



A 2020 Vision for Aspen in Scotland

Aspen is a pioneer tree which establishes well on disturbed ground. In the wake of the last ice age, it successfully colonised a vast tract of the temperate northern hemisphere. Together, the Eurasian Aspen *Populus tremula* and closely-related North American Aspen *Populus tremuloides* have the widest natural range of any tree species in the world.

Whilst Aspen is found throughout Britain, it is most frequent in northern Scotland. However, even here it occurs mainly as small isolated stands, few of which are managed. This is bad news for the diverse flora and fauna which Aspen supports. Aspen's importance for biodiversity is only recently becoming recognised.

Aspen supports many specialist species, especially fungi, lichens, mosses, flies, beetles and moths. Aspen is also a preferred food-source for beavers. Five Aspen-dependent species are UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Species. All these species' Action Plans emphasise the importance of increasing available habitat and linking existing Aspen stands to secure the future of these species and facilitate their dispersal.

Elsewhere in its range, Aspen is valued in forestry for its fast growth and versatile timber, which is used for various products, including oriented strand board (OSB), pulp and biomass fuelwood.

With its attractive appearance at all seasons, its value for wildlife and its commercial potential, Aspen can make an important contribution to the Scottish landscape and rural economy.

Scottish Native Woods is now poised to progress an ambitious vision for the future of this iconic tree: that by the year 2020, you will never be more than a mile from a managed Aspen stand along any of Scotland's rivers and lochs.

This project will address four principal tasks:

- to assess current distribution and status of Aspen stands throughout Scotland; central to this will be an interactive web-based mapping facility to allow information on Aspen distribution to be generated and shared
- to improve the supply of local origin Aspen for planting
- to support actions to manage existing Aspen woodland and establish new stands to enhance functional connectivity between Aspen stands;
- to improve knowledge and awareness of Aspen among both land-managers and the general public.

The project will work with a wide variety of partners including the public, land-holders, rural businesses, local communities, NGOs such as Highland Aspen Group, and agencies including Forestry Commission Scotland, Cairngorms National Park and Scottish Natural Heritage.