

Moray & Aberdeenshire FD

Elchies Forest Plan

Map :3 Analysis and Concept

Scale : 1:12500 @ A1 Date: August 2009

Drawn: DEH

Legend

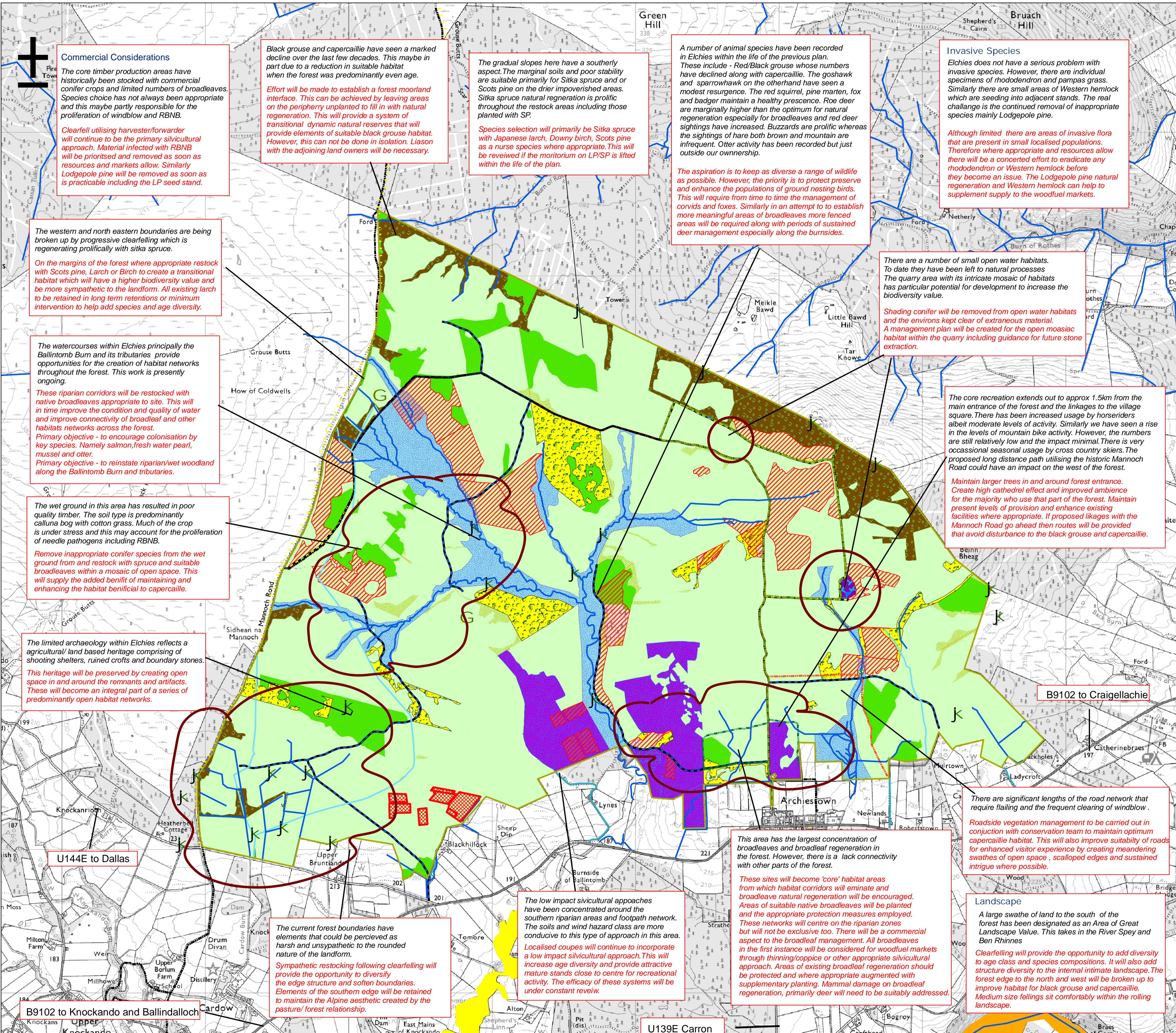
- Elchies boundary
- Clearfell & restock approach
- RBNB prioritise removal
- Open mosaic habitat reserve
- Transitional forest/ moorland interface.
- Riparian natural reserve
- Low impact silvicultural approaches
- Long term retention
- Broadleaves in mixture
- Open unplanted
- Special area of conservation
- Site of special scientific interest
- Deer enclosure plots
- Research experiments
- Archaeology
- Water courses
- Active Water Supplies
- Lochans & Ponds
- Public right of way
- Cap o cairn cattach walk
- Love birds link
- Speyside Footpath Network
- Track - advertised not waymarked

Roads

- Class A
- Class B
- Class C
- Transfer Point
- Unclassified
- Unassigned



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Commercial Considerations
The core timber production areas have historically been stocked with commercial conifer crops and limited numbers of broadleaves. Species choice has not always been appropriate and this may be partly responsible for the proliferation of windblow and RBNB.
Clearfell utilising harvester/forwarder will continue to be the primary silvicultural approach. Material infected with RBNB will be prioritised and removed as soon as resources and markets allow. Similarly Lodgepole pine will be removed as soon as is practicable including the LP seed stand.

Black grouse and capercaillie have seen a marked decline over the last few decades. This may be in part due to a reduction in suitable habitat when the forest was predominantly even age.
Effort will be made to establish a forest moorland interface. This can be achieved by leaving areas on the periphery unplanted to fill in with natural regeneration. This will provide a system of transitional dynamic natural reserves that will provide elements of suitable black grouse habitat. However, this can not be done in isolation. Liaison with the adjoining land owners will be necessary.

The gradual slopes here have a southerly aspect. The marginal soils and poor stability are suitable primarily for Sitka spruce and or Scots pine on the drier impoverished areas. Sitka spruce natural regeneration is prolific throughout the restock areas including those planted with SP.
Species selection will primarily be Sitka spruce with Japanese larch, Downy birch, Scots pine as a nurse species where appropriate. This will be reviewed if the monitorium on LP/SP is lifted within the life of the plan.

A number of animal species have been recorded in Elchies within the life of the previous plan. These include - Red/Black grouse whose numbers have declined along with capercaillie. The goshawk and sparrowhawk on the other hand have seen a modest resurgence. The red squirrel, pine marten, fox and badger maintain a healthy presence. Roe deer are marginally higher than the optimum for natural regeneration especially for broadleaves and red deer sightings have increased. Buzzards are prolific whereas the sightings of hare both brown and mountain are infrequent. Otter activity has been recorded but just outside our ownership.
The aspiration is to keep as diverse a range of wildlife as possible. However, the priority is to protect preserve and enhance the populations of ground nesting birds. This will require from time to time the management of corvids and foxes. Similarly in an attempt to establish more meaningful areas of broadleaves more fenced areas will be required along with periods of sustained deer management especially along the burnsides.

Invasive Species
Elchies does not have a serious problem with invasive species. However, there are individual specimens of rhododendron and pampas grass. Similarly there are small areas of Western hemlock which are seeding into adjacent stands. The real challenge is the continued removal of inappropriate species mainly Lodgepole pine.
Although limited there are areas of invasive flora that are present in small localised populations. Therefore where appropriate and resources allow there will be a concerted effort to eradicate any rhododendron or Western hemlock before they become an issue. The Lodgepole pine natural regeneration and Western hemlock can help to supplement supply to the woodfuel markets.

The western and north eastern boundaries are being broken up by progressive clearfelling which is regenerating prolifically with sitka spruce.
On the margins of the forest where appropriate restock with Scots pine, Larch or Birch to create a transitional habitat which will have a higher biodiversity value and be more sympathetic to the landform. All existing larch to be retained in long term retentions or minimum intervention to help add species and age diversity.

The watercourses within Elchies principally the Ballintomb Burn and its tributaries provide opportunities for the creation of habitat networks throughout the forest. This work is presently ongoing.
These riparian corridors will be restocked with native broadleaves appropriate to site. This will in time improve the condition and quality of water and improve connectivity of broadleaf and other habitats networks across the forest.
Primary objective - to encourage colonisation by key species. Namely salmon, fresh water pearl, mussel and otter.
Primary objective - to reinstate riparian/wet woodland along the Ballintomb Burn and tributaries.

The wet ground in this area has resulted in poor quality timber. The soil type is predominantly calluna bog with cotton grass. Much of the crop is under stress and this may account for the proliferation of needle pathogens including RBNB.
Remove inappropriate conifer species from the wet ground from and restock with spruce and suitable broadleaves within a mosaic of open space. This will supply the added benefit of maintaining and enhancing the habitat beneficial to capercaillie.

The limited archaeology within Elchies reflects a agricultural/ land based heritage comprising of shooting shelters, ruined crofts and boundary stones.
This heritage will be preserved by creating open space in and around the remnants and artifacts. These will become an integral part of a series of predominantly open habitat networks.

The core recreation extends out to approx 1.5km from the main entrance of the forest and the linkages to the village square. There has been increased usage by horse riders albeit moderate levels of activity. Similarly we have seen a rise in the levels of mountain bike activity. However, the numbers are still relatively low and the impact minimal. There is very occasional seasonal usage by cross country skiers. The proposed long distance path utilising the historic Mannoeh Road could have an impact on the west of the forest.
Maintain larger trees in and around forest entrance. Create high cathedral effect and improved ambience for the majority who use that part of the forest. Maintain present levels of provision and enhance existing facilities where appropriate. If proposed linkages with the Mannoeh Road go ahead then routes will be provided that avoid disturbance to the black grouse and capercaillie.

This area has the largest concentration of broadleaves and broadleaf regeneration in the forest. However, there is a lack connectivity with other parts of the forest.
These sites will become 'core' habitat areas from which habitat corridors will emanate and broadleaf natural regeneration will be encouraged. Areas of suitable native broadleaves will be planted and the appropriate protection measures employed. These networks will centre on the riparian zones but will not be exclusive too. There will be a commercial aspect to the broadleaf management. All broadleaves in the first instance will be considered for woodfuel markets through thinning/coppice or other appropriate silvicultural approach. Areas of existing broadleaf regeneration should be protected and where appropriate augmented with supplementary planting. Mammal damage on broadleaf regeneration, primarily deer will need to be suitably addressed.

There are significant lengths of the road network that require felling and the frequent clearing of windblow.
Roadside vegetation management to be carried out in conjunction with conservation team to maintain optimum capercaillie habitat. This will also improve suitability of roads for enhanced visitor experience by creating meandering swathes of open space, scalloped edges and sustained intrigue where possible.

Landscape
A large swathe of land to the south of the forest has been designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value. This takes in the River Spey and Ben Rhinnes
Clearfelling will provide the opportunity to add diversity to age class and species compositions. It will also add structure diversity to the internal intimate landscape. The forest edge to the north and west will be broken up to improve habitat for black grouse and capercaillie. Medium size fellings sit comfortably within the rolling landscape.

The current forest boundaries have elements that could be perceived as harsh and unsympathetic to the rounded nature of the landform.
Sympathetic restocking following clearfelling will provide the opportunity to diversify the edge structure and soften boundaries. Elements of the southern edge will be retained to maintain the Alpine aesthetic created by the pasture/ forest relationship.

The low impact silvicultural approaches have been concentrated around the southern riparian areas and footpath network. The soils and wind hazard class are more conducive to this type of approach in this area.
Localised coupes will continue to incorporate a low impact silvicultural approach. This will increase age diversity and provide attractive mature stands close to centre for recreational activity. The efficacy of these systems will be under constant review.

U144E to Dallas

B9102 to Craigellachie

B9102 to Knockando and Ballindalloch

U139E Carron