

Argyll & Bute Woodland & Forestry Strategy
Response to Issues Paper

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Climate Change SWOT analysis and questions

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Argyll has 15% of the Scottish conifer resource, much of which is approaching maturity – can make a major contribution to woodfuel sector</p> <p>The large existing forest resource in Argyll that provides a nationally significant amount of sawlogs</p> <p>Potential in some sites to use of harvested tree mass for woodfuel (e.g. branches, stumps and small roundwood)</p> <p>Pre-existing biomass heat and power installations – potential to act as exemplar projects at a local and national level</p> <p>Nature of Sitka crop – higher carbon sequestration</p> <p>Areas of broadleaved woodland that could be brought into management to boost carbon sequestration/biomass production</p> <p>Adoption of good management practice across the industry</p> <p>Argyll's climate is ideal for growing trees</p>	<p>Little current financial support for renewable heat to date</p> <p>Uptake of technologies dependent on developer buy-in for new developments, or public sector investment</p> <p>Conventional forestry practices and road based transport systems are carbon intensive.</p> <p><u>Over-reliance on a single species</u> (86% of plantations are sitka spruce: A&BC Issues paper) <u>for timber production</u></p> <p><u>Table 1 in the accompanying issues paper shows that "79% of Argyll & Bute is of either limited or very limited flexibility for the growth and management of trees" (source MLURI)</u></p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Restructuring and restocking could be focussed on long-term sequestration or biomass production</p> <p>Increased application of district heating could help to address rural fuel poverty</p> <p>Ensuring uptake of biomass heat and power in public procurement process – cost and carbon savings over building lifecycle and displaying leadership in uptake of technology</p> <p>Longer growing season as climate warms</p>	<p>Insufficient investment in biomass supply chain will hamper growth</p> <p>If existing weaknesses in the timber/forest products transport network are not addressed, locally produced woodfuel may be less competitive</p> <p>Increased prevalence of pests and disease – particularly serious if relevant to Sitka spruce</p> <p>Increased incidence of windthrow damaging the forest resource and further limiting the</p>

Comment: This suggests that the consultants have missed a fundamental on climate change: "Argyll's climate is ideal" is not the same as Argyll's climate **will remain**

<p>Potential for cooperation with other renewables developers on forest land (wind and hydro power)</p> <p>Potential to expand marine transport network for forest products</p> <p><u>The need to anticipate</u> changing climatic conditions <u>will require a greater diversity in species mix and management approaches.</u></p>	<p>potential of exposed sites/thin soils</p> <p>Emerging climate projections suggest that climate impacts may be more significant than previously supposed – creates significant uncertainty for forest planning.</p> <p>Inability of biodiversity to adapt to climate change, impacting on the ecosystem of the area.</p>
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Deleted: could present opportunities to diversify species mix

1. Do you agree with the above SWOT analysis? If not which elements would you add or change?

See comments above

2. Should the Strategy prioritise an expansion of woodland and forests with the aim of maximising carbon sequestration? If so where and is the type of forestry important? If not which areas would be sensitive to expansion and why?

The Strategy should not prioritise woodland expansion with a single aim. Expansion of a range of woodland types which are aimed at delivering a range of public benefits should be encouraged.

Argyll & Bute already has woodland and plantation coverage in excess of the Government target for Scotland as a percentage of land use, suggesting that other areas of Scotland might benefit more from large scale woodland expansion than Argyll and Bute. Scottish Native Woods strongly suggests that better management of the existing resource would yield greater benefits for Argyll & Bute

3. How should the Strategy support the development of the woodfuel market to provide a low carbon source of heat and power?

Wood utilisation should be hierarchical, and play a full part in world in which we are reducing our carbon demands. In the first instance wood should wherever possible be used to reduce demand for more carbon intensive materials (for example steel and concrete in building), and be designed to do this for as long as possible. Burning wood & wood waste for energy should be the last resort, and should be done as efficiently as possible.

The development of local firewood co operatives should be encouraged. The potential is described in a Scottish Enterprise report(Rippengal R (2005). Scoping study: the commercial opportunities of wood fuel heating in Scotland). A report for Scottish Enterprise, December 2005., which has relevance to Argyll & Bute. The report estimated that a woodfuel industry could deliver 2000

FTE jobs, annual sales of £53 million and 750,000 CO2 tonnes savings per annum, and emphasised the desirability of focusing on “easy wins”: rural

properties with high heating bills and their own wood supply scored highly in the development opportunities.

Argyll & Bute should do more to encourage log burning.

4. What emphasis should be placed on using woodland to reduce the risk of flooding and slope instability? Where would this be appropriate?

There are considerable opportunities to make use of native woodlands to achieve this.

5. What emphasis should the Strategy place on creating forest habitat networks to help species adapt to climate change? Are there particular species that would benefit from this and where are they?

This Strategy needs to be aligned with the Red squirrel strongholds that Scottish Government is proposing. Scottish Native Woods has responded to this consultation. We support & agree with the three point strategy for Red Squirrel Conservation of:

- i. Improving woods for red squirrels
- ii. Minimising the threat from grey squirrels
- iii. Research/monitoring.

We see strongholds as a secondary element of i, and believe that FHNs should not be disregarded in their favour.

6. How should the Strategy help existing woodland management and forestry practice adapt to climate change? What actions could be taken and where would these have the most benefit?

a. The Strategy should ensure that improved management of the existing woodland and plantation resource is not driven out by a focus on the expansion of the resource.

b. The Strategy should encourage a diverse approach to forestry practice in the light of climate uncertainty. At present Argyll's forestry is largely about the utilisation of a single species. We need to move to a position where plantation management is considerably more diverse, relying on a range of species and a range of markets.

c. Native woodland management should be encouraged. Many woodlands still have inappropriate grazing levels, and a shortage of young trees. Woodlands with a good range of age classes and in good condition are more likely to withstand the uncertainties of climate change. This should be a priority for the Strategy.

Timber SWOT analysis and questions

Strengths	Weaknesses
Large timber resource, much of which is	Constraints on viable tree species

<p>reaching maturity</p> <p>High average yield classes for Sitka spruce</p> <p>Well established sea transport routes</p> <p>Strong local forestry workforce</p> <p>Recent investment through STTF in transport infrastructure (e.g. in-forest haul routes)</p>	<p>Underdeveloped processing sector</p> <p>Long distances involved for road haulage</p> <p>Significant areas of relatively inaccessible forest</p> <p>Geographical isolation of certain forest blocks (particularly on islands)</p> <p>Relatively small area of mainland Argyll available for forest expansion (due to high level of existing forestry cover, environmental designations and topographical/climate constraints)</p> <p>Low added value from timber in Argyll and Bute (e.g. untapped potential in processing)</p>
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p>
<p>Multi-scale woodfuel processing and use operations</p> <p>Increase productivity through wood fuel production</p> <p>Harvesting and restructuring of plantations offer significant opportunities to optimise planting densities, thinning where applicable, to ensure higher timber quality in the next rotation (in addition to other benefits)</p> <p>Use of locally sourced timber in local authority/statutory agency capital projects as exemplars for the material</p> <p>Opportunities to develop processing infrastructure in the region</p> <p>Largely untapped broadleaved resource – areas of native woodland could benefit from more active management</p> <p>Opportunity to develop local hardwood markets/processing/end use business (e.g. furniture, high quality building materials)</p> <p>Diversification of agricultural practices to include forestry</p> <p>Forests continuing to provide opportunities for tourism development</p>	<p>Dominance of Sitka increases vulnerability to pest and disease attack as climate change effects take hold</p> <p>Continued central government investment (through STTF) required to bolster transport network – economic downturn could adversely affect budgets</p> <p>Rising fuel prices impacting on all transport costs</p> <p>Current high-value sites may be restricted in future potential because of their location in sensitive areas (may be protected by emergent River Basin Management Plans etc)</p> <p>Inappropriate management of native woodland threatening biodiversity.</p>

Comment: For good reason?

Comment: This is not about timber

7. Do you agree with the above SWOT analysis? If not which elements would you add or change?

See comments in text

8. Should the area of forest in Argyll and Bute be increased? Where should such expansion be concentrated? Are there areas that are considered too sensitive for such expansion?

Scottish Native Woods believe that there is only limited potential to increase the area of plantations where the primary focus is timber production in Argyll and Bute, and that woodland expansion should not be focused on a single public benefit. A&B already has an above average cover of woodlands and plantations.

Argyll & Bute does not have any industrial timber processing capacity. Such capacity as exists is declining as the industry withdraws from Argyll, and shows no signs of wanting to invest in processing plant in the area. Further A&B is remote from markets, so any volume of timber produced must be transported. Transport is energy demanding, reducing the beneficial impact of climate change forestry where the crop is to be harvested.

This leaves Argyll vulnerable to climate change and fuel price fluctuations.

There are other constraints, of which one is highlighted at 3.49 in the Issues Paper:

“Much of the unforested area is extremely steep, or contains the relatively small area of agricultural land in the district. Similarly, the upland topography and maritime location result in exposure to Atlantic storms, with significant potential for windthrow in exposed locations ”

9. Should the emphasis be on providing more stable and reliable supply of timber from forests in Argyll and Bute? How can this be done?

Timber production in Argyll and Bute has been relatively reliable. Much of the NFE production is guaranteed, although the private sector is more vulnerable to price fluctuations. There is the scope to smooth the short term bulge in production of sitka spruce from Argyll & Bute, and the potential to ensure that in the future we have a greater mix of species and age classes.

10. Should there be support for the development of the hard wood sector or an emphasis on increasing the market for woodfuel?

The hardwood sector has only limited prospects in the short to medium term. However support should be given where it encourages local added value. We should do everything possible to support hardwood timber management where it ties into rural development in Argyll & Bute.

There is scope to encourage more broadleaf plantings with a timber emphasis. Argyll can grow broadleaves of a reasonable quality, and land managers need to be supported and encouraged to embark on these long term steps.

Woodfuel is already attracting considerable support at a Scottish level, and there is considerable potential in Argyll to capitalise on this. Firewood is the poor cousin of the woodfuel sector, and steps should be taken to change this.

11. How can the Strategy help increase the value added to timber products within Argyll and Bute and develop local markets for timber products?

Support for small scale wood processing enterprises.

The public sector could be a major market for timber and woodfuel. Council should explore potential to include within contracts a clause on distance travelled. This would potentially reduce carbon emissions and support local enterprises.

12. Should there be an emphasis on increasing the proportion of native species and restoring ancient woodland sites, for example, even if this reduces the area of forestry and the volume of timber produced? Where would this be of most value

We find this question to be slightly opaque: surely increasing the proportion of native species and restoring ancient woodland sites (presumably this means Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites or PAWS) will not “reduce the area of forestry”.

The technical paper (2.7) states that forestry cover is approximately 30% in A&B, and that 95% of this is coniferous plantation (although the consultants also use 85 & 90% at different points in their papers). The Scottish figure is 72%. This suggests that there is scope to alter the balance to deliver other woodland benefits, as at 3.7, referring to the Scottish Forestry Strategy:

“At a more general level, there has been a refocusing of the national forestry agenda to concentrate on the development of multi-functional forests and woodlands that, while maintaining a viable timber industry, meet wider economic, social and environmental objectives. While this presents a number of challenges to the traditional practices of the timber industry, it also presents a wide range of opportunities to enhance both the operation and reputation of the sector.”

- Strong support should be given to the restoration of all PAWS in Argyll & Bute.
- Native species should be encouraged as part of the process of diversifying our forest area.

13. How can the Strategy help deliver the agreed objectives of the Timber Transport Group?

Strategy should do all that it can to encourage reduction in energy use associated with forestry. Some of this reduction can come about by making greater use of non road transport.

14. Should Argyll and Bute make more of its forestry culture and legacy of important woodlands, forests and policy plantings? If so what and where?

Scottish Native Woods suggests that this question is in the wrong place, and would be better placed in Business Development.

However we also believe that there are opportunities. These might either be related to specific periods, and could develop existing facilities and trends (for

example stronger ties between Bonawe Furnace and Glen Nant Oakwoods). Or attention could be paid to the major planting campaigns that were carried out in the 19th and 20th centuries. Again, existing activity could be built on: policy woodland feature strongly in Glorious Gardens of Argyll. There is also scope to explore the impact of, for example the Dukes of Argyll or Malcolms of Poltalloch: in both these cases there is good archive material available.

Business development SWOT analysis and questions

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Well established existing <u>primary</u> Industry</p> <p>Large areas of forest reaching maturity, producing high volumes of sawlogs <u>small diameter material</u> and fuel</p> <p>Argyll is a well-established tourist destination with a broad base of attractions that has potential for expansion</p> <p>Pre-existing market for woodfuel.</p> <p>Large areas of Argyll and Bute under forest management – portfolio analysis may highlight opportunities for disposals for business development</p> <p>Nature based tourism – e.g. Mull Sea Eagle scheme, mountain bike trails, forest parks</p>	<p>Difficulties with existing transport network</p> <p>Range of potential timber products limited by dominance of Sitka spruce</p> <p>Transport distances from Argyll may make forest products less competitive in the national marketplace</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Biomass sector could provide an economic use for brush, stumps and small roundwood</p> <p>Opportunities for timber processing facilities of varying scales (in line with the proposals in the Structure Plan)</p> <p>Potential for renewables development on forest land – income can be reinvested in infrastructure etc</p> <p>Potential for expansion of niche markets in hardwood sector, with attendant processing infrastructure</p> <p>Localised woodfuel processing and distribution could increase the value of poor quality or isolated blocks (e.g. on Mull)</p> <p>Use of suitable forest land for the development of affordable housing</p> <p>Deer management in certain areas could be promoted/ marketed as stalking concessions</p> <p>Potential to develop a 'Forestry School' to provide an appropriately trained local workforce</p> <p>Potential to build on/grow well established forestry industry.</p> <p>Development of the forest tourism based sector.</p>	<p>Restructuring of forests may reduce future timber production capacity – must remain at a suitable level to ensure any new industry is sustainable.</p> <p><u>Timber processors have historically re-equipped themselves on a 15 year cycle. Far less than a single rotation of trees.</u></p> <p><u>Increases in the price of energy, and the impact of declining availability of oil. All but the most optimistic assessments of oil production assume that supplies will be limited by the time we harvest trees that are being planted now. We should start to address this threat</u></p> <p>Lack of investment in strategic transport infrastructure. <u>If oil prices remain unstable/rising any investment will not remove the threat.</u></p> <p>Perceptions of reduced environmental quality created by clear felling. <u>This is weakly worded. Three quotes below show that the view is widespread among professional foresters</u></p> <p><u>"There is also an interest in increasing the area managed under alternative systems to clearfelling, as they produce a more diverse age structure, which is of value to biodiversity" UK Indicators of Sustainable Forestry, Forestry Commission 2002</u></p> <p><u>"It is generally accepted (although not proven)</u></p>

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	<p><u>that lower impact silvicultural systems are of greater value for biodiversity” (UKWAS Interpretation Note 4)</u></p> <p><u>The Northern Ireland Forest Service has “We recognise that clearfelling an established plantation brings about the most dramatic change possible in forestry. The suddenness of the change and its impact on the local wildlife is acknowledged. The Forest Service is aiming to reduce the size of future clearfell areas (known as felling coupes), particularly in our upland forests.”</u></p> <p>http://www.forestserviceni.gov.uk/index/about-us/what-we-do/harvesting-our-timber/what-other-factors-influence-our-decision-on-when-to-fell.htm</p>
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15. Do you agree with the above SWOT analysis? If not which elements would you add or change?

See notes in boxes.

16. How much potential do you believe the biomass sector has to add value to currently uneconomic forest products or plantations? What and where?

There is potential. Government subsidy is shaping the way this develops. Further there are still obstacles, or developers would have started to build schemes for which planning permission has been granted.

There should be a hierarchy of use. Where timber is fit for another purpose, it should be used for that purpose (ie support should not distort the market and should aim to lessen existing distortions in eg timber transport, processing support). Where wood is not fit for another purpose (or has reached the end of its useful life), then biomass is appropriate.

Biomass should be small scale and located in Argyll where CHP is beneficial. Local markets for this heat have potential to grow/establish new business (for example at the proposed Barcaldine biomass plant).

17. How can the economic potential of timber and timber processing industries in Argyll and Bute be maximised?

By encouraging local markets (the Council have a role to play: there is the scope to specify distance travelled/energy used in tender documents).

The industry believes that labour availability is a constraint in Argyll & Bute.

Support for mechanisms that remove timber from Argyll & Bute act against timber processing in Argyll & Bute.

18. In which areas of Argyll and Bute can woodland and forestry businesses contribute most to local economies?

Small scale businesses on local scale is the aspiration.

At the moment the trend goes the other way, with ever larger businesses increasingly owned and managed remotely.

19. Where are there untapped opportunities for forest-related business development in Argyll and Bute? How best can the strategy help to unlock these opportunities, and what mechanisms could be successfully applied?

Social enterprises

Firewood co operatives to assist management of farm woodlands and to reduce fossil fuel consumption.

Forest croft scale enterprises.

Development framework that encourages appropriately located & scaled businesses.

20. What is the scope for development of new (or improvement of existing) forest parks in the region to increase the attractiveness of the area to tourist?

21. Which forest areas have the most to potential to be developed for tourism/leisure-related business?

22. Is there potential to diversify incomes from forests and woodlands in Argyll and Bute? If so, how should this be achieved (e.g. biomass, wind energy, tourism and recreation, forest crofts etc)?

Yes. Areas for exploration should include forest crofts, farm woodland management, small scale and micro enterprises.

Community development SWOT analysis and questions

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Strong community identities and existing groups and structures with an interest in woodland issues</p> <p>Large number of Community Woodlands across the area</p> <p>Relatively large numbers of people employed in 'land based industries' therefore a good awareness of issues and opportunities</p> <p>Strong public sector presence can provide leadership in community development</p> <p>Existing examples of land purchase for affordable housing through the National Forest Land</p> <p>Up to date Development Plan</p> <p>Nature based tourism schemes that provide wider benefits for Argyll's communities.</p>	<p>Dominant planting regimes in 1970s and 80s forests do not always lend themselves to community development schemes</p> <p>Lack of awareness of role of development plan in relation to development issues in woodlands/forests</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Build on the success of existing community woodland schemes and pilots to encourage greater local ownership and management of woodlands.</p> <p>Publicity and education – ensuring the public are informed of the issues facing the forestry industry</p> <p>Argyll is an ideal location for the development of small, woodland-related businesses – remote from other sources of employment</p> <p>Community/district-scale biomass heat and power already a success in Argyll – can be used to promote further development</p> <p>Restructuring existing plantations close to communities should create opportunities for engagement</p> <p>Potential to develop woodland crofts or equivalent development on forest land</p> <p>The Argyll and Bute Woodland and Forestry Strategy helping to identify priorities and balance competing interests</p>	<p>Difficulties in reconciling the expectations of diverse groups of stakeholders and communities</p> <p>Competing interests (economic, environment, community).</p> <p>Complexity of gaining access to funding sources</p>

Comment: They can do, however it requires innovative thinking and support.

Comment: There are district heating systems in Argyll, but no heat and power (CHP) schemes yet (as far as I'm aware)

23. Do you agree with the above SWOT analysis? If not which elements would you add or change?

See comments in text

24. Are there opportunities to create 'forest crofts' or other forms of affordable housing associated with forestry in Argyll and Bute that link to the Development Plan opportunities? If so, where might the most suitable locations be?

Yes, wherever possible affordable housing in woodlands/forestry & forest utilisation should be strongly linked.

These developments should not be based in woodlands with conservation value (woodlands on the Ancient Woodland Inventory).

These developments should preferably be based close to existing settlements where additional development which increases the number of full time active residents will help to make existing community and services more viable. This will also potentially reduce the carbon footprint of the development by placing it within walking/cycling distance of facilities and public transport links.

25. What opportunities are there to help local businesses benefit from links with forestry and woodland?

Marketing of small parcels of timber (especially broadleaves and more durable conifer species).

Encouragement of social enterprises

Access and health SWOT analysis and questions

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Woodland and forests recognised as important leisure and recreation resources</p> <p>Range of woodland and forest features (e.g. longer distance paths, natural heritage interests, e.g. NNR/SWT Reserves, cultural heritage) to attract visitors</p> <p>Active access forum, including representatives from the forestry industry</p>	<p>Large parts of the forest resource is remote from centres of population and is relatively inaccessible</p> <p>Planting structure of 1970s and 80s forests do not readily lend themselves to access and recreational development</p> <p>Relative geographical isolation of much of Argyll perhaps reduces the potential for wider promotion</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Cooperation with local health board on 'Paths to Health' schemes, prescribing outdoor exercise for suitable patients</p> <p>Linking high quality assets via the Core Path and other access networks</p> <p>Integration with education – promoting woodlands and forests as a resource for learning</p> <p>Maximising the potential of attractions within the forest – possible to attract grant aid from a wider range of sources</p> <p>Potential to create a range of access provision, catering to the full spectrum of possible users</p> <p>Wider promotion of community woodlands, where local people can influence the management of their woodland to maximise relevant benefits</p> <p>Climate trends may contribute to increased outdoor recreation as summers become warmer and drier</p> <p>Development of community focused facilities such as Green Gyms.</p> <p>Access to water for canoeing, sailing etc. through woodland and forestry</p> <p>Provide improved interpretation and promotion of places of interest; particularly relating to landscape, wildlife, history and geology.</p>	<p>Concentration of use in certain areas – creates the potential for erosion, habitat damage and disturbance</p> <p>Development of an access network that doesn't provide sufficient opportunities for access for the range of different users.</p> <p>Lack of interest/investment from key</p> <p>Provision of facilities develops unrelated to demand context.</p> <p>Impact of warmer, wetter climate (due to climate change) on tourism.</p>

26. Do you agree with the above SWOT analysis? If not which elements would you add or change?

27. How important are forests and woodland in contributing to Argyll and Bute's recreational resource? How, where?

Woodlands are important for local use (eg Blarbuie Wood, Council leased woods in Helensburgh & Rothesay) as well as for tourists and visitors (eg NFE sites, Clachan Farm at Loch Fyne Oysters, Glorious Garden sites). Woods can absorb large numbers of people more effectively than open ground.

28. Is there a need to increase the range of access and recreation opportunities in Argyll and Bute? If so where and what should they be?

29. Where are the most suitable locations for enhancing existing access (explain why) and recreation provision, and what should be done to maximise their potential?

Maintaining and enhancing (where there is evidence of increasing use) existing facilities should be the priority.

30. Should the focus be on areas popular with tourists or on areas around settlements? Which settlements

If this is about access and health then the answer should be about settlements.

Refer to Woodland Trust access standards, and act on any areas where there is a shortfall.

31. What are the key themes that access and recreation promotion and provision should focus on?

The internationally important feature of Argyll and Bute's forest resource are our temperate rainforests. Much more should be done to promote this both locally and to tourists.

Development of access and recreation that minimises carbon impact. Eg better links to public transport, an emphasis on longer stay walking/cycling holidays.

Environmental quality SWOT analysis and questions

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Industry successfully manages a significant area of important habitat (esp. Ancient woodland)</p> <p>Management issues for woodland habitats well understood by foresters</p> <p>Internationally designated woodland assets</p> <p>Cooperation in managing sensitive sites with statutory agencies and NGOs</p> <p>Exemplar projects, such as the Scottish Beaver Trial (supported by FCS) have the potential to raise the profile of managing woodland for natural heritage</p> <p>Presence of iconic species –such as red squirrel, capercaillie, black grouse and large raptors – provide important 'hooks' to encourage engagement and public interest</p>	<p>70% of woodland SSSIs are in 'Unfavourable' condition (30% assessed as 'declining')</p> <p>Prevalence of invasive rhododendrons, Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed</p> <p>Inappropriate grazing levels of wild and domestic animals hampering natural regeneration of woodlands</p> <p>Fencing young plantations / areas of regeneration threaten populations of black grouse and capercaillie</p> <p>Difficult to manage many 1970s and 80s plantations for biodiversity</p> <p>Lack of biodiversity in commercial Sitka forests</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Restoration and appropriate management of the existing ancient and semi-natural woodland resource</p> <p>Creation of forest habitat networks – linking existing areas of native woodland through a range of mechanisms</p> <p>Restructuring / restocking forests following harvesting presents major opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, habitat network development and native woodland expansion e.g. related to Atlantic oak and Caledonian Pinewoods and their associated species</p> <p>Opportunities for smaller scale native woodlands with potential and high biodiversity value</p> <p>Install more bird friendly fencing associated with forests to reduce the potential for collision by species such as Black grouse and Capercaillie.</p> <p>Targeting of funding for biodiversity enhancement through SRDP</p> <p>Using the forest resource to expand educational opportunities</p> <p>Use of Biodiversity Action Plan priorities to attract Lottery or European funding</p>	<p>Lack of investment in appropriate grazing management</p> <p>Problems in engaging all relevant stakeholders (foresters, land managers, land owners, tenant farmers, crofters etc)</p> <p>Perceptions of increasingly prescriptive forest planning – rather than intended partnership approach</p> <p>Effects of climate change on sensitive woodland habitats and species</p> <p>Monoculture threaten biodiversity.</p>

Comment: If we successfully managed this important habitat, why are over 2/3rd of the flagships in unfavourable condition (and what does that say about the likely condition of the rest)?

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Comment: Do we have any capercaillie left? I understand that none were counted on Loch Lomond this year. It's odd that we are spending £x on high profile trial re-introduction of a species to Argyll, while in the same year we might have allowed what are possibly the last true Scottish capercaillie to quietly disappear.

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32. Do you agree with the above SWOT analysis? If not which elements would you add or change?

33. Which forests would benefit from restructuring to bring landscape enhancement and other environmental improvements? Are there specific areas where changes in the composition or extent of forestry and woodland would be beneficial in terms of landscape character and quality?

All monocultures would benefit from landscape and environmental improvement. This particularly applies to 20th century sitka plantations, but also to an extent to even aged oak woodlands of the 19th century.

It is surprising that this document makes no reference to the parallel Scottish consultation on red squirrel strongholds.

34. What are the key opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of Argyll and Bute's culture of forestry and woodland?

Support for Forest School is a good starting point, and it is encouraging that, for example, Lochgilphead School has recently sent two teachers to Forest School training.

Groups such as Argyll Green Woodworkers Association have the capacity to provide a people side to the interpretation and demonstration of traditional woodland crafts and skills.

This question also relates to an earlier one. Here is a repeat: "These might either be related to specific periods, and could develop existing facilities and trends (for example stronger ties between Bonawe Furnace and Glen Nant Oakwoods). Or attention could be paid to the major planting campaigns that were carried out in the 19th and 20th centuries. Again, existing activity could be built on: policy woodland feature strongly in Glorious Gardens of Argyll. There is also scope to explore the impact of, for example the Dukes of Argyll or Malcolms of Poltalloch: in both these cases there is good archive material available."

35. Are there specific areas where the historic environment should be protected from expansions in woodland or forestry, or any existing areas restructuring could enhance the historic environment and people's appreciation of it?

Yes, at the least care should be taken wherever remnants are found. 18/6/9 Oban Times carried a story about the upset caused to a local community by the destruction of a corn kiln (due to development rather than forestry). This is indicative of the level of local concern for locally important features that do not appear on any centrally held list.

Over and above this local level of concern, alterations to land use in areas with a high degree of archaeological and landscape importance, or designations such as Kilmartin Glen, Inveraray, and Ardkinglas need to be treated with care.

36. Are there areas where forestry contributes to low water quality in burns, rivers and lochs, or are there locations where changes in forestry management, or appropriately designed and located woodland could make a positive contribution to the water environment?

All clearfell operations have an adverse effect on water quality in areas like Argyll where there are slopes and heavy rainfall. This is mitigated by adherence to forest and water guidelines. If climate change produces the severe weather incidents that are predicted, then this impact might become more significant on a wider scale.

Biodiversity SWOT analysis and questions

Comment: The document assesses the SWOT for environment and biodiversity to be identical. Please therefore accept that my comments above apply here

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Industry successfully manages a significant area of important habitat (esp. Ancient woodland)</p> <p>Management issues for woodland habitats well understood by foresters</p> <p>Internationally designated woodland assets</p> <p>Cooperation in managing sensitive sites with statutory agencies and NGOs</p> <p>Exemplar projects, such as the Scottish Beaver Trial (supported by FCS) have the potential to raise the profile of managing woodland for natural heritage</p> <p>Presence of iconic species –such as red squirrel, capercaillie, black grouse and large raptors – provide important 'hooks' to encourage engagement and public interest</p>	<p>70% of woodland SSSIs are in 'Unfavourable' condition (30% assessed as 'declining')</p> <p>Prevalence of invasive rhododendrons, Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed</p> <p>Deer numbers hampering natural regeneration of woodlands</p> <p>Fencing young plantations / areas of regeneration threaten populations of black grouse and capercaillie</p> <p>Difficult to manage many 1970s and 80s plantations for biodiversity</p> <p>Lack of biodiversity in commercial Sitka forests</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Restoration and appropriate management of the existing ancient and semi-natural woodland resource</p> <p>Creation of forest habitat networks – linking existing areas of native woodland through a range of mechanisms</p> <p>Restructuring / restocking forests following harvesting presents major opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, habitat network development and native woodland expansion e.g. related to Atlantic oak and Caledonian Pinewoods and their associated species</p> <p>Opportunities for smaller scale native woodlands with potential and high biodiversity value</p> <p>Install more bird friendly fencing associated with forests to reduce the potential for collision by species such as Black grouse and Capercaillie.</p> <p>Targeting of funding for biodiversity enhancement through SRDP</p> <p>Using the forest resource to expand educational opportunities</p> <p>Use of Biodiversity Action Plan priorities to attract Lottery or European funding</p>	<p>Lack of investment in appropriate grazing management</p> <p>Problems in engaging all relevant stakeholders (foresters, land managers, land owners, tenant farmers, crofters etc)</p> <p>Perceptions of increasingly prescriptive forest planning – rather than intended partnership approach</p> <p>Effects of climate change on sensitive woodland habitats and species</p> <p>Monoculture can threaten biodiversity.</p>

37. Do you agree with the above SWOT analysis? If not which elements would you add or change?

See response to environment SWOT: the two SWOTs are identical

38. Where are the priorities in terms of:

- **Creating habitat networks**

I understand FHN for A&B is in advanced stages of preparation. It's already available for Argyll Islands and Loch Lomond areas. Suggest Strategy is guided by these.

- **Restoring ancient woodland, moorland and bog habitats**

Priority is the restoration of all PAWS in A&B. Where possible this should be done in a gradual way.

- **Restructuring forestry plantations to include more native species, more varied age structures and a higher proportion of open space**

Any plantation (ie almost all of them) which is or will receive public funding for restructuring should be following this approach. Diversification of exotic species can also assist with protection of some Priority species such as red squirrel

- **Action targeted on priority species and habitats associated with woodland in Argyll and Bute including native woodlands such as Atlantic oakwoods and Caledonian pine forest?**

Protection and enhancement of woodlands on the Ancient Woodland Inventory should be a high priority.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. **Overall, do you think that the amount of forestry and woodland in Argyll and Bute is about right, too little or too much? If too much or too little, please explain why and what should change?**

The amount is probably about right, but should trend gently upwards. We have more than the Scottish aspiration already, and should concentrate our resources on making sure that we make the best job of managing the woodlands and forests that we have.

2. **Thinking about the balance between coniferous forestry on the one hand and broadleaf and semi-natural woodland on the other hand, do you think the balance is about right, too heavily in favour of coniferous woodland, or too heavily in favour of broadleaves? Please explain why and how you think a change in the balance could be achieved?**

This question appears to be trying to reinvent a polarised discussion from a decade ago. It also manages to link Caledonian Scots pinewoods with industrial conifer plantations, and eucalyptus stands with atlantic oakwoods. However...

Figures quoted in papers associated with this document show that Argyll's forestry is between 85-95% exotic conifer plantations, with three quarters of this monoculture sitka spruce. At a global scale, the situation is almost reversed: United Nations FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005 gives a maximum figure of 4% exotic species in the world's forests. It might well be that Argyll & Bute is the area of the world with the highest percentage of exotic species in its forest resource. At the least this should surely act as a caution against tipping the balance against native species.

The high percentage of sitka spruce does have advantages in that we can produce large quantities of fast grown fibre that suit industrial production (admittedly not in Argyll, but much of it is used in Scotland). However it also has disadvantages: all of our eggs are in one basket, and this limits the other public benefits that can be drawn from forestry in Argyll & Bute.

Much of the ground under the plantations will not easily support other species, and sitka spruce will remain a big part of the future of forestry in Argyll. However where there are opportunities to diversify, these should be encouraged and supported. A large part of this should be about native conifers and broadleaves (managed for a range of outputs), but another part should be about diversifying exotic species on appropriate plantation sites. It is notable that in the parallel Scottish Government consultation on red squirrel strongholds, Forestry Commission score Eredine, Inverliever and Kilmichael forests at 0 for silvicultural constraints, implying that there are no silvicultural constraints to diversifying species and age structure to suit red squirrel. This contrasts with the constraints suggested in this consultation.

3. **Which issues are most important in guiding the future development of forestry and woodland in Argyll and Bute? Please enter an xx for each category.**

	Highest				Lowest
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	priority				priority
Timber		xx			
Business development		xx			
Climate Change		Xx			
Community development		Xx			
Access and health		Xx			
Biodiversity		xx			
Environmental quality		xx			