

# **Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) for the Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2016**

**February 2016**

## Table of Contents

Title Page.....	1
1. Background to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).....	3
2. Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2016 .....	3
2.1 Themes and objectives .....	5
3. Background Information on Sites.....	6
3.1 List of European Sites .....	6
3.2 Analysis of European sites.....	7
4. Screening.....	20
4.1 Screening of the Strategy .....	20
4.2 Screening of themes and objectives .....	20
4.3 Screening for in-combination effects.....	23
4.4 Conclusion on likely significant effects.....	24

## **1. Background to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

Natura 2000 sites are a network of protected sites of international importance which include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's), Special Protection Areas (SPA's) and Ramsar Sites. Under Article 6 (3 & 4) of the European Habitats' Directive any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall undergo an Appropriate Assessment to determine its implications for the site. The competent authority can only agree to the plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned (Article 6.3). In exceptional circumstances, a plan or project may still be allowed to go ahead, in spite of a negative assessment, provided there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project is considered to be of overriding public interest. In such cases the Member State must take appropriate compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 Network is protected (Article 6.4).

## **2. Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2016**

Aberdeenshire Council are preparing a Forestry and Woodland Strategy for Aberdeenshire as Supplementary Guidance to the 2016 Local Development Plan. The strategy replaces a joint Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City document produced in 2005. The production of Forestry and Woodland Strategies by Local Authorities is encouraged by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and the Scottish Government and is supported by the FCS guidance document *The Right Tree in the Right Place*.

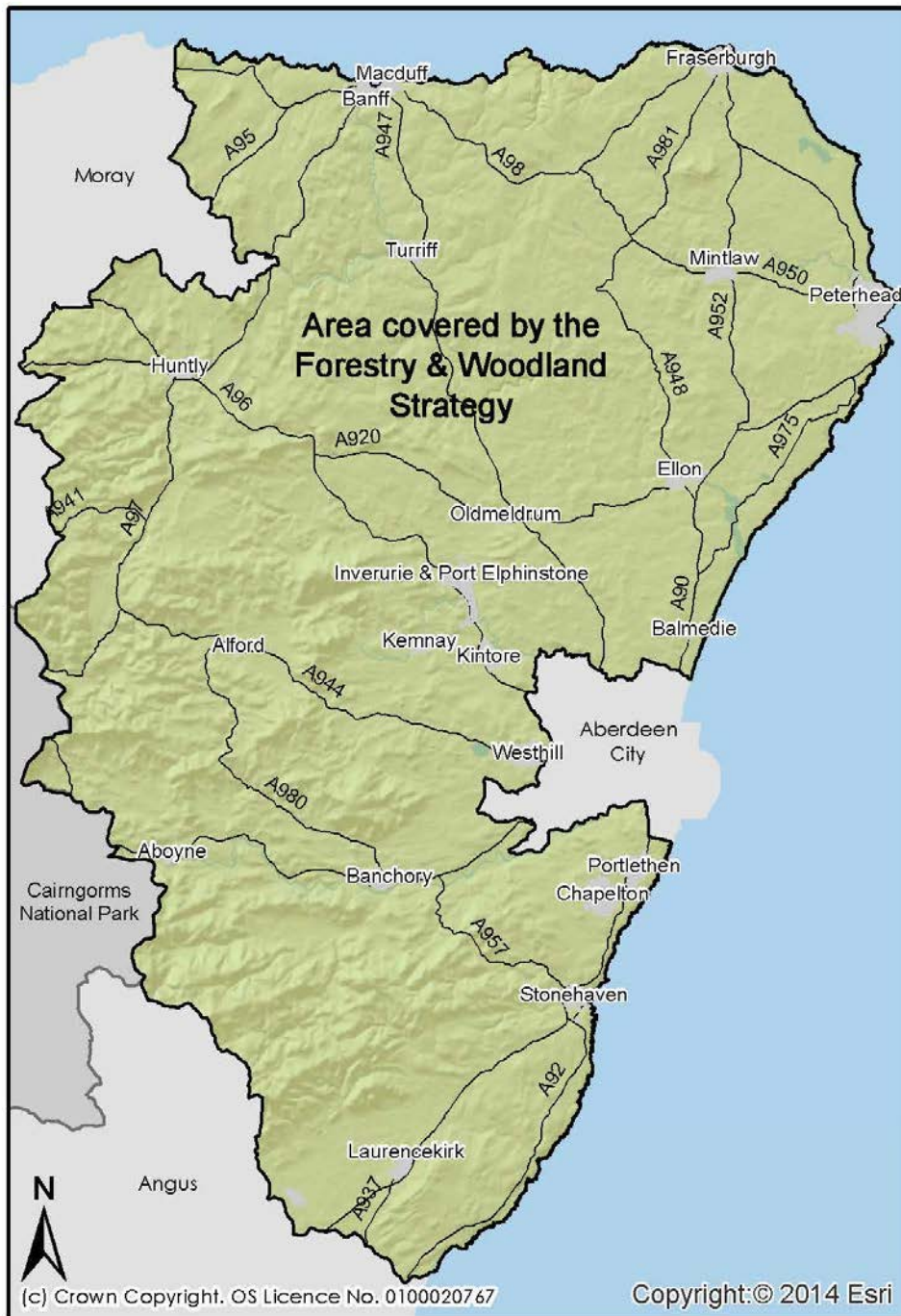
The Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2016 sets out high-level objectives for forestry and woodland management and creation, reflecting national policy and regional circumstances, for the Local Development Plan area (note this is not the whole of Aberdeenshire but just the LDP area – see Figure 1). Many of the national policies the strategy reflects will already have been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The strategy covers issues in relation to development management and Council owned woodlands. However, it is an expression of all forestry and woodland stakeholders' priorities and is likely to cover issues relating to climate change, timber and business development, community development and the environment.

The strategy maps preferred areas for new woodland creation in Aberdeenshire. This has been carried out using a GIS based process which identifies significant constraints and opportunities in relation to the planting of new woodland. The map will influence Scottish Rural Development Plan (SRDP) new woodland creation grant award process.

It is important to note that the strategy, and the maps contained within, are high level and strategic. The strategy will have an influence on woodland management and creation in the local development plan area. However, actual on-the-ground land use decision making will take account of a wide variety of factors, one of which may be the strategy. The strategy will inform woodland management and creation rather than dictating action.

Figure 1: Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy area



## 2.1 Themes and objectives

The strategy is split into four interrelated themes. A number of key issues are reflected under each of these themes. The strategy will also map preferred areas for new woodland creation. Table 1 sets out these themes and lists some proposed objectives. These themes and objectives are the elements that will be assessed in this HRA.

Note that the strategy also reiterated policies of the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2016. These policies have been subject to HRA, through a separate process, already.

**Table 1: Themes and Objectives**

Theme		Objectives	
1	Climate change and tree health	1.1	Aid trees and woodlands' resistance to the negative effects of climate change and tree disease
		1.2	Promote trees and woodlands as a means of mitigating and adapting to climate change
2	Timber and business development	2.1	Support expansion of Aberdeenshire's woodland coverage in line with Scottish Government targets
		2.2	Promote and support the forestry industry
3	Community Development, Access and Health	3.1	Protect and enhance trees and woodlands in the planning and construction of built development
		3.2	Promote and support woodland's role in providing opportunities community development and recreational access
4	Natural, Cultural and Historic Assets	4.1	Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances environmental quality and biodiversity
		4.2	Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances cultural and historic assets
5	Mapping of preferred areas for new woodland creation	5.1	Maximise the benefits of new woodland creation
		5.2	Promote integrated land use

### 3. Background Information on Sites

#### 3.1 List of European Sites

In Table 3.1 below, we have provided a list of European sites with the potential to be significantly affected by the Strategy that are within the Local Development Plan area.

**Table 3.1: List of European sites**

European sites	
1	Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SAC
2	Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA
3	Cairngorms Massif SPA
4	Fowlsheugh SPA
5	Garron Point SAC
6	Hill of Towanreef SAC
7	Loch of Skene SPA/RAMSAR
8	Loch of Strathbeg SPA/RAMSAR
9	Mortlach Moss SAC
10	Red Moss of Netherley SAC
11	Reidside Moss SAC
12	River Dee SAC
13	Sands of Forvie SAC
14	Turclossie Moss SAC
15	Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor SPA
16	Troup, Pennan and Lions Head SPA
17	Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA

### 3.2 Analysis of European sites

In the Table 3.2, we have analysed the European sites, listing their conservation objectives and identifying their qualifying interests. We have also analysed conditions of the sites, factors influencing the sites and their vulnerability to changes

**Table 3.2: Information about Sites Selected**

Site & Conservation Objectives	Conservation Objectives	Qualifying Interest	Condition of Site	Factors influencing Site	Vulnerability to changes or potential effects of PPS
1. <b>Buchan Ness to Collieston SAC</b> (208.62 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat (i.e. vegetated sea cliffs) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitat that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of the habitat on site</li> <li>• Distribution of the habitat within site</li> <li>• Structure and function of the habitat</li> <li>• Processes supporting the habitat</li> <li>• Distribution of typical species of the habitat</li> <li>• Viability of typical species as components of the habitat</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat</li> </ul>	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts	Favourable Maintained (25/5/2010)	Development, telecoms, rural development contracts, dredging, transport infrastructure, renewable energy, recreational use	Parts of the site are managed for grazing; others have not been grazed for some time. The varied vegetation would be vulnerable to changes in the management of these cliff-top grasslands. A coastal path runs along the cliff-top and is in part well used by walkers and naturalists. Parts of the site are also used by climbers. Current levels of recreational activity are compatible with maintenance of the cliff vegetation.  <b>Summary of Key Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat loss</li> <li>• Disturbance</li> <li>• Recreational impact</li> </ul>
2. <b>Buchan Ness to Collieston SPA</b> (5,400.94 ha)	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species,	Seabird assemblage, breeding	Unfavourable No change (04/07/2007)	Applications have been considered for marine dredging, onshore	The management of part of the site by the Scottish Wildlife Trust Longhaven Reserve

designated on 30/03/1998	thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of the species as a viable component of the site</li> <li>• Distribution of the species within site</li> <li>• Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of the species</li> </ul>	Guillemot ( <i>Uria aalge</i> ), breeding	Favourable Declining (04/07/2007)	wind farm, offshore wind farm, renewable energy projects and other developments  There is a recreational use of the cliffs and rock-climbing.	ensures that there is no significant threats to the interest at present  SNH is engaged in a programme of monitoring seabird populations, and is working with the local authority, and owners and occupiers, to agree a programme of path improvements and site interpretation.  <b>Summary of Key Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat loss</li> <li>• Disturbance</li> <li>• Recreational impact</li> <li>• Unfavourable and declining qualifying features</li> </ul>
		Kittiwake ( <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable No change (04/07/2007)		
		Fulmar ( <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable declining (04/07/2007)		
		Shag ( <i>Palachro orax aristotelis</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable No Change (04/07/2007)		
		Seabird assemblage, breeding	Unfavourable No change (04/07/2007)  The low, broken cliffs show many erosion features such as stacks, arches, caves and blowholes. The varied coastal vegetation on the ledges and cliff tops includes maritime heath, grassland and brackish flushes.		
3. <b>Cairngorms Massif SPA</b> (187504.06 ha) Designated 28/10/2010	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate	Golden eagle ( <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> ), breeding	Favourable Maintained 31/08/2003	Development, recreation, forestry, wildlife crime	Golden eagle survival overwinter is influenced by carrion availability whilst availability of live prey has an influence on breeding success. Traditional grouse moor management has maintained suitable



	<p>contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and  To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of the species as a viable component of the site</li> <li>• Distribution of the species within site</li> <li>• Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of the species</li> </ul>				<p>habitats for golden eagle for many years. However management can also result in reduction in the populations of live prey such as mountain hares, loss of nesting trees, or reduce habitat diversity e.g. through drainage of bogs or other wetlands. Locally, high deer numbers have previously prevented tree regeneration and damaged upland and moorland habitat, but initiatives including Section 7 Agreements; Joint Working Programme Sites; voluntary population reduction by a number of estates; Scotland Rural Development Programme funding for woodland management are underway. Other potential threats include inappropriate afforestation of more open hill areas, creation of new hill tracks and wind farm construction. This is a popular area for a number of outdoor pursuits including hill walking, skiing, mountain biking and bird watching, which can cause</p>
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					<p>unintentional disturbance to golden eagles. Visitors can cause damage to the more vulnerable areas and a combination of strategies for visitor management and ongoing repair and maintenance to footpaths is being used to address this issue</p> <p><b>Summary of Key Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat quality</li> <li>• Prey availability</li> <li>• Grazing</li> <li>• Disturbance</li> </ul>
<p>4. <b>Fowlsheugh</b> SPA (1303.54 ha) designated on 31/08/1992</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of the species as a viable component of the site</li> <li>• Distribution of the species within site</li> <li>• Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of the species</li> </ul>	Razorbill ( <i>Alca torda</i> ), breeding	Favourable Maintained (11/06/1999)	<p>Applications have been considered for off-shore Wind, and tourism / leisure Developments</p>	<p>There are no significant threats to the interest at present. The site is managed as a nature reserve by the present owners, the RSPB, who have upgraded the public footpath which runs along the clifftop for the benefit of visitors to the colony, and provided information boards.</p> <p><b>Summary of Key Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential tourism impacts</li> </ul>
		Kittiwake ( <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> ), breeding	Favourable Maintained (11/06/1999)		
		Guillemot ( <i>Uria aalge</i> ), breeding	Favourable Maintained (11/06/1999)		
		Fulmar ( <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> ), breeding	Favourable Maintained (18/06/1999)		
		Herring gull ( <i>Larus argentatus</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable Declining (18/16/1999)		
		Seabird assemblage, breeding	Favourable Maintained (18/06/1999)		

<p>5. <b>Garron Point</b> SAC (15.58 ha) designated on 16/9/2008</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (Narrow-mouthed whorl snail) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of the species as a viable component of the site</li> <li>• Distribution of the species within site</li> <li>• Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of the species</li> </ul>	<p>Narrow-mouthed whorl snail (<i>Vertigo angustior</i>)</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (20/09/2011)</p>	<p>Recreation use and geological interest on site at Skatie Shore. Introduction of livestock to the site.</p> <p>Disturbance from burning of driftwood and disposable barbecues away from the snail colonies.</p>	<p>Vulnerability of snail colonies recreational, wood burning and grazing activities. Potential site erosion from livestock activity. Vulnerability to site to marine oil pollution and long term rising sea level.</p> <p><b>Summary of Key Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat loss</li> <li>• Disturbance</li> <li>• Risk from fire</li> <li>• Coastal squeeze</li> <li>• Oil pollution</li> <li>• Erosion</li> <li>• Recreational impact</li> </ul>
<p>6. <b>Hill of Towanreef</b> SAC (1885.92 ha) designated on 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of the habitat on site</li> </ul>	<p>Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (12/09/2007)</p>	<p>Past peat cutting. Extension of Muirburn onto blanket bog, resulting in loss of Sphagnum cover. Land privately owned. Recreational use by walkers and use</p>	<p>Loss of Sphagnum cover; One part of the site is frequently visited by walkers but this is not damaging to the site's interests</p> <p><b>Summary of Key Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat loss (blanket bog and dry heaths)</li> <li>• Disturbance</li> </ul>
<p>Blanket bog</p>	<p>Unfavourable Declining (28/08/2013)</p>				
<p>Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (12/09/2007)</p>				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribution of the habitat within site</li> <li>• Structure and function of the habitat</li> <li>• Processes supporting the habitat</li> <li>• Distribution of typical species of the habitat</li> <li>• Viability of typical species as components of the habitat</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat</li> </ul>	<p>Marsh saxifrage (Saxifraga hirculus)</p> <p>Dry heaths</p> <p>Alpine and subalpine heaths</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (27/08/2008)</p> <p>Unfavourable Declining (12/09/2007)</p> <p>Favourable Maintained (12/09/2007)</p>	for grouse moor and rough grazing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential depletion of carbon sink</li> <li>• Recreational impact</li> </ul>
7. <b>Loch of Skene</b> SPA/RAMSAR (120.89 ha) designated on 01/10/1986	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of the species as a viable component of the site</li> <li>• Distribution of the species within site</li> <li>• Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of the species</li> </ul>	Greylag goose (Anser anser), non-breeding	Unfavourable Declining (01/11/2008)	The site has been subject of onshore wind and housing development applications. Lock subject to sailing activities, sports fishing and wildfowling. Hypertrophication from sewerage and agriculture	<p>SPA is vulnerable as hypertrophication increase algal bloom which in turn affects aquatic flora and fauna and reduces food availability to the SPA interest.</p> <p><b>Summary of Key Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hypertrophical &amp; pollution</li> <li>• Potential disturbance from site activities</li> </ul>
8. <b>Loch of Strathbeg</b> SPA/RAMSAR	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring	Sandwich tern (Sterna sandvicensis), breeding	Unfavourable No Change (31/07/2013)	Conflict between the geese which roost on the loch and the	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is managing to reduce conflicts and

(615.94 ha) designated on 27/11/1995	that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of the species as a viable component of the site</li> <li>• Distribution of the species within site</li> <li>• Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of the species</li> </ul>	Pink-footed goose (Anser brachyrhynchus), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (01/04/2009)	surrounding farms where they feed. Shooting from adjacent land of birds leaves the roost in disturbance.	vulnerabilities. For example disturbance is being regulated by RSPB's purchase of some of the shooting rights and by licensing. SNH have strategized a Loch of Strathbeg Goose Management Scheme to alleviate the conflict between the geese farming  <b>Summary of Key Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disturbance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict between roosting activities and farming</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (01/04/2008)		
		Whooper swan (Cygnus cygnus), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (01/04/2009)		
		Teal (Anas crecca), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (01/04/2009)		
		Svalbard Barnacle goose (Branta leucopsis), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (01/04/2009)		
		Greylag goose (Anser anser), non-breeding	Unfavourable No change (01/04/2009)		
9. <b>Mortlach Moss</b> SAC (12.02 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat (Base-rich fens) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitat that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of the habitat on site</li> <li>• Distribution of the habitat within site</li> <li>• Structure and function of the habitat</li> <li>• Processes supporting the habitat</li> </ul>	Base-rich fens	Favourable Maintained (01/09/2005)  For Alkaline fens, this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.	Site contains self-sown pine and other conifers. No damage to the habitat	Forest Enterprise (FE) work to an agreed management plan when undertaking forestry operations in the catchment. Felling Licence has been granted.  <b>Summary of Key Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No issues now</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribution of typical species of the habitat</li> <li>• Viability of typical species as components of the habitat</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat</li> </ul>				
<p>10. <b>Red Moss of Netherley</b> (92.52 ha) designated on 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat(s) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of the habitat on site</li> <li>• Distribution of the habitat within site</li> <li>• Structure and function of the habitat</li> <li>• Processes supporting the habitat</li> <li>• Distribution of typical species of the habitat</li> <li>• Viability of typical species as components of the habitat</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat</li> </ul>	Degraded raised bog	Unfavourable No change (22/10/2008)	<p>Extensive drainage and cutting over of the bog Lowered water table Local loss of bog vegetation and encroachment of open mire by scrub. Damage from muirburn, grazing and prospecting for minerals (diatomite)</p>	<p>Abandonment of past activities are no longer a threat. A few major drains remain along the site's margins and in a more central part of it, and although these are no longer maintained, they are still active. An ongoing problem on parts of the site is scrub encroachment.</p> <p><b>Summary of Key Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects on hydrology</li> <li>• Low water table</li> <li>• Erosion</li> <li>• Habitat loss (bog)</li> </ul>
		Active raised bog	Unfavourable No change (29/10/2008)		
			<p>Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (80%) Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (10%) Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (10%)</p>		

11. <b>Reidside Moss</b> SAC (87.17 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat(s) thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of the habitat on site</li> <li>• Distribution of the habitat within site</li> <li>• Structure and function of the habitat</li> <li>• Processes supporting the habitat</li> <li>• Distribution of typical species of the habitat</li> <li>• Viability of typical species as components of the habitat</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat</li> </ul>	Active raised bog	Unfavourable No change (3/8/2010)	Factors that influence the site include existing drains, woodland encroachment, grazing, cultivation and afforestation .	Existing management agreement covering part of the site that controls afforestation, grazing and cultivation will address key issues  <b>Summary of Key Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects on hydrology</li> <li>• Disturbance</li> </ul>
		Degraded raised bog	Unfavourable Recovering (3/8/2010)		
			Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (65%) Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (25%) Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (10%)		
12. <b>River Dee</b> SAC (2446.82 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for	Atlantic salmon (Salmo salar)	Favourable Maintained (21/07/2011)	Site is affected by housing developments, water abstraction and river engineering. The site is subject is recreational use	River Dee Integrated Catchment Management Plan is in place; There is guidance on best practice for river engineering works.  <b>Summary of Key Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat loss</li> </ul>

	<p>the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of the species, including range of genetic types for salmon, as a viable component of the site</li> <li>• Distribution of the species within site</li> <li>• Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of the species</li> <li>• Distribution and viability of freshwater pearl mussel host species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting freshwater pearl mussel host species</li> </ul>	<p>Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</p>	<p>Favourable Declining (06/10/2012)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disturbance</li> <li>• Potential Recreational impact</li> <li>• Coastal squeeze</li> </ul>
		<p>Freshwater pearl mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>)</p>	<p>Unfavourable No change (07/08/2003)</p>		
<p>13. <b>Sands of Forvie</b> SAC (734.02 ha) designated on 17/03/2005</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p>	<p>Shifting dunes</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (11/08/2011)</p>	<p>Factors that influence the site include trunk roads and other developments</p>	<p>This is highly active and mobile along the fringe but the older dunes have stabilised and largely support heathland and grassland. Very little active management is required to maintain the habitats of interest.</p>
		<p>Lime-deficient dune heathland with crowberry</p>	<p>Favourable Maintained (19/05/2010)</p>		



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent of the habitat on site</li> <li>Distribution of the habitat within site</li> <li>Structure and function of the habitat</li> <li>Processes supporting the habitat</li> <li>Distribution of typical species of the habitat</li> <li>Viability of typical species as components of the habitat</li> <li>No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat</li> </ul>	Shifting dunes with marram	Favourable Maintained (12/08/2011)		<b>Summary of Key Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No serious issue</li> </ul>
		Humid dune slacks	Favourable Maintained (11/08/2011)		
14. <b>Turclossie Moss</b> SAC (62.77 ha) designated on 17/03/2005	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent of the habitat on site</li> <li>Distribution of the habitat within site</li> <li>Structure and function of the habitat</li> <li>Processes supporting the habitat</li> <li>Distribution of typical species of the habitat</li> <li>Viability of typical species as components of the habitat</li> <li>No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat</li> </ul>	Degraded raised bog	Unfavourable No Change (19/10/2010)	Factors that influence the site include past cut-over bog resulting in lowered water table. Turclossie Moss is a remnant of a much larger peatland. Soil and geology is acidic, nutrient-poor, peat	<p>At present there are no damaging activities being carried out on the site. A hydrological study will inform the restoration management of this site.</p> <b>Summary of Key Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hydrological effects (lowered water table)</li> <li>Potential diminishing carbon sink from loss of peatland</li> </ul>
		Active raised bog	Unfavourable No Change (19/10/2010)		
			Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (92%) Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (5%) Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (3%)		
15. <b>Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor</b> SPA	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the	Common gull ( <i>Larus canus</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable No Change (22/05/2008)	Applications have been considered for off-shore Wind,	Common gulls are vulnerability to predation from crows and foxes as

<p>(83.71 ha ) designated on 15/12/2000</p>	<p>qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of the species as a viable component of the site</li> <li>• Distribution of the species within site</li> <li>• Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of the species</li> </ul>			<p>and housing Developments The site is managed as a grouse moor and as rough grazing for sheep.</p>	<p>well as from rotational muirburn</p> <p><b>Summary of Key Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predation</li> <li>• Disturbance</li> </ul>											
<p>16. <b>Troup, Pennan and Lion's Heads</b> SPA (3367.21 ha) designated on 14/03/1997</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of the species as a viable component of the site</li> <li>• Distribution of the species within site</li> <li>• Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of the species</li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="960 730 1196 820">Herring gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>), breeding</td> <td data-bbox="1205 730 1451 820">Unfavourable No change (03/07/2007)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="960 820 1196 909">Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>), breeding</td> <td data-bbox="1205 820 1451 909">Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="960 909 1196 999">Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>), breeding</td> <td data-bbox="1205 909 1451 999">Unfavourable No change (03/07/2007)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="960 999 1196 1088">Seabird assemblage, breeding</td> <td data-bbox="1205 999 1451 1088">Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="960 1088 1196 1177">Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>), breeding</td> <td data-bbox="1205 1088 1451 1177">Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="960 1177 1196 1378">Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>), breeding</td> <td data-bbox="1205 1177 1451 1378">Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)</td> </tr> </table>	Herring gull ( <i>Larus argentatus</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable No change (03/07/2007)	Razorbill ( <i>Alca torda</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)	Kittiwake ( <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable No change (03/07/2007)	Seabird assemblage, breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)	Guillemot ( <i>Uria aalge</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)	Fulmar ( <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)	<p>Applications have been considered off-shore Wind on-shore wind, marine activities, electricity (exc. renewable energy cases) and other developments and water abstraction</p>	<p>There are no significant threats to the interest at present. SNH is engaged in a programme of monitoring seabird populations, and is working with the local authority, and owners and occupiers, to agree an access policy for the site.</p> <p><b>Summary of Key Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential disturbance from access and recreation</li> </ul>
Herring gull ( <i>Larus argentatus</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable No change (03/07/2007)															
Razorbill ( <i>Alca torda</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)															
Kittiwake ( <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable No change (03/07/2007)															
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Guillemot ( <i>Uria aalge</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)															
Fulmar ( <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable Declining (03/07/2007)															

<p>17. <b>Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch</b> SPA (1016.24 ha) designated on 30/03/1998</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population of the species as a viable component of the site</li> <li>• Distribution of the species within site</li> <li>• Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species</li> <li>• No significant disturbance of the species</li> </ul>	Little tern ( <i>Sternula albifrons</i> ), breeding	Favourable Maintained (01/08/2012)	<p>Factors that influence the site include tourism / leisure Developments, Onshore Wind, Microrenewables, Other developments</p>	<p>Burning will damage sensitive habitats and species. Tern colonies are vulnerable to out damaging activities and disturbance. Tern breeding is vulnerable to predation and the periodic overtopping of the favoured shingle beds by sand. Shooting of geese is not though as an issue. Effects of eutrophication on the estuary and its flora and fauna. Invertebrates, which are the prey of waterfowl, are vulnerable to build up of algal mats</p> <p>Fox control measures and bye laws are thought to be helping.</p> <p><b>Summary of Key Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disturbance</li> <li>• Predation</li> <li>• recreational impacts</li> <li>• eutrophication</li> </ul>
		Sandwich tern ( <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> ), breeding	Favourable Maintained (01/08/2012)		
		Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> ), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (18/08/2012)		
		Eider ( <i>Somateria mollissima</i> ), non-breeding	Favourable Declining (21/08/2012)		
		Redshank ( <i>Tringa totanus</i> ), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (19/10/2012)		
		Common tern ( <i>Sterna hirundo</i> ), breeding	Unfavourable No Change (01/08/2012)		
		Pink-footed goose ( <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> ), non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (06/11/2012)		
		Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding	Favourable Maintained (19/10/2012)		

## **4. Screening**

The purpose of this screening is to determine whether elements of the Strategy, either individually or in combination with other policies, plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 sites listed in Table 3.2 above. In doing so, we have identified all aspects of the strategy which would not be likely to have a significant effect on a European sites, either alone or in combination with other aspects of the same or other plans so that they can be eliminated from further consideration.

### **4.1 Screening of the Strategy**

There are a number of factors that need to be considered in relation to the screening of the Strategy:

- The Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2016 sets out high-level objectives for forestry and woodland management and creation, reflecting national policy and regional circumstances, for the Local Development Plan area. The on-the-ground effects of the Strategy are, in many cases, uncertain and the strategy, and the maps contained within, are high level and strategic. The strategy will have an influence on woodland management and creation in the local development plan area. However, land use decision making will take account of a wide variety of factors, one of which may be the strategy. The strategy will inform woodland management and creation rather than dictating action.
- Under each of the themes there are a series of proposed actions. These have been considered in the screening as they could potentially have effects. However, the strategy is intended to deliver positive environmental outcomes in its proposed actions and no action would be included without environmental safeguards. Woodland management and woodland expansion both have the potential for environmental impacts, however the strategy promotes environmental protection and enhancement in all types of management activity. The strategy promotes robust, site based consideration, taking into account environmental factors amongst others, before any management activity is planned.
- The strategy does present a map of preferred areas for new woodland creation that will influence the Scottish Rural Development Programme grant award process. However, the map identifies all sites protected for nature conservation as sensitive to woodland planting, aiding their protection from inappropriate management action.

Thus, the screening process has been carried out based on all these factors and we have screened out aspects of the Strategy on the basis that they are:

- general policy statements where we cannot identify direct effects on European sites;
- proposed actions where we cannot identify direct effects on European sites;
- aspects that are intended to protect the natural environment;
- aspects that will not directly lead to on-the-ground effects;
- aspects that may result in on-the-ground effects but are unlikely to significantly affect European sites.

### **4.2 Screening of themes and objectives**

Table 4.1 below shows how we have screened the policy areas, key messages and suggested actions of the Strategy (Table 2.1). We have indicated which elements either been screened in or out of the assessment and the criteria used.

**Table 4.1 Screening of policy areas, key messages and suggested actions**

Themes and objectives		PPS likely to have significant effects individually or in combination	General policy statements	Projects not generated by this PPS	Protective, enhancement and conservation policies	Does not generate development and change	Provision of change with no link or pathway to qualifying features	Provision of changed with no or minimal effects	Too general nature of PPS with no information on where, how, or when of implementation	Screen in / Screen out
Theme	Objectives									
1. Climate change and tree health					X					out
	1.1 Aid trees and woodlands' resistance to the negative effects of climate change and tree disease				X					out
	1.2 Promote trees and woodlands as a means of mitigating and adapting to climate change				X					out
2. Timber and business development					X					out
	2.1 Support expansion of Aberdeenshire's woodland		X		X				X	out

	coverage in line with Scottish Government targets									
	2.2 Promote and support the forestry industry		X						X	out
3. Community Development, Access and Health			X						X	out
	3.1 Protect and enhance trees and woodlands in the planning and construction of built development		X						X	out
	3.2 Promote and support woodland's role in providing opportunities community development and recreational access		X						X	out
4. Natural, Cultural and Historic Assets			X							out
	4.1 Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances environmental quality and biodiversity		X		X				X	out
	4.2 Promote woodland creation and management practice which protects and enhances cultural and historic assets		X		X				X	out
5. Mapping of preferred areas for new woodland creation	5.1 Maximise the benefits of new woodland creation		X							out
	5.2 Promote integrated land use		X						X	out

### 4.3 Screening for in-combination effects

**Table 4.2: In-combination effects considered at screening stage**

Aspects of the strategy screened in as having LSE	Aspects of the strategy screened in as having minor residual effects (MRE)	Other Plans and sites with potential LSE	Potential in-combination effects	Risk of LSE	Screen in/out
None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Land use Strategy</li> <li>• Aberdeen City Local Development Plan</li> <li>• Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan</li> <li>• Aberdeen City and Shire SDP</li> <li>• Aberdeen City and Shire Regional Transport Strategy</li> <li>• Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route</li> </ul>	No in-combination effects identified since the elements of the strategy is essentially protective and very general in nature.	None	Out

#### **4.4 Conclusion on likely significant effects**

Following the screening of the strategy, we can conclude that the Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy is unlikely to have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 sites listed in this assessment, either alone or in combination with other aspects of the plan or other plans. No further appropriate assessment will be undertaken.