomass within woodlands. What are the opportunities for communities to become more involved in the management of woodland areas, either the recreational assets such as footpaths and hutting sites for example or through management of areas of woodland for wood fuel ?

Question 6 Are there identifiable opportunities to support community woodland ownership/management and small scale community owned renewable energy projects within Moray's woodlands?

Environment

Woodland creation plays an important role in helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration and timber and fuel production and can also assist natural flood management, habitat restoration and protect soils and water resources. Woodland expansion can also enhance biodiversity and create green networks connecting our towns and villages to nearby woodlands.

There is a need to protect and enhance our woodland resources and woodland removal is recognised as impacting on ambitions for woodland expansion. The Scottish Government policy on woodland removal seeks to minimise woodland loss and requires the provision of compensatory planting.

Woodlands will have to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change in particular the potential for milder and wetter winters, warmer and drier summers and an increase in severe weather events.

Question 7 How can the strategy contribute to protecting and enhancing the environment, support natural flood management, habitat creation, improve biodiversity and address climate change?

Question 8 What areas of Moray are inappropriate for woodland expansion?



Challenges

There are a number of challenges that need to be highlighted within the strategy.

Health

Supporting healthier citizens is a Scottish Government priority. The strategy can contribute by helping to reduce obesity and improving mental health and wellbeing by encouraging more people to become more active and utilise local woodlands for leisure and recreational pursuits.

Timber Transport

Many forestry roads and tracks are in a poor state of repair. Between the Council and the timber industry there is limited money to pay for the upkeep of roads infrastructure. This will be an ongoing issue with timber production forecast to continue to rise and accordingly should be highlighted within the strategy.

Fuel Poverty

Figures from 2012 show that 32% of households in Moray are in fuel poverty. The strategy should explore if there are any means to support and encourage more local wood fuel suppliers to assist in alleviating fuel poverty locally. This could include community wood fuel schemes and management of non-productive woodland or moribund woodland.

Affordable Housing within Woodlands

There is a significant requirement for affordable housing in Moray. Opportunities for the provision of affordable housing in sensitive woodland locations in rural areas of Moray should be explored within the strategy.

Climate Change and Plant Health

Moray will have to adapt to the impacts of climate change including the local impacts of wetter milder winters and more frequent severe weather. Expanding woodland cover offers the opportunity to introduce natural flood management and this should be considered through the preparation of the strategy.

The local impact of tree disease and control measures will be highlighted within the strategy as means of protecting and enhancing existing woodlands and future woodlands.



RESPONDING TO THE CALL FOR IDEAS

Responses are sought to the questions set out within the document and will be used to inform the content of the strategy.

A response form is set out in Appendix 2. Further consultation will be undertaken on the draft strategy which will be published at the end of 2016.

The deadline for responses is 3 June 2016

Responses should be sent to:

localdevelopmentplan@moray.gov.uk

or

The Moray Council,
Local Development Plan,
Development Services,
PO Box 6760,
Elgin, IV30 9BX.

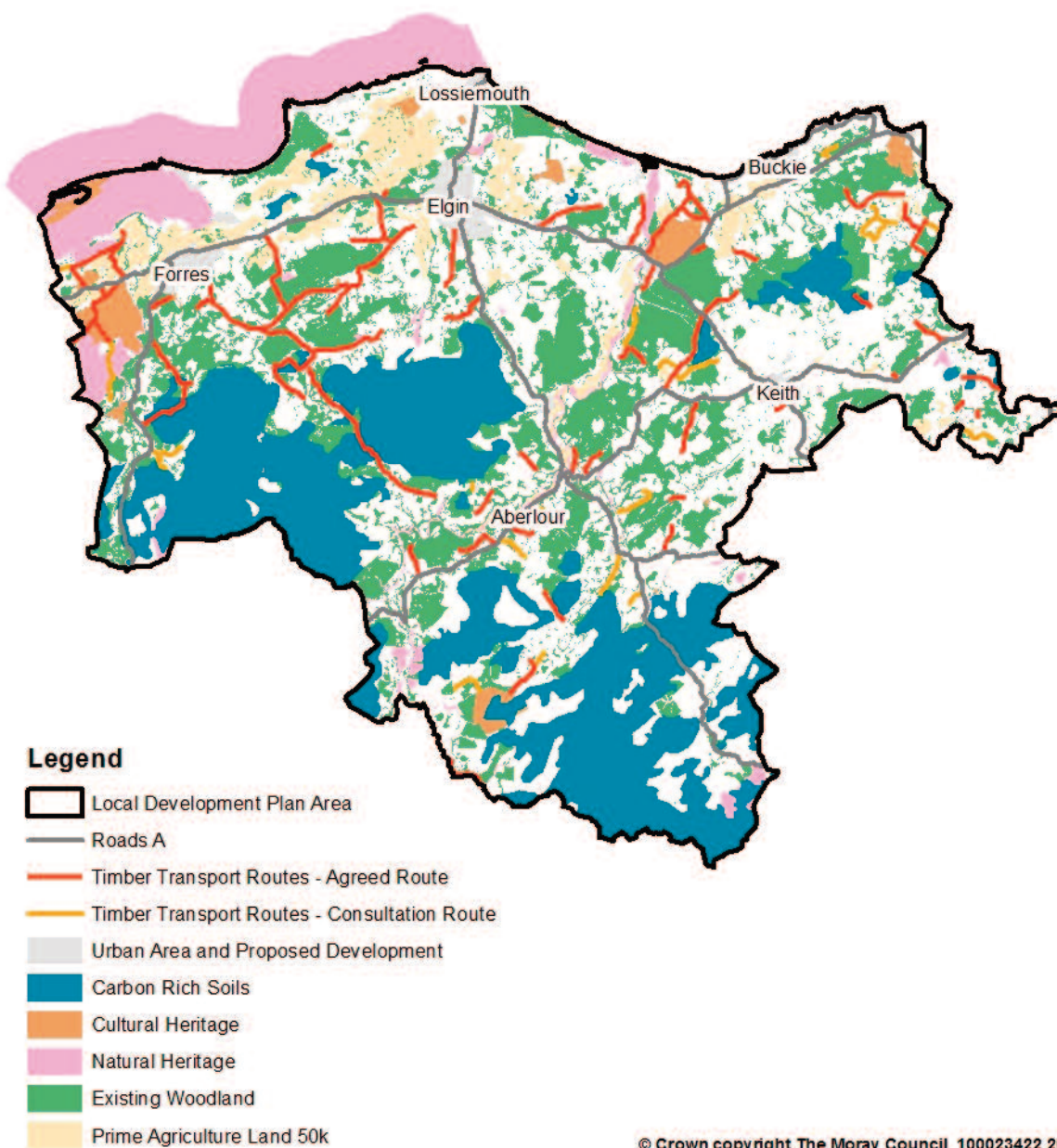
Should you have any questions or wish to participate in stakeholder events scheduled for May/June 2016 please contact:

Emma Gordon
Planning Officer
01343 563292



Appendix 1 Constraints Mapping

MAP 2: Constraints Map



Appendix 2 Response form

Question 1

What are the key opportunities and challenges facing Moray's woodlands? Are there issues that should be included that have not been identified?

Question 2

What opportunities are there to promote and encourage woodland tourism and recreational opportunities within Moray's woodlands? How could these be supported within the strategy?

Question 3

What are the key challenges facing forestry and woodland businesses in Moray? How can the woodland strategy support the local timber industry?





Moray Woodland Strategy

Question 4

What are the economic development opportunities for Moray's woodlands?

Question 5

How can the health and wellbeing benefits of woodlands be influenced by the strategy? How can access to woodlands be improved and maintained in the long term?

Question 6

Are there identifiable opportunities to support community woodland ownership/management and small scale community owned renewable energy projects within Moray's woodlands?



Question 7

How can the strategy contribute to protecting and enhancing the environment, support natural flood management, habitat creation, improve biodiversity and address climate change?

Question 8

What areas of Moray are inappropriate for woodland expansion?

Question 9

Any Other Comments





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