



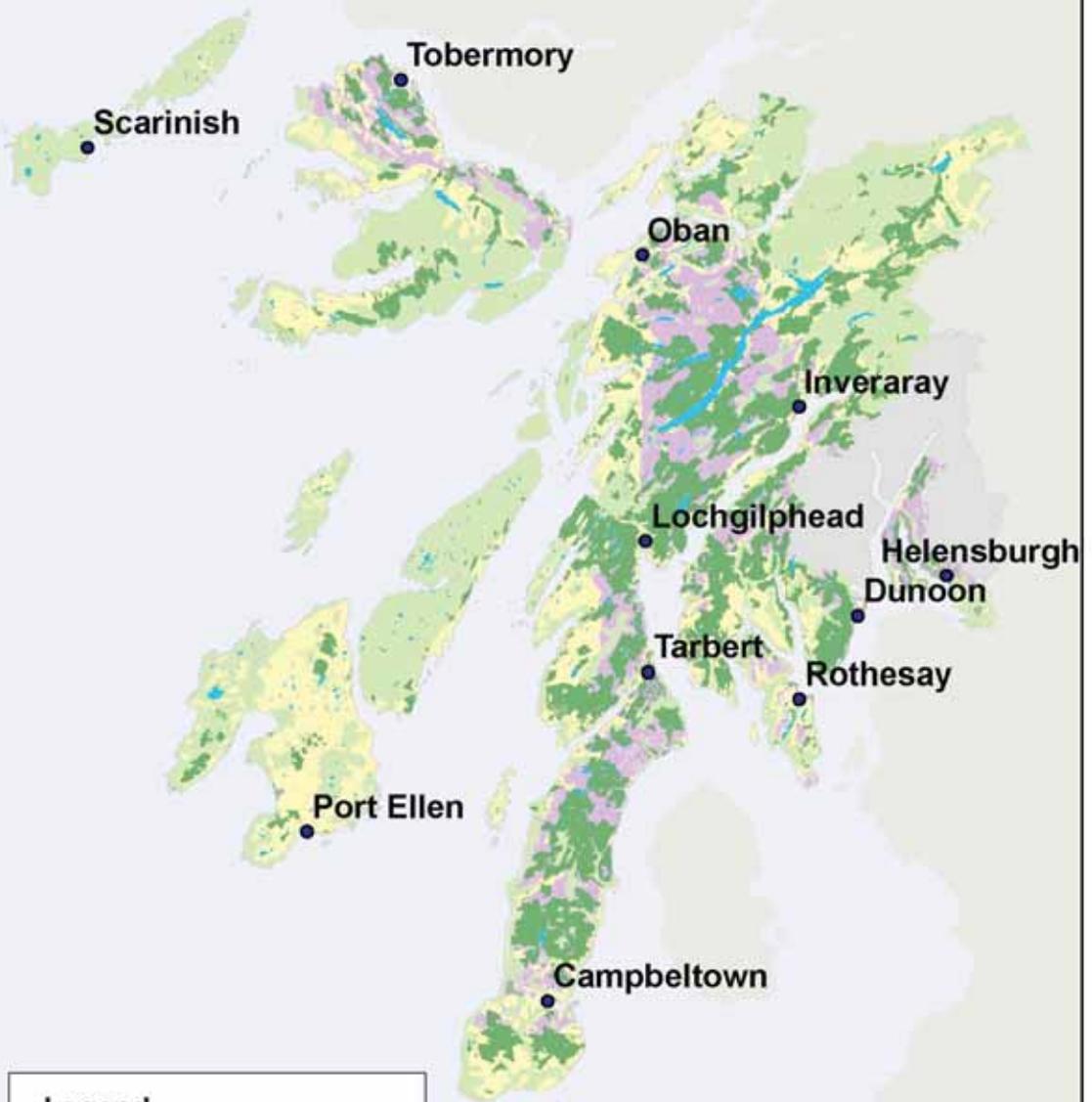
# Argyll and Bute Woodland and Forestry Strategy

## Executive Summary

This Project was part funded by the Scottish Government and the European Community, Argyll and the Islands LEADER 2007 - 2013 Programme



# Indicative Suitability for Woodland Expansion



## Legend

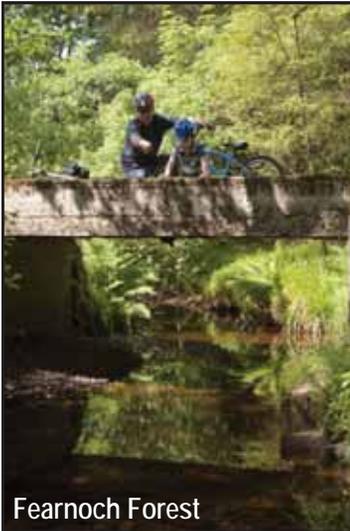
- Built-up areas
- Existing planted woodland
- Potential
- Preferred
- Sensitive
- Water

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The full version of the Argyll and Bute Woodland and Forestry Strategy is available at [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/woodland](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/woodland).

This can be downloaded for free. An interactive version is also available.

# Woodland and Forestry in Argyll and Bute



Fearnoch Forest

Forests and woodland cover over 30% of the land area of Argyll and Bute, and as such, impact on many aspects of our lives. The Argyll and Bute Woodland and Forestry Strategy provides an overall picture and sets out what we would like the woodlands in our

area to look like over the next 50 years. It shows how we can make the most of the forests so that they contribute to our local economy, to the environment, our rich heritage, and to the quality of life for our communities and residents.

One of the main reasons for producing the Woodland and Forestry Strategy is to influence the future expansion and restructuring of woodlands in our area. The strategy also identifies the local circumstances and factors that should be considered when planting and felling proposals are being assessed. This will help ensure that the benefits from the future development of woodlands in the area are maximised.

The strategy identifies the existing resource within Argyll and Bute (excluding the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park). See the full strategy at [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/woodland](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/woodland) to get a view of what we have and where it is across a wide range of forest and woodland related activities. This includes Ancient and Semi Natural Woodlands, timber transport routes, land capability for forestry, recreation facilities and main access.

The strategy examines the issues facing our area and identifies **preferred** areas which offer

the greatest scope to accommodate the future expansion of a range of woodland types, and are therefore able to deliver on a very wide range of objectives. See map opposite. The strategy also highlights where there is **potential** to accommodate future expansion of a range of woodland types, but where at least one significant 'sensitivity' exists. **Sensitive** areas, where a combination of sensitivities means there is limited scope to accommodate further woodland expansion are also identified. This will help those with a woodland or forestry interest plan for the future finding a balance between economic, social and environmental matters. An interactive map of these areas is available on the Council web site.

The Woodlands and Forestry Strategy is also used to help inform the assessment of Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) applications. This is the main source of grant funding relating to forest and woodland activities.



Beinn Lora

The strategy and associated Action Plan highlight shared priorities within Argyll and Bute and linkages with the Scottish Rural Development Programme. An additional 10% will be added to grant support for woodland creation in the Argyll Islands Native Woodland Partnership area, available through the Rural Priorities element of the SRDP. An additional 10% premium is also available for the creation of woodlands for timber production in the 'Preferred' and 'Potential' areas indicated in this strategy.

# Our Vision for the Future



View over Coal Scotnish. West Argyll

Argyll & Bute's Woodland and Forestry Strategy recognises that woodland and forestry have the potential to contribute a range of benefits for local people, including employment, opportunities for leisure and recreation, land for housing, and a source of cost-effective and sustainable energy, in addition to important quality-of-life factors.

## Our vision is:

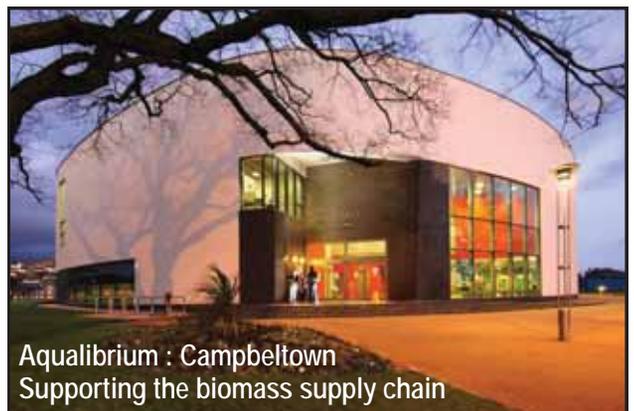
*"The woodlands of Argyll and Bute will make a significant contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation, have significant levels of economic value retained locally, enhance biodiversity and environmental quality and support the further development of recreation opportunities, for the benefit and well-being of local people and visitors alike. Sustainable and responsible stewardship of the resource will enable communities to play an active role in the ownership and management of woodlands in their area, developing business opportunities and helping to maintain the viability of rural living."*

The Strategy is intended to be accessible and useful for all sections of society that may have an interest in woodland and forestry issues.

Here is how everyone can contribute:-

## Argyll and Bute Council

As statutory Supplementary Guidance to the Local Development Plan, the Council will use the Strategy to inform consultations on applications for woodland creation and management grants. The Strategy also contains a number of actions where the Council is identified as a key partner for delivery. It will also be used to inform the Council's Economic Development Action Plan, as appropriate.



Aqualibrium : Campbeltown  
Supporting the biomass supply chain

## Forestry Commission Scotland

Forestry Commission Scotland will require land managers seeking grants for woodland expansion or management to develop their proposals in line with this Strategy, ensuring that they are suitable for the environments, constraints and opportunities of the area. They are also identified as a key partner for delivery of the Action Plan.



Harvesting operations at Dounie, West Argyll

## Woodland Managers and Developers

The Strategy provides a clear indication of the Council's vision for how the woodland resource and forestry industry in Argyll and Bute should develop over the coming 20 years. The actions and priorities established in the Action Plan provide clear guidance on what type of woodland management and creation schemes will be supported, giving agents and landowners a degree of certainty in applying for support. They are also linked to the appropriate SRDP Rural Priorities to assist in the preparation of grant applications – supporting the aims and objectives of this Strategy are a strong justification for approval.

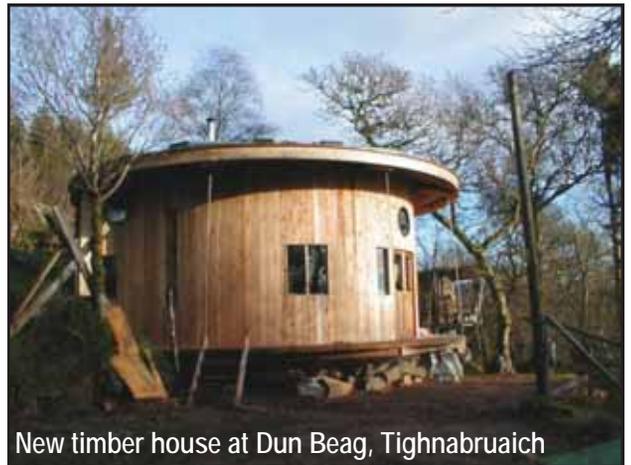


Forestry operations

## Communities

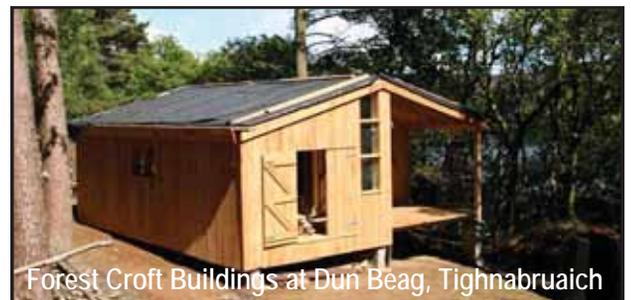
The Strategy provides communities with a useful insight into the key issues and the likely patterns of woodland management they are liable to see in their area. It also sets out the range of social, environmental and economic benefits that the Council expect woodland and forestry to deliver to local people.

Argyll and Bute's woodlands are a major resource for its people, providing employment and business opportunities, high quality environments and a largely untapped renewable energy reserve. They also provide a range of less tangible benefits, known as "ecosystem services" – such as clean air, protection from landslides and erosion and carbon storage – which contribute to everyone's wellbeing. The policies and actions set out in the Strategy ensure that local people have assurances that these interests will be safeguarded and enhanced.



New timber house at Dun Beag, Tighnabruaich

The Strategy also provides an indication of the types of community ownership / management schemes that the Council will support, where planning considerations can be satisfactorily addressed, and the types of social, economic and environmental benefits that should be generated.



Forest Croft Buildings at Dun Beag, Tighnabruaich

# Themes, Strategic Priorities and Actions

## Scottish Forestry Strategy Themes

The Argyll and Bute Woodland and Forestry Strategy is based on the seven Scottish Forestry Strategy themes:-

- Climate Change;
- Timber;
- Business Development;
- Community Development;
- Access and Health;
- Environmental Quality; and
- Biodiversity.

**Strategic Priorities** have been defined under each of these seven themes, backed by more detailed **Priority Actions**. These have been identified through consultation with partners, key stakeholders and the communities of Argyll and Bute so as to be relevant to our needs.

These themes are not mutually exclusive – the forestry sector fulfils a wide range of roles and links to many policy agendas. Most of these roles and links provide multiple benefits – for example, biomass has recently become an important economic timber product from Argyll and Bute’s woodlands but also delivers social and environmental benefits as a locally-sourced form of renewable energy contributing to climate change mitigation. Users should read the strategy as a whole to ensure that proposals for woodland management or expansion take into account the wider potential for adverse environmental impacts – and opportunities to add value.

## Climate Change

There are a number of ways that forestry and woodland can support the mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate change.

**The Strategic Priorities identified in relation to the climate change theme are to:-**

- Encourage the net expansion of woodland cover in Argyll and Bute in order to further contribute to national targets for carbon sequestration.
- Support development of biomass sector as a locally available, low carbon and cost-effective source of heat and power.
- Support the use of locally produced timber building products particularly where this reduces the requirement for energy intensive materials which need to be imported into Argyll and Bute.
- Support ongoing efforts to reduce the sector’s dependence on fossil fuels
- Encourage robust protection of peat soils to maintain their value as carbon stores
- Ensure that woodland and forest expansion and management takes account of the need to adapt to a changing climate.
- Support the role of woodland in contributing to climate change adaptation strategies.

***A good example of a development that helps us achieve a number of these Strategic Priorities is the Glenshellach Community Heating Scheme.***



Glenshellach Community Heating Scheme

## Timber

To encourage forestry expansion, an additional 10% premium will be available for the creation of woodlands for timber production in the 'Preferred' and 'Potential' areas indicated in this strategy. See Indicative Suitability for Woodland Expansion map.



Timber transport

## Business Development

The forestry sector makes a significant contribution to Argyll and Bute's economy, particularly in rural areas through 'traditional' areas such as woodland and forest management, haulage and small scale processing. Most of the trees grown for sawn timber, pulp, particle board and pallets are processed outside Argyll and Bute, a reflection both of the difficult geography of the area and the recent trend for large scale timber processing plants situated close to the main markets. The emphasis of this strategy is therefore on developing local and niche markets and facilities, particularly where these help deliver wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Examples include development of the biomass sector, support for quality timber production and processing together with the further promotion of woodland-based tourism and recreation. These kinds of initiatives would help reduce dependence on outside markets and fragile transport infrastructure.

**The Strategic Priorities that support the timber industry are to:-**

- Encourage the net expansion of woodland cover in Argyll and Bute in order to further contribute to national targets for woodland cover;
- Ensure woodland expansion/restocking for timber production occurs in areas where appropriate timber transport solutions can be secured;
- Encourage greater use of locally produced timber and wood products in Argyll and Bute; and
- Address the major timber transport challenges facing Argyll and Bute through continued public/private sector partnership in the forestry sector through the Timber Transport group and through delivery of the Woodland and Forestry Strategy.

***A good example that helps us achieve a number of these Strategic Priorities is the Argyll Timber Transport Group***



Growing Quality Hardwoods

## The Strategic Priorities that support business development are to:-

- Work with timber producers and local businesses to add and retain value to the timber product within Argyll and Bute;
- Work with land managers to expand woodland cover in agricultural areas where appropriate, thereby contributing to diversification of the rural economy;
- Further develop woodlands' contribution to tourism and recreation in Argyll and Bute;
- Development of a skilled workforce in Argyll and Bute, geared to future forest management and processing requirements, but also reflecting the development of biomass sector and specialist niche activities;
- Continue to support the development of local timber and biomass markets and supply chains through positive planning measures, encouraging the specification of locally sourced materials and woodfuel; and
- Support and promote the development and use of technologies that can add value to Argyll and Bute's economy and contribute to development objectives.

***An example of good practice that helps deliver identified Strategic Priorities for business development in Argyll and Bute is the development of acoustic tools for in-forest timber grading.***



Recreation at Glen Nant

## Community Development

Woodland and forestry have the potential to contribute a range of benefits for local people, including employment, opportunities for leisure and recreation, land for housing, and a source of cost-effective and environmentally sound energy, in addition to important quality-of-life factors. It has also been demonstrated through a range of projects that woodlands can be effectively managed by local groups. These types of project help foster local ownership and involvement and can have social benefits beyond economic and employment.



Learning about woodlands

## The Strategic Priorities that support community development in Argyll and Bute are to:

- Support further community involvement in the ownership and management of woodlands, and in the creation of woodland based educational and social enterprises;
- Support schools and tertiary education providers, and the community development and voluntary sectors, in making greater use of woodlands as a resource for inspiration, learning, enjoyment and a rewarding career; and
- Continue to support meaningful community and stakeholder engagement in woodland planning and management processes.

***An example of good practice that delivers multiple identified Strategic Priorities for community development in Argyll and Bute is the North West Mull Community Woodland Company***

## Access & Health

The majority of woodland in Argyll and Bute is remote from the population. However, those woodlands close to settlements are well used for recreational purposes, on a formal or informal basis. Examples include Bishop's Glen at Dunoon, Duchess Wood at Helensburgh, Dunollie woodlands on the edge of Oban, and Kilmory Woodland Park at Lochgilphead. Accessible woodlands provide a great deal of scope to develop facilities that can help contribute positively to mental and



physical well being of populations. Green Gyms and the Forestry Commission Active Woods Campaign are all examples of programmes which encourage greater use of woodlands – particularly audiences that may be less likely to

participate in physical activity. The emerging Core Path Network for Argyll and Bute has a strong emphasis on the use of forestry and forest tracks as elements of its makeup. The Forestry Commission Scotland policy generally allows for non-motorised access to afforested areas on the National Forest Estate.

### The Strategic Priorities that support access and health in Argyll and Bute are to:-

- Further develop the role of woodlands and forests in contributing to outdoor access and recreation; and
- Promote the health, educational social benefits that woodland and forests can bring for both local people and visitors to Argyll and Bute.

***An example of good practice that helps deliver identified Strategic Priorities for access and health in Argyll and Bute is Blarbuie Woodland Project***



## Environmental Quality

The landscapes, natural environment and cultural heritage of Argyll and Bute are widely acknowledged as being amongst the finest in Scotland. As the area has the highest proportional level of forest cover of any Scottish local authority (around 30% of land area), trees and woodland are a fundamental aspect of landscape character.

A high standard of environmental quality is fundamental to Argyll and Bute's economy, supporting the tourist industry by attracting visitors, providing livelihoods for farmers, foresters and land managers and maintaining the quality of water required to support aquaculture and fishing. Since such a significant portion of land area is under forestry, the industry has a major role to play in terms of safeguarding and enhancing these irreplaceable assets.



## **The Strategic Priorities that support environmental quality in Argyll and Bute are to:-**

- Manage forests and woodlands to conserve and enhance water and soils and contribute to river basin planning objectives of improving to, or maintaining at, good ecological status; and
- Manage woodlands to conserve and enhance Argyll and Bute's landscape and cultural heritage and people's appreciation and enjoyment of them.

***An example of good practice that helps deliver identified Strategic Priorities for environmental quality in Argyll and Bute is the Dalriada Project.***

## **Biodiversity**

Argyll and Bute's woodlands provide a rich and diverse suite of habitats for wildlife and they play a vital role in conserving nationally scarce species that are central to the character and identity of the area. Species of conservation importance which depend on woodland habitats in Argyll and Bute include the lichens, liverworts and mosses which make up one of the most diverse lower plant communities in the world, red squirrel, otter, black grouse, wood warbler and the pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly. 42 of the 109 Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the area are designated, at least in part, for their woodland (35 for their Atlantic oakwoods). Argyll and Bute has around 33,100ha of ancient and long-established woodland, comprising around 5% of total land area including around 17,400ha (3% of land area) which may be semi-natural in origin.

## **Strategic Priorities identified for Argyll and Bute in relation to biodiversity are to:-**

- Support the improvement in condition of Argyll and Bute's woodland SSSIs to at least 'recovering' status
- Support the management and restoration of semi-natural woodland habitats;
- Support the identification, safeguarding

and gradual restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS), in line with UKFS and FCS policy;

- Support the control of invasive species where these threaten semi-natural woodland habitats and wider woodland biodiversity, especially the removal of *Rhododendron Ponticum*;
- Support the agricultural community in maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity value of the woodland habitats in their care;
- Support the delivery of woodland-related Species Action Framework programme, including maintaining the identified Red Squirrel woodland strongholds as a key part of the strategy for protecting Scotland's Red Squirrels;
- Support land managers and SNH in implementing local deer management objectives to maintain a healthy population, reduce adverse impacts on woodland habitats and mitigate the effects of fencing on sensitive species, while maximising the value of the resource;
- Ensure that woodland expansion and management make a positive contribution to Argyll's biodiversity and people's understanding and appreciation of it; and
- Ensure that woodland expansion and management protect and enhance internationally, nationally and locally important habitats and species.

***An example of good practice that helps deliver identified Strategic Priorities for biodiversity in Argyll and Bute is the Mull Eagle Watch Project.***

## **The Action Plan**

The full Strategy contains an Action Plan which sets out a series of more detailed Actions under the Strategic Priorities for each of the 7 themes. The Action Plan identifies the key partners, timescale and priority for each action. Where relevant an SRDP Regional Priority Code has also been included.



Helping Deliver Corporate Objective 3

**“The full potential of our outstanding built and natural environment is realised through partnership working.”**

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