

Mid Deeside Limited
Bell Wood and Lady Wood
Forest Plan

Scoping Report



Mid Deeside Ltd
Victory Hall, Ballater Road, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire, AB34 5HY

Report Prepared by
The Ross Partnership, Bearfold, Ordie, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire, AB34 5LS
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**Mid Deeside Limited
Bell Wood and Lady Wood
Forest Plan Scoping Process**

1. Introduction

1.1 Name of Property

This scoping report is concerned with the Bell Wood and the Lady Wood, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire

1.2 SRDP Case Number

4164478

1.3 Main Location Code

038/0018

1.4 Forest Plan Area

The Forest Plan will cover an area of 112.8 ha. Not all of this area is established woodland. A small proportion is open ground within the woodland.

1.5 Arrangements for the Scoping Process

Two scoping meetings were held in June & July 2010. A drop-in session for members of the general public was held at the Aboyne Accademy & Community Centre in the village of Aboyne on Friday 25th June from 14:00 to 21:30 and on Saturday 26th June from 10am to 3pm. Display boards showed the maps of the outline proposals along with explanatory text. Members of the Aboyne Community Woods association and the Ross Partnership were present to answer questions and take responses.

Adverts were placed in the Public Notices section Deeside Piper announcing the drop-in session two weeks before the event. Press releases were also issued and The Deeside Piper ran a small article publicising the meeting during the two weeks before the date. Several posters were placed on various notice boards around the village for two weeks before the event.

A formal meeting for statutory bodies and representatives of organisations was held in the Victory Hall on Friday 2nd July. This meeting was chaired by Dan Cadle of Forestry Commission Scotland. Written invitations to the meeting were issued three weeks beforehand. The minutes of this meeting are included in Appendix 2.

Along with the written invitation, participants were sent maps of:

- Access and recreation considerations
- Constraints, including wildlife sensitive areas
- Concept map

Following the Scoping Meetings all invitees, including those who were unable to attend, were given until the 28th July to submit written comments.

2. Participants

2.1 Attendees at Formal Meeting

Name	Organisation	Address
Eileen Baird	Director, Mid Deeside Limited	Mid Deeside Limited Victory Hall Ballater Road Aboyne Aberdeenshire AB34 5HY
Frank Sheridan	Contracts Manager, Mid Deeside Limited	Mid Deeside Limited Victory Hall Ballater Road Aboyne Aberdeenshire AB34 5HY
Irvine Ross	Forestry Consultant to MDL	The Ross Partnership Bearfold Ordie Aboyne AB34 5LS Tel 013398 81651
Dan Cadle	Forestry Commission Scotland	Grampian Conservancy Ordiquhill Portsoy Road HUNTLY Aberdeenshire AB54 4SJ Tel: 01466 794542
Jo Sinclair	Secretary, Mid Deeside Community Council	38 Barclay Park Aboyne AB34 5JF
Ruth Sim	Chair of Deeside Access Panel	4 Blacksmiths Cottages Birkhall Ballater AB35 5ST
Mary McLeod	Environmental Planner Aberdeenshire Council	Viewmount Arduthie Road Stonehaven AB3 2DQ Tel : 01569 768293

2.2 Correspondents

Written responses were received from the following

Name	Organisation	Address	Correspondence References
Julia Galley	Area Officer Aberdeenshire South Scottish Natural Heritage	Inverdee House Baxter Street, Torry Aberdeen, AB11 9QA	1

Ian Francis	RSPB	10 Albyn Terrace Aberdeen AB10 1YP	2
Andrea Dilley	SEPA	142 Sinclair Road Torry Aberdeen AB11 9PR	3
Laura Barker		laurajobarker@gmail.com	4
Hollie Walker	North East Scotland Project Officer, Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels	Inverdee House Baxter Street, Torry Aberdeen, AB11 9QA	5
Cllr Marcus Humphrey	Aberdeenshire Council		6

Copies of the letters received are contained in Appendix 3

2.3 Drop-in Consultation Session

A number of comments were received in verbal or short note form at the Drop-in Consultation Sessions These are summarised in Appendix 1

3. Key Issues

3.1 General

In general terms the Bell Wood and the Lady Wood are considered important for amenity and recreation. The Lady Wood form an important backdrop to the western entrance to the village. The path through the lady Wood is a much used route to the Community Centre and to the Aboyne Academy and Primary Schools. The wood is also used for educational purposes by the pupils of both schools. The Bell Wood is popular for a range of recreational activities, particularly for residents in the east end of the village

As the conifer plantations in the Bell Wood lie immediately adjacent to the Tarland Burn, a tributary of the River Dee, which is designated as an SAC, the matter of water quality was also important to consultees. Issues were raised concerning access, integration with forestry operations and disturbance to wildlife.

3.2 Key Issues

The key features highlighted during scoping were

- Maintenance and improvement of recreation facilities
- Maintenance of landscape and visual amenity
- Wildlife and biodiversity

A list of all the issues that were identified from the two Scoping Meetings and written responses are presented in the table below together with the measures that could be taken to address them.

3.3 Bell Wood

Main Issues	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be Taken	Notes
Recreation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access for the disabled 	Impact on recreation management	<p>The car park should have designated disabled bays and be disabled accessible</p> <p>Paths should be graded to abilities</p> <p>Gates should be wheelchair/baby buggy accessible</p> <p>Signs and information should be accessible to the disabled</p> <p>Seats/Perches should be provided to assist those who walk with difficulty</p>	<p>Work on the present car park is not yet complete. The car park is not on ground owned by MDL and cannot be extended. The car park was provided as part of an agreed package of developer contributions.</p> <p>Some concern was expressed that these might become the target for vandalism.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage 		<p>Consider making request for route signage from the main road by Council roads department.</p> <p>Threshold signs need to be provided which give information on path lengths and grading</p> <p>Waymark posts are required to indicate routes</p>	<p>several comments were made that the Bell Wood is difficult to find for first time visitors</p> <p>Planning approval will be required.</p>

Main Issues	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be Taken	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paths have suffered water damage in the recent past 		Drains should be cleaned as necessary, path surface repaired, water bars, board walks provided where necessary	Damage has already been surveyed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of the Bell Wood by horse riders. Some sections of paths on soft ground have been damaged 	impact on path maintenance programme	Routing to separate horse and foot/bicycle traffic is required. Discussions to be initiated with regular horse users.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of the Bell Wood by mountain bikers 		Consider creation of dedicated mountain bike track. This should be sited to avoid conflict with other users.	This facility was suggested by several respondents. Liability for injury may be a problem. Forres Community Woodland Trust have mountain bike trails and could provide advice. Advice on trail design available through Forestry Commission. Must be reconciled with the desire to have areas of woodland with lower disturbance for the benefit of wildlife.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision for access during forestry operations 	Impact on all forestry operations	Provide adequate warning of proposed operations. Erect and maintain adequate signage during period of operations Co-operate with local access officer where core paths affected. Signpost alternative routes where practicable	

Main Issues	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be Taken	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed Deeside Way Linkages to other paths/cycle routes 	Impact on proposed core path network	<p>MDL will explore possible footpath/cycle links from the Bell Wood to the Deeside Way and other local routes.</p> <p>A footbridge across the Tarland Burn should be constructed in the near future as part of an agreed package of developer contributions.</p>	<p>The final route of the Deeside Way has yet to be decided.</p> <p>This will depend on neighbour co-operation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Visitor Facilities. Provision of second car park 		<p>Monitor use of existing car park to assess the need for additional parking area.</p> <p>Re-assess the situation periodically to ensure there is adequate provision.</p>	<p>The majority of respondents were strongly opposed to this proposal.</p> <p>Planning approval has been obtained</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Visitor Facilities. Provision of composting toilet 		<p>Make assessment of the level of use and impact of any social problems on comparable sites with existing toilets.</p> <p>MDL will make efforts to resolve differences of opinion.</p>	<p>The majority of respondents were strongly opposed to this proposal.</p> <p>Respondents with an interest in disabled access or education were in favour.</p> <p>Planning approval has been obtained.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Visitor Facilities. Provision of a shelter 		MDL will explore possible designs/ construction costs.	Little opinion either way on this matter from respondents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog Fouling 		MDL will approach Aberdeenshire Council to request dog litter bins at the entrances to the wood	

Main Issues	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be Taken	Notes
Wildlife/Biodiversity			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals for felling of exotics and replacement by native trees is welcomed because of proximity to Tarland Burn and River Dee 	Impact on harvesting plan	Plan for the removal of exotic conifers on the banks of the Tarland Burn	Make assessment of impact on River Dee SAC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of non-native trees after felling 	impact on restocking plan	Plan to replace with mixed native broadleaves according to site type. Favour the use of small seeded native broadleaves which do not provide food for grey squirrels.	Phase 1 habitat survey to guide replacement species choice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Squirrels 	Impact on harvesting/restocking plans	Retain mature mixed species conifer forest to provide variety of food and habitat. Avoid extensive clear fells. Follow guidance in FCS Guidance Note 33 Forest Operations and Red Squirrels in Scottish Forests. Maintain vigilance for the presence of grey squirrels and take appropriate steps to trap them if they should arrive.	Red squirrels are known to breed in the Bell Wood and population monitoring in is ongoing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Otters 	Impact on harvesting/restocking plans	Commission a survey to detect whether holts or resting couches are present in the Bell Wood. Consult SNH if any are found.	Otters are known to frequent the Tarland Burn.

Main Issues	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be Taken	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Badgers 	Impact on harvesting/restocking plans	Maintain vigilance for the presence of badgers	There are no known badger setts in the Bell Wood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bats 	Impact on harvesting/restocking plans	Avoid disturbance to any likely bat roosts in the summer months.	There is a possibility that bats will use some of the small number old trees scattered through the Bell Wood for summer roosts
Water			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forestry activities may impact on water quality especially in the River Dee 	Impact on harvesting/restocking plans	Pollution prevention will be integral to plan. Follow Forests and Water Guidelines in all operations	Update harvesting constraints map with latest data on all water supplies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest Road construction 	impact on timber harvesting and recreation	Follow Forests and Water Guidelines and CAR regulation in all maintenance operations	It is considered unlikely that there will be any necessity to construct significant lengths of new forestry roads as the woodlands already have adequate access.
Deer Management			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low numbers of roe deer present 	Impact on Wildlife Management Plan	Note any increased browsing impact, should it occur, and assess its importance	Deer numbers are low and are having little visible impact on the growth and survival of tree seedlings.
Archaeology			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no known sites of Archaeological interest in the Bell Wood 	Impact on all forestry activities	Maintain lookout for any signs of archaeological remains during all forestry operations.	
Site Designations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites of Interest to Natural Science 	Impact on all forestry activities	MDL will follow up and assess the accuracy and relevance of the SINS designations and incorporate in forestry planning	Data from NESBREC has already been obtained.

Main Issues	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be Taken	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBAP Lists 	Impact on all forestry activities	MDL will follow up and assess the accuracy and relevance of the LBAP lists and incorporate in forestry planning.	
Landscape			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual impact of tree harvesting on the landscape 	Impact on harvesting plan	<p>Continue policy of using continuous cover harvesting systems where appropriate.</p> <p>Any necessary clear felling should be restricted to small/moderate sized coupes.</p> <p>A programme of regular selective thinning will be implemented to support the continuous cover objective.</p>	<p>Given the location, topography and recreational use of the Bell Wood, the internal landscape is of more importance than its setting in the wider countryside.</p>

3.4 Lady Wood

Main Issues	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be Taken	Notes
Recreation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access for the disabled 	Impact on recreation management	<p>MDL will investigate the cost and possible sources of funding to upgrade the path to be wheelchair accessible</p> <p>Signs and information should be accessible to the disabled</p> <p>Seats/Perches should be provided to assist those who walk with difficulty</p>	Some concern was expressed that these might become the target for vandalism.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Path Maintenance 		A programme of regular trimming of path side vegetation should be implemented to keep the path passable for baby buggies and for companions walking with disabled users.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed Deeside Way Linkages to other paths/cycle routes 	Impact on proposed core path network	MDL will explore possible footpath/cycle links from the Lady Wood to the Deeside Way and other local routes.	<p>The final route of the Deeside Way has yet to be decided.</p> <p>This will depend on neighbour co-operation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog Fouling 		MDL will approach Aberdeenshire Council to request additional dog litter bins at the entrances to the wood	
Education			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of the wood for educational purposes 	Impact on all forestry operations	MDL will maintain liaison with the schools and with the Aberdeenshire Council Countryside Ranger Service	The wood is currently used by both schools for environmental education.

Main Issues	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be Taken	Notes
Wildlife/Biodiversity			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beech regeneration 	Impact on silvicultural operations	Remove beech seedlings to prevent shading of ground vegetation. Replant any gaps with oak seedlings of local provenance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife habitat 		Retain mature trees for as long as is consistent with public safety	Trees beside footpaths and boundaries should be inspected at regular intervals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garden escapes 		maintain watch for any invasive species such as Japanese knotweed or rhododendron.	

Appendix 1
Written and Verbal Responses from Public Meeting
Friday & Saturday 25 & 26 June

Bell Wood and Lady Wood Public Scoping : Open Meetings 25 & 26th June 2010

Location: Foyer, Aboyne Academy and Community Centre and . (Wheelchair Accessible)

Format: Drop-in session

Publicity: Press; posters around Aboyne

On Display: Proposals/Issues maps)

13 response sheets were completed and handed in on the days

27 post-it notes were left on the Bell Wood Map by 11 individuals

13 post-it notes were left on the Lady Wood map by 12 individuals

Bell Wood

COMMENT	No of responses	SOURCE
Woodland Management		
Minimal Intervention please (leave as it is)	6	1
In favour of small felling coupes	3	1
Should fell conifers along Tarland Burn and replace with native broadleaved trees	4	1
Should NOT fell conifers along Tarland Burn and replace with native broadleaved trees	5	1
Should retain good wildlife habitat regardless of whether of native or exotic tree species	10	1
		1
Should create more clearings in the wood for wildlife benefit	1	1
more clearings and seats along Tarland Burn	1	1
Should NOT create more clearings in the wood	7	1
Recreation		
In favour of more facilities at Bell Wood		
a shelter	1	1
Mountain bike track	8	1&2
composting toilet	3	1&2
dog bins	1	2
horse track	2	2
Car park needs designated disabled bays and to be disabled accessible	1	
Car park needs to be enlarged	1	2
Against more facilities at Bell Wood	11	1&2
		1
In favour of better signage/interpretation (disabled accessible)	7	1&2
Against better signage		
Grade routes to abilities	1	1
Path drainage needs improvement	2	1
paths should link to Deeside Way and other paths/cycle routes	4	1,2&3
Other comments		
This is a wood not a theme park	1	1
I would not feel safe walking alone in the woods. Would like ranger guided walks	1	1
It is good that the community takes responsibility	1	1
more bird boxes please	1	1
more squirrel boxes please	1	1
keep some areas wilder and more difficult to access	1	2

keep as natural looking and undeveloped as possible	1	2
publicise to encourage use by wider range of folk	1	2
opportunities for volunteers should be developed	1	2
want programme of activities/events	1	2
forest art, sculpture etc.	1	2
It's fine just as it is	1	2
It is difficult to find for the first time, no signs from the main road	1	3
We never go there (residents in west end of Aboyne)	5	3

Lady Wood

COMMENT	No of responses	SOURCE
Woodland Management		
In favour of removing beech seedlings	4	1,2&3
Against removing beech seedlings	3	1
remove garden escapes	1	1
keep natural look of the woods	2	2
Recreation		
In favour of resting places for the disabled	5	1
Against resting places for disabled people	3	1
make paths wheelchair accessible	2	2
more dog waste bins	2	2
trim trees and bushes growing over existing pathway (difficult for buggies)	1	2
provide links to Deeside Way and other local paths	1	2
Other comments		
create outdoor classroom for school use	1	2
provide aerial slide, fire tower, tree top walk way	1	2
provide skate park	25	2
valuable for school cross country running	1	3
ask local residents to adopt parts of the pathway	1	2
paths and signage to be accessible for disabled users	1	2

Sources	Code
Anonymous response sheets	1
Anonymous Post-it notes	2
Verbal comments	3

Appendix 2
Notes from Scoping Meeting
Friday 3 July

MID DEESIDE LIMITED
BELL WOOD AND LADY WOOD FOREST PLAN SCOPING METING - 2nd July 2010

4. Present

Dan Cadle	Woodland Officer, Forestry Commission Scotland
Ruth Sim	Chair of Deeside Access Panel
Irvine Ross	Forestry Consultant, Ross Partnership
Frank Sheridan	Contracts Manager, Mid Deeside Limited
Jo Sinclair	Secretary, Mid Deeside Community Council
Eileen Baird	Director, Mid Deeside Limited
Mary McLeod	Environment Planner, Aberdeenshire Council

Apologies:

Holly Walker	Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels
Julia Grey	Area Officer, Scottish Natural Heritage
Moiria Grieg	Archaeologist, Aberdeenshire Council
Ian Francis	Area Manager, RSPB
Cllr Marcus Humphrey	Aberdeenshire Council
Andrea Dilley	SEPA

5. Introduction

Dan Cadle (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the background to the planning process developed by the Forestry Commission. All the participants introduced themselves.

Dan explained that this meeting is part of the consultation process required by the Forestry Commission in the preparation of a Forest Plan. The Forest Plan should describe how the woodland will be managed over the next 20 years with detailed plans for the first 10 years and outline indications for the second 10 years. All necessary felling for the first 10 years will be licensed by the Forestry Commission on completion of Forest Plan. The first step is the scoping process with the public open session on 26th June and the present formal meeting with the Forestry Commission. After the scoping report has been circulated for comment, MDL will proceed with writing the Forest Plan taking into account the responses to the proposals. After the Forestry Commission have given initial approval of the plan it will go on the public register for 4 weeks. During this time any agency or member of the public can submit comments on the plan. After any necessary amendments have been to accommodate relevant comments, approval will then be given to carry out the work.

After 10 years there will be a review of how the plan is working. The plan will include a tolerance table to indicate how large a deviation from the plan will require a formal amendment agreed with the FC.

6. Bell Wood

It is a 110 hectare woodland mostly planted in 1960 by Glen Tanar Estate. An older stand of Scots Pine was planted in by the previous owners Aboyne Castle Estate. It provides good habitat for red squirrels because of the varied tree species. More diversity is developing now and some open space has been created by the removal of a stand of after Sitka spruce. Lodge Pole Pine is scattered throughout the wood and may need to be removed if disease becomes a problem. The management policy to date has been to provide continuous cover. Some felling and restocking is also done.

6.1 Recreation

there is a network of footpaths which has been well received – these are wheelchair standard on the terrace for 2,000 metres and 4,000 metres for pedestrians. Flooding has been a localised issue with washout on steep gradients. Almost all the paths in the Bell Wood are in the core path scheme. Access points and links to wider paths such as the Deeside way are still being debated. The Old Railway line and the Old Deeside Road which goes to the Council sheds are potential routes. It was agreed that it was important to link routes wherever possible.

Disabled access:

Ruth Sim recommended that access provision for the disabled should follow the guidelines in the BT Countryside Guide. It was agreed that MDL will order a copy. There should be no physical barriers. Existing car park is at present not suitable for wheelchair users. It was pointed out that the car park has still to be completed as part of a package of Developer Contribution.

Signage :

Signage is an issue and it was pointed out that signs should be accessible to disabled users. This is no information available at present on the length of the paths and their suitability for disabled users. The Bell Wood is also difficult to find for first time users as there are no road signs indicating the route to the car park.

Level of Usage:

The Bell Wood is a popular facility and well used by local residents. However it became clear at the public consultation the relatively few residents from the west end of the village use the Bell Wood for recreation.

Use by Horse Riders:

Horses use the footpaths and have caused damage on some sections of soft ground. It was suggested that there should be signs to designate suitable bridle paths. It was agreed that Eileen Baird will contact the WHW and invite them to discuss. It was agreed that MDL will produce a map showing the paths and bridle paths. The Outdoor Access Forum can be brought in to resolve disputes as a last resort.

Use by Cyclists:

The woods are being used by a number of cyclists. A mountain bike track was a very popular request from young people at the public consultation. If MDL are to create a Mountain bike track then there are areas where it could be situated avoiding sensitive areas. Forest Enterprise have constructed mountain bike tracks. Safety is an issue. See Forres Community Woodlands Trust for an example of a mountain bike trail. There is a cycle way which crosses the WHW fields and could link to the tracks in the Bell Wood. The intention to create a bridge across the Tarland Burn from the south into the wood is in the plan.

Additional Facilities:

The ACWA has drawn up a 5 year action plan outlining proposed developments Additional facilities proposed are: - car park, toilet and shelters. Some objections were raised at the public scoping session on the grounds this would encourage more traffic and that the existing car park was not used to capacity. There was a positive reaction from education users.

6.2 Biodiversity and Wildlife

Mary McLeod advised that the plan has to acknowledge protected species. She table information from the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre. Badgers setts are not known to be present but there was some evidence of badger foraging from a walkover survey. This should be checked. Presence of bats should be checked and knowledge of woodland birds compiled. The Tarland Burn should be checked for otter holts contact made with the water vole project for mink monitoring. Red squirrels were discussed and the squirrel monitoring survey by the Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service was noted. Roe deer are known to be present but their numbers are relatively low and there is no evidence that browsing is keeping tree regeneration in check.

There are not known to be any rare or endanger plant species present. There are some garden escape plants in the western end of the wood but there are no known patches of invasive species such as Japanese knotweed

It was suggested that there should be an area of low activity designated to provide a wildlife refuge.

It was noted that the Tarland Burn was graded at "moderate" status by SEPA. DC will check this.

6.3 Silviculture and Timber Harvesting

Mary McLeod pointed out that the landscape impact of any felling and replanting should be taken into account

It was clear from the public scoping session that the local community would like to see long term continuity of tree cover. However small patch felling and replacement would be acceptable.

The advisability of felling some of the spruce on wet ground along the Tarland Burn and replacing with native broadleaved trees was discussed and considered advisable. Over the remainder of the area the current policy of continuous cover or small patch felling would be continued. Dan Cadle pointed out that a Sustainable Forest Management Grant is available for the maintenance work involved in Low Impact Silvicultural systems is available under the Scottish Rural Development Programme.

7. The Lady Wood

7.1 Introduction

The Lady Wood is the last remnant of the old oak woodland existing since at least 1822 and probably consists of oak planted at the time of the Napoleonic wars. The local opinion is that it should stay as it is and the oak trees should be maintain as far as possible.

7.2 Recreation

Ruth Sim recommended that access provision for the disabled should again follow the guidelines in the BT Countryside Guide.

The present footpaths were installed by the then UDAT about 6 years ago but there were little or no specifications laid down and the paths are not wheelchair accessible. UDAT will maintain them for 10 years. There was a request for perches be installed to assist use of the wood by the disabled and it was noted that a request had been made to upgrade the path so it could be used by people in wheelchairs.

The paths are regularly used as a route to school and as a route to the public library and Community centre. The heavy usage will necessitate regular maintenance including cutting back path side vegetation.

Both the Aboyne Academy and Aboyne Primary School use the Ladywood for environmental studies and the wood is used for cross country running.

The mature oaks should be checked regularly to ensure public safety.

7.3 Biodiversity and Wildlife

The beech seedlings at the western end of the wood were discussed. It was pointed out that, if left unchecked they will eventually shade out all the ground cover plants where the beech grow closely together. Removing the beech and replanting with locally collected oak seedlings was suggested.

Garden escape plants are present in the wood, however this is almost inevitable with a wood in this situation. A lookout should be kept for any invasive exotic plant species.

8. Conclusions

Dan Cadle summarised all the points raised at the meeting and pointed out that the next stage in the process was to produce a scoping report. This will be circulated to all participants for comment before the detailed preparation of the Forest Plan can be commenced.

Appendix 3
Correspondence Received

From SNH

Apologies for being unable to attend the meeting on Friday morning regarding the Bell and Lady Wood Forest Scoping Plan. I have prepared some comments however below:

River Dee SAC

Part of the site is within the catchment of the River Dee Special Area of Conservation, designated for freshwater pearl mussels, Atlantic salmon and otter, so measures are needed to avoid any silt release into the watercourse during forestry operations.

The Bell wood concept map outlines the possibility of removing exotic conifers from the stream side and replacing with native broadleaves. The Tarland Burn has been the topic of much surveying in the past and therefore datasets should be available to inform the Forest plan. Otter are one of the designated features of the SAC and it is likely that they use the Tarland Burn. As otter are a European protected species it is necessary to carry out an otter survey to identify absence or presence of otter and any holts or couches in the area that work is proposed. If the survey identifies the presence or signs of otter then SNH should be contacted to provide further advice and information on any licensing requirements.

The forest plan will need to be subject to an appraisal of the potential impacts on the interests of the River Dee SAC and, if any significant effects on the features are likely, an appropriate assessment will be required. This assessment would be carried out by FCS but SNH can provide further advice on this if required.

Squirrels

We would recommend not felling the spruce trees but keeping them and possibly planting native broadleaves (such as Hazel) interspersed amongst the established trees. However the planting of native broadleaves does not necessarily add to the favoured food source of the red squirrel but should encourage grey squirrel exclusion. To continue on the theme of grey squirrel exclusion we would advise not planting any oak trees anywhere on site as they provide ideal grey squirrel habitat.

FCS have their own guidance and specialist understanding of red squirrels and how to encourage them in Lady and Bell wood, if not already present, and will therefore be able to offer advice on this particular part of the plan.

Other protected species

In addition to red squirrels, there are a range of other protected species, including badgers and bats that may be affected by woodland management operations. We advise that checks for such species should be carried out to ensure that the requirements of these species are taken into consideration during works and to avoid inadvertently committing any offences. I would recommend contacting the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC). They can advise you of any records of habitats or species of conservation interest in the area of the proposed works.

NESBReC, University of Aberdeen, 23 St Machar Drive, ABERDEEN, AB24 3RY
Tel. 01224 273633
<http://www.nesbrec.org.uk/>

They will probably hold species records for much of this area and the information could be used to inform management. FCS has also produced guidance notes on these issues but please let me know if you would like any further advice.

At this stage I am not able to provide more specific advice. If more site specific advice on species or habitats is required then please get in touch.

Please feel free to call me if you wish to discuss any of the above or if there is other information or advice that you need from us.

Best wishes

Julia Galley
Area Officer
Aberdeenshire South
Scottish Natural Heritage
Inverdee House
Baxter Street, Torry
Aberdeen, AB11 9QA
tel: 01224 266 500
direct dial: 01224 266 511

Hi Irvine

Just to let you know that we have no comments to make on the plans for these two woods.

Best wishes
Ian

Ian Francis

Area Manager, NE Scotland

RSPB Scotland

01224 624824

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654.



Our ref: PCS/108056/AD/CB

Francis Wilbur
Mid-Deeside Scotland
The Victory Hall
Ballater Road
Aboyne
AB34 5HY

If telephoning ask for:
Andrea Dilley

25 June 2010

Dear Mr Wilbur

**Mid Deeside Ltd – Bell Wood and Lady Wood Forest Plan Scoping Meeting
Stakeholder Consultation**

Thank you for your letter of 8 June 2010, received by SEPA on 10 June 2010, inviting us to a scoping meeting on 2 July 2010. We do not routinely attend forest plan scoping meetings, but are always willing to provide advice on specific issues insofar as our interests are concerned upon request.

Our initial advice is provided below but when you have a draft report we will be pleased to review this and provide, where applicable, site specific comments.

1. River Basin Management Plans

- 1.1 For your information, the final River Basin Management Plans for the Scotland and the Solway Tweed river basin districts are now available on our website at www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx. The GIS interactive map enables a search on individual water bodies within a forest plan area and associated water body data sheets give information about an individual waterbody's current ecological status, any pressures upon it, measures being taken to resolve any issues and targets for any improvement needed.
- 1.2 We note that this forestry area drains into the Tarland Burn. It is also close to the confluence with the River Dee (Ballater to Banchory) water body.
- 1.3 The Tarland Burn is at moderate status, and is affected by diffuse pollution and alterations to its beds and banks. River Basin Management Planning requires that all stakeholders seek to prevent deterioration and improve the ecological status of water bodies where possible. This should be achieved by a clear emphasis on the Forests & Water Guidelines best practice as part of restocking, operations and long term planning.
- 1.4 The River Dee (Ballater to Banchory) is also at moderate status because of fish barrier(s) and point source pollution – the forestry proposal is unlikely to impact on these issues, but good practice in forestry management will help to prevent deterioration in this water body, which is a Drinking Water Protection Area and part of the River Dee Special Area of Conservation.

2. General advice

- 2.1 In general, with regards to woodland management, if the proposals accord with the Forest and Water Guidelines and follow best practice it is unlikely that we would have major issues. The Working Checklist at the back of the Guidelines is particularly important to observe in planning and carrying out operations on site.
- 2.2 Specific care should be taken when working in areas close to watercourses, which includes ditches, to ensure that pollution does not occur. As highlighted within the Forests & Water Guidelines, surface water drains should not discharge directly into the water environment and, where applicable, you should seek to address existing drains of this type to avoid siltation problems during and after forestry operations.

3. Regulatory advice

3.1 The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (as amended) (CAR)

- 3.1.1 From 1 April 2006 CAR replaced the Control of Pollution Act and Groundwater Regulations. These new regulations not only control discharges to watercourses and groundwater but also cover abstractions, impoundments and engineering works within and in the vicinity of inland surface waters. This means that activities such as culverting, ditch clearing, dredging, bridging and damming may now require to be authorised under CAR.
- 3.1.2 The publication 'The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2005: A Practical Guide' provides very useful advice on CAR and it is recommended that all applicants consult this document.
- 3.1.3 Details of regulatory requirements (including a link to the CAR Practical Guide) and good practice advice for the applicant can be found on our website at www.sepa.org.uk/planning.aspx. If you are unable to find the advice you need for a specific regulatory matter, please contact a member of the Environmental Protection and Improvement (EPI) Team in your local SEPA office at: Inverdee House, Baxter Street, Torry, Aberdeen AB11 9QA Tel: 01224 266600.

If you have any queries relating to this letter, please contact me by telephone on 01349 860302 or e-mail at planning.aberdeen@sepa.org.uk.

Yours sincerely



Andrea Dilley
Planning Officer
Planning Service

From: Laura Barker [<mailto:laurajobarker@gmail.com>]
Sent: 26 June 2010 13:14
To: Donna Speed
Subject: 20 year plan Development of Bellwood / Ladywood

Dear Sir / Madam

I am aware of the open meeting held today in Aboyne to poll public opinion on the 20 year plan development of Bellwood and Ladywood.

Unfortunately I can not attend in person however I would appreciate it if my opinion is taking into account and duly noted for the record.

I feel very strongly that to build a further car park in addition to the existing under used car park is a total waste and misappropriation of public funds.

To even consider building toilet facilities in this small woodland is quite simply a nonsense. Not only is it not justified, but the ongoing maintenance of these facilities is costly, and as has been previously shown, they attract less than desirable activity as well as falling into disrepair and disuse over a very short period.

Your justification being that disabled people require these facilities is less than well founded, I would be interested to know whether you have statistics that prove that there is enough call from the disabled community for this investment.

Regards

Laura Barker

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels North East Scotland Project Officer (Hollie Walker) Comments

Re: Mid Deeside Ltd- Bell Wood and Lady Wood Forest Plan

Introduction

There are currently seven Red Squirrel Conservation Officers in Scotland: Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels (SSRS) Project Officers cover the North East, Tayside and Argyll and the Trossachs; Red Squirrel in South Scotland (RSSS) Project Officers cover Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders; and there are also Red Squirrel Project Officers in Highland and Fife.

As well as woodland management for the benefit of red squirrels the following information is important to SSRS:

- **Report sightings**
All sightings of red and grey squirrels in North East Scotland should be reported to the Local Squirrel Group in your region- NESBReC <http://www.nesbrec.org.uk/submitRecords.asp> or the Grampian Squirrel Group http://www.grampiansquirrelgroup.co.uk/red_squirrels_sightings.htm.
- **Survey and monitoring**
Long term monitoring programmes are underway at selected target woodlands to monitor the distribution and population density of red squirrels, and the spread of grey squirrels. If you would like to get involved in fieldwork, please contact the SSRS Project Officer for the North East
- **Grey squirrel control**
The humane control of grey squirrels in red and grey squirrel interface areas is essential. There may be traps available for loan to appropriate individuals; contact Grampian Squirrel Group or the Project Officer- North East- Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels redsquirrelgrampian@swt.org.uk.

Grey squirrels are not far away from both woodlands in the Forest Plans. Therefore the SSRS north east Project Officer (NEPO) would request that grey squirrel control be considered in the plan. If grey squirrel control occurs in and around the woodlands, the more likely it will be that the woodland retains a healthy population of red squirrels.

To aid the survival of the red squirrel in the long term, it is important that appropriate habitat management is undertaken to help increase the range and numbers of red squirrels and discourage the spread of grey squirrels.

In woodlands where only red squirrels are present, management for them should be strongly favoured.

Lady Wood

Remove beech seedlings

This is beneficial to red squirrels as large-seeded broadleaved tree species such as oak (*Quercus* spp.), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*) are used by red squirrels, but should be discouraged as they also attract grey squirrels.

Bell Wood

Felling plantation of spruce trees

In mixed broadleaved/conifer woodland, management for red squirrels should focus on enhancing the conifer element, whilst maintaining the balance of broadleaved/conifer species. This will help to provide long term habitat for red squirrels. Coniferous woodlands offer the greatest potential for supporting red squirrels in the presence of grey squirrel expansion, as small-seeded conifers are not favoured by grey squirrels, therefore avoiding felling of the spruce would be preferred.

If felling is decided the SSRS north east Project Officer (NEPO) would request the following:

- Survey area for dreys
- Avoid felling or thinning trees between February and early October (the breeding season).
- Felling should ideally take place in small coupes although the acceptable size of felling areas is dependent on the total size of the woodland and the risk of wind blow. Large scale clear felling should be avoided.
- It is important that felling does not fragment the woodland canopy; links must be retained between seed-producing areas to prevent isolation, reduce losses from predation, and facilitate movement of red squirrels between them. However, this should not preclude opening up the canopy of dense woodland, for example, by thinning.
- New planting in appropriate areas should be encouraged, provided the preferred conifer species are to be used. If a proportion of broadleaved trees are required, small-seeded species should be favoured. However, consideration should be given to other conservation objectives, such as use of native species, local provenance, etc.

Create more clearings?

It is important that felling does not fragment the woodland canopy; links must be retained between seed-producing areas to prevent isolation, reduce losses from predation, and facilitate movement of red squirrels between them. However, this should not preclude opening up the canopy of dense woodland, for example, by thinning.

Recently felled area. Replant or keep as open ground?

If replanting please consider the species below:

Species of benefit to red squirrels		Other species of neutral value for red squirrels, which do not benefit grey squirrels	
Norway spruce	Wych elm	willows	bramble
Scots pine	red cedar	aspen	guelder rose
Lodgepole pine	cypress	alder	dog rose
Corsican pine	hawthorn	birch	holly
Larches	blackthorn	rowan	juniper

Douglas fir yew	bird cherry wild cherry	ash	
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Remove exotic conifers from stream side and replace with native broadleaves?

Large-seeded broadleaved tree species such as oak (*Quercus* spp.), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*) are used by red squirrels, but should be discouraged as they also attract grey squirrels. Where small numbers of large-seeded broadleaved tree species occur within coniferous woodland, they should, where possible, be replaced with small-seeded broadleaved tree species suited to the locality, such as:

- Willow (*Salix* spp.)
- Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)
- Aspen (*Populus tremulus*)
- Birch (*Betula* spp.)
- Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*).

Additional comments:

- The recommended age structure of a conifer woodland for the benefit of red squirrels depends on the tree species involved, but as a general rule woodland managers should aim for the following:

30% at 0-15years, 30% at 15-30 years and 40% over 30 years old. This ensures continuity in seed production for red squirrels. At least 50-60% of the woodland should be of seed-producing age (ie Over 15 years old).

<i>Spruce/larch dominated</i>	<i>Pine dominated</i>
20-30% of 0-15 years	20-30% of 0-20 years
20-30% of 15-30 years	20-30% of 20-40 years
At least 40% of 30+ years	At least 40% of 40+ years

- Ideally there should be areas of long-term retention
- Focus on enhancing the conifer element where appropriate, particularly on diversifying the main conifer species in single-species plantations.
- A mixture of tree species is important to reduce the impact of poor cone years in particular species.

From: MARCUS HUMPHREY. C.B.E. D.L. F.R.I.C.S.

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Our Ref: JMMH/JAF/MDCC/01

2 July 2010

Francis Wilbur
Mid Deeside Ltd
The Victory Hall
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AB34 5HY

Dear Frances

Mid Deeside Ltd – Bell Wood and Lady Wood Forest Plan Scoping Meeting – Stakeholder Consultation

Many thanks for your letter of 8 June with enclosures.

I am sorry I was not able to manage either the Drop-in session on 26 June, nor the Scoping Meeting on 2 July due to previous commitments.

Your suggestions for both woodland areas seem eminently sensible, and I look forward to hearing the results from both the Drop-in Session and the Scoping Meeting in due course.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,



J M M Humphrey