

**AYRSHIRE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
8 DECEMBER 2000**

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**Forests for Scotland – The Scottish Forestry Strategy**

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Joint Committee of the recent publication by the Scottish Executive entitled “Forests for Scotland – The Scottish Forestry Strategy” and to advise whether concerns raised within the draft Strategy have been addressed.

BACKGROUND

- 2 The Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and Transportation Committee submitted a formal response to the Forestry Commission regarding the Draft National Forestry Strategy in June 2000. Members should take note, the contents of which were subject to a Committee Report in June 2000. The Scottish Executive has now finalised and published the Scottish Forestry Strategy.
- 3 The strategy continues to develop the Scottish Executive’s framework for future forestry within Scotland with a vision to create more balanced multi-purpose forestry with increased levels of investment, a strengthening of economical prospects and greater social and environmental benefits for society as a whole.
- 4 The Scottish Forestry Strategy is important because it forms part of a wider national policy initiative to integrate rural policy and produce a joined up approach in policy implementation. The Strategy provides a national framework which directs development and employment initiatives contained within the Forest Industry Cluster Report ‘Roots for Growth’ combined with the Forestry Commissions Corporate Plan for Scotland. This framework provides the basis against which the production of an Indicative Forestry Strategy (IFS) for Ayrshire will be completed.

THE SCOTTISH FORESTRY STRATEGY

- 5 To summarise, the document highlights a number of visions that are to be realised through a set of guiding principles. The principles are then transposed in a development section which then identify a number of Priorities for Action and how they can be delivered. The document concludes by indicating the roles played by the differing

stakeholders involved in forestry in the implementation of the strategy. The document includes an executive summary a copy of which is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR AYRSHIRE

6 The following comments are divided into six main topic areas and relate to strategic concerns previously highlighted within Forestry Committee paper of June 2000. These comments were taken forward and submitted to the Forestry Commission as a written representation.

(a) Integrated Policy Approach

The refined strategy has attempted to answer past criticisms by providing a clear policy approach between differing spatial hierarchies. The Strategy presents a prescriptive strategic framework that has been translated and interpreted downward within various other documents dependant upon function. Nationally a lateral integration of policy spheres is attempted, whilst sub-nationally a hierarchical framework is developed.

It is clear that past criticism have been acknowledged and attempts have been made to develop a synergic policy approach between the differing rural policy areas. The role of IFS within the document have also been expanded to reflect a more balanced approach, producing clearer regional guidance. The transparency of the framework along with the increased detailing of the form and function of IFS is to be welcomed.

(b) Transportation

The Strategy has responded to concerns by recognising the current problems associated with transportation. However instead of calling for private sector investment, the Strategy advises a pragmatic partnership approach be adopted, developing innovative solutions to the current problems integrated within a more focused multi-modal haulage network. The document takes this theme forward by highlighting current initiatives underway and the grants available to develop a sustainable transportation network.

(c) Targets

The document highlights forestry trends and sets a strategic long-term vision for the future of forestry in Scotland. The continued failure to detail explicit targets relating to forestry planting or jobs created is a reflection of this. Targets are set within the Forest Industry's Cluster Report 'Roots for Growth' which sits below the national Strategy. In addition it is proposed the Forestry Commission's Corporate Plan when published will detail how the Commission will develop and action the Strategy.

(d) Environmental Issues

The protection and management of the environment has been further developed within the wider policy framework contained within the document. A clear statement of intent to protect and manage the environment at the international and national level is indicated. Concerns previously raised in regard to policy and designed landscapes have been recognised and they are now included within the document. Mechanisms detailed within the Priorities for Action highlight the relevant champions to implement environmental initiatives. These champions are actively involved within the development of the Indicative Forestry Strategy for Ayrshire and as such form an integrated policy approach.

(e) Economic Aspects of Forestry

As noted above the Strategy presents a prescriptive strategic framework that has been translated and interpreted downward within various other documents dependant upon function. Concerns previously raised in regard to the timber production forecast, processing infrastructure and employment have been answered within the Forest Industries Cluster Report 'Roots for Growth'.

The report was subject to a previous Committee paper in October 2000, specific targets to note include:

- the doubling the growth rate of sales within the forestry industry from 1.5% to 3% per annum;
- the creation of over 1000 new jobs;
- the stimulation of an extra £100m of investment in processing capacity; and
- an increase in UK market penetration for forest products from 9% to 15%.

Linkages between policy spheres have successfully been made, with the current initiatives providing a transparent framework to develop an Indicative Forestry Strategy for Ayrshire. The recognition of the existing concentration of clustered forestry industries within Ayrshire is welcomed and a framework to develop them is eagerly awaited.

(f) Resources

Concerns over the re-direction of national forestry policy appear to be recognised. The announcement to review of the current woodland grant programme (Woodland Grant Scheme and Farm Woodland Premium Scheme) in 2001 and the repeal of laws forbidding tree planting on tenanted land should aid the

implementation of sustainable forestry. However, the streamlining of grant procedures and review of land ownership laws will not bring about a change in the landscape of low-lying areas without the inclusion of a review of fiscal aid.

(g) Forest and Woodland Expansion

The document continues to present an underlying tone of forestry expansion throughout with the onus placed on IFS to prescribe forestry levels. However, further expansion has to be based around diversity and local distinctiveness that are identified regionally within Landscape Character Assessments. The national Strategy has therefore been refined to allow local areas to define the capacity threshold that will indicate when damage to an area's distinctiveness will be reached. The clarification of land balance and woodland capacity is to be commended and will speed up the formulation of an IFS for Ayrshire by prescribing a methodology which all stakeholders in the process can agree.

## CONCLUSIONS

- 7 The Scottish Forestry Strategy has answered previous criticism through the provision of a clear spatial framework and the detailing of a transparent methodology to implement identified goals. Forestry expansion is now clearly presented within a sustainable fashion, orientated and directed by set economic targets and grant aid, and implemented by a group of clearly identified champions. This presents a clear and transparent framework for the development of an IFS for Ayrshire to follow.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8 It is recommended that the committee:
- note the contents of this report; and
  - approve the continued development of an Indicative Forestry Strategy for Ayrshire taking account of the National Forestry Strategy.

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