

Screele & Potterlands FDP Brief

Background

This is the first revision of the Screele & Potterlands Forest Design Plan (FDP), this is a rolling 35-year plan formally reviewed every five years. Screele and Potterlands are two steep sided hills overlooking Auchencairn bay and the river Urr estuary. Though Screele is the highest point in the area, it is only one many similar hills along the western side of the Urr estuary. The open hill surrounding its top gives great views in all directions. These two blocks cover 570 Ha, of which approximately 500 Ha is currently productive. The only waymarked route to the top is through the forest from the FCS car park on the A711. Potterlands is the next hill to the north east of Screele, though it is not as high its position on the edge of the coastal plain make it an important part of the landscape. The A711 Auchencairn to Dalbeattie road runs along the western edge, and a minor road to Gelston separates the two blocks. The nearest village is Auchencairn, which is approximately 5 miles to the south. Most of the forest is visible from the public roads.

Most of the first rotation crop was planted between 1950 and 1970. The first five years of the restructuring process is already improving the internal and external forest landscape. The forest design has been compromised by continuing windblow throughout the forest, but particularly in the southwestern corner.

This forest is in the 'coastal zone' (ref. Ae FD Strategic Plan) key priorities being:

- Growing commercial spruce crops to meet market demand
- Increase the biodiversity potential
- Increase the recreational potential
- Improve the visual quality of the forest

As part of the national forest estate this plan will contribute to the seven key national themes in the Scottish Forest Strategy in the following ways:

Theme 1: Climatic Change

- Increase the area of Long Term Retention (LTR) and Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS), particularly along riparian zones, this will maintain higher levels of sequestered carbon and reduce the likelihood of flooding downstream.
- Create stable habitat links through the forest to improve the permeability to both woodland and open ground species

Theme 2: Timber

- Improve the quality of the final crop by increasing the area to be thinned.
- Identifying areas where more productive conifer species could be employed.
- Identify areas where productive broadleaves could be grown.

Theme 3: Business development

- Improve the long-term economic potential of the forest by restructuring the forest to develop a more sustained production from future rotations.
- Increase the area managed under a coppice regime to support local craft business.

- Support the local tourist economy by improving the visual amenity along the waymarked route to the summit of Screel and ensuring that due consideration is given to the impact of forest design within the wider landscape of the National Scenic Area.

Theme 4: Community development

- Local community views on the draft Forest Design Plan (FDP) will be sort through the local Community Councils before final Approval is sort.
- Continue to work in partnership with the Taliassan Community woods to develop access links and use of the forest.
- Agree with Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council ways to enhance the FDP for local stakeholders.

Theme 5: Access and Health

- Ae FD recreation strategy defines this as a ‘General recreation forest’ indicating that FCS do not propose to significantly change the existing facilities

Theme 6: Environmental quality

- Most of the forest is within the East Stewartry Coast National Scenic Area; all major changes to the forest landscape will be sensitively managed.
- The visual impact of the internal and external forest landscape will be modified in accordance with the D&G Landscape Character guidance for Types 20 Coastal Granite Uplands.

Theme 7: Biodiversity

- Areas of suitable habitat for Black grouse will be increased by modifying forest design, in particular the upper margins.
- The Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) to be restored (Chapelyard and Potterlands Burn) will become part of a permanent habitat network that links all parts of the forest increasing the permeability of the forest to as wide a variety of fauna and flora as practical (ref. Ae FD Policy 4 PAWS)
- Identify areas that will be managed to increase the volume and biodiversity value of standing and fallen deadwood.