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Interactive and Participatory Forest Planning in Forestry Commission Scotland Forest Districts

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1 Introduction

The talk explained the FCS Forest Design Plan process and the production of a local plan. The involvement of local people and other interest groups during the planning process was described.

2 Context

Fort Augustus Forest District is close to the ELAV East Sutherland project area and near the Highland city of Inverness, the most northerly city in the UK.

The District has 26 Community Council areas and the main source of livelihood within the District is tourism. 1.5 million people per year visit Loch Ness, which lies centrally within the District boundary.

Inverness is the area administration centre and within easy reach of commuters living in the District.

The area is renowned for the Glen Affric National Nature Reserve, an extensive area of native Scots pine woodland that forms a mosaic habitat. Although the local population in the surrounding area is low, communities are extremely interested in how the Reserve is managed and comprehensive engagement is being followed.

3 Preparation of a local forest plan

A graphic (Figure 1) illustrates the process that FCS follows to implement UK government forest policy. This demonstrates how the views of all interested stakeholders contribute to the final production of the plan, including those of the local community.

The plan may be modified at each stage, depending on the views expressed.

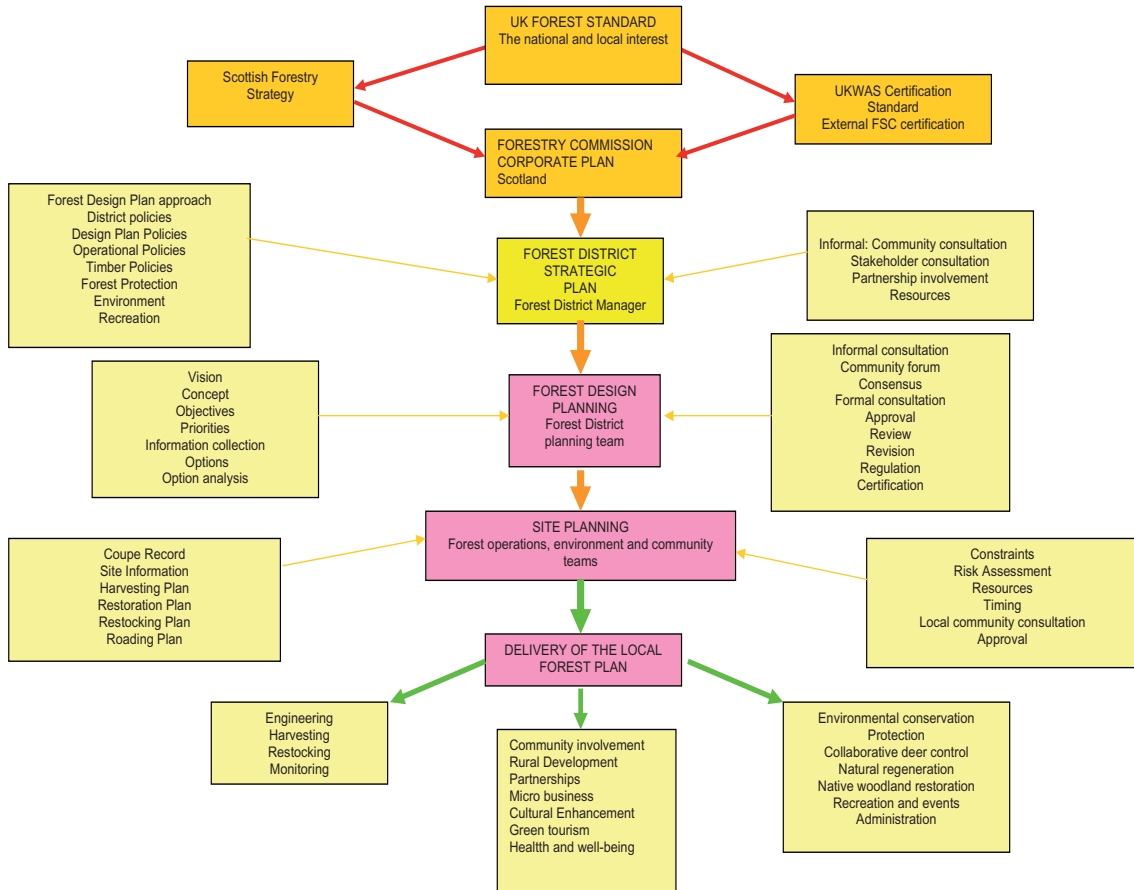


Figure 1. Implementation of UK government forest policy.

Once the plan is complete, a wide range of relationships may form with those who have expressed a particular interest during the planning process (Figure 2). Communities may formalise this relationship, from relatively simple agreements, to carefully composed Concordat documents.

It is very common for working partnerships to be formed, where community interests can be supported and accommodated. These arrangements give mutual benefits.

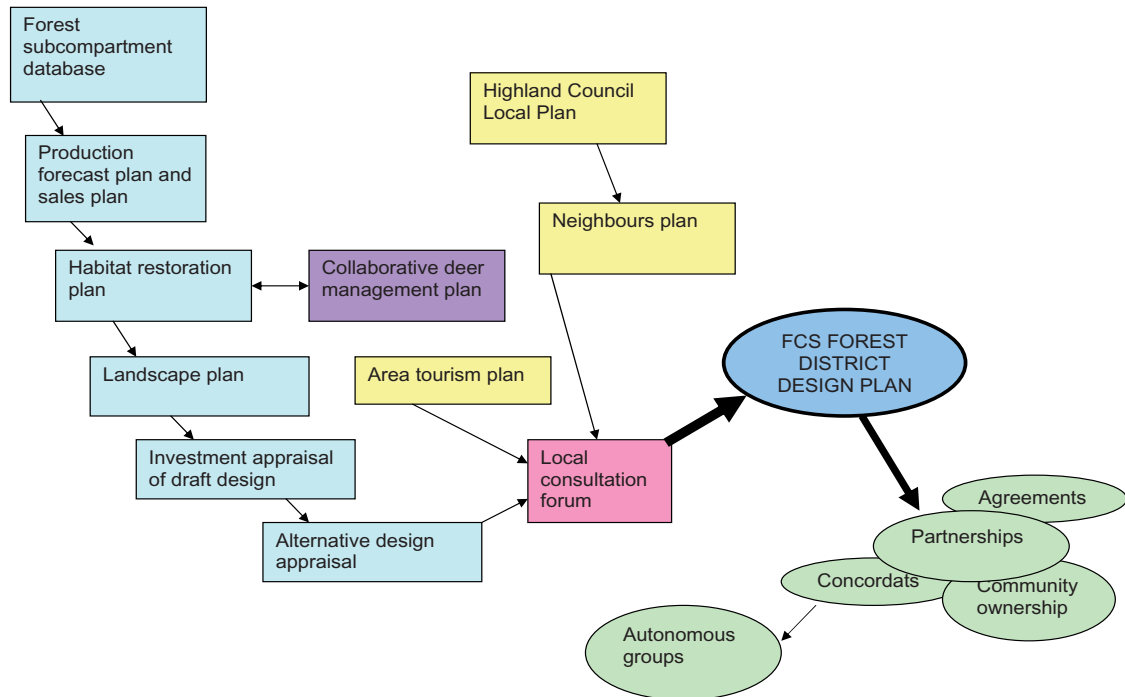


Figure 2. Relationships, which may form with those who have expressed a particular interest during the planning process.

In the Glen Affric community example, a Concordat was signed by the Chief Executive of Forest Enterprise Scotland and the Chairman of the Community Development Programme.

As a result, the community are confident about close liaison during all management planning phases, the progressive development of their ideas in a strong partnership, development of green tourism and strengthen the communities capacity to manage and, very importantly for this particular community - collaborative deer management.

The community formed an independent business company, limited by guarantee, to facilitate access to funding streams not available to the state organisation (FCS).

4 Outcomes of the Forest Planning Process

The members of the community have developed greater trust in the state organisation and obtained increased familiarity and understanding of other users and interests in the forest.

An example of the large range of typical interested stakeholders shows the complexity of inclusive forest planning (Figure 3).

