

Tree planting in Langamull Forest

Statement by Colin Morrison North West Mull Community Woodland Co Ltd Chair

As part of our Long Term Forest Design Plan agreed with Forestry Commission Scotland we are legally required to ensure replanting of harvested forest areas across our woodlands. Langamull North and South were the two earliest areas to be harvested in 2012 and as the 5th year following harvest is upon us we are making plans to begin restocking.

Initially some areas of the woodland will be fenced to discourage grazing animals from entering and eating the new saplings and all footpath and access gates will be checked and improved as necessary to continue to allow access for all. This will then be followed by ground preparation, mounding and clearing as necessary, prior to replanting.

Both areas of Langamull, whilst retaining much of their productive Sitka Spruce, will have increased areas of mixed conifer after restock (scots pine, douglas and noble fir and norway spruce and in West Ardhru this will include western red cedar). There will also be an increase in the native broadleaf habitat with natural regeneration in some areas and planting in others. Due to legal restrictions there will be no replanting of Larch or Ash. There will be more open ground created by increasing the riparian areas - a band of open ground alongside water courses. Some areas on the nine forest crofts will also be open.

The large pine weevil is a species of major concern here on the Isle of Mull as previous silvicultural methods, our climate and soil type have all led to a high population in our area. Unfortunately where there is a high population in a woodland the adult weevils will ring-bark or girdle newly planted saplings and naturally regenerating plants causing the plant to die. There is a great deal of scientific information around and research studies ongoing that should give us and the governing bodies much to consider over the coming year and a quick online search will point to much of this information so I won't add to those here.

Over the course of the coming months, NWMCWC are carrying out risk assessments on the weevil population from stump checks to planted test sites in order to inform our own planting programme.

Much has been said lately on the use of pesticides both globally and locally. Many of us have concerns on the use of Neo-Nicotinoids (Neonics) in many areas of agriculture and forestry. Concerns over the effects on humans and to the wider environment through water course and ground soil contamination, not to mention potential issues for pollinators, have been made and should be considered by the UK government and the EU in the coming months.

In forestry, one particular type of pesticide, a neo-nicotinoid, is used in both nurseries and as a spray: Acetamiprid, also known as Gazelle. The roots of young trees are dipped in the nursery to give them a "good start" in areas where the Large Pine Weevil population is high. A follow up spray in the second year is sometimes applied directly to the planted trees if necessary. These are often used as part of a multi-faceted approach to pest control sometimes involving non-chemical controls like paper sleeves, nematodes and adoption of new silvicultural methods.

Minimising the use of chemicals has been a company/charity policy since inception in 2006.

As a community owned commercial forest it's important to us to try and match the concerns of the community and to conserve and improve local biodiversity in all its forms. The development of a

good commercial crop from which future generations can enjoy a financial return is also of critical importance. Balancing our responsibilities and commitments is an ongoing process.

It has been encouraging to hear the passionate voices from the NW of Mull and across the island on the future of our forest areas. Continued interest and engagement of the communities involved is of course crucial to the ongoing success of our community owned forests on Mull. With community support and involvement Mull's woodland charities can flourish, continuing to provide an excellent resource for future generations.

Colin Morrison, Chair
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