

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Agreement: Forestry Commission Scotland and Forest Enterprise Scotland, 30th June 2015

Introduction

The refreshed Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS), the 2020 challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity, was published last year. The 2020 Challenge proposed that Delivery Agreements are developed to set out organisational roles for meeting the strategy's outcomes and priority projects outlined in 'Scotland's Biodiversity – a Route map to 2020' (published 25th June 2015).

Forestry Commission Scotland serves as the forestry directorate of the Scottish government, and supports and regulates forest and woodland management throughout Scotland. Forest Enterprise Scotland is an agency of the Forestry Commission charged with managing the National Forest Estate (NFE) on behalf of Scottish Ministers. This document describes how Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) will help to deliver the priority projects in '[Scotland's Biodiversity – a Route map to 2020](#)'.

Forestry and woodlands cover 18% of Scotland and forms a major land use type. FES manages about 9% of the land area in Scotland and a third of the total forest and woodland cover in Scotland.

For consistency in reporting and monitoring the actions listed in this agreement link to the implementation plan of the [Scottish Forestry Strategy](#) and to the key commitments in '[The role of Scotland's National Forest Estate and Strategic Directions](#)'. SBS aims are embedded in both of these documents and supporting policy, plans and programmes including [Woods for Nature](#) and [Variety is the Spice of life](#) available from the links above. Both of the strategic documents and some supporting documents are due to be reviewed next year.

SBS Delivery Agreement

The [UK Forestry Standard](#) is the reference standard for sustainable forest management across the UK, and is based on criteria agreed at International and European levels. The Standard is supported by the Forest and Biodiversity Guidelines, along with guidelines on water, soil, climate change, landscape, people and historic environment. These set out the approach of the UK governments to Sustainable Forest Management, define standards and requirements, and provide a basis for regulation and monitoring. Underpinning these is robust programmes of research guided by the [Forestry Commission's Science and Innovation Strategy](#).

The standard and guidelines are embedded in forest planning and compliance with these is essential to be given any form of grant support. All FES woodlands comply with the UKFS, and are also voluntarily independently certified. Forest and land management plans are developed in collaboration with a range of external stakeholders, and along with all management plans required for grant support, are consulted upon via the public register. All comply with relevant environmental legislation and are subject to Environmental Impact Assessment where required.

The table below (Table 1) shows the 'BIG STEPS' in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, and the priority projects that sit beneath these, and form the 'Route map to 2020', in the left-hand columns. In the right hand column is the range of activities will be carried out by FCS and FES to contribute to the delivery of each of these Priority Projects. Some of this work is being taken forward by FCS or FES alone, but the majority are developed and delivered in partnership with a huge range of other government and non-government organisations (listed on pages 76 to 79 of the Scottish Forestry Strategy implementation plan).

This Delivery Agreement will be updated on a regular basis.

SBS Delivery Agreement

Table 1: FCS and FES contribution to the 'Route map to 2020' and Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy

BIG STEP 1: Ecosystem Restoration	
<p>Priority project 1: Restoration of Peatlands</p>	<p>Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will: In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support restoration, as appropriate, through the Forestry Grant Scheme. Develop and promote guidance on restoring afforested peat bogs with partners and continue to promote a joined-up cross-government approach. • In support of the Caithness & Sutherland Peatland Strategy, work with woodland managers to implement guidance on addressing forest edge impacts. • Work to align and promote the Peatland Carbon Code and the Woodland Carbon Code <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with partners on peatland restoration and develop the Woodland Carbon Code. <p>On the National Forest Estate, FES will In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to undertake peatland management work; including maintaining projects supported by Scottish Government and SNH through the Peatland Action fund Implement guidance on restoring afforested peat bogs and guidance on addressing forest edge impacts on peatlands. <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a survey of all open habitats on the National Forest Estate, and maintain the best sites in in good ecological condition.
<p>Priority Project 2: Restoration of Native Woodland</p>	<p>Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will: In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and prioritise geographical areas for action to improve the condition of native and ancient woodland based on the evidence base of the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland. • Working with partners, contribute to action on deer through the Forestry Grant Scheme, Wild Deer National Approach, Deer Management Plans and the Rural Development Programme Co-operation Scheme. • Commission a refreshed programme of research through Forest Research and wider partners on resilience building and climate change adaptation.

SBS Delivery Agreement

- Complete, with SNH, guidance on the management of ash in native woodlands in relation to the effects of dieback due to Chalara infection.
 - Review and publish the guidance for the sector on nursery practice and planting pine adjacent to CPI woodlands in light of threats from Dothistroma.
 - Work with partners to develop management guidance for Juniper habitats at threat from the pathogen Phytophthora austrocedri.
 - Deliver research outputs through a workshop for the forest sector on climate change adaptation measures.
 - Work with SG Energy Consents unit to review the implementation of the policy with a view to producing updated guidance where required.
 - Work with partners to deliver a series of knowledge transfer events on the use of biomass from farm woodlands.
 - Working with partners, encourage 3-5000 hectares of new native woodland creation a year.
 - Review the forestry consultation procedures and review forest plan process and guidance.
 - Publish a strategic national approach to rhododendron control across Scotland in collaboration with partners, and promote FCS guidance on managing invasive non-native species.
- Looking ahead to 16/18:**
- Continue to work with partners to encourage 3-5000 hectares of new native woodland creation a year.
 - Produce guidance on improving the ecological and silvicultural quality of new native woodlands.
 - Research the causes and losses of ancient and native woodland using NWSS data, and continue work to improve the condition of native woods across Scotland.
 - Continue to support the forest sector to adapt to climate change and become more resilient to pest and diseases, through a range of measures, including research, advice, incentives and advice.
 - Continue to develop opportunities to stimulate more management of existing woodlands and creation of new woodlands.
 - Continue to work with partners to secure implementation of the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal policy
 - Develop a plan for updating the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland data.
- On the National Forest Estate, FES will**
- In 15/16:**
- Implement the Estate's Deer Management Strategy.
 - Implement resilience-building measures, such as work to mitigate slope stability risks and mitigation strategies for current tree diseases threatening the National Forest Estate

SBS Delivery Agreement

	<p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work towards restoring around 85% of woodlands on ancient woodland sites across the Estate. • Over time, increase broadleaved tree cover on the estate from the current 8% of woodland cover to around 20%, using data from the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland to help secure biodiversity benefits from this. • Implement a landscape-scale spatial planning approach that promotes adaptation and mitigation of climate change.
<p>Priority Project 3: Restoration of Freshwaters</p>	<p>Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with SEPA and other stakeholders to secure the role of forestry in the second cycle of the RBMP and the first cycle of the flood risk management plans. • Promote the higher grant rate payment for the 14 diffuse pollution priority catchments identified by our 'Woodlands for water Opportunity mapping' project for woodland creation where there will be greatest benefit for mitigation of diffuse pollution and flood alleviation. • Produce guidance, with partners, on protecting Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems in relation to forest planning and operations. • Develop and begin to deliver the 'Forestry & Water Scotland' initiative, to help forest managers comply with the UK Forestry Standard Water Guidelines and to begin meeting obligations under water legislation. <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure full roll out of 'Forest and Water Initiative' • Assess the need and produce any guidance required for the forest sector on the management of steep slopes • Continue to commission evidence and promote the contribution that woodlands provide to a good quality freshwater environment and the role they can play in flood alleviation. <p>On the National Forest Estate, FES will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to ensure that the contribution that woodlands provide to a good quality freshwater environment and the role they can play in flood alleviation is reflected in land management planning on the National Forest Estate.

SBS Delivery Agreement

BIG STEP 2: Investment in Natural Capital

Priority project 4: Investment in Natural Capital

Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will:

In 15/16:

- Contribute to the 2022 target of 100 000 hectares of woodland creation.
- Continue to develop and promote the Woodland Carbon Code
- Work with partners across Scottish Government to review the implementation of the Control of Woodland Removal policy with a view to producing updated guidance where required.
- Commission research into how woodlands provide a range of benefits in terms of ecosystem services and natural capital, and how to incorporate into forest planning.

Looking ahead 16/18:

- Continue to implement the Control of Woodland Removal Policy
- Continue to develop and promote the Woodland Carbon Code

On the National Forest Estate, FES will:

In 15/16:

- Explore how best to steward the carbon resources locked up in both the National Forest Estate's trees and soils, and bring 'carbon conservation' into the decision-making process in land management planning on the Estate.

Looking ahead 16/18:

- Explore how to incorporate an understanding of ecosystem services and natural capital into land management planning on the National Forest Estate.
- Continue to work in partnership with RSPB Scotland, The Woodland Trust and BP was part of the legacy of the Scottish Forest Alliance through the Sustainable Forestry SCIO to research, monitor and evaluate carbon sequestration in accordance with the Woodland Carbon Code and enhancements to biodiversity on four sites on the
- Estate including the Great Trossachs Forest within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.

SBS Delivery Agreement

BIG STEP 3: Quality greenspace for health and education benefits

**Priority Project 5:
More people
enjoying and
experiencing
nature**

Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will:

In 15/16:

- Publish the new Woodlands In and Around Towns (WIAT) programme.
- Continue to support the development and funding of the Central Scotland Green Network initiative.
- Publish a 'working with communities' package as part of the response to the recent 'community health check'.
- Launch the new Forest Education Initiative to take account of the Outdoor Learning Network (OWL) collaboration.
- Undertake a '10 years on' progress report of the National Forest Land Scheme. Review and revise the Scheme to incorporate any changes from the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill.
- Carry out two pilot studies in collaboration with 'Scotland Counts' to engage the wider public on woodland biodiversity.
- Continue to support facilitated access to woodlands for under-represented groups.
- Continue to support opportunities for greater engagement with communities in woodland management and ownership through engagement and support of the Scottish Woodlots Association and Borders Forest Trust Forest Development Programme.

Looking ahead to 16/18:

- Promote the new WIAT programme, and support the roll out the new NFLS and working with communities' packages.

On the National Forest Estate, FES will:

In 15/16:

- Continue to invest available resources into maintaining high quality facilities that encourage and help visitors to the Estate experience and enjoy and hence appreciate the outdoor environment. As part of this we will define and invest in management of 'visitor zones' to make them attractive and welcoming.
- Continue to contribute to the Woodlands In and Around Towns programme by creating and managing woodlands close to where people live. Align the contribution of the Estate with the larger Central Scotland Green Network vision.

Looking ahead to 16/18:

- Continue to develop visitor experience plans for key destinations and sites which draw together the key opportunities and hence actions required to ensure that more visitors enjoy and experience nature in a

SBS Delivery Agreement

	<p>responsible manner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the Commonwealth Games legacy open and manage new outdoor access opportunities on the Estate around Glasgow including within the Clyde Gateway area on previously derelict and vacant land, and within the Kilpatrick Hills area. • Help to deliver the Woodlands In and Around Towns Central Scotland Engagement Programme, with outreach to a diverse range of protected characteristic groups. Promote opportunities on the Estate for community engagement, wildlife viewing, volunteering and skills development which connect people with nature. • Implement the findings of our review of waymarked trails on the Estate to include seeking opportunities to extend and promote a network of easy access paths. • Continue to support facilitated access to woodlands for under-represented groups.
<p>Priority Project 6 Taking learning outdoors</p>	<p>Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the network of Outdoor and Woodland Learning Scotland (OWL) groups to work with Local Authorities and other partners. • Provide outdoor learning information and opportunities in National, Regional and Local Parks, Nature Reserves and the National Forest Estate. • Facilitate and partner fund a youth employment skills training programme within the CSGN, particularly for young people from areas of disadvantage, taking positive action to promote protected characteristics groups. • Work with partners in the education sector to support teachers delivering outdoor learning initiatives such as Teaching in Nature and Forest Kindergarten's. • Continue developing the opportunities for collaborative working to support training opportunities for young people in rural skills via the Rural Skills Partnerships. <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to develop and improve greenspace provision and opportunities for outdoor learning close to schools. <p>On Scotland's National Forest Estate, FES will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to facilitate education initiatives such as Forest Education Initiative and Forest School through making suitable parts of the Estate available for education projects and programmes. • Facilitate a youth employment skills training programme on the Estate within the CSGN, particularly

SBS Delivery Agreement

	<p>for young people from areas of disadvantage, taking positive action to promote protected characteristics groups.</p> <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of our visitor experience planning seek to provide interpretation which adds a learning dimension to visits to the Estate. • Open a new facility which will accommodate basic facilities for visiting groups to The Lodge Visitor Centre at Aberfoyle within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.
<p>Priority Project 7: Developing Scotland's Natural Health Service</p>	<p>Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support the development and funding of the Central Scotland Green Network. • Continue to support the current number of groups (35) under the Branching Out programme (for adults using mental health services in Scotland). Seek resources to expand the programme across Scotland. Train new leaders and publish a Branching Out healthcare assistant training manual to support this work. • Continue to promote Commonwealth community walks programme in partnership with 'Paths for All'. • Support the Green Exercise Partnership to deliver greening on the NHS estate around hospitals and healthcare centres throughout mainland Scotland. • Undertake woodland activity programme for people with early-stage dementia and publish a FCS research note: Trees, woodlands and forests as places of well-being for people with dementia. • Continue Commonwealth Woods project, building sustainability within the network for the partners to continue to deliver on the legacy. <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to operate and deliver the Branching Out programme. • Publish research findings for the Greening NHS Estate initiative. • Continue to support facilitated access to woodland for underrepresented groups. <p>On the National Forest Estate, FES will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with health initiatives such as Branching Out, and fully open the Cuningar Woodland Park Commonwealth Games 2014 Legacy project. <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to make suitable parts of the Estate available to partner organisations for health improvement projects and programmes.

SBS Delivery Agreement

BIG STEP 4: Conserving Wildlife in Scotland	
Priority Project 8: Protected Areas	<p>Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the number of woodland sites in favourable (or recovering) condition continues to increase and contributes to the target of 80% of sites favourable condition by March 2016. • Utilise a new planning grant to support the production of plans on these priority sites. • Complete work of the Delivering Favourable Condition Technical Group on woodlands <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the project plan to increase the number of woodland in Scotland in good condition – up from the 46% identified in the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland. <p>On the National Forest Estate, FES will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that at least 95% of designated sites on the Estate are in favourable (or recovering) condition. <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop plan implement a partnership programme of restoration of habitats and improvements to visitor infrastructure within and adjacent to protected areas at Glenmore and Rothiemurchus within the Cairngorm National Park which will benefit priority habitats and species, improve the visitor experience, whilst reducing and mitigating the adverse impacts of visitors within the Glenmore corridor. • Continue to work proactively with SNH to demonstrate the value of National Nature Reserves including the designation of the Great Trossachs Forest as a key area within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park as a new NNR.
Priority Project 9: Conservation of Priority Species	<p>Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish the advice notes for the red squirrel strongholds programme, and integrate the findings of recent red squirrel research projects into our guidance for forest managers. • Working with partners, support the publication and promotion of the new Scottish red squirrel action plan. • Commission research with partners on capercaillie tracking with a view to improving current guidance on forest management where required. <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p>

SBS Delivery Agreement

- Commission research and publish advice on managing woodland habitats for priority species where needed, incorporating habitat information from the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland.

On National Forest Estate, FES will:

In 15/16:

- In support of the national Rhododendron strategy, continue to work towards the eradication of invasive rhododendron on the Estate, with a reduction of 40% by 2016.
- Manage directly the two thirds of Scotland's red squirrel strongholds that are on the Estate and carry out grey squirrel control on the Estate to combat the spread of squirrel pox.
- Monitor capercaillie, black grouse and red squirrel populations annually on the Estate.
- Continue to host the Scottish Government's beaver re-introduction trial and contribute expertise to the Scottish Government's review of the potential for beaver re-introduction.

Looking ahead to 16/18:

- Strengthen the monitoring of and status reporting of priority species on the Estate.
- Work with Butterfly Conservation Scotland to produce annual national population indices for pearl-bordered fritillary and chequered skipper butterflies.

SBS Delivery Agreement

BIG STEP 5: Sustainable management of land and freshwater	
<p>Priority project 10: Improving Ecological Connection</p>	<p>Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Forestry Grant Scheme incentives and revised maps and guidance to target new native woodland creation for habitat connectivity. <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the causes and losses of ancient and native woodland using NWSS data, and continue work to improve the condition of native woods across Scotland. <p>On the National Forest Estate, FES will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the 'Strategic Guide for Conservation of Open Priority Habitats on the Estate'. <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland to identify where expansion of broadleaved woodland on the Estate will improve the habitat network and buffer ancient woodland fragments.
<p>Priority Project 11: Sustainable Land Management</p>	<p>Through policy, incentives and regulation FCS will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partner countries to refresh the UK Forestry Standard and contribute to a review of the independent UK Woodland Assurance Scheme. Continue to contribute to ongoing work of the Land use strategy pilot areas. <p>Looking ahead to 16/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with landowners to promote the benefits of forest management for the provision of ecosystem services. Secure implementation of broader land use strategy principles in forest plans across the forest sector. <p>On the National Forest Estate, FES will:</p> <p>In 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage 100% of the Estate to the environmental standards set out in the UK Forestry Standard and the independent UK Woodland Assurance Scheme.

SBS Delivery Agreement

- As part of a five year Heritage Lottery Funded programme, work with the Cairngorm Outdoor Access Trust to repair and redevelop mountain paths which better meet the needs of visitors whilst reducing and minimising environmental impacts within the Loch Lomond National Park.
- Looking ahead to 16/18**
- Continue to develop the way we undertake landscape-scale spatial planning on the Estate to promote adaptation and mitigation of climate change as an integral part of sustainable land management.
 - Establish starter farms on the Estate linked to woodland creation proposals, and identify opportunities to develop exemplars of forestry and farming integration.
 - Work with research and other specialists to demonstrate best practice and provide long-term monitoring sites, for example in relation to ecosystem management and climate change adaptation.
 - As part of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority's 'Our Park' programme facilitate the development of informal campsites at key locations on the Estate to reduce negative visitor impacts on habitats and species.