

CAMBUSMORE

# Farmer creates large-scale woodland for biodiversity and timber production

**Sarah Toulson**  
(Cawdor Forestry)  
and **Helen Webb**  
(Scottish Forestry)

Ken Greenland, owner of the Cambusmore Estate near Dornoch, is to plant the largest woodland to be approved by Scottish Forestry under the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS). Scottish Forestry has awarded £3.2m for the 933ha scheme, which will be planted over a three-year period starting this winter.

From end-to-end, the new woodland at Cambusmore will stretch over 12km along Strath Carnaig, strengthening the current native woodland networks on a landscape scale.

Nearly all the new trees - 1.4 million in total - will be native species, mostly Scots pine and birch with rowan, oak, aspen and alder. The plan also includes planting 58ha of diverse conifer for future timber production and 77ha of natural regeneration which will protect and add diversity to the existing native woodlands.

The new woodlands will sequester nearly 50,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2045, contributing towards the Scottish Government's climate change commitment to reach net zero emissions.

## Farmer uses third of his land for woodland creation

The planting and natural regeneration will expand woodland onto about one third of Ken Greenland's land, enabling a rationalisation and improvement of his hill grazing.

Mr Greenland farms sheep and cattle and is passionate about the wide range of habitats and variety of wildlife which are present on the estate. Increasing biodiversity and integrating the new woodland with his farming business were key objectives. "I want to focus my hill grazing on the better land and introduce more cattle, whilst actively

farming the land which has Special Protection Area status."

"The planting is nearly all native species as I really want to increase the habitat for the amazing range of wildlife species we have on the ground. I believe that the Highlands can offer both quality food production and a top quality environment."

"My agents have taken great care in developing the plans to ensure that we can accommodate wildlife species that need open areas such as black grouse. I also wanted to provide a long-term habitat for a wide range of species whilst also connecting up the fragments of native woodland. It has been a long time in the planning but now I cannot wait to get started with fencing and planting".

## Innovative forest design reconciling biodiversity and timber production

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) consent for the woodland creation scheme was granted in early 2020 following nearly three years of very detailed evaluation and consultation involving SNH (NatureScot), RSPB, Historic Environment Scotland and other consultees. Much of the area proposed for planting is within a designated hen harrier SPA/SSSI and other protected bird species such as Black grouse are also present. There are also scheduled ancient monuments, a SSSI oak wood and a SAC/SSSI alder woodland plus existing fragments of native woodland in the

strath, which will be integrated to the scheme.

Sarah Toulson, Forest Manager, Cawdor Forestry who developed the FGS application on behalf of Ken Greenland, acknowledged that the multiple designations and high sensitivity of certain areas meant that an innovative and flexible approach was needed.



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"Cawdor Forestry's driving principle in designing planting schemes is 'the right tree in the right place' and this was especially important for Cambusmore. National Vegetation Classification (NVC), soil and peat depth surveys were carried out to match the most suitable woodland type to different areas of the scheme.

"We recognised from an early stage that a predominantly native woodland would be most suitable and this supported the owner's aim to increase biodiversity. We have managed to identify an area for more productive forestry, which will be planted with diverse conifers - Scots pine and Norway Spruce. This, together with restocking previously felled commercial plantations elsewhere on the estate and





replacing poor quality Lodgepole pine with more appropriate commercial species, will generate future income for the owner. “

The 58ha of productive diverse conifers are at the eastern end of the scheme, outside the boundary of the SPA. This area has direct access onto the public road network which makes it more accessible for the initial establishment and importantly for future timber transport. It also had some of the better soils, making it more suitable for the productive elements of the scheme and allowing a diverse range of species to be planted.

### Good collaboration and quality design work key for smooth application process

Ken Greenland and Cawdor Forestry worked very closely with Scottish Forestry’s Highland and Islands Conservancy team to gain approval for the ambitious plan. Helen Webb, Woodland Officer for Scottish Forestry’s Highland and Islands Con-

**Ken Greenland with Helen Webb and Sarah Toulson**

servancy said:

“Working with Sarah and the team at Cawdor really helped to make the FGS application process run smoothly. Sarah’s knowledge and experience of large-scale woodland establishment enabled us to discuss the design of the scheme and modifications which were required, while producing a practical and well-designed scheme. This ensured all of the constraints on site were fully addressed and that the scheme met the various grant option requirements. Sarah’s experience was also beneficial during stakeholder engagement to clearly explain the plans and the practicalities of woodland establishment. “

The quality of application was vital to the application’s success, and approval being achieved within nine months of the EIA consent. In particular:

- Detailed and appropriate survey, in particular soils & current ground vegetation.
- Continual stakeholder consultation and collaboration.
- High quality GIS, data management and cartography, to present the plans in a comprehensive and clear way.
- Pragmatic fine tuning of the plans to fit with the numerous sensitivities, whilst not losing sight of the owners objectives.
- 3d visualisation to ensure and demonstrate that the new woodland will be a good fit with the landscape.

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### What are the barriers to other farmers making similar applications?

The scale of the woodland creation scheme along with the site sensitivities might have deterred most landowners from embarking on a scheme that was likely to take years to achieve. Ken Greenland believes that the biggest barrier for many farmers is the initial outlay which is required to submit the application. On his scheme multiple surveys had to be undertaken before the application could be made which was a significant upfront investment, with no guarantee of success. The upfront cost of the fencing and planting operations is also a consideration as the FGS grant will be paid in arrears.

### How does the scheme reflect other new woodlands in the region?

John Risby, Conservator for Highland and Islands Conservancy said: “To date, H&I Conservancy have approved 13,500ha of woodland creation under FGS, over 80% of which is broadleaves or Caledonian Scots pine. This reflects the site types, accessibility and sensitivities across the Conservancy as well as owners objectives. The Conservancy promotes well designed mixed woodlands with appropriate parts of sites being planted to enable future timber production. Native species such as Scots pine and birch can produce good quality timber and at Cambusmore this has been achieved by planting 58ha of diverse conifer (SP/NS/SBi) on an accessible area to tie in with a conifer restock.”

Other woodland creation schemes that Cawdor Forestry are working on are more like 60% productive conifer 40% native broadleaves/Caledonian scots pine.



**Left: Visualisation of part of the Cambusmore scheme**