

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 9 MAY 2000

DRAFT SCOTTISH FORESTRY STRATEGY

Report by Director of Development Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To advise the Committee of the contents of the Draft Scottish Forestry Strategy and its potential implications for the promotion of related development in the context of the East Ayrshire Finalised Local Plan and the developing Indicative Forestry Strategy for Ayrshire.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Draft Scottish Forestry Strategy, published in March 2000, is the Scottish Executives' framework for taking forestry forward. The intention of the Strategy is to promote confidence in the future of forestry, encouraging investment that will benefit current and future generations.

2.2 An initial Consultation Paper, "Forests for Scotland", was published by the Scottish Office in March 1999. The consultation period for this Paper extended over the summer of 1999. A summary of the points agreed by the Development Services Committee on 3 August 1999 as the Council's formal response on the above Consultation Paper forms part of the Appendix to this report. Respondents to the Consultation Paper were subsequently invited to a seminar in Dunkeld on 3 November 1999. This allowed for further discussion of issues arising from the above consultation exercise and for the Forestry Commission to present an outline structure for the Strategy.

2.3 The Scottish Executive formally consulted the Council on the Draft Scottish Forestry Strategy in mid-March 2000 and requires a response from the Council by 6 June 2000.

3. CONTENTS OF DRAFT SCOTTISH FORESTRY STRATEGY

3.1 The Policy context for the Strategy is set by the UK's international commitments to sustainable forestry enshrined in the UK Forestry Standard. The Strategy is based on the following principles,

- **sustainability:** Scottish forestry must contribute positively to sustainable rural development and meet internationally recognised standards of sustainable forest management.
- **integration:** forestry should fit well with other rural activities in Scotland, such as agriculture, conservation, deer management, fishing, recreation and tourism;

- **positive value:** forests and woodlands should be managed in ways which enjoy broad public support;
- **diversity and local distinctiveness:** different types of forest will suit different places.

3.2 The Strategy proposes five Strategic Directions for Scottish Forestry through which it could be developed to contribute to the economy, conserve and improve the environment and enhance the quality of life of communities. These are:

- to maximise the value to the Scottish economy of the wood resource becoming available for harvesting over the next 20 years;
- to create a diverse forest resource of high quality that will contribute to the economic needs of Scotland throughout the 21st century and beyond;
- to ensure that forestry in Scotland makes a positive contribution to the environment;
- to create opportunities for more people to enjoy trees, woods and forests in Scotland;
- to help communities use woods and forests to promote development.

The methods by which the above Strategy Directions are to be achieved are identified in the Strategy as Priorities for Action. These are set out in the Appendix to this report. During 2001 a statement will be issued by the Forestry Commission indicating progress on implementation of the Strategy. The above Priorities for Action will be reviewed by the Forestry Commission in consultation with Councils and other previous consultees.

3.3 Successful implementation of the Strategy will depend upon effective partnership and co-operation between the private sector, Central and Local Government and the voluntary sector. The Strategy is intended as a framework for action which contributors will be able to use in determining their priorities.

4. ISSUES

4.1 The major planning issues relating to the development of forestry in Ayrshire which were identified as part of the Council's response to the initial Consultation Paper referred to in Section 2 above and in the Appendix to this report are,

- upgrading of transport infrastructure for wood haulage should take into account the cost of such improvement works, local transport needs and a general need for investment in rail infrastructure.
- the potential for "downstream" economic activity within East Ayrshire through forestry "cluster" studies should be pursued with Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire.
- There is substantial potential for development of enhanced tourist facilities in forestry areas.

The Draft Scottish Forestry Strategy addresses the above issues through specifying them as Priorities for Action, as referred to in Section 3 above. These Priorities for Action will outline the benefits of the actions proposed, set out how the proposals are to be implemented, and their likely cost, and identify the potential bodies, including local authorities, which might contribute to the implementation of the proposals.

4.2 The approved Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan identifies promotion of economic growth and the principles of sustainable development as key elements of strategic intent for Ayrshire, and Policy E. 3 of the Structure Plan provides for the three Ayrshire Councils, together with the Forestry Authority and other relevant agencies to prepare an Indicative Forestry Strategy for Ayrshire. The draft Scottish Forestry Strategy emphasises the potential of forestry to the local economy in achievement of these strategic aims. The two plans are broadly consistent.

4.3 The East Ayrshire Economic Strategy also recognises the need to exploit the potential of rural industries, including agriculture and forestry, in promoting economic development to regenerate the local economy. The development opportunities presented by the economic potential of forestry are identified in the East Ayrshire Economic Strategy as a strategic objective which could be pursued in collaboration with Enterprise Ayrshire; local businesses and other development agencies. Those priorities for Action identified by the Scottish Forestry Strategy and outlined in Appendix B set out how the above strategic objective of the East Ayrshire Economic Strategy might be achieved.

4.4 Under Policy ENV 15 of the East Ayrshire Finalised Local Plan the Council will actively seek to preserve and supplement existing broadleaf and native tree species throughout East Ayrshire. Under Policy ENV 16 of the Plan the Council will encourage the Forestry Authority and other woodland owners to ensure that their planting proposals are sensitive and sympathetic to the environment and are of benefit to residents of the area as well as visitors. These policies accord with the sustainable principles of the Draft Scottish Forestry Strategy.

5. LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council had originally expressed concern that the previous Consultation Paper had not made specific reference to the role of local authorities in developing forestry partnerships. However, the Draft Scottish Forestry Strategy now clearly identifies in its Priorities for Action how Local Authorities would be involved in achieving those priorities shown in the Appendix to this report, as referred to in Section 3 above.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee (i) note the contents of this report; and (ii) agree that the Head of Planning and Building Control respond to the Forestry Commission regarding the Draft Scottish Forestry Strategy in the terms set out in Sections 4 and 6 of this report.

**Stephen Chorley
Director of Development Services**

27 April 2000 (JT/IMB)
FV/AN

CRForestryStrategy1

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1. Draft Scottish Forestry Strategy, Forestry Commission March 2000.**
- 2. Letter from Head of Planning and Building Control to the Secretary, Scottish Forestry Strategy Working Group, Forestry Commission, dated 9.8.99.**
- 3. Report to Development Services Committee, 3/8/99
- Forestry Commission: Consultation on Strategy dated 27/7/99;
Director of Development Services.**
- 4. "Forests for Scotland - Consultation towards a Scottish Forestry Strategy",
Forestry Commission March 1999.**

Anyone wishing to inspect the above papers please contact Julian Thorp on (01563) 576789.

Implementation Officer: Alan Neish

APPENDIX A

Points made by the Council as its response to the Forestry Commission regarding the consultation paper "Forests for Scotland - Consultation Towards a Scottish Forestry Strategy" agreed at Development Services Committee 3/8/99:

1. As regards the paper's advocacy of the development of partnerships, working with local authorities is not specifically mentioned although reference is made to the development of the Central Scotland Countryside Trust which includes local authorities. Through the East Ayrshire Woodlands Initiative the Council has demonstrated its interest in working in partnership with forest interests - consideration will be given to developing this partnership in the context of a local strategy for forest and related industry developments.
2. Specific reference is made in the consultative strategy to the need to upgrade transport infrastructure to allow wood haulage to be internationally competitive. The cost of providing adequate infrastructure requires to be considered specifically by the Scottish Executive. This should take into account both local transport needs and the need for investment in the rail infrastructure to reduce capacity constraints.
3. The strategy indicates the potential for "downstream" economic activity. The Council might consider jointly with Enterprise Ayrshire the potential for promoting such industries within East Ayrshire.
4. The important contribution made by forestry to tourism is noted in the strategy. The development of enhanced tourist facilities providing access through the Doon Valley to the Galloway Forest offers substantial potential within East Ayrshire.
5. Consultation is recognised as an important element, and reference is made to the arrangements to provide details of applications for grant aid and felling for public observation. Current procedures are inadequate to give local communities the confidence that their views are fully taken into account in the planning stages of major forest developments. For example the proposed timber extraction from Whitelee Forest which has caused considerable local concern will not be the subject of formal application or consultation until key decisions have been taken on harvesting programmes and transport arrangements.

The Council welcomes the guiding principles set out in the strategy, subject to the specific points of criticism noted above. In view of the growing significance of the industry for East Ayrshire and the potential value of environmental and economic benefits it is proposed that a local forestry development strategy and action programme should be developed for consideration by the Council in due course. This would be linked to the wider Indicative Forest Strategy due to be prepared by the Ayrshire Structure Plan Joint Committee.

APPENDIX B

DRAFT SCOTTISH FORESTRY STRATEGY

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

To maximise the value of the wood resource

- Improve competitiveness by developing a strong forest industries network
- Secure investment in wood processing
- Develop the timber transport infrastructure.
- Promote more use of timber
- Develop products that meet market needs.

To create a diverse forest resource for the future

- Expand the area of well-designed productive forest.
- Improve timber quality through following good forest practice
- Develop forests of mixed species.
- Exploit non-timber outputs and benefits of woods and forests.
- Tackle deer problems.

To make a positive contribution to the environment

- Improve management of semi-natural woodlands.
- Extend and enhance native woodlands by developing forest habitat networks.
- Increase the diversity of the farmed landscape.
- Aid recovery of acidified rivers and lakes and improve riparian habitat.
- Encourage alternatives to clear felling.
- Contribute to radical improvement in the quality and setting of urban areas

To help communities use woods and forests to promote development

- Create wider employment opportunities.
- Increase opportunities for community consultation.
- Provide opportunities for greater community involvement in forestry.
- Support community ownership where this will bring local benefits.

To create opportunities to enjoy trees, woods and forests

- Provide woodland recreation opportunities near towns
- Improve availability of information about opportunities.
- Increase forestry's contribution to tourism