

# Forestry and local economy

A modern productive forest complies with rigorous environmental regulations. Planting on deep peat or near watercourses is prohibited, drainage controlled, and planting of native woodland for biodiversity is required.<sup>1</sup> Yet sustainability includes human communities as well as the wider natural world. What is the impact of forestry on the local economy? These two case studies explore the recent transformation of estates in the Scottish Borders from farms to forests and mixed land use.



## CASE STUDY ONE: WESTWATER



### FACTS & FIGURES

**Size:** 815ha

**Planted:** 2008-2009

**Previous use:** 106ha improved and 665ha rough grazing for sheep and cattle, 44ha woods, buildings and tracks.

**New use:** 424ha conifers, 53ha broadleaves, 46ha existing woodland buildings and tracks, 80ha improved grazing for sheep, 212ha open ground.

Over its lifetime, the forest will employ 2.5 people, the same as on the old farm. Whereas the farm employed a shepherd, stockman and part-time gamekeeper continuously, the forest provides continuous employment in management and deer control, but a much larger workforce at planting and harvest times.

Yet the changes to the local economy run far deeper. The open ground was largely sold off by the forestry company and put to a range of uses including a falcon breeding business and a plant contractors yard as well as the continued farming of the retained grazing.

On the farm, around 9 people lived on the site as tenants of tied cottages. When the forest was planted, the properties were sold off individually including

the previously empty big house and a ruined building. All the properties are owner-occupied, and the number of people has doubled, with everyone working on various enterprises on the estate and surrounding area.

The impact of the purchase and establishment of the forest has been to diversify both the range of employment on the estate and ownership of it, creating a far more resilient community. The forest brought economic vitality not just in the work involved in fencing, ploughing, planting and establishing the forest, but also in wide range of other developments such as house and workshop renovation. Once mature, the forest will create additional activity and revenue, as well as retaining a small 'starter' farm.

1. For a good example of environmental regulation, see the Larriston 1 Environmental Statement (non-technical summary) 2015, <http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/images/corporate/pdf/larriston-nontech-summary-2.pdf>



## CASE STUDY TWO: LARRISTON



### FACTS & FIGURES

**Size:** 1108ha

**Planted:** 2016-17

**Previous use:** 115ha improved and 897ha rough grazing for sheep and cattle; 56ha existing mixed woodland, tracks, and scree.

**New use:** 450ha conifers, 62ha broadleaves; 540ha open ground, 56ha existing mixed woodland, tracks, scree.

The farm employed approximately 1.5 people, including a part-time shepherd and casual help at lambing time.

During the planting phase in years 1-3, 40-50 full-time people were employed installing 9000m fencing, spraying bracken and planting.

In the establishment phase in years 3-5 there will still be higher employment than the farm, ensuring pests and browsing animals are controlled and trees establish.

In years 5-20, recreational facilities will be developed: links into a long-distance cross-border footpath, and an industrial archaeology interpretation trail including the old tile works in the Larriston Burn.

From years 20-40, a continuing cycle of activity will pick up as the forest requires thinning, harvesting and replanting.

The forest manager and assistant are early-career foresters recruited through a graduate scheme, and for them Larriston provides the opportunity for experience and training as part of a structured professional career.

As at Westwater, the buildings on the estate have been sold. Whereas previously the only inhabitant was the shepherd, now four cottages and a development site are inhabited by around 10 people, and these residents are adding a growing number of holiday lets.



Modern forestry in the UK directly reinvigorates the economy of local communities. While trees and livestock production require similar hours of human input, forestry is part of an integrated profession across the whole region and beyond, providing job security and opportunities for professional development. The peaks of employment at planting and harvesting time require a significant additional workforce, so a continuous stream of forestry projects such as these would ensure more stable employment at a diverse range of skill-levels: planter, fencer, deer-stalker, harvester, manager and so on.

More importantly, these case studies reveal the development of a new 'forest culture', characterised by increased diversity in land ownership, residence, public access, recreational facilities, environmental regulation, and small rural businesses.