

AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN WOODLAND STRATEGY



2003



MEMBERSHIP OF AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN WOODLAND STRATEGY STEERING GROUP

AYRSHIRE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

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TREES ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE CHARACTER OF AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN



INTRODUCTION

Trees are an essential part of the character of Ayrshire and Arran and there is a wide variety of species and location. Over twenty per cent of the land area is covered by trees. These can vary from the rare whitebeam woods in Arran through the beech woods of the river valleys and the eighteenth century designed landscapes of the agricultural lowlands to the plantations of productive conifer species in the Southern Uplands. Trees are, therefore, an inescapable part of daily life. But they are also a vital economic resource employing several thousand people and mainland Ayrshire has established itself as one of the United Kingdom centres for wood processing industries.

Although tree planting and management does not come within the scope of planning legislation and control, planning authorities have had an input into planting decisions through their role as a consultee in the Forestry Commission funded Woodland Grant Scheme. In the past, to help inform their decisions, planning authorities have developed broad forestry strategies, known as "indicative forestry strategies" which were then included in the structure plan for the area.

In Ayrshire and Arran, prior to local government reorganisation, this was prepared as a joint exercise between the former Strathclyde Regional Council and the Forestry Commission and included in the Strathclyde Structure Plan. When this plan was replaced by the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan in 2000, all policies on forestry lapsed. In the discussions leading to the approval of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan, however, the Ayrshire Councils gave a commitment to preparing an Indicative Forestry Strategy as soon as was practicable.

With the establishment of the Scottish Parliament it became apparent that a reinvigorated forestry policy for Scotland would be prepared, but with a considerable re-emphasis on the creation of multi-functional woodlands and an enhanced appreciation of the economic importance of the woodland resource. The publication of "Forests for Scotland: The Scottish Forestry Strategy" by the Scottish Executive and "Roots for Growth: A Strategic Framework for Action for the Scottish Forestry Industries" by Scottish Enterprise in 2000, therefore, provides both the context and the catalyst for the preparation of a new form of Indicative Forestry Strategy. In order to exemplify this new policy format, it was decided to rename the document the "Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy".

This document presents the conclusions and recommendations of the joint working party, the Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy Steering Group, formed to consider how future investment in woodland planting can be directed to secure the greatest economic, environmental and social benefit. The purpose of this strategy document is to:

- explain the background and development of the Woodland Strategy;
- indicate general locations for different forms of woodland planting and management that will maximise the economic, environmental and social benefits of these activities, with a particular emphasis on enhancing the landscape quality of the area;
- identify other key actions that can be taken to support timber related, downstream, industrial investment and employment in woodland planting and management;
- identify key actions that can be taken to improve the efficiency of timber transport and actions that can reduce the negative impacts of timber transport on the road infrastructure and upon communities affected by transport of timber by road;
- identify actions that can be taken to maximise the benefits of new woodland planting and management of existing woodlands for local communities.



The document should be used by:

- The Forestry Commission in considering applications for grant assistance for planting and management of woodlands;
- The Planning Authorities in Ayrshire as an aid to formulating their consultation responses to applications for grant assistance, in preparing any future, detailed, forestry framework plans and revised structure plan and local plan policies;
- Local and national transport authorities in prioritising investments in improved infrastructure;
- Private and public landowners and private forestry companies and advisers in selecting the locations of new planting and management schemes;
- Community and voluntary groups in selecting locations for new planting and management schemes;
- Others with an interest in the development and promotion of the woodland resources of Ayrshire.

It should be recognised that the Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy is a strategy document and that detailed guidance on the design of individual planting and management schemes should be sought from other appropriate sources. In identifying priority areas for specific types of woodland planting and management, the Strategy does not necessarily seek to preclude other forms of appropriate woodland within these areas that achieve the objectives of the Strategy, the Scottish Forestry Strategy or other relevant national or local strategies/initiatives.

IMPORTANT NOTES

This policy document has been prepared at the strategic level and it is not intended that any specific sites be identified from the accompanying diagrams. All individual planting proposals require to be assessed on their own merits, having due regard to any national or local forestry and related policy documents in force at the time, in addition to the guidance set out in this document. The recommendations and guidance contained within the Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy should, however, be regarded as the agreed opinions of the contributors to the document. A larger scale version of the Strategy Diagram is contained on a CD-ROM at the back of this document.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WOODLAND STRATEGY

THE SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

The Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy provides guidance on the means by which the economic, environmental and social benefits of woodland planting and management and timber processing can best be developed for the area. The guidance contained within the document goes beyond the sustainable planting and management of trees to include promotion of the economic and social role of woodland planting and management. The guidance is the collective opinion of the organisations that have contributed to the development of the strategy, who have been drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER POLICY GUIDANCE

Prior to the publication of the Strategy, guidance on the planting and management of trees was available at the national and local authority level. The Forestry Commission's publication "UK Forestry Standard" (1998) sets out the criteria and standards for the sustainable management of forests and woodlands for all of the United Kingdom and is an important source of guidance against which proposals for woodland planting and management are assessed.

At the Scottish level, "Forests for Scotland" (2000) published by the Scottish Executive, details the strategy for expanding the extent of tree cover in Scotland and increasing the economic and environmental benefits for society. The statutory local plans produced by the three Ayrshire Councils contain policies specifying the criteria against which applications for grant assistance for the planting and management of woodland are assessed. Lastly, in the instance of the Island of Arran, the "Arran Forestry Framework" (March 1996) sets out policies for forestry planting for that particular locality.

The Strategy works alongside these documents by giving local expression to national policy and prioritising investment in new planting and management of trees to deliver the benefits of "multi-purpose" forestry. Importantly, the Strategy provides locational guidance which is not available from the other documents referred to above.

BACKGROUND

Previous guidance at an Ayrshire and Arran-wide level on the location of suitable and unsuitable areas for afforestation was included in the Strathclyde Structure Plan (1995), prepared by the former Strathclyde Regional Council. The "Indicative Forestry Strategy for Strathclyde" identified at the strategic level those parts of Ayrshire and Arran that were considered suitable for large-scale afforestation. In common with other indicative forestry strategies produced elsewhere in Scotland, the Strathclyde strategy was primarily intended to guide the planting of large scale commercial forestry proposals and did not promote forms of woodland planting that can deliver the wider social and environmental benefits that "Forests For Scotland" now seeks to promote.

The Strathclyde Structure Plan was replaced with the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan in 2000, at which time the Indicative Forestry Strategy for Strathclyde lapsed. In the discussions leading up to the approval of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan, however, the Ayrshire Councils gave a commitment to preparing an indicative forestry strategy for Ayrshire and Arran as soon as was practicable. An Issues and Opportunities Report was published for consultation in March 2000. This report acted as the starting point for consultation on the strategy and a wide range of groups, including the forestry industry, Central Government agencies, local councils, community councils and environmental interest groups were invited to comment. Nearly 150 separate comments were received which raised a wide range of issues that went beyond the commonly regarded content of an indicative forestry strategy.

The conclusions of the consultation exercise together with the publication of the Scottish Executive's "Scottish Forestry Strategy" and a related document "Roots for Growth" prepared by Scottish Enterprise/Forest Industries Cluster Group (2000) (which promotes the economic development potential of the woodland resource) suggested a more wide-ranging strategy document than previous indicative forestry strategies was necessary. The Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy has been developed to respond to this need and has regard not only to the landscape, ecological and cultural sensitivities of the landscape to timber planting, but also seeks to encompass pro-active forestry management to deliver economic and social benefits and to respond to the consequences of the transportation of the timber resource.

THE NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity as a concept emerged from the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The term simply defines all varieties of life on the Earth. It is also a measure of sustainable development, and as such measuring biodiversity is a key element in measuring whether sustainable development targets are being achieved.

There has been a strong government commitment to the concept of biodiversity through the production of the UK Action Plan for Biodiversity (1994) and by the establishment of the Scottish Biodiversity Group in 1996. In line with the concept of "think global, act local" the Government sees the delivery mechanism for biodiversity not just at the national scale but through local biodiversity action plans.

The general thrust of biodiversity action is in the definition of priority action plans for species and habitats under threat or in decline. In the United Kingdom this has led to some 400 species and 40 habitat action plans, many associated with woodland biodiversity. This has been taken forward in Scotland by the Scottish Biodiversity Group's "Action for Scotland's Biodiversity" (2000). As such both the "UK Forestry Standard" (1998) and the "Scottish Forestry Strategy" (2000) place a particular emphasis on the role that woodland planting and management can play in the development of biodiversity and this is carried forward to the Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy.

RURAL POLICY CONTEXT

Following devolution, the Scottish Executive underlined its commitment to rural communities and the rural economy through the creation of the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department and the implementation of a new devolved rural strategy. 'Rural Scotland - A New Approach' took forward the pledge given in 'Partnership for Scotland' to develop an integrated approach to sustain and support rural communities, economies and the environment. In addition, 'Rural Scotland - A New Approach' highlighted the difficulty of developing and co-ordinating effective national strategies over complex rural areas with many inter-related policies occurring simultaneously. It was recognised that the implementation of generic policy approaches, with more detailed solutions in specific topics such as forestry may be more appropriate. This national rural policy therefore provides an important policy context for the development of a Strategy.



BIODIVERSITY

A MEASURE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

FORESTRY POLICY CONTEXT

The framework for forestry policy in the United Kingdom has been informed by international commitments made since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Together these agreements set the framework for sustainable forestry. More recently, the revision of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the United Kingdom (1999) continued to promote the importance of woodlands to sustainable development objectives and indicated a commitment to continue the expansion of the wooded area.

The Government's approach to sustainable forestry was published in 1998 in the UK Forestry Standard. It sets out the criteria and standards for the sustainable management of all forests and woodlands in the UK. Whilst providing the benchmark for all forestry proposals, it also forms the basis of an independent certification scheme - The UK Woodlands Assurance Scheme. Many woods and forests are already independently certified against this standard.

After devolution, the responsibility for forestry in Scotland like all other rural affairs now rests with the Scottish Executive. 'Forests for Scotland - The Scottish Forestry Strategy' was launched in November 2000 and fulfils pledges given within 'Rural Scotland - A New Approach'. Further, in addition to developing the commitments made within the United Kingdom Sustainable Development Strategy, 'Forests for Scotland' promotes multi-purpose woodland for both market and non-market benefits, and the enhancement of local diversity and distinctiveness. Partnership between interested parties and integration of rural land practices is also central to the ethos of the document. "Forests for Scotland", provides the strategic directions for any overall revision of policy and identifies five strategic directions for Scottish forestry. 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 forestry in Scotland makes a positive contribution to the environment;
- To create the opportunities for more people to enjoy trees, woods and forests; and
- To help communities benefit from woods and forests.

Further national guidance on developing the economic potential of forestry in Scotland is provided in the Scottish Forest Industries Cluster's strategic framework "Roots for Growth" which sets out the strategy and action plan for the Scottish Forest Industries 2000 to 2005. It takes forward the Scottish Forestry Strategy priority for action "to maximise the value of the wood resource."

The Forestry Commission regulates forest development by private owners and the management activities of Forest Enterprise who have the responsibility for the management of nationally owned forests. Regulation is achieved through a system of grants and controls over felling of woodland. Grants are paid to private landowners to assist with the management of existing forests and to help create new woodland. A system of felling licenses are used to control felling of woodlands and to ensure cleared areas are replanted, where appropriate.

The Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department and the Forestry Commission completed a major review of the current system of grants, known as the Woodland Grant Scheme and the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme, in Summer 2002. The aim of the review was to improve the effectiveness of the grants system in delivering the priorities identified in the Scottish Forestry Strategy. As an outcome of the review, the current system is to be replaced in Scotland, subject to European Union agreement, in Spring 2003 by the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme and the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme: Farmland Premium. The new grants will be available throughout Scotland, however, additional funding will be available for certain areas, including Ayrshire and Arran. These additional grants are referred to as Locational Premium and their aim is to better target funding towards specific types of woodland planting or areas identified in strategic or regional documents.

Forestry development is also subject to the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (Scotland) Regulations 1999. These require anyone who wishes to carry out a relevant project (e.g. deforestation, afforestation, forestry roads or quarries) that might have a significant effect on the environment, to obtain consent for the work from the Forestry Commission. The applicant or proposer must submit an Environmental Statement to apply for consent. The Environmental Statement is subject to full public consultation.

INDICATIVE FORESTRY STRATEGY GUIDANCE

“Forests for Scotland” also provides updated guidance on what is expected of an Indicative Forestry Strategy. The following themes have been identified.

- **The contribution that further woodland expansion or restructuring of existing forests can make towards the creation of high quality woodlands serving a variety of purposes;**
- **Identification of priority areas where woodland expansion might be targeted;**
- **The balance of forestry against other land uses across the area;**
- **The limits of acceptable change in areas sensitive to further planting; and**
- **The extent to which opportunities provided by felling might be used to restructure existing plantations.**

AGRICULTURAL POLICY CONTEXT

The ‘Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture’ attempts to address the serious difficulties identified by Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department in ‘Rural Scotland – A New Approach’ within the agricultural sector. In addition the Strategy introduces an integrated and co-ordinated long-term approach to the development and management of the agricultural sector and the countryside.

In the future, the strategy states that farming is likely to become more independent, and with increased efficiency within the market place rather than increased subsidy sustaining profitability. Diversification of the agricultural resource into niche markets including food, retail and environmental crops will provide additional financial stability. Through partnership, there will be better promotion and integration with other rural land uses and the environment, with those farmers pioneering better environmental stewardship being rewarded through grant aid. It is anticipated that during this period of substantial change in the agricultural economy, farming will look to tree planting as another area into which farming might diversify.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR SCOTLAND

The Rural Development Plan for Scotland is required under European Legislation to provide a national overview against which to set a rural development approach with particular emphasis on the agricultural and forestry sectors. National funding mechanisms are linked with European funds to help focus policies on the development of a more sustainable and integrated rural strategy.

As the key programme for targeting European funds the Plan will have a major influence in the implementation of any future Strategy. Part of the EU regulation is specifically identified for support to be provided to contribute to the maintenance of and development of the economic, ecological and social functions of forests in rural areas, both for the afforestation of agricultural and non-agricultural land and for investments in forests.



ENHANCING LOCAL DIVERSITY AND DISTINCTIVENESS

THE LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

AYRSHIRE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN

The Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan provides an important context for the development of the Strategy. The Plan was prepared by the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and Transportation Committee on behalf of the three Ayrshire Councils and approved by the Scottish Ministers on 24 January 2000. The structure plan contains the land use planning policies and proposals which co-ordinate the requirements for development land with the protection of the environment at a strategic level. The approved policies therefore act as a controlling influence on the preparation of a woodland strategy.

The Structure Plan has four key Statements of Strategic Intent:

- Promotion of economic growth;
- Protection and promotion of the vitality and viability of existing settlements;
- Protection and enhancement of the countryside and the environment; and
- Promotion of the principles of sustainable development.

These provide the background to future development and underpin all other policies. The Statements represent the defining principles against which the Strategy must be developed.

Following from the Statements of Strategic Intent there are a wide range of policies that provide the context for all types of land use development. Although forestry and woodland planting and management are outside the scope of current planning legislation it is expected they will require to conform generally to the approved policies. The policies can be seen in full in the Structure Plan, but the main areas of interaction are:

- A requirement to manage development in the countryside to protect the perceived quality of the environment;
- To promote tourism, including the development of rural recreational opportunity;
- To support the rural economy through measures that encourage partnership with rural communities, support rural business and encourage farming and forestry that is sympathetic to the environment;
- To recognise the importance of landscape characteristics to both quality of life and the environment;
- A requirement to protect all aspects of biodiversity and cultural heritage; and
- Maximise the use of non road-based freight transport through the development of rail and coastal shipping.

THE FOUR KEY STATEMENTS OF STRATEGIC INTENT

- PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC GROWTH
- PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF EXISTING SETTLEMENTS
- PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE COUNTRYSIDE AND THE ENVIRONMENT
- PROMOTION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



THE AYRSHIRE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

The Ayrshire Landscape Character Assessment was published in March 1998 and provides a landscape character assessment and a commentary on forces for landscape change. The aim of the study was to assist policy development and to aid evaluation of the impact of individual development proposals.

The variation in landscape character was analysed using a systematic methodology which combines objective and subjective assessment of the landscape and classification of the landscape into areas of distinct and relatively homogenous character. This method enables the character of the landscape to be described in a hierarchical framework. It is based upon the identification and description of Regional Character Areas, Landscape Types and the identification of Landscape Units. The Ayrshire Landscape Character Assessment identified eight Regional Character Areas and twenty two landscape types. The same landscape character types occur in different regional character areas, but are distinguished by broader regional influences, such as geology, soil or land use. In total, eighty three individual landscape "units" were further identified to aid the development of the strategy.

For each of the twenty two distinct landscape types, the report describes the current landscape character and the forces for change affecting it and sets out a series of management and planning guidelines which are designed to conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the landscape. In this regard, the document identifies 12 of the landscape types as being sensitive to further large scale, productive woodland planting. It is recognised, however, that appropriate forms of tree planting and management, that are in harmony with the landscape character, would benefit most types of landscape. The individual landscape units have been used in the development of the Strategy to assess the sensitivity of different parts of the landscape to woodland planting.

THE AYRSHIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

The Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan, published in 2001, documents and describes broad habitat types and individual species of animals and plants that are considered to be priorities for conservation and enhanced management.

The Action Plan was compiled by Scottish Natural Heritage, the three Ayrshire Councils and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in association with many other national agencies and organisations and local natural environment interest groups and forms part of a series of Local Biodiversity Action Plans, covering all of Scotland. These plans seek to translate the UK Government Biodiversity Action Plan into effective action at a local level.

The Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan identifies seven broad habitat types and 11 species which require greatest conservation efforts. The document sets out what actions are required to conserve each of these and to identify lead organisations and a timetable for action. Native and semi-natural woodland and policy woodlands are identified as priority habitats. The protection and promotion of these priority habitats and the other habitats and species identified in the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan have been taken into consideration in the formulation of the Strategy and, indeed, the Strategy is a key mechanism by which a number of the Action Plan proposals will be implemented.

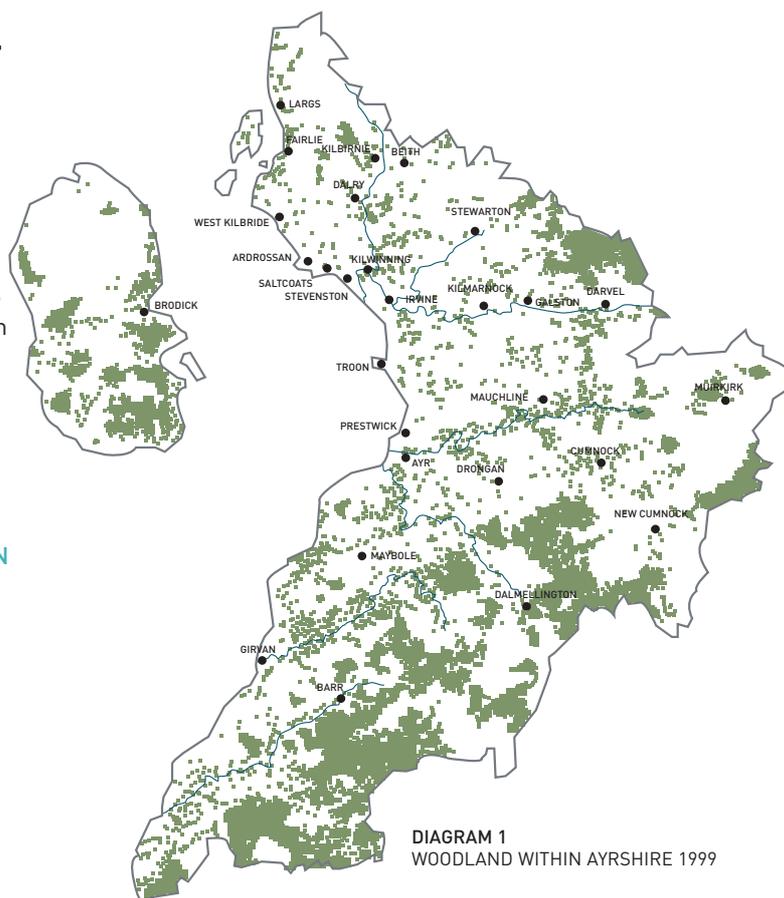


DIAGRAM 1
WOODLAND WITHIN AYRSHIRE 1999

THE EXISTING WOODLAND RESOURCE

LARGE SCALE, PRODUCTIVE WOODLAND

Ayrshire and Arran like many other parts of Scotland experienced extensive tree planting for timber throughout the latter part of the 20th century. This has resulted in woods and forests contributing to approximately 21% of the total land cover of the area. The timber resource currently reaching maturity will provide mainly coniferous softwood for use in processing plants (Diagram 1).

With the rest of Scotland, a significant proportion of the productive forests has reached maturity, or will do so in the near future. Latest long-term timber production estimates published by the Forestry Commission indicate that Ayrshire and Arran will experience a three-fold increase in soft wood timber available for extraction between 2001 and 2021. Not only could this provide considerable employment opportunities and potential economic benefits, but it also gives some indication of the importance that re-structuring of existing forests will have in creating multi-benefit forests for the future (Figure 1).

WOODLAND ENVIRONMENT

Another significant element of the woodland resource is the ancient, long-established and semi-natural woods that account for just over 3% of the total countryside area. These are recorded in the Nature Conservancy Council (the predecessor to Scottish Natural Heritage), Inventory of Ancient, Semi-Natural and Long Established Woodland.

These woodlands, are located principally in lower lying areas close to valley floors and following the river networks. Native species of trees are predominant in these woodlands, some of which are known to have been in existence for many hundreds of years. Certain areas, including the gorge woodlands of the River Ayr, are considered to be of particular importance and as such have been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). In the north of Arran woodlands in Glen Diomhan have been included within an SSSI on account of the presence of rare species of whitebeam endemic to the island (see Diagram 2).

Many ancient or semi-natural woodlands are recognised as being of local importance for their nature conservation value and the contribution that they make to the character of the landscape. Farm woodlands including shelterbelts and hedgerow trees contribute to the landscape and provide important habitats for wildlife. On a larger scale there are a number of fine examples of estate woodlands. These are often composed of a mixture of designed landscapes and plantations.



FIGURE 1
ESTIMATED TIMBER VOLUME
PRODUCTION IN AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN 1999 - 2066
[Source: Forestry Commission]

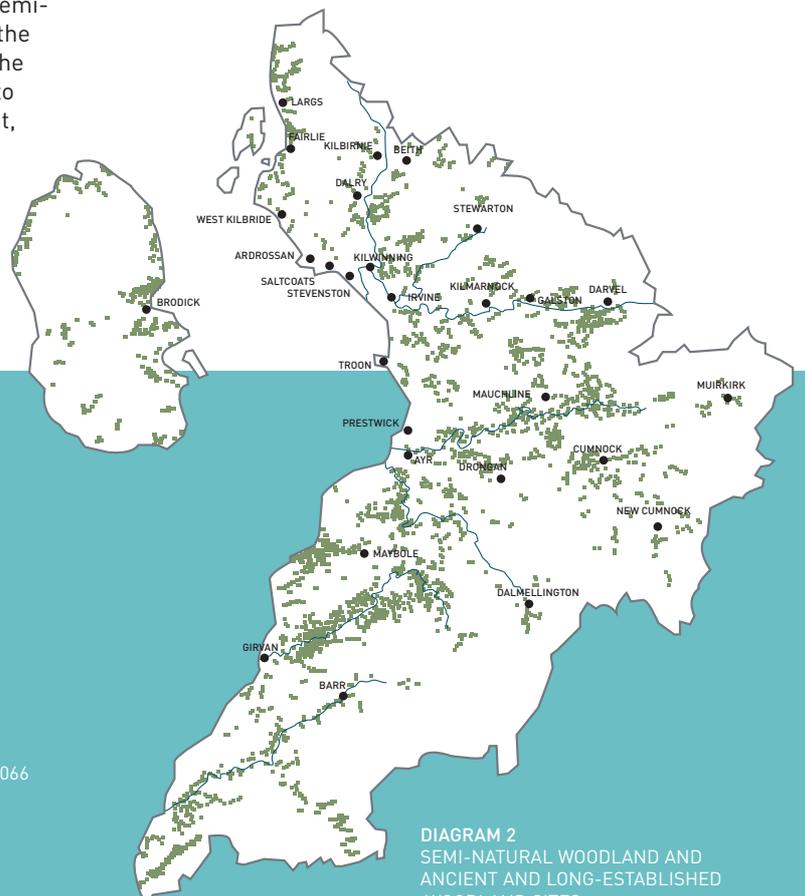


DIAGRAM 2
SEMI-NATURAL WOODLAND AND
ANCIENT AND LONG-ESTABLISHED
WOODLAND SITES

PLANTING TRENDS

Targeted funding, facilitated through the Woodland Grant Scheme and Farm Woodland Premium Scheme, combined with changes in agricultural trends and practices has resulted in a wide variation in the number of applications submitted each year for approval under the two schemes. The diversification and viability of the agricultural sector are significant factors in this variation. There has been an increase in the amount of broadleaf woodland planted since 1985 following a change in national forestry policy and associated change in funding arrangements (see Figures 2 and 3).

TIMBER INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

Employment in the forestry industry and other related industries, makes a significant contribution particularly to the rural economy. In 1999 it was estimated that between 2000 and 5000 people were employed in forestry and related industries. Indications are there has been a significant growth in the number of individuals employed within the forestry industry as a whole over a relatively short time period, with the greatest increase in employment being experienced within the indirect sector as major new plants have come on stream.

Wood processing industries form a major component of the national forest employment resource. The area has a strategic cluster of major processing sites and a large number of small sawmills. Direct employment within these industries accounts for over one-third of the total direct employment of forestry. The significance of this is increased when processing sites are located within rural areas (see Diagram 3).

FIGURE 2
NUMBER OF WGS
APPLICATIONS
APPROVED IN
AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN
1992-2001

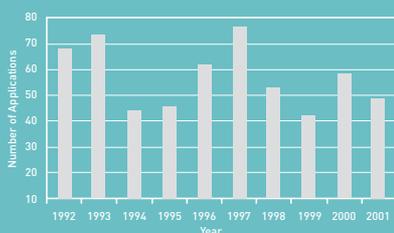
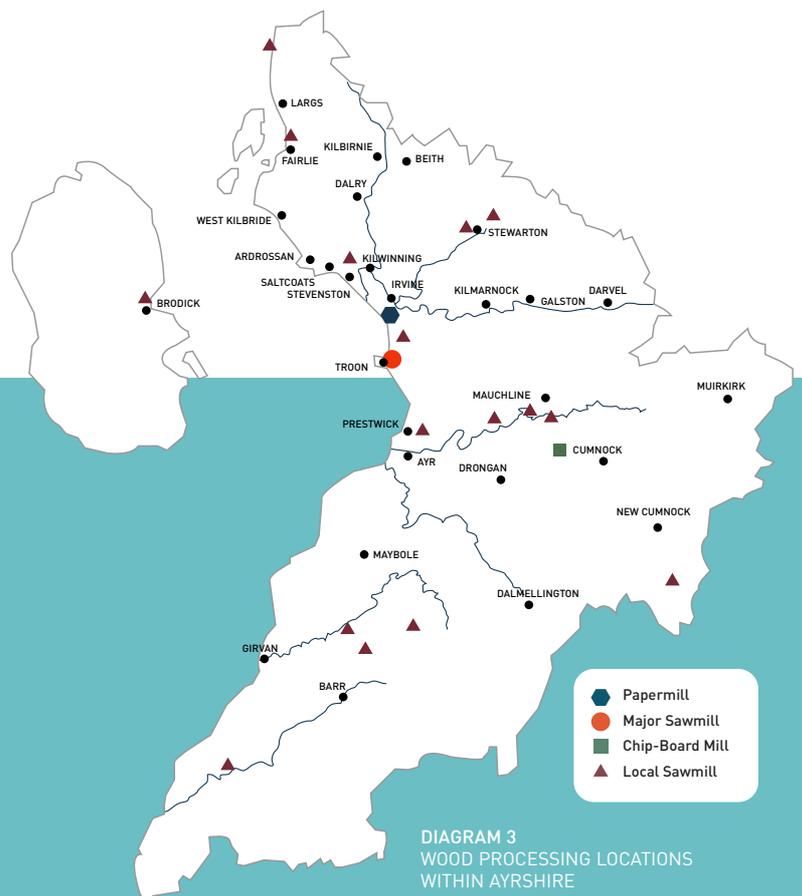
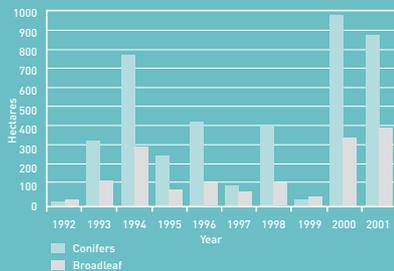


FIGURE 3
NEW PLANTING
WITHIN AYRSHIRE AND
ARRAN 1992 - 2001

[Source: Forestry Commission]



THE AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN WOODLAND STRATEGY

VISION STATEMENT

**TO DEVELOP THE WOODLAND OF AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN AS A
MODEL OF INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF LAND
THAT SUPPORTS THE LOCAL ECONOMY, CONTRIBUTES TO
COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND PROMOTES ENVIRONMENTAL
EXCELLENCE.**

The Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy seeks to guide the management and development of woodland over the coming two decades. The vision statement communicates a simple structure to the Strategy and incorporates the key policy directions.



UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

In developing previous indicative forestry strategies, the main policy direction concentrated on large scale forestry plantations. With the new national strategy now focused on multi-benefit woodland the Strategy focuses on policies and priorities for all types of woodland management and tree planting. In this way it is hoped to focus increased impetus to the restructuring of the large scale, productive forests and to the development of the considerable resource provided by trees in the lowland landscapes.

In order to set a context for the Strategy a number of assumptions have been made. These are:

- Appropriate continued woodland planting is desirable to deliver an integrated economic, environmental and social policy approach;
- The aim is to direct woodlands to the most appropriate locations and promote trees of an appropriate type and scale in balance with other land uses;
- Area capacity to accommodate further woodland planting can be defined through physical, landscape character and ecological thresholds;
- Areas identified through systematic sieving are tested for their economic viability, sustainability and accessibility;
- There should be a focus on all aspects of the timber industry from site identification through to harvesting, extraction, transportation and processing and on woodlands as a broadly based rural economic resource;
- Best practice guidance will be followed throughout the process of site identification, planting, management and harvesting;
- Current regulatory procedures including the UK Forestry Standard will deal with all site-specific environmental concerns; and
- There is a recognition that woodland planting has a role to play in agricultural diversification and the promotion of countryside access and recreation.

THE STRATEGY

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOODLAND PLANTING

The aim of guidance to previous indicative forestry strategies was to effect a balance between the economic needs of the forestry sector and wider social, economic and environmental needs. This aspect remains an important component of the new national advice. One of the key aspects of delivering this balanced strategy, is to ensure that new woodlands integrate, enhance and reflect the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape in which they are set.

Previously this was referred to in a diagram showing areas that were preferred, potential, or sensitive to commercial forestry planting. With the increasing emphasis on providing multi-benefit woodland and the recognition that national strategy applies to all types of woodland planting, there has been considerable discussion on the continued need for this type of diagram. Both the revised Scottish Office Development Department Circular 9/99, Indicative Forestry Strategies, and the national strategy both see a continued role for an indicative forestry strategy type of diagram, but consultation during the development of the Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy was inconclusive.

The conclusion reached by the Steering Group is that since there is no direct statutory control of the tree planting process, it is of fundamental importance to give the industry the earliest indication of the areas where there are potentially sensitive issues associated with landscape, the natural, cultural and historic environments and biodiversity. These would apply to development under planning legislation and it seems reasonable that the timber industry should also be required to take account of these issues. Accordingly the categories of preferred, potential and sensitive have been retained in a diagram showing opportunities for woodland planting.

It is important to recognise that no specific target for tree coverage in Ayrshire and Arran has been set. Whilst the current figure is below that given as a future national target in "Forests for Scotland", the Forestry Commission policy towards a multi-benefit forest resource allows a flexible approach to planting. The Strategy is based, therefore, on a recognition that some areas may be generally unsuitable through agricultural or environmental concerns and/or may only be appropriate to a certain scale or type of planting. A detailed description of the process is contained in Technical Report No. 24 available separately.

Four specific categories have been identified in line with current government advice and are identified on Diagram 4.



PREFERRED AREAS:

Areas with few constraints for planting other than a requirement to meet the UK Forestry Standard. Further planting of woods and forests will be encouraged.

POTENTIAL AREAS:

Areas where scale is an issue, and/or where there is at least one significant issue relating to biodiversity, landscape, agriculture and the natural and built environment, but where there is still considerable potential for planting of woods and forests.

SENSITIVE AREAS:

Areas where there is a significant sensitivity either to scale or to other land use priorities, and where the scope for further planting of woods and forests is severely limited and may be discouraged.

AREAS UNSUITABLE FOR PLANTING:

Areas considered unsuitable for wood and forest planting through physical constraints eg. built-up areas, covered by water or considered too high for economic tree growth etc.

Scale

The concept of scale as applied to categories of sensitivity is not simply a product of the actual size of a planted area. In some areas quite small scale planting can have significant environmental or biodiversity effects, whilst in others it may not. Scale is therefore defined as a relationship between the type and size of planting and the broader landscape context. It will require to be judged on its merits as individual applications for planting come forward. Outside the preferred areas large scale planting of uniform species will, generally, not be appropriate.

Reference should be made to the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan to identify any particular habitats or species that will require conservation and enhanced management in the design of new planting schemes. In addition, a significant change to the current environmental monitoring and management regime is taking place with the introduction of the proposed 'Water Framework Directive'. This major piece of new legislation will cover all aspects of development which may have an effect on the water environment and will have implications for future woodland planting.

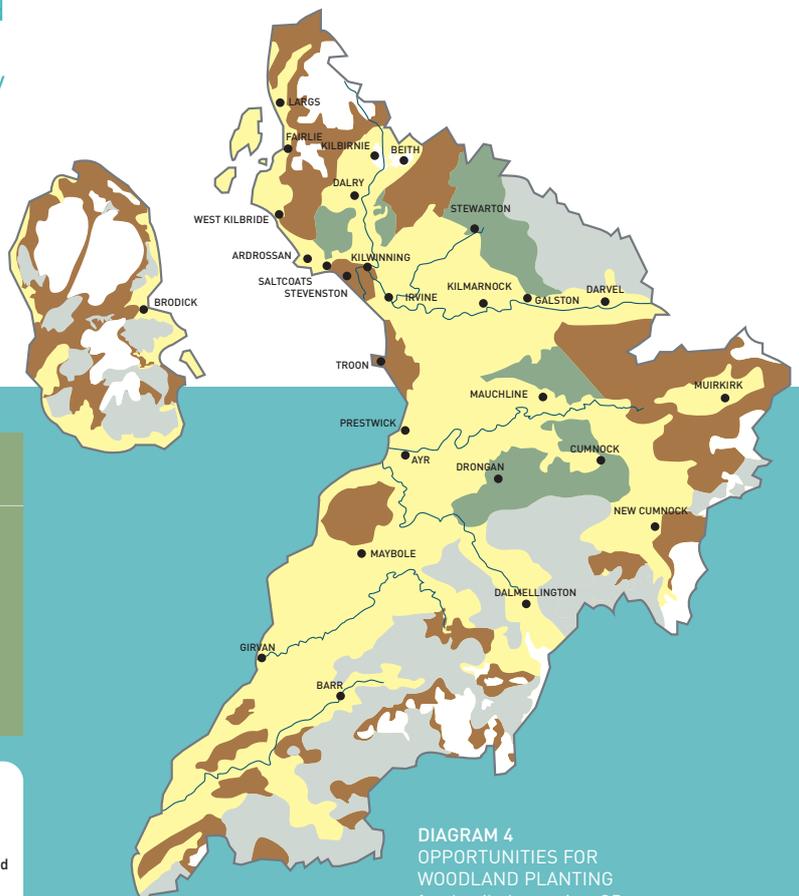


DIAGRAM 4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOODLAND PLANTING for detail please view CD

KEY ACTIONS	
WS1	All agencies responsible for the delivery of woodland management recognise Diagram 4 "Opportunities for Woodland Planting" as the basis for effective promotion.

- Areas Unlikely to be Suitable for Planting
- Sensitive Areas
- Potential Areas
- Preferred Areas for Large Scale Commercial Woodland
- Existing Woodland

DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF THE WOODLAND RESOURCE

This section details the action that is required across a range of issues to promote the integration of woodland planting and management into a broader land utilisation agenda. The action points are grouped under four main headings:

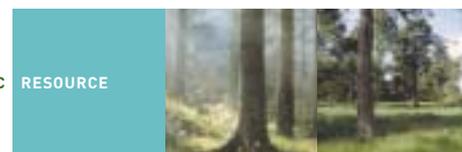
- Woodland Promotion
- Transport
- Environmental Management
- Community and Partnership

The existing significant woodland resource has contributed to the growth and development of a nationally important cluster of wood processing industries. The Scottish Executive’s publication “Roots For Growth” emphasises the need for a locally defined, long term strategy to assist in securing the forestry industry clusters that already exist, whilst also providing certainty to attract further investment. If Ayrshire and Arran is to maintain its current economic position in the wood processing industry and develop a sustainable resource, there is a need to ensure a stable or increasing supply of softwood, both through replanting of existing forests and woodlands following harvesting and new planting. Careful consideration, however, must be given to the design and extent of new and replacement planting, in order to ensure that they contribute positively to their surrounding environment and landscape. New and replacement plantings should be designed in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard.

Replanting of Existing Woodlands

The Scottish Forestry Strategy promotes the replanting of the existing resource to help sustain rural employment, increase biodiversity and provide access and recreational opportunities. The Woodland Strategy supports this objective and encourages the replanting of all existing woodland areas, identified on Diagram 4. Careful consideration, however, must be given to the design and extent of replanting of these areas, in order to ensure that they contribute positively to their surrounding environment and landscape. There may be situations, for example peat land or bird interest, where a reduction in the scale of planting or incorporation of more open space should be encouraged. Reference should be made to the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan to identify any particular habitats or species that will require conservation and enhanced management.

	KEY ACTIONS
EW1	The principle of replanting on existing woodland as identified on Diagram 4 will generally be accepted.
EW2	There should be a requirement for complete coverage of Forest Design Plans and Forest Plans for all public and private large-scale woodland areas.
EW3	In bringing forward proposals to replant existing woodland the principle of the development of multi-benefit forests to provide greater social, economic and environmental benefits appropriate to the location will be encouraged. Regard will be had to the UK Forestry Standard and the objectives of the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
EW4	Additional funding sources will be sought to assist in the restructuring of existing woodlands.



New Large Scale Productive Woodland Planting

The encouragement of new woodlands in areas not previously covered by trees would, in certain areas, bring a number of economic, social and environmental benefits. In addition to providing a resource to secure existing forestry industries and the potential to attract further investment, there are parts of the landscape that would benefit from enhanced tree cover. This would be particularly applicable if the expansion of the woodland area is linked to achieving broader environmental and social benefits.

It is recognised, however, that the development of further areas of woodland is an issue that requires careful consideration. If the areas identified by this strategy for further large scale productive woodland planting are to be successful, not only must the regulatory framework (developed through sustainable development principles and applied by the Forestry Commission) be enforced through best practice guidance, but changes to grant aid must be inevitable. This would have the effect of directing large scale productive woodland planting to the areas of least sensitivity, identified in Diagram 4.

	KEY ACTIONS
NW1	Promote the expansion of large scale productive woodland in the areas identified on Diagram 1 as “preferred”.
NW2	Encourage the development of multi-benefit forests to provide greater social, economic and environmental benefits appropriate to the location. Regard will be had to the UK Forestry Standard and the objectives of the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
NW3	Encourage the targeting of forestry and agricultural funding mechanisms toward areas identified as strategic opportunities for large-scale woodland.

Agricultural Diversification

Historically, landscapes have been shaped throughout time by changes in land management practices, driven by government policy and financial incentives. The landscape of Ayrshire and Arran reflects this trend, being characterised by a rich tapestry of shelterbelts, farm woodlands, field boundaries and hedgerows in the fertile lowland plain. River gorges and valleys have retained small clusters of woodland, whilst the large expansive hill farming areas of the uplands have remnant broadleaf woodlands or copses in areas protected from stock grazing. It is much of this upland area that has historically been subject to large tracts of monoculture conifer plantation.

The increased financial marginality of the farming industry has led to less emphasis on the maintenance and enhancement of areas that provide little immediate financial return, such as boundary hedgerows, individual trees or shelter belts, yet are of high biodiversity and landscape value. The current crisis in the farming industry has seen increased pressure for agricultural diversification which does not always include positive management of this biodiversity.

This has had a social and economic, as well as an environmental significance. At a national level, the recently finalised Rural Development Plan and the Scottish Forestry Strategy both seek to address the significance of woodland planting as a means to integrate rural land management practice and provide an alternative for diversifying farm incomes. The development of a new funding regime in the Rural Development Plan seeks to implement this new integrated approach. The Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan also specifically identifies farm hedgerows and shelterbelts as a priority habitat for conservation and expansion.

Through an analysis of the Landscape Character Assessment of Ayrshire it is possible to identify areas of the farmed landscape that should be prioritised to restore neglected habitats and develop a more integrated rural setting. For example the planting of new native woodlands, establishing smaller scale, mixed woodlands, planting new shelterbelts and re-establishing hedgerows. Whilst such forms of planting are acceptable outwith the priority areas identified, it is considered that planting these types of woodlands in the locations identified would bring the greatest benefit to the overall landscape value of Ayrshire and Arran.

KEY ACTIONS	
AD1	Promote the areas identified on Diagram 5 as priority areas for agricultural diversification by appropriate woodland planting.
AD2	Prioritise forestry and agricultural funding mechanisms toward the establishment and management of appropriate woodlands within the areas identified.

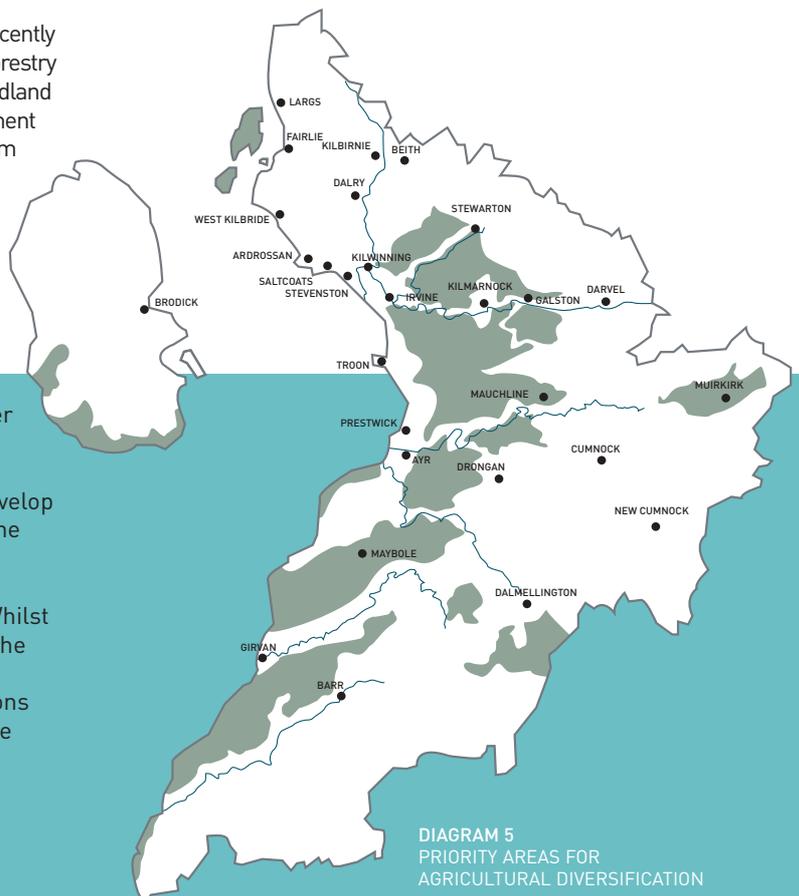


DIAGRAM 5
PRIORITY AREAS FOR
AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION

Wood Processing Locations

Employment in the forestry industry makes an important contribution to the economy, particularly within rural areas. As forests mature and the harvesting of timber increases, the numbers of individuals employed within the industry is also expected to increase. Due to the long-term nature of wood production, the world price of timber and the vagaries of the international processing sector, it is impossible to predict with any degree of accuracy the future possibility of further large scale processing plants locating within the area. Nevertheless, the Scottish Enterprise Cluster Study saw a cause for optimism in growth of the processing sector generally in Scotland and Ayrshire and Arran is particularly well placed to attract further industries.

In order to maximise the potential for the existing forestry cluster to expand or to attract additional industrial processes, sufficient sites are required to be identified and safe-guarded as part of a strategic industrial site resource. The following strategic sites have been identified as having the potential for future timber processing locations:

- Hunterston;
- Caledonian Paper Factory Extension;
- Ardeer; and
- Former Barony Colliery, Auchinleck.

Whilst other types of development should not be discouraged it is recognised these locations may provide the right type of locational criteria for development of further processing industries. A detailed consideration will, however, be required to be undertaken in bringing forward an individual proposal for any site.

	KEY ACTIONS
WP1	Identify and secure a range of well-connected and serviceable sites for further forestry sector development.
WP2	Seek to protect and promote existing forestry sector sites.

Renewable Energy

Increasing the proportion of electricity generated from renewable energy sources is one of the key objectives of both the UK and Scottish Climate Change Programmes. This forms part of a wider government initiative to develop a more environmentally sustainable pattern of development, focusing on reducing the overall demand for energy and moving away from fossil fuel as the dominant generation source. The re-dressing of this balance will go some way to reducing greenhouse gas emissions thereby meeting the UK emission targets.

Harvesting residues, sawmilling residues and biomass crops are increasingly being used as alternative materials to produce energy. Biomass energy plants can be relatively small in size and include portable applications. A variety of plant can increase flexibility, reduce costs and allows generation close to harvesting locations. In addition to energy generation, biomass also has the capacity to be incorporated within a heat recovery system providing both electricity and heat for local communities. The development of these schemes in rural areas has an important role to play in sustaining employment and skills in the agricultural and forestry sectors.

	KEY ACTIONS
RE1	Encourage the appropriate development of harvesting and sawmilling residues and biomass energy facilities within Ayrshire and Arran.
RE2	Promote the development of renewable energy plants in rural areas close to the existing timber supply.

TRANSPORT

Agreed Routes

The movement of timber throughout the local road network and particularly on unclassified roads, can generate significant problems for the local council road maintenance programmes and create tension between timber haulage companies and rural communities. In representations to the Issues Report the transportation of timber through urban areas was also highlighted as a major safety and environmental concern.

The identification of a set of routes on which timber lorries would agree to haul timber would have a number of benefits. These routes would allow local authorities to prioritise investment in traffic management and road safety. A dialogue between the timber growers, timber hauliers, processors and local councils through the Ayrshire Timber Transport Forum is already proving of benefit to the development of these agreed routes and this should be continued, promoted and discussed with local communities most affected.

	KEY ACTIONS
AR1	Develop a set of agreed Timber Transport Routes for Ayrshire.
AR2	Seek sufficient investment to mitigate any safety or environmental impacts associated with the movement of timber.
AR3	Ensure the final version of the agreed Timber Transport Routes is discussed with communities.
AR4	Ensure that coordinated action is taken to improve routes within the Preferred Areas.

Transport of the Forest Resource

The efficient transport of felled timber is critical to the successful development of the timber industry. 'Roots for Growth' identified access to the timber resource, the low level of past investment in the network, and the lack of an integrated land use and transport strategy as the key issues affecting the viability of timber extraction. As the estimated area of woodland available for felling is set to triple in Ayrshire and Arran during the next 20 years this could result in an increase of loaded haulage movements from 13,500 to 44,200 per annum.

In attempting to alleviate these concerns an innovative project to model the strategic movement of timber by road, rail and sea was undertaken by Scottish Enterprise. The Scottish Timber Transport Mapping Study identified potential strategic timber loading railheads and processing plants capable of rail connection throughout Scotland. The study also recommended that Local Area Modelling Assessments be undertaken to look at local issues.

The development of Local Area Modelling Assessments would allow detailed analysis of the capital and environmental costs associated with timber transport over total transport network, including internal forest roads, to be determined. South-west Scotland has been chosen to pilot this study due to the extent of its woodland resource and concerns raised in regard to the ability of its transport infrastructure to sustain the projected level of extraction (see Diagram 6). These findings will form a sound foundation to lobby the Scottish Executive for additional investment to maintain the forest industry in rural areas.

	KEY ACTIONS
TR1	Undertake a strategic modelling assessment of the transport network in South-West Scotland to cope with existing and future demands of the timber industry.
TR2	Use the results of the Local Area Modelling Assessment to lobby for additional resources to develop an effective timber transport network.

The Promotion of Alternative Timber Transport Modes

The promotion of alternatives to road haulage, combined with improvements to overall logistics, are considered key ways to mitigate environmental concerns and reduce the operating costs associated with timber transport. The costs associated with the promotion and running of alternative modes such as railheads or sea ports often make it impractical to develop without government funded assistance. The geography of Ayrshire and Arran combined with the existing transport network presents the opportunity to develop a more integrated approach to transport timber via road, rail and sea and this will be examined through the use of the Local Area Modelling Assessment project. The following projects give an indication of the type of actions that will be pursued in the future:

- Powharnal (Cronberry) near Cumnock. £9.75 million grant secured in February 2002 for new railhead at an opencast coal mine. The railhead will be completed in summer 2003 and will involve upgrading of the signalling infrastructure on the Glasgow and South Western railway.
 - Ports of Ayr and Troon. £4.4 million Scottish Executive grant was approved in February 2000 for improved timber handling facilities and associated freight shipping service costs.
- In addition, it is likely that a Freight Facilities Grant will be submitted for the undernoted:
- Barrhill Timber Terminal. A grant application is pending for the construction of a railhead for the transfer of timber to rail at Barrhill in the south of Ayrshire.

	KEY ACTIONS
AT1	Promote the identification and development of alternative methods to transport timber, other than road, where appropriate.
AT2	Integrate and model scenarios using these alternative transport forms to develop the most efficient transport network for timber extraction.
AT3	Lobby the Scottish Executive to support the construction and development of the most efficient method of timber transport.



DIAGRAM 6
TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Forest Restructuring

The restructuring of maturing forests within the upland areas provides opportunities to bring the forests up to modern environmental standards and create multi-benefit woodlands providing a range of environmental, economic and social benefits.

The plantations of the 1960s, 70s and early 80s were established predominantly for the production of timber. As with other forests of this era, they generally do not meet today's environmental standards for design in the landscape, opportunities for access and recreation and enhancing biodiversity. However, the production of a Habitat Action Plan as part of the Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan for planted coniferous woodland illustrates the potential for improving the biodiversity value of these woodlands through appropriate management. In addition, a number of watercourses and lochs have been identified as suffering from varying degrees of acidification. This is caused by the inability of the underlying geology to neutralise the effects of atmospheric pollution. Large areas of woodland within these catchments can aggravate the impact through the trees ability to capture more of the atmospheric pollutants.

Through an assessment of these woodlands it is possible to identify those that exhibit a mix of concerns and where there should be a priority for restructuring. This work should be undertaken as a priority in conjunction with the Forestry Commission, Councils, private timber growers and the environmental agencies. The emerging policies and action programmes under the Water Framework Directive is likely to further influence priorities for forest restructuring as well as the location of new planting proposals.

	KEY ACTIONS
FR1	In conjunction with Forestry Commission, Councils, private timber growers and other environmental agencies will draw up and promote a series of priority areas for restructuring, renewal and re-investment.
FR2	Proposals for restructuring should aim to overcome the identified sensitive issues of landscape, biodiversity, water quality and access relating to the site, ensuring the forest as a minimum, meets the UK Forestry Standard, and clearly contributes to the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Native and Broadleaf Woodlands

The ancient and semi-natural woodland account for approximately 3% of the total land area. This woodland is found principally in areas that are difficult to farm and is concentrated along Ayrshire’s river and gorge valleys flowing from the lowlands to the coast. Although concentrated in small pockets throughout the lowlands, many of these groups of trees are isolated and, as a consequence, do not meet their full potential ecological value as coherent wildlife corridors.

The protection and promotion of this type of woodland and creation of wildlife corridors is a priority in the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan and would be in line with the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The Woodland Strategy embraces these objectives and seeks to encourage the management of existing areas of ancient, long established and semi-natural woodland and planting of new native woodlands linking these together within the river valley and gorge corridors of Ayrshire and Arran. These priority areas are identified on Diagram 7 at the end of the document.

	KEY ACTIONS
NB1	Safeguard, extend and enhance areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland, in accordance with the objectives of the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
NB2	Identify potential habitat networks between isolated groupings of ancient or semi-natural woodland and adopt development strategies for their renewal and development.
NB3	Redirect existing funding or seek additional funding to manage and protect native and broadleaf woodland particularly in the habitat networks identified in Diagram 7.

Policy Woodlands

Policy woodlands are collections of trees planted primarily for ornamental reasons perhaps developed over hundreds of years, and found today principally clustering around country houses. They are predominantly mixed woodlands and include significant numbers of exotic broad-leaved or coniferous trees, planted to accentuate their location, colour and texture. Due to the long life span of most trees, the woodlands appear ageless and unchanging. Yet as a result of reduced management resources, particularly since the end of the First World War, many have fallen into decay. This is reflected in the large number of over mature trees and uncontrolled infestation of rhododendron bushes within many areas. However, policy woods, represent a major contribution to the landscape because of their location, distribution and careful design.

	KEY ACTIONS
PW1	Ensure woodland planting within Designed Landscapes reflects the character and spirit of the design, in accordance with the objectives of the Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan.
PW2	Encourage the development of long term management plans for the sustainable use of designed landscapes and historic gardens.
PW3	Target funding to the preparation of management plans, and the maintenance and restoration of designed landscapes/ policy woodlands..

There are 13 policy woodlands identified through the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes maintained by Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland. However, the actual number of designed landscapes identified by the Garden History Society is considered to be much greater. Sites contained within the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes are regarded to be of national importance. There are also a number of sites which are candidate sites of the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland, and these are also regarded to be of national importance. The remaining sites identified by the Garden History Society are considered to be of regional and local importance. These areas offer the opportunity, due to their relative proximity to major settlements and a concentration of rare and unusual species, for recreation and environmental education. Additionally, designed landscapes also act as havens for a wide range of wildlife and plant communities, many of which are significant in biodiversity terms.

As with native and broadleaf woodlands their development and promotion is seen as a priority in the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan and must be regarded as a candidate for additional funding.

Renewing Landscapes

Woodland Planting Initiative

Tree planting can make a valuable contribution towards the restoration and renewal of landscapes. The Ayrshire Landscape Character Assessment, recognised that the quality of a number of landscapes had been altered significantly as a result of land management and past mineral extraction. Woodland, along with providing important habitats for wildlife and increasing landscape quality, can also regenerate soil condition and restore economic value to land.

Through a review of the Landscape Character Assessment combined with an analysis of sites identified within the Ayrshire Councils Vacant and Derelict Land Surveys and the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute Land Capability for Forestry and Agriculture (1988), it is possible to identify concentrations of landscapes of very poor quality which would benefit from woodland planting and require investment. The following areas have been identified as requiring improvement:

- Garnock Valley;
- Upper Doon Valley; and
- Cronberry/ New Cumnock Area.
- A77/M77 Corridor.

The upgrading of the A77 corridor to motorway standard, together with the identification of the general area as suitable for large-scale woodland planting, presents a major opportunity for landscape renewal. The management of the existing A77 and B764 and the opening of the area to potentially more general access can be seen as a chance to facilitate greater tourism and recreation in the area. Any schemes brought forward should have regard to the existing landscape character of the area and should preserve important views out across the moorland.

Mineral Extraction

Mineral extraction, together with woodland planting, are the two greatest land uses changes that occur today in the rural area. Ensuring that during the submission of proposals, extractive industries consider the planting of woodland as an appropriate afteruse will help mitigate the problems associated with past industrial operations in the countryside. New woodland in these locations could actually be designed to improve the current landscape quality and biodiversity value. It is suggested that a project should identify priority locations for woodland to be provided on former mineral extraction areas.

	KEY ACTIONS
RL1	Promote the identified locations on Diagram 7 as priority areas for landscape renewal through appropriate woodland planting.
RL2	Integrate landscape renewal in the proposed upgrading of the A77 and bring forward a landscape proposal for the area.
RL3	Explore the opportunities presented by the restoration of former opencast coal areas to plant new woodland and promote new landscape structures.
RL4	Encourage early discussion with the Forestry Commission on planning applications for mineral extraction to establish the contribution tree planting could make to restoration schemes.
RL5	Prioritise forestry and agricultural funding mechanisms toward areas identified as strategic renewal opportunities.

Urban Fringe Woodland

Woodland on the edge of urban areas creates a number of recreational and social opportunities. Respondents to the Issues Report also supported the creation of urban woodlands to enhance the amenity and settings of communities either experiencing high levels of development pressure or being set within landscapes of poor quality.

Following an assessment of woodland within 800m of urban settlement boundaries a number of communities are identified that would benefit from urban edge woodland planting. The development of woodland at these locations would provide additional access and recreational opportunities for local residents and increase the landscape quality of their immediate surroundings. The following areas have been identified as priorities for urban fringe woodland:

- Ardrossan/ Saltcoats/ Stevenston North
- Irvine
- Kilmarnock
- Stewarton
- Prestwick/Troon gap
- Mauchline.

	KEY ACTIONS
UF1	Promote the areas identified on Diagram 7 as a priority for urban fringe woodland.
UF2	Encourage the development of long term management plans for urban fringe woodland, focusing on maximising community benefit .
UF3	Target funding to the development of urban fringe woodlands.

Tourism and Recreation

The quality and diversity of the wildlife and landscape, and access to it, is one of the main attractions to visitors. 'Forests for Scotland' acknowledges the important role forestry has in attracting a wide variety of tourists and recognises that much more needs to be achieved to sustain and enhance tourist facilities. Representations made to the Issues Report identifies the development of access routes close to major centres of population and the reinstatement and protection of footpath networks throughout the wooded area as major opportunities.

There is considerable scope to increase both informal and formal recreation within the larger wooded areas, whilst avoiding any areas with sensitive wildlife issues. Access officers have been appointed by East Ayrshire Council and North Ayrshire Council. South Ayrshire Council are also active in this area through the Ayrshire Paths Partnership. The Galloway Forest Park currently is the only established location for large-scale woodland tourist and recreation based activities. However, no formal recreational strategy has been developed.

In other parts of Ayrshire and Arran potential for the development of enhanced recreational facilities exists at Whitelee Forest, due to its proximity to the Glasgow Conurbation, and Southern Arran, as a result of the development of visitor facilities. An access planning study has been commissioned for the Whitelee Forest. The Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park is another significant area for countryside access and recreation. The park area has not been identified under the Woodland Strategy as it is not considered to offer potential for significant woodland planting. However, the development of

access and recreation for the Park is supported by the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and the relevant policies of the Local Plan.

Enhanced public access and improved recreational opportunities will require additional investment in visitor facilities, and changes in access legislation and forestry management regimes. Legislation before the Scottish Parliament will meet some of these requirements through the provision of the right of reasonable access and delegating greater responsibility to public agencies to help people enjoy the countryside. Access is currently permitted to all publicly owned forests and indeed many privately owned forests also make provision. There are, however, some areas where access will remain an issue and will merit further consideration.

If the rural economy is to benefit from individuals visiting the countryside then associations between the landscape and visitor must be maintained and enhanced in order to attract greater numbers. The national cycle network, national tourist routes and footpath network present all have an important role to play. Views from these routes will be significant to the overall impression of the area to the visitor, and can be significant in supporting the use of rural services. The judicious use of tree planting along these routes should be supported and developed.

- The national cycle network (Sustrans);
- The National Tourist Route; A713 from Dumfries and Galloway to Ayr
- Public Rights of Way;
- The identified footpath network; and
- Routes emerging in Access Strategies being developed by Councils.



KEY ACTIONS	
T01	Extend the tourism and recreation opportunities within the Galloway Forest Park.
T02	Investigate the feasibility of developing the woodland areas of Southern Arran and Whitelee Forest to maximise their potential recreation and tourist opportunity.
T03	Develop formal recreation strategies within appropriate large-scale woodlands.
T04	Identify funding sources to allow the further development and management of facilities in the Galloway Forest Park, Southern Arran and Whitelee Forest.
T05	Protect and enhance the landscape setting and visual amenity of the recreation and tourist network.
T06	Target funding toward the development of forest recreation and tourist opportunities.
T07	Encourage close contact and joint working between those with responsibility for woodland design with the access officers of the Ayrshire councils and their equivalents and integration of woodland planting and management with emerging Access Strategies and the Core Path Network Plans of the three Ayrshire councils.

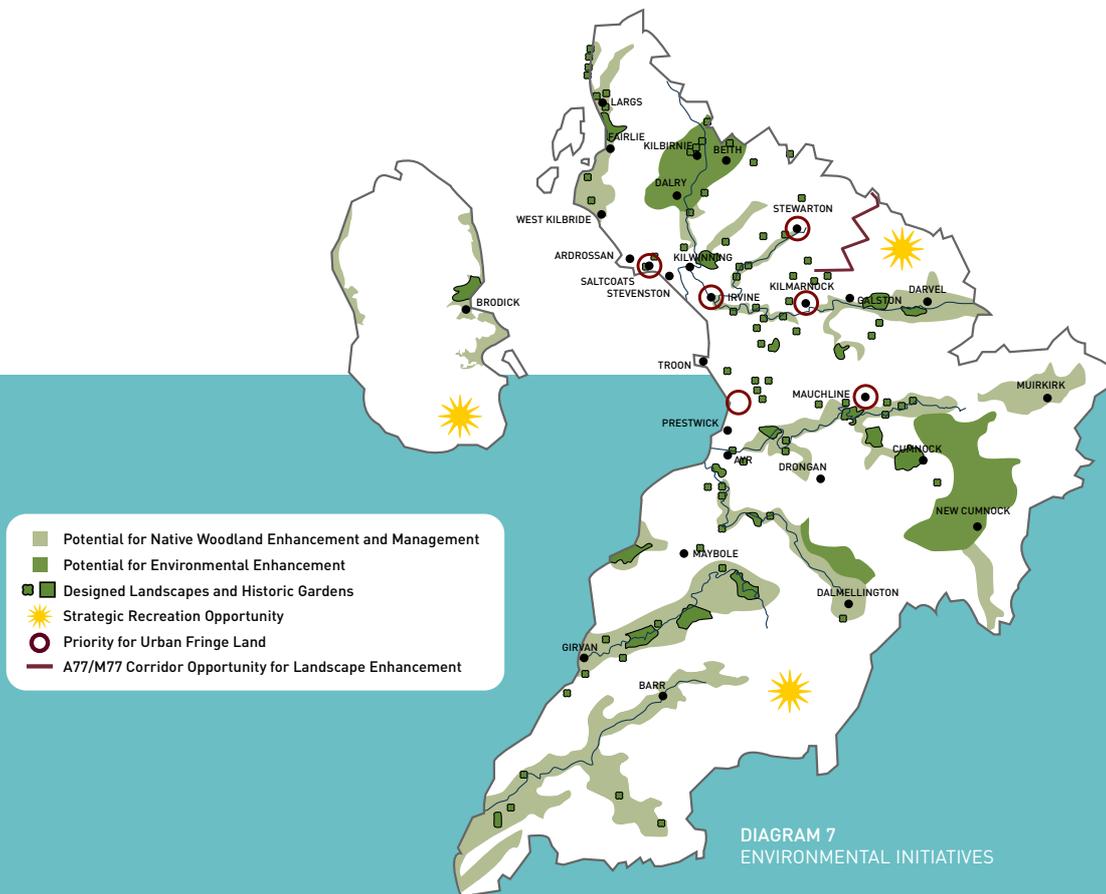


DIAGRAM 7 ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIP

Forestry Employment

Employment within the forest sector can help to support and sustain fragile rural communities. 'Forests for Scotland' indicates that a lack of employment opportunities in rural areas can lead to under-employment and rural depopulation. Forestry employment has also been undergoing a period of consolidation in recent years. The felling and harvesting of the timber has become increasingly mechanised and as a result of economies of scale a small number of contractors now operate over large areas.

East Ayrshire Woodlands run a number of initiatives to train and develop long term unemployed individuals in land based industries. This initiative is jointly funded by a variety of public and private organisations and provides opportunities for approximately 25 individuals per year. Upon completion of training, 50% of students obtain full time employment. However, the initiative is currently focused mainly in East Ayrshire.

The further extension of this project to cover all of Ayrshire would assist in the development of a skilled rural employment base, whilst reducing dependence on the agricultural or mineral extraction sectors to maintain rural employment and population. Commitment from the forestry sector is required to ensure that local procurement, employment and contracting is sustainable and provides viable opportunities for trained individuals. Contractors must be competitive and be trained to operate to current environmental and safety standards.

However, forests and their associated industries have a vital role to play in developing the whole rural economy not just in terms of forestry employment. The development of the timber resource in those areas where it is the dominant land use should be geared towards achieving the maximum benefit for the local community from a full range of activities. This would include not only direct forestry employment but also tourism, recreational and access opportunities, sawmills, energy from wood schemes etc.

	KEY ACTIONS
FE1	Develop a co-ordinated forest and woodland training programme to cover the whole of Ayrshire and Arran.
FE2	Promote the procurement and retention of local forest employment within rural areas.
FE3	Identify priority areas to develop and support wood and woodland related employment.

Community Woodland

Woodlands owned or managed by a local community empower individuals to set priorities for their own area. The Scottish Forest Strategy identifies the need to ensure all sections of the community have the opportunity to visit and enjoy forests and also promotes the development of community-owned woodlands.

A number of communities have already developed community woodlands, either attached or adjacent to their settlements. The motivation to establish and develop local woodlands differs between communities, with each one having specific environmental, recreational and/or educational objectives. The identification of communities with poor woodland provision immediately adjacent gives an indication of where community woodland might be beneficial. It may be that the areas identified for the prioritisation of urban fringe woodland could form the basis for the development of community woodland initiative.

	KEY ACTIONS
CW1	Assist local communities to develop, manage and design woodlands.
CW2	Target financial and human resources to develop community woodlands.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Community Participation

Forestry proposals create legitimate concerns within local communities. The revised Scottish Forestry Strategy recognises the tension that can result from any proposed changes to the landscape and calls for an increase in dialogue between local communities and the forest sector. This potential tension between the timber industry and local communities was also acknowledged in representations made at the Issues Report stage.

The physical planting of woodland remains outwith the control of planning authorities. Planning authorities are however consulted on applications for grant assistance and they provide an important conduit by which local communities views can be expressed. Nevertheless, a more effective dialogue at both the strategic and local levels can ensure that concerns raised by local communities are given appropriate consideration. Planting applications of all types at the local level will continue to raise significant issues upon submission. The Forestry Commission together with the timber industry and local councils should explore methods to increase the effectiveness of consultation and dialogue with local communities. The revised grant scheme (Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme) due to be launched by the Forestry Commission in early 2003, will include measures to increase public involvement on decisions on grant applications.

The Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy has been prepared as a partnership document which seeks to define new means of achieving forest and woodland planting and management in an environmentally and ecologically sensitive way. A key element in achieving these aims will be to ensure that the Strategy is implemented by the organisations concerned. In order to drive this process forward, the Woodland Strategy Steering Group will seek to establish an implementation group that will continue the process of discussion and which will review progress in achieving the action points contained within the strategy.

To aid the process of review, a monitoring regime will be developed. This will establish baseline data for the extent and type of woodland cover. Trends in new woodland planting and management will be tracked and compared against the objectives of the Strategy. In addition to monitoring trends in woodland planting, the implementation group will examine success in achieving the economic and community objectives of the Strategy. A set of targets for some or all of the action points may be established if the implementation group consider that this would aid the delivery of the Strategy.

	KEY ACTIONS
CP1	Agree mechanisms between the forestry industry and local communities for increasing public involvement in woodland planting and management.

APPENDIX A – SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES, ACTION POINTS AND IMPLEMENTATION AGENCIES

OBJECTIVE	MEANS	KEY BENEFITS	ACTION POINTS	IMPLEMENTATION AGENCY(S)
Ensure long term supply of commercial timber.	Planting of new woodlands and replanting of existing woodlands in appropriate locations.	Economic: ensure long term viability of established Ayrshire and Arran forestry industry cluster.	NW1, NW2, NW3, EW1, EW2, EW3 and EW4.	<p>Scottish Executive Environment & Rural Affairs Dept: setting national policies in relation to woodland planting and management.</p> <p>Forestry Commission: setting policies in relation to publicly owned forests and Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme funding priorities.</p> <p>Forestry Industry: to have regard to Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy in devising new planting/replanting and management proposals.</p>
Agricultural Diversification.	Planting new broadleaf woodland, small mixed species woodland, establishment and reinstatement of hedgerows.	<p>Economic: alternative source of income to support agriculture and ensure flow of timber to supply downstream processing industry cluster.</p> <p>Landscape: reinstate, and reinforce distinctive features of the lowland and upland farming areas.</p> <p>Ecological: improve range and extent of habitats.</p>	AD1 and AD2.	<p>Forestry Commission: targeting of woodland grants.</p> <p>Scottish Agricultural College: promotion of appropriate planting schemes.</p> <p>Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group: promotion of appropriate woodland planting schemes.</p> <p>Scottish Executive Environment & Rural Affairs Department: setting national policy in relation to farm and rural diversification and woodland planting.</p> <p>Local Authorities: through the town and country planning process.</p>
Support development of downstream timber processing industry cluster.	Identify and secure a range of suitable sites for industry.	Economic: encourage diversification of economy of Ayrshire and Arran.	WP1 and WP2.	<p>Local Authorities: identify opportunity sites in local plans.</p> <p>Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise: promote timber processing industry cluster.</p>
Support For Development of Renewable Energy.	Consider siting of biomass power generation plants and combined heat and power plants in suitable locations close to forest resource and communities.	<p>Environmental: contribution towards achievement of UK and Scottish Climate Change Programmes.</p> <p>Economic: support rural employment & skills.</p>	RE1 and RE2.	<p>Local Authorities: through local plan policies and development control decisions.</p> <p>Forestry Commission: encourage supply of suitable fuel materials.</p> <p>Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise: support for appropriate forms of investment.</p> <p>Department of Energy: support through overall UK energy policy.</p>
Improve the efficiency of timber transport and address problems of transport of timber by road. Increase public involvement in transport issues.	<p>Develop "Agreed Routes" and prioritise investment in road infrastructure to secure efficiency and safety gains.</p> <p>Undertake comprehensive assessment of timber transport in Ayrshire and Arran and secure funding for alternative transport modes.</p>	<p>Economic: reduction in cost of transport of timber.</p> <p>Environmental: reduction of impact on communities affected by transport of timber by road.</p>	AR1, AR2, AR3, AR4, TR1, TR2, AT1, AT2 and AT3.	<p>Ayrshire local authorities through Ayrshire Timber Transport Liaison Group.</p> <p>Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise: support for initiatives.</p>

OBJECTIVE	MEANS	KEY BENEFITS	ACTION POINTS	IMPLEMENTATION AGENCY(S)
Restructuring of priority large scale productive forests to create multi-benefit woodlands and address environmental issues.	Restructuring of large scale productive plantations in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard.	<p>Environmental: resolution of problems of poor landscape design, poor biodiversity value, poor water quality.</p> <p>Social: overcome issues of poor access for recreation.</p> <p>Economic: improved quality of forests products.</p>	FR 1 and FR2.	<p>Forestry Commission: targeting of grant assistance and internal policies in respect of publicly owned forests.</p> <p>Scottish Environmental Protection Agency: facilitating priority setting.</p>
Safeguard and enhance areas of native and semi-natural woodland and promote development of wildlife corridors	<p>Protection and Regeneration of indigenous woodland.</p> <p>Planting of new indigenous woodlands linking existing tree groups to form "corridors".</p>	<p>Environmental: increased biodiversity and landscape enhancement.</p>	NB1, NB2 and NB3.	Forestry Commission: targeting grant assistance. Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group.
Safeguard and enhance Policy Woodlands.	Protection and regeneration of policy woodlands.	<p>Environmental: increased biodiversity and landscape enhancement.</p> <p>Social: enhancement of cultural heritage and opportunities for countryside recreation and leisure.</p>	PW1, PW2 and PW3.	<p>Forestry Commission: targeting prioritisation of grant assistance.</p> <p>Local Authorities: control of development affecting policy woodlands through local plan policies and development control decisions.</p> <p>Scottish Natural Heritage & Historic Scotland: influencing practice through Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.</p> <p>Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Group.</p>
Landscape Renewal and Enhancement.	<p>Appropriate tree/ woodland planting in areas identified as priority for landscape enhancement.</p> <p>Encouragement of woodland planting as a means of reinstating disused mining sites.</p> <p>Planting of trees within A77/M77 road corridor.</p> <p>Planting of "Urban Fringe Woodland".</p>	<p>Economic: increase potential for reuse of degraded land.</p> <p>Environmental: improved landscape and biodiversity quality.</p> <p>Social: overcoming problems of poor perception of affected areas and increased opportunities for countryside access and recreation.</p>	RL1, RL2, RL3, RL4, RL5, UF1, UF2 and UF3.	<p>Forestry Commission: targeting grant assistance.</p> <p>Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department.</p> <p>Local Authorities: promotion of appropriate planting schemes, where appropriate, through planning conditions/agreements.</p>
Increase Tourism and Recreation Within Larger Woodland Areas.	<p>Develop formal recreation strategies to secure improved access opportunities and facilities.</p> <p>Encourage planting and management of woodland to enhance tourist routes and recreation networks.</p>	<p>Social: improved access to the countryside.</p> <p>Economic: increased tourism facilities.</p>	T01, T02, T03, T04, T05, T06 and T07.	<p>Forestry Commission: targeting of grant assistance.</p> <p>Ayrshire Councils: through integration of work of Access Officers and their equivalents in developing outdoor recreation strategies.</p> <p>Scottish Natural Heritage: promotion of outdoor recreation.</p> <p>Paths For All Partnership: promotion of appropriate proposals.</p> <p>Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board: promotion of outdoor recreational opportunities.</p>

OBJECTIVE	MEANS	KEY BENEFITS	ACTION POINTS	IMPLEMENTATION AGENCY(S)
Maximise Woodland Employment In Rural Communities.	Develop forest and and woodland training initiatives, encourage local procurement and local employment within rural areas.	<p>Social: sustain fragile rural communities.</p> <p>Economic: broaden employment base of Ayrshire and Arran.</p>	FE1, FE2 and FE3.	<p>East Ayrshire Woodlands: continuance and expansion of current training schemes.</p> <p>Private Woodland Owners and Forest Enterprise: recruitment and training practices.</p> <p>Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Enterprise Ayrshire and Economic Development Officers of the Ayrshire Councils: promotion of appropriate initiatives.</p>
Promotion of Community Woodlands.	Planting and Management of Woodlands by by community volunteers.	<p>Ecological: increased habitat diversity.</p> <p>Landscape: improved aesthetic value.</p> <p>Recreation: improved opportunities for local access for recreation.</p> <p>Social: opportunities for community education.</p>	CW1 and CW2.	<p>Forestry Commission: procedures for public involvement in preparation of woodland planting and management plans.</p> <p>Local authorities through involvement of the community in formulating responses to grant scheme applications.</p>
Improved Community Involvement In Decision Making.	Involve local people in the decision making process on applications affecting them.	<p>Social: more responsive to local opinions and therefore greater acceptance of outcomes.</p> <p>Greater awareness of opportunities amongst local population resulting in potential for greater creativity & innovation.</p>	CP1.	Forestry Commission: through agreed procedures for public consultation on grant applications and forest design plans for publicly owned forests.

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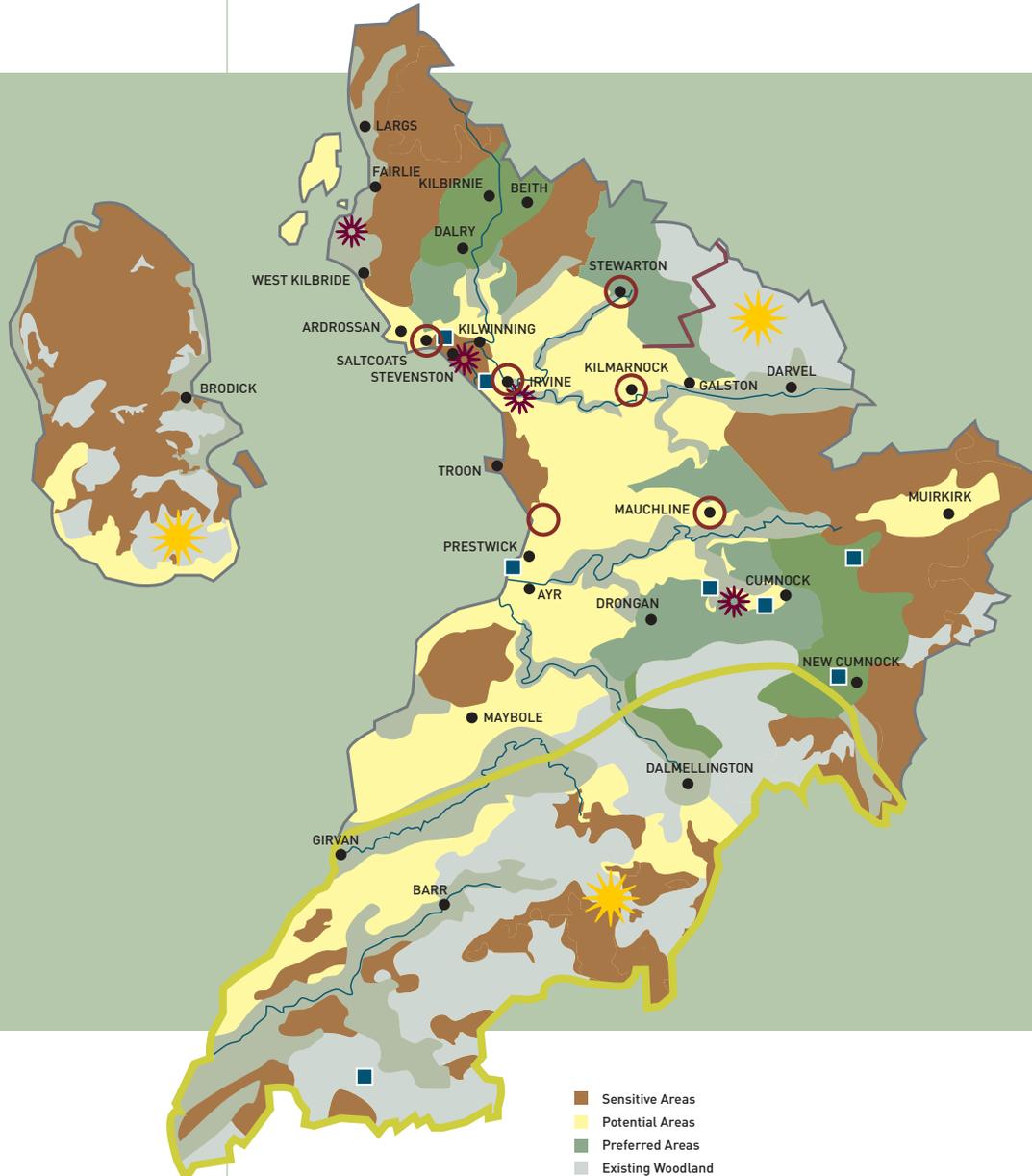
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AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN WOODLAND STRATEGY DIAGRAM 8



- Sensitive Areas
- Potential Areas
- Preferred Areas
- Existing Woodland
- Strategic Recreation Opportunity
- Priority for Urban Fringe Land
- Strategic Sites
- Timber Transport Project Priority Area
- Potential Railhead
- A77/M77 Corridor Opportunity for Landscape Enhancement
- Potential for Environmental Enhancement
- Potential for Native Woodland Enhancement



TREES... PART OF THE CHARACTER OF AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN