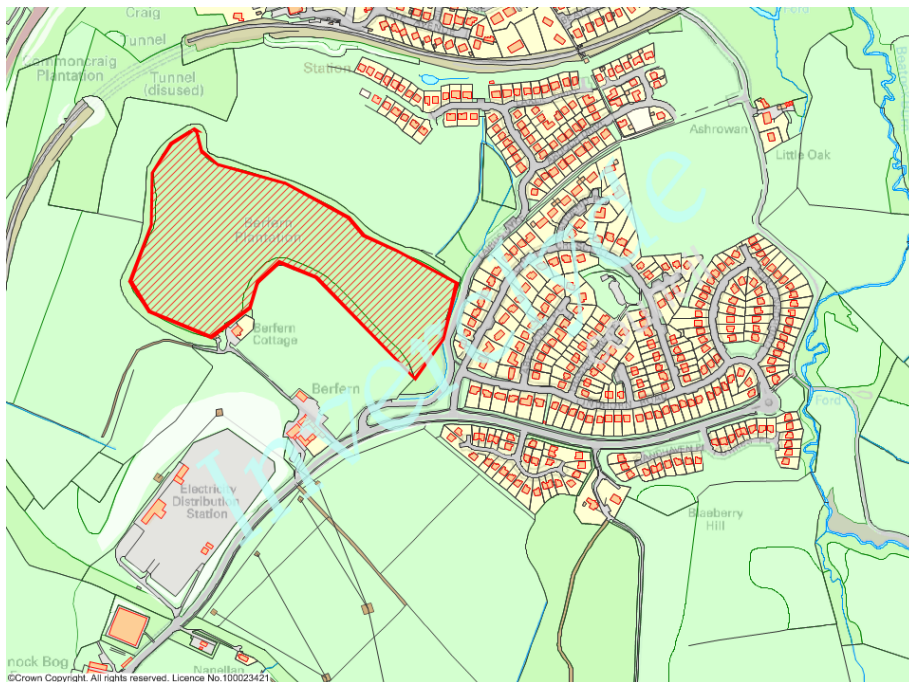


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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>The Planning Board</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>4th April 2012</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Regeneration and Planning</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>IC/06/008 Plan 04/12</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>David Ashman</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712416</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Amendment to Woodland Management Plan at Hill Farm, Inverkip</b>		

## INTRODUCTION

Planning permission was granted in May 2007 for residential development land bound by the railway, Finnockbog Road, Everton Farm Road, Hill Farm Housing Development and Berfern Farm, Inverkip.



An integral part of this planning permission was a Woodland Management Plan for the Berfern Plantation. This had a long term objective of replacing the existing mainly coniferous commercial plantation with a mainly deciduous mix of species to form a native broadleaved community woodland. Open glades with pedestrian recreational routes were to be formed throughout the Plantation. The proposed phased felling and replanting works were to be implemented over a 25 year period to allow gradual landscape change. Works were to progress, in general terms, from the interior of the plantation outwards in five distinct phases each operating over a five year period.



Above: before the winter storms.  
Below: after the winter storms.



The Woodland Management Plan is already 5 years old and some replanting has already occurred but it is clear that the Plan is not longer tenable. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, as the early phases of the Plan have been implemented it has become clear that the remaining trees are of poor quality, having never been the subject of silvicultural thinning. It has been discovered that the depth of soil is only a few inches in some places before bedrock is encountered. As a consequence the root systems of the trees are very shallow. This has combined to compromise the quality and integrity of the planting and leave it susceptible to wind blow damage. Indeed the winter storms either side of Christmas and New Year caused substantial loss of trees with approximately 90% of the standing woodland being blown down. There is significant damage to some of the remaining standing trees.

The remaining stock has been inspected by Scottish Woodlands and the Council's landscape consultants, the conclusion being that vast tracts of the Plantation have to be removed in the interests of health and safety. Once this clearance is complete very little of the original Plantation will remain and those isolated pockets will be extremely vulnerable to further storm damage.

It has been concluded that due to the unknown ground conditions, the poor quality of the trees within the Plantation and the consequences of the winter storms, the existing Woodland Management Plan has failed; a new approach requires to be taken to ensure the desired objective of provision of a community woodland can be achieved.

## THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

The site developer has provided a report which examines the remaining stock. It is proposed to remove the remaining trees and carry out full replanting of the site within the next planting season.

The advantage of this approach is that replanting, which was to occur over a 25 year period, will take place in one season. It also allows a fresh look to be taken at the site with a more designed approach to landscaping than was previously possible. By way of example, a series of viewpoints can be created and a more structured footpath network through the woodland can be formed. The disadvantage of this approach is that there would be a comprehensive change to the landscape at this site in the short term, noticeable in both short and long distance views including approaches on the A78 and views from the Kip Marina development.



The Council's landscape consultant has examined the replanting proposals and is satisfied that a generous level of replanting is shown and that the scheme is acceptable in principle.

If permission is granted for the change to the Woodland Management Plan then clearance of the remaining stock will take place within the next few weeks with the replanting programme being carried out during the next planting season (November 2012-March 2013). The replanting cannot take place immediately following the clear felling as planting out of season typically has a high failure rate. Following the completion of the planting the woodland would be adopted by Scottish Woodlands for its long term maintenance and care.

It is regrettable that the current Woodland Management Plan has failed due to circumstances outwith the control of the developer. Nevertheless, it is considered that the proposed amendment offers the best opportunity to secure a sustainable community woodland on the site of the Berfern Plantation.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the amendment to the Woodland Management Plan be accepted.

Stuart Jamieson  
Head of Regeneration and Planning

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Planning permission IC/06/008
2. Approved Woodland Management Plan
3. Proposed Woodland Management Plan



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