

# Woodlands' View

SCOTTISH WOODLANDS NEWSLETTER | Summer 2024

Photo Contest Winner Highlights Biodiversity in Wood-Producing Forests

### Also In This Edition

- Restoration on a Landscape Scale
  - Meet the Environment Team
    - Whitlaw Case Study
    - Timber Market Update
      - Investment Update •

Update on Renewable Energy •

Scottish Woodlands Photography Competition – WINNER – Charlotte Cavey-Wilcox

#### Growing a Sustainable Future

### WELCOME TO OUR SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2024



Ian Robinson, Managing Director

Everyone at Scottish Woodlands Ltd is delighted to meet you as we attend a full schedule of rural shows in 2024, right across the UK.

Over the course of the summer, we'll be at the Balmoral Show (Northern Ireland), Royal Highland Show, Scottish Game Fair, Turriff Show, Moy Game Fair, Lochaber Show, Royal Welsh Show and Black Isle Show. And we very much look forward to talking trees!

Following the long-awaited and generally positive 'Forestry Summit' held in Battleby in December 2023, Scottish Woodlands Ltd remains optimistic on future opportunities for planting in Scotland - despite the Scottish Government's recent adjustments to the 2024/25 forestry budget.

We are actively collaborating with industry colleagues and trade body Confor to navigate these changes and address the changes brought about by the recent updates to the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS).

Scottish Woodlands Ltd continues to be a leader in woodland creation, contributing more than 30% of all new woodlands in Scotland and expanding our efforts across the UK.

The timber market presents its challenges with ongoing uncertainty in both the housing and the Repair, Maintenance and Improvement (RMI) sector, but increasing demand and our strong relationships with timber processors are helping us to market a greater volume of client timber again.

We are excited to announce the strengthening of our senior team with the appointment of seven new regional managers in our forest management and timber harvesting departments.

Our graduate development programme is flourishing, playing a vital role in our business by 'Growing our Own.' In 2024, we will welcome six new graduates to enhance our management, compliance, and utilities departments.

If you're considering felling and replanting your woodland, or planting trees on your land, we invite you to reach out to one of our offices. The benefits for your business, the economy, and the environment are immeasurable. Let's grow together!





lan.robinson@scottishwoodlands.co.uk 0131 451 5154 | M: 07778 772 358



### SCOTTISH WOODLANDS RESEARCH SETS THE HARES RUNNING - OUT OF WOODLAND SITES

Wild hares could be saved from culling on forestry sites - thanks to a new study by Scottish Woodlands' environmental experts.

The survey showed that one-way structures can allow both brown and mountain hares to voluntarily leave fenced-off woodland planting areas - reducing tree damage while also avoiding alternative hare control methods.



Scottish Woodlands Ltd led the research (part-funded by the Scottish Forestry Trust), which used cameras to monitor small one-way gates and earthen ramps, which allowed hares to exit, but not re-enter, fenced woodland areas.

The motion sensor cameras monitored four structures across three locations at a woodland site in the Monadhliath mountains near Aviemore, in the Highlands.

Over a three-month period, four hares were filmed successfully exiting through the one-way passages one using a gate and three using the ramp. Hares were frequently observed surveying surroundings from the elevated vantage points; one image captured by the cameras showed two hares apparently 'kissing' through the fence.

"Hares inside fences paced along boundaries when outside hares were present, so social behaviours might influence voluntary departure," said Megan Parker, lead author of the study and a Senior Forest Planner at Scottish Woodlands, based in Dingwall near Inverness. Jemma McLachlan, Assistant Environment Forest Manager, also worked on the research project, called Efficacy of One-Way Hare Structures in Woodland Areas.

Ms Parker added: "Allowing some hares to leave could lower populations inside enclosures and reduce tree damage. This kind of project shows the importance of environmental and biodiversity considerations at our woodland creation sites.

"This will continue to be a strong focus to support our clients to create new woodland which is in line with their aspirations to support climate change mitigation, net zero and nature."

While limited in scale, the exploratory study indicates one-way ramps could augment hare control programmes that currently rely on trapping or shooting. "With further research into optimal placement and quantity, these structures may provide a more humane option for typical culling," added Ms Parker.

Scottish Woodlands continues investigating nonlethal solutions to reduce the impact of hares and other herbivores such as deer on newly-established woodland projects.



Wildlife



### **RESTORATION ON A LANDSCAPE SCALE**

Scottish Woodlands has an increasing portfolio of peatland restoration projects across Scotland, from the Northwest Highlands to the hills of the Borders.

Peatlands, in particular blanket bog, cover over 25% of Scotland's land area, yet 80% are estimated to be in a degraded or modified state (NatureScot, 2018). These damaged peatlands have far-reaching impacts as degraded peat loses its carbon storage ability, actively producing carbon emissions as the exposed peat dries and oxidises. Peatlands in higher areas are also vital in managing the distribution and quality of water, while damaged peatlands can increase the amount of sediment going into waterways. In turn, restoration of damaged peatlands can have far-reaching benefits; a restored peatland can prevent further loss of stored carbon, reduce sedimentation, mitigate flood risk and a provide a multitude of biodiversity benefits.

Scottish Woodlands Ltd is working with NatureScot Peatland ACTION and contractor teams to deliver a growing portfolio of restoration projects across Scotland - with more than 1,400 hectares of damaged peatland under active restoration and many more schemes at the planning stage. Currently, some funding is available for eligible restoration projects through NatureScot Peatland ACTION partners and many projects are also eligible to apply for the IUCN Peatland Code - an independently-verified standard which certifies peatland carbon units from restoration activities such as artificial drain blocking and hag reprofiling (improving the condition of a hag, a bare 'wall' of peat, to reduce the chance of erosion).

### GLEN DYE MOOR

Glen Dye Moor is one of SWL's largest projects, combining both peatland restoration and woodland creation. It exemplifies the challenges and potential benefits of working in vast upland landscapes. The Glen Dye Moor estate holds over 1,500ha of peatland but much of this is in a drained and damaged state. Extensive areas of deep gullies, hags and bare, exposed peat are now the target of a multi-phase restoration effort across the estate. (see Image)

Operations on Glen Dye Moor started in November 2023, bringing over 100ha under restoration within the first phase. This year, we hope to move into the second phase which aims to restore over 200ha using low ground pressure machinery to reshape

and reprofile erosive features, block artificial drains and create small dams. The overall aim of these interventions is to slow movement of water to prevent further erosion and create conditions which allow peat-forming plants such as Sphagnum mosses to reestablish.

Areas where the overlying peat has eroded away completely are the most challenging to restore. Using combined techniques to physically slow water flow before revegetating bare peat or mineral can prevent further degradation. Incorporating these challenging areas into restoration is vital in securing the overall integrity of the peatland and the ensuring success of adjacent restoration measures.





Restored peatlands provide biodiversity uplift and hydrological as well as Carbon benefits. Re-established pool systems in particular can support increased biodiversity, within aquatic invertebrate groups (Beadle et al., 2023) which provide a food source for populations across the wider area.

Large scale restoration projects such as Glen Dye Moor have a key role in meeting twin challenges of global biodiversity loss and climate change.

The Carbon Team along with Forest Managers would be delighted to discuss any potential projects and provide an assessment of sites for restoration.

Jeannie M. Beadle, Joseph Holden, Lee E. Brown, Landscape-scale peatland rewetting benefits aquatic invertebrate communities, Biological Conservation, Volume 283, 2023,110116,





Dr Erin Stoll

E: Erin.stoll@scottishwoodlands.co.uk T: 01738 505 277 | M: 07391 048 457



# MEET THE ENVIRONMENT TEAM

A dedicated Environmental Team is now in full swing as we move into another active summer period. These specialised forestry staff are available to provide in-house advice on protecting sensitive species and habitats to ensure compliance with relevant legislation. The Team also develops case studies and explores pragmatic evidence to support our Harvesting and Management & Services divisions, ensuring that our practices deliver high-quality forest management solutions that are specific and appropriate to each site. Our team members come from a variety of backgrounds and they are dedicated to the concept that responsible forest management will improve conditions for the UK's most iconic woodland species of plants and animals.

<b>Stuart Wilkie,</b> Certification and Environment Manager	Part of Stuart's role is to ensure Scottish Woodlands takes an active part in developing industry standards and is at the leading edge of environmental developments. He has helped to develop and deliver significant improvements to Scottish Woodlands management systems and developed a suite of guidance for managers as well as presenting a variety of training sessions for staff. Stuart is at the forefront of Scottish Woodlands' efforts to lead the industry in terms of environmental awareness.
<b>Megan Parker,</b> Senior Forest Planner	Specialising in mitigation development for sensitive habitats, aquatic environments, and protected species in both the UK and the USA, Megan has 17 years of forestry field experience and degrees in both Forestry and Ecology & Environmental Sustainability. Her current role as Senior Forest Planner enables her to realise landowner objectives over time through site specific forest design strategies.
<b>Jemma McLachlan,</b> Environment Forest Manager	Covering Scottish Woodlands south-west region, Jemma supports forest/harvesting managers on various aspects of environmental management, utilising her degree in Environmental Science and Sustainability as well as experience gained from completing Scottish Woodlands two-year Graduate Development Programme. Jemma's current role as Environment Forest Manager primarily involves carrying out woodland surveys with particular emphasis on environmental issues, obtaining regulatory approval for works including species licencing, and undertaking internal auditing in line with UKWAS requirements.
<b>Amauta Halvorsen,</b> Assistant Environmental Forest Manager (Graduate)	Focusing on field-based assessments, Amauta has a background in research and monitoring as well as education. Originally based in Norway where she received her MSc in biology/Biological Sciences, she also has experience working on ecological projects and nature reserves in Costa Rica and Ecuador. She provides field surveys and mitigation development for harvesting and new woodland creation projects in our North Region. Amauta is currently completing her two-year Graduate Development Programme.
<b>Beth Scott,</b> Assistant Environmental Forest Manager (Graduate)	With a recent degree in Environmental Forestry, Beth has spent a number of years in Canada working on habitat and wildlife projects. She works with the Central Region team to carry out wildlife surveys and protected species licencing as well as focusing on habitat management. Beth is also completing her two-year Graduate Development Programme and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).





### SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE IS SWL'S CHOSEN CHARITY FOR 2024





### Scottish Woodlands Ltd has chosen Scottish Mountain Rescue as its Charity of the Year for 2024.

It's a good cause close to home as Arran Smith, a Senior Forest Manager with Scottish Woodlands, has been a member of Border Search and Rescue Unit for almost a decade.

Border Search and Rescue is one of 25 volunteer teams that make up Scottish Mountain Rescue across the length and breadth of the country, providing emergency response to incidents including injured hillwalkers, flooding and missing persons. All 850 team members are volunteers and they are ready to respond 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Although each team receives funding from the Scottish Government, this is usually only enough to cover approximately 50% of a team's operating costs - so donations are vital.

Arran Smith, based in Scottish Woodlands' Melrose office, said: "Donations are vital to allow Scottish Mountain Rescue's teams to provide the very best service to the public.

"Most Scottish Woodlands staff will spend time working in remote locations on a regular basis. Hopefully, none of them will require a call to the local team to help them - but if they do, any donation you make or fundraising you get involved with will go directly to providing the assistance they need."

Arran has had personal experience of the need for organisations like Scottish Mountain Rescue. He explained: "I succumbed to hypothermia and exhaustion at an ultra-marathon event a couple of years ago. Although somewhat embarrassing, this experience made me realise how reassuring it is to have such dedicated volunteers available to provide the treatment I needed at the time." Border Search and Rescue Unit is in the final stages of building a new team base in Kelso - upgrading from a 3-bay breeze block garage with no heating or toilet! Arran said: "This has required significant funding from grants and donations. As well as major developments such as the base, general running costs are significant. We recently upgraded our stretchers to lighter, more compact models, which are much easier to carry uphill. These are over £2,000 each! Equipment like ropes and harnesses require renewal every 10 years to comply with safety regulations, and ropes can cost up to £400 each.

Bill Glennie, Chair of Scottish Mountain Rescue said: "Scottish Mountain Rescue thanks Arran Smith for his service to Border Search and Rescue Unit and welcomes the decision of his colleagues at Scottish Woodlands Ltd to make us its selected charity for 2024. This support is very much appreciated and any donations will be put to good use."

Ian Robinson, Managing Director of Scottish Woodlands Ltd, said: "I'm delighted we have chosen Scottish Mountain Rescue as our charity for 2024. We had a very successful 2023 raising money for Lyme Disease UK, which poses a real threat to our staff - and everyone else who works and plays in rural areas - as it is commonly caused by the bite of a tick. Scottish Mountain Rescue continues our efforts to support those charities who play a vital role in keeping people safe across rural Scotland."

Scottish Woodlands will be holding fundraising events throughout the year and has set up a Just Giving page to support Scottish Mountain Rescue.







### PHOTO CONTEST WINNER HIGHLIGHTS BIODIVERSITY IN WOOD-PRODUCING FORESTS

Scottish Woodlands Ltd is pleased to announce the winners of its 2024 staff photography competition, which showcases the stunning landscapes and diverse flora and fauna found in the forests managed by the company.

The winning image, by Charlotte Cavey-Wilcox, Regional Manager for South East Scotland, features a female Black Darter dragonfly at Ericstane Forest, north of Moffat. The photograph highlights hidden biodiversity in timber-producing forests, with the site recording various butterfly, moth, and dragonfly species. Scottish Woodlands plans to further enhance the habitat by installing hibernacula (underground chambers) to allow amphibians and reptiles to shelter from the cold, and cutting back Sitka spruce around the pond edges.

Runner-up Gregor Hamblin, Assistant Harvesting Manager, submitted a stunning photograph taken on a harvesting site in Argyll on a winter evening. The image showcases the magnificent light and beauty of the company's work locations, contrasting the warm, sunlit logs in the foreground with the cool tones of the sky and silhouetted trees.

The other runner-up, Isla Campbell, Graduate Assistant Forest Manager, captured a newly restocked Sitka spruce plantation at Eilanreach Estate near Glenelg in Lochalsh, western Scotland. The photograph illustrates the full cycle of sustainable forestry, from harvesting to ground preparation, young tree delivery, and planting, ensuring a continuous supply of home-grown timber while supporting jobs and the rural economy.

David Robertson, Director of Investment and Business Development at Scottish Woodlands, and one of the judges, said: "The winning images beautifully capture the essence of our work – managing diverse and thriving forests that provide valuable resources and habitats. We are proud of our staff's talent and dedication in showcasing the landscapes we nurture across the forests and woodlands we work on."

The competition, open to all Scottish Woodlands employees, received a high number of entries, demonstrating the staff's passion for the forests they manage and the biodiversity they support.



Photo contest

The photo was taken at Ericstane Forest that has a hidden acidic pond where we intend to install hibernacula for amphibians and reptiles and pull back some Sitka spruce from the pond edges, I was visiting to undertake a survey for Scotch Argus butterfly as I had spotted that the habitat was good for that butterfly. Given the area is visited only sporadically and is as commercial a property as you can get, we have recorded Green Hairstreak, Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Scotch Argus, Emperor Moth, Orange Tip, Ringlet, Large Red Damselflies, Blue Tailed Damselflies, Common Blue Damselflies, Black Darters, and Common Hawkers. It's a little gem of a pond. The photo is of a female Black Darter.

#### Charlotte Cavey-Wilcox, Regional Manager SE Scotland (winner)



I took this photo on a rare dry and sunny day out west on Eilanreach Estate near Glenelg, looking across to the south of Skye. The photo is of a newly restocked site, planted with Sitka spruce. The good quality of the young planted trees, combined with the forest soils prepared by machine to create raised planting positions, will give these trees the best chance of establishment so they grow into a high yielding crop for harvesting in the future.

This photo made me take a moment to realise and appreciate everything that leads up to the point of restocking sites like this one; the harvesting of the first rotation crop, the ground preparation for replanting, the delivery of young trees from the nurseries and then the actual planting of the trees. All of this is done to keep our essential home-grown timber supply growing while also safe-guarding livelihoods and contributing to the rural economy.

**Isla Campbell**, Forest Manager (runner-up)

A photo of a site in Argyll on a moody winter's evening, when the sun is falling behind the hills into the sea. The site looks out towards the Western Isles. The light on this night was sublime, and really showcases the beauty of some of the locations that we work in. This is my personal favourite as I have never seen light quite like it on a harvesting site. The orangey glow of the sunlight and the freshly cut logs in the foreground contrasts with the rich verdant standing trees silhouetted against the celestial blues of the sky. It is views like this that make me feel so grateful to do what I do.

#### **Gregor Hamblin**, Assistant Harvesting Manager (runner-up)





### TIMBER MARKET UPDATE

#### I am an optimist at heart. A glass half full type of person. You may be wondering why I am making these personal statements in a timber market report so I will elaborate.

I was recently visiting a couple of standing timber sales with work colleagues on the Kintyre Peninsula, and as with any glorious Spring day in Scotland it was raining, and we were well and truly wet though and cold from walking the timber sales. Unfortunately, on the way back to the office we suffered a flat tyre on the vehicle. With our team working skills coming to the fore to get the spare tyre fitted and back on the road again I jokingly said, '*Well at least it is only the bottom of the tyre that is flat.*'

I am in no doubt that was overkill optimism, but it did make me reflect on preparing this timber market summary that, regardless of the weather and the poorly timed flat tyre, the two sales which we viewed, although hugely different in species and quality, both presented the positives of the current timber market. One sale was poor-quality larch and pine which will be destined for the panel board and biomass market. The other was a Sitka spruce stand with a high-yield sawlog content, in addition to palletwood and small roundwood, which will feed into the carcassing, fencing, pallet, panel board, paperboard and biomass markets. The positives? Regardless of the quality of the crops and the roundwood products being produced demand from the processing sector is strong and has been steadily improving since the back end of last year. It would be fair to say that this is a welcoming contrast to what was the reoccurring theme or mood for the majority of 2023, where sawlog demand declined courtesy of the reduction in activity in the new housing construction sector and the Repair, Maintenance, and Improvement (RMI) sector, both sectors suffering the same economic pressures as experienced by many industries. Inflationary pressures, interest rate increases, and subsequently reductions in new mortgage applications all led to a slowdown in the new housing construction sector, with the same erosion in consumer confidence leading to homeowners reluctant to progress with RMI projects in the home.

As we move through 2024 supply and demand forces are coming into play and there is a positive outlook within the fencing, panel board, paper, and biomass sector for 2024. It would be fair to say that the C16 (construction grade) timber market remains challenging, principally due to a reduction in new housebuilding and continuing timber imports (C24 grade), which were only 2.2% lower in 2023 compared to the previous year. Equally, the pallet market remains challenging, with the level of demand and supply of pallets always being a reliable barometer regarding the level of general economic activity within the UK, and overall level of activity in the distribution of goods. It is expected with rate of inflation decreasing, coupled with predicted interest rate cuts in 2024 that this will bring about much needed consumer confidence and stimulus into the economy.

Timber Update



Throughout 2023 the sawmills effectively managed their sawn stock production down to levels which allowed increased sawmill production in the later months of 2023 and currently in 2024, with some mills running at full production, a rarity in 2023! There are also reports of record levels of weekly production and monthly dispatches of sawn goods at some sawmills in 2024, which compared to 2023 is a welcomed step change.

Returning to the glass half full metaphor I would proportion the empty void of the glass to the volatility experienced by the timber industry since 2020. The global shock events from a pandemic to wars and Brexit, have all put challenges at the industry's door in the short-term. The substantial 'spike' in demand for timber caused by the pandemic and the nation's 'race for space' at home, followed by the unpalatable issues arising from a hard decline in demand relative to the 'spike' post-pandemic has fuelled the volatility and made it more difficult to manage throughout the supply chain. Subsequent inflationary pressures have also pushed up costs throughout the supply chain, from forest floor to end-consumer of sawn goods. The timber industry is not unique in this respect but with a notable decline in timber demand from the 'spike,' coupled with increased working costs it is inevitable that timber harvesting activity would decline, with forest owners carefully monitoring standing sale values to determine whether to bring timber sales to market or not.



The UK continues to import ca. 80% of its timber requirement, from sawn softwood to engineered wood products and import timber volume data adequately demonstrates not only the short-term shock witnessed in supply and demand but also the positive medium to

long term growth in timber demand in the UK. Referring to the recent TDUK Timber Statistics Industry Facts  $\vartheta$  Figures, April 2024, Fig 1.



All Import Volume Monthly % Change 2016-2024 clearly demonstrates the volatility in the market witnessed since 2020. However, if we are to look at the long-term trend of imports and demand within the UK for timber product imports it shows steady growth, as illustrate in Fig 2. All Import Monthly Volume & Trendline 2013-2024 illustrates.





As an optimist, can I look forward to a full glass? I hope so! The government published it much anticipated 'Timber in Construction Roadmap' in December 2023 with its aim squarely set to increase the use of timber in construction, whilst bringing about opportunities for additional rural and processing sector jobs. As the built environment contributes about 25% of UK greenhouse gas emissions, timber in construction will also undoubtedly help towards reaching net zero targets. With the UK being the 3rd largest net importer of timber, the sector continues to heavily invest in sawmilling and processing facilities across the UK , demonstrating commitment and confidence in the UK timber market in the medium to long term. To that I raise a glass!





Andrew Tuft Harvesting & Marketing Director E: Andrew.tuft@scottishwoodlands.co.uk T: 01835 823 353 | M: 07850 098 701



DAVID ROBERTSON, INVESTMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, PROVIDES AN UPDATE ON THE CURRENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND DRIVERS FOR FORESTRY INVESTMENT.

#### **Politics and Economic Impacts**

**Much** has changed in the forestry world since the last full newsletter produced in June 2023. Politics certainly hasn't stood still, and we now have a "slightly" revised Cabinet in Scotland following the anointment of John Swinney as the First Minister. That cabinet is now widely expected to make changes to a number of the policies of the - now abandoned - SNP/Green alliance. We also have the predictable changes that are likely to come with the forthcoming UK General Election.

Persistently high inflation in 2023, accompanied by high interest rates in the UK has dented consumer confidence and led to reduced demand for our home-grown timber – with New Build construction output remaining static and the Repair, Maintenance and Improvement sector (which accounts for 40% of UK construction output) being flat.

This has impacted timber sales volumes and has led through to declining prices for quality sawlogs.

The good news - we are starting to see glimmers of hope in both these key markets again, with the UK construction industry forecast to see a resurgence in the remaining part of 2024 due to the upturn in the UK economy.

# The Importance of Timber as a Value Driver

Long-term management to produce quality timber is vitally important to the processing sector, the economy which is sustained by that industry - and the people who work in it. They include machine operators, planting and maintenance squads, forest managers, fencers, nursery workers, sawmillers, and timber harvesting and transport companies. Like many rural industries, there are also the offshoot benefits such as use of local accommodation providers, local traders and more, who benefit from the activity happening in their area.

Timber is also key to providing the income that still pays for many of the wider benefits of forestry and woodland though aspects like nature restoration, biodiversity enhancement and public access. Without the future income that timber provides much of the forestry activity we see would not occur, and these wider benefits would be lost with it.

# Understanding the Impacts of Nature Restoration Projects

We are seeing a strong movement towards nature restoration projects that provide the benefits of biodiversity enhancement, habitat creation and carbon sequestration from tree planting and carbon abatement from peatland restoration. These are all laudable outcomes, and if you understand the vagaries of the underlying drivers - ecosystems services crediting such as biodiversity credits and carbon credits, then that is great, and these projects can provide significant benefits for the grower and wider society. These benefits can include allowing growers to provide carbon credits to offset their own unavoidable emissions, selling surplus credits into the market to allow others to do the same - or perhaps biodiversity credits to offset losses on developments elsewhere on the owner's property, or a neighbour's property.

These projects shouldn't however be confused with standard forestry investment projects and have the same expectations of future capital value attributed in line with past performance. All of the drivers for continued performance in productive forestry are very clear in our opinion, such as increased timber use at a time of reduced UK supply and the importance of timber products embodying carbon in the built environment, but it is still the case that timber production shoulders the burden of producing capital value and income in most assets. If there is no tangible future crop, then the capital value of assets will reflect that, and in many cases will restrict the future value of the property.



Care is also required to properly consider the impact of ongoing monitoring and verification of these projects. With the intensive requirements of such monitoring we now estimate that projects must be a minimum of 10 hectares in size to carry the costs involved.

# The Importance of Financial and Tax Planning

What is extremely important is that a project should be carefully considered to meet the owner's objectives, with the impacts of any decisions identified at the outset. Projects can be designed to be multi-faceted, with measured and considered outcomes.

How taxation and VAT play into the process must also be considered, and proper advice from a range of specialist advisors should be sought.

#### Seek the Best Advice

Diversification of a farm or estate through creation of productive forestry can be a very rewarding process with multiple benefits - so getting the best advice on that process is key.

Scottish Woodlands Ltd seeks approval and implements around 35% of all new woodland across Scotland and 20%-25% across the UK. Our local staff are supported by regional and national teams of in-house specialist planning teams, ensuring that projects can be designed, approved and implemented effectively.

We aim to ensure that your project will work for you, your circumstances, and your future goals, whatever they may be.







David Robertson Investment and Business Development Director E: David.robertson@scottishwoodlands.co.uk T: 01738 505 277 | M: 07795 831 595



LANDOWNERS: NEED ADVICE ON THE IMPACT OF RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY CONNECTIONS?

The Pathway to 2030 (published by National Grid ESO, the electricity system operator for Great Britain) sets the blueprint for the electricity transmission network infrastructure required to enable the forecasted growth in renewable electricity across Great Britain.

The projects identified within the Pathway to 2030 are critical to delivering the UK and Scottish Government's offshore wind targets and to deliver these targets investment in network infrastructure is being proposed over much of northern and eastern of Scotland.

Further details on the project can be found here https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/2030-projects/ but in summary the main projects involve the following:-

- a new 400kV connection between Beauly and Spittal with associated sub-stations.
- a new 400kV connection between Beauly and Peterhead with associated sub-stations.
- an upgrade to the existing Beauly to Denny 275kV line to increase capacity to 400kV with the creation of further sub-stations.
- a new 400kV connection between Kintore and Tealing with associated sub-stations.
- a new Western Isles underground and subsea connection linking to a new substation at Beauly.
- a new subsea connection from Spittal to Peterhead.

The designation of preferred routes are well advanced for some lines but there are still opportunities to lobby for deviations and mitigations in some circumstances. Affected landowners will be eligible for compensation and Scottish Woodlands can assist in negotiating with Scottish & Southern Energy to mitigate the impact that the construction and operation of the infrastructure may have.

The construction and upgrade projects may also provide additional opportunities for some landowners. It may be possible to retain the temporary roads created to facilitate the construction of the lines if these will aid future management on the property and there may also be opportunities to secure rentals for providing ground for work compounds or secure royalties if suitable borrow pits can be identified to provide stone of construction.

If your property will be affected by any of the proposed routes or indeed any other utility projects please feel free to contact your local Scottish Woodlands office to discuss how we may be able to assist.





Andrew Crompton Senior Land Agent E: Andrew.crompton@scottishwoodlands.co.uk T: 01896 800 831 | M: 07860 641 037







### TOMORROW'S FORESTS WINS SWL AWARD AT INDUSTRY 'OSCARS'

Tomorrow's Forests has been named as the latest winner of a top industry prize, sponsored by Scottish Woodlands Ltd, which rewards those who communicate positive and effective messages about the forestry industry.

Scottish Woodlands' Managing Director Ian Robinson presented the Changing Attitudes Award at the annual dinner, hosted by industry leadership body Confor.

Tomorrow's Forests was chosen from a shortlist of four on the basis of a series of excellent videos, which reach out beyond the industry to tell the modern forestry story to a wider audience.

The finalists also included Jillian Kennedy, a Forest Manger with Scottish Woodlands, who was shortlisted for her exceptional work in fostering closer relationships and better understanding between farming and forestry.

The other finalists were Emyr Parker, a Forest Manager with Tilhill, for his work in promoting forestry careers to young people, and Timber Talks by Tilhill - a series of short films which address the challenges faced by the industry and tackle common misconceptions.

Tomorrow's Forests, founded just 10 years ago, emerged as the winner for its excellence in promoting forestry through educational videos about the industry. In the last year in particular, Tomorrow's Forests has ramped up its content, with many videos talking about the forestry industry and its role in the wider rural landscape.

Ian Robinson said: "Tomorrow's Forests was a deserved winner of the 2024 Changing Attitudes Award as a relatively young company with a lot to say - and an impressive way of saying it. The videos reached out beyond the industry to tell a positive story about modern forestry.

"I'm delighted that Scottish Woodlands Ltd continues to sponsor this important award to recognise those doing most to communicate the fantastic work of our industry."

Previous winners of the Changing Attitudes Award were Mima Letts of Tree Sparks (2020), Laura Jermy of TG & DS Norman (2022) and Tom Barnes of Vastern Timber (2023). The awards dinner was not held in 2021 due to the pandemic.

Two more Scottish Woodlands staff were shortlisted in the annual 'Forestry Oscars'. Carbon Manager Emma Kerr was a finalist in the Net Zero award category for her work in making Scottish Woodlands Ltd the UK's largest developer of forest carbon schemes, and



has become one of the "go to" people in the carbon world. The Net Zero Award was won by Rainbow Professional for its work in creating a new generation of environmentally friendly tree shelters.

Megan Parker, a Forest Planner with Scottish Woodlands, was also shortlisted in the Future Forest Leader category, which was won by Rosanna Curtis of Reheat.

"I'm really pleased that Jillian, Emma, and Megan were all shortlisted," said Mr Robinson. "It's a reflection of a strong new generation of forestry professionals coming through into senior roles at Scottish Woodlands Ltd and signals a bright future for the business."

The winner of the main award at the Confor Award Dinner, for Dedicated Service to Forestry, was Rodney Shearer for his role in promoting the tree nursery sector, mainly during more than 30 years at Alba Trees.

Ian Robinson concluded: "I'd like to congratulate all the winners and thank Confor for putting together another great night of celebration for our industry. Scottish Woodlands Ltd is very happy to be part of such a terrific occasion."

The dinner heard a video message from Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Mairi Gougeon MSP, and a live speech from Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity. Mr Fairlie described forestry as a "dynamic industry with sustainability at its core" and said it was vital to Scotland's climate change ambitions. He recognised industry concerns about the 40% reduction in the Scottish Government budget for woodland creation in 2024/25 but said ministers were "doing everything we can in straitened times".

Mr Fairlie thanked the forestry industry for its work and said there was a record number of approvals for new planting in the system (around 14,000 hectares). He added: "It's critical we make the most of the available funds this year and get as much planted as possible. Keeping up [this] momentum increases the case for more funding in future."

Confor CEO Stuart Goodall highlighted deep industry concerns over the budget cut, noting that nurseries would have to make decisions soon about how many young trees to grow for the coming years, and without additional funding being made available quickly, production would inevitably fall. This would 'bake in' a significant reduction in future tree supply and mean woodland creation targets would be significantly undershot for at least the next 3-4 years.

He warned Scotland that its much-vaunted position as the best place to plant trees and invest in wood production in the UK could not be guaranteed. There had been real progress made on fast-tracking approvals in England and work with industry to develop a National Wood Strategy for England and a Timber in Construction Roadmap, while Scotland was falling back following the funding cut and was at risk of standing still at best in the coming years.





# EVEREST MARATHON MAN RECOUNTS HIS EPIC STORY

#### A Senior Forest Manager has recounted his epic effort in completing a marathon in the shadow of the world's highest mountain.

Arran Smith took part in the gruelling Tenzing Hillary Everest Marathon, the highest marathon in the world, which starts at an altitude of almost 5,500 metres.

The race finishes at 3,500 metres, after a hugely challenging course in extremely difficult terrain - following part of the route used by Sherpa Tenzing and Sir Edmund Hillary when they conquered Everest in May 1953. The 2023 race took place on the 70th anniversary of them reaching the summit.



Arran finished the course in 9 hours, 1 minute 46 seconds, which put him 79th out of 164 competitors. 6th of 17 UK runners and 32nd out of 108 non-Nepalese runners. "I was very pleased just to finish and had not set myself any time goal," he said. "The fastest time was an incredible 3 hours 48 minutes by a Nepalese runner!"

The 34-year-old, who is based in Scottish Woodlands' Melrose office, described some of the challenges he faced during the race, which began before the start!

"I suffered badly with altitude sickness on the trek up to base camp at around 4000m, with nausea, headache and dizziness," he said. "The doctor gave me Diamox which helps with altitude by dilating the blood vessels. This had an unwanted side-effect of increased toilet stops leading to dehydration and severe nosebleeds, including a huge one in the tent before the race when trying to sleep."

"Most of my group developed the Khumbu Cough, caused by the cold, dry air. This was exhausting and at times made it difficult to hold a conversation. A Dutch runner was helicoptered from base camp on the morning of the race due to the severity of his symptoms and didn't start. A UK runner collapsed at mile 20 and had to be airlifted out."

Arran said the course itself was full of massive challenges: "The first 5 miles were over the Khumbu Glacier boulders over ice, made more challenging by the groups of yaks heading in the opposite direction! The rest of the course was on the main trekking path and crossed some of the famous wire bridges. Although the net elevation decreased, there were two very steep climbs. The first, to Tengboche Monastery at mile 20, seemed like the only big climb - before we were reminded we still had Namche hill to climb. And that was far worse!"

How did Arran keep going? "There were plenty of times I wanted to give up. My cough hadn't gone away and during the hill climbs, I was sometimes bent double coughing up nasty green stuff. It was completely exhausting but I was determined to finish as I'd invested a lot of time and resources to take part. I didn't finish an Ultra Marathon in March 2022, and knew the feeling of regret at not completing a race and didn't want to have the same feeling again. I was so exhausted at the finish; I was holding my certificate upside down for the photos."



"The first 5 miles were over the Khumbu Glacier - boulders over ice, made more challenging by the groups of yaks heading in the opposite direction! The rest of the course was on the main trekking path and crossed some of the famous wire bridges."

Arran, based at Melrose office in Scottish Borders, has been with SWL since 2012. He discovered the trip when looking for adventure holiday ideas. "I always had a fascination with Everest and its climbing history and culture," he explained. "Add the world's highest marathon and it made the perfect adventure! The chance to spend two nights at Everest Base Camp also really appealed."

He added: "I did very little research into the actual marathon as I wanted it to be an unknown experience. I knew it was going to be tough and set myself 4 goals for the trip to see Everest, get to base camp, start the marathon and finish the marathon, so I was delighted to tick all 4 boxes."

Before heading to Nepal, Arran completed a 38-mile ultra marathon in October 2022. He is also part of the Borders Search and Rescue Team, which in 2019 entered the Dolomiti Rescue Race in Italy - a 16 km mountain race which reaches an altitude of 2700 metres, involving a section of Via Ferrata [a climbing route that employs steel



cables, rungs, or ladders, fixed to the rock], an abseil and a stretcher carry.

He said he was keen not to overdo training before the Everest Marathon: "I'm a regular gym goer and also do hill walking and running. I didn't want to overdo my training as there were so many factors outside my control in Nepal - illness, altitude, injury. And I knew the trek to the start would help me adjust to the altitude."

Arran flew to Kathmandu, then Lukla, and spent 11 days trekking to Everest Base Camp, followed by a two day rest to acclimatise. After the race, there was a rest day near the finish in Namche Bazaar before a trek back to Lukla and return to Kathmandu for a two-day stay before the flight home.

Arran said of his family and friends: "I don't think they fully appreciated what I was doing, which is probably for the best! However, I'd recently started dating a girl and when I got back, she said she'd convinced herself I was going to die out there; fortunately I'm back in one piece and the relationship is still going strong!"

He says that it's "unlikely" he will do the same marathon again but would love to go back to Nepal to spend more time trekking and exploring the Himalayas. "Climbing Everest does appeal to me, but finances and time off work are major limiting factors," he said.

Next up is putting a team together to take part in the Dolomiti Rescue Race again in 2024.





Community

## THE WHITLAW PROJECT

#### Introduction

In July 2021, the Whitlaw project was initiated following the acquisition of a 446-hectare farm, with the ambition to convert the site into a sustainable mixed forest. This ambitious project involved extensive planning to balance the ecological potential of the land, which had been primarily used for agricultural activities, with new woodland creation aimed at creating a productive local timber resource, while enhancing biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

#### Site Assessment and Initial Planning

Initial evaluations classified most of the land as moderately suitable for agriculture, with limited better parts utilized for arable crops. However, detailed assessments revealed that a significant portion of the farm had excellent potential for afforestation. This potential was substantiated by its classification as F5/6 under forestry suitability criteria, indicating it was ideal for a productive conifer-based scheme, specifically spruce. Our plan detailed a planting strategy with 68% coniferous trees and 15% broadleaf trees, spreading across 322 hectares of the designated planting area.

#### **Community and Regulatory Engagement**

Given the project's proximity to the town of Lauder (only 2km away), we anticipated community interest and potential opposition. Early public

consultations brought forward concerns from local groups, critically examining the proposal's environmental impacts. In response, we engaged independent professionals to identify important features to validate our plans and address community concerns transparently, ensuring that our strategies aligned with both industry best practices and public expectations.

### Ecological Surveys and Environmental Considerations

During our detailed site surveys, an oversight initially missed a patch of high-value speciesrich grassland. This discovery was brought to our attention by individuals opposing a conifer-based project, adding complexity to our planning, but also an opportunity to incorporate this into our design. Further surveys revealed the presence of notable bird populations, including curlews and black grouse, on the adjoining lands. To accommodate these species, we integrated extensive areas of open ground into our forest design to mitigate against habitat disruption, reflecting a careful balance between land use change and ecological preservation.





#### Addressing Environmental Constraints

The presence of wax cap fungi was an unusual but important finding, suggesting the grassland could be of historical ecological importance. Such indicators required us to further adjust our plans, incorporating zones where no planting would occur to preserve these ecologically sensitive areas. These decisions were informed by both local ecological data and input from environmental specialists, ensuring that our approach was both data-driven and sensitive to the unique characteristics of the site.

#### **Operational Challenges**

From the outset, our operations were planned to be responsive and efficient. After a period of uncertainty, we received contract approval late November 2023, and in days we had mobilised our experienced contractors, initiating fencing and ground preparation works, followed closely by the arrival of the first tree deliveries. This phase was critical, as the timely construction of over 10,000m of deer fencing was essential to protect the young tree from wildlife, which included deer, hares, rabbits, and voles.

#### Advanced Protective Measures for Young Trees

Recognising the likely browsing pressures, we adopted advanced protective measures. Traditional voleguard protection were improved by using larger Easywrap guards, which provided enhanced protection for the young trees, accommodating a wider range of species and sizes which may have been vulnerable to browsing pressure. This proactive approach was pivotal in mitigating the impact of voles and other browsing animals, ensuring higher survival rates for the newly planted trees.

### Sustainability and Carbon Sequestration Initiatives

An integral component of our project was to explore the feasibility of registering with the Woodland Carbon Code to generate carbon credits. The complex requirements of the Code, coupled with the Forestry Grant Scheme's (FGS) guidelines, posed significant challenges. However, our team, led by Emma Kerr, our Head of Carbon, developed innovative approaches to meet these challenges, proposing a trade-off where future grant support could be significantly reduced in order to make productive coniferous scheme pass additionally through reduced FGS funding.

#### Long-Term Management and Monitoring

The incorporation of a Grassland Management Plan (GMP) was a critical step in ensuring the longterm sustainability of the project. This plan, legally binding for 20 years, was designed to support the management of designated grassland areas, particularly those identified as critical for wading bird populations. The GMP allows for adaptive management practices that will enable us to respond to evolving ecological and environmental conditions over time.



#### Conclusion

As we near the completion of the initial planting and establishment phase, we reflect on the journey that the Whitlaw project has been. Despite facing numerous challenges—from ecological sensitivities and regulatory hurdles to operational logistics—the progress has been immensely fulfilling. We encourage stakeholders and the public to visit Whitlaw to witness firsthand the transformation and the careful integration of forestry management with conservation efforts. Looking forward, we are committed to monitoring and nurturing this new forest, ensuring it serves as a beacon of sustainable development for years to come.





Michael Wilson Forest Manager E: Michael.wilson@scottishwoodlands.co.uk T: 01835 823 353 | M: 07918 553 602



# SWL SUPPORTS NEW **PESTICIDE-FREE TRIALS**

### Scottish Woodlands Ltd is involved in a pioneering new trial of pesticide-free products designed to protect young trees against the scourge of weevils.

The large pine weevil (Hylobius abietis) is a major forest pest in the UK and can destroy nearly all the young seedlings in a replanted woodland.



Connisafe treated tree

Applying the product in the field

To limit the spread of chemicals into the wider environment, insecticide is usually applied directly to individual young trees - but Scottish Woodlands Ltd (SWL) sees a future in which insecticides are no longer required.

Working with Scandinavian partner Bjorn-Thorsen, SWL is testing a new product called Connisafe at Barrhill Forest, near Kirkcudbright.

Euan Wilkie, SWL's Forest Manager at Barrhill said, *"If anywhere can test a weevil control method to its limits, it's Barrhill - so we are confident of giving Connisafe a stiff test!"* 

The trial follows on from the promising testing of Bjorn-Thorsen's Conniflex product last year.

Stuart Wilkie, SWL's Environment and Certification Manager, said: *"We have trialled many physical barrier methods in the past including nets, sleeves, and wax coatings but such methods have only protected 40-60% of trees."* 

"Last year's Conniflex trial gave us hope that where populations were low enough, good levels of protection could be achieved - but not at higher populations typically experienced in the West."

# *"We were determined to try again and with the support of the owner, a randomised trial of 2500 plants was set out in early April."*

Connisafe is a mineral blend that encloses the plant using a water-based binder and has no insecticidal properties. The idea is that the pine weevil does not have the strength to bite off the coating to get to the trunk. At the same time, the coating is flexible so as not to impede the growth of the plant and is non-toxic. Normally it would be applied mechanically in the nursery but for the number of trees required for these trials, it was done manually in the forest.

# Stuart Wilkie added: *"We are looking forward to monitoring the trials over the summer to see how Connisafe performs against the high weevil numbers we normally experience at Barrhill."*

Scottish Woodlands Ltd is at the forefront of the industry's drive to reduce pesticide use in forestry, especially for weevil control. It is a major supporter of HIRP (Hylobius: The Industry Research Programme) and Jemma McLachlan (Assistant Environment Forester) is currently the group secretary.

Jemma and Euan Wilkie will attend the New IPM Symposium 2024, at Swansea University, later this year, an event focused on emerging opportunities in crop protection and environmentally friendly control of pests.



### SWL STAFF LEARN ABOUT PEAT IN THE PEAKS!

# Four members of the Scottish Woodlands team headed south to learn more about peatland restoration in the Peak District.

The team, led by Carbon Manager Emma Kerr, visited Bleaklow, one of the highest points of the High Peak area of Derbyshire, midway between Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester. Emma was accompanied by newly-recruited Peatland Project Manager Dr Erin Stoll, Forest Manager James Macpherson-Fletcher, and Forest Investment Manager Dan Wilson.

Emma Kerr said: "We had an inspiring few days learning about all things Peat in the Peaks - including metal-eating bacteria, sphagnum scaffolding, helicopter treatments and Teletubby land!"

Chris Dean and Steve Maynard from Moors for the Future Partnership hosted the visit, to illustrate the erosion of peatland habitats in the area.

"Chris and Steve showcased peatland restoration work carried out over the last 21 years," Emma Kerr added. "Bleaklow's location means that since the industrial revolution, it has been exposed to significant air pollution – leading to vast erosion of the peatland."

"We visited areas of significant bare peat, which had been eroded down to the mineral soil, and areas that had been restored and were actively recovering."

Peatland restoration at Bleaklow has involved a combination of reducing the extreme acidity of polluted soils using lime and fertilisers before spreading heather brash and reseeding the site with a nurse grass mix. 250 years of heavy industry in surrounding cities had polluted the soil to such a level that metal-eating bacteria - usually only found in metal scrap and industrial waste disposal units were recorded within the soil.

Eroding gullies and channels between the peat hags (isolated mounds of peat) were also modified using

stone dams and coir logs to create retaining walls. This helps to slow the movement of water and trap sediment to prevent further loss of peat and create pools for Sphagnum moss plugs to be planted.

Dr Erin Stoll said: "We learnt about how the common haircap moss Polytrichum commune can be used as 'scaffolding' in shallow bog pools to allow sphagnum to regenerate and how the application of heather brash onto areas of bare peat has provided a root structure to allow vegetation to take hold."

"Chris and Steve described how the initial phase of restoration could look like 'Teletubby land' with the nurse grass providing a foundation for the other bog plants to thrive. Also, Moors for the Future Partnership has perfected the use of helicopters and other novel methods to apply seed, lime and fertiliser to remote and heavily-eroded sites over the last 21 years."

The Scottish Woodlands team was keen to visit a heavily eroded site to understand how such areas could be restored, so they can apply similar techniques to SWL's wide-ranging peatland restoration projects. Dr Stoll joined the team in January to reflect the growing importance of peatland restoration in the company's work with owners of land and estates.

Also on the visit were Deborah Land, Jack Pocock and Ian McKee from NatureScot Peatland ACTION. The team discussed with them what types of restoration techniques could be transferrable - and how this would fit in with Peatland ACTION grant funding in Scotland.

Emma Kerr concluded: "Peat in the Peak District is exposed to both air pollution and a high footfall of walkers wishing to escape city life. Despite the geographical differences between some of our Scottish sites to Bleaklow, we came away from the visit inspired and keen to get stuck into peatland restoration this year."







Dingwall 🔵

Fort William

Fenwick

Lochgilphead ODunoon

Ballymena

Muir Of Ord

Elgin Fochabers

Perth

e Edinburgh

Dumfries

Chirk 🔵

Melrose

Alnwick

Wolsingham

Banchory

#### Departments / Services:

- Head Office
- Forest Management
- Investment
- Utilities
- Landscaping

www.scottishwoodlands.co.uk/contact

Shot State

Many of the images used throughout this edition were taken by members of staff as part of the SWL Photo Competition.



2

ALL THE



www.scottishwoodlands.co.uk 01738 505 277

