



Inverclyde  
Renfrewshire  
East Renfrewshire  
LBAP



Birch tree (Betula pubescens) © Lorne Gill/SNH

### Current Status - UK and Local

In the LBAP Partnership area of East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde a broad range of woodland types are found, ranging from intensive, commercial conifer plantations to relic ancient or semi-natural woodland of high conservation value (see Table 1). In addition to their intrinsic habitat interest, the woodlands also make an important contribution to the landscape and amenity value of the partnership area, as can be readily seen on hillsides fringing the Greenock coast and the upland slopes to the south and west of the Paisley conurbation. In general, woodland within the partnership area is distributed among a large number of small sites, often linear in shape and regularly associated with the river valleys.

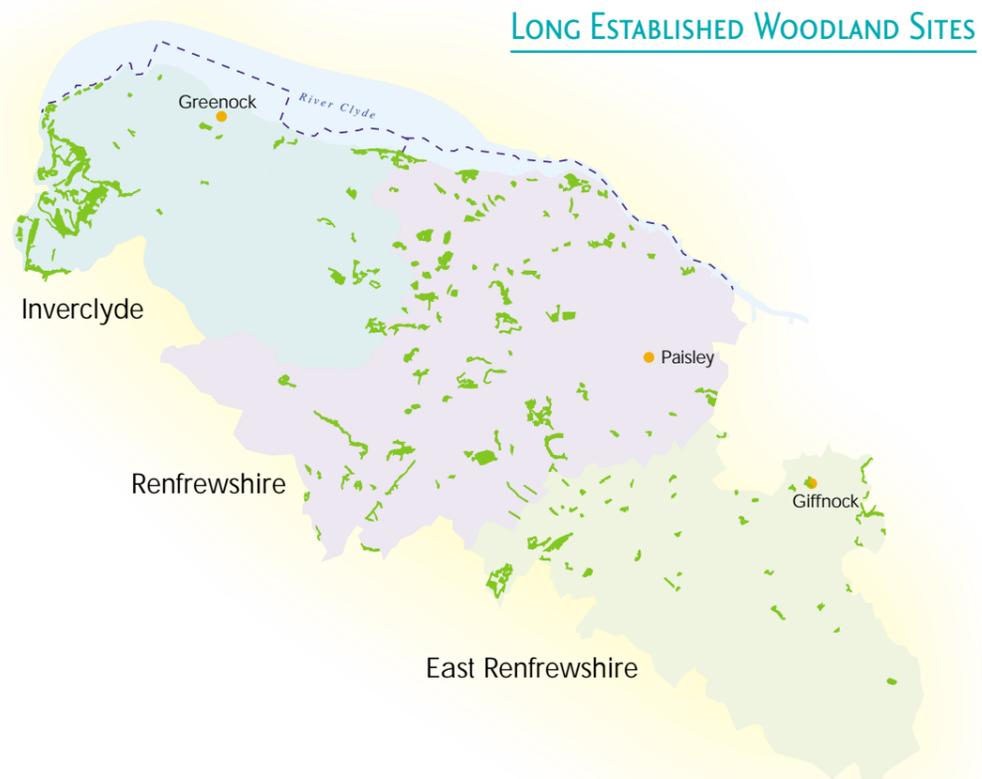
| Woodland Classification              | Area (ha)     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| Seminatural woods                    | 358ha         |
| Mixed                                | 641 ha        |
| Plantations of Broadleaved trees     | 2660ha        |
| Plantations of Conifers (non-native) | 1873ha        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                         | <b>5532ha</b> |

Woodlands within the LBAP Partnership area are protected by a range of policies and designations, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Sites of Importance for Nature Conversation (SINCs) and Tree Preservation Orders (T.P.O.s).

### Ecology and Management

Broadleaved woods often support a wide variety of species in their ground layer including bryophytes<sup>1</sup>, lichens, ferns, fungi, invertebrates, birds and small mammals. Ancient or long-established woodlands can be particularly valuable, as mature relatively undisturbed woods can support a diverse range of habitats and rich plant and animal communities.

Riparian woodlands are corridors of trees that grow alongside watercourses, and are important in



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providing food, dens, roosts, and nesting sites. They serve as important migration routes between habitats. Such woodlands also benefit the watercourse and the wildlife that lives in it, by providing cover and shade over the water for fish and attracting insects, that in turn are food for other wildlife. The root systems form a buffer zone that stops sediment and other pollutants entering the stream while holding the banks in place.

1 Bryophytes are small primitive plants consisting of mosses, liverworts, and hornworts.

Deadwood is a key microhabitat within woodland sites. Standing, diseased and dead timber, as well as fallen dead wood, is important for a range of invertebrates, fungi and bryophytes.

In socio-economic terms, broadleaved and mixed woodlands can also be important to the local community for their aesthetic and recreational value.

### Factors Causing Loss or Decline

For hundreds of years, woodland clearance for agriculture, and development pressure have reduced woodland cover throughout the Partnership area. Some of these activities are still relevant today and causing loss and fragmentation of woodland resources, and leading to a less robust woodland ecosystem. The main factors affecting woodlands today are considered to be as follows:

- ★ Land use pressures such as flood prevention, river engineering, transport, housing, industrial and business developments
- ★ Invasion by non-native species such as rhododendron, sycamore and beech can shade out the ground flora and radically alter soil conditions
- ★ Lack of woodland management leading to loss, invasion or dereliction
- ★ People pressure e.g. recreational use, vandalism
- ★ Over grazing by stock on farm woodlands preventing regeneration.

### Opportunities and Current Action

Statutory protection such as the Habitats Directive, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Regional Planning Guidance and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG14) Natural Heritage provides the basis for habitat protection.

National forestry policy and NPPG 14, Natural Heritage encourage replacement planting where trees are lost to

# BROADLEAVED & MIXED WOODLAND

### Habitat Definition

The scope of this habitat plan covers a number of woodland types, including all broad-leaved or mixed broad-leaved and coniferous woodlands, small patches of scrub and related features such as glades and rides. It excludes commercial and non-native coniferous plantation. Carr woodlands, hedgerows and associated field marginal features are also not covered, being better represented as part of separate habitat action plans.

### Woodland Classifications:

**Ancient woodland:** sites that have been continuously woodland and were recorded as being of semi-natural origin on either the 1750 'Roy' maps or the OS First Edition maps c.1860.

**Seminatural woods:** sites composed predominantly of native trees and shrub species, which have not been planted. Many woods are semi-natural even though they contain a few introduced trees, for the latter do not change the character of the wood.

**Long-established woodland of plantation origin:** sites which appear to be plantation woodland in c.1860 AD but are not shown as woodland at all in 1750 AD. These woods have a proven continuity as woodland for at least 140 years and may have considerable conservation interest.

development or other uses, and in particular seeks to conserve ancient seminatural woodland. Designation as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) ensures compulsory consultation with SNH over some management operations or other development proposals.

The felling and planting of woodland is regulated by the Forestry Commission in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard. The Forestry Commission has produced Forestry Practice Guides 1 – 9<sup>2</sup> relating to the management of semi-natural woodlands. Guidance on ways of creating new native woodlands is available in the Forestry Commission's Bulletin 112.

<sup>2</sup> Numbers 1 and 2 of the guidelines are not applicable to Scotland.

Significant inventories of woodlands include the Forestry Commission's National Inventory of Woodland and Trees, initiated in 1995, which provides information on the extent, distribution and composition of woodland in the whole of Great Britain. Information on woodland type and management is also collected through local woodland initiatives (e.g. Treewise).

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) holds an Inventory of Ancient, Long-established and Seminatural Woodland for Scotland on GIS, as well as other woodland information such as the Scottish seminatural woodland inventory.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust also carries out site species surveys and monitoring programs, as does the Clyde Branch of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC). These can contribute to local and national recording schemes via Biological Recording in Scotland (BRISC).

Grant aid on managing, protecting, expanding and increasing the value of woodland to society and the environment is available from the Forestry Commission. Agri-environment schemes can include woodland prescriptions or require the agreement holder to seek management advice and provide



incentives for woodland and wetland management. Sources of funding include:

- Forestry Commission
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- EU – LIFE Nature Fund
- Landfill tax.

#### Action Plan

The objectives aim to maintain the current extent of ancient seminatural woodland and to increase the total extent of UK priority woodland habitat types within the Partnership area. The other aim is to ensure that the ecological value of existing broadleaved and mixed woodland is improved and associated socio-economic benefits are enhanced and promoted for public benefit. This would involve:

- ★ Restoring some of the former areas of ancient sites for priority woodland habitat types that have been planted with non-native conifers since World War II, or are currently dominated by other non-native species.
- ★ Encouraging the expansion of broadleaved and mixed woodland as a result of promoting natural colonisation and by planting species mixtures of site native and local genetic provenance. Sites will be selected where existing woodland habitats will become linked to each other, thus developing a Forest Habitat network.



#### Objectives

- Objective 1 Maintain the current extent of ancient seminatural woodland.
- Objective 2 Identify and assess woodland areas of important nature conservation value.
- Objective 3 Increase the total extent of native woodland habitat within the LBAP area.
- Objective 4 Ensure the ecological value of other broadleaved and mixed woodland is improved.
- Objective 5 Promote woodlands for socio-economic and public amenity benefits.
- Objective 6 Review this plan on an annual basis, beginning in 2005.

We will achieve these objectives by:

| Action   | Actioned by   | Timetable        |
|--|---|------------------|
| Ensuring no further loss in extent and quality of existing woodland habitat                  | FC<br>SNH<br>LAs  | 2004-07          |
| Reviewing available survey information to establish size and condition of main sites         | LAs<br>CMRP   | 2004-05          |
| Encouraging natural regeneration, colonisation and native tree planting in appropriate sites | FC<br>LAs   | 2004-2010        |
| Encouraging sympathetic, site-specific management regimes                                    | FC<br>SNH<br>LAs  | 2004-07          |
| Promoting an appreciation of the value of woodlands to local communities                     | Greenspace Projects<br>LAs                                  | 2004-07          |
| Monitoring and recording actions towards these objectives                                    | LBAP Steering Group<br>LBAP Officer<br>Local Records Centre | Ongoing / annual |

#### Links with Other Action Plans

Pipistrelle Bats, Brown Hare, Rivers & Streams.

Further Information can be obtained from The Biodiversity Officer 0141 842 5281