

Wind's Eye, Gartly Forest Community Purchase Feasibility Report

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I Executive Summary

Huntly Development Trust¹ (HDT) is an active, ambitious community organisation established in 2009 “to work with others to build a resilient, inclusive, enterprising community capable of dealing with ongoing change.” Its community of benefit is defined as the AB54 postcode district in Western Aberdeenshire.

HDT has over 600 members, is governed by a board of 7 volunteer Trustees/Directors and employs 24 people (13 FTE). Its annual turnover is ca £1.5 million.

Since establishment, HDT has undertaken a wide variety of projects of increasing scale and complexity and with a wide range of partners. These include the purchase and redevelopment of three vacant town centre properties in Huntly, including the award-winning flagship Number 30 venue on The Square with its cinema, café, co-working office, learning zone and other spaces. Underpinning HDT’s work is its purchase in 2014 of the 25.5ha (63 acre) hill farm of Greenmyres, specifically with the intention of installing a 500kw wind turbine adjacent to the existing Dummies Wind Farm and Gartly Forest (GF)

HDT has investigated the potential of acquiring all or part of GF with a view to expanding what it can deliver from Greenmyres and generating additional (financial) benefits to the community arising from community ownership of the forest. The forest is currently owned by Scottish Ministers and is managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS).

HDT’s acquisition plans now focus on the Wind’s Eye area of Gartly Forest. Wind’s Eye is the rounded hill just to the South of Greenmyres. Its eastern flank is planted woodland that extends northwards from the main Gartly Forest area and wraps around the eastern side of Greenmyres (see Map 1).

An initial study into the community acquisition option, commissioned by HDT and carried out by CWA in 2020/21 was, for a variety of reasons, only taken to a final draft stage. It considered the feasibility of the local community purchasing the whole of Gartly Forest (1,222 ha), just the Wind’s Eye block (168 ha), or the Wind’s Eye block and Wishach Hill areas (422 ha). The conclusion in this draft report was that purchase of the Wind’s Eye block would be the preferred, most realistic option for the community, and as such this area is considered in more detail in this 2025/26 update to CWA’s initial report.

The report is augmented by additional work on the potential of the site for mountain bike development commissioned from CRC² and Collective Trax³. It also incorporates the site’s potential for hosting a wind farm development. Renewable energy generation was initially

¹ <https://www.huntlydt.org/>

² <https://www.crc.scot/>

³ <https://collectivetrax.com/>

explored by Green Cat Renewables⁴ and subsequently progressed in more detail by Locogen⁵.

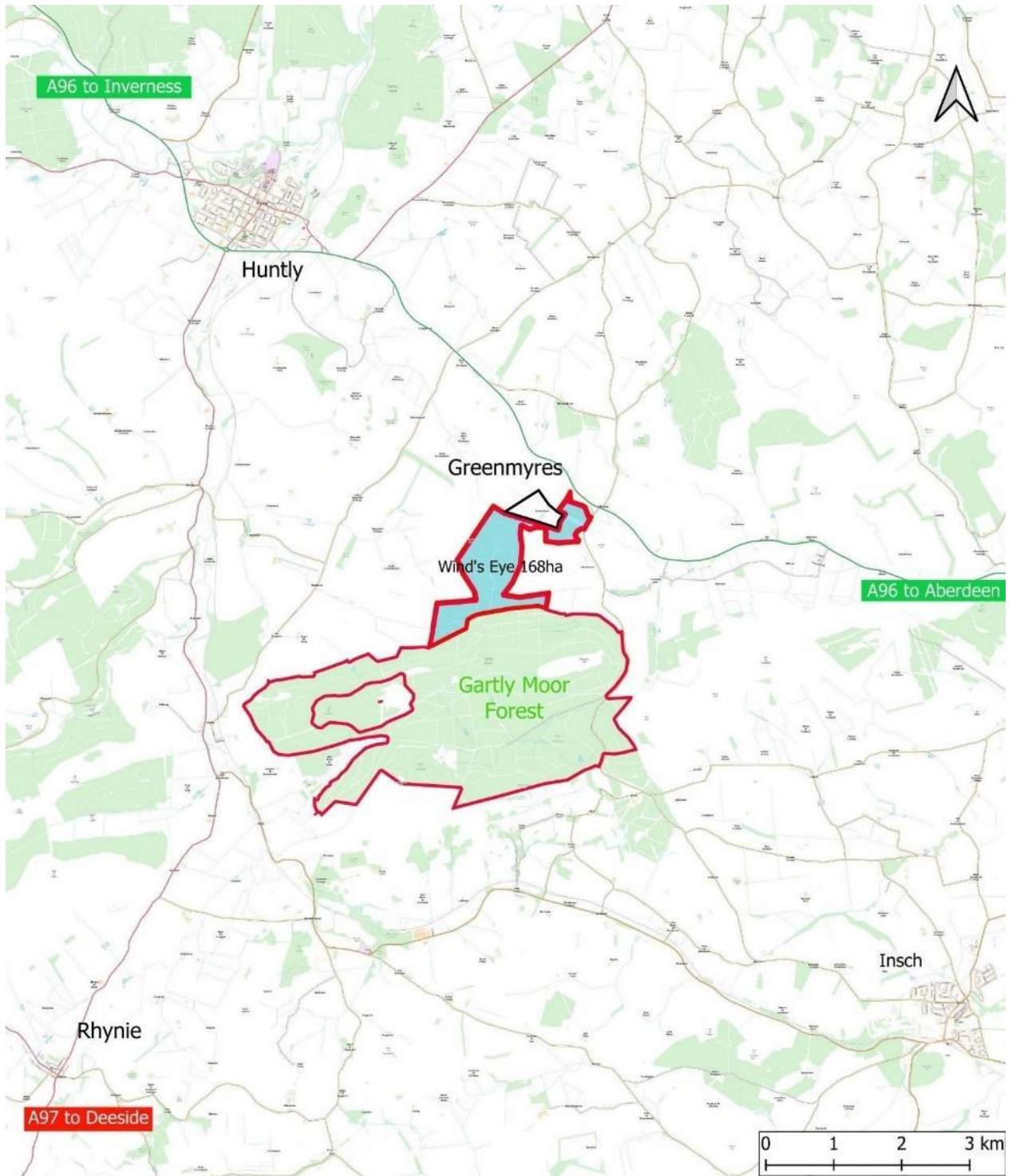
The report assesses the potential for community ownership of Wind's Eye as an opportunity to deliver a variety of community development aspirations and generate significant long-term income, largely through renewable energy, for investment in other community projects. It is intended to inform HDT's discussions and consultation with the local community, feedback from which will be incorporated into a final report and business plan. This will lay out the community's preferred options, provide income and expenditure projections and support HDT's fundraising for the purchase costs and subsequent management and development of the proposed acquisition. Acquisition would be via the Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) operated by FLS.

The report's key conclusions are:

- Most of HDT's current objectives and aspirations for woodland ownership could be delivered through the acquisition of Wind's Eye, rather than needing to purchase the whole of GF.
- The scale of the Wind's Eye block and its adjacency to Greenmyres means that a wide range of projects could be undertaken. Some of these can be income-generating, others not.
- The potential for future income from timber harvesting will depend on whether FLS fell coupes before sale, but long-term the site is viable for sustainable production of conifer construction timber and birch and conifer woodfuel. Provision of tourist accommodation might produce a small income but would only become a consideration for development once the options for renewable energy generation had been fully explored and implemented. Most other public access and environmental projects will require support from grants or other funding.
- The exposure of the site gives it significant potential for renewable energy. Three contemporary, large, turbines are considered achievable, subject to overcoming development constraints. This would be a key income-generator delivering substantial income for HDT and the local community into the second half of the century.
- Acquisition rather than entering into a lease or management agreement fits best with HDT's aims for the site.
- Acquisition should be seen as complementary to and synergistic with the development of Greenmyres: activities in the future community woodland will help drive footfall at Greenmyres, whilst development of Greenmyres will help monetise the use of the forest.

⁴ <https://www.greencatrenewables.co.uk/>

⁵ <https://locogen.com>



Map 1: Gartly Forest, Wind's Eye Block and Greenmyres location map

2 Introduction

2.1 Feasibility Study remit and outline

With the support of the Scottish Land Fund (SLF), in 2020 HDT commissioned the Community Woodlands Association (CWA) to produce a comprehensive feasibility study for community ownership and management of all or part of Gartly Forest (GF). This work was concluded in draft in summer 2021, but for a variety of reasons - largely related to HDT's own internal capacity and focus on other key projects - not progressed further at that time.

The current document presents the findings of CWA's initial work, updated as necessary to reflect changes that have occurred in the interim.

The feasibility study assesses the potential for community ownership and management of all or part of GF to offer the community a wide range of new opportunities to develop forest-based activities, wellbeing, recreation, accommodation and education, as well as generating income for community investment from timber harvesting and renewable energy. The study is supported by further work commissioned by HDT since 2020/21 on the opportunities around renewable energy (work by Locogen) and outline mountain bike route options (CR Contracting and Collective Trax). Key findings of their work are included within this report.

The study intends to:

- Describe the woodland and the background to community involvement and outlines the community's objectives for management.
- Assess the feasibility of a "long list" of projects and activities which might deliver those objectives.
- Identify any significant risks and challenges faced in community ownership of the Wind's Eye section of GF (the study's recommended area for acquisition) and the proposed management activities, and to advise on how to mitigate these risks.
- Provide realistic advice on navigating the Forestry and Land Scotland Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) and Scottish Land Fund (SLF) processes.

The feasibility study forms the basis of HDT's consultation with the local community and internal discussions, the feedback and decisions from which will be incorporated in a final report and business plan, which will:

- Lay out the community's preferred options for forest management and development projects to be taken forward in the first five years of community ownership.
- Provide a 25-year indicative cashflow and detailed income and expenditure projections for the first five years.
- Support HDT's fundraising for the costs of acquisition and subsequent management and development of Wind's Eye.

2.2 Huntly and District

The town of Huntly (population approximately 4,600⁶) is located in Aberdeenshire, North East Scotland. Established as the seat of the Gordon clan, it is a market town for the surrounding, agricultural community, with around 7,000 people looking to Huntly as their rural service centre. Huntly is connected to Inverness and Aberdeen by the A96 trunk road and railway line, by the Banff/Deeside A97 and Huntly/Dufftown A920.

The main industries in Huntly and the surrounding area are agriculture, forestry, distilling and tourism. Huntly is also home to Deans (shortbread makers). Agriculture focusses today on livestock and barley. Forestry has become a significant land-use with several large plantations established during the 20th century. Many of these are owned by Scottish Ministers and managed by FLS, although recent years have seen the establishment of new plantations on private land. Public access is promoted in several of the plantations close to Huntly, including The Bin (5km) and Coynachie (8km). Huntly has a primary and secondary school, along with sporting and cultural facilities serving the wider area, such as a swimming pool, library, sports grounds and HDT's recent cinema development at Number 30, The Square.

Like many rural/small town communities, Huntly and District struggles to retain economic output and young people, and faces some significant challenges as highlighted in the most recent (2020) release of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD):

- Two out of five SIMD data-zones in Huntly are in the 30% most deprived in Scotland. One of these is the 12th most deprived area in Aberdeenshire.
- Around 9% of the population in Huntly and District can be described as income deprived and 7% of the working population employment deprived.
- Over half of the data-zones in Huntly and District have a higher than the national average proportion of the population with no qualifications.
- 7% of 16- to 19-year-olds living in the most deprived data-zone in Huntly are not participating in education, employment or training. In the same data-zone, 13% of residents live in overcrowded households.
- Overall initial leaver destinations from The Gordon Schools (TGS) are in line with national data, however a disparity exists within the most deprived 30% of pupils, particularly with those whose initial destination is unemployment/seeking work (22% at TGS, 7% nationally).
- 26% of Huntly's population is aged 65+ (18% across Aberdeenshire). The town also has a higher rate of dementia compared to Aberdeenshire levels.
- Depression rates range from 12% to 20% of the population.
- All data zones that constitute the district hinterland of the town are in the 20% most geographical access deprived in Scotland as a whole. One of these is ranked 132nd out of 6,976 for geographic access.

⁶ <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/statistics/population/>

Aberdeenshire Council statistics⁷ from January 2025 reveal that Huntly's average household income (£32,057) is almost the lowest of any settlement in Aberdeenshire, 30% below the Aberdeenshire average (£45,853). It also ranks well below the average income for Scotland (£39,386, -19%) and the UK (£42,470, -25%).

At a larger scale, the economy of the whole of the North East of Scotland is undergoing major transition through the decline of oil and gas.

2.3 Huntly Development Trust

2.3.1 Structure and aims

Huntly Development Trust (HDT) is a company limited by guarantee⁸ with charitable status⁹. Established in 2009, it has a membership of over 600 and is managed by a board of 7 directors/Trustees (brief biographies are contained in Appendix 1)¹⁰. The Trust now employs 26 staff members (ca 14 FTE) and has an annual turnover of around £1.5 million.

The company's Memorandum and Articles of Association¹¹ state that:

"The company has been formed to benefit the community of Huntly and surrounding district as defined by the postcode sectors within postcode district AB54 (the "Community"). The Company has the aim to build a resilient, inclusive, enterprising Community capable of dealing with ongoing change.

The Company has the following objectives:

- *To advance development of the Community by maintaining, improving and regenerating its physical, economic, social and cultural infrastructure, and assisting people who are at a disadvantage because of their social and economic circumstances;*
- *To advance the education of people and organisations so that they can play a leading, proactive role in the sustainable development of the Community;*
- *To advance the arts, heritage and culture of the Community to the benefit of both locals and visitors;*
- *To advance public participation in sport (meaning sport which involves physical skill and exertion);*
- *To advance environmental protection or improvement;*
- *To provide recreational facilities and organise recreational activities within the Community, with the object of improving the conditions of life for all; and*
- *To promote, establish, operate and/or support other similar activities and projects of a charitable nature within the Community for its benefit.*

⁷ <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/statistics/economy/#Income>

⁸ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC358964>

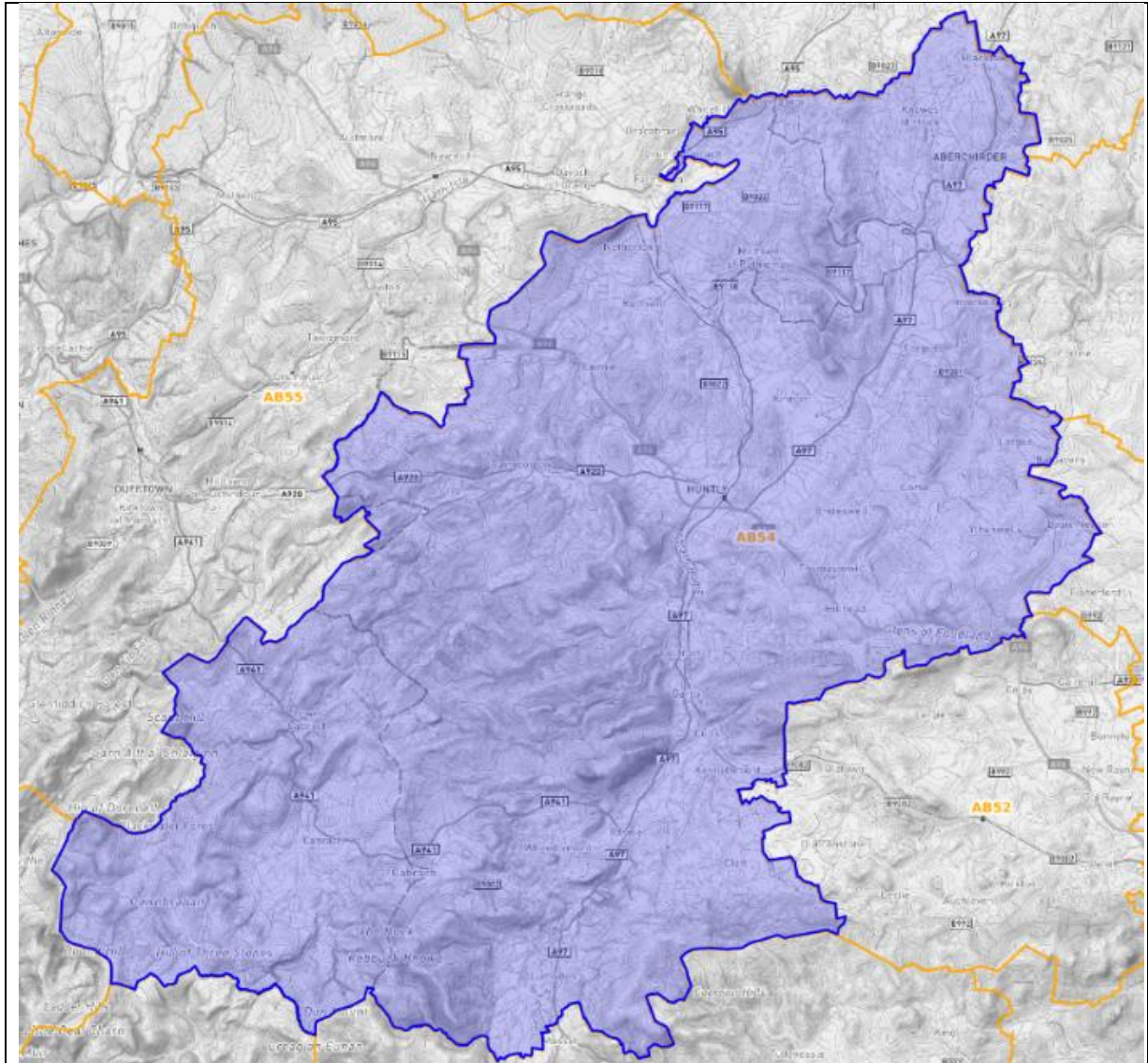
⁹ <https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/search-the-register/charity-details?number=43353>

¹⁰ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC358964/officers>

¹¹ Available at <https://www.huntlydt.org/about-us/documents>

But such that the Company shall do so following the principles of sustainable development and in a way that respects and enhances the Community's local culture, social traditions and built heritage, as well as the local and global natural environment."

Map 2 below shows HDT's formally defined community of benefit, the AB54 postcode district.



Map 2: HDT area of community benefit (AB54 postcode district)¹²

2.3.2 Huntly Development Trust community assets and activity

Since establishment in 2009, HDT has undertaken a wide variety of projects of increasing scale and complexity and with an extensive range of partners. These include:

- Purchase and initial redevelopment of a 25.5ha hill farm at Greenmyres, 8km by road SE of Huntly and easily accessible from the A96. Developments to date include a new watersports facility, cycle pump track and family-friendly outdoor education centre. Given its relevance to the proposed acquisition of Wind's Eye, Greenmyres is explained in more detail in section 2.3.3 below.

¹² From <https://crtb.sedsh.gov.uk/crtb/>

- Acquisition and redevelopment of 3 town centre buildings as part of Huntly's wider Room to Thrive community regeneration strategy¹³. These include conversion of the former RBS into a home for Orbs Community Bookshop and the reimagining of the former Cruickshanks store into the flagship Number 30 venue on The Square. This award-winning redevelopment contains a cinema, café, co-working, learning zone, a Changing Places facility and the new Huntly Banking Hub. Number 30 hosts a wide range of activities to support community wellbeing in all kinds of ways, from boccia sessions to Pilates, toddler time to choir rehearsals, enterprise development and support. It employs 19 people on a full and part-time basis, a significant number in our community, and additional work experience/apprenticeship opportunities for local school pupils.
- Establishment and operation of the Huntly Travel Hub, offering car, e-bike and community minibus hire as well as foot and cycle path development and promotion. This includes construction of a multi-trail link from Huntly to Greenmyres and into GF.
- Installation of gateway signage for Huntly.
- Leadership of the Huntly Learning and Leisure Campus project, as part of the Town Team Forum facilitating community consultation on future development of the North side of Huntly.
- Co-ordination of a skills development and exchange project with 3 communities in Finland.

To reduce its dependency on grant funding and ensure its long-term sustainability, HDT seeks to generate its own income wherever possible. To that end, it has developed its own community wind turbine at Greenmyres and secured enhanced community benefit in two commercially-owned wind farms. Together, these three developments generate ca £250,000 per annum towards HDT operational costs and investment in its community projects.

HDT is an active member of the Huntly Town Team (HTT), a multi-stakeholder group made up of representatives from a range of community organisations in Huntly and the public sector. The HTT meets roughly quarterly to liaise with public sector partners, such as Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian, on community issues and plans.

¹³ Available at: <https://www.huntlydt.org/about-us/documents>

2.3.3 Greenmyres

With the help of a grant from the Scottish Land Fund (SLF), HDT purchased Greenmyres Farm, some 8km south east of Huntly, in 2014. The farm is located very close to the A96 Aberdeen-Inverness trunk road and borders the Forest and Land Scotland (FLS) Gartly Forest. On purchase, the farm comprised:

- a deteriorating 1.5 storey farmhouse
- various outbuildings in a poor state of repair (now demolished and material recycled on-site)
- a large pond, used for fishing and leisure; and
- 63 acres of upland grazing, let to a local farmer.

The twin aims of the purchase were to:

- erect a wind turbine to generate a significant stream of long-term income to provide investment in community projects and sustain HDT
- develop the site as a venue that delivers a variety of social, environmental and economic benefits for our community.

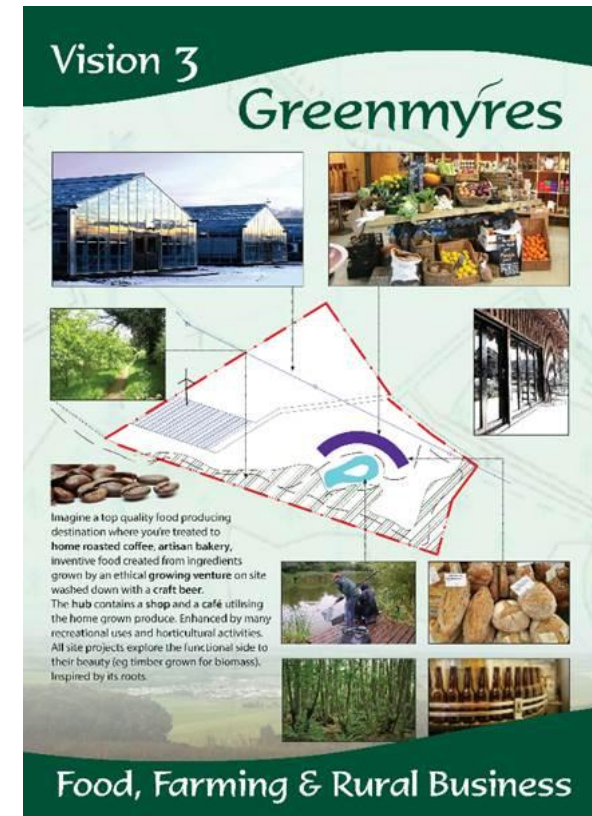
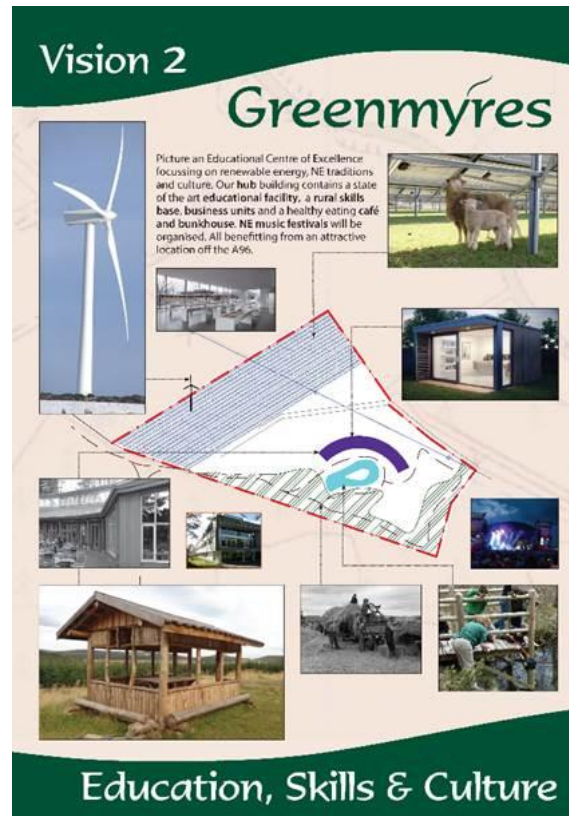
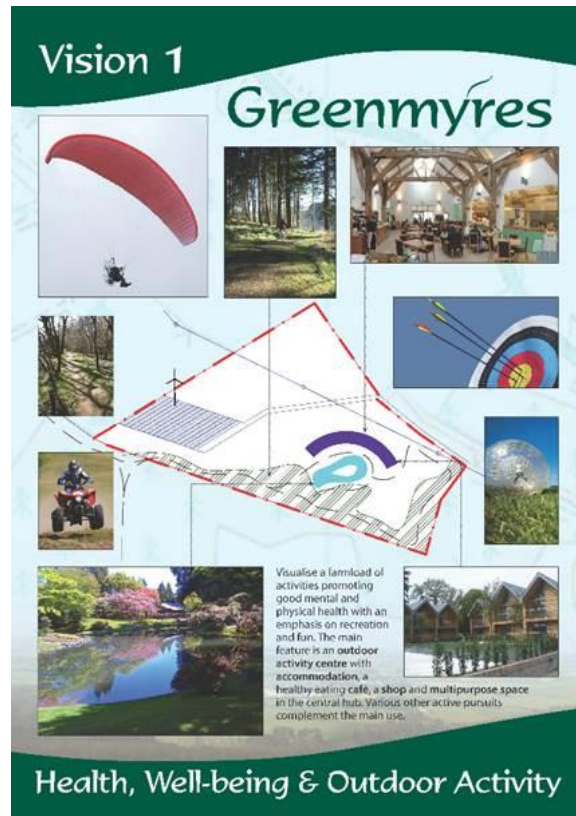
The first aim was realised in November 2016 with commissioning of the Greenmyres community wind turbine. Since then, the turbine has generated over £1 million of unrestricted funds which HDT has been able to use as direct and levered investment in HDT and community projects.

Work on meeting Aim 2 was preceded by identifying more clearly what the community would like to use the site for. Hence, post-acquisition of Greenmyres in March 2014, HDT carried out two rounds of community consultation to identify community ambitions for the site alongside the wind turbine project. The first phase resulted in a significant number of ideas, which were clustered into three broad visions for the second phase of consultation:

- Health Wellbeing and Outdoor Activity
- Education, Skills and Culture
- Food, Farming and Rural Business

Community feedback on these was very positive showing that any of the three, or a mix of all three would be desirable.

Access to Gartly Forest would enable HDT to maximise the opportunities on offer from several of the elements considered.



The 3 “Vision Boards” for Greenmyres developed through the extensive 2014- and 2015 post-purchase consultation process.

To make any of the visions possible, however, HDT first needed to create a safe, warm, sheltered meeting space, with toilets, kitchen and potentially storage to enable individuals and groups to meet and to act as a base to explore the site. In March 2020, the redeveloped former farmhouse opened as the Greenmyres Ecobothy, a fully-accessible exemplar environmental venue capable of hosting groups of up to 30 people. Although initially hit by Covid-19 restrictions, the Ecobothy and wider Greenmyres site is now increasingly well-used by the community.

Further work to realise community aspirations has seen HDT complete a range of other site improvements, such as creation of a car park for up to 25 vehicles, a cycle workshop and equipment store and a dog park. Two wildlife scrapes have been dug and over 6,500 native trees planted. Site connectivity has been improved with completion of missing links in a pre-existing foot/cycle path from Huntly. This allows access to Greenmyres on almost entirely traffic-free paths/roads and creation of a 1.2km foot/cycle path into Gartly Moor providing access to ~30km of forest tracks.

Since 2022, HDT has been working with Opportunity North East¹⁴ and others to create a family-friendly, introductory-level outdoors adventure facility at Greenmyres. This has involved adding a cycle pump track and changing room block (2024) and extending the pond to create a watersports venue capable of hosting canoeing, kayaking and standup paddleboarding, as well as competition-level triathlon events (2025).

These developments have enabled a greater number and wider variety of users to benefit from Greenmyres, and vice versa. The Ecobothy and wider site provide a safe, warm, open and welcoming space to host educational sessions, training, events, meetings and informal drop ins by a wide range of users. These include schools, colleges, uniformed groups, sports groups, businesses and individual users, such as walkers and cyclists. Children's holiday camps have proved a great success and HDT is also working with Aberdeenshire Council on ongoing activity provision for pupils of The Gordon Schools.

A decade on from HDT's purchase of the site, Greenmyres currently provides the following outcomes for the local community:

- improved learning and training opportunities
- improved employment and economic opportunities
- increased awareness of ecological building techniques
- better physical and mental health
- greater social connections for those at risk of isolation in the largely rural area
- greater pride in what the rural area has to offer

¹⁴ <https://www.opportunitynortheast.com/>

2.4 Gartly Forest and Wind's Eye

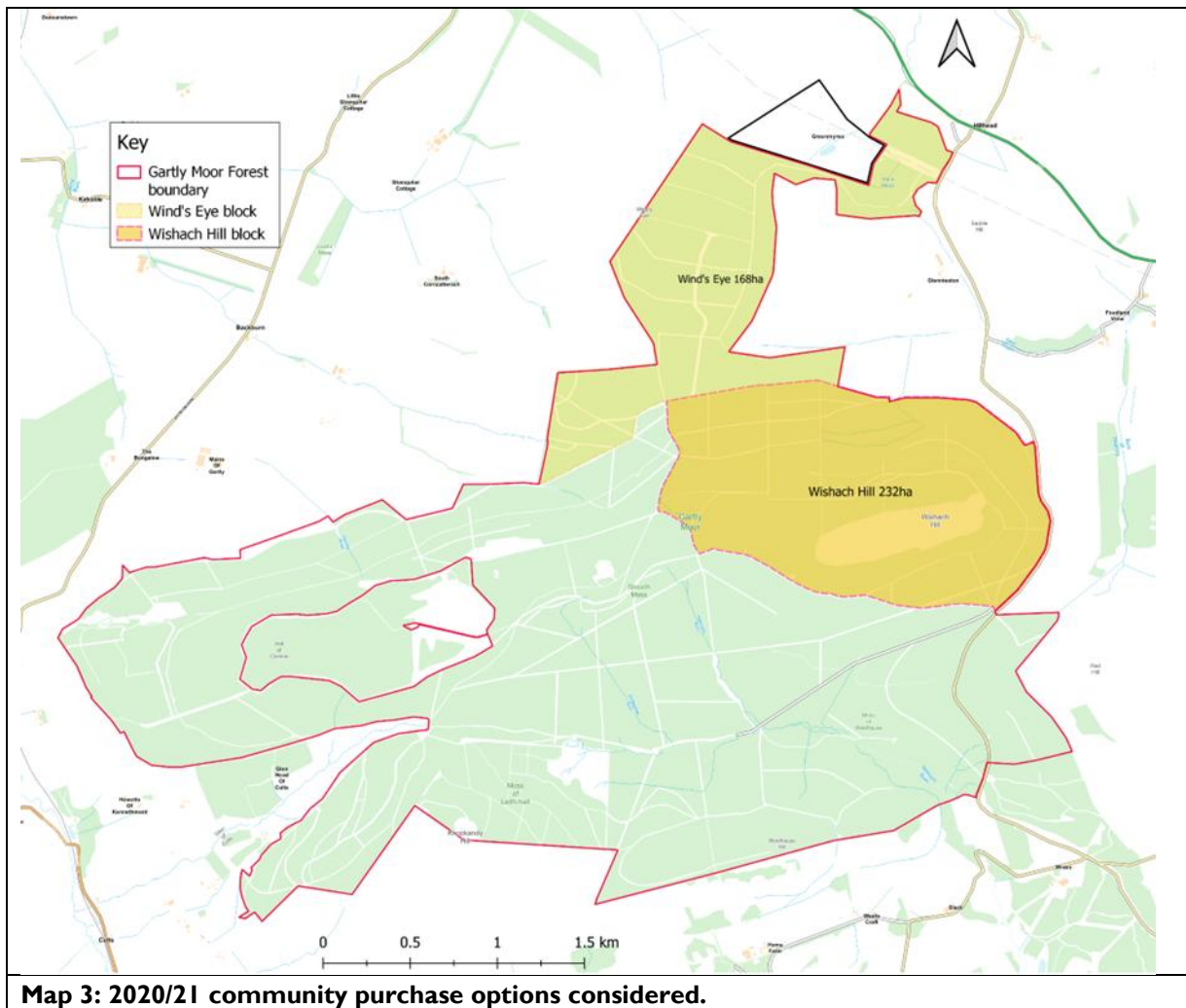
Gartly Forest was purchased in stages by the Forestry Commission from 1946 to 1959, intended as a commercial plantation, albeit at an altitudinal range of 150m to 440m above sea level and on relatively poor soils. The full extent of the forest is 1,222 hectares (ha). Yield classes (YC - cubic metres per hectare per year) vary from 10 to 20 with Sitka spruce yielding on average between YC 12-14. Dothistroma (red band needle blight/Dothistroma Needle Blight/DNB) has affected the growth of lodgepole pine, and lodgepole pine is currently being removed and replaced with Sitka spruce. In 2018, *Phytophthora ramorum* was identified in the larch and sanitation felling is being carried out to try and prevent this fungal disease from infecting more of the larch in the forest and forests of the surrounding area. Whilst some of the stands of spruce and larch are being managed on longer rotations using natural regeneration to replace the mature trees, other stands are vulnerable to windblow and are managed on shorter, clear-fell rotations.

There are several access points into the forest, and the forest roads are well-built and well established. Despite the distance to Huntly (the NW corner is 6km as the crow flies), the forest is used by the public for recreation: walking, dog walking, running, cycling, horse riding, cross-country skiing. There is space for car-parking, but no waymarked trails and Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) are not promoting public access to the area. With FLS agreement, however, HDT created a new path into the forest from Greenmyres in 2018.

Archaeological sites include several wells and some disused slate quarries (See Appendix 2). No sites are designated. There are no conservation designations that affect the site but species of conservation interest recorded on the site include wildcat, water vole, badger, red squirrel and Scottish crossbill.

On commissioning the feasibility study, HDT asked CWA to consider three options for acquisition of all or part of Gartly Forest (see Map 3):

- 1) Purchase of the whole forest (1,222 ha);
- 2) Purchase of the Wind's Eye block (168 ha);
- 3) Purchase of Wind's Eye and Wishach Hill blocks (422 ha).



CWA was asked to assess to what extent these areas could deliver significantly increased community benefit against HDT's objectives for potential acquisition, namely to (strengthen Greenmyres' ability to):

- Enhance social and recreational opportunities in the community;
- Make a greater contribution to biodiversity and conservation;
- Create more opportunities for economic development;
- Improve opportunities for learning in a woodland setting.
- Generate income through renewable energy generation.

Alongside these specific objectives, community ownership of all or part of the forest was recognised at the outset as giving the community, and generations to follow, direct control of decision-making about the forest and the benefits derived from it.

During the 2020/21 study, it became clear that acquisition of the Wind's Eye block, the northern 'arm' of GF adjacent to Greenmyres, is most suited to a community asset transfer request to FLS. Like the rest of GF, Wind's Eye was planted from the early 1950's to produce conifer timber for industrial purposes. Although production is limited to some extent by the altitude (cool and windy environment) and by soil quality (low nutrient status), growth rates and the quality of tree trunks of a range of conifers is still suitable for economically viable timber production. The size of the Wind's

Eye block is also large enough to meet most of HDT's current objectives identified above and is more affordable than acquiring larger areas of GF.

As a precursor to wider community engagement on the opportunity, HDT gauged likely support for potential acquisition plans of Wind's Eye at its 2024 Greenmyres Open Day. 90% of the 84 respondents expressed support. Clearly this is a small sample, but it has encouraged HDT to develop its plans since. The next stage of community engagement in early 2026 will be delivered through a range of media, including HDT's website¹⁵ and social media channels¹⁶, public meetings, one-to-one discussions, flyers, etc.

2.5 Key outcomes of community ownership¹⁷

The Scottish Land Fund (SLF) supports communities to become more resilient and sustainable through the ownership and management of land and buildings. It will fund projects that empower communities through asset ownership and strengthen their voices in the decisions that matter to them. Applicants to the fund must demonstrate that their project will contribute to SLF outcomes:

1. Our communities will achieve more sustainable economic, environmental and/ or social development through ownership of land and buildings.
2. Our communities will have a stronger role in and control over their own development.
3. Our communities own well-managed, financially sustainable land and buildings.

SLF will prioritise applications that can demonstrate a significant positive impact for the community as a whole.

Potential acquisition of Wind's Eye can deliver against each of these:

1. *Our communities will achieve more sustainable economic, environmental and/or social development through ownership of (forest) land.*
 - The acquisition will enable HDT to generate income from renewable energy to invest in community development and enable HDT to broaden the activities and facilities for public use of the wood, which will make Huntly a better place to live and work.
 - Ownership of the forest will support development of HDT's existing facilities at Greenmyres, which provide the perfect base for increasing public use and enjoyment of the forest.
 - Ownership of the forest resource will build community capacity and resilience, expanding the range of volunteering and employment opportunities, with consequential health and social benefits, and broadening community use of the forest by schools, families and individuals.
2. *Our communities will have a stronger role in and control over their own development.*
 - The ownership of Wind's Eye will empower the community to lead and control the development of the woodland and will bring new opportunities for involvement, volunteering and community activities.

¹⁵ <https://www.huntlydt.org/>

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/HuntlyDT/>

¹⁷ This section is intended to demonstrate alignment with the priorities of the Scottish Land Fund

- Community decision making will determine how Wind's Eye is developed, but it is likely that public access improvements will be central to widening access to the forest for all abilities - from active cyclists to wheel-chair users. Community ownership will ensure that all of the community can have opportunities to be involved and benefit from visits to Wind's Eye and the wider Gartly Forest, either to participate in management or for recreation.
- The community will contribute to tackling the climate and biodiversity emergencies through establishment of renewable generation and environmental improvements in the woodland.

3. Our communities own well managed, financially sustainable land and buildings.

- Income from renewables will provide match funding for development projects aimed at increasing community engagement and involvement with the forest.
- Income from renewables and other projects will contribute to the costs of community management.
- Development at Greenmyres will provide further opportunities to generate income from the forest.

3 Community and Policy Background

3.1 National and regional policy

3.1.1 Community Ownership and the National Performance Framework

The national performance framework is under review, but the current 11 National Outcomes are still in operation as is the duty (Community Empowerment Act) on public bodies ‘to have regard’ to them and they are referenced in setting the vision for the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

Community ownership of land and built assets has been encouraged in Scotland by a range of policy initiatives and legislation and is recognised in the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework which includes “*Increasing the number of land and built assets in community ownership*” as an indicator to measure progress against the national outcome “We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe”.

Legislation, including the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, has introduced a range of community rights to buy land and other assets. This has been underpinned by the Scottish Land Fund (SLF), which had an annual budget of up to £10 million to provide technical assistance to community bodies and support capital costs (and some revenue costs) of community acquisitions.

Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gives eligible community bodies the right to make requests in relation to purchase, lease or other rights over land owned or managed by Scottish public authorities. Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) has developed the Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) to meet their obligations under the Act¹⁸.

3.1.2 Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029

This presents a long-term framework for the expansion and sustainable management of Scotland's forests and woodland. There are three objectives for the next ten years:

- Increase the contribution of forests and woodlands to Scotland’s sustainable and inclusive economic growth;
- Improve the resilience of Scotland’s forests and woodlands and increase their contribution to a healthy and high-quality environment; and
- Increase the use of Scotland’s forest and woodland resources to enable more people to improve their health, well-being and life chances.

The Strategy has 6 priorities, including:

- Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands;

¹⁸ <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-empowerment-cats>

- Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands.

3.1.3 Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) makes a commitment to development of a sustainable, mixed economy that rises to the challenge posed by climate change, acknowledging that there are significant challenges for improving the economies of more remote communities, particularly those that in the past depended more on tourism, fishing, and agriculture.

The plan aims to help promote Aberdeenshire as:

- An area with a high quality of life and distinctive places, and where new developments are designed as effectively as possible to improve this, help deliver sustainable, low carbon places and contribute positively towards the health and wellbeing of its residents.
- An area that promotes sustainable development that reduces the need to travel, reduces reliance on private cars and promotes safe and convenient active travel opportunities.
- An area where natural and cultural heritage are protected and enhanced, and where we recognise the multiple benefits of local green spaces and green-blue networks as an integral component of successful placemaking.

The following policies from the LDP are relevant to HDT's potential plans for Gartly Forest:

"B3.1 We will support the development of new tourist facilities or accommodation. Generally, these must be well related to settlements and deliver net economic and social benefits."

"C2.1 We will support solar, wind, biomass (energy from biological material derived from living or recently living organisms) and hydro-electricity developments which are in appropriate sites and of the appropriate design."

"C2.2 We will approve wind energy developments in appropriate locations taking into account the spatial framework mapping at the end of this section. Detailed guidance is set out in the Strategic Landscape Capacity Assessment for Wind Energy in Aberdeenshire Final Report 2014."

3.1.4 Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2017 (updated in 2023)

The strategy¹⁹ is a supplementary document to the LDP. The Strategy's Vision is that: *"The forestry and woodlands of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan area are resilient to the effects of climate change, protect and enhance the environment, habitats, species and local culture, benefit and support the local and national economy and are valued and enjoyed by people, both residents and visitors."*

Theme 3 of the strategy, "Communities, Development, Access and Health" states; *"Promote and support the woodland's role in providing opportunities for community development, community food-growing and recreational access."*

¹⁹ <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/natural-heritage/forestry/>

Community ownership and management of GF could contribute to several aspects of the LDP, including

- providing better access to outdoor recreation facilities;
- community control of local resources that generates;
- reinvestment in the district whilst;
- enhancing the natural and cultural heritage and
- providing a focus for developing personal and community skills.

3.1.5 Community Wealth Building Act 2026

Community wealth building is an approach to economic development that focuses on ensuring that economic wealth is generated, circulated and retained in local communities.²⁰ In February 2026, the Scottish Parliament passed a Bill establishing Scotland as the first country in the world to legislate for the implementation of a national Community Wealth Building (CWB) model. This legislation provides a strategic, enabling framework to ensure consistent implementation of CWB across Scotland's local and regional economies. Under the proposals in the Bill, each local authority would need to work with certain public bodies (such as health boards) in their areas to publish a community wealth building action plan for that area. Local authorities and public bodies must implement any measures set out in those action plans.

3.1.6 National Planning Framework 4²¹

In 2023, the Scottish Government published National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). This is the national spatial strategy for Scotland, setting out spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy. It aims to help Scotland achieve “*net zero in a way which also tackles longstanding challenges and inequalities....Planning will also play a critical role in delivering the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and in community wealth building.*” Its provisions are particularly relevant to HDT’s ambitions for developing a small wind farm on the proposed area to be acquired, but HDT’s plans more broadly support NPF4 aims to realise rural revitalisation, community wealth building, Just Transition, Climate Change and others.

3.1.7 Place/Community Action Plans

Several community consultations over recent years have elicited input from residents, businesses and organisations on what Huntly and District needs to regenerate itself and provide opportunities for all. Key examples include:

- **Huntly Room to Thrive²²**, a year-long, engagement exercise undertaken in 2018-19 by Ice Cream Architecture (ICA) on behalf of the Huntly Town Team (HTT). Input from consultation delivered the following priorities, which HTT partners have been working to deliver since:
 1. A town centre that belongs to us,
 2. With a campus for learning and play.
 3. A rural place with transport that works for us,

²⁰ <https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/s6/community-wealth-building-scotland-bill>

²¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>

²² Available at: <https://www.huntlydt.org/about-us/documents>

4. Where the focus is people, environment and culture,
5. And real opportunities exist for enterprise.

The Room to Thrive document was refreshed in 2022 post-Covid and found that although good progress had already been achieved, much also still remained to be done.

- **Just Transition:** In 2023, the North East of Scotland Climate Action Network (NESCO) commissioned Community Chartering Network (CCN) to undertake community engagement work in several Aberdeenshire towns, including Huntly. Their two-year project came to a conclusion in autumn 2025 and identified that Huntly and district is uniquely placed to capture several opportunities. These include further development of community-owned renewable energy, increasing access to locally grown food, improved local childcare and a minimum income guarantee pilot.

The Huntly Town Team is aiming to take forward/support these different areas in different ways.

4 Gartly Forest / Wind's Eye - background information

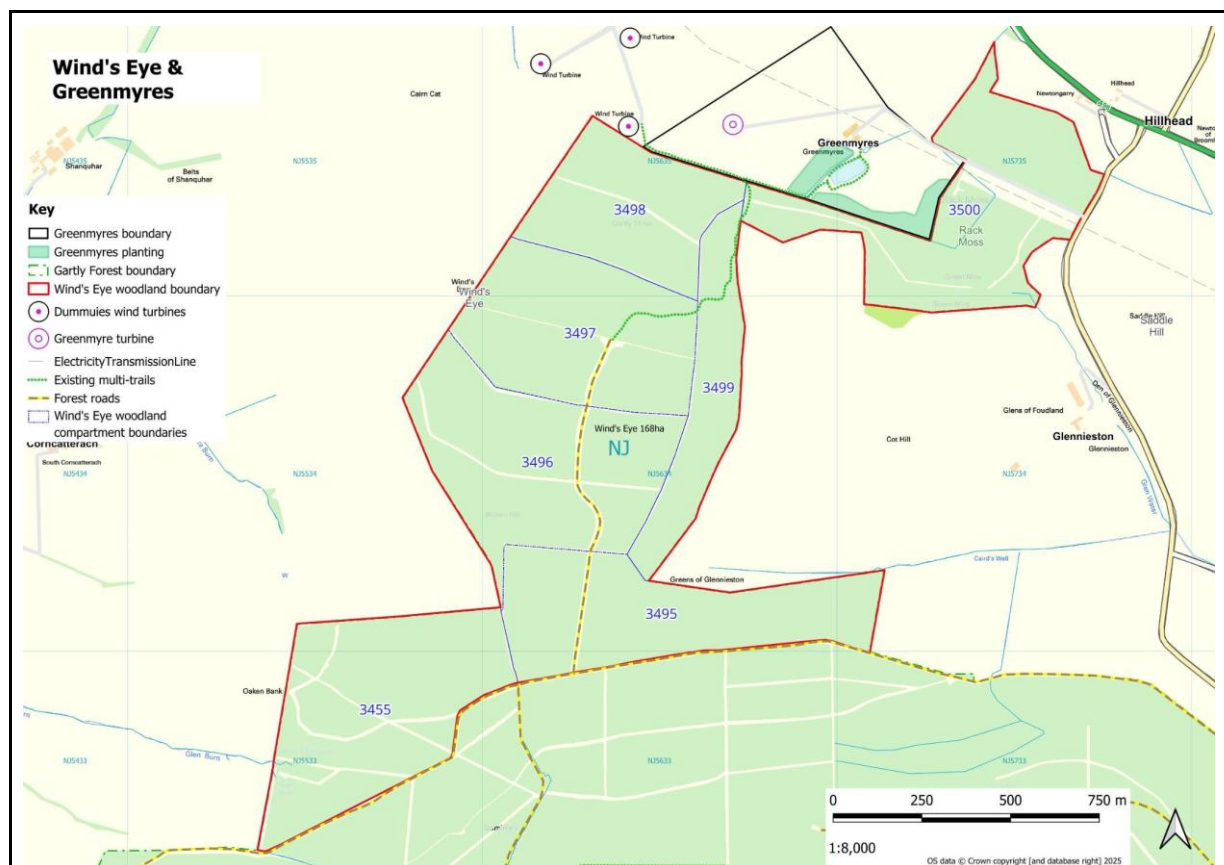
As outlined in Section 2, during the initial phase of the feasibility study in 2020/21 HDT asked CWA to explore three potential acquisition scenarios:

- The whole forest (1,222 ha);
- Wind's Eye block (168 ha);
- Wind's Eye and Wishach Hill blocks (422 ha).

As a result of that initial work, HDT has opted to pursue acquisition of the Wind's Eye block. It is large enough to meet most of HDT's current objectives and is more affordable than acquiring a larger area of Gartly Forest.

This section of the report describes GF, and in particular Wind's Eye, in more detail. It summarises pertinent aspects of the 2023 Gartly Land Management Plan (with FLS sub-compartment data updated to 2025).

For the purpose of this report Wind's Eye is the area of plantation forest that connects Greenmyres to the rest of Gartly Forest, North of the East/West forest road on the North side of Gartly Forest (Forestry and Land Scotland Compartments 3455 and 3495 to 3500). This is shown on Map 4 below.



Map 4: Wind's Eye woodland and Greenmyres

4.1 Ownership and management history

Wind's Eye and the rest of Gartly Forest is currently owned by Scottish Ministers and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS). It was purchased and planted by the then Forestry Commission in the late 1940's to the late 1950's. Over recent years the area has been managed to produce conifer timber, with some adjustment to accommodate the adjacent Dummies wind farm. Plantation management has involved clear-felling and re-planting.

Neighbouring land is privately owned and managed predominantly as farmland (arable – barley and livestock grazing – cattle and sheep). The Wind's Eye block shares a boundary with HDT's Greenmyres farm. Perimeter fences are stock proof, but not deer proof.

4.2 Geology, Soils and Topography

The Gartly Land Management Plan includes the following information:

- *Geology - According to the British Geological Survey, Geological Map of the UK, the whole of this forest design plan area is underlain by the Southern Highland Group of the Dalradian Supergroup. This is a relatively well differentiated sequence of marine sandstones, siltstones, mudstones and carbonate rocks. This gives rise to overlying soils that have a medium level of nitrogen available.*
- *Soils - The Soil Survey of Scotland identifies that the majority of the block is underlain with the Foudland Association. The soils of the Foudland Associations are developed on drifts derived from slates and other weakly metamorphosed argillaceous (clay minerals are a minor but significant component) rocks. Hence the presence of the Haining, Wishach Hill and Hill of Foudland slate quarries. These parent materials are acidic and low in nutrients.²³*

The generally poor levels of soil fertility are reflected in the modest growth rates of most stands and species.

The altitude range in the plantation is from 250m to 440m above sea level. Hill summits are rounded, plateau-like with hill-side gradients not exceeding 35%. Predominant hillside aspects are North and South with drainage running in all directions to connect (primarily) with Strathbogie (River Deveron catchment) and the River Urie (River Don catchment)

4.3 Climate

The climate for Wind's Eye is classed as cool, moist/wet.

The expected impact of climate change is that the climate will remain cool and moist/wet, but with an increased frequency of extreme weather events (gales and heavy rain storms, as well as drought). This is not expected to greatly impact the choice of species suitable for growing as timber crops in Wind's Eye. The main limiting factor is soil quality.

²³ [Gartly land management plan | Forestry and Land Scotland](#)

The land capability assessment for Wind's Eye is F5, which, out of a 7-point system is in the lowest 3 categories.²⁴

4.4 Fauna

Wildlife of note within Gartly Forest includes wildcat (*Felis silvestris*), Scottish crossbill (*Loxia scotica*), water-vole (*Arvicola amphibious*), European badger (*Meles meles*) and red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*). There is also a relatively new record of hairy wood ant (*Formica lugubris*). Wind's Eye lies within the Strathbogie Wildcat Priority Area.²⁵

Red deer and roe deer are present. The deer culls carried out by FLS across the whole of Gartly Forest within the years 2017-2024 are:

- 2017/18 71 roe and 3 red deer
- 2018/19 54 roe and 1 red deer
- 2019/20 100 roe and 0 red deer
- 2020/21 52 roe, and 1 red deer
- 2021/22 99 roe deer
- 2022/23 81 roe deer
- 2023/24 223 roe deer
- 2024/25 100 roe deer

The variation in cull numbers is due to how stalking resources are applied to the area depending on the level of protection required. During and after planting, high levels of input are required. Once crops are established resources are focussed elsewhere. There is also some fluctuation in deer numbers due to breeding success and natural mortality and when deer move in from other areas.

4.5 Flora

There are two UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) priority habitats in GF that are both relevant to Wind's Eye: upland heath (with vegetation dominated by ling heather, *Calluna vulgaris*) and fen/blanket bog.

Upland heath will return to hill tops and slopes if plantation woodland is removed. Fen is represented at Slouch Moss, which is also quickly filling in with tree regeneration.

Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) regenerates readily on the site and along with Sitka spruce comes to dominate sites left fallow on the lower slopes. Ling is quick to regenerate back into some clear-felled areas, such as the North side of Wind's Eye.

4.6 Invasive non-native species

No invasive non-native species have been recorded on site.

²⁴ From [National scale land capability for forestry | Scotland's soils](#)

²⁵ [About Us - Scottish Wildcat Action](#)

4.7 Designations

There are no statutory environmental designations on the site, nor are any areas identified as ancient woodland. There are no designated core paths within the forest.

4.8 Archaeology

The image below is drawn from Historic Scotland's Past Map²⁶ and shows records of historic features, some of which appear on old maps. Several have disappeared under contemporary land management and development, but all indicate how people used the land in the past; evidence of cultivation, or extractive industries, or simply cultural features. Further information on archaeological sites within GF is found in Appendix 2.



²⁶ <https://pastmap.org.uk/>

4.9 Power lines and other infrastructure

The power line that feeds from Gartly to a communications mast within GF needs to be protected and there will be a safe-working restriction on operations within 2-tree lengths of the power line. There will be a maintenance agreement in place to keep a corridor of trees (perhaps 8m wide) free of trees.

The pylon line that runs through Greenmyres is a visual distraction to the entrance to the farm and places significant restrictions on land-use under the powerline but is otherwise of minor significance to forest management options and operations either side of it. The utility company will be responsible for managing woody vegetation that grows within the wayleave of the power line.

All of Cmpt 3498 (18ha) is included within a lease agreement with Dummies Wind Farm, enabling them to manage the trees to no more than 3m in height so that there is minimal interference with air flows to and from the turbines, especially the one that is only 25m from the forest edge. This lends itself to growing Christmas trees in this area, but little else apart from native heath. This area is enclosed by 1,780m of deer fence with proposed management for broadleaves.

It is anticipated that the Dummies Wind Farm agreement will run to 31 March 2030 but can be terminated prior by notice. There is no lease for the radio mast on the Hill of Corskie, the majority of which is built on land outwith FLS's title.

4.10 Fencing

Wind's Eye is bound by stock fencing on the West, North and East sides. FLS has not been able to determine the fencing repair responsibilities. Typically, it might be expected that fence repair costs are, where they are on a boundary, shared 50:50 with the neighbour with the forest owner paying the additional cost if the boundary fence has been upgraded to a deer fence. The only deer fence in the Wind's Eye block encloses the broadleaved planting in Cmpt 3498 adjacent to the Dummies wind turbine; this was installed and is maintained as part of the management agreement with Dummies Wind Farm

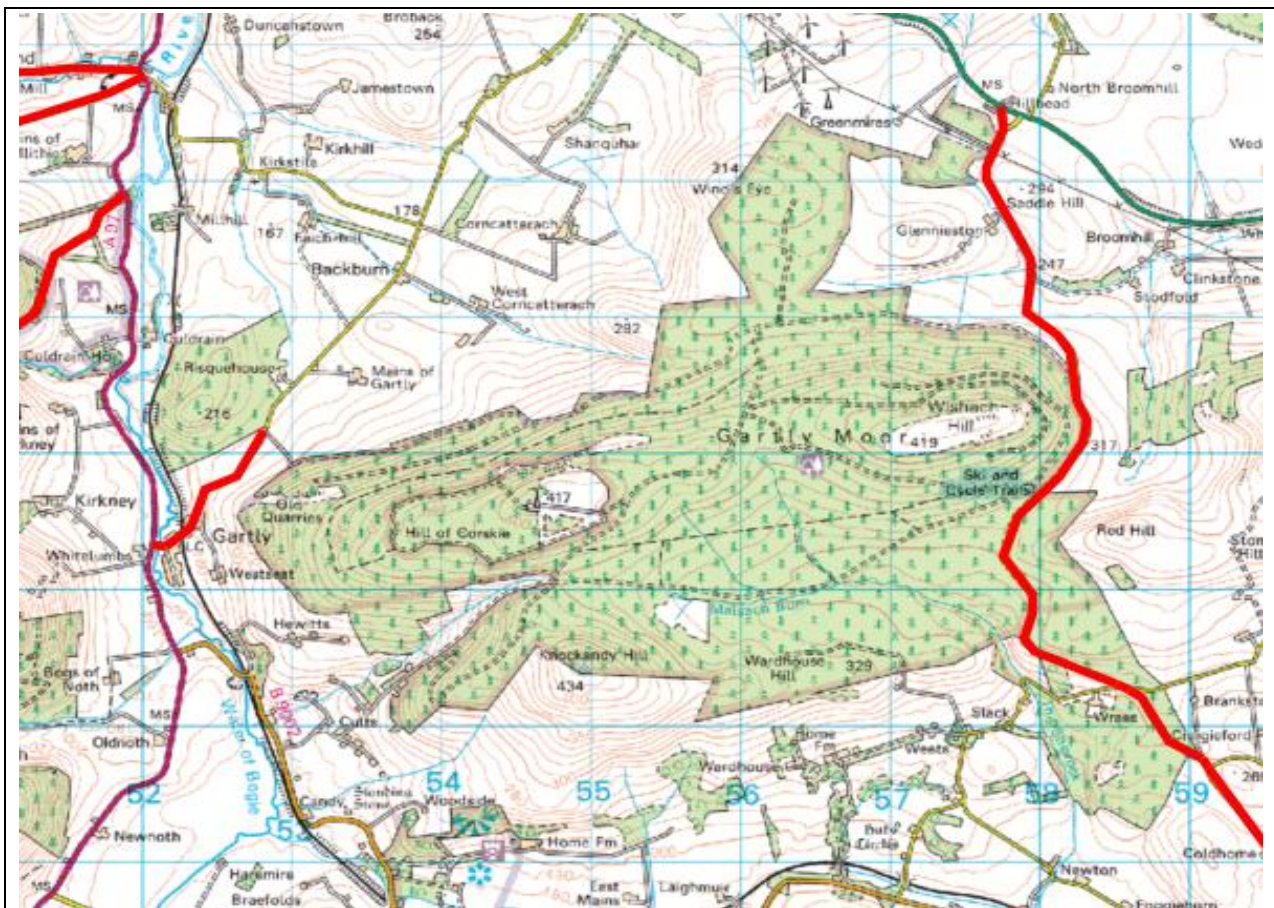
4.11 Access for timber harvesting

The 3 main access points for timber lorries are onto two unclassified roads: both are agreed timber transport routes (see Map 6 below) – which lead to the A96 and A97:

- Wishach Hill South NJ 579 327
- Wishach Hill North NJ 583 336
- Risquehouse/Gartly NJ 527 332

There are no known Aberdeenshire Council restrictions on these unclassified roads other than the standard UK restriction to 44 tonnes gross.

To extract timber from Wind's Eye, currently the single forest road connects to the Gartly Forest road network, and it is 2km from there to get lorries onto the public road on the North side of Wishach Hill. FLS would expect a financial contribution to use their forest roads.



Map 6: Agreed timber transport routes from Gartly Forest²⁷ (Agreed routes marked in red)

4.12 Access for public recreation

FLS have not invested significantly in public access facilities in recent years.

There is a new access trail of approximately 720m connecting Greenmyres to the forest road in Wind's Eye. This was built by HDT with support of Scottish Government funding. HDT leases the footprint of the trail and a small buffer zone either side and is responsible for repairs and maintenance.

The Trail Forks website identifies a range of trails at Gartly Forest, with the main forest road and Greenmyres trail included. Greenmyres can be accessed from Huntly by cyclists and walkers using minor roads and farm tracks, including the access roads for Dummuies windfarm.

4.13 Landscape character and value

Wind's Eye, like the rest of Gartly Forest and Greenmyres is situated in the 'Moorland Plateaux, Grampian Outliers' landscape character type, as categorised in the National Programme of Landscape Character Assessment²⁸. Forestry blocks can appear as a dark mantle over the undulating hills when viewed from the lowlands or they can merge with summits of open heathland. Generally,

²⁷ From <https://timbertf.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4a23d4910e604b71872956441113c83c>

²⁸ <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/cce069c5-8a2b-4932-9fae-4f9023cd9d5b/snh-landscape-character-assessment-2019>

there are sharp edges with adjacent farmland that reflect the geometric shapes within the agricultural landscape. Diversity within large forest blocks can be introduced by significant areas of deciduous species and by clear-felling to introduce structural (height) diversity. Hill tops within Gartly Forest provide sweeping views over surrounding countryside. Wind's Eye is most prominent in the landscape from relatively short-range views from the A96.

4.14 Dummies Wind Farm

The north-western corner of the forest is adjacent to the Dummies Wind Farm. The wind farm operator pays an annual rent to FLS. In return, FLS undertakes not to plant any commercial tree crop or any other trees, plants or other crops, or erect any structures greater than three metres in height on the Clearance Area throughout the term of the Agreement with the exception of the planting of trees consistent with any approved Land Management Plan during the final five years of the agreement provided this does not conflict with the terms of any planning conditions. The wind farm agreement is set to run for the lifespan of the windfarm but can be terminated prior by notice. It is anticipated that the agreement will run to 31 March 2030.

4.15 Local Communities

Communities in close proximity to GF include the village of Gartly (500m to the south west forest edge) and a number of smaller settlements (e.g. Kennethmont, 2km to the south 'as the crow flies') and farms. Larger communities are Huntly (7km from town centre to the nearest forest access point) and Insch (8km from village centre to nearest access point.).

Consultation for the 2023 FDP sent correspondence to Huntly Community Council and Bennachie Community Council. Neither submitted a response.

4.16 Forest cover

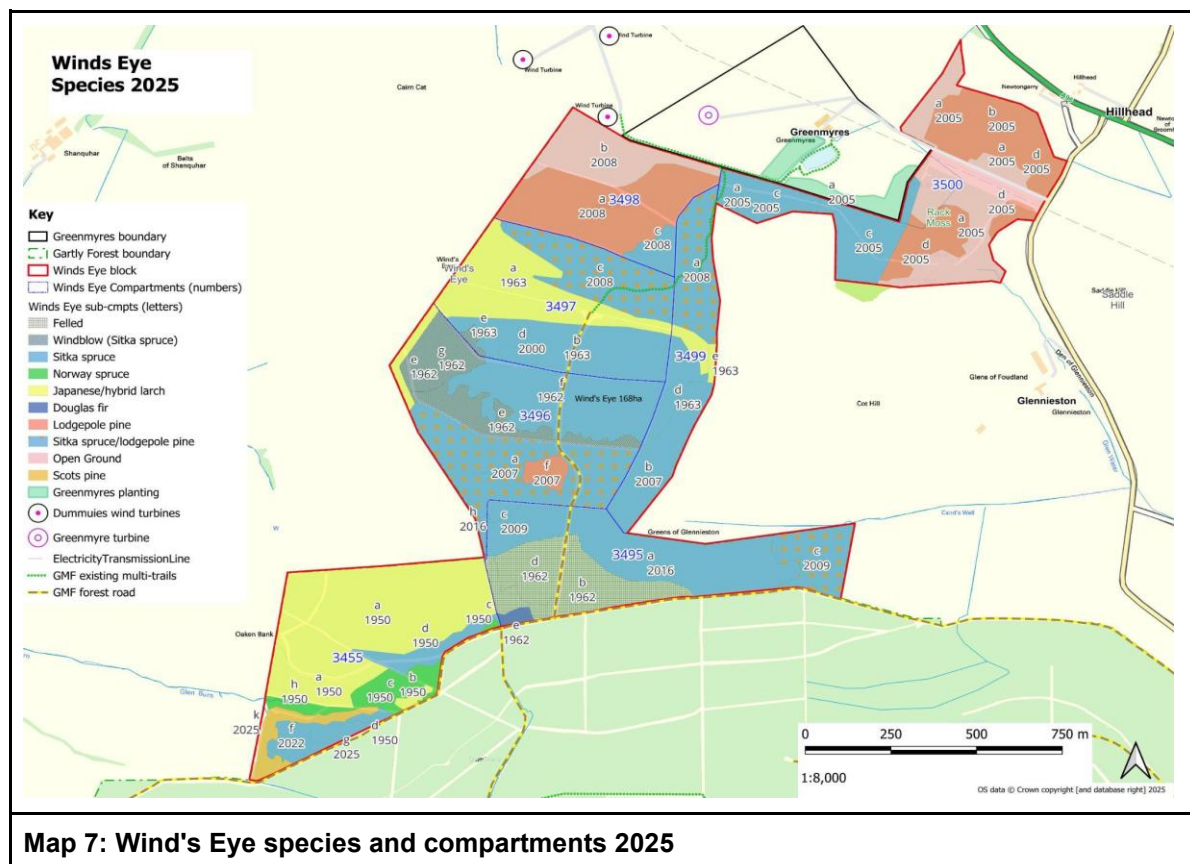
4.16.1 Species

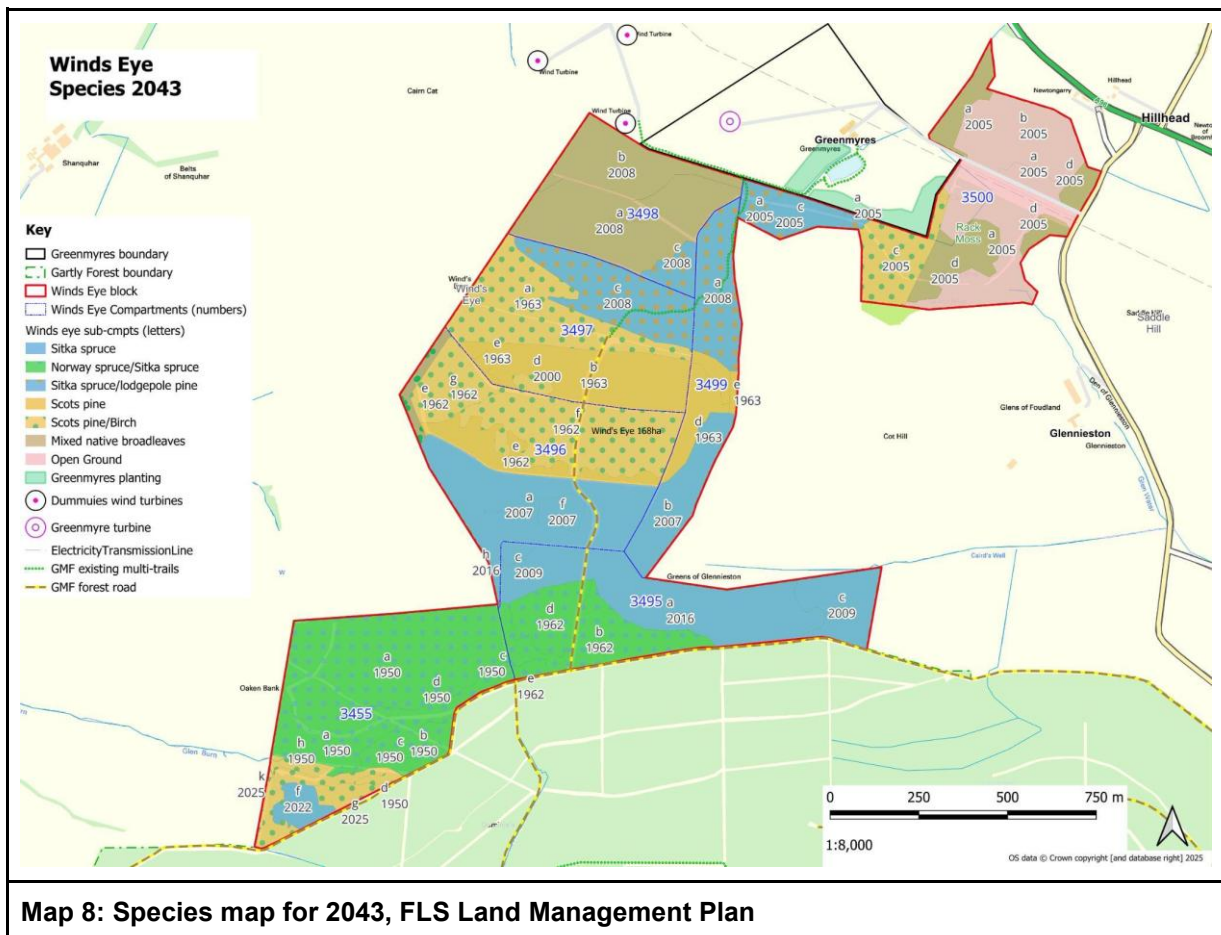
Table 1 and Maps 7 and 8 below show the Wind's Eye species mix taken from the 2023 GF Land Management Plan (LMP) for two scenarios:

- as per the LMP, updated to 2025 (Map 7)
- the anticipated mix in 2043 as per the LMP (Map 8).

	2025		2043	
Species	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%
Sitka spruce	51.02	30	36.11	21
Sitka spruce/lodgepole pine mix	37.95	23	14.68	9
Lodgepole pine	10.46	6	0	0
Japanese larch	30.82	18	0	0
Norway spruce	3.11	2	0	0
Norway spruce/Sitka spruce mix			33.13	20
Scots pine	1.86	1	14.65	9
Scots pine/birch mix			30.80	18
Douglas fir	0.41	0.5	0	0
Birch and other native broadleaves	0.21	0.5	23.36	14
Windblown (spruce)	7.02	4		
Felled	8.55	5	0	0
Open Ground	16.45	10	15.13	9
Totals	167.86	100	167.86	100

Table 1: Wind's Eye species 2025 and projected 2043, if FLS land management plan implemented.





The species mix for 2043 reflects the expectation that larch will be removed before then due to *P. ramorum* and its replacement with other species. The use of productive conifers reflects a focus on timber production, but greater species diversity (Norway spruce and Scots pine) is being introduced to compensate for the loss of larch from the woodland mix and ensure a more varied woodland environment close to Greenmyres. There is a commitment to peatland restoration on Rack Moss in that planted and regenerating Sitka spruce will be removed to improve the existing open ground elements.

The area of felled or windblown stands may have been replanted by the time ownership is transferred to the community. In some of the felled sub-compartments there is already significant regeneration, chiefly of Sitka spruce. This will reduce the cost of re-planting but creates an additional management cost if Sitka spruce is not the target species.

4.16.2 Age class

Currently the age-class structure for the Wind's Eye block is relatively diverse, but not evenly dispersed. Within another 10 years it is likely that all of the older stands planted in 1950 or 1962 will have been felled due to the risk of storm damage or infection by *P. ramorum* and the woodland will be dominated by younger age classes.

Age class (yrs)	Growth phase	2025		2043	
		Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%
0-10	establishment	30.88	18	26.25	16
11-20	thicket	64.98	39	46.53	28
21-40	thicket/pole-stage	1.94	1	55.34	33
41-60	mature	0	0	1.94	1
61+	old	56.32	34	0	0
n/a	open ground and native broadleaf	13.74	8	37.8	22
Total		167.86	100	167.86	100

Table 2: Wind's Eye age classes 2025 and 2043

Note: 2020 "0-10" class includes clearfell and windblow that will be replanted within 5 years

4.16.3 Yield Class²⁹

Yield classes are moderate, as expected for this type of ground. The majority of Sitka spruce in the Wind's Eye area is achieving YC 12 to 16, with lower-than-average yields for other conifers. On the poorest ground there is a risk that nitrogen deficiency could put Sitka spruce into check even on restock sites. This might explain the inclination for the LMP to include Sitka spruce/Lodgepole pine mixes in order to help the spruce establish without heather check. Taking the 113 hectares of Wind's Eye with conifer stands achieving YC 10 or above, the average yield class is 12.

A very crude calculation might be to multiply the yield class by this 'productive' area (113 ha) to get an annual potential volume production figure: 1,356m³. The UK standing sales price index for the period to September 2025, for coniferous timber was £34/m³. The average income potential for 113 ha of Wind's Eye might therefore be ca £46,000/year.

4.16.4 Standing Volumes

The table below estimates the volume of timber currently standing in the Wind's Eye block, based on figures from the FLS sub-compartment database and production forecast. It excludes broadleaves and any conifer stands planted 2000 or later (i.e. less than 25 years old). Any broadleaf/hardwood timber volumes will be negligible, and these stands are managed for environmental value not timber production.

²⁹ Yield class is an index of the potential productivity of even-aged stands of trees. It is based on the maximum mean annual increment of cumulative timber volume achieved by a given tree species growing on a given site. It is measured in units of cubic metres per hectare per year (m³/ha/year) and conventionally expressed in increments of 2. The range of values found in GB is from 2 to 30.

Species	Area (ha)	Volume (m ³)	Vol/ha (m ³ /ha)
Sitka spruce - mature	21.98	13,000	590
Sitka spruce – 20yr old	9.33	670	72
Norway spruce (mature)	3.11	1,340	430
Japanese and Hybrid larch (mature)	30.82	10,020	325
Douglas fir (mature)	0.41	215	525
Salvage from windblown stands	7.02	2,100	300
Total	65.65	25,245	

Table 3: Wind's Eye standing volume estimate 2025

4.16.5 Timber breakout and quality

Spruce is of generally good form and yields from felling mature stands would be expected to produce 60-75% saw-log material. A lower percentage of sawlogs will be harvested from areas of windblow due to damage and degrade. The quality of larch seems reasonable for this location.

4.17 Access to Timber Markets

Wind's Eye is well positioned to service timber markets in the North East with easy access onto the A96 and no timber transport constraints on the minor roads leading to the A96 and A97.

Current FLS sales supply any of 3 sawmills within a 50-mile distance of the forest. Demand, and consequently the price, for sawmill-quality logs drops if they are too big or “oversized”. This is when log diameters reach 50 to 55cm or more. Continuous cover systems of forest management produce more oversized logs than clear-fell systems as a proportion of trees are left longer on site. As the proportion of oversized logs is still relatively low, this is not significant for determining the system of management as compared with the cost-saving of not having to re-plant after felling.

Small roundwood currently tends to go to the oriented strand board (OSB) factory at Dalcross (Nairn/Inverness). There are also timber exporting ports at Peterhead and Inverness. To-date, fuelwood/biomass has not been a significant market category from the forest, but this market and the market for industrial cellulose fibre could increase as pressure mounts to reduce Scotland's dependency on petroleum products. A whisky distillery at Craigellachie on Speyside is buying in significant quantities of small roundwood to power a combined heat and power plant. AWW Jenkinson produces wood chips for biomass plants at Kinnoir, near Huntly and they may be buying in branchwood as well as small round wood.

The domestic firewood market is predominantly serviced by firewood merchants sourcing hardwood and softwood from the Huntly area forests. Buyers/suppliers include Linnorie Firewood Services in Huntly, MacPhersons at Netherton near Huntly and Huntlywood at Braes of Hillockhead near Huntly. These buyers can be useful for tidying up small quantities of small roundwood that have not found other markets although they may be less interested in bigger logs as they cannot be

processed with firewood machines, needing to be cut and split with specialised equipment or more labour-intensive methods.

Timber is an international commodity, and, in the absence of significant protectionist policies, it is anticipated that timber prices will continue to reflect exchange rate fluctuations and other international factors (see section 14.3 for further discussion). Timber (e.g. in construction) is expected to play an increasing role in moves towards a low-carbon Scotland, so in theory prices should only go up, however, profit margins may be capped by increasing production costs (e.g. reflecting fuel costs).

4.18 Tree Health and Constraints

4.18.1 Dothistroma Needle Blight

Dothistroma Needle Blight (DNB) is not currently a notifiable disease, but it does reduce the growth rates in pine species and in some cases, can cause mortality. DNB seems to be more virulent on Lodgepole pine. Its presence in Gartly Forest prompted FLS to bring forward removal of lodgepole pine and limit the planting of Scots pine.

4.18.2 *Phytophthora ramorum*

Phytophthora ramorum is an algae-like organism called a water mould. It causes extensive damage and death to more than 150 plant species, including some forest species. Larch trees are particularly susceptible, and large numbers have been affected across the UK with Gartly Forest being one of the few places in the NE of Scotland where it has been identified. It is a notifiable disease and when identified on a site owners are served with a Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) by Scottish Forestry requiring the felling of infected stands as well as all larch trees in a buffer area around them.

4.18.3 Large Pine Weevil (*Hylobius abietis*)

The Large Pine Weevil is a significant problem for forest managers when replanting on conifer clear-fell sites, especially when the previous crop was pine. Larvae breed in stumps and emerging adults feed on the bark of newly planted trees, often ring-barking them and killing them. Options of management include leaving a 4 to 5-year fallow period after felling or treating transplant seedlings with insecticide in the nursery and spraying them as necessary, on-site, for when adult weevils emerge in the Spring and late Summer. Using sturdy Sitka spruce transplants for restocking can help reduce mortality although the trees might be heavily damaged and weakened, they might recover. Fallow periods are only really effective if adjacent blocks are not felled just prior to or just after restocking. Alternatives to clear-felling results in fewer stumps, and therefore weevil breeding sites, and the lower populations of weevils have little impact on naturally regenerating trees.

4.18.4 Deer

Deer are both an opportunity, in terms of visual amenity/interest and venison sales, and also a cost in that their browsing will impact efforts to introduce tree species diversity. For deer, almost any tree is more palatable than Sitka spruce. To establish species such as Scots pine, Norway spruce, Douglas fir and any broadleaved tree other than alder would require fencing, unless deer numbers

can be reduced to between 2 and 5 per km². There is usually a net cost to getting deer numbers this low: improved night vision technology is helping but it is unlikely that the resources required will be offset by income from venison sales.

4.18.5 Windblow

Given the altitude and exposure of GF, windblow is a constraint to the age and height to which trees can be grown in most of the plantation area. Soils that restrict rooting either by having a high water table or an impermeable layer and soils that hold water and remain saturated for longer are more vulnerable to windblow than soils that drain quickly and facilitate deeper rooting. Areas that are exposed to the prevailing storm force wind direction and where topography encourages wind acceleration are more vulnerable to wind damage.

As the forest is now, largely into at least the second rotation, experience has now shown which sites are most vulnerable to windblow and which stands can be left for longer rotations without suffering windblow or wind-snap and that are suitable for continuous cover forest management.

5 Summary of Wind's Eye management opportunities and constraints

Given the above considerations, this section of the feasibility study summaries opportunities and constraints facing HDT in management of the Wind's Eye block, should it be successful in acquiring the area from FLS.

Constraint	Opportunity
Soils - acidic and low in nutrients - limiting range of suitable tree species	Where planted or regenerating spruce and lodgepole pine are growing poorly on wet soils, there is the opportunity to block drains and re-convert these areas to carbon sequestering wetland with native species. Other areas where yield classes are low could be converted to native species woodland with Scots pine, juniper and downy birch. Birch introduced into conifer stands may help with nutrient recycling and improve soil quality. Some lower lying areas where soils are slightly deeper and well-drained are suitable for oak and hazel.
- modest growth rates	Growth rates for Sitka spruce are still good enough for economic timber production, especially if established with other species.
Topography	Gentle slopes make the area relatively easy to access and reduces the visibility of the plantation within the landscape.
Altitude – 270 to 315m	
- Exposure increases risk of wind blow reduces the age and height to which tall conifers can be grown.	Wind energy generation is a viable alternative to plantation forestry.
	Gradients don't exceed 35% so machine access for forest operations is good.
Climate – cool, moist ³⁰	Suitable for Sitka spruce with some risk of drought impact.
Class 5 suitability for forestry out of 7 classes, where 7 is the unsuitable for tree crops ³¹ .	Sitka spruce regenerates naturally. This is an opportunity for reducing restocking costs and working with continuous cover forestry, but removing spruce regeneration from areas managed for native species adds an additional cost.
Landscape	A relatively 'industrialised' landscape of farming and forestry plantations. Opportunities to introduce more diversity and soften the landscape with appropriate woodland management, e.g. using deciduous broadleaves along plantation edges and blended into the evergreen conifers. Wind turbines are already present in the landscape, albeit at a smaller scale than proposed

³⁰ ESC4 – Forest Research - <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/ecological-site-classification/>

³¹ <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/capability-maps/national-scale-land-capability-for-forestry/>

Wildlife - Fauna	
- Strathbogie Wildcat Priority Area³².	Wildcats adaptable to plantations, thickets and rough grassland. Retained areas of windblow can provide sheltered denning areas. Badger, red squirrel and crossbill adapt to a range of tree species. Red squirrels especially will do well with a mix of Scots pine and Norway spruce, and hazel where soils will support their establishment.
- Deer will require management to secure woodland regeneration – adds cost to management.	Venison a product of woodland management
- Large pine weevil impacts on replanting but can be managed with some additional cost.	
Wildlife – Flora	
- 2 UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) priority habitats in Wind's Eye: upland heath (with vegetation dominated by ling heather, <i>Calluna vulgaris</i>) and fen/blanket bog.	Bog restoration in Rack Moss, heathland restoration with juniper where conifer crops are not appropriate, e.g. where clear ground is required around turbines.
- Fungal pathogens (red band needle blight and <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>) restricting the diversity of species that can realistically be planted for commercial forestry.	Larch can be replaced by birch, Douglas fir. Lodgepole pine can be replaced by Scots pine.
Designations	There are no statutory environmental designations on the site, nor are any areas identified as ancient woodland. There are no designated core paths within the forest.
Archaeology	None that cannot be incorporated into productive woodland management, adding to the cultural history of the area.
Access for woodland management	Access roads established and connected to local council agreed timber transport routes – no additional negotiation required to bring timber lorries onto public roads.
- No roads connect to Greenmyres, without additional roads to Greenmyres there will be a charge to FLS to use their roads for timber harvesting.	This could alter with the installation of wind turbines.
Access for public recreation	Established path between Greenmyres and the road network in Wind's Eye. Easy terrain for path and trail construction. Greenmyres provides parking and other facilities from which to base a visit to Wind's Eye.
Proximity to Dummies wind farm	

³² [About Us - Scottish Wildcat Action](#)

- Management agreement approx. 6ha restricts tree height to 3m; renewal date of 2030 if required.	Agreement income from Dummuies wind farm would be paid annually
Power lines and other infrastructure	Overhead power lines run across a relatively small part of the plantation that is recommended for wet woodland restoration rather than productive conifers, so the overhead lines wont significantly impinge on management.
- Perimeter fences, where required to be stock proof will be repaired and replaced 50:50 with neighbouring owners.	The forest road will form the boundary between Wind's Eye and the rest of Gartly Forest.
Proximity to timber markets	Gartly Forest is relatively close to a range of markets for a range of timber categories from small-roundwood to saw-logs. Transportation costs will be relatively low compared with many other areas in Scotland.

6 Forest Management Options – Appraisal

6.1 Management systems and governance

6.1.1 Governance

Post-acquisition responsibility for management of the woodland will be vested in the Board of HDT, which has well-established and appropriate management and governance systems. Decisions are made collectively, with groups of Board members leading on specific areas. HDT would benefit from having two or more board members who are able to focus on the management of Wind's Eye and the decisions pertinent to woodland management.

Day to day oversight of forestry operations could be done by the Greenmyres project managers, but HDT would benefit from input from a forester to advise on forest plans to meet the conditions of the UK Forestry Standard, and to make and report on applications to Scottish Forestry for woodland grants. See 'Community Forester' below.

HDT will secure suitable public and employers liability insurances and consider appropriate insurance to cover against storm or fire damage. HDT is already familiar with the annual recurring costs associated with land management and governance systems, such as insurance, annual accounts inspection, as well as office costs, consumables and sundry expenses.

HDT is a member of the Community Woodlands Association (CWA) which provides advice, assistance and information to community woodland groups across Scotland. CWA organises training and networking events on a range of topics for member community groups, and through CWA's membership of the Scottish Community Alliance, HDT is eligible for the Community Learning Exchange, which supports community groups to visit their peers.

HDT will establish procedures and systems to manage on-going responsibilities, such as maintaining perimeter stock-proof fences with neighbours. Where neighbours are not keeping livestock, it may be sufficient to maintain boundaries marked by corner posts rather than actual fence lines.

A number of community woodland groups, particularly those with larger woods or more ambitious plans, have recruited³³ community foresters to take an on-going management role. Their objectives include:

- To create employment locally, increasing the economic benefit of the forest;
- To buy in skills and experience which aren't available within the Board or membership;
- To relieve the workload on volunteer Board and membership;
- To present a professional face for the organisation to funders and regulators;
- To provide a public face for the organisation within the woodland.

The community forester role covers a very wide job description and indeed can have a variety of job titles. In most cases the community forester (whatever their actual job title) role includes elements of what might in other circumstances be three separate jobs filled by individuals from very different backgrounds:

³³ Usually this has been by direct employment, but in some cases as a self-employed contractor

- Forest Manager: concerned with silviculture and land management, they may do some “hands-on” forestry as well as managing contractors and processing forestry grants;
- Business Manager: concerned with the future business development of the community company, developing projects (crofts, housing, renewables), bringing in investment etc;
- Community Ranger: focussing on community engagement, working with local community, schools, visitors, user groups with specific needs.

The balance between these components will vary according to the local context: the nature of the woodland and the needs, skills and objectives of the community. If considering employing staff, groups must be clear and agreed amongst themselves about what they are looking for in the role, and what the priorities are, as it is usually unlikely that one individual will have all the essential and desirable skills and experience.

With HDT already employing development staff, it may be possible to cover some parts of the role with existing staff, and the new role can slot into the team and focus on the gaps in provision. The scale of acquisition might impact on the nature and focus of the jobs: the larger the purchase the more likely that the Community Forest Manager will have a more managerial and development focussed role, as more works are likely to be undertaken by contractors and there may be more additional staff associated with specific development projects to manage. Conversely, for a smaller acquisition, the role may be more hands-on, with a greater focus on volunteer effort and fewer staff.

An alternative is to extend the role of the Greenmyres development manager to implement all of the community development projects in the forest and to engage a private sector forestry consultant to manage forest operations, deer management, certification and forest grant applications. Whilst there may be financial advantages to such an arrangement it is unlikely to bring the same community development benefits of HDT directly engaging a community forester.

Key forestry-related tasks include:

- Drafting and agreeing a long-term forest plan with HDT and stakeholders and then submitting it to SF for approval;
- Managing the tender process for harvesting and liaising with contractors/agents;
- Setting up, tendering and managing establishment contracts for replanting sites;
- Drafting and monitoring a deer management plan, liaison with deer controllers;
- Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) applications, reporting and claims.
- Managing the certification process of annual audits and reporting, if HDT considers this value for money.

In addition, successful implementation of the business plan will require:

- Researching, planning, fundraising for and managing recreation and development projects community development projects
- Managing staff employed to deliver specific projects
- Developing partnership and contractors to deliver specific projects

- Identifying and promoting opportunities for volunteers and managing volunteers working on projects

6.1.2 Other staff employment/contract roles

In addition to the community forest manager, other staff or contract roles may be required. Several of the development projects outlined above included staffing elements, which could in some circumstances be combined, whilst it is likely that a deer manager/stalker will be required, probably contracted in. They may be able to bring processing skills to enable HDT to add value to the deer shot in the forest.

6.1.3 Forest planning

Following acquisition, HDT will need to register the land with SGRPID and develop and seek approval from Scottish Forestry for a Long-Term Forest Plan (LTFP)³⁴; this is required for access to future forestry grant support and ensures necessary felling permissions for the first 10 years. As an interim measure HDT could adopt the FLS Forest Design Plan so that they can continue with any approved harvesting work whilst developing their own Long Term Forest Plan.

The Wind's Eye area is large enough to require the development of a long-term forest plan. Plans are developed with stakeholder consultation and submitted to Scottish Forestry so that felling can be covered by a felling licence and forestry grants applied for. Plans cover a 20-year period in outline with details of felling and restocking proposed, but only the first 10 years are covered by an accompanying felling licence.

The LTFP is a 20-year strategic management plan that brings together the management objectives, the environmental, economic, and social functions and the silvicultural prescriptions into a comprehensive plan to deliver long term benefits through sustainable forest management. It will include an overarching vision for how the forest will look after that 20-year period. The LTFP also outlines how the woodlands will be managed in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard (the minimum requirements for woodland management in the UK)

The Long-Term Forest Plan could be produced in-house, by a Community Forest Manager or delivered under contract by a private sector forest management company/agent.

Stakeholder consultation is an integral part of the forest planning process. Stakeholders include local communities, neighbours, government agencies where they have an interest in the site (e.g. Aberdeenshire Council re archaeology and Local Biodiversity Action Plan species) and local groups or NGOs with specific interest in the site (local history groups, conservation groups and specifically Scottish Wildcat Action, and recreation groups e.g. horse riders and mountain bikers).

Consultation can be carried out in a variety of ways, with responses solicited by letter/email, questionnaire, during a public meeting in a neutral venue or at a meeting on site. Stakeholders are

³⁴ <https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/standards-regulations-and-incentives/forestry-grant-scheme/forest-plan-resources/132-long-term-forest-plans-applicant-s-guidance>

invited to comment on and also to provide additional information about a site in response to a draft concept plan with associated map or maps that illustrate the opportunities and constraints for forest management.

6.1.4 Certification

In addition to the minimum requirement of meeting the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS), forest certification is a voluntary process whereby an independent third party (the “certifier”) assesses the quality of forest management and production against a set of requirements (“standards”) predetermined by a public or private certification organization. In the UK, certification, either under Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) principles, is carried out with reference to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS). There is a fixed annual fee for being part of a certification scheme and for an annual audit, along with the additional costs of management to meet the certification requirements.

Certification may bring a small premium for the timber and may make the timber more competitive and attractive to buyers, most of whom need to ensure a high proportion of the timber they buy for processing is certified in order to maintain the certification labels on their products. Certification also satisfies the public and funders that woodland management is being carried out to the highest sustainability standards.

HDT would have to decide whether the advantages of certification outweigh the costs (time and money): had HDT been seeking to acquire the entire GF it may well have been cost-effective to seek certification but is potentially less so if only the Wind’s Eye block is purchased. Cost savings can be achieved by buying into a group scheme run by a forest management company.

6.2 Silvicultural systems

Broadly speaking the management of plantation woodlands for timber production can fall into two categories: clear-fell and replant or continuous cover with natural regeneration and/or enrichment planting.

6.2.1 Clear-fell systems

Clear-fell systems are basically where areas are planted and the trees felled once they reach maturity in large coupes or blocks and replanted again. Stands may be thinned from the age of about 17 or 20 years old, then regularly every 5 to 8 years, depending on growth rates and objectives, before felling when growth rates start to drop off and the optimal tree size is reached. Clear-fell systems suit situations where tree stability limits the age to which trees can be grown before they start to blow over, or where access is too restrictive to cost-effectively bring harvesting teams in for regular thinning interventions.

The advantages of clear-fell systems are in economy of scale. The value of timber produced can easily cover planning and management costs, costs of bringing harvesting teams to site are spread across a large volume of timber produced, a totally different crop can be established if the previous species was not ideal for the site or where bringing more diversity into the woodland is desired.

Disadvantages of clear fell are that there are peaks and troughs in cash flow. Using natural regeneration to restock felled areas is usually not an option because the seed source has been felled, so re-planting costs are high. Visual impact is high and the environment oscillates between woodland and open ground, which may suit some wildlife but not others.

6.2.2 Continuous cover systems

‘Continuous cover forestry’ or ‘alternatives to clear-fell’, or ‘low impact silvicultural systems’ are terms for woodland management systems that avoid felling in coupes larger than 0.5 hectares, or narrow strips up to 1 or 2 hectares in size. These management systems rely on regular interventions, but they are designed to work with natural regeneration rather than re-planting. A plantation might start off being planted but are then thinned and thinned regularly to produce a framework of trees with good diameter to height ratios to keep them wind firm and with deep crowns to produce seed for natural regeneration.

The advantages of continuous cover forestry, or CCF, is in regular income from regular harvesting interventions. The forest environment and landscape is retained along with their wildlife and amenity values. Over the long-term CCF should produce larger volumes of good quality sawlogs than clear-fell systems. There are no re-stocking costs.

The disadvantages of CCF are that it takes more skill from the forester and machine operators to implement. Natural regeneration may need to be re-spaced to ensure that trees are not growing too close together, so the savings in not replanting can be spent on this operation instead. Deer management has to be sufficient to allow the desired species to grow and this can be difficult if there are not sufficient glades and clearings to facilitate deer control. CCF can be applied to light demanding species such as Scots pine, but to initiate regeneration small coupes, or strips or a very low distribution of over-storey trees are needed. Where the overstorey is not heavily thinned to initiate seeding of light demanding species, shade tolerant species such as European silver fir, beech, Douglas fir and Sitka spruce are required.

6.2.3 Natural reserves

A proportion of natural reserves are required within all plantations in order to meet the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS). These are areas that are not clear-felled and where intervention is minimal in order to provide the stability in a woodland environment that is retained for wildlife. A high proportion of the trees might blow over in a natural reserve, but they are allowed to rot on site and natural regeneration of a range of species should replace the windblown trees. Often natural reserves might focus on corners of the forest that are difficult to manage due to access constraints or along riparian areas where humidity levels can support a range of bryophyte and fungi species.

6.2.4 Species mix, native woodland, environment and landscape improvements

The species currently planted on site are generally suitable to the site. However, it is more than likely that all the larch will need to be felled as *Phytophthora ramorum* continues to spread. Sitka spruce is slow to establish in some areas where soils are poor and heather establishes to restrict nitrogen availability to the trees; hence the FLS proposal to restock Sitka spruce with lodgepole pine in a mixture. The aim is for the lodgepole pine and spruce together to shade out the heather

and once that is achieved the spruce grows faster than the pine, which is either left to be shaded out by the spruce or removed in a thinning operation.

The FLS proposals for more Norway spruce, Scots pine and birch to be planted will be of benefit to wildlife, especially red squirrels, but also cross-bills. Scots pine and birch will allow the natural, heath ground flora to return where it is otherwise shaded out by spruce crops. The proposal to remove spruce and lodgepole pine from Rack Moss is appropriate for the restoration of this wetland area where plantation trees are growing poorly.

The area named Oaken Bank and Glen Burn (compartment 3455), currently growing larch could be planted with sessile oak, hazel, silver and downy birch in order to enhance the amenity and wildlife value of this area, especially if the larch has to be removed.

6.3 Timber harvesting

Without wind-turbines (see Section 10 Renewables) the following scenario of timber harvesting over the next 10 years might be appropriate (The income values given are based on nominal pre-harvesting value taken from Forest Research Timber Price Indices, data to September 2025):

Period	Cmpt	Area (ha)	Activity	Volume production (m3)	'Standing' value (£) @ 34/m ³ overbark
2026-2030	3455 3496	6.1	Salvage windblown spruce	2181	74,154
	3455, 3496 3497, 3499	22.5	Fell mature Sitka spruce before more of it blows down	12,897	438,498
		11.0	Fell adjacent larch	3,309	112,506
	3455	19.9	Thin larch stand to be retained	2112	71,808
	3455, 3497 3498, 3499 3500	33.2	Thin P2000-2008 stands	1,170	39,780
2031-2035	3455	19.9	fell larch (assuming <i>P. ramorum</i> infection)	5,964	202,776
	3455, 3495	3.0	Fell spruce, and DF ahead of probable wind blow	1,286	43,724
	3500	11.7	Fell for wetland/native woodland restoration	1,032	35,088
	3495, 3496	12.1	Thin	724	24,616

With wind turbine installation, woodland clearance will still provide income from timber sales. For a 3-turbine scenario, there is some variation to the above felling plan. Bigger turbines can be key-holed into plantations with approximately 120m radius of land kept free of trees around them. The only variation in the above scenario is felling rather than thinning 9.5 ha of young conifer stands, yielding an additional 820m³ in the period 2026-2030.

With good access created to install wind turbines it will be appropriate to harvest the branchwood (brash) from felling sites, both to clear the site but also to generate some additional income as the brash can be used for biomass wood chips. While some of the brash will be used to create racks for harvesting machines to run on and protect the soils, once the logs have been removed, if the brash mats are not too full of soil, they can be lifted to roadside and chipped or baled for transportation.

Without turbine installation it will probably be better to use FLS forest roads to get timber out of the forest, even if this costs a rate per tonne. In 2021, the cost indicated by FLS was £1/m³ basic charge and 0.12 per m³ per km for haulage over what would be 2.2km of FLS road. It may be possible to negotiate this downwards.

The alternative is to build an additional road in from Greenmyres, with the associated costs of construction and maintenance. With the installation of turbines access roads will be built for getting the turbines in and these can be used to get timber out, without using the FLS roads.

6.4 Restocking

Any areas felled by FLS prior to purchase will need to be re-planted (8.55ha in 2025).

Grants are available to support re-planting; currently up to £550/ha under the diversity and resilience option of restructuring regeneration grants in the Forestry Grant Scheme.

The exceptions are wetland areas in Cmpt 3500 that are not suited to growing conifers. They can be converted to open ground with natural regeneration of eared willow/downy birch scrub.

If planning permission is received for the installation of wind turbines, then these areas can be left un-planted. Areas under wind turbines will be suitable for heathland restoration with juniper.

It is otherwise proposed that under community ownership the plan should be to follow the direction of the FLS land management plan, with the exception of retaining the larch in Cmpt 3455. If this larch is felled for plant health reasons, then more of this area will be replanted with native broadleaves, e.g. oak, hazel. There can be up to a 5-year delay on replanting areas to allow weevil populations to die down (see deer and wildlife management below).

Replanting costs without wind turbines:

Period	Action	Area (ha)	Species	Cost (£)
2026-2030	Plant previously felled areas	8.55	Mixed conifers	33,400
2031-2035	Plant areas felled 2026-30	41.47	Mixed conifers, 10% broadleaves	157,900
2036-2040	Plant areas felled 2031-2035	22.8	30% mixed conifers 70% broadleaves	74,600

Replanting costs with 3 wind turbines:

Period	Action	Area (ha)	Species	Cost (£)
2026-2030	Plant previously felled areas	8.55	Mixed conifers	33,400
2031-2035	Plant areas felled 2026-30	35.53	Mixed conifers, 10% broadleaves	135,300
2036-2040	Plant areas felled 2031-2035	22.8	30% mixed conifers 70% broadleaves	74,600

Planting costs are based on:

- Ground preparation at £1,000/ha
- Tree supply costs of £950/ha for conifers planted at 2,600 trees/ha and broadleaves £765/ha planted at 1,600/ha.
- Planting labour costs of £550/ha for conifers and £360/ha for broadleaves.
- Weeding costs of £375/ha for conifers and £240/ha for broadleaves, weeded twice if ground preparation is used.

No allowance has been made for tree protection, but if deer management is not sufficient, to establish broadleaves, Scots pine or Douglas fir, fencing will be required and could be in the region of £20/m.

6.5 Deer and Wildlife Management

Wind's Eye is a large enough area for HDT to hire someone in to do additional stalking rather than rely on the FLS stalkers to continue controlling deer in this area. The annual cull of roe deer from 168 hectares could be in the region of 15 to 30 deer per year, but as the deer density reduces the cost in time spent managing deer becomes greater than the value of the venison.

Stalking will need to be carried out in liaison with FLS and neighbouring land owners.

For the interests of wild cat and pine marten conservation it would be appropriate to identify an area that can be left as a non-intervention area that would be suitable as a denning area. These animals might adapt to the presence of wind turbines, because they are largely nocturnal and because their primary prey species, field voles, will be unaffected, or even enhanced by open ground around the turbines. The loss of natural habitat to access roads and foundations, and disturbance from maintenance traffic and recreation will have some impact, because wild cat and pine marten are usually shy to human presence, especially if recreation is accompanied by dogs.

Red squirrel populations will be supported by an increase in the planting of Scots pine, Norway spruce and hazel. Retention of older growth woodland and a reduction in the size of clear-fells will also be advantageous.

Pine weevils are a pest in replanting clear-felled areas of conifers. Adult larvae feed on the cambium of young trees and, if there are sufficient numbers then the young trees are ring-barked and die. They will eat planted or naturally regenerating tree seedlings, both conifers and to a lesser extent broadleaves. Larvae of the beetle feed in the stumps of felled trees until such time as the stumps are too rotten to sustain them, which can be up to 5 years. A clear-felled area can therefore produce large numbers of adult weevils, with emergence in April/May, from over-wintering larvae, and in August. Adult weevils are mobile, so planted areas adjacent to freshly felled areas are as vulnerable as if the adults were emerging from stumps within the planted area. To manage weevil impact sites can be left fallow for up to 5 years to allow stumps to rot down and become unsuitable for the weevils. Leaving sites fallow means that grass and herbaceous plants are a problem, so it might be more necessary to mound the area to create weed free planting sites for planting into, and weeding might be necessary to secure establishment of the trees. Re-planting soon after felling will probably require trees to be treated with insecticide, which will kill the weevils if the stem bark is eaten. While the insecticide can be targeted to the stem of the tree, there will always be some nearby vegetation that is treated and there is some collateral impact on non-target species. Continually thinning woodland to eventually regenerate the stand by natural regeneration avoids creating large numbers of fresh stumps that support high weevil numbers.

Field voles can also be a problem for newly planted trees, especially if a felled and replanted area grows a thick carpet of grass. This will apply to larch stands immediately after felling, while spruce stands might take longer to build up a dense grass sward some years after felling.

6.6 Grant aid to support forest management

Environmental enhancements can be supported by a range of funds from lotteries to independent trusts, but the back-bone of funding for woodland management might still come from the Government backed Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) with their Sustainable Management of Forests (SMF) annual payments, and Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) capital grant options:

The following is a list of FGS options that might be suitable to support woodland management in Wind's Eye.

- Woodland Management Plans – FGS-WIG
 - Long-term Forest Plan Preparation Grant - £25/ha for first 200 ha - £4,200 for 168 ha
 - Forest Plan Renewal Grant - £10/ha for the first 200ha - £1,680 for 168 ha at year 10 plan revision stage.
 - Deer management plan - £12/ha for the first 500ha - £2,016 for 168 ha. Requires independent assessment of deer numbers and impact, with the aim of reducing deer numbers to an agreed density. With this plan in place the woodland is eligible for the SMF options of Low Impact Silviculture, Native Woodland and Reducing Deer Impact. The cost/benefit of applying for 'reducing deer impact' and 'deer management plan' grants is only there if deer management is going to be an overall cost to the woodland.
- Re-structuring regeneration – FGS-WIG
 - Delivering UKFS woodland - £300/ha if over the woodland area no more than 65% is allocated to a single species and in each application at least 10% is allocated to 'other species'.
 - Delivering diversity and resilience woodlands - £550/ha if no more than 60% is allocated to a single species and within each application at least 20% is allocated to 'other species'.

7 Community Development Projects – Recreation

HDT's existing landholding at Greenmyres provides an ideal base for development of public recreation in Wind's Eye and extending further into Gartly Forest. If footfall at Greenmyres justifies the expansion of visitor facilities in future, then this too would increase the value of the recreation options discussed below.

Community acquisition provides an opportunity for investment, development and suitable promotion of an enhanced range of recreational facilities, encouraging substantially greater use of the forest, for both informal visitors and those participating in organised events and greater satisfaction from those using the routes.

The current forest road infrastructure in Gartly Forest supplies basic provision for hiking, cycling, cross-country skiing or horse riding with some appealing forest structure in terms of big trees to provide visual amenity in addition to long vista views out to the surrounding countryside. However, there is currently limited car-parking and no way-marking or promotion of facilities, and consequently limited public recreational use of the forest.

Monetising the provision of public recreation is difficult: Part I of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides for free, responsible access on foot, horseback and cycle, and whilst it is possible to charge for car parking, introducing such charges where not applied previously has proved challenging and controversial.

In practice the likely scale of any developments will be constrained by the availability of funding, primarily from grants, although income may be available from renewables and timber harvesting. Engagement of volunteers and winning stone onsite can reduce costs of trail building to some extent.

Grant aid for capital items related to path works and other recreation infrastructure (way-marking, interpretation, furniture etc) may be available through public funding or other potential funders. Away from urban areas grants are not easy to identify and secure and the bulk of funding might need to come from contributions from renewable energy generation.

7.1 Path works and related infrastructure

A wide range of path projects could be undertaken, with various objectives (but all driving additional footfall):

- Improving accessibility: establishing discrete all ability or multi-user loops providing shorter, less-committing recreational routes close to the existing carpark and/or Greenmyres.
- Improving connectivity: establishment of new trails to connect “dead-end” sections of forest, facilitating loop routes, rather than out-and-back.
- Accessing features of heritage interest or hill tops and view-points: suggesting and way-marking to identified destinations within the forest.
- Enabling connections to and between communities: (Insch, Rhynie, etc) and being part of long-distance routes e.g. the Gordon Way. HDT has already undertaken groundwork for such connections in the AB54 Paths Network Strategy produced in 2019.

Provision of benches and picnic tables will increase accessibility and should be built into any path works plan, especially for those paths closest to car-parks.

Small, simple roofed shelters are an attractive feature of many community woodlands and can provide both a popular destination and a mid-walk resting place for visitors. (Huts, bothies etc are dealt with in a later section). HDT has experience of construction of these through a collaborative project with Finnish communities in 2013, which resulted in two such structures being built locally.

Additional recreation infrastructure and usage can increase complications when felling, requiring diversions or closure and reinstatement if paths are damaged during harvesting operations, but there are well-established protocols for managing access in such circumstances. There will be a need to monitor trail infrastructure, which may need to be closed for safety reasons e.g. after windblow: it may take time to gather the resources to clear the trails again. Given the ready establishment of tree regeneration and gorse, vegetation management will be required to keep more informal trails open.

Trail construction costs vary considerably, depending on the grade of trail and the ground conditions encountered. Costs can be reduced substantially if stone can be sourced from borrow-pits / quarries onsite, and/or through engagement of volunteer labour.

7.2 Signage, interpretation and promotion

Post-acquisition, HDT would need to establish effective way-marking, both on existing trails and on any new provision. This is a relatively minor cost but needs to be kept up to date, refreshed and responsive to any on-going developments.

Static, onsite interpretation is commonly installed at recreation sites, displaying material to inform, welcome, orientate and direct users. Interpretation panels have value but can be expensive and if not done well are a very passive way for visitors to interact with the site. On-site interpretation weathers quickly, so consideration should be given to options where the on-site presence is minimal, but the content can be easily accessed on a leaflet or mobile phone application.

When designing interpretation, it is important to identify good stories that will be engaging and can be installed in a way that is as interactive as possible. Some community woods have created themed trails based on the cultural/heritage use of the site. It might be possible to develop narratives based on the quarries, the healing wells or the forest industry. The Huntly area has a history of droving, travelling people and the bothy ballads sung by itinerant farm labour.

Off-site (e.g. on-line) promotion of facilities will be an important component of driving up footfall, especially if the target audience is beyond the immediate Huntly community area. Increasingly, potential visitors like to know what is available at a given destination and often will seek to print off or download a map to guide them on a phone or other device. HDT has already developed a series of walking routes which are available online³⁵ and as printed leaflets. Some of these feature walks to and in Greenmyres and Gartly Forest.

7.3 Woodland playpark and/or gym

Community ownership could facilitate the development of a wide range of other recreation activities and infrastructure that benefit from the presence of woodland features and materials. These range from free play for children where they use the branches, logs and other site features to create their own dens or whatever takes their fancy to more specific playpark and exercise features such as rope webs and board walks. The potential for high rope facilities such as those provided by Go-Ape³⁶ may be limited due to the altitude and windiness of the site.

7.4 Mountain/gravel biking

Mountain biking and off-road (gravel) cycling continue to grow in popularity, attracting a wide range of users from families to daredevils. The relatively recent development of mountain e-bikes and gravel bikes is anticipated to widen participation. As with other recreational facilities, biking infrastructure requires significant investment and can be difficult to monetise: most projects are dependent on grant for establishment costs, whilst income to fund maintenance can be generated from car parking and uplift, bike hire/repair and cafes.

HDT could seek to facilitate and develop mountain/gravel biking based from Greenmyres and linked to Wind's Eye at a range of levels, but the Wind's Eye area itself, due to modest gradients and distances, suits the development of easy trails that can be made more challenging with the addition of technical rock or timber-built features.

Support may be available from organisations such as the Aberdeenshire Trail Association³⁷ (ATA) which works in partnership with private land-owners, FLS and other agencies to create and maintain bike-trail attractions for locals and visitors. ATA was recognised by the International Mountain Bike Association as one of Europe's leading trail advocacy groups in 2019.

³⁵ <https://www.huntlydt.org/what-we-do/huntly-travel-hub/walking-and-cycling-routes>

³⁶ <https://goape.co.uk/>

³⁷ <https://www.aberdeenshiretrail.org/>

Existing facilities in the area

There are various other mountain biking facilities in the north east of Scotland, a number of which are outlined below (all distances are by road from Greenmyres).

The largest existing development is at BikeGlenlivet³⁸ (61km), a purpose-built trail centre on 330ha of Crown Estate land, 7km from Tomintoul. In addition to red, blue and orange graded trails, facilities include a Pump Track, Skills Area, Toilets (open 24hrs, includes disabled facility and baby changing unit) and Bike Wash (free, but not always available in winter). Income generation comes from a cafe³⁹ and bike hire (both of which close in the winter) and car parking charges (free for first hour, £2 for up to 2 hours, £4 for >2 hours).

Forestry and Land Scotland advertises mountain biking in two forests: the Moray Monster Trails⁴⁰, outside Fochabers, (35km), by the A96 comprise a range of purpose-built trails for a wide range of skills; and Pitfichie⁴¹ (40km) where *“trails lead through varied forest and across open hill tops, with wide views of the Vale of Alford and Bennachie. Mountain bikers can find exciting rides through real countryside on a red-grade trail across granite hill tops, as well as a challenging downhill route”*.

Cycle Grampian records MTB trails in a number of other FLS forests, notably Kirkhill Forest⁴² (43km), Scolty Hill and Shooting Greens⁴³ (64km), Drumtochty Forest⁴⁴ (96km) and Durris Wood⁴⁵ (68km), all of which are relatively close to Aberdeen.

There is a private sector development at the DH Farm Bike Park⁴⁶, Portsoy (34km) which has two technical trails and charges £7 per person for parking. The Lecht Ski Centre⁴⁷ (61km) has blue and red trails available in summer only.

There are also community-led facilities at Bellwood Community Woodland⁴⁸, Aboyne, (53km): this has a bike park managed by the Aboyne Bike Park Association opened in 2013 on land owned by the Mid Deeside Community Trust. Aboyne Bike Park is currently fundraising to expand the facility. The relatively new Banchory Woodland Trails run by Deeside Bike Collective hosts *“moderate”*, *“difficult”* and *“extreme”* trails in a setting close to Banchory Town Centre.

³⁸ <https://www.glenlivetestate.co.uk/outdoor-activities/mountain-biking>

³⁹ <https://www.glenlivetestate.co.uk/outdoor-activities/mountain-biking/glenlivet-bike-trails-cafe>

⁴⁰ <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/moray-monster-trails>

⁴¹ <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/pitfichie>

⁴² <http://www.cyclegrampian.co.uk/mtb/routes/kirkhill.html>

⁴³ <http://www.cyclegrampian.co.uk/mtb/routes/scolty-shooting-greens.html>

⁴⁴ <http://www.cyclegrampian.co.uk/trail/drumtochty.html>

⁴⁵ <http://www.cyclegrampian.co.uk/mtb/routes/durris.html>

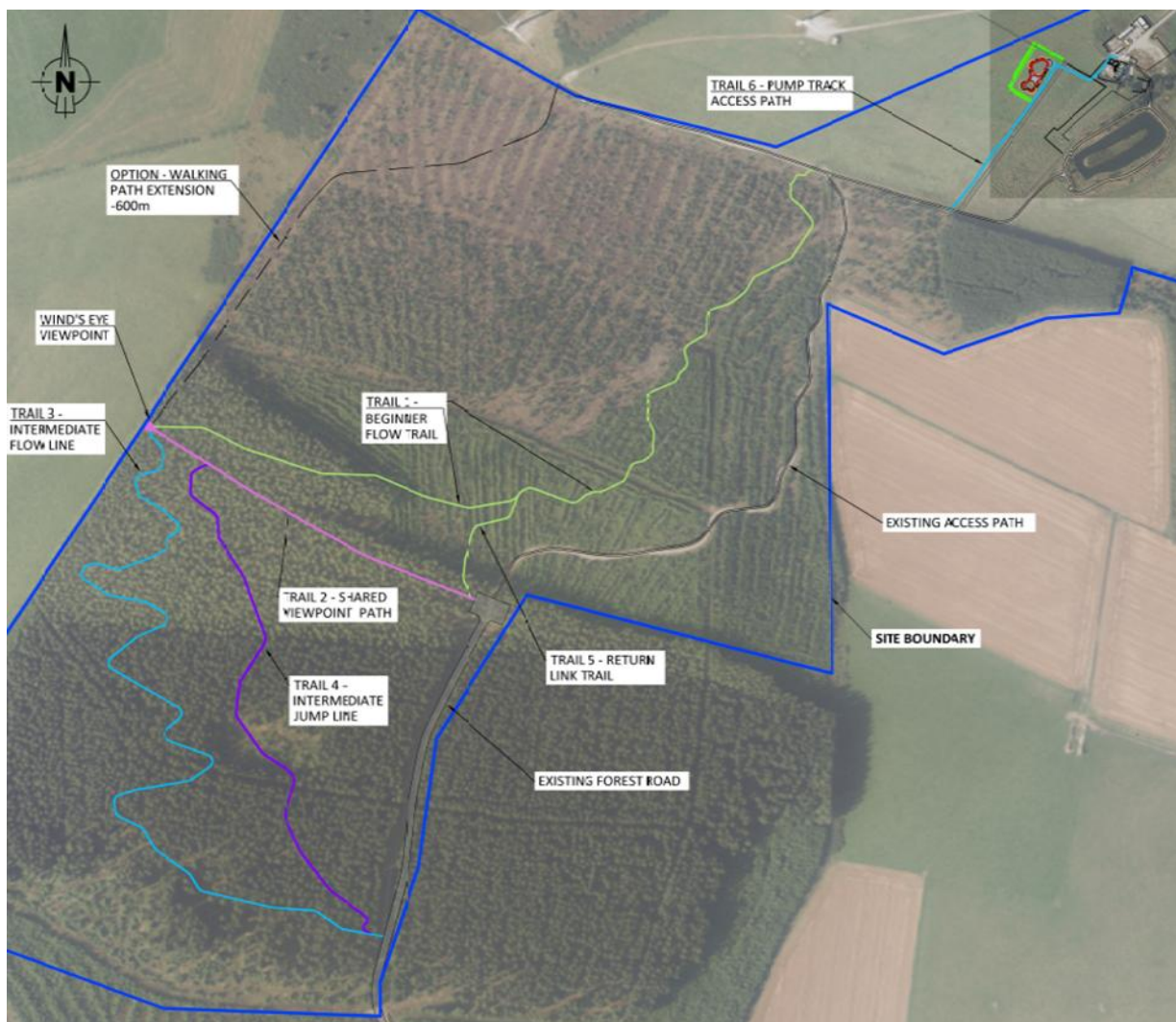
⁴⁶ <https://dhfarm.cc/about>

⁴⁷ <http://www.cyclegrampian.co.uk/mtb/routes/the-lecht.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www.mid-deeside.org.uk/projects/bike-park>

Finally, Tarland Trails⁴⁹ (50km) are a set of award-winning mountain bike trails developed by the Tarland Development Group working alongside the MacRobert Trust. The original trails at Drummy Woods to the SW of the village opened to the public in 2015. Trails consist of a family trail (blue), a technical run (red), big jump run (orange) and a large pump track. The newer Pittenderich facility opened in 2023 where *“trails consist of sweeping turns, berms, jumps and technical riding. The ideal place to take your riding to the next level.”*

Through HDT’s collaboration with ONE NEAT, in 2021/22 CR Contracting and Collective Trax prepared an initial feasibility study into the potential for mountain-biking at Greenmyres/Wind’s Eye, albeit in a slightly smaller section of the woodland that is now being considered for acquisition by HDT. Map 9 below shows initial trail options, excluding any other site development projects e.g. accommodation, huts, turbines. These other elements will clearly have to be factored in to a final design. The full results are available in separate documents on the HDT website.



Map 9: Initial CRC/Collective Trax design for bike trails in Wind’s Eye

⁴⁹ <https://www.tarland-trails.com/>

MTB-specific facilities

Working from a 'trailhead' at Greenmyres, this option would involve adding to the existing Greenmyres pump track by creating a skills development area and graded trails. Again, this could be delivered gradually and opportunistically as funds are available. The skills development area and easy trails would be best sited close to the trailhead, whilst graded trails would stretch further afield into Wind's Eye.

Development of MTB-specific trails could drive footfall for a café, whilst additional income could come from electric and other bike hire from Greenmyres. Car parking is a source of income at some trails, but as discussed earlier, may not be welcomed by those looking for simple walks from Greenmyres.

7.5 Other sports

There is potential, in conjunction with developments at Greenmyres, to increase the use of Gartly Forest for a range of sporting events such as enduro⁵⁰ or dirt crit⁵¹ mountain bike racing, running or orienteering in the forest, potentially delivered in partnership with local sports clubs. HDT already has experience of working in partnership to deliver the popular and successful Room To Run⁵² and Room to Ride events.

The forest could still be used to host the Speyside Stages car rally if public access can be managed accordingly to ensure safety. Currently, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Moray are bidding jointly to host the World Rally Championship in 2027-29.

Orienteering is an exciting and challenging outdoor sport that exercises mind and body, the aim of which is to navigate between control points marked on an orienteering map. For one-off events control markers are installed on a temporary basis. A permanent orienteering course can be installed using wooden markers, with a map made available e.g. at Greenmyres. Variants suitable for wheel-chair users or cyclists are also possible. A specialised map is required but not new paths or trails.

It might be possible to develop facilities for winter sports, such as cross-country skiing, although the vagaries of Scottish winters might limit usage.

7.6 Adventure tourism

Whilst most visits to Greenmyres and Gartly Forest are likely to be self-contained there is potential for developments to establish wider connectivity between neighbouring forests and hills (e.g. Clashindarroch, Foudland, Whitehaugh, Bennachie) in order to provide long-distance trails for horse riding, off-road cycling or hiking.

⁵⁰ E.g. <https://www.nevisrange.co.uk/event/scottish-enduro-series-round-6/>

⁵¹ E.g. <https://www.nevisrange.co.uk/event/dirt-crit-mountain-bike-event/>

⁵² <https://www.roomtorun.uk/>

The facilities at Greenmyres could be used as a stop-over destination (access to toilets, kitchen, shelter) for those who are otherwise travelling light and camping wild. They also lend themselves to a venue for training Duke of Edinburgh/John Muir Trust award participants, with the forest as the backdrop/venue for trekking by foot, bike, ski or horse.

Stop-over facilities elsewhere in the forest might include a Scandinavian style bivouac site that would include a sheltered sleeping platform, compost toilet, log store and fire pit. Axe and fire utensils could be hired for the night from Greenmyres.

7.7 Events

With a significant facility in terms of parking and shelter at Greenmyres, there is potential to host specific arts, cultural or sporting events in or adjacent to the forest. Consideration needs to be given to neighbouring landowners, partner organisations to help host and run the event, how the events will be funded and how the events stimulate and sustain public engagement in forest activities.

- Open days: HDT staff and directors already host annual drop-in type events at Greenmyres, and these could be extended to include more regular scheduled guided walks into the forest. Displays and activities at Greenmyres would add to the attraction of the day. Activities might include demonstrations of horse logging, using axe and cross-cut saw to process felled logs, bug hunts or nature trails, falconry, identifying and processing wild food, building bird and bat boxes, etc. Ideally these events would engage a number of additional local volunteers, local groups, local companies and Forestry and Land Scotland and Aberdeenshire ranger staff.
- Cultural events: such as open-air theatre or 'fireside' music sessions featuring locally-sourced venison stew and beer, included in the ticket price. Numbers of guests might be restricted by parking, the capacity under any shelter provided and what would feel safe to the organisers. A shuttle bus from Huntly/Insch might alleviate the parking restrictions.
- Seasonal events: such as a Christmas tree sale or Santa's Grotto event, perhaps in conjunction with other craft activities utilising forest materials.

7.8 Art installations

Greenmyres and Wind's Eye would lend itself as a venue for outdoor art; either ephemeral projects that use the natural resources or more permanent works that are inspired by the location; either developed through courses or by an 'artist in residence'. Art installations might be best suited to forest areas that are already well used by the public, unless they are developed as a new attraction. Options include a simple poetry trail⁵³ that uses new or existing poems or ballads of the local area might originate from a workshop or event at Greenmyres and pick up on some of the cultural heritage of the area or a sculpture and music trail such as that installed at community-owned Dunnet Forest⁵⁴.

⁵³ E.g. <https://www.corbenicpoetrypath.com/>

⁵⁴ <http://www.dunnetforest.org/>

8 Community Development Projects – Volunteering, education, skills

There is significant potential to use Greenmyres and Wind's Eye for a range of volunteering, education and skills projects. Whilst the site is a short drive away from population centres, HDT's existing facilities at Greenmyres and its sustainable and active travel operation (minibus and e-bike hire) linked to Huntly's commercial bus and rail provision provide a great advantage to the development of such initiatives.

Initiating and running these projects will generally require grant funding, supplemented by income from e.g. renewables and timber harvesting: a number of potential funders is identified in Appendix 4.

8.1 Volunteering

Voluntary involvement is a key component of the sometimes intangible community development benefits arising from community asset ownership. Whilst some forest management operations require appropriately skilled and qualified professional contractors, many activities can be carried out by volunteers. Voluntary input will also be critical to deliver some potential income generating projects detailed in sections 9 below.

Potential activities include:

- Environmental surveys and monitoring
- Tree planting and maintenance
- Removal of non-natives and invasive species
- Path construction and maintenance
- Drain blocking to re-wet previously drained fen habitat
- Tree nursery work
- Running events (Christmas tree and woodfuel sales, etc)

Volunteers could be recruited from the HDT membership or more widely through promotion of opportunities. Many community woodland groups with significant volunteer input run regular work parties, covering both weekdays and weekends to widen accessibility, sometimes with groups aimed at specific user-groups: women, older folk, etc.

Volunteers could also be recruited through other organisations, including corporate groups, youth groups such as Scouts, Duke of Edinburgh (DofE), and organisations that offer volunteering holiday opportunities.

All volunteers need to be appropriately trained, equipped, managed, supported and serious consideration needs to be given to their safety. HDT will need to acquire appropriate tools and personal protective equipment (PPE) for volunteers and ensure that appropriate insurances are held, and risk assessments made.

8.2 Skills training

A few community woodland groups have developed their woods as venues for skills training, both in terms of developing woodland / land management skills or using the woodland as a venue for a much wider range of skills training. However, developing this to any significant extent, i.e. moving beyond ensuring volunteers are appropriately trained or occasional educational events to the point where it might become an income generating activity, has proved challenging, and requires significant investment in infrastructure, people and promotion.

In the short term the appropriate focus for HDT might be to offer Greenmyres to trainers as a venue for outdoor training opportunities. Course themes might include First Aid, chainsaw training, path creation and maintenance, bike trail construction, building from logs, making spruce beer, deer and wildlife monitoring and management.

8.3 Education initiatives – forest school etc.

With Greenmyres as a base there are opportunities to use the site and adjoining woodland for education events. Development of this will require further liaison with schools or with mental health charities to find out if there are, e.g. forest school practitioners in the area looking for venues, or the schools' options to have whole class sessions outdoors or targeting the development of activities towards special needs groups.

Considering that the woodland is not adjacent to a school, the time required to get participants into the woods suggests that the forest might be most suitable as a venue for groups, such as Scouts, running after school clubs on long, summer evenings, or forest school practitioners hosting forest play activities during the school holidays, or wildlife clubs running weekend events for their members. However, HDT is already delivering outdoor learning and other sessions for secondary school pupils at The Gordon Schools. This involves pupils being away from school for several hours at a time e.g. whole mornings and is proving both popular and a good way of achieving awards in outdoor activities.

9 Economic Development projects

In addition to the sale of timber to conventional markets, there are a number of potential development projects which could contribute to long term income generation from the forest and thus help underpin its financial sustainability. These include various options for adding value to timber and marketing other forest products, subletting for woodland management and establishing tourist accommodation.

Most of these projects will require specific business planning to assess demand and identify options for raising investment capital over and above HDT income from renewables and timber harvesting. A number of possible funders for development projects is contained in Appendix 4.

Options for renewables development are considered in section 10.

9.1 Community firewood and or biomass enterprise

Whilst the majority of timber harvested from Wind's Eye is anticipated to be suitable for sawlogs, there will be a significant proportion of lower value small round-wood which could be processed for local consumption. A number of community woodland groups have developed woodfuel enterprises: these are usually run directly but, in some cases,⁵⁵ are managed by third parties.

Woodfuel is generally considered a relatively straightforward option for a community enterprise as the product is well-understood, with an established market which is expected to grow, it is relatively low-tech, without needing specialist skills, and it is possible to grow the business organically from an initial low-level of investment. Margins are typically fairly low, so a woodfuel business would be unlikely to return significant profits to HDT but would help meet community aspirations by supporting employment. Additionally, delivering a valued product to local consumers helps embed the community appreciation of the forest.

Developing a woodfuel business would require investment in stacking/loading areas and (perhaps) drying sheds, probably at Greenmyres and the purchase or hire of processing and handling equipment. The scale and layout of the enterprise would have to be carefully managed to be compatible with the public recreation focus currently being developed at Greenmyres. Energy from the wind turbine at Greenmyres (and future renewables developments) could be used to dry firewood and/or woodchips.

Key considerations for HDT in developing a woodfuel business will be a more detailed understanding of the local market, the prospects for growth and the extent to which this is likely to be met by existing businesses (see 5.6 above). Both FLS and SLF will need to be assured that HDT will not simply displace existing providers.

One alternative option would be for HDT to establish facilities (e.g. drying sheds) at Greenmyres and rent these (and sell small roundwood) to an existing firewood business. Another option might

⁵⁵ E.g. at Abriachan Forest Trust

be to concentrate on a specific niche, e.g. woodchip, if local markets can be identified and it can be established that displacement wouldn't be a significant issue.

Timber harvesting estimates based on a proposed Wind's Eye harvesting plan suggest that ~21,500m³ of timber might be produced in the first five years, 40% of which might be suitable for processing into firewood. 8,700m³ is a lot of timber to store and with which to establish a business that might only sell 1,000m³ in its first years. It should also be borne in mind that conifer logs will only keep for 3 or 4 years out in the open before they start to lose value due to rot. The second 5-year period of felling might produce 3,600m³ of logs suitable for processing into firewood and after that, with the installation of 3 turbines, regular thinning might only produce 2,000m³ every 5 years. So, the production of wood goes from feast to famine until a more consistent supply of wood can be established through appropriate thinning a felling. Given the forest road network, logs can easily be bought in from the adjacent Gartly Forest.

9.2 Sawmill

A second option for adding value to timber from the forest is the establishment of a sawmill, again, probably at Greenmyres. This is a rather more challenging business area than woodfuel, requiring significantly more initial capital investment and operator skills, but a small number of community projects⁵⁶ have established facilities with a suite of milling and processing equipment to supply a range of products, whilst others have bought just a mobile sawmill to supply rough-sawn planks, posts and beams.

Given the small scale of any venture, sawmilling is unlikely to be a high profit operation but would contribute to economic objectives by supporting employment and providing a valued product to local markets. As with woodfuel, key considerations will be likely demand from the local market and the potential for displacement of local businesses such as the existing sawmill at Ordbrae, just NW of Huntly.

A sawmill would be dependent on access to a regular supply of timber, which would necessitate buying all or most of the forest. From the perspective of local processing, the larch in the forest is more valuable than the Sitka, as for many uses it does not require chemical treatment. The potential proliferation of *P. ramorum* is therefore a threat to the likely success of any milling operation that becomes dependent on selling larch for cladding, for example.

9.3 Venison

It may be possible for HDT to develop a venison business, either as a stand-alone operation or working in partnership with a local company. This could be established as an employment training project. It would involve constructing a larder to dress out deer shot from the forest and, with only a few deer coming from Wind's Eye each year, would need to buy in deer, and possibly rabbit and hare, shot from other land holdings. It would need to include a butchery and additional food

⁵⁶ E.g. Kilfinan Community Forest, North Sutherland Community Forest Trust, Stornoway Trust, Knoydart Forest Trust.

processing units to add value to the venison, but all benefitting from access to renewable energy at Greenmyres.

9.4 Tree nursery

The Scottish Government has set ambitious tree planting targets as part of measures to tackle climate change, and there is ongoing and rising demand for trees for restocking. There is a well-established nursery sector, including Christie Elite at Forres⁵⁷ and FLS Newton Nursery at Burghead. Re-planting and new planting tree requirements in the area are also being met by nurseries as distant as Northumberland. Some community groups have established small tree nurseries to produce native species grown from locally sourced seed and where they have a modest re-planting requirement.

If HDT were to develop a tree nursery then this would probably best be sited at Greenmyres, so not strictly within the new area being acquired from FLS, although it would be intimately linked to that proposal. A tree nursery would be a very effective community engagement tool (e.g. with schools, youth groups, and also a focus for volunteers, and could provide a significant proportion of plants for re-planting felled sites or enrichment planting for diversity (NB it would take a few years to get up to full production). Volunteer input would keep costs down, although realistically it is unlikely that they would be substantially cheaper than those available commercially.

Other caveats: unless they are for private gardens, producing trees for wider sale (or for FGS funded work) requires compliance with Forest Reproductive Material regulations, which adds a significant bureaucratic burden. Running a tree nursery can be surprisingly labour intensive at some times of year, particularly if there's a period of drought, as trees need daily watering. Further advice could be sought from community groups⁵⁸ that have set up tree nurseries.

9.5 Christmas trees

There is a well-established market for Christmas trees, and whilst it might be difficult to break into this at a large scale, there is scope for HDT to develop a smaller scale business focussed initially on its members, who may be minded to buy their tree from the community business as part of the contribution to the charity. Christmas trees sales could take place as weekend events e.g. at Greenmyres: if combined with other activities (and with coffee and cake available!) these could be popular and effective community engagement exercises as well as income generating. In early years it may be worth considering buying in a batch of trees wholesale to test the concept, although there is an associated risk of trees not being sold.

Dedicated Christmas trees could be grown in specific plots – potentially in the deer fenced area close to the Dummuies wind farm. Nordmann fir is the most commonly used species for dedicated Christmas tree growing but it is relatively slow growing; Norway spruce and Scots pine grow quicker but fetch a lower price. Sitka spruce is generally not favoured as the needles are very sharp.

⁵⁷ <https://christie-elite.co.uk/>

⁵⁸ E.g. Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust

A second option might be to employ conifers destined for Christmas trees as “nurses” for broadleaves in restock areas, allowing them to provide shelter to help early establishment but removing them before they begin to impede growth of the broadleaf stand. Alternatively, naturally regenerating trees or the tops of thinned trees can be used; indeed for the first few years these would be the only ones available.

Growing Christmas trees commercially is an agricultural activity that often utilises precision planting of trees, mechanical and chemical weed control, fertilising and physical and chemical ‘pruning’ to create trees that have the ‘right’ colour, shape and density of branches. If HDT were to seek to operate on this scale then the appropriate business model would probably be to rent a specific area to an established business and let them carry the costs of machinery and labour and the identification of wider commercial markets.

9.6 Sublets: woodland crofts, small holdings, wood-lots

There are several potential models for leasing part of the forest to an individual, family or group of friends to manage, subject to complying with HDT’s overall vision for the forest as expressed in the Long-Term Forest Plan.

There is considerable interest in and demand for woodland crofts, and some community groups⁵⁹ have developed these. A croft is a unit of land whose occupation and cultivation is subject to the Crofting Acts and is recorded in the Crofters Commission Register of Crofts. A woodland croft is a croft with sufficient tree cover overall to be considered a woodland under UK forestry policy; it is thus also subject to forestry regulation⁶⁰.

Woodland crofts are a great opportunity for individuals and communities to build lives and livelihoods based on a woodland resource. However, Aberdeenshire is not within the traditional crofting counties nor within the additional areas designated by Scottish Ministers (currently Arran, Bute, the Cumbraes and Moray), so any development would not currently be eligible for some forms of financial or policy support (the most important might be that the presumption of the ability to build a house might not be recognised by planning).

There may be scope for creating small-holdings within the forest, but again a key issue will be the extent to which planning allows development of housing and ancillary buildings to facilitate occupation and management.

A less permanent arrangement that does not involve full-time occupation of the forest is a Woodlot. The basic principle of a woodlot is that the landowner has an agreement covering the wood (or a demarcated portion of it) with a woodlot licence holder who pays rent in return for taking an “annual allowable cut”. Woodlots appear to work best when dealing with larger woods

⁵⁹ E.g. North West Mull Community Woodland Company, Kilfinan Community Forest

⁶⁰ ‘woodland croft’ is a descriptive term only: crofting legislation does not recognise woodland crofts as distinct from any other croft.

with limited public usage: they can be a good way of bringing woods into management (and getting more people involved) but they have to be manageable using small-scale forestry.

The Wind's Eye area might provide discrete areas that an individual or syndicate might wish to take on as a woodlot. Consideration would need to be given as to how this might impact on recreation activities in the woodland, and whether Wind's Eye is better managed with reliance on dependable and mechanised contractors to do the timber harvesting work.

9.7 Huts

In recent years there has been substantial interest in hutting, encouraged by the Reforesting Scotland "Thousand Huts" campaign.⁶¹ The usual model is that individuals pay a ground rent to a landowner to build a simple hut for the use of their family and friends. An alternative option is that HDT could build and own the huts and manage them as holiday lets – this is discussed in the section below. Huts will need to be 'off-grid' but accessible for servicing and maintenance and with a water supply and toilet facility. They could be designed for overnight stays for those travelling by bike, horse, ski or foot and offer nothing more than shelter, a wood stove or outdoor fire pit and sleeping platform.

All hutting options need to resolve the requirements for toileting, water for drinking and hygiene and energy for cooking and lighting and safety. Remote access reduces the risk of vandalism but also makes it harder to service. For low levels of use in a remote area a simple pit latrine might suffice. Rainwater catchment can provide a simple option for hand washing. Consideration could be given to facilitating designs that use timber from the forest and a rental agreement that requires occupiers/tenants to carry out volunteer tasks within the forest, as a means of encouraging 'hutters' to engage in the life of the forest.

There is no standard rental rate as there are many variables. The Thousand Huts website suggests that *"based on our survey of 50 hutters, this ranges from approximately £500-£1200 per annum per hut plot on a multiple site. It can depend on the services and initial outlay paid for by the hut site developer, as there are often substantial costs incurred at this stage"*.

A low-key alternative is the provision of bivouac sites similar to those found in Scandinavian forests that provide a covered, rain-proof sleeping platform, fire pit, log store, long-drop/composting toilet. To ensure they are used appropriately and looked after by those who use them requires education and the development of a respectful forest culture.

9.8 Forest cabins

HDT could develop a tourist accommodation business in Wind's Eye, with a range of possible specifications, from glamping pods to huts and chalets: each will appeal to different audiences (individuals seeking remoteness, families, those looking for weekend retreats or even longer stays for e.g. artist in residence) and will have slightly different requirements for servicing, accessibility,

⁶¹ <https://www.thousandhuts.org/>

etc. and it may be sensible to (over time) develop a suite of accommodation attracting different market segments.

All sites need to be relatively accessible, not just for guests so that they can come and go easily, but also for servicing and monitoring. Consideration needs to be given to ensure views from the cabins but not between cabins (sense of seclusion) and accessibility to forest paths and trails. Hiring out e-bikes or an electric 'mule' from Greenmyres might be an option for access and add a sense of adventure for those using the facilities.

Consideration needs to be given to the popularity of cabins for a forest holiday or retreat with or without wind turbines, and also the exposure of the site. Cabins will be subject to additional wear and tear in an exposed location and, if sheltered by woodland, at risk to windblown trees.

Establishing such a business will need initial capital investment and ongoing expenditure in maintenance and cleaning of facilities as well as promoting the opportunities and managing bookings (all of which creates employment) and might well prove lucrative. An alternative option would be for HDT to establish the cabins but sub-let the promotion and on-going management of the facilities to an existing or new business. There are a number of existing examples of 'quirky' accommodation in the North East, including Boutique Farm Bothies⁶², Down On The Farm⁶³, Deeside Holiday Park⁶⁴ and elsewhere in Scotland; Dreamcatcher Cabins⁶⁵ is an original example set in a nondescript edge of a spruce plantation.

9.9 Green burials

Green, or natural burial is the interment of a person's body in a manner that allows the body to recycle naturally and has become an increasingly popular alternative to other contemporary Western burial methods in recent decades, as a response to both the environmental impact and the cost of conventional funeral care. There is no single definition of what constitutes a green burial, but key components are usually:

- The site serves a conservation purpose;
- Sustainable, fully biodegradable materials are used for the coffin or shroud;
- There is limited or no demarcation or personalisation of the grave.

Proposals to establish new burial grounds are assessed by Local Authorities and SEPA; any new burial site is a material change of use and will require full planning permission. The Local Authority roads department⁶⁶ determines the access infrastructure required: this can be the biggest cost. The

⁶² <https://boutiquefarmbothies.co.uk/>

⁶³ <https://downonthefarm.net/>

⁶⁴ <https://www.woodleisure.co.uk/our-parks/deeside/camping-pods-deeside/>

⁶⁵ <https://dreamcatcherscabins.co.uk/>

⁶⁶ Different LAs seem to work to different rules, some expect access to be at the standard necessary for emergency vehicles and tend to default to local authority adoptable standard, although this is not a legal requirement.

potential for the cemetery to impact on groundwater will be assessed by SEPA, whose officials work to cemeteries guidance⁶⁷ (note this is guidance not a legal requirement). Key considerations are the:

1. depth of unsaturated soil available:
 - The soil cover above the coffin or shroud should not be less than 1m;
 - The base of the grave should be 1m above bedrock or the seasonal high groundwater level.
2. distance from watercourses - SEPA recommends that burials should not be:
 - Within 250 metres of any groundwater abstraction; namely any spring, well or borehole used as a source of drinking water;
 - Within 50 metres of any other spring, well or borehole or any watercourse;
 - Within 10 metres of a field drain.

Cremation burials are considered to present a lesser risk to the water environment, and subsequently face fewer restrictions on soil depth:

- Cremated remains should not be interred below the water table, and it is considered preferable, but not essential, to maintain >1m between the planned depth of the buried cremated remains and the annual maximum water table.
- An average spacing of at least 0.5m between individual cremated remains is recommended. At the discretion of the Local Authority the burial depth may be less than a metre.

However, standoff requirements from water features (as above) should be maintained. If urns are used, SEPA recommended they are composed of either inert (e.g. ceramic) or biodegradable (e.g. wood) materials.

Although the idea of being buried amongst mature trees may seem attractive, for practical reasons most “woodland” burial grounds are either new woodland sites or clear-felled areas with stump removal and landscaping prior to restocking. There are around 300 dedicated natural burial grounds the UK, including over 20 in Scotland. The Findhorn Hinterland Trust (FHT)⁶⁸ has operated a green burial site at Wilkie’s Wood for ~10 years and several other groups are actively developing green burial projects, to meet a range of objectives:

- As a commercial operation to support the community management of the woodland;
- To create or support a part-time job;
- To deliver a service for the community, particularly in those areas with limited or no alternative burial provision;
- To develop a deeper sense of connection between the community and the woodland.

Depending on the site there can be significant set-up costs around clearance and access provision, and then on-going costs of management and promotion. FHT engaged a specialist funeral co-ordinator, whose role includes liaison with funeral directors, family and all other requirements for an individual’s funeral such as supply of coffin, etc.

⁶⁷ <http://www.sepa.org.uk/media/143364/lups-gu32-guidance-on-assessing-the-impacts-of-cemeteries-on-groundwater.pdf>

⁶⁸ <https://www.findhornhinterland.org/green-burial/>

Potential customers will need to be assured that arrangements for the management of the site are secured in perpetuity, and if taking advance payment for services, such as the long-term care of the plot then bonds or insurance to protect the customers' investment will be required. Funerals typically involve services of other businesses: funeral directors as well as florists, catering, venues. It may be that the community group is able to offer some or all of these services, or there may be opportunities to work in partnership with existing local businesses.

Charges⁶⁹ for green burials vary, with some sites charging premia for more scenic locations, whilst others are benchmarked to Local Authority rates. Fees have several components, notably reservation of the lair, the interment itself and the long-term maintenance of the site, some of which may be payable in advance. In 2013 FHT introduced a "Pay now, die later" scheme which brought in considerable income through reservations.

If a reasonable demand can be assessed by HDT, terrain and access considerations suggest that green burial in the Greenmyres site, or Compartment 3498 of Wind's Eye might be suitable.

A further related option is the development of a business selling commemorative trees (with or without interment of ashes).

⁶⁹ See <https://www.findhornhinterland.org/green-burial/burial-costs/> for a schedule of charges

10 Renewables

10.1 Green Cat Renewables Initial Study

At the time of the initial feasibility study (2020-21), Green Cat Renewables (GCR) was subcontracted by CWA to assess the potential for renewable energy generation – wind and/or solar PV - at Gartly Forest. Their brief was also to consider the viability of these being linked to onsite energy storage in the form of batteries or hydrogen as well as having the electricity exported to the grid.

GCR concluded that:

- the scale and exposure of the site give it significant potential for wind energy projects. However, to minimise landscape and visual concerns, any additional turbines should be situated to appear as an extension to the existing Dummies and Greenmyres cluster, i.e. development should be focussed on the Wind's Eye block at the north of the forest
- despite this potential any proposed development will face constraints, notably local planning policy, suggesting that smaller scale proposals may be more likely to be supported by Aberdeenshire Council.
- development of any turbines would require compensatory planting for the area of woodland lost to access roads and the turbine 'footprint'. In addition, a surrounding 'tree free' area would need to be managed to ensure trees did not grow to more than 3m tall.
- a "standalone" solar PV array in all scales examined is not financially viable, despite a potential significant land take but a wind/solar configuration in a 'grid share' scenario was found to be potentially financially viable.
- incorporating lithium-ion batteries into the development would not be financially feasible due to high capital costs and uncertain market conditions.
- incorporating a IMW electrolyser with the wind turbine development for the production of hydrogen may be financially viable but as the supply chain for hydrogen is currently uncertain this would be a high-risk development for HDT.

10.2 Locogen Follow-Up Work – Current Status

Building on the recommendations of GCR, Locogen – who manage HDT's existing Greenmyres turbine and have provided various other pieces of consultancy advice to the Trust over the years – has been supporting HDT to investigate in more detail the opportunity to develop a small wind turbine cluster in Wind's Eye and the potential for a solar PV array at Greenmyres itself.

That work has been funded by Local Energy Scotland (LES) through their Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) and has sought to identify any potential "technical showstoppers", of which aviation concerns remain the most likely. Recent changes to aviation guidelines and improved mitigation methods mean that concerns about wind turbines for aviation in general (radar interference) are now reduced, albeit not entirely resolved.

Locogen has also undertaken various initial studies on potential project impacts on ecology and ornithology, noise, shadow flicker and the local landscape. An optimum site layout and potential

transport route for turbine delivery have been mapped. Project finances and what the development could deliver for the community have been assessed.

Finally, with increasing grid constraints in the area, HDT has followed up one of Locogen's initial recommendations and secured 16MW of grid capacity for a shared wind and solar development with a connection date of October 2031. Ongoing grid reform means that that timescale is subject to change, but it is the best indication currently HDT has of a likely connection date.

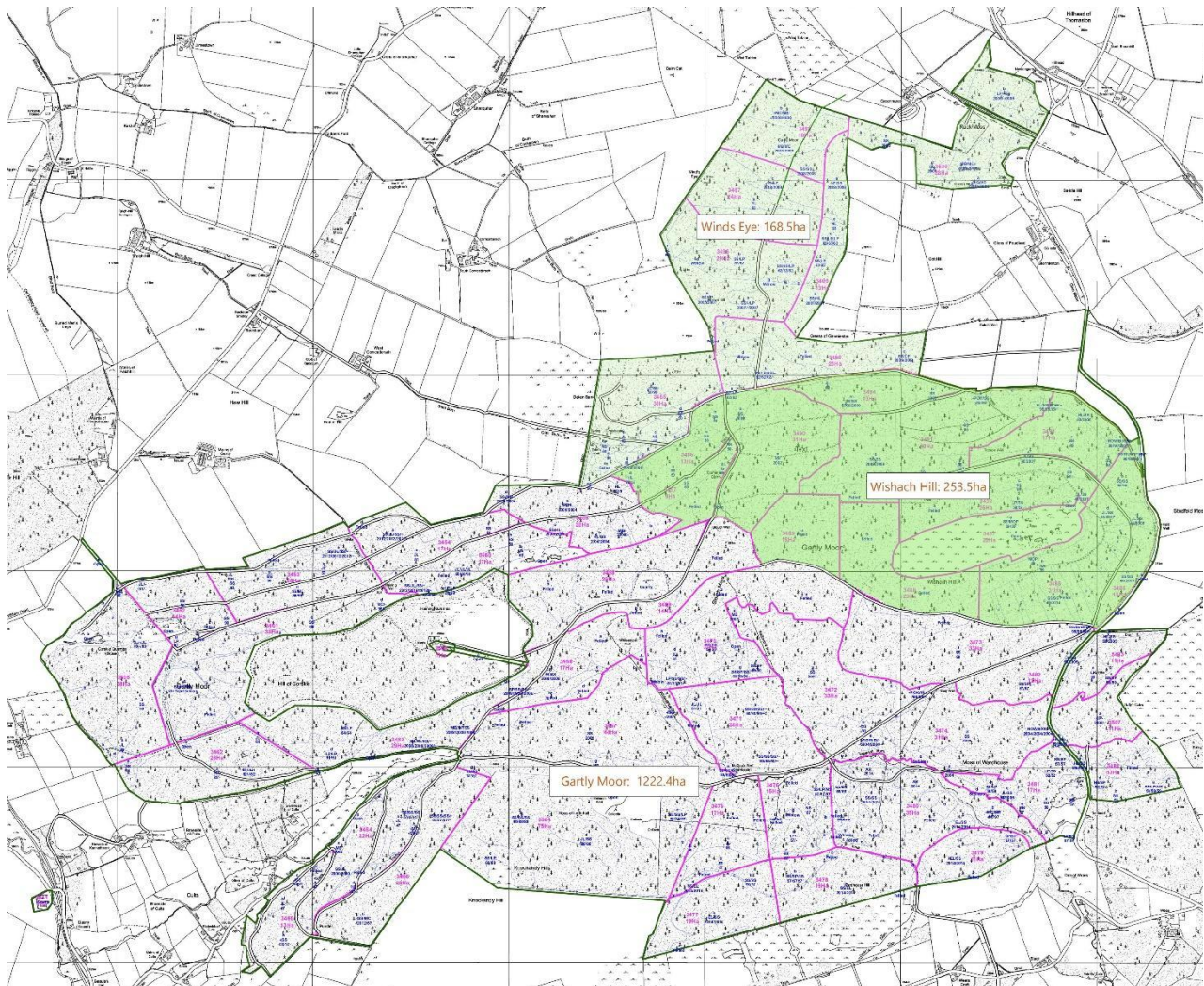
All of this means that HDT is well-advanced with the groundwork for informed and meaningful community engagement on the proposal ahead of any CATS application and submission of a potential planning application to Aberdeenshire Council. Key information about the current status of the renewables element of the proposal is summarised below.

- HDT is only pursuing a grid-connected wind turbine project in the Wind's Eye block. If HDT were to pursue a solar PV option, that would be at Greenmyres, and this does not form part of current plans. Any work on battery storage or hydrogen would be progressed at a later date, as would the opportunity for local supply arrangements.
- Recent developments in turbine technology, costs and government incentives, mean that fewer but larger turbines are needed to make any project viable. Given HDT's current grid connection date of October 2031, turbine suppliers have indicated that by that time, only larger turbines will be available, with their smaller (sub 150m tall) machines being withdrawn from the supply chain by that time. As a result, HDT's current proposal is to develop 3-4 150-180m tall machines. Each one of these is roughly twice the height of the existing turbines at Greenmyres and Dummies, in line with other proposed commercial developments in the area.
- To accommodate this potential development, Locogen have worked to find the optimum turbine layout within the site boundaries and constraints. This seeks to balance a range of factors, including landscape and visual impact, noise, near neighbour perspectives, other proposed site uses and the wind resource. The proposed layout is illustrated in Map 11, Section 12. A selection of photomontages and wireframes showing the project's potential landscape and visual impact from a variety of viewpoints are available on the HDT website.
- Larger turbines, whilst more expensive to purchase, do offer a greater financial return. This is necessary to enable the project to secure the borrowing it needs. The project's most recent financial assessment produced by Locogen in October 2025 shows the 25-year Net Present Value of the project to the community of just over £10 million with a first-year net revenue (after repayment of bank loans and operating expenses) in the region of £600-800,000. Income of such a level is expected for the following 20-25 years creating a genuinely transformational income stream for Huntly and District into the second half of the century. HDT will work with its community of benefit to identify how such significant proceeds are invested to meet community needs and aspirations.
- Any planning application would provide the community with an opportunity to comment both before and after submission. HDT will work creatively with any parties impacted by the development proposals to mitigate their concerns.

11 Acquisition Scenarios

The three original scenarios considered for community ownership and management of Gartly Forest were considered in some detail in the 2021 feasibility report. The management options outlined above informed the project plans for each scenario.

- 1) Purchase of the whole forest (1,222 ha);
- 2) Purchase of the Wind's Eye block (168 ha);
- 3) Purchase of Wind's Eye and Wishach Hill blocks (422 ha).



Map 10: 2021 acquisition options for initial valuation

Acquiring the whole forest gives the greatest potential for long-term, steady returns of income from timber, the ability to invest in establishing significant renewable energy generation and flexibility in developing projects for wider community development. However, two key considerations impact on the choice of current proposed acquisition area, namely the purchase price and the demonstration of additional community benefit for the FLS CATS process. These have led to the decision by HDT to pursue acquisition of the smallest of the three options, Option 2 the Wind's Eye block. Given that decision, further information on individual FLS compartment details of Options 1 and 3 is not presented below.

FLS made it clear at the outset that any subdivision of the forest would need to be negotiated and agreed with them. Their concern is to ensure that any change of ownership does not unduly impact on their management of the portion of the forest that they retain. This would include any subdivision that appears to create a ransom strip or leaves them with small and/or isolated blocks of forest.

In order to assist FLS with managing the remainder of GF, HDT is therefore proposing that the East-West forest road at the southern end of the Wind's Eye block forms the southern boundary of its CATS request. This forms a clear boundary for both parties. However, it is not the only possible configuration, and it would be possible to draw the boundaries elsewhere, i.e. to include or exclude specific areas/compartments as required.

11.1.1 Valuation

A formal valuation was jointly instructed by HDT and FLS and carried out, after significant Covid-related delay, by Galbraiths in March 2021. The values attributed to the whole forest and the identified sub-areas including both tree crop and solum - were significantly higher than anticipated:

Block	Area in ha	Valuation
Wind's Eye	168	£2,995,000
Wind's Eye and Wishach Hill	422	£7,660,000
Gartly Forest	1,222	£22,160,000

Table 6: Valuation of whole forest and identified sub-areas

Galbraith also provided a split between solum and crop values and an indicative range of crop prices for different forest types, to aid in assessing likely valuation of alternative areas. The solum value ranged between £2,500-£3,500/ha depending on land quality, the crop prices for various species are shown in the table below.

Crop type	Price range (£/ha)
Sitka spruce	£15,000 - £30,000
Larch	£10,000 - £20,000
Pine	£5,000 - £15,000
Broadleaves	£2,000

Table 7: Indicative crop prices for various species

It should be noted that Galbraith valued on a market basis, using comparable sales evidence and did not carry out independent calculations of timber volumes and prices.

The values suggested by Galbraith are indicative of the speculative boom in rural land prices in 2021 and reflect a range of non-productive factors.⁷⁰ Whilst timber prices had increased significantly prior

⁷⁰ Investment in forestry is promoted as offering significant returns <https://tilhill.com/forestry-investment/why-invest/> and as a means to “manage” tax liabilities <https://tilhill.com/forestry-investment/taxation-matters/>

to 2021, projected harvesting income over 25 years accounts for less than 60% of the estimated price. An updated valuation will be undertaken shortly and is likely to be refreshed during any subsequent funding/pre-sale process.

It should also be noted that the asset transfer process gives the community the opportunity to request a discount against market value, to reflect the additional community benefits that community ownership will deliver.

11.1.2 Funding for acquisition

The primary funding source to support community land and asset acquisition in recent years has been the Scottish Land Fund (SLF), which helped HDT acquire Greenmyres in 2014 and has funded much of this feasibility study. The current round of SLF ends in March 2026 and, although at the time of writing no guarantees can be given, it is widely expected that the fund will be relaunched after the May 2026 Scottish Parliament election as it enjoys cross-party support. It is not yet clear what the total budget will be nor whether support for individual projects will continue to be capped at £1,000,000 as before⁷¹.

Acquisitions of assets costing over £1,000,000, such as Wind's Eye will likely be, will usually be expected to raise significant additional funds, from e.g. other statutory or charitable grants, community shares or other crowdfunding methods, or from selling on assets.

Community forest acquisitions can potentially use anticipated future income from timber harvesting to leverage the purchase. There are several ways in which such a deal could be structured, options include:

- bank loan;
- advance sale of timber to a forest management company;
- loan or finance agreement from a forestry investment company;
- long-term lease agreement over all or part of the forest with a forestry management company.

The options listed above operate over different time frames: bank loans and advance sales would probably only cover the first 10 years, whereas a long-term lease agreement might extend to 99 years, i.e. covering not only the current crop but its successor. Whilst such a lease could raise more money, it would also reduce the extent of community control over the site, and we would anticipate that FLS would scrutinise such a deal very carefully to ensure that there was genuine community benefit and that the CATS process was not “being taken advantage of” by private interests.

It might also be possible to structure a deal whereby part of the initial acquisition price was met by selling off parcels of land for housing or other development, however such arrangements would be

⁷¹ There have been occasional exceptions, e.g. Ulva, but demand for the new fund is expected to be very high.

complex and likely to raise concerns with FLS or SLF or both, who might seek clawbacks in their contracts, reducing the value of such a deal to HDT.

A further option would be for HDT to finance (part of) the land purchase through the development costs of the renewable energy scheme.

Additional community benefit

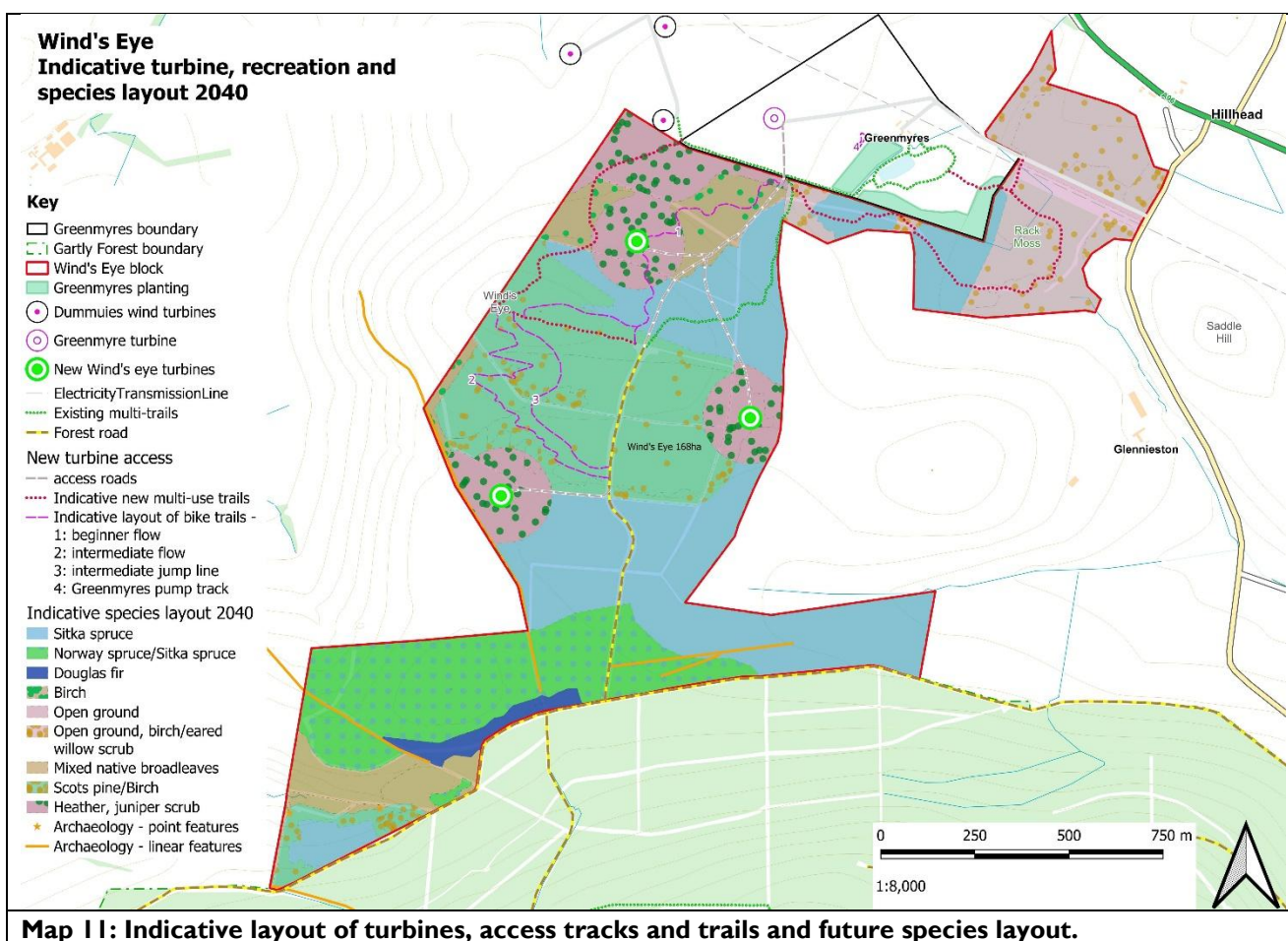
Gartly Moor has not been notified for disposal by FLS: this means that as part of the CATS process, the community's intentions for the site will be compared to FLS's own plans, and that HDT will need to show that considerable additional community benefit will accrue from community ownership, and that the additional benefits are proportionate to the area being acquired. There is no absolute scale on which this is measured, but broadly speaking, the bigger the area sought, the bigger the community's plans and the ensuing community benefit need to be.

12 Wind's Eye option - business case outline

12.1 Proposal

Based on the description of Wind's Eye, management options and the opportunities identified in the sections above, HDT's proposal in outline is to:

- purchase the 168 ha Wind's Eye block
- manage the land to optimise benefits for nature and continue to grow commercial conifer timber crops on ca 60% of the Wind's Eye woodland area
- install additional facilities for public recreation, focussed initially on hiking trails and mountain bike trails
- apply for planning permission to install 3 wind turbines
- explore other recreation and business opportunities over future years.



12.1.1 Timber harvesting

Phase 1 of felling and timber harvesting would be to clear the land for the proposed wind turbines and to clear stands of trees where there is already extensive wind-blown areas (essentially most of the mature woodland on the East side of Wind's Eye hill, compartments 3496, 3497 and 3499). Phase 2 would be to then fell any other mature stands if they are unlikely to withstand storm damage and if the larch in Cmpst 3495 is infected by *P. ramorum*. These phases are set out in more detail in Table 8 below.

Period	Cmpt	Area (ha)	Activity	Volume production (m3)	'Standing' value (£) @ 34/m ³ overbark
2026-2030 (Phase 1)	3455 3496	6.1	Salvage windblown spruce	2181	74,154
	3455, 3496 3497, 3499	22.5	Fell mature Sitka spruce before more of it blows down	12,897	438,498
		11.0	Fell adjacent larch	3,309	112,506
	3455	19.9	Thin larch stand to be retained	2112	71,808
	3455, 3497 3498, 3499 3500	33.2	Thin P2000-2008 stands	1,170	39,780
2031-2035 (Phase 2)	3455	19.9	fell larch (assuming <i>P. ramorum</i> infection)	5,964	202,776
	3455, 3495	3.0	Fell spruce, and DF ahead of probable wind blow	1,286	43,724
	3500	11.7	Fell for wetland/native woodland restoration	1,032	35,088
	3495, 3496	12.1	Thin	724	24,616

Table 8 Proposed phased harvesting in Wind's Eye

A variation to Phase 2 is that if the larch does not become infected with *P. ramorum*, then it can be thinned and retained for longer.

The clear-felling scenarios will mean that no stands will be ready to clear-fell after 2035 until the stands restocked in 2009 become ready for felling (ca 2050).

Attempting to delay clearfell and move existing mature stands towards a continuous cover system might have longer term benefits – if the stands do not fall victim to windblow - but would inevitably reduce the volume harvested in the first ten years of community ownership.

Regular volumes of timber can be delivered by thinning operations, as shown in table below⁷².

Again, a range of options (e.g. length of thinning cycle, intensity) are available. For the purpose of modelling, the figures are based on a standard 5-year thinning cycle at marginal intensity (70% of Yield Class) for three types of stand:

- Stands to be clearfelled as per table above will be thinned in all previous phases⁷³
- Stands now over 25 years old and not identified for clearfell will be thinned in all phases
- Young stands (planted since 1997) thinned from age 25-30⁷⁴

Total harvest volume over 10 years is thus almost 31,000m³. Only some of this will be from areas cleared for wind turbines, an on-going sustainable harvest of timber could be from some 100 ha. There could be a significant shift away from Sitka spruce production to native broadleaves.

12.1.2 Restocking

Within the area of Wind's Eye that is retained for forest management there are currently 8.5 ha of felled land awaiting restocking.

If HDT were to acquire Wind's Eye they will take on responsibility for ensuring that these areas are adequately restocked. FGS grant aid is currently available to support re-planting, but would only meet a relatively small percentage of the costs (£550/ha of grant income compared with £3,100/ha of costs). In addition, as described above, over the following 10 years a further 58 ha will be clear-felled and will require restocking.

Net restocking costs for planting are likely to be in the region of £3,000 - £3,500 per ha, with either £300/ha or £550/ha grant aid available⁷⁵, however the latter rate requires the Sitka proportion across the whole forest to be kept below 60%. Some cost savings will be available where ground conditions reduce the need for ground preparation, and through volunteer involvement in planting, although this is unlikely to be at a significant scale, particularly for initial operations.

Accepting natural regeneration, likely to be overwhelmingly of Sitka spruce, would be substantially cheaper, despite some longer-term costs of respacing, but will reduce the grant aid available for those areas being replanted (grant aid is available for restocking by planting but not for restocking by natural regeneration.) It also limits the capacity of managers to diversify the species mix.

12.1.3 Recreation and community development projects

Acquiring the Wind's Eye block would provide sufficient area for a range of substantial recreation and development projects – 168ha is still significantly larger than many very active community

⁷² It should be noted that these volumes are indicative and based on FLS estimates of future Yield Class: it is not possible to accurately measure YC for younger stands.

⁷³ i.e. a stand to be clearfelled in Phase 4 is thinned in phases 1, 2 and 3

⁷⁴ So stands planted 1998-2002 have their first thinning in Phase2, P 2003-2007 in Phase 3, etc. In practice first thinning age might vary according to growth rate and operational considerations.

⁷⁵ This is the rate of grant applicable under the current Forestry Grant Scheme

woodlands,⁷⁶ and there would be the opportunity to work in partnership with FLS to develop recreational access across the remainder of the forest.

168 ha would give sufficient space to establish huts or develop a tourist accommodation business, and whilst the volume of timber available for woodfuel would be reduced it might be possible to buy-in additional material from FLS's harvesting operations.

The only development options that would be foregone if only the Wind's Eye block were acquired are those involving very large-scale recreational development (e.g. establishing a major centre for mountain biking or other downhill sports facilities, such as indoor skiing) or extensive sub-letting (e.g. creating woodland smallholdings/crofts or woodlots).

Acquiring the Wind's Eye block would give considerable scope for local habitat improvement through restocking and enrichment planting with native broadleaves but would of course limit options for large scale interventions.

12.1.4 Renewables

The Green Cat Renewables study recommended that any wind turbine development should be designed to appear as an extension to the existing Dummies and Greenmyres cluster, i.e. it should be focussed on the Wind's Eye block at the north of GF. Purchase of the Wind's Eye block is therefore supported by the realistic potential for renewables projects, and this work has been further developed by Locogen as set out in section 10. It should be noted that if wind turbines were developed this would almost certainly disrupt felling schedules and require appropriate compensatory planting. However, the significant annual income available to the community from the renewable's proposal would appear to more than compensate for such disruption.

12.1.5 Analysis

Acquiring just the Wind's Eye block may appear to be a very reduced proposal compared to acquiring the entire forest. However, 168 ha is still a very significant block of forestry⁷⁷, and as noted above, in practice the great majority of HDT's development aims could be met within this area.

Galbraith have estimated a market value of £3m for the Wind's Eye block, to be refreshed shortly. Although HDT have the opportunity to request a discount on the market price based on the community benefit to be delivered by community ownership, it is clear that there could be a considerable gap between the eventual price and the usual SLF funding cap of £1m.

⁷⁶ E.g. Dunnet Forest 104ha, Evanton Wood 64ha

⁷⁷ If successful, this would be the highest capital value CATS acquisition to date and the second largest by area after Mull and Iona Community Trust's acquisition of 201ha at Ardura. Carsphairn Community Woodlands' initial application to buy 324ha at Muirdrochwood was approved by CATS but rejected by SLF, CCW has had a subsequent application for a smaller area of 48.7ha approved.

It would be possible to raise additional funds from preselling timber, other grants and crowdfunding, although the most likely option would be to factor some of the land price into the costs of a renewables development, thus increasing the borrowing requirement.

12.1.6 Alternative scenarios

It would be possible to reduce the area being acquired by excluding Cmpt 3455 or both Cmpt 3455 and 3495; on Galbraith's figures this would reduce the acquisition price by ~£1m. This would remove the attractive larch stands in Cpt 3455 (potential tourist accommodation and community activity sites) from the acquisition, although it is worth noting that these stands of mature larch are at risk from *P ramorum* and may need felling soon.

It might also be possible to request that FLS fell the mature stands in Cpts 3496 and 3497 prior to acquisition. On Galbraith's figures this should reduce the acquisition price by ~£1m, although on our estimates the timber is worth £725k. This would remove the potential to reinvest timber income in development projects and leave HDT with a substantial restock obligation, but even so would make the acquisition more affordable.

12.2 Conclusions

Most of HDT's objectives and aspirations for forest ownership can be delivered through the acquisition of some or all of Wind's Eye block (max 168 ha) at the northern end of the forest, adjacent to HDT's land at Greenmyres. (As FLS will retain ownership of the remainder of GF there is always the possibility of seeking to acquire a further tranche of the forest in the future.)

A wide range of projects can be undertaken at Wind's Eye. The main income-generator is likely to be a windfarm comprising 3 turbines, which would deliver substantial income for HDT and the community of Huntly and District in the medium term.

There is one significant stand of timber at Wind's Eye which if felled would generate income for re-investment, however, it may be necessary (to afford the acquisition) to allow FLS to harvest this prior to community purchase. In the longer term, as young stands become available for thinning, there may be some potential for small but regular income from timber.

Provision of tourist accommodation might produce a small income, but most other public access and environment projects will require support from grants or other external funding.

Any acquisition should be seen as complementary to and synergistic with the development of Greenmyres: activities in the future community woodland will help drive footfall at Greenmyres, whilst development of Greenmyres will help monetise the use of the forest.

The extent of any acquisition bid will be dependent on the development projects to be pursued, in particular whether a renewables project is to be part of the proposal. Responses to the forthcoming community consultation will help inform this decision.

13 Alternative tenure options

The primary focus of this study has been the community purchase of all or part of Gartly Forest, however, consideration must be given to whether community objectives could be met under alternative models of tenure, such as lease or management agreement between HDT and FLS.

The Asset Transfer provisions of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 give eligible community bodies the right to make requests in relation to purchase, lease or other rights over land owned or managed by Scottish public authorities. However, any request must be approved by FLS, who will be concerned to ensure that granting a request does not adversely affect their management of the remainder of the site, or place them under additional obligations.

Under a *lease*, HDT would take on full responsibility for managing the forest and the land and would retain all or most (depending on the lease terms) of the surplus from timber harvesting but would not have access to grants from the Scottish Land Fund⁷⁸. Rent (unless set at peppercorn level) would be an on-going cost to the community.

Most of the desired projects could be taken forward (unless the terms of the lease were restrictive) however it might be harder to get grant funding for some development projects involving infrastructure. FLS has indicated that it would prefer any mountain biking developments to take place on community owned land, rather than that managed under a lease. Potential clients of a green burial business might be more assured by HDT's ownership of the site than by a lease.

In the longer term a lease might prove more restrictive, limiting the scope for HDT to pursue as yet unforeseen development possibilities, as each new proposal might have to be negotiated with FLS. The existing lease agreement between HDT and FLS is specifically for the route of the new access path from Greenmyres into the forest.

The other alternative tenure option is a *management agreement*. There are various levels of formality possible with this option, from signed to verbal agreements. Similarly, the level of responsibility assumed by HDT could vary considerably. FLS would (probably) retain responsibility for managing the forest and would keep the income from timber harvested: ultimately the timing of harvesting (and possibly the details of restocking proposals) would rest with the FLS.

There are some advantages to the community in that the potential financial liability of catastrophic windblow would remain with the FLS, however the community would be severely constrained in its access to grant funding and the types of projects it could take forward.

The preferred tenure model is closely linked to the decision on what community benefit projects HDT decides to take forward. For example, starting small, a management agreement might be

⁷⁸ Under a lease, HDT would not need capital funding for acquisition, but leased assets are not eligible for post-acquisition revenue funding from the Scottish Land Fund. e.g. for a development post

suitable for building-up countryside volunteering, e.g. on path maintenance projects or non-native removal in areas dedicated to native habitats.

The greater and more complex a community's ambitions, the more an outright purchase is favoured. Given HDT's aspirations for community economic development at Gartly Forest and Greenmyres, purchase seems the more appropriate model, at least for part of the forest, although it may also be possible to seek to manage other portions of the forest under a lease (e.g. to create new circular routes linking up "dead end" forest roads).

14 Analysis of major risks⁷⁹

An acquisition of the scale proposed clearly offers great rewards/benefits to the community but is clearly also not without risk. The key risks identified are set out in Table 9 below.

14.1 Table of risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Land transfer ultimately unable to go ahead (due to FLS or other barriers)	Medium	Project cannot proceed	HDT maintains a professional approach and transparency with FLS.
Funding bid to SLF unsuccessful	Medium	Project v unlikely to proceed	High-quality application, strong community support
Community unable to raise match funding for acquisition if required	Low/ Medium	Project v unlikely to proceed	Robust fundraising plan and implementation
Significant fall in timber prices	Low	Reduced income for HDT	Flexibility in harvesting plans, fell when prices increase
Deterioration of relationship with neighbouring landowners/managers	Low	Delays, changes to plans, loss of community support	Maintain good communications and relationships. Sensitive management. Maintain professional standards.
Severe windblow in woodland	Medium	Reduced income, potential impact on amenity and other projects	Careful management, flexibility if needed. Cash in hand to respond in case of emergency.
Lack of community involvement / volunteers	Low/ Medium	Delays in implementation, lack of community commitment or buy-in	Active communications and promotion of opportunities. Working with external groups that can help liaise with interested volunteers
Lack of capacity within group / loss of key individuals	Low/ Medium	Delays in implementation, management failures	Robust governance systems, succession planning, wider networking and support. Keep it fun and interesting for directors.

⁷⁹ See section 12 for impact of COVID-19

Funding bids for development projects unsuccessful	Medium	Delays, projects unable to proceed	Good quality applications, flexibility
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Table 9: Risks and their mitigation

14.2 Timber price

Like all raw materials, the price of logs sold into open, international markets is vulnerable to a wide range of influences - and not just demand for wood within the UK. Timber has been talked up as an alternative to fossil fuel sources of energy and feedstock for plastics in response to the climate emergency, but the real revolution has yet to materialise.

In reflection of the international drivers in the timber market, the most important factor in timber price fluctuations is the ***Sterling exchange rate*** and this can vary according to the strength of the UK economy and Government policy.

The second key factor is ***foreign supply*** of timber whether there is a surplus of timber coming out of Europe or the US as a result of storm or insect damage, or whether foreign supplies are reduced or diverted to other markets. Given that Ireland is a big producer of Sitka spruce, what happens in this country is usually significant on the UK price of logs.

The UK building industry is probably the biggest domestic driver on timber prices, and again, if the exchange rate favours imports, then the building industry will buy sawn timber from abroad rather than from UK sawmills. Whatever drives the demand for timber products in construction, be that beams or panel boards, fence panels or pallets for shipping other goods, will have a similar drive effect on timber prices. Demand for wood as a fuel is steady but not racing ahead in development. Logs for domestic stoves are still in demand, but wood pellet boilers get most of their supply from imports. Wood chip boilers place a steady demand on the market for small roundwood, but again, new developments are not currently pushing the market. The domestic heating demand is currently all about air-source heat pumps, ideally using renewable energy.

Diesel fuel is still the single biggest component of the combined harvesting, extraction and transport costs. As yet there is a great deal of uncertainty in the future costs of this fuel, and while there is progress in electrifying timber transport, in the short to medium term, diesel fuel will strongly determine harvesting costs.

14.3 Grant aid

Many of the likely activities and operations to be pursued by HDT will rely on grant aid to some extent. Woodland management operations, including restocking, are currently supported through the Forestry Grant Scheme, which has until recently been co-funded by the EU and the Scottish Government. Whilst the scheme will continue in the short term, the longer-term outlook is unclear, although the importance of forestry in tackling the climate and biodiversity emergencies gives some confidence of extended support. A range of potential funding sources are identified in Appendix 4.

15 Abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
CARES	Community and Renewable Energy Scheme
CCF	Continuous Cover Forestry
CWA	Community Woodlands Association
DF	Douglas Fir
DO	Development Officer
FCS	Forestry Commission Scotland (now operating as 2 agencies; Scottish Forestry and Forestry and Land Scotland)
FDP	Forest Design Plan
FE	Forest Enterprise (now Forestry and Land Scotland)
FGS	Forestry Grant Scheme
FLS	Forestry and Land Scotland
FMC	Forest Management Company
GF	Gartly Forest
ha	Hectare (=100m x 100m, 10,000 square metres)
HDT	Huntly Development Trust
HL	Hybrid Larch
JL	Japanese Larch
LDO	Local Development Officer
LDP	Local Development Plan (Aberdeenshire Council)
LES	Local Energy Scotland
LIS/LISS	Low Impact Silviculture / Low Impact Silviculture System
LP	Lodgepole Pine
LPIS	Land Parcel Identifier System
LTFP	Long Term Forest Plan
MB	Mixed Broadleaves
MOP	Mountain Pine
NB	Native Broadleaves
NS	Norway Spruce
OG	Open Ground
OL	Other Land
OM	Operations Manager
OSCR	Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SF	Scottish Forestry
SF CF	Scottish Forestry Community Fund
SGRPID	Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate
SLF	Scottish Land Fund
SPHN	Statutory Plant Health Notice
SRW	Short Roundwood
SS	Sitka Spruce
YC	Yield Class

Appendix I HDT Director Biographies

(See also <https://www.huntlydt.org/about-us/people>)

Jamie Wilkinson (Chair)

Jamie was born in Aberdeen and brought up in the Aberdeenshire countryside. After leaving Alford Academy in 2003 he studied Geography at Glasgow University and then completed a Master's degree at the University of Aberdeen. Following some time spent working in rural development funding Jamie joined Community Energy Scotland as a Development Officer, supporting community groups develop renewable energy resources. During this period, he worked with HDT on the Greenmyres wind and solar projects. In early 2016, Jamie started in a new position as Co-ordinator with a development funding programme for fishing communities in Aberdeenshire. Jamie lives in Glass with his wife, children and two chocolate Labradors.

Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam

Sippi is an international affairs consultant who has called the local area home for 23 years. With a strong background in community development and over three decades of professional experience in challenging contexts, she brings valuable strategic and organizational skills to the Board. Sippi joined Huntly Development Trust in December 2025, keen to contribute her extensive management expertise to support the sustainable development and wellbeing of the Huntly community. Her commitment to participatory approaches and community-led initiatives aligns closely with the Trust's mission to create positive change in the local area.

Eileen Cosgrove

Eileen was born in Reading where she went to school. She then attended Aberdeen University to study medicine, graduating in 1981. After training posts in the West Country and Hull she and her husband decided they wanted to settle long-term back in Scotland. They initially lived in Gartly because of family connections in the area. Eileen joined Huntly medical practice in 1985, retiring in 2016. Over the years Eileen has been involved with the transition from HDT's predecessor - the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership – into formation of the Huntly Development Trust. Latterly, she has been part of a group of volunteers supporting the Number 30 project. She has also been involved with the Huntly Nordic Ski club for many years as a volunteer coach and volunteered at the Huntly Foodbank for several years. Eileen feels that Huntly has been a great place to bring up two children, to work in and to access the activities the family has enjoyed. She would like to help ensure that Huntly continues to offer similar opportunities to others. Besides cross country and downhill skiing Eileen enjoys walking, cycling, gardening and making wonky baskets.

Audrey Michie

Audrey grew up in Portknockie and began her career in hospitality after completing a BA (Hons) in Hospitality Management at Robert Gordon University. She spent several years travelling and working in the cruise industry before progressing into hotel management, holding roles in Glasgow, Perth and then moving with her family to Turriff. She later changed career direction and undertook further study at the University of Chester, gaining a Master's in Economic Development and Regeneration while working within Aberdeenshire Council's Economic Development service, where she initially supported HDT in securing town centre funding and providing expertise. Since completing an MSc in Place Management and Leadership, Audrey has taken on the role of Service Leader for Vibrant Communities in Angus. Living just outside Turriff and with a continued passion for town centre regeneration and community-owned energy, she has now joined the board of HDT and that of its trading subsidiary Greenmyres Renewable Energy.

Rosemary Munro

Rosemary was born on a farm in Devon and grew up in South Australia. She has lived near Cornhill since 1991. Rosemary spent 50 years working as a diagnostic radiographer mainly in the NHS. During this time, she worked in some very well-known hospitals and with some inspiring teams of people. The combination of Radiography and wanting to live in the country brought her to Jubilee Hospital and thus her connection to Huntly. Rosemary is interested in a wide variety of outdoor activities, including gardening and walking. She also maintains a lifelong interest in health and well-being. The people of Huntly and District were very welcoming to Rosemary at Jubilee Hospital, and she loved working in Huntly. Rosemary much appreciated the kindness shown to her by the people of Huntly and is therefore now glad to be able to give something back by devoting some of her time to the work of the HDT.

Bruce Murray

Bruce is an active member of HDT's Town Centre Subgroup and Chair of our trading subsidiary, Greenmyres Renewable Energy, which operates our wholly owned Greenmyres wind turbine. Together with the Number 30 Manager, Bruce runs the venue's cinema offering and leads on the sourcing and marketing of the films being shown each week. Outside of his involvement as a volunteer with HDT, Bruce is also Chair of Huntly Sports Trust. Bruce has run several business ventures in his past life and is now concentrating on all aspects of film production through his company Fierce Beastie Productions.

Claire Newman

Claire was born and brought up in Renfrewshire. Following an MA (Gen Arts) at The University of Edinburgh she moved to Aberdeen in 1984 for a post graduate course which led to a job within the sales department of a Norwegian company selling remotely operated vehicles and associated subsea equipment. After 15 months travelling and working overseas, she returned home to work in Edinburgh in office admin before getting married and moving with her husband to Aberdeenshire in 1990. With a desire to bring up their family of 4 boys in a rural area with a good school and offering a diverse range of activities and a strong sense of community, Huntly proved to fit the bill. Claire enjoys walking, cycling, skiing, cooking and gardening.

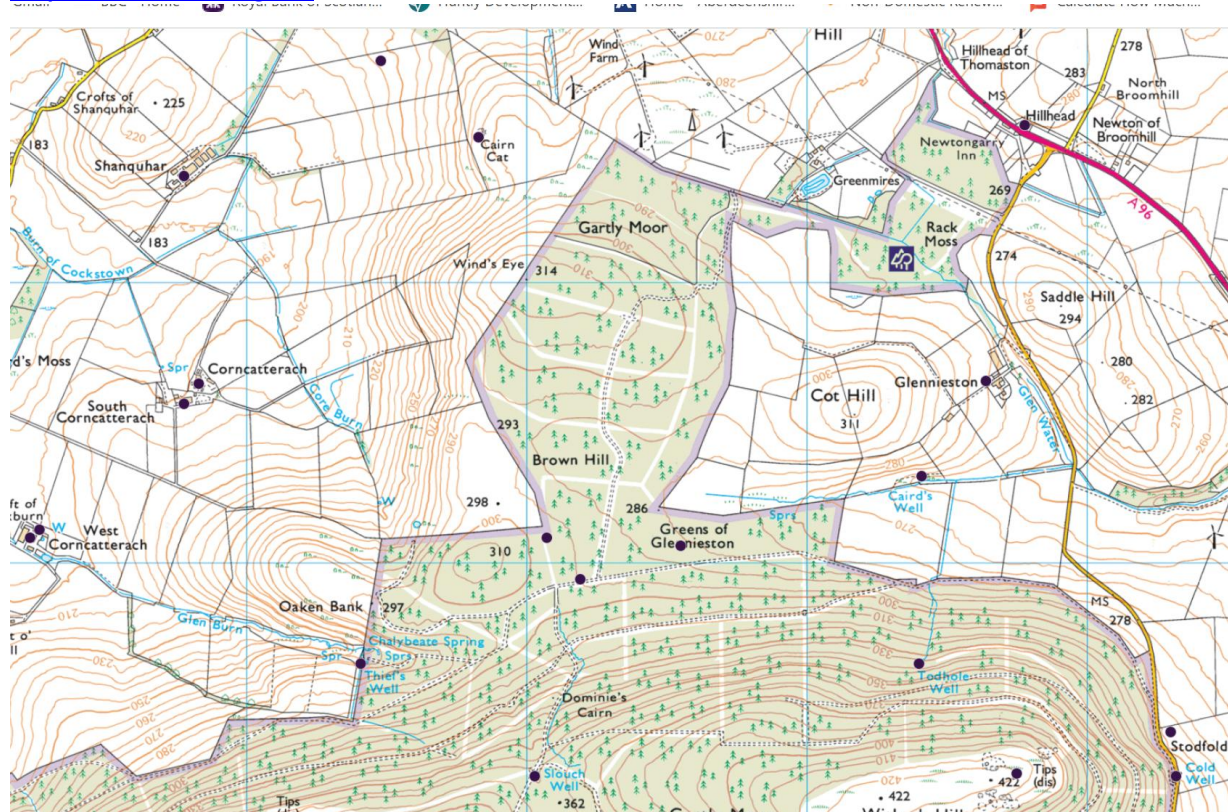
Graeme Ralph

Originally from the north of England Graeme qualified with a BSc in Forestry from Aberdeen University in the mid 80's. After initially spending time at the sharp end planting trees, building fences and learning all the practical basics of forestry he moved to Aberdeenshire in the late 80's to take up the role of a timber harvesting manager working in the private sector. Working for the same company after 30 years, he became Operations Director for North Scotland and responsible for all aspects of the company business north of the Central Belt delivering an annual turnover of around £30 million. Recently retired, Graeme now enjoys spending time with two grown up children and his grandchildren. This also gives Graeme more time to revel in his role as an outdoor enthusiast: mountaineering, ski touring and road cycling being his main interests, as well as helping wherever he can with the local community.

Appendix 2 Gartly Forest Archaeology

Map and table from Canmore (the National record of the Historic Environment)

<https://canmore.org.uk/>



Archaeological sites (from Trove.scot, part of Historic Environment Scotland). The four sites in the Wind's Eye Block marked with a ● are listed in the Table below (from West to East).

Site Name	Classification	Alternative Name(s)	Canmore ID	Site Number	NGR	NGR Description
Thief's Well	Well (Period Unassigned)	Glen Burn, Gartly Forest	147767	NJ53SE 37	NJ 5541 3364	
Brown Hill	Hollow Way (Period Unassigned)		348658	NJ53SE 100	NJ 5607 3409	NJ 5607 3409 - NJ 5678 3473
Gartly Moor	Hollow Way (Period Unassigned)		348587	NJ53SE 99	NJ 5619 3394	NJ 5619 3394 - NJ 5644 3417
Gartly Moor	Hollow Way (Period Unassigned)	Greens of Glennieston	347930	NJ53SE 98	NJ 5655 3406	NJ 5655 3406 - NJ 5640 3402

Appendix 3 Forest Analysis - Wind's Eye Forest data 2025

Cmpt	Sub-Cmpt	Main species ⁸⁰	Second species	Year planted	Yield class	Age 2025	Age 2043	m ³ /ha 2025	Area (ha)
3455	a	JL	SS	1950	10	75	93	310	16.56
3455	b	JL		1950	6	75	93	300	3.27
3455	c	NS	WB	1950	16	75	93	430	2.56
3455	d	SP	UP	2022	10	3	21	0	2.01
3455	e	SS		1950	20	75	93	620	1.78
3455	f	SS		2000	12	25	43	130	2.02
3455	g	NS	WB	1950	12	75	93	400	0.55
3455	h	SS	WB	1950	18	75	93	500	0.48
3455	k	MB		2025		0	18	0	0.21
3495	a	SS	UP	2016	14	9	27	0	12.09
3495	b	F	SS	0		0	15	0	8.55
3495	c	SS/LP	LP	2009	10	16	34	50	4.15
3495	d	DF	LP	1962	14	63	81	490	0.41
3496	a	SS/LP	LP/UP	2007	16	18	36	60	10.74
3496	b	SS	WB	1962	16	63	18	440	9.83
3496	d	WB	SS	1962	14	0	18	200	3.38
3496	e	JL		1962	6	63	10	270	0.9
3496	f	LP	SS/UP	2007	10	18	36	60	1.03
3496	g	WB	SS	1962	16	0	18	400	3.33
3496	h	SS		2016	16	9	27	0	0.26
3497	a	JL	UP	1963	10	62	10	240	9.17
3497	b	SS		1963	16	62	10	500	7.91
3497	c	SS/LP	LP	2008	10	17	35	50	6.81
3497	d	SS	WB	2000	8	25	43	80	0.51
3497	e	WB	SS	1963	10	0	18	350	0.3
3498	a	LP	BI/UP	2008	14	17		60	4.32
3498	b	OG	BI					0	5.68
3498	c	SS	UP	2008	14	17	35	50	1.33
3499	a	SS/LP	LP	2008	12	17	35	60	5
3499	b	SS	HL	2007	16	18	36	70	3.88
3499	c	SS	LP	1963	18	62	10	600	1.61
3499	d	SS	LP	1963	16	62	10	500	0.51
3499	e	JL	HL	1963	12	62	18	310	0.91
3500	a	SS	OG/NBL	2005	6	20	38	10	11.55
3500	b	LP	SS	2005	10	20		50	6.15
3500	c	SS		2005	14	20	38	60	5.85
3500	d	LP	SS/BI	2005	8	20		40	4.53
3500	e	OG						0	0.76
Total area								160.89	

⁸⁰ Where: JL=Japanese larch, HL=hybrid larch, SS=Sitka spruce, NS=Norway spruce, DF=Douglas fir, LP=lodgepole pine, BI=birch, NBL=native broadleaves, MB=mixed broadleaves, OG=open ground, WB=windblow, UP=unplanted, F=felled, Data taken from information supplied by Forestry and Land Scotland in 2021, updated 2025 and surveys by CWA in 2021.

Indicative 10-year felling and re-planting plan, under community ownership, with 3 wind turbines:

Cmpt	Sub-Cmpt	Sps1	Sps2	P_year	YC	age_2025	Fell_ph	Thin_yr	m³/ha 2025	FLS replanting plan, 2043	Indicative species and habitat plan with 3 turbines, 2043	Area (ha)
3455	a	JL	SS	1950	10	75	2031-2035		310	NS/SS	NS/SS	16.56
3455	b	JL		1950	6	75	2031-2035	2027	300	NS/SS	NBL	2.96
3455	b	JL		1950		75	2031-2035	2027	300	NS/SS	NS/SS	0.31
3455	c	NS	WB	1950	16	75	2031-2035	2027	430	NS/SS	NBL	2.45
3455	c	NS		1950		75	2031-2035	2027	430	NS/SS	DF	0.11
3455	d	SP	UP	2022	10	3				SP/BI	SP/BI	2.01
3455	e	SS		1950	20	75	2026-2030	2027	620	NS/SS	DF	1.78
3455	f	SS		2000	12	25		2027	130	SS	SS	2.02
3455	g	NS	WB	1950	12	75	2026-2030	2027	400	SP/BI	NBL	0.55
3455	h	SS		1950		75	2026-2030	2027	500	SP/BI	SP/BI	0.33
3455	h	SS	WB	1950	20	0	2026-2030		500	SP/BI	SP/BI	0.15
3455	k	MB		2025		0				NBL	NBL	0.21
3495	a	SS	UP	2016	14	9		2036	60	SS	SS	12.09
3495	b	F	SS	0		2025				NS/SS	NS/SS	8.55
3495	c	SS/LP	LP	2009	10	16		2032	50	SS	SS	0.46
3495	c	SS/LP	LP	2009	14	16		2032	60	SS	SS	3.69
3495	d	DF	LP	1962	14	63	2031-2035	2027	490	NS/LP	DF	0.41
3496	a	SS/LP	LP/UP	2007	16	18		2032	60	SS	SS	6.99
3496	a	SS/LP	LP/UP	2007	14	18	2026-2030		60		OG, heather	3.75
3496	b	SS	WB	1962	16	63	2026-2030		440	SP/BI	SP/BI	9.43
3496	b	SS	WB	1962	16	63	2026-2030		440		OG, heather	0.16
3496	b	SS	WB	1962	16	63	2026-2030		440		OG, heather	0.24
3496	d	WB	SS	1962	14	2025	2026-2030		200	SP	SP/BI	1.42
3496	d	WB	SS	1962	14	2025	2026-2030		200		OG, heather	1.16
3496	d	WB	SS	1962	14	2025	2026-2030		200	SP	SP/BI	0.8
3496	e	JL		1962	6	63	2026-2030		270	BI	BI	0.9
3496	f	LP	SS/UP	2007	10	18		2032	60	SS	SS	1.03
3496	g	WB	SS	1962	16	2025	2026-2030		400	SP/BI	SP/BI	3.33

Cmpt	Sub-Cmpt	Sps1	Sps2	P_year	YC	age_2025	Fell_ph	Thin_yr	m³/ha 2025	FLS replanting plan, 2043	Indicative species and habitat plan with 3 turbines, 2043	Area (ha)
3496	h	SS		2016	16	9		2036	60	SS	SS	0.26
3497	a	JL	UP	1963	10	62	2026-2030		240	SP/BI	SP/BI	9.17
3497	b	SS		1963	16	62	2026-2030		500	SP	SP/BI	7.16
3497	b	SS				62	2026-2030		500		OG, heather	0.75
3497	c	SS/LP	LP	2008	10	17		2027	50	SS/LP	SS	5.78
3497	c	SS/LP	LP		10	17	2026-2030		50		OG, heather	1.03
3497	d	SS	WVB	2000	8	25	2026-2030		80	SP/BI	SP/BI	0.51
3497	e	WVB	SS	1963	10	62	2026-2030		350	SP	SP/BI	0.3
3498	a	LP	BI/UP	2008	14	17		2027	40	NBL	BI	4.32
3498	a	LP	BI/UP	2008	14	17		2027	40	NBL	BI	2.24
3498	a	LP	BI/UP	2008		17	2026-2030		40	NBL	OG, heather	3.91
3498	b	OG	BI							NBL	OG, heather	5.68
3498	c	SS	UP	2008	14	17		2027	50	SS/LP	SS	1.33
3499	a	SS/LP	LP	2008	12	17		2027	60	SS/LP	SS	5
3499	b	SS	HL	2007	16	18		2027	70	SS	SS	3.88
3499	b	SS	HL			18	2026-2030		70		OG, heather	0.81
3499	c	SS	LP	1963	18	62	2026-2030		600		OG, heather	1.61
3499	d	SS	LP	1963	16	62	2026-2030		500	SP	SP/BI	0.51
3499	e	JL	HL	1963	12	62	2026-2030		310		OG, heather	0.91
3500	a	SS	OG/NBL	2005	6	20	2031-2035		10	SS/BI	OG/NBL	1.27
3500	a	SS	OG	2005	6	20	2031-2035		10	NBL	OG/NBL	0.27
3500	a	OG	SS/BI		6		2031-2035		10	OG	OG/NBL	7.3
3500	a	OG	SS	2005	6	20			10	NBL	OG/NBL	1.79
3500	a	OG	SS	2005	6	20			10	OG	OG/NBL	0.92
3500	b	LP	SS	2005	10	20	2031-2035		50	OG	OG/NBL	6.15
3500	c	SS		2005	14	20		2027	60	SS	SS	1.73
3500	c	SS		2005	14	20		2027	60	SP/BI	SS	4.12
3500	d	LP	SS/BI	2005	8	20	2031-2035		40	NBL	OG/NBL	2.92
3500	d	LP	SS	2005	8	20	2031-2035		40	NBL	OG/NBL	0.73
3500	d	LP	SS/BI	2005		20	2031-2035		40	NBL	OG/NBL	0.88

Cmpt	Sub-Cmpt	Sps1	Sps2	P_year	YC	age_2025	Fell_ph	Thin_yr	m³/ha 2025	FLS replanting plan, 2043	Indicative species and habitat plan with 3 turbines, 2043	Area (ha)
3500	e	OG								OG	OG	0.76

Appendix 4 Potential Funders for Community Development Projects

There are a number of potential funders for HDT's proposed community development projects:

Scottish Rural Development Programme

Forestry Grant Scheme

Support for a wide range of woodland management operations;

<https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/>

The options most likely to apply to HDT for the management of Wind's Eye would be:

- Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) – Long-term Forest Plan and Deer Management Plan.
- WIG – Restructuring regeneration, delivering diversity and resilience woodland.
- WIG – Habitats and Species – tree crop removal, small-scale tree planting.
- Sustainable Management of Forests (SMF) – Public Access, rural woods.
- SMF – Reducing Deer Impact.

If HDT decide to go down the direction of developing woodland enterprises FGS options also include Harvesting and Processing that supports the purchase of machines and equipment. The Forestry Co-operation option is also open to community groups to help them plan and prepare grant applications.

National Lottery

Awards for All Scotland

Awards for All can provide between £300 and £20,000 for projects that involve the community and:

- bring people together to build strong relationships in and across communities
- improve the places and spaces that matter to communities
- help more people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage
- support people, communities and organisations facing more demands and challenges because of the cost-of-living crisis.

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-scotland>

Community Action

For communities in Scotland that will help people connect more with each other, supporting projects that are open, inclusive and led by their community.

Applications, for £20,001 to £250,000 for up to 5 years will need to show how the project will:

- bring people together – through an activity or a space, online or in person
- reach and support people affected by poverty, disadvantage or discrimination
- be led by your community. This means that people from your community lead on the project idea, planning and decisions
- build on the strengths, skills and experience already in your community
- understand services and activities available and show how your project fills a gap.

The project must meet at least 2 of these outcomes:

- build positive relationships
- support people's health or wellbeing
- help people improve their access and connection to nature
- make a positive difference to the environment

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-programmes/community-action>

Heritage Fund

Grants from £10,000 to £10 million for projects that protect or enhance any aspect of cultural or natural heritage.

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-grants-heritage-2021-22>

Charitable Foundations

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

<https://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk/>

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve our natural world, secure a fairer future and strengthen the bonds in communities in the UK. It is one of the largest independent grant-makers in the UK and supports a wide range of work within the arts, children and young people, the environment and social change.

Other potential charitable funders include:

The Tudor Trust: <http://tudortrust.org.uk/how-to-apply/> - for projects that improve equality and social inclusion

The Henry Smith Charity: <https://www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk/> - Backing organisations that drive social change and empower people who are socially or economically excluded.

The Robertson Trust: <https://www.therobertsontrust.org.uk/> - aiming to prevent and reduce poverty and trauma in Scotland, by funding, supporting, and influencing solutions to drive social change.

The Dulverton Trust: <https://www.dulverton.org/> - supporting UK charities with a national reach tackling a range of social issues, protecting the natural world, and preserving heritage crafts.

The Mickel Fund: <http://www.mickelfund.org.uk/> - a wide range of priorities including the advancement of public participation in sports.

The Weir Charitable Trust: <https://weircharitabletrust.com/what-we-fund/> - over-subscribed in 2025, now limited to projects supporting animal welfare and participation in and preservation of Scotland's distinctive culture.

The Pebble Trust: <http://www.thepebbletrust.org/> - supporting projects with a vision for a more sustainable, fair and low carbon society.

The Marsh Charitable Trust: <https://www.marshcharitabletrust.org/> - supporting a wide range of projects run by charities, but including heritage and environmental projects.

Miscellaneous

Walking Scotland

Limited avenues for funding for path building through Walking Scotland. New funding streams might open up in the future.

<https://walkingscotland.org.uk/our-work/path-funding/>

Volunteering Matters

No direct funding as such, the approach is place-based and community-led. Volunteering Matters work alongside local people to co-design solutions that reflect their needs, strengths and aspirations, and develop projects that are implemented by volunteers.

<https://volunteermatters.org.uk/our-work/volunteering-in-scotland/>

Tesco Stronger Starts

Tesco Stronger Starts is open for not-for-profit community groups to apply for up to £1,500 for projects that bring benefit to communities.

https://www.groundwork.org.uk/grants_tesco-community-grants/

SEPA Scottish Landfill Communities Fund

The Scottish Landfill Communities Fund (SLCF) is a tax credit scheme, linked to Scottish Landfill Tax that encourages landfill site operators to provide contributions to Approved Bodies, who can then pass the funds onto community and environmental projects. Projects are usually only eligible for funding if the project site is within 10 miles of a landfill site or transfer station – the nearest to Gartly is the Lumsden, Aberdeenshire which is just under 9 miles away.⁸¹

<https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/waste/scottish-landfill-communities-fund/looking-for-funding/>

Additional, regularly updated funding options can be found on the Community Woodlands Association website:

<https://www.communitywoods.org/funding>

⁸¹ <https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/scottish-communities-landfill-fund/>