

We can now see the wood for the trees

Andrew Heald argues that the sins of the past are behind us

WHEN critics of forestry get into their stride, a mention of the Flow Country is never far away.

So I always try to get there first and tell them that yes, foresters at the time got it wrong, in some cases very wrong, but we haven't done anything like that for more than 30 years.

Forestry is a long-term business and the sins of past policy and practice are very much visited on us today. Those creations of the 1970s and 1980s are what people see in our landscapes now, but the way we plant and manage forests is very different today.

That's not just a message for the forestry sector and policy-makers, it's one we are taking out to a wide range of people and organisations. A recent visit to Whitehillshiel in the Borders was part of this process of open discussions "on the ground", showing environmental organisations including the RSPB, John Muir Trust and Scottish Wildlife Trust that forestry has a very modern face, embracing a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits.

I am often struck by how much common ground exists between forestry and environmental groups, but so much gets lost in misconceptions and simple vocabulary – "blanket afforestation", "wall-to-wall" and so on.

I'm certain we can increase trust and understanding of each other's position by starting an open, honest dialogue about what we want.

If we do this and find where our objectives overlap, we can do great things.

At Whitehillshiel, managed by Scottish Woodlands, we talked about the balance between forestry and farming, peat and breeding birds, changes of land use, water management and much more. I stressed that the majority of Scottish timber is used in construction, and there is a growing demand for domestic timber, with recent multi-million pound investments in local sawmills.

Jonnie Hughes, chief executive of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, was interested in the role that modern, mixed forestry might play in the National Ecological Framework. Andrew Panter of Scottish Natural Heritage recognised it's not just about planting a new forest, but creating a whole new landscape.

Vicky Swales of RSPB Scotland stressed the



importance of conducting an environmental impact assessment and finding out what bird species (and wildlife more generally) is present on a site before pressing ahead. This was an issue in the creation of Scotland's largest current woodland creation project in Clackmannanshire, where the outer edges of the forest were specifically designed to encourage black grouse populations back into the area.

Hugh Chalmers of the Tweed Forum saw restructuring last century's forests as a great opportunity to improve water management, although he noted this doesn't always happen. He stressed the need for a thorough understanding of the relationship between forestry and water at a landscape level, including wetland habitats, water quality, ground preparation, ditch design and the impact of woody debris. Confor was involved in a document called *The Role of Productive Woodlands in Water Management*, published earlier this year, which examines many of these issues, and showed how productive forestry can have a positive impact, particularly in reducing flooding.

My aim for the Borders forest visit was to begin a dialogue, which I think we did, and hopefully by developing that dialogue it can lead to more understanding, more trust – and better decision-making in our mutual interest.

There is much to do. Forestry needs to work harder to make sure professionals embrace design and consultation skills more fully, not just the technical skills of woodland creation.

In particular we need to demonstrate the social benefits of forestry, in terms of employment and delivering sustainable construction materials for house building, whilst reducing our dependence on imported forest products

To go back to where I started, huge monoculture forests are history; 2015 is about modern, mixed forests which also deliver for biodiversity, employment, climate change, water management and much more.

In 30 years' time, I'm certain we will be talking about how to improve modern, mixed forestry to deliver multiple benefits – not arguing about outdated perceptions of a past long gone.

● Andrew Heald is technical director, Confor www.confor.org.uk

Lottery of life can

Grant is helping WWF to protect these gentle giants as they face a triple challenge off the coast of Lamu in Kenya, writes Lang Banks



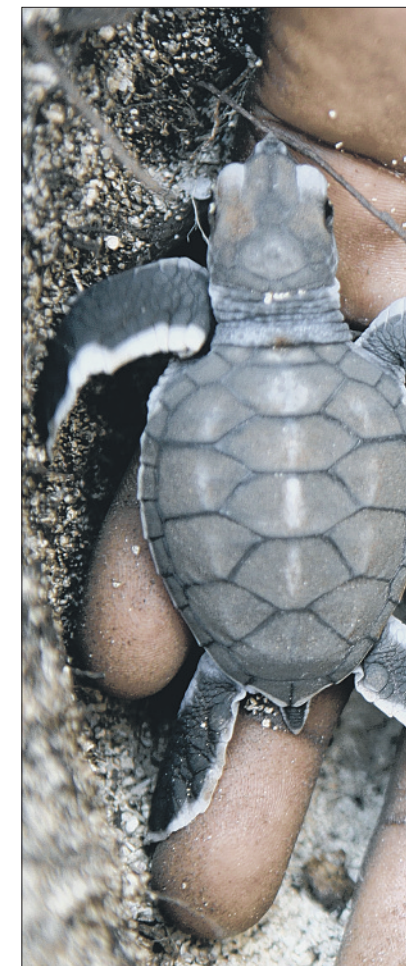
to protect turtles as they're important predators that help to keep marine food chains healthy. For instance, hawksbill turtles play an important role in protecting coral reefs by eating marine sponges, which would

otherwise out-compete reef-building corals. Similarly, by grazing on seagrass beds, turtles keep them clipped and healthy. The leatherback turtle is a major predator of jellyfish, which eat fish larvae – so having turtles around helps stop jellyfish from depleting fish stocks.

Now is a critical time for the turtles as March to August is the peak nesting season in Lamu. My colleagues, plus a team of volunteers, are working tirelessly night and day to help protect adult female turtles, nests and hatchlings. So far they have recorded over 100 nests, including a hawksbill nest and green turtle nests. When you think only one in a thousand newly hatched turtles survive to adulthood, it becomes clear how important it is that efforts are increased to protect them.

As well as safeguarding the nests, the team works to raise awareness of the ecological and cultural importance of turtles, and makes sure local indigenous knowledge is recorded. Staff and local volunteers also collect and analyse data on turtle activity, as well as forming beach patrols to keep the area clean and free any turtles accidentally caught in fishing nets.

Not only does this link between Scotland and Lamu help ensure this vital work can continue, but there are other links too. These majestic



creatures are no strangers to our seas. Giant leatherback turtles have been known to find their way to Scottish waters, creating a lot of excitement when they do. We know that the public of Scotland will welcome the fact that there's now a Scots-backed project that's designed to help these and other marine wildlife.

TV presenter and WWF ambassador Simon Reeve has visited the seascape around Lamu and has spoken of his

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Divestment policy not a blanket but aimed

Things are not as simplistic as our critics claim, argues Andy Kerr



THE issue of how to invest money responsibly has become increasingly contested in recent years.

High-profile campaigns have focused attention on whether invested funds of civic institutions and charities reflect their desire to produce socially good outcomes.

The University of Edinburgh has a strong track record of action in this area, reflected in its decision to divest from tobacco in 2004 and to sign the Principles for Responsible Investment in 2013.

On 11 May, the university adopted a new strategy on fossil fuel investments, having reached the clear conclusion that taking no action on this issue was unacceptable.

The university accepted an internal working group

recommendation to divest from the most polluting forms of fossil fuels – specifically coal and tar sands – and drive investments to the most carbon efficient companies. Following last week's meeting of the university's investment committee, the university announced it would write to three of the world's biggest coal and oil tar sand producers with the intention of divesting within six months.

This follows the end of a ten-day student occupation of one of its buildings in Chambers Street, with students arguing that the university was not going far

enough in only divesting from coal and tar sands. However, it was clear from the submissions received by the university that there were widely differing views on the issue of divestment, and strong feeling backed up with evidence.

Despite setting out a position similar to – though slightly stronger than – that proposed by the Church of England and Oxford University, both of which received plaudits, the university has been met with concern and disapproval in some quarters.

These objections have variously argued that we

rejected divestment from fossil fuels or that a malign fossil fuel influence has prevailed.

It has also been said that we are more concerned with research income from fossil fuels than with the wider issue of climate change and, more subtly, that the conditions under which we will divest are too loose to work effectively.

These objections are based on a misunderstanding of our decision. We have not rejected divestment – effectively we have adopted a "divest unless" approach to coal and tar sands. We have not been malignly influenced and we do not put our research income above the moral imperative of mitigating human-induced climate change.

The evidence gathered suggested that the balance of our research was

Environment



help baby turtles



The vast majority of baby turtles fail to reach adulthood so anything we can do to help them is vital

passion for it, and his desire to help ensure turtles continue to play their important role in maintaining the health of the coral reef habitat. He reported that during a visit to Lamu while travelling around the Indian Ocean for a BBC TV series he was absolutely blown away by the beauty and history of the place. But despite the issues facing the people and nature of the Lamu seascape, his message to supporters of our work there

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Giant leatherback turtles have been known to find their way to Scotland

is one of hope. I could not agree more with Simon. We must all strive to protect our natural world on behalf of all those who depend on it or love it, and – of course – for the benefit of future generations as well.

Over the past five years WWF Scotland has received over £1m from players of People's Postcode Lottery for our work on climate change and marine issues both here and abroad. ● *Lang Banks is director WWF*

Scotland www.wwf.org.uk/scotland For more information about WWF's work in the Lamu seascape, follow the blog from WWF-Kenya's Mike Olendo: <https://blogs.wwf.org.uk/biographies/mike-izava-olendo/>

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at engaging and improving performance

overwhelmingly towards alternative energy, renewable energy, earth systems understanding and carbon capture and storage. Indeed even the funding received from fossil fuel companies was overwhelmingly towards carbon mitigation measures.

The university has specifically said it will divest from fossil fuel companies if two conditions are met. These two conditions are that realistic alternative energy sources are available and that the companies involved are not actively investing in technologies that address carbon emissions.

The first condition reflected our concern about energy access. We live in a world where nearly one in five of the global population are without access to electricity. Whilst we all wish



to deliver their energy needs with clean energy supplies, the university sees energy access for the world's poorest to be an equally high priority – in terms of their wellbeing – as the carbon content of that energy.

The university believes there are reasonable energy alternatives to coal and oil from tar sands in most countries. However, it does not see fully developed energy alternatives at present to conventional oil and gas, and so we are not targeting these industries.

The second condition reflects the truism that it is

not extraction of fossil fuels that causes human-induced climate change, but the emissions of greenhouse gases. Companies that are actively – and practically – developing technologies to reduce or stop carbon emissions would be exempt from any divestment.

As a result, the university's first condition for divestment is met for companies engaged in extracting coal and oil from tar sands. The university will shortly begin investigating the second condition – whether specific company activities to reduce emissions are taking place. This will be a timescale measured in months not years.

At the same time, we will develop new ways of benchmarking the carbon performance of all our investments, with the intention

of only investing in the highest performing companies.

The issue of divestment raises passionate arguments. The desire for a thriving, low carbon society is not in dispute. However, the means by which we achieve that – through the financial impact and signal value of invested university funds – remains contentious. We do not believe that a blanket divestment policy from fossil fuel extraction companies is the way forward. Instead, we propose to divest where alternative energy sources exist, and engage and improve performance where they do not. ● *Andy Kerr, executive director, Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation and a member of the Fossil Fuel Working Group, University of Edinburgh edinburghcentre.org*

We won't let the wildlife bug us

Environmentally friendly way with insects, says **Mel Houston**

HOUSES, especially historic houses, provide insects with good living: somewhere affordable to live, an easy commute to work, excellent food just around the corner and a safe environment for the kids.

Without realising it we've provided insects with an ideal home that few estate agents could compete with.

Of course, insects have a slight advantage over us. We've only been looking for the right cave or two up two down for 200,000 years or so, insects have been scouring the planet seeking the perfect pad for 400 million years. They know a good thing when they see it.

Cold-blooded insects control their body temperature mostly through external sources of heat, such as the sun. Think of a sluggish bumblebee on a cold summer's morning that needs the dawn's rays on its back to get going. If there is a free source of constant heat, insects have more time to pursue other worthwhile activities. Like breeding. Let's face it, not many animals get amorous unless the temperature is right. Central heating in our homes gives insects more "energy" and hence they can be more active, doing what comes naturally but more frequently.

It is therefore no surprise that we see woodworm holes in those patches of flooring where the sun always hits, or in a tell-tale pattern over the route of an under floor hot water pipe.

For many insect pests, especially woodborers, home is also a great food source. Wood panelling, skirting boards, shelving, furniture and wicker baskets are all perfectly good harbourages. They are also very nutritious if you have the right physiology. Why waste time and energy and risk meeting predators by leaving a safe abode for food when you can make it surround you? If you only have to venture from home once in a lifetime to find a mate you significantly reduce the chances of being taken out by a passing spider, mouse or vacuum cleaner.

This applies to moths or carpet beetles too who need high protein snacks such as wool, fur or feathers. Webbing clothes moths seek out tasty accommodation they can eat and live on, spinning their equivalent of one-man tents to ensure they are protected from the desert conditions of a centrally heated home.

As we know only too well in caring for the National Trust for Scotland's properties, over the millennia humans have brought



the outside inside. Our floors, ceilings, walls and furniture are made from forests. They also frame our paintings and form the pages of our books. Grasses seed our homes, making the glues and pastes that hold the floral pattern on the wall or the leather jacket to a book. Animals stalk our hallways, with sheep's wool on the floor and in the wardrobe. Cattle "graze" in the form of an old, comfy leather armchair. All the natural fibres and animal products we covet so much sustain insects outside, so it no surprise that the same is true indoors.

Most of us know too well that finding the right mate is a problem. For insects though, our homes act as speed dating agencies. As any relationship counsellor will tell you, if you socialise near to where you live and eat (unless you are into computer games), you are more likely to find a companion than if you frantically take to the skies looking for a damselfly in distress.

Once the courting is over, all new parents aspire to healthy, well-fed offspring with prospects for the future. Bringing them up in the relative safety of an Ikea bedroom table or a 17th century tapestry rather gives them a great start. These are tried and tested locations and with enough food for a few more generations.

NTS is a conservation charity and it is not in the business of destroying wildlife. Our integrated pest management programme to control insects causing damage is based on simple steps to help us protect our collections.

Firstly, we try to deter entry and good housekeeping makes locations less desirable to an insect eye. If we can't keep them out, we need to know what and where the insect is and how numerous. Our highly trained staff can identify significant outbreaks and we treat infestations only when we have to. We use the most environmentally friendly methods appropriate to each case and only use pesticides when absolutely necessary.

A place for everyone, indeed – albeit the right place. ● *Mel Houston ACR is a Conservator with the National Trust for Scotland's Collections Conservation Services www.nts.org.uk*