



Woodland Action Plan

Scottish Biodiversity List habitat: Yes
UK Biodiversity List of Priority Habitats: Yes

Summary

Prior to the conifer plantations of the 20th century North Lanarkshire had only 4.2% woodland cover. This reflected the agricultural and industrial land uses that dominated the area. During the 1980's there was a huge amount of coniferous planting, significantly increasing the woodland cover. However, the importance of native planting and knowledge of its benefits over the last decade has been recognised through a wide range of plans and forestry schemes, and subsequent planting by LBAP partner such as Green Action Trust has been predominately native.

The focus of this plan is to provide continuity for the future following the positive changes which have resulted through Scottish Forestry run grant schemes (Woodland Grant Scheme, Scottish Forestry Grant Schemes (SFGS), Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT) and Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP).

The recent Native Woodland Survey of Scotland shows that North Lanarkshire has 2,916 ha of native woodland (6.2% of the LA land area), with an additional 239 Ha as near native. Ancient Woodland only covers 461 ha (1.1%) which is below average the national average of 4.2%). Much of the ancient woodland is concentrated along the North and South Calder, linking to the woodlands of the Clyde Valley and the burns around Cumbernauld and the Kilsyth hills. Though discontinuous, these woodlands have the potential to be part of a larger woodland network in North Lanarkshire and subsequently across Central Scotland. Native woodland comprises 29.2% of the woodland cover of North Lanarkshire, suggesting that there is a total woodland cover of 20% of the land area, which is above average.

Habitat Profile

Woodland distribution within North Lanarkshire reveals a large number of small, linear sites. These semi-natural (non-plantation) woods are found in river gorges and on steep slopes where there has been little human intervention, particularly in the north. These sites may represent the only relics of the more extensive, past woodland cover. The semi-natural woods are mixed but mainly broadleaved woods of Oak, Birch and Rowan with Ash, Elm and Alder.

Introduced broadleaves, including Beech and Sycamore are frequently present especially in the policy plantations associated with the public parks of Colzium, Cumbernauld House, Palacerigg, Coltness, Dalzell, and Cambusnethan. There has been, however, opportunities through the grant support system to gradually improve woodland habitats. Since 2008, NLC has taken advantage of grant schemes such as SFGS and WIAT and have been able to undertake management and enhancement works at 20 sites (table 1). Since 2015, the total area benefitting from WIAT projects totalled 83 hectares.

Table 1: WIAT schemes implemented since 2008

1	Broadwood
2	Cairnhill woods
3	Calderbank
4	Cambusnethan and Carbarns Woods
5	Chapelhall
6	Coltness and Branchalwood
7	Colzium Lennox Estate
8	Cumbernauld Community Park



In 2006, North Lanarkshire Council carried out an Audit of Council owned woodlands, including an ecological audit. This resulted in the production of 12 woodland management plans and also the development of the Councils Woodland Strategy which has resulted in successful WIAT grants and biodiversity gains. Since 2008, the Council has completed 20 woodland and access improvement projects throughout the local authority under the WIAT initiative. Most recent projects in the last 5 years have included woodland sites at Thornwood, Newarthill, Chapelhall, Calderbank and Broadwood. There is a long-term forest plan for Palacerigg Country Park, which has been developed to coordinate with SWTs forest plan for neighbouring land in Cumbernauld. Phase 1 of the long term forest plan has been completed. Going forwards the Council are carrying out a number of woodland creation projects in response to the Climate Emergency where 40,000 trees will be planted across the local authority.

Table 2: Tree Planting carried out as part of WIAT and Woodland Creation schemes

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of Trees Planted	600	1,550	9,350	12,000	12,950	13,000

In recent years, there has been a rise in the quantity and distribution of pests and diseases which affect woodlands. The main concerns in Scotland are: Ash die-back; Sudden Oak death; Red band needle blight; *Phytophthora* (a range of fungus like diseases which target specific species, such as Larch and Cypress); and Asian Long Horn Beetle. Ash die-back is expected to have a significant impact on woodlands in the future, with an anticipated loss of up to 70% of ash in Scotland in the next two decades North Lanarkshire Council are developing an Ash Action Plan to help map diseased trees on Council assets and programme the removal of high risk diseased trees.

These pests and diseases can seriously damage, or kill, host trees, and the spread of some (for example Ash Die-back) has been very rapid. More information on tree pests and diseases, along with the UK's response to each can be found on the Scottish Forestry website:
<https://forestry.gov.scot/sustainable-forestry/tree-health/tree-pests-and-diseases>

Future Status

The key to the future of all our woodlands is their landscape scale connectivity to the habitats of North Lanarkshire, and neighbouring Local Authorities. Integrated Habitat Networks (IHN) treat woodlands as part of an interlocking landscape that benefits the movement of wildlife as well as providing a recreational network for people and the communities of North Lanarkshire. A Central Scotland Green Network wide IHN model has been developed to spatially show existing connections in woodlands, grasslands wetlands and highlight critical connections that are vital to protect and expand in order to secure habitat connectivity into the future, particularly in light of climate change. The connectivity model is available on NatureScots website, and has been used by Glasgow Clyde Valley Green Network to create a Habitat Blueprint that identifies key opportunity areas for habitat creation across the greater Glasgow area:

<http://gateway.snh.gov.uk/natural-spaces/index.jsp>

<https://www.gcvgreennetwork.gov.uk/what-we-do/our-blueprint>

Current Factors Affecting This Habitat

Whilst there are some locally specific factors affecting woodlands in North Lanarkshire (for example, involving people in their local environment, litter and vandalism), the majority of issues are larger scale, either regional or national (control of invasive species, pollution, climate change, habitat fragmentation and development).



Current Action

- On-going consultation on Forest Design Plans and all schemes which are entered on the Scottish Forestry Register.
- Extensive use of woodlands for environmental educational through Forest Schools, environmental education, and Branching Out.
- Investigating improved access to GIS system for ancient woodland maps etc.
- The Council's Greenspace Biodiversity Officers comment, as necessary, on all applications that affect areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland and SINCs.
- Treatment/Control of Invasive Species as part of current and on-going grant schemes.
- Diamond wood project.
- NLC - Green Action Trust partnership to plant woodland on suitable areas of bare ground, particularly vacant and derelict land through available funding channels.
- Woodland Management of sites through WIATS and other grants, for example woodlands at Broadwood Loch and Chapelhall.
- Forestry & Land Scotland woodland management at Croy, Carron Valley, Nether braco, Arns and Longriggend.

Targets and Rationale of the Woodland Plan

National targets relate to the creation, expansion and restoration of specific native woodland types. These targets aim to ensure that the right types of woodlands are planted in the right areas when working towards the Scottish Forestry Strategy targets.

The Scottish Forestry Strategy 2019-2029 has three main objectives, which this plan emulates:

1. Increase the contribution of forests and woodlands to Scotland's sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
2. Improve the resilience of Scotland's forests and woodlands and increase their contribution to a healthy and high quality environment.
3. Increase the use of Scotland's forest and woodland resources to enable more people to improve their health, well-being and life chances.

The objectives are underpinned by 6 priorities as follows, with the ones relevant to this LBAP highlighted

Priority 1: Ensuring forests and woodlands are sustainably managed.

Priority 2: Expanding the area of forests and woodlands, recognising wider land-use objectives.

Priority 3: Improving efficiency and productivity, and developing markets.

Priority 4: Increasing the adaptability and resilience of forests and woodlands.

Priority 5: Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands.

Priority 6: Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands.

Proposed Objectives, Targets and Actions

1. To maintain and expand the current extent of woodland within North Lanarkshire.
2. To improve the quality of woodland within North Lanarkshire.
3. To improve the quality of access to woodlands.
4. To improve the biodiversity of woodlands

