Abstract: The purpose of this report is to seek agreement to publish the draft Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework (AWFF) for public consultation and to also submit the Environmental Report (Strategic Environmental Assessment) to the Consultation Authorities.

1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 It is recommended that Committee:-

(i) agree to publish the draft Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework for public consultation purposes;

(ii) have regard to and take account of the Environmental Report (published alongside this Committee report) undertaken by Land Use Consultants on behalf of Angus Council;

(iii) note that Angus Council, as the Responsible Authority, require to publish and submit the Environmental Report to the Scottish Government SEA Gateway and Consultation Authorities;

(iv) note that a further report on the outcome of the public consultation will be submitted to a future Infrastructure Services Committee.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Infrastructure Services Committee at their meeting of 3 June 2008 agreed to commission the preparation of an Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework which would ‘assist targeted use of existing resources and acquisition of further resources to invest in specific forestry and woodland initiatives’. (Report 565/08 refers).

2.2 In recent years, the rationale for public support for forestry has changed markedly and now reflects the multiple benefits which can derive from well-managed woodlands. In addition climate change mitigation and sustainable energy production from woodfuel have presented significant opportunities for well-managed new and existing woodlands in Scotland.

2.3 Existing development plan guidance on forestry in Angus is provided by the Tayside Indicative Forestry Strategy (IFS) introduced originally as part of the Tayside Structure Plan 1993 and incorporated into the approved Dundee and Angus Structure Plan 2002. This provided a strategic framework for considering commercial forestry proposals. However with recent significant developments in the implementation of national forestry policy and the wider rural environmental sector, it was considered helpful to produce a dedicated Woodland and Forestry Framework for Angus. Although a non-statutory document it would seek to draw together the various strands of policy change and development opportunities in forestry.

2.4 Following the tendering process Rural Development Initiatives Ltd were awarded the contract in 2009 and have undertaken various consultation stages with key stakeholders, preparation of preliminary drafts etc before reaching the current stage of a Draft Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework. In parallel with this process, a Strategic Environmental Assessment of
the Woodland and Forestry Framework has been undertaken by Land Use Consultants, and the Environmental Report will also be published alongside the Framework.

2.5 It should be noted that the Forestry Commission Scotland have provided financial, information and mapping support for the preparation of the Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework.

2.6 While a full copy of the Draft Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework and Environmental Report is available for reference purposes in the Members Lounge, The Cross, Forfar, a copy of the AWFF contents page is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

3 SUMMARY OF ANGUS WOODLAND AND FORESTRY FRAMEWORK

3.1 The Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework (AWFF) sits alongside other Scottish Government initiatives which aim to enhance the opportunities that woodland and forests can bring. It should also be viewed in the context of the Government's broad target to achieve 25% woodland cover across Scotland by 2050. The AWFF follows the principles of the Scottish Forestry Strategy but has been developed specifically to meet local needs in Angus and maximise its unique opportunities. The AWFF applies to all of Angus except that part of the area covered by the Cairngorm National Park, which has its own Forestry and Woodland Framework. In line with these initiatives the overall aims of the AWFF are to:

- encourage best use of Angus's existing woodland and forestry resource;
- focus efforts taken in Angus to help deliver on the outcomes and objectives of the Scottish Forestry Strategy and the Angus Single Outcome Agreement;
- act as a means of assessing the contribution Angus could make towards delivering national and regional targets;
- identify existing levels of woodland and forestry related activity in Angus; and
- ensure consistency with other policies and strategies.

3.2 In developing the Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework the seven Key Themes from the Scottish Forestry Strategy have been considered in terms of the specific contribution Angus could make and opportunities then highlighted to demonstrate the range of activities that could be undertaken to help Angus assist in the delivery of the Scottish Forestry Strategy. This is set out in Appendix 2 of this report. The key themes are as follows:

- Climate change
- Timber
- Business Development
- Community Development
- Access and Health
- Environmental Quality
- Biodiversity

3.3 The AWFF is structured in five main sections together with four appendices. (A copy of the contents page is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.) Sections 1 and 2 provide the introduction and background to the document, while section 3 sets out the strategic themes; section 4 the potential for woodland expansion in Angus; and section 5 delivering the Woodland and Forestry Framework in Angus. The appendices set out opportunities for action and case studies; SRDP/Rural priorities matrix; list of key partners; and consultation responses.

3.4 Section 4 on the potential for woodland expansion highlights that during the 20th century the area of woodland in Angus has doubled from 4% to 10% at an average increase of 150–200ha per annum. However in recent years the level of new woodland establishment has reduced to approx 70ha per annum. It is also noted that the Scottish Government has established a target of 25% woodland cover across Scotland by 2050. While it is considered that there is scope for additional woodland in Angus there was no consensus on the scale of
woodland expansion appropriate for Angus during initial public consultation by the consultants. A major factor in this is the significance of arable farming on good quality farmland in the Lowlands of Angus and the emphasis on land management for game shooting in the uplands and the Angus Glens. As a consequence it is considered unrealistic to expect or indeed promote a major land use change in these areas to favour forestry in order to achieve 25% woodland cover in Angus.

3.5 The report identifies four potential zones where it is considered there is potential to appropriately target new woodland creation in Angus. These are set out in table 1 below (and shown in map form in the AWFF report) and are considered areas where woodland creation or expansion would add desirable economic, environmental and social benefits.

Table 1: Opportunities for Woodland Expansion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential woodland creation zone</th>
<th>Land category</th>
<th>Woodland type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Angus Glens</td>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td>Areas of land suitable for creation of new or management of existing productive woodlands, including forest habitat networks and native woodland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angus Foothills and Sidlaw Hills</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Areas where main emphasis should be placed on creating or managing farm woodlands, including shelterbelts and short rotation forestry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlands in and around towns</td>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td>Areas where main emphasis should be on creating or managing woodlands in and around towns (WIAT).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowland Angus</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Areas where potential exists for limited woodland creation for amenity, biodiversity, landscape, sporting purposes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6 It is considered that The Angus Glens and Woodland in and Around Towns (WIAT) offer the greatest scope to accommodate future expansion of a range of woodland types. These two zones are considered to be preferred in terms of woodland creation.

3.7 The Angus Foothills/Sidlaw Hills offer significant potential to accommodate future expansion of a limited range of woodland types. This is also considered as potential land in terms of woodland creation.

3.8 Lowlands Angus also shows the potential to accommodate expansion of a limited range of woodland types and is considered as potential land in terms of woodland creation. However due to the economic importance of this agricultural area little significant woodland creation would be expected to take place other than for amenity, biodiversity, landscaping and/or sporting purposes.

3.9 The zones are illustrated on a map base within the document but given the mapping scale, are indicative only. Other types of forest/woodland may also be appropriate within the zones.
and all new projects would need to be approved by relevant regulatory bodies and take account of industry standards and guidelines.

3.10 Section 5 ‘Delivering a Woodland and Forestry Framework in Angus’ is the main part of the document. This is based on the seven key themes identified in the Scottish Forestry Strategy and outlines how these could be delivered in Angus. A range of opportunities has been identified in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. The opportunities identified are focussed on:

- encouraging new woodland creation in appropriate areas for a variety of purposes, including carbon sequestration, quality timber production and Forest Habitats Networks;
- promoting Woodland in and Around Towns (WIAT) opportunities and increasing community involvement in woodland and related activities; particularly in the responsible access and health living agendas;
- developing Angus as an exemplar in utilising biomass as a renewable source of heat energy and in developing the necessary support side infrastructure;
- supporting the one larger scale sawmill in Angus to sustain its key niche market in handling larger dimension logs;
- investigating the potential for more sustainable forest based tourism, including active pursuits;
- pro-actively pursuing greater integration of forestry with farming and sporting land use interests;
- promoting the potential contribution of trees and woodlands to the quality of Angus’ cultural heritage; and
- supporting key habitats and species identified in the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan including red squirrels and riparian woodlands.

3.11 Appendix 2 of the Framework sets out a range of economic and development opportunities in Angus and case studies under each of the seven key themes. This contains a more detailed description of the potential opportunities for action (some 50 projects) and their associated priorities and possible delivery partners. The case studies demonstrate examples of good practice both within Angus and further afield.

3.12 The Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework comes within the scope of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and consequently a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken. SEA is a systematic method for assessing the environmental effects of the AWFF and mitigation of any adverse effects before plan implementation. (See paragraph 9.1 below)

3.13 An Environmental Report (ER) has been prepared on behalf of the Council by Land Use Consultants as an integral part of the AWFF project. The initial findings of the assessment have been used to assist in finalising the AWFF. Angus Council, as the Responsible Authority, are required to publish the Environmental Report alongside the AWFF. There is a prescribed process for this stage – publishing the relevant statutory advertisement; submitting a copy of the ER to the SEA Gateway and Consultation Authorities (SNH, Historic Scotland and SEPA) and also making the Environmental Report publically available for comment.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Forestry is a minor, but nonetheless important part of the Angus rural economy and has traditionally been integrated into estate management, together with more significant farming and sporting interests. Angus has a current woodland cover of approximately 10% compared to 17% woodland cover for Scotland as a whole. Angus contains a mosaic of different forest and woodland types including, large scale coniferous plantations such as in the Angus Glens (Glen Clova and Glen Isla) and Montreathmont; mixed traditional estate woodlands such as Airlie, Glamis, Kinnordy and South Esk; small scale mixed lowland farm woodlands and semi
natural birch woodland remnants (eg Glen Esk) and the region supports a wide range of tree species.

4.2 One of the roles of the AWFF is to identify the potential for woodland expansion in Angus. The Scottish Government's target is 25% woodland cover across Scotland by 2050. However in the Angus context, given the significance of arable farming on good quality agricultural land in the lowlands of Angus and the current emphasis on land management for game shooting in the uplands and Angus Glens, the study concludes that it is unrealistic to expect or indeed promote a major land use change in the these areas to favour forestry in order to achieve 25% woodland cover in Angus. Nonetheless there is opportunity for a range of new woodland and while the main potential woodland areas are identified individual planting schemes will continue to be subject to industry standards, guidelines and relevant approvals.

4.3 The AWFF will help to deliver the outcomes of the Scottish Forestry Strategy (2006) as well as assist Angus Council in meeting commitments in relation to sustainable rural development, biodiversity, climate change and health improvement targets and lifelong learning priorities. It also gives priority to protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment eg. through expansion of Forest Habitat Networks and protection of key habitat types and species. The AWFF also supports and complements similar neighbouring strategic forestry documents including the Forest and Woodland Strategy produced by Perth and Kinross Council, the Urban Woodland Strategy in Dundee, and the Cairngorms Forestry and Woodland Framework.

4.4 The Framework allows partner agencies within Angus to work with a coherent plan, containing specific objectives, which tie together the various policies and initiatives now prevalent in this sector including the acquisition of further resources to invest in specific forestry and woodland initiatives and projects, which are identified under the seven key themes.

4.5 In particular it is intended that the Framework will encourage sustainable development options and contribute to Angus’s sustainable energy and tourism growth targets, through new woodlands for carbon sequestration, biomass and use of home grown timber for building and construction. Some of the projects also focus on business growth through adding value locally and identifying forest tourism opportunities.

4.6 The Environmental Report identifies that the AWFF is likely to have a broadly positive effect on the environment.

4.7 In terms of Development Plan policy the Indicative Forestry Strategy (IFS) - originally set out in the Tayside Structure Plan (1993) and continued through in the Dundee and Angus Structure Plan (2002) - is not being continued in the emerging TAYplan – Strategic Development Plan. The Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework although a non statutory document will provide a basis for helping to consider woodland and forestry development proposals and related economic and tourism projects.

4.8 On approval of this report by Committee it is intended to publish the draft Angus Woodlands and Forestry Framework, and for the consultants to undertake consultation during July with a range of consultees and the public, including a second public consultation meeting. The Environmental Report will also be published and submitted to the Scottish Gateway. On completion of the consultation period a further Committee report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee for final approval of AWFF, followed by publication of the document and the post adoption statement required under the SEA regulations.
5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Funding for this consultancy project was approved in Report 568/08 and the £10,000 contribution from Angus Council is allowed for within the Planning and Transport Revenue budget. There are no further financial implications directly arising as a result of the recommendations contained in this report.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no human rights implications arising directly from this report.

7 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The issues contained in this report fall within an approved category that has been confirmed as exempt from an equalities perspective.

8 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

8.1 The Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework contributes directly the following local outcome(s) contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus.

  1. We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe
     • Sustainable business growth in Angus is achieved.
     • Growth in tourism in Angus is achieved.

  12. We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations
     • Angus’ natural environment is protected and enhanced.
     • Angus’ built environment is protected and enhanced.
     • Angus’ built and natural environment is valued and enjoyed.

  14 We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production
     • The carbon and ecological footprints of Angus are reduced.

9 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

9.1 An Environmental Report (ER) has been prepared on behalf of the Council by Land Use Consultants as an integral part of the AWFF project. The initial findings of the assessment have been used to assist in finalising the AWFF. Angus Council, as the Responsible Authority, are required to publish the Environmental Report alongside the AWFF. There is a prescribed process for this stage – publishing the relevant statutory advertisement; submitting a copy of the ER to the SEA Gateway and Consultation Authorities (SNH, Historic Scotland and SEPA) and also making the Environmental Report publically available for comment.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Law & Administration, Head of Finance and Director of Neighbourhood Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.
11 CONCLUSION

11.1 The AWFF establishes a framework for the next 5 – 10 years and puts forestry into a wider context of rural development within Angus. Publication of the Draft Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework will allow public consultation on the document and the accompanying Environmental Report.

ERIC S LOWSON
DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

NOTE: The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

- Angus Local Plan Review, adopted February 2009;
- Dundee and Angus Structure Plan Approved October 2002;
- Tayside Structure Plan 1993, approved 1997;
- Report 565/08, Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework, to Angus Council Infrastructure Services Committee 3 June 2008

P&T/GWC/GDP/IAL
16 May 2011
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Appendix 2: Key strategic themes for Angus

In developing the Angus Woodland and Forestry Framework, a number of key strategic themes have been identified which focus on specific opportunities and conditions in Angus and also link to the relevant policy documents and initiatives. In turn, these themes will enable the Framework to:-

1. Help Angus reduce the impact of climate change and better equip the county to be able to adapt to its changing climate by:-
   i. Identifying potential areas for new woodland creation in appropriate areas
   ii. Encouraging closer integration between forestry and farming
   iii. Highlighting opportunities for farm diversification
   iv. Supporting the continuing use and expansion of biomass for heating
   v. Promoting the benefits of carbon sequestration through the Woodland Carbon Code

2. Maximise the benefits of Angus’s increasing and sustainable timber resource, support business development and strengthen the forest industry and its contribution to local economic growth and employment by:-
   i. Promoting the use of local timber as a substitute for non-renewable materials
   ii. Identifying business development opportunities
   iii. Underpinning sustainable forest management

3. Improve the quality of life and well-being of local residents and visitors to Angus by supporting community development and encourage an increased community involvement in forestry and woodland initiatives by:-
   i. Developing opportunities for and expanding the woods in and around the towns and villages in Angus
   ii. Sharing good practice with initiatives in the neighbouring councils of Dundee, Aberdeenshire and Perth & Kinross
   iii. Investigating opportunities for increased woodland education initiatives

4. Encourage responsible access to and enjoyment of forests and woodland across Angus and help improve physical and mental health of residents by:-
   i. Highlighting opportunities for expanding sustainable recreational facilities in the Angus Glens & on private land
   ii. Promoting the development and management of woods for health at Stracathro Hospital

5. Protect the environmental quality of Angus’s natural resources, enhance its landscape and make the most of its unique historic environment and to help restore, maintain and enhance the county’s biodiversity as highlighted in the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan and increase an awareness and enjoyment of it by:-
i. Helping to deliver habitat enhancement as set out in the South Esk Catchment Management Plan

ii. Developing linkages with the Forest Habitat Networks in the Angus Glens, Cairngorms National Park and Eastern Perthshire

iii. Promoting Angus’ rich cultural heritage, particularly in the Angus Glens, historic houses and veteran trees

iv. Highlighting specific woodland types to assist with the protection of key species such as red squirrels