

Landscape Scale Conservation Case Study

The Great Trossachs Forest NNR

Creating a connected mosaic of native woodlands in the heart of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

Summary

Covering 16,500 hectares, The Great Trossachs Forest is the legacy project of the Scottish Forest Alliance and is a partnership between RSPB Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland and Woodland Trust Scotland. Since 2006, more than 2 million native trees have been planted, which, along with ancient woodlands, wood pasture and are other important woodland habitats, are creating a natural mosaic of more than 4,400 hectares of connected woods. This is a 200 year project, thus providing habitats and wildlife the time and space to adapt and become resilient to the many threats posed by climate change.



“The Great Trossachs Forest is the UK’s largest National Nature Reserve. Partners are conserving a landscape in the heart of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and have committed to work together for 200 years. The Great Trossachs Forest NNR is creating a lasting legacy for future generations and providing a huge space for nature to adapt and become resilient to the effects of climate change”. Tim Hall, WTS

Challenges

Time

Trees take a long time to grow and having previously been part of the biggest sheep farm in Europe, our habitats are taking a long time to recover. This leads to many challenges as PR teams, funders, and communities expect to see demonstrable conservation improvements. Time also presents a challenge as visitors and communities will see the visible scar of our work (non-native tree felling, deer fencing and mounding) but the positive impact will only be felt by future generations. This can be difficult for people to accept.

Keeping up momentum and enthusiasm

New ideas and projects often attract more attention, meaning existing, on-going work can be overlooked. This occurs both within partner conservation organisations and among funders and publicists. Therefore, maintaining momentum and enthusiasm in a project that is only ten years into a 200 year agreement can, at times, be a challenge.

Grazing pressure by deer and feral goats

Achieving a grazing balance for our habitats whilst respecting the requirements of neighbouring land owners is challenging.

INNS, Tree diseases & Climate change

The challenges posed by an ever increasing suite of tree diseases, the constant work required to tackle INNS such as *Rhododendron ponticum* and our changing climate leads us to question how resilient are our woodlands? Have the right trees been planted or will they be under stress when they mature? What would happen if a whole species was eradicated by disease?

Communication

Our model of working together is such that each organisation is delivering its own corporate requirements whilst simultaneously delivering the vision and aims of The Great Trossachs Forest. Maintaining communication between partners, learning from each other and keeping our key stakeholders updated is critical to the success of the project.

The solution

When establishing The Great Trossachs Forest, the partners set out a shared vision, aims and objectives for the project but importantly did not require a full suite of strategic plans.

Delivery on the ground is guided by site management plans for individual sites and therefore reflects the conservation needs of each, as well as delivering the conservation objectives of each organisation. This flexibility means the focus of work for each organisation is slightly different, yet all are ultimately working towards the same goal.

“As we have 200 years, we have the time to try out different conservation techniques, learn from each other and adapt as required.”

Yvonne Boles, RSPB

Outcomes

Throughout the first 10 years of the project we have completed a huge amount of conservation work. This has resulted in us having a constant stream of news stories that we can promote to maintain interest and enthusiasm in the project. Often when news has been quiet at one partner site, something will be happening elsewhere that all partners can report on.

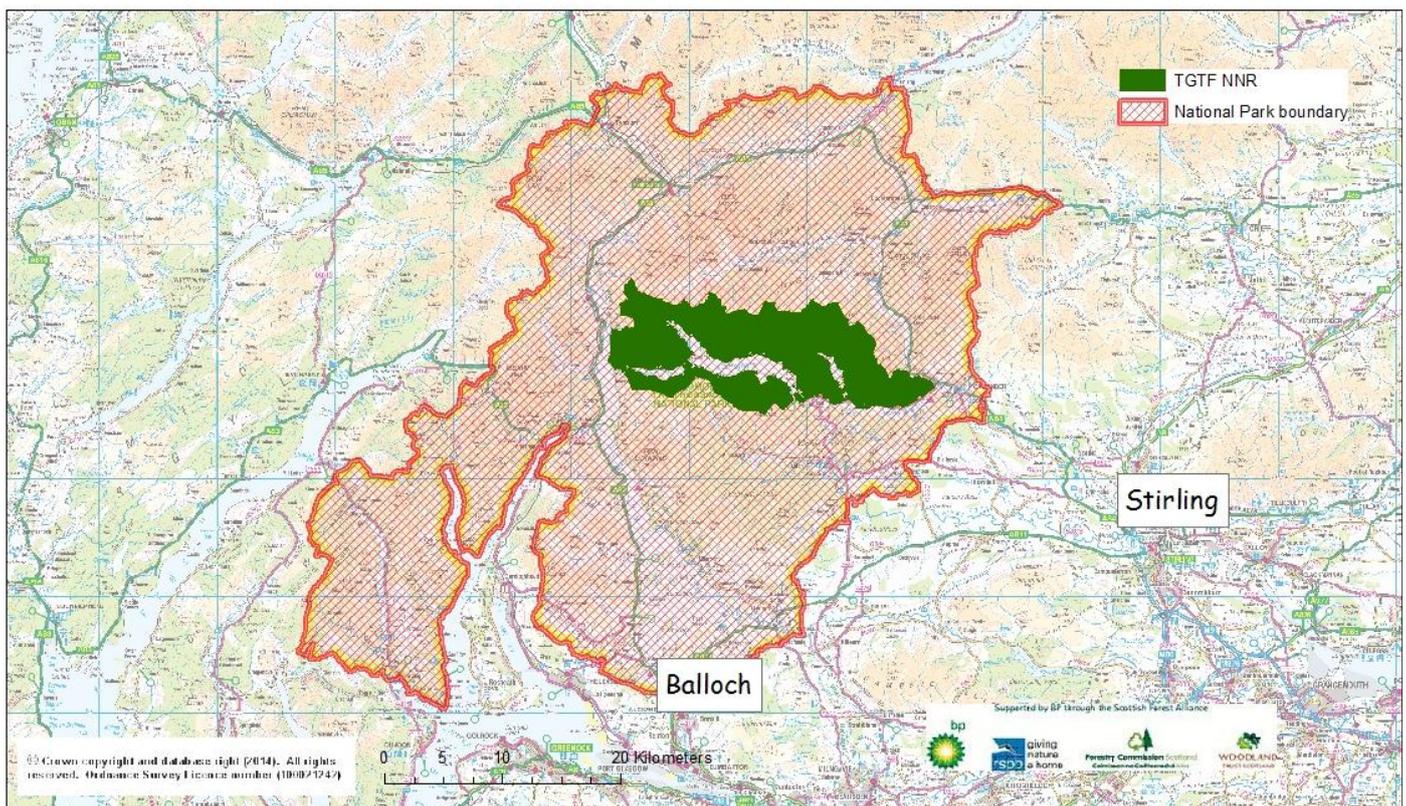
After the first ten years of delivery, we now have an emerging connected woodland corridor covering more than 4,400 hectares. Our habitats are starting to recover and we are discovering an increasing number of important species that call The Great Trossachs Forest home.

Just as wild deer do not recognise land ownership boundaries, we also look at deer management on a landscape scale too. We have joined up fences between partner lands, jointly stalk area and undertake bi-annual helicopter counts to assess our deer populations. We also meet regularly to review deer management across the whole of the landscape.

Facts and figures

- 3 partners working together over the lifetime of a 200 year project
- More than 2 million native trees have been planted.
- 4,400 hectares of an emerging native woodland corridor and a mosaic of recovering habitats across the 16, 500 landscape area.
- Rare species have been found including pearl bordered fritillary butterfly, narrow bordered bee-hawk moth and the four spot beetle

The Great Trossachs Forest NNR in the National Park



The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve



- Partner**
- Forestry Commission Scotland
 - RSPB Scotland
 - Woodland Trust Scotland



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The partnership:

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