

Harthills Wood, Kemnay – Forest Plan Outline

Owner

New Barn Farm Estates

Location

Harthills Wood is located to the South-East of Kemnay and south-west of Kemnay in Aberdeenshire and covers an area of 126.7 hectares.

Background

The areas forming Harthills Wood were purchased by the Forestry Commission between 1926 and 1980 and were managed by the Commission until they were sold in late 2013. Parts of the Woods have been forested since at least the mid-1800's.

The woodlands are predominately mid-to-late rotation, conifer plantations with some small areas of mature broadleaves and a significant area of younger broadleaves. The principal conifer species is Sitka spruce with Scots pine and Douglas fir also common, with various other conifer and broadleaved species adding to the mixture.

Long Term Vision

The primary aim of the proposed plan is to maintain a focus on productive woodland while maintaining and enhancing the impact of the woodlands in the landscape and surrounding environment. While the productive aim is to fell trees as close to their maximum economic value as possible, in the interest of reducing the visual impact of felling some areas will be allowed to over-mature.

Proposed Work Programme

Phase 1 – 2016 to 2021

A programme of thinning and clear felling will be initiated where appropriate in commercial conifer areas.

The priorities for felling are the area to the south-west in the Bandshed Moss which has suffered from repeated windblow events in recent years and the area north of the Bandshed Moss where many trees are already over-mature.

The areas which are not felled in the first phase will be thinned in order to improve the quality of the crop.

Restructuring will take place primarily with commercial conifer species, with broadleaved species and designed open ground used in areas of high amenity and visual impact.

Phase 2 – 2020 to 2025

The thinning and restructuring programme will continue on a regular cycle to improve the timber quality of the conifer stands. Clear felling will occur in the middle area of the wood at Stony Hill,

including a small area of lodgepole pine which will be removed to reduce the disease risk to the nearby Scots pine.

Phase 3 and 4 – 2025 to 2035

The woods will continue to be managed under a system of thinning and restructuring felling and regeneration.

Operational Constraints

Landscape – The wood is set back from the nearest main road but is visible from both the B994 between Kemnay and Kintore, and the B977 between Kintore and Dunecht. The views from the roads are generally limited due to the low lying nature of the landscape and the presence of smaller woodland blocks and the twisting nature of the roads themselves. The straight lines of the conifer blocks have generally already been softened by the broadleaved areas on the edges of the wood, but there are a number of powerline way-leaves through the woods running to an electrical substation to the south-east which force straight lines through the woods. Restocking along the power-lines can utilise varying height broadleaves, open ground and uneven conifer edges to vary the straight lines.

Public Access – The woods experience moderate public access primarily by dog walkers using a number of informal tracks through the woods primarily from the gate at the north-east. As the clearfelling in the first phase is planned for the west of the woods the impact on public access will be minimised, but any thinning carried to the east out will affect access. Any fencing for plant protection during restocking will have planned gates to allow for future access to the woods.

Archaeology – There are no scheduled sites or monuments in the woods. The only archaeological site in the woods is the Shepherds Stone, as marked on OS maps. During any operations and exclusion zone will be marked around the stone, and all other Forest and Historic Environment Guidelines will be followed at all times. If any other sites are identified in the future they will be protected during operations and all guidelines followed.

Protected species – A number of badger setts have been identified in the woods, and red squirrels are present in the wider landscape although no dreys have been identified in the woods. All forestry best practice guides will be followed when carrying out operations where these species are present.

Power-lines – There are a number of powerline way-leaves which run through the woods, and felling and restocking should be planned to prevent impacting on the power-lines. When restocking an exclusion zone should be marked so no trees grow too close to the lines, and shrub-type broadleaves should be planted in a buffer between the line and any larger broadleaves or conifers.