

To – Corporate Planning Team
Scottish Forestry
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Scottish Forestry corporate plan: consultation

The Scottish Anglers National Association Ltd (SANA) is recognised as the governing body for game angling in Scotland. This response to the consultation has been prepared on its behalf by its Non-migratory Fish and Migratory Fish Committees.

Though SANA has no particular expertise in forestry we have considerable background in fisheries and their need for good quality water and suitable habitats. Consequently the following comments mainly concern the freshwater environment and the dangers forestry can pose to it if not properly managed.

Paragraph 4 of the draft Corporate Plan says *“The forests and woodlands that we support and regulate currently cover around 19% of Scotland's land area. As the Scottish Government implements its plans, that area is set to get bigger.”*

In the past forestry conifer plantations have blighted aquatic life through insensitive drainage of acidic uplands, and planting too close to streams and rivers. Densely planted conifers use so much water and let in so little light that almost all soil-binding ground cover plants are absent. Streams in such forests are prone to drying up in droughts, and they also become more acidic, sometimes acutely so, seriously reducing juvenile salmonids, grayling and other fish species' production and survival levels. Whilst we appreciate that the forestry sector has improved environmental practice over recent years and these problems are now better understood by forest managers, we expect this improvement will continue as the percentage of afforested land grows.

The draft Plan says that *“Scottish Forestry helps protect our native woodlands and species such as the red squirrel and golden eagle. By applying UK Forestry Standard (UKFS), woodlands and forests are becoming more biologically diverse: they are important ecosystems in terms of habitat, food sources, water drainage, soil improvement, and so on.”* Though the Plan aims to sustain wild life, *“safeguarding priority habitats and species”*, and to improve *“the resilience of Scotland's forests and woodlands and increase their contribution to a healthy and high quality environment”*, it makes no mention of salmon, trout or other fish. Yet many woodland areas incorporate streams and stillwaters, some publicly owned and occasionally leased to angling interests, so it is important for fish, aquatic invertebrates, and anglers that

water courses are as free as possible from abstraction, pollutants, sediment, and barriers to migration.

The draft supports *“forest design and silvicultural actions which increase the capacity of forests and woodlands to adapt to, and thrive in, a changing climate.”* A laudable objective so long as watercourses (which are already starting to suffer from climate change) are not compromised with consequent harm to aquatic life. In order to protect juvenile salmon and sea trout, River Trusts are currently planting trees along streams in some catchments to shade water courses from future increases in drought conditions. Consumption of water by trees, including transpiration from their canopies, can exacerbate droughts, and forest drainage can lead to increased erosion and deposition of silt in watercourses, so contour ploughing should be the norm rather than “vertical” ploughing which leads to faster run-off. In general mixed-species deciduous woodlands, which protect water quality, limit bank and bed erosion and minimise siltation problems in water courses, should be planted in preference to blanket conifers. As far as fisheries are concerned conservation of water resources can be as, or more, important than moderating water temperatures, so forest design and management should take into account local fishery management objectives.

The draft says you *“value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment.”* SANA hopes that this includes the freshwater environment and its denizens in both current and increasing woodland, and we expect that the importance of Marine Scotland’s policy on improvement of wild fisheries and the essentials of good quality water and habitats will be recognised in the Corporate Plan.

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SANA Ltd

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