

### Suggested information sources include:

- FC Bulletin 112 Creating New Native Woodlands;
- FC Bulletin 124 An Ecological Site Classification for Forestry in Great Britain;
- FC Practice Note 8 Using Local Stock for Planting Native Trees and Shrubs;
- FCS Guidance Note 9 Site Survey Requirements for New Native Woodland;
- FCS Guidance Note 20 Forest Habitat Networks;
- Woodland Networks for Wildlife and People – FC/SNH publication;
- Local Forest Habitat Network Plans published by FC/SNH;
- FC Handbook 5 Urban Forestry Practice;
- FC Handbook 11 Creating and Managing Woodlands around Towns;
- FC Community Woodland Design Guidelines;
- Scottish Native Woods publication Restoring and Managing Riparian Woodland;
- FC Forests and Water Guidelines;
- Water Framework Directive.

### Grants

Information about current Forestry Commission Scotland grants is available from the Forestry Commission website using the following link to reach the “Grants and Felling Licences” section:

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland>

Forestry Commission Scotland  
Central Scotland Conservancy  
Bothwell House  
Hamilton Business Park, Caird Park  
Hamilton ML3 0QA  
Tel: 01698 368530  
Fax: 01698 368531  
Email: [centralscotland.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:centralscotland.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

## Forest habitat networks

Joined-up landscapes created through development  
- the opportunities and benefits



## Introduction

West Lothian has a woodland cover of just 14% (or around 6500ha). Almost 60% of this is made up of the coniferous plantations in the south, but the remainder is a mixture of fragmented woodlands and shelter belts largely created during the agricultural improvement period of the 19th century.

Of this heritage only 316ha, less than 5%, can be truly



identified as ancient woodland - areas that have been wooded since at least the mid-18th century. These are found in three core areas associated with the Rivers Almond, Avon, Linthouse Water and Murieston Water, shown in the plan.

In the past 70 years around one third of the ancient woodlands of the Lothians have been lost through agricultural and development pressures. They are, however, generally the most valuable woodlands for wildlife and critical to adapting to climate change through the provision of woodland corridors that will enable plants and animals to migrate from them, to sustain West Lothian's woodland biodiversity.

## The Vision

Forests and woodlands should not be treated as blocks or random patches of trees, great or small, but as an interlocking landscape that not only benefits the movement of wildlife but also provides a recreational network for people and the new communities being planned in West Lothian. By linking woodland through new developments the link and 'fit' into the landscape can be strengthened by the creation of Forest Habitat Networks.

It begins with the management and then the expansion of the remaining ancient woodland core areas, to strengthen their biodiversity and to create links and corridors that will serve as the dispersal means for wildlife into the adjoining areas. The canal and river courses are the most important means of linking West Lothian's ancient woods.

The result will be a joined-up landscape which extends through town and country to create a mosaic of forest habitat networks which will be a wooded habitat as well as a network for the public to enjoy. But, it is not only woodlands that can make a contribution. Hedgerows, scrub, tree avenues, street trees, wet woodlands as part of Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes and, in all cases, associated grassland, can contribute to the network as well.

## Opportunities Through Development

The West Lothian Local Plan responds to the needs of the Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan 2005 for 12000 new houses to be built in the area. To meet this three core development areas have been identified in addition to that already identified in Armadale.

The landscape setting of these core areas will be essential for their environmental integration. The associated design criteria set down in the Local Plan to guide developers includes the need for robust landscape frameworks as well as the detailed landscaping requirements.

Through this developers are being asked to plan the new wooded landscapes on the basis of the Forest Habitat Network principles.



However, this includes not just the framework planting but also the contributions that will be made in the detailed landscaping of these new communities.

Development at all scales, whether for housing, industry or transportation can make a contribution. Planning applications will be expected to address this and the

guidelines provided apply to all circumstances.

Developers have a lead role to play since they have a major influence on the wooded landscape of the future and, subsequently, on how the Forest Habitat Network is created in West

Lothian. It's an opportunity that cannot be missed.

## The Guidelines

These guidelines are to be used by developers to plan planting schemes and for planners to address through conditions and monitoring.

- Assess the native woodland distribution in the locality – location, size, management regimes etc.
- Look at the composition of native woodlands in the locality - soil types will also be the indicator of what should be planted.
- The proposed woodlands will be of native trees and shrubs, preferably from approved local seed sources or propagators.
- The optimum width of a woodland corridor is 50m plus a 50m woodland edge habitat on either side but narrower ones can be acceptable, depending on the location. The minimum standard for grant is 15m, in some instances. Other features such as hedgerows and street trees can also make a contribution.
- To be eligible for grant aid they also need to be within 300m of an existing native woodland or area of non-native woodland that could be converted to native woodland, and a minimum of 0.25ha in area.

- Open space and public access will be considered in the design. Also the management and maintenance of the woodland.



- Other details such as badger gates in fences and deer management will need to be considered at an early stage.
- The principle does not apply only to new woodlands. Grant aid is also available for managing existing native woodlands and for converting existing non-native ones.
- When the creation of riparian woodlands is also part of a scheme it must reflect the composition of local semi-natural woodlands and add to the diversity of habitat networks.

## Advice and Information Sources

We would encourage you to contact Forestry Commission Scotland staff at an early stage of planning, especially in Core Development Areas, so that you are aware of the funding available and standards required. It can also provide a list of forestry agents and specialists who may be able to help.

