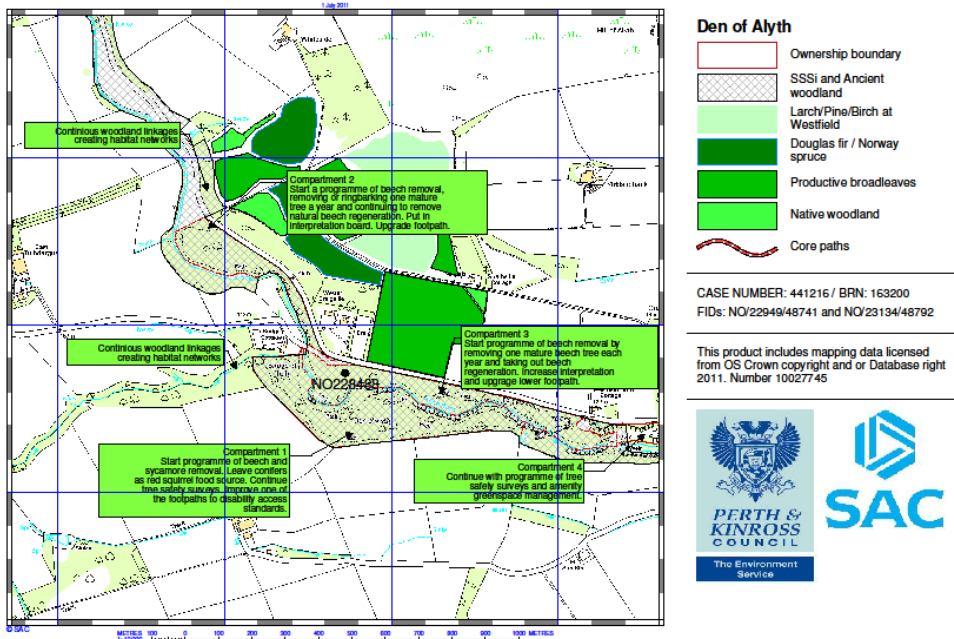


29 Den O’Alyth

29.1 Location and Background



Property

Perth and Kinross City Council own the woodland. The Forest Plan has been written by Friendly Forestry Ltd and Perth and Kinross Council is the payee for any grant monies.

Location and Area

The Den O’Alyth is located to the west of Alyth and covers an area of 24.7 ha of which 20.79 ha are owned by Perth and Kinross Council. The woodland runs either side of the Alyth burn and gorge for 2.3 km, reaching a width of no more than 250 m.

Altitude

The altitude ranges from 150 m to 90 m above sea level.

Soils

The soils are Gleneagles: Brown Forest Soils with some humus-iron podzols and some gleys.

History

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The site was gifted to the Alyth Town council in 1923 by the Earl of Airlie, having been woodland since the mid-19th century. It has been managed as an amenity space since then, with the burn being used in the past as a swimming pool and curling pond.

There is currently a woodland management plan for 2008 to 2013 that sets out the key management needs and five year programme of works.

Community Interest

There is strong interest from the local community in the Den O’Alyth and volunteer conservation days have been undertaken there. There is particular attachment from the local people to the beech trees and the Red Squirrels. There is also a children’s play park on site within the open areas of Compartment 4.

Long Term Vision

The long term vision is for the Den of Alyth to be a SSSI in favourable condition whilst providing a high quality natural visitor experience for local residents and tourists.

Management Objectives

- 1) Gradually take out the beech and sycamore trees and remove the seedlings.
- 2) Increase the interpretation about the SSSI and Red Squirrel habitats.
- 3) Maximise structural diversity by fostering the understory and coppicing some of the hazel.
- 4) Maintain current levels of deadwood, both standing and on the ground.
- 5) Maintain and improve visitor facilities including paths, interpretation boards and benches.

Site and Species Descriptions

The woodland is mixed broadleaved with a large proportion of oak, birch and ash with pockets of beech and a few sycamore. The age range is mixed from young regeneration through to mature and standing deadwood. There are also areas of Hazel scrub. There are also non-woodland habitats such as bogs and open glades. There are also some exposed rocky cliffs cut by the river and quarrying activities in the past.

Compartment	Area (ha)	Description
1	8.75	Mixed broadleaved woodland dominated by Oak, birch woodland (W10) with ash birch (W9) woodland in wetter areas. Few exotic species including sycamore and beech. Reasonable amount of standing deadwood.
2	3.73	Mixed broadleaved woodland dominated by ash birch

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		woodland (W9) along with an area of oak, birch wood (W10) felling has opened up areas that are now colonised by natural regeneration.
3	6.04	Mixed broadleaved woodland including oak, birch woodland and ash birch woodland, with substantial areas of beech dominated woodland, along with defined areas of coppice stools
4	1.6	Open ground including amenity green space.

Figure 16: Standing Dead Wood at the Den O'Alyth

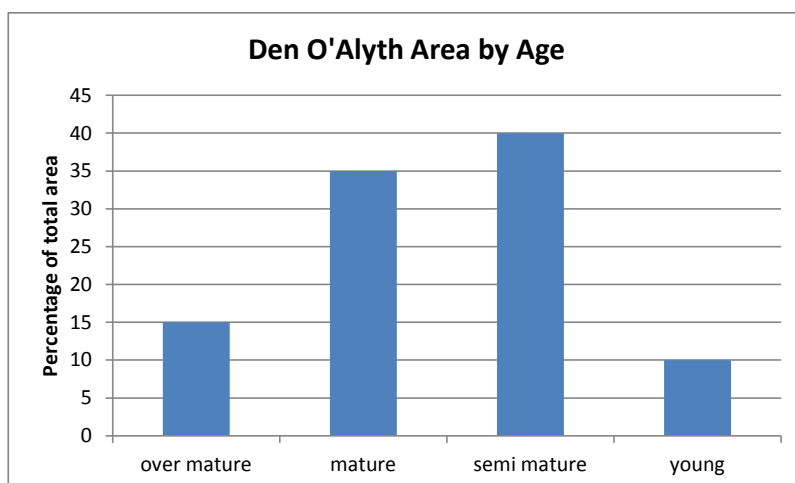
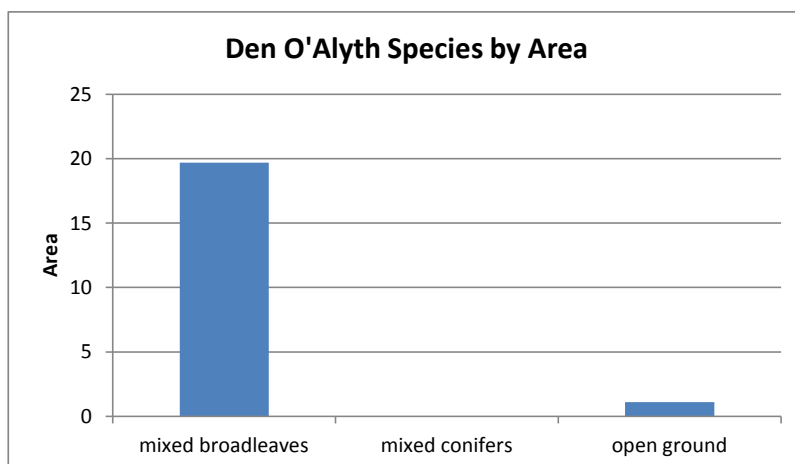




Figure 17: Mixed Broadleaves at Alyth Den

Stand Data

Compartment	Species	Area (ha)	Age
1	Mixed broadleaves (mainly oak/birch with some ash)	8.75	Mature and semi-mature
2	Mixed broadleaves (ash/oak/birch/beechn)	3.73	Mature, some semi-mature and some regeneration
3	Mixed broadleaves (beechn/oak/birch)	6.70	Mixed – mainly mature and over mature with some semi mature and some regeneration
4	Open ground with some strips of mixed broadleaves	1.61	Mature and semi-mature
Total		20.79	



Survey Data

No surveys have been undertaken on site.

29.2 Analysis of Constraints and Opportunities

Landscape

The Landscape Character Assessment of Tayside classifies the Den O’Alyth as part of the broadvalley lowlands. One of the key characteristics of this region is ‘Tree loss that weakens the landscape character’. There are no landscape guidelines within the LCA relating directly to existing woodlands, however, there is a desire to create an integrated pattern of woodlands, and the Den O’Alyth forms the backbone of such a network.

Archaeological

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There are two designated archaeological sites within the wood. The first is a curling pond to the east and the second is the Georgian bridge over the Alyth Burn.

Ecological

The woodland is classified as a SSSI for its upland mixed ash wood. There have not been any bird, mammal or herbaceous surveys undertaken here although there are known to be several locally uncommon plant species including *Convallaria majalis* and *Neottia nidus-avis*. There have also been a number of landslips on site and these have resulted in the closure of the burn side footpath. Tree roots and ground vegetation can stabilise slopes and therefore to reduce the risks of landslips in the future, continuous cover forestry must be undertaken on the banks. Any trees removed or blown over on the slopes should have their stumps and root plate left in place.

Herbivore

There was no significant evidence of deer browsing and the high level of natural regeneration suggests that deer are not using the Den. The rabbit damage was also insignificant. There are both red and grey squirrels on site although no base line survey has been done.

Social

There are very few problems with anti-social behaviour. The middle car park has been closed due to improper use. There is a small amount of litter on site.

Public Access

The footpaths form part of the core path network and the ALTH/16 and 119 follow the circular paths to the south and north side of the rivers respectively. The northern path is suitable for disabled users.

29.3 Links with Scottish Forestry Strategy

Theme	Aims	Priority
Climate change	As part of a network of woodlands in the area, the Den O'Alyth will contribute to the landscape scale ecosystem adaption to climate change. The woodland is managed under continuous cover regime and therefore the carbon retention within the wood is high.	Medium
Timber	No saleable timber at this site.	Low
Business development	The Den O'Alyth increases the desirability of the area as both a place to live and a	Low

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Theme	Aims	Priority
	place to work. The woodland is mainly visited by local people, however, the tourist potential can, and should, be increased. The volunteer activity undertaken in the wood provides people with a transferable skill that can be used in other aspects of life such as employment.	
Community development	The Den is an important part of the landscape of Alyth. It provides an important sense of place for the residents. There are over 100 volunteer days a year from various groups, and a high level of interest from local users, especially from the Alyth Local Environment Group.	High
Access and health	The paths are well used. The path through Compartment 3 is suitable for disabled users and is part of the 'walks for wheels' scheme. There are car parking facilities and the Den is easily accessed from Alyth Town. Volunteers take part in physical activity such as pulling up sycamore saplings.	High
Environmental quality	The trees on the banks of the river will reduce soil erosion, stabilise the river banks and reduce water acidification. They will also reduce airborne dust particles and noise from the nearby A926.	High
Biodiversity	Forms part of a habitat network; a SSSI and designated as an upland mixed ash wood. Upland Ashwoods are also HAP habitats for Tayside, as they are amongst the richest habitats for wildlife in the uplands. There are red squirrels on site.	High

29.4 Links with other Council Policy

Perth and Kinross Corporate Plan

Of the five objectives set out in the corporate plan, objective two 'promoting healthy, caring communities' is supported by this plan. Exercise can improve both physical and mental health and by improving the provision of the disabled access into the countryside, the aging population of Perth and Kinross can enjoy the benefits of getting out into woodlands.

Perth and Kinross Community Plan

The management proposals for the Den O’Alyth contribute to the outcomes of all three aims contained within the Community Plan. Firstly, managing the woodland sustainably will create a substantial natural environment that supports a vibrant and successful area, secondly, providing an attractive and safe outdoor space will improve health and well-being which in turn will support the aim of nurtured and supported people. Finally, the location of the Den O’Alyth next to the town of Alyth provides access to woodlands for everybody, and this can reduce inequalities between the affluent and disadvantaged, resulting in a more inclusive community.

29.5 Silvicultural Policy

Use low intervention techniques to gradually convert the woodland to a native ash/oak/birch woodland and continue using the continuous cover forestry regime that encourages a more diverse age structure. Small-scale selective felling, thinning, path construction and maintenance along with some small-scale enrichment planting are all desirable operations that will be carried out. These operations will benefit and enhance the existing amenity and biodiversity interests and diversify the current species structure of the woodland

Felling and Thinning

Thinning will be focused on the non-native species (beech and sycamore) and will consist of a) felling to waste near footpaths with the deadwood left in situ on the forest floor (with some of the branches tidied up) and b) ring barking away from footpaths to increase the amount of standing deadwood. Tree felling will be undertaken between August and February to avoid the nesting season. Thinning will take place in three phases, with around eight mature beech or sycamore trees felled in each phase in groups of two – three.

No large scale felling will take place. Some coppicing of the Hazel will be undertaken if volunteer numbers are high enough to make it worthwhile. The majority of the hazel will be allowed to grown into senescence as requested by SNH.

Restructuring and New Planting

Natural regeneration of exotic species (beech and sycamore) will be removed to prevent colonisation. Natural regeneration of oak and birch will be encouraged, herbivore browsing will be monitored.

No new planting will take place.

Management of Open Areas

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Open areas will be maintained as amenity open space. Grass cutting will prevent tree encroachment.

Protection and Maintenance

All access points, boundary fences and walls will be monitored and repaired if necessary.

Herbivore Impacts

The vegetation will be monitored for damage by deer in partnership with SNH.

Public Access

Public access will be encouraged along existing routes in the woodland. Restrictions will be kept to a minimum when thinning is undertaken and suitable diversions put in place along with operational signs explaining the work that is being done.

Litter and rubbish is not a big problem but it will be collected on a regular basis.

Control of Non-native Invasive Plant Species

The woodland will be monitored for species of Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam and other exotic species and if present, they will be removed/controlled.

Summary of Felling, Thinning and Restructuring

Felling Period	Area of Thinning (ha)	Area of Felling (net area) (ha)	Restructuring Area by Successor Crop Types (net area of species, other land to cover open ground) (ha)						
			Sitka Spruce	Other Conifer	Mixed Broadleaves	Native Broadleaves	Caledonian Scots Pine	Natural Regeneration	Other Land
2014		0.18						0.18	
2018		0.18						0.18	
2022		0.18						0.18	
Totals		0.54						0.54	

29.6 Work Plan

Activity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023-2033
Tree safety surveys and subsequent										

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Activity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023-2033
work required.										
Thinning of beech and sycamore.										
Planting of native species (or protecting natural regeneration).										
Coppice Hazel.										
Install interpretation board.										
Monitor condition of, and undertake subsequent maintenance of, paths.										