

*Guidance for Woodland expansion  
& Golden Eagle  
(Aquila chrysaetos) Special  
Protection Areas (SPA's) in  
Scotland*

Syd House  
Conservator  
Forestry Commission Scotland  
Perth & Argyll Conservancy

ECRAN Workshop, Kopacki Rit,  
Croatia 21-23 Oct 2014

- Bsc (Hons) Ecological Science (Forestry) Edinburgh University
- Worked for Forestry Commission since 1978 on forest management, policy development, regulation, planning & promotion all across Scotland
- Worked in Australia 1981-82
- Currently Conservator (Regional Manager) in Scotland leading a team of 17 staff regulating, providing grant incentives and planning/promoting forestry for *Multiple Public Benefits*
- Works closely with all stakeholders to ensure forestry delivers public benefits in the region

- Chaired Regional Committees delivering Scottish Rural Development Programme 2006-13 & 2014-20
- Represented UK on the EU Greenforce network 2005-12 dealing with forestry & conservation in context of Natura 2000
- Natura 2000 is one of many designations/constraints impacting on the forestry sector
- Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Foresters

- Habitats Directive translated into Scottish legislation & then into requirements of forest & environment laws/guidelines/practice
- Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) deemed a 'competent authority' with responsibility to determine projects re Natura 2000 sites (ie 'Appropriate Assessment') & be legally accountable
- Network of Special Conservation Areas/ Special Protection Areas + Protected Species *could be* impacted by forestry operations and FCS decisions
- FCS team has to understand Natura 2000 to make decisions on Forest Plans, felling licences, etc

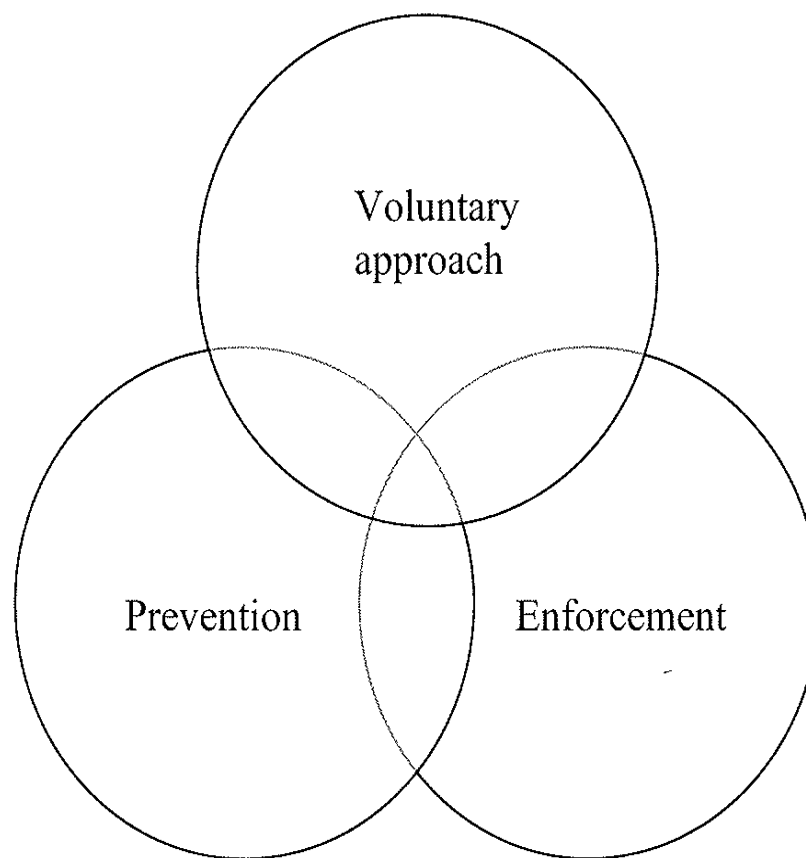


- Particular obligation to help bring woodland Natura 2000 sites to Favourable Conservation Status
- Regular dealings with forestry operations impacting on protected species such as capercaillie, golden eagle, otter. Good practice guides in place
- Timber regulation (FLEGT) now in place but not a major issue in UK
- Water Framework Directive is very influential & now working with Water Authorities to improve forestry practice on watercourses
- Workshops & training for private forestry sector to help comply with environmental obligations



# Practical implementation of Natura 2000

Management – control – enforcement



- Identifying & working with stakeholders
  - Why it's good to talk
  - Why stakeholders matter
- Agreeing objectives & work programmes
  - Social, economic & land use context
  - Threats/opportunities
  - Good outcomes
- Feedback & review
  - Monitoring
  - Information/data required
  - Revise Management Objectives/Plan as appropriate

- Scotland: 450 pairs of golden eagles: 5% of European population (Cat 3 species of European Conservation Concern)
- Still subject to persecution (to protect game birds for hunters & protect farmers' sheep)
- 2010 designation of 6 new SPAs (6% Scotland area) covering 400k ha in addition to 8 existing ones
- Eagles allegedly prefer open habitats ie not forested
- Concern/conflict re woodland restoration ie 'single species' designation for golden eagles would restrict woodland expansion for timber & for habitat. Review of past guidance required



- Less than 2% of original semi-natural woodland remains (once was >60%) thus greatly reduced habitat. Which is preferred – eagles or trees?
- Government conservation advisers (Scottish Natural Heritage) indicated 'Appropriate Assessment' of new woodlands in SPA would be required. Enough to discourage woodland expansion?
- Concern over stakeholder engagement on the designation
- In addition, golden eagles elsewhere (as European Protected Species) may be a significant constraint on woodland expansion

***Problem: How to expand woodland cover without negative impact on golden eagle SPA's and EPS?***



- Set up working group to commission expert research and advice
- Working Group includes statutory agencies, NGO's and independent expert advisers
- Remit: assess current guidance on eagles interacting with woodland to produce an agreed set of criteria for readily assessing woodland expansion proposals in golden eagle SPA's









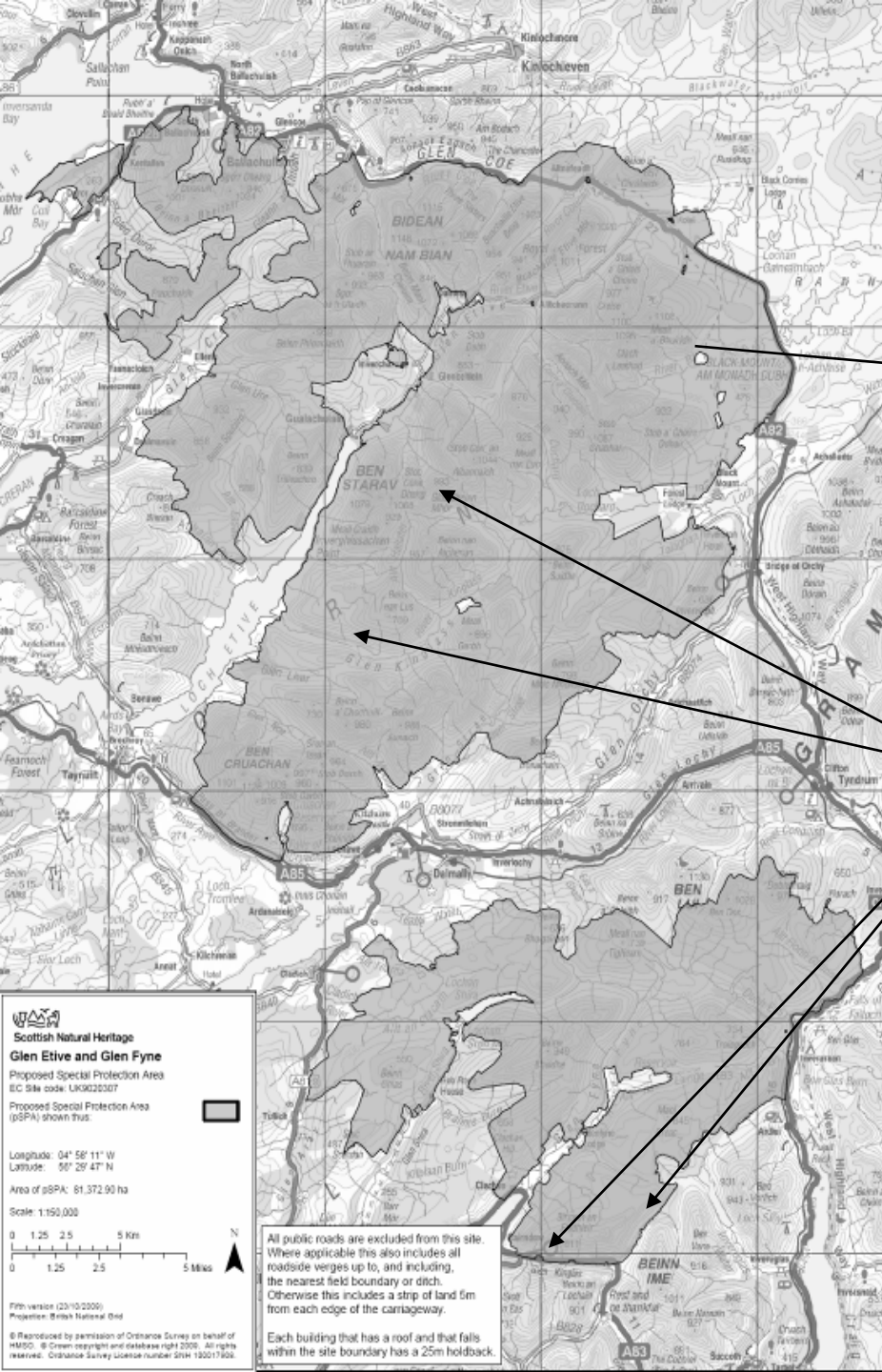




BarbAnna



- 19 active eagle territories; 4.2% of UK population
- Minimal woodland area but desire by some land managers to extend woodland area (habitat restoration)
- Can golden eagle habitat conservation be compatible with woodland restoration?



Woodland expansion  
 Proposals (4 areas totalling  
 ~ 400ha)













- Many golden eagles thrive in and around areas of woodland & woodland expansion as well as open ground
- Availability of live prey is fundamental to eagles
- Golden eagles have a very wide territory. Careful study can identify critical and less critical parts of the territory
- Potential for woodland expansion in their territory without negative impact on eagle integrity (and may even improve habitat quality)

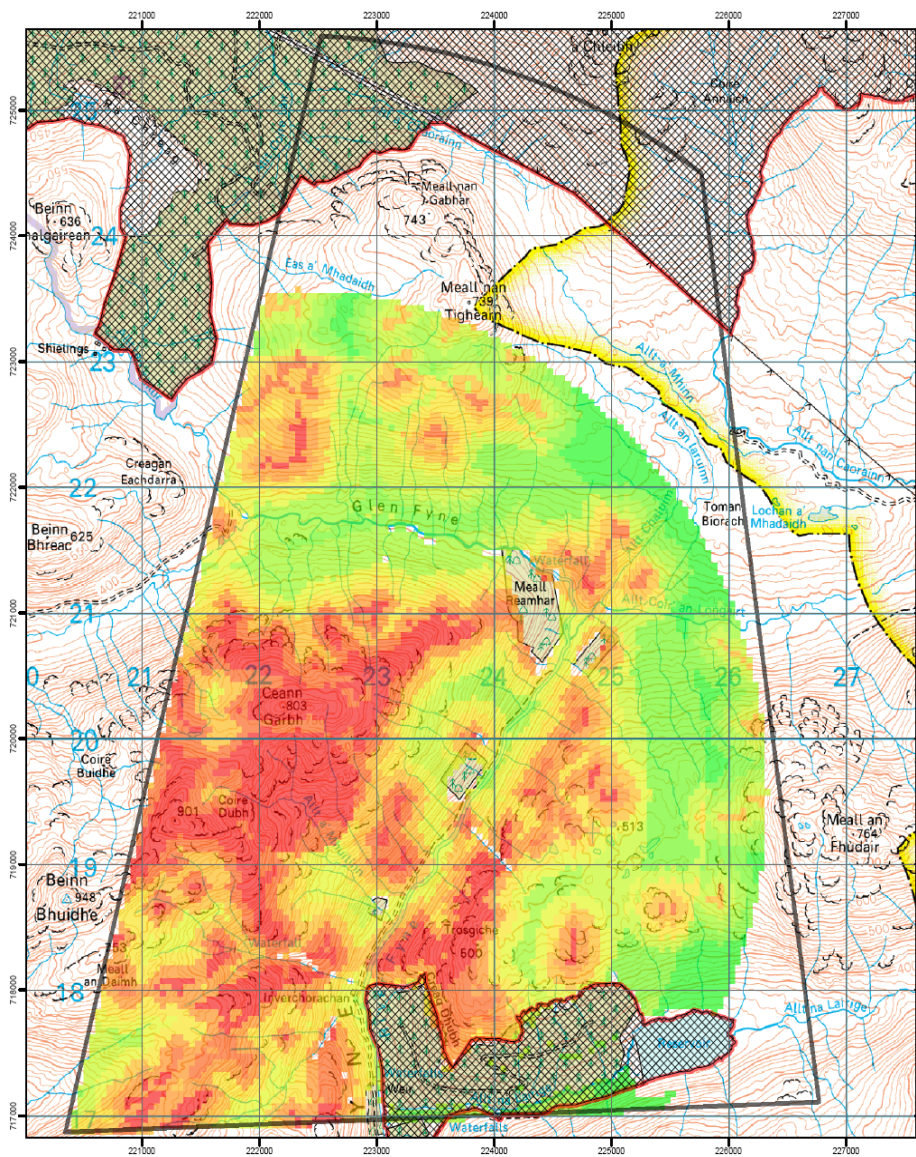


- Avoid planting wet/boggy ground or area of high prey importance eg rabbit warrens
- Keep ridges free & avoid core range around nest (may be 2-3km radius but variable)
- Areas of low prey importance (eg bracken ground, short or improved grassland) can be planted with minimal or even beneficial impact
- Study of individual eagle territories will inform assessment
- Scale and design of new woodlands is critical. If sited appropriately these may enhance eagle live prey availability

- Based on assessment of range boundaries for each pair of eagles
- Mathematical modelling incorporated
- Gives proper weighting to key features such as ridges and proximity to nest
- Identifies less suitable and frequented habitat
- Produces 'predicted use' of a territory

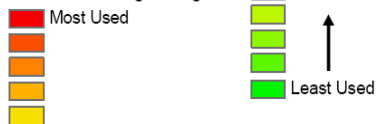


Figure 2. Underlying PAT Model for GF2a



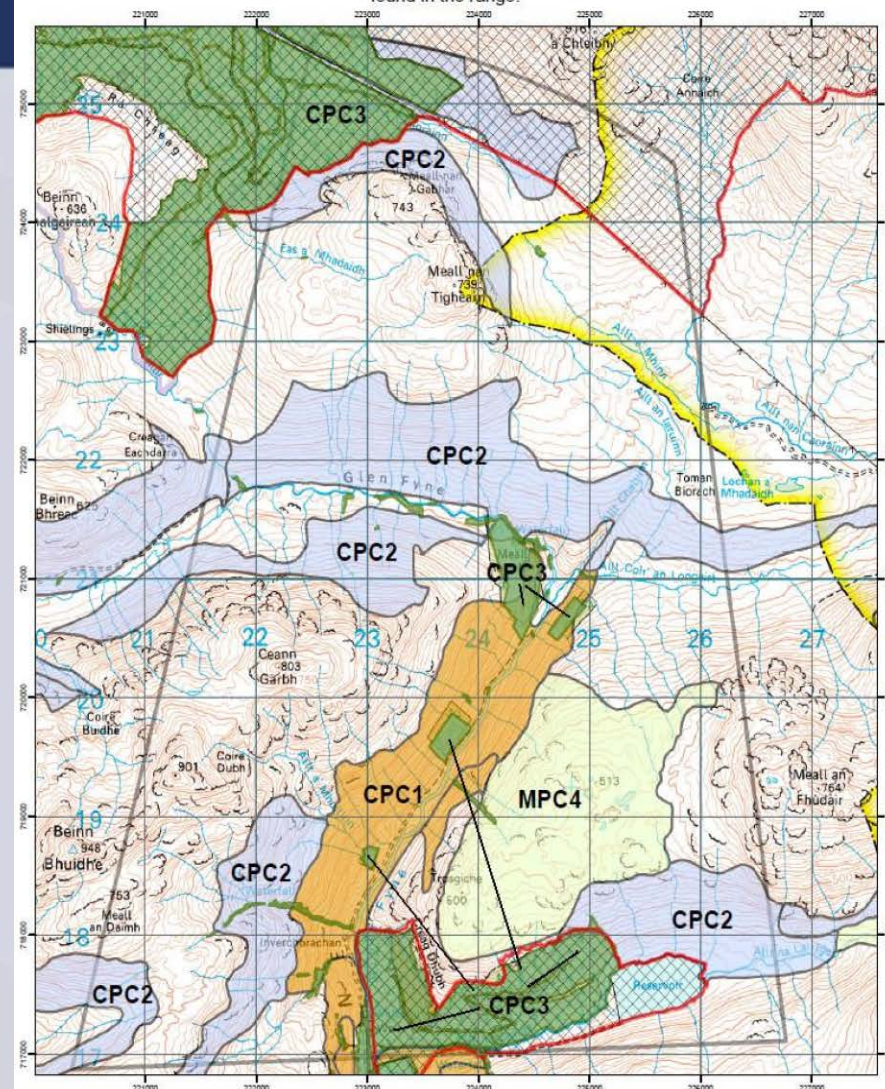
#### Legend

GF2a Golden Eagle Range Use



SPA  
None-SPA  
GF2a RIN Boundary

Figure 3 Predicted Medium Prey Communities (MPC) and Constrained Prey Communities (CPC) found in the range.



#### Legend

Bracken (CPC1)  
Nardus/Molinia (CPC2)  
Bog-Peatland (MPC4)  
Commercial woodland (CPC3)

GF2a RIN Boundary  
SPA  
None-SPA

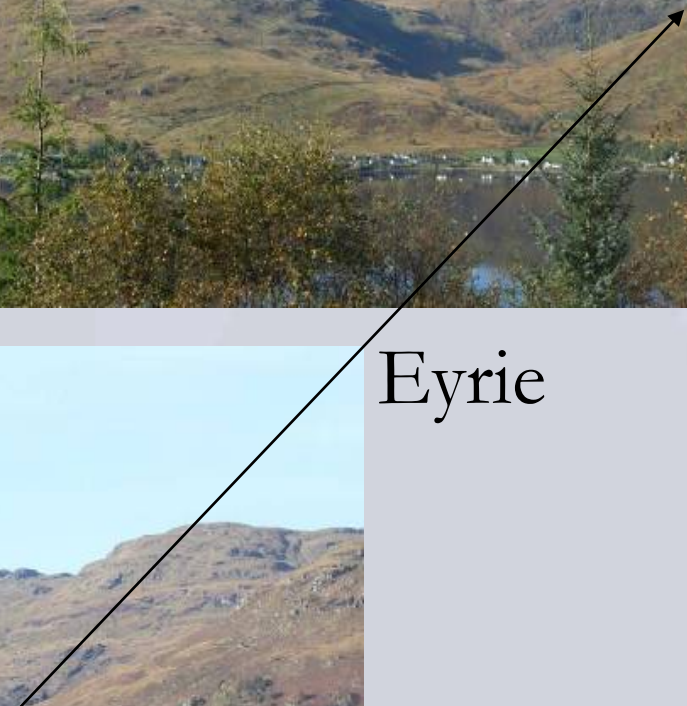
Medium Prey Community (MPC): existing prey productivity could be improved further by improved management of the existing habitat e.g. upland areas which are overgrazed or have experienced a harsh muirburn regime.

Constrained Prey Community (CPC): contains virtually no, or very little, golden eagle prey. e.g. bracken, blocks of purple moor grass (Molinia) and Mat Grass (Nardus) or closed canopy commercial forestry such as Sitka.



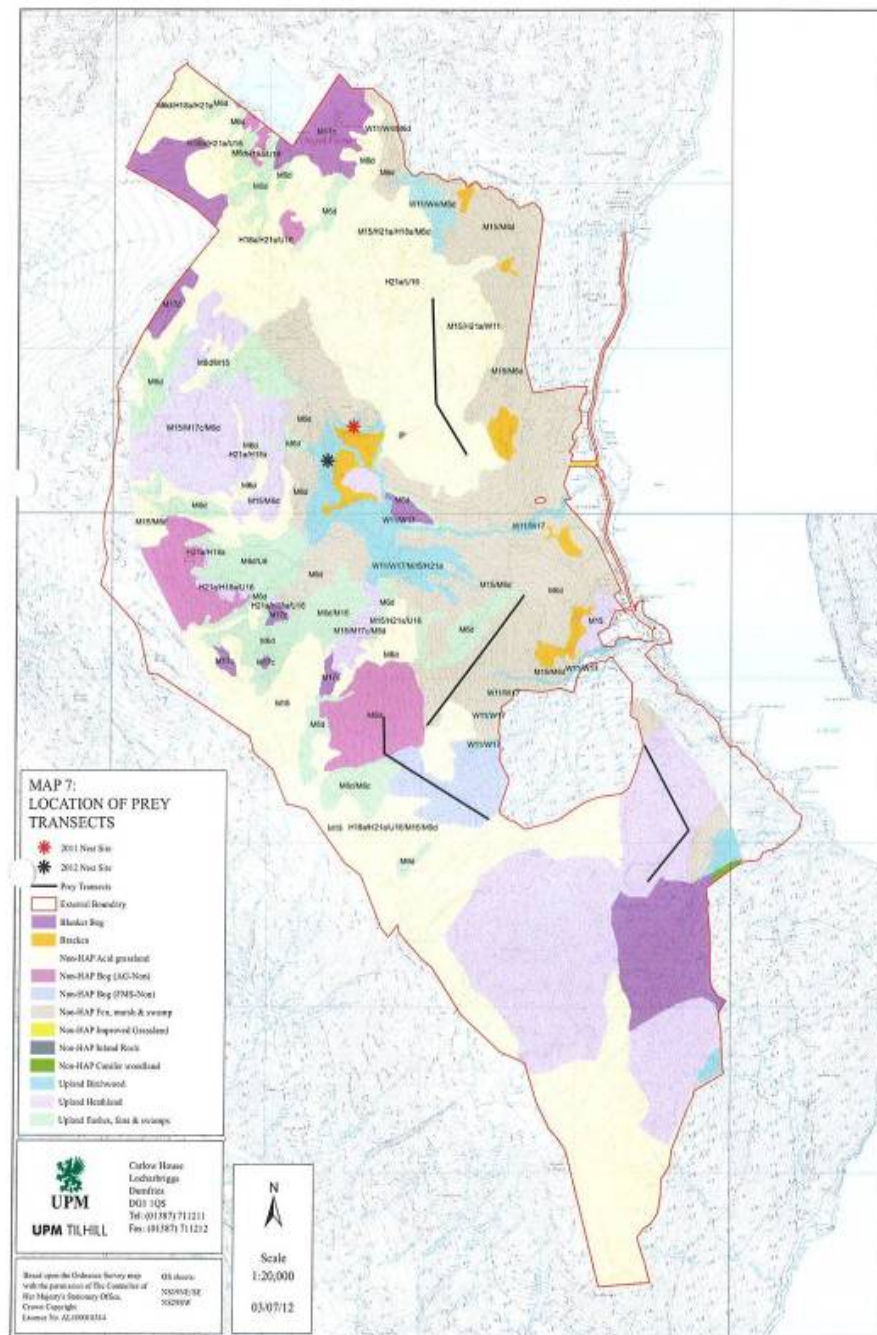
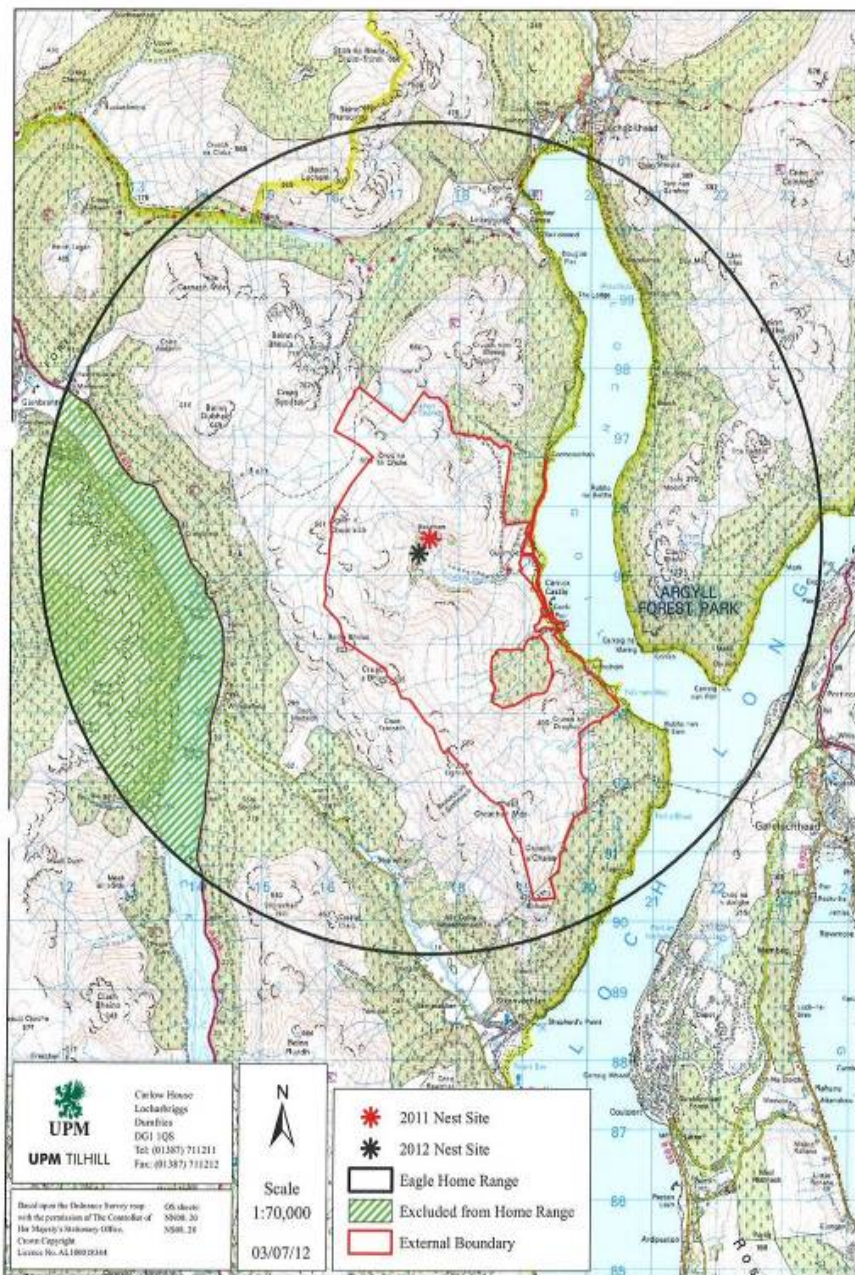


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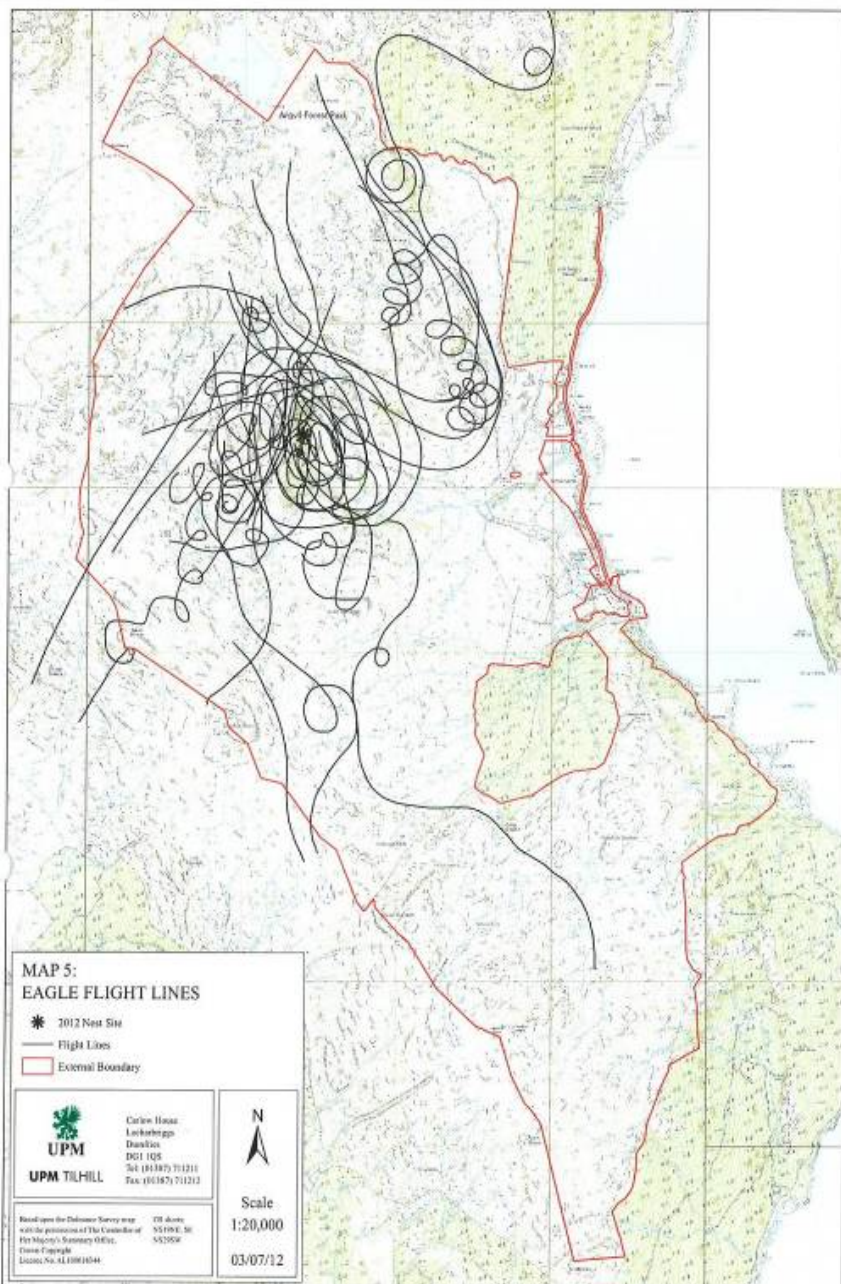




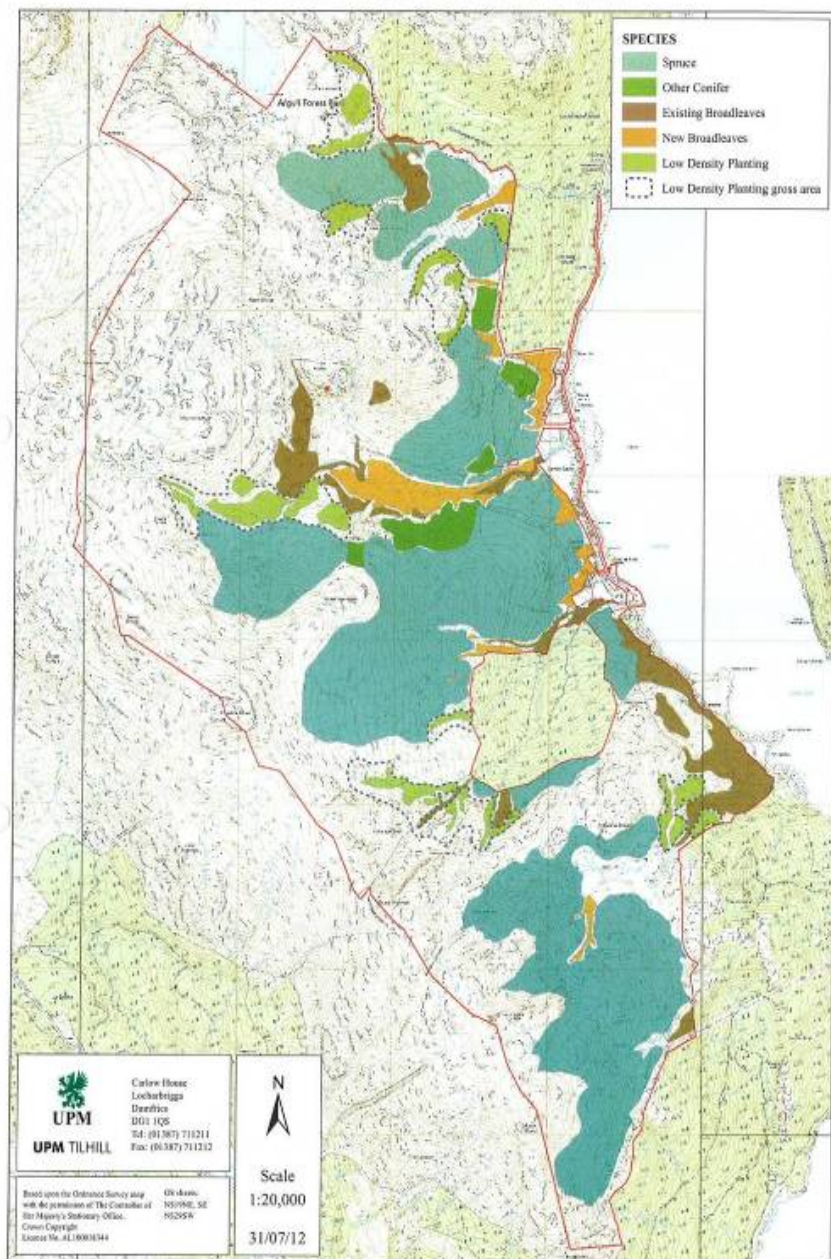
MAP 8: APPROXIMATE EAGLE HOME RANGE







**MAP 10: CARRICK FARM - CURRENT PLANTING PROPOSAL**







- A low-cost, robust & reliable model available to land managers who wish to undertake land management in golden eagle territories
- Supports staff required to implement EU Habitats & Species Directives
- Recognition that if the model is used correctly when considering woodland expansion, proposals may be supported and may not even require 'Appropriate Assessment' (ie if they can be shown to have a beneficial impact on the designated interest)



- It's good to talk to stakeholders prior to designation to identify concerns
- Beware unintended consequences (real threat is persecution not habitat loss) on other interests
- Beware single species conservation measures
- Good forest design, based on sound science and evidence, can address apparent concerns
- Designation should be supported by pro-active engagement to seek stakeholder support and address perceived concerns

## Good practice experiences and examples from different Member States in managing forests in Natura 2000

1. Setting conservation objectives for Natura 2000. Experiences in some Members States.....	2
2. Integrating conservation objectives into public forests in Austria. Measures to improve the conservation status of bird species linked to forests.....	2
3. Improving forest management in cooperation with landowners in the Natura 2000 site Tullnerfelder Donau-Auen, Austria.....	2
4. Management of public forests in Natura 2000 sites in South East Belgium .....	2
5. Integration of nature conservation objectives in forest management. Restoring conservation status of forest habitats in Flanders.....	2
6. Sustainable management of forests in Natura 2000 sites in Smolyan region, Bulgaria ...	2
7. Natura 2000 Green Annexes, a tool for management of forests with protected habitats and species in France.....	2
8. Forest management through collaboration and contracts in the Vallée de la Loue et du Lison, France .....	2
9. Forests for the Capercaillie in the Vosges Mountains (France).....	2
10. Natura 2000 management planning in Baden-Württemberg, Germany.....	2
11. Analysis of the natural and economic impacts of the Habitats Directive on the basis of case study forest enterprises in Germany .....	2
12. Guidance for the conservation of old trees and dead wood DE - AuT-concept in Baden-Württemberg, Germany.....	2
13. Guidance on Appropriate Assessment procedure for forestry activities in Ireland .....	2
14. Ireland's Native Woodland Scheme. A tool for the management of Natura 2000 woodland .....	2
15. Bosco della Fontana, Italy. Techniques for re-establishment of dead wood for saproxylic fauna conservation .....	2
16. Ecoforests in Latvia .....	2
17. Integrating Natura 2000 management plans into forest management plans in Poland ....	2
18. Forest management in Slovenia. Strategic approach to integration and funding .....	2
19. Tools for forest management planning in Natura 2000 in the Castilla y León Region (Spain) .....	2
20. Forest exploitation compatible with Black Vulture conservation in a private forest in Spain.....	2
21. Maintenance of 'dehesas' in Spain .....	2
22. National strategy on forest protection and guidance on management of protected forests in Sweden .....	2
23. Management of wooded pastures in Sweden.....	2
24. Developing guidance for woodland expansion in Golden eagle Special Protection Areas in Scotland (UK) .....	2

### Pilot project Kopački Rit, Croatia

- no longer pastoral grazing
- problem with invasive (exotic) species
- disappearing of species (birdlife)
- 2008 start project with Kopački Rit Nature Park and ARK Nature
- financed by Dutch ministry (BBI-Matra)

**Appropriate assessment of forestry proposals which are likely to have a significant effect on a European site under the Conservation of Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. Regulation 48.**

1. Name of European site affected by the application and current designation status, including name of component SSSI (if relevant).

2. Features of European qualifying interest, whether priority or non-priority; and conservation objectives for qualifying interests.

3. Details of proposal.

Name: Location:  
Applicant: Reference:

Description of proposal:

Operations:

4. Assessment of impact on European interest.

4.1 *Is the proposal directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?*

Yes/No (If Yes go to 5.)

No – Although the project will restore natural habitat, it is not of European interest.

4.2 *Is the proposal likely to have a significant effect on the European interest on the designated site?*

Yes/No (If yes assess impact on site)

4.3 *Outline of possible impacts*

4.4 *Summary of assessment in relation to possible impacts*

4.5 *Any other comments*

4.6 *What would be the outcome on the site if the proposal is not approved?*

5. Conclusions.

*Will the proposal adversely affect the integrity of the European site?*

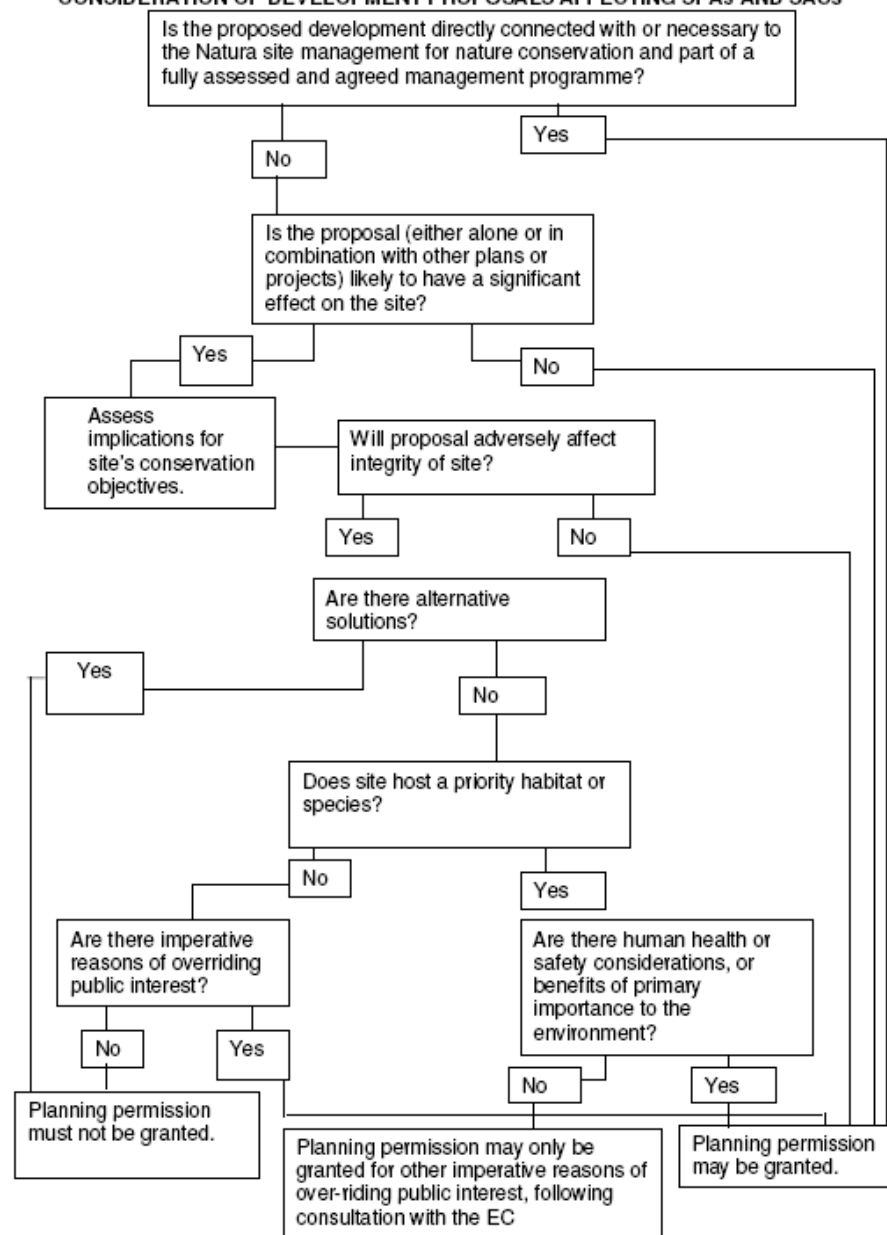
6. Conditions required (if any).

Signed

Woodland Officer.....

Date.....

**CONSIDERATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AFFECTING SPAs AND SACs**





- Sea eagle re-introduction into Scotland
- Exterminated 100 years ago by hunting & farming interests
- Project to re-introduce over last 20 years
- Sea eagles now significant tourism attraction in rural locations & support quality of eco-tourism experience





















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**Wild Woods**  
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