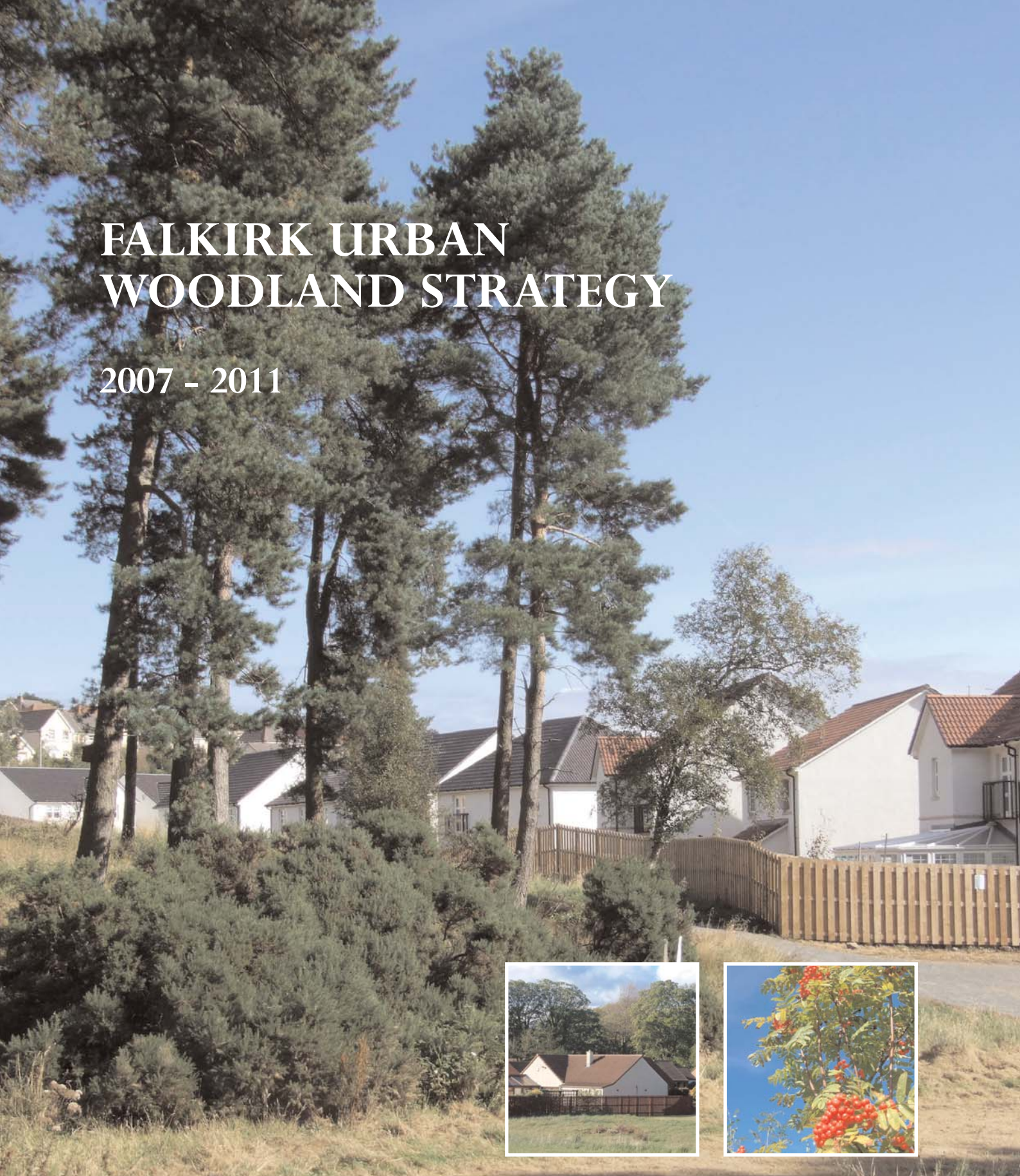


FALKIRK URBAN WOODLAND STRATEGY

2007 - 2011



Falkirk Council
Development Services



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FOREWORD

I am pleased to commend Falkirk Council's first Falkirk Urban Woodland Strategy, which was approved following widespread consultation with national and local stakeholders.

We are fortunate to have such a rich and varied woodland resource in and around our main urban communities. However we are not complacent and there is a need to co-ordinate action across a range of issues to maximise the wide range of benefits that can accrue from our urban woodlands.

Falkirk Council is committed to improving the quality of life for people living and working in the area. This strategy aims to greatly increase the opportunities for all to enjoy the woodlands in and around our communities.

Partnership with the Forestry Commission, Central Scotland Forest Trust, Callendar Estate and other local woodland owners and our local communities is a key feature of the strategy and it is hoped that the Council's commitment to urban woodland will attract widespread support.



Councillor David Alexander
Leader of the Council
Falkirk Council
January 2007

1. INTRODUCTION

This document presents a strategy for the management of urban woodlands in the Falkirk Council area. It assesses the current position with regard to the existing woodland resource, lists key priority issues, identifies priority sites, includes a vision for the future, and presents issues and proposals for action.

Why Woodlands In and Around Towns are Important

Woodlands are a valuable environmental, social and economic asset. They:

- ❖ Enhance the image of the area and local neighbourhoods
- ❖ Contribute to the quality of life for residents and communities
- ❖ Assist with economic development and tourism initiatives
- ❖ Provide an educational resource for schools
- ❖ Provide a recreational resource with path networks for healthy exercise
- ❖ Are reserves full of wildlife contributing to our biodiversity action plans

Falkirk Council promotes sustainable development and aims to improve quality of life for all citizens. Given the pressures on land and environmental resources around the urban areas of Falkirk, this strategy seeks to maximise the potential contribution of our urban and urban fringe woodlands in achieving these aims.

Challenges of Managing Urban Woodlands

The urban and urban fringe areas of Falkirk contain a varied woodland resource. However many areas are affected by new development, dereliction, and pressures associated with housing, retail and industrial useage. Woodland management can also be made more difficult by:

- ❖ Fragmented ownership and land management
- ❖ Conflicting land uses and hope value for development
- ❖ Vandalism, fly tipping, arson and illegal vehicular use (joy riding/quad bikes)
- ❖ Land in a semi-derelict condition awaiting possible rehabilitation or development.

The Need For a Strategy

In the past, action by local agencies through various specific initiatives has created a significant resource of urban and urban fringe woodlands. These have helped to enhance the landscape, provide opportunities for recreation, promote biodiversity and education, and generally improve the image of the area.

The importance of these woodlands is listed above. While these areas have many advantages, there are recognised problems (e.g. fly-tipping, arson and unauthorised vehicle access) associated with their use and longer term management. These problems are common across Scotland and the need for improved management has been noted in national policy and supported by new and evolving funding streams from Forestry Commission Scotland.

Falkirk Council recognises the value of the local woodland resource and the need for improvement. The lack of local strategic guidance to encourage the development and management of urban woodlands is a current weakness and an area for improvement. Three main factors have prompted the preparation of this strategy :

- ❖ High levels of new development arising from Falkirk Council's Development Plan led growth strategy
- ❖ New advice and financial assistance from central government on woodlands in urban areas spearheaded by the Forestry Commission's "Woodlands in and Around Towns Initiative"
- ❖ Recognition of the extent and value of the local woodland resource and the scope for improved management.

Given the availability of funding via the Forestry Commission a strategy is regarded as essential to provide a framework for future action and as a basis for future funding bids.

This strategy will also help make links with other policy agendas including those addressing health, community learning, social inclusion, path networks, settings for business and residential uses, biodiversity and the quality of life of Falkirk Council's residents and visitors.

This strategy was prepared by staff of Falkirk Council and Callendar Estate, one of the principle woodland owners in the area.

Scope and Content

This strategy focusses on the "Woodlands In and Around Towns" (WIAT) area as defined by the Forestry Commission, i.e. those woodlands in or close to (within 1km) of settlements of over 2000 population. It aims to provide a framework for action in the next five years. It seeks to build on the policies of the existing Council Development Plan and a number of key strategies produced by partner agencies including Forestry Commission Scotland and Central Scotland Forest Trust. The main components of the document are:

- ❖ A GIS audit of the existing woodland resource
- ❖ An examination of the accessibility and proximity of woodlands to communities and schools
- ❖ An assessment of woodland in relation to a range of other criteria including: access, biodiversity, adjacent development land, priority regeneration areas,
- ❖ A rolling programme of priority woodlands for concerted partnership action, management plan production, funding package assimilation and implementation.
- ❖ It reviews available and potential resources for implementation and ongoing community engagement and maintenance
- ❖ It identifies gaps in the woodland network as strategic priorities for new native woodland planting and habitat creation.

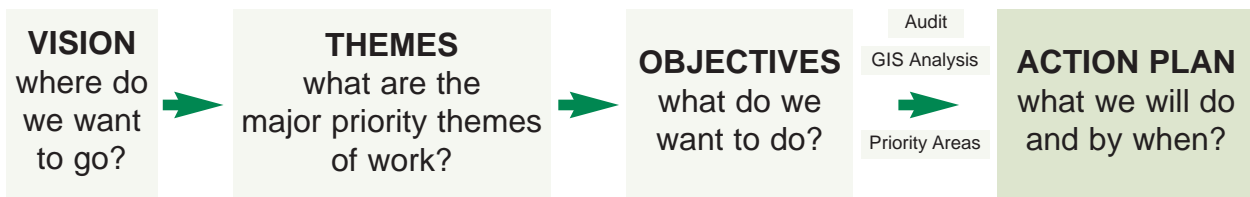
This background and analysis work is then used to detail an action plan with initial recommendations and key priorities where appropriate.

Implement Strategy 2007 - 2011

A programme of actions for urban woodland management and enhancement is scheduled for five years, 2007-2011. It is anticipated the strategy will be reviewed at the end of this period (2011), and progress reported annually to the relevant Council committee.

2. STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Strategy Framework



Vision

The Falkirk Council area will be recognised as one in which woodlands in and around towns are appreciated, protected, managed and maintained for the multiple benefits of the local community and future generations, and in which :

- ❖ The quality of life in all communities will be enhanced by access to local woodlands
- ❖ The image of the area will be significantly enhanced as a place to live, work and visit through the creation and management of Falkirk's urban woodlands
- ❖ The area will be enhanced as a business location by the improved quality of the physical environment.

Themes

A well managed woodland resource close to where people live and work can be a great asset for the area. This brings the countryside close to the town and has the potential to meet the objectives of several compatible policy agendas. These agendas are addressed through the 8 key themes below. These have been derived from the national forest strategy which have been found to fit well with the local context.

The eight key themes of the strategy are :

- 1 Woodland accessible and close to where people live - a community resource.**
By building on the success of the outdoor access strategy the aim is to provide path networks that link communities to and within local woodlands and to encourage community use and ownership of local woodlands.
- 2 Woodland as a gateway to the town - improving the landscape, setting and image.**
The quality of woodlands in and around town is an indicator of the quality of the area. Planting new and managing existing woodland has a key role in realising the objectives of the "My Futures in Falkirk Initiative" to improve the environment for business and housing as well as raising the quality of life for local residents and visitors.
- 3 Woodland and health - a resource for physical activity.**
As well as improving soil, air and water quality, accessible woodland, with improved paths, close to where most people live and work provides an invaluable respite from the stresses of modern living. Working with the "Braveheart" programme and other agencies, the improvement of local woodlands will give increased opportunities to promote the health benefits of walking and cycling and an outdoor lifestyle.
- 4 Woodland as a classroom - a forest education initiative.**
Woodlands in and around towns provide hands-on learning opportunities in a variety of "outdoor classrooms". This supports the educational curriculum with particular relevance to environmental education. By developing the Forest Education Initiative in the Council area there is an aspiration to link schools with their local woodland.
- 5 Woodland as a nature reserve - key biodiversity sites.**
There is a wide range of nature conservation designations covering many of the woodlands within the study area. The importance of these designated and undesignated woodlands to biodiversity is fully recognised in the Falkirk Council Local Biodiversity Action Plan and reflected in management and land use decisions.
- 6 Woodland brought into management - to co-ordinate partnership effort.**
To address the above themes, woodlands will need an agreed management plan and active management.

7 Woodland profile and resources - increase the availability of information and resources.

Securing additional partnership financial resources is a key aim of this strategy. Continual improvement of the woodland resource over the next 5 years will also need a campaign to raise awareness of the contribution woodland can make to the quality of life in the area.

8 Woodland as an economic resource - optimising the economic benefits which woodlands can bring to the local area.

Finally, woodlands can also directly create jobs and income from emerging sustainable industries such as woodchip fuel and biomass, and they can also help support the tourism and leisure industries.

Objectives

The main objectives of the strategy are to:

- ❖ Provide a framework to co-ordinate the management of Falkirk Council owned woodland resource.
- ❖ Co-ordinate the management of Council woodlands with the management of privately owned woodlands.
- ❖ Develop a cohesive partnership for the creation and management of Falkirk's urban woodlands.
- ❖ Encourage and support the engagement of others in the implementation.
- ❖ Steer partnership effort and resources towards agreed priority sites.
- ❖ Protect and enhance urban woodlands in the planning process, particularly through the identification of priority sites adjacent to/within housing areas and through preparation of management plans.
- ❖ Provide the basis for an annual review of progress to Council committee leading to a revised strategy in 2011.

3. NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

National Policy Context

The Woodlands in and Around Towns initiative and the Falkirk Urban Woodland Strategy must contribute to national planning guidance expressed in Scottish Planning Policies (SPPs), Planning Advice Notes (PANs) and Government Circulars. The overall themes which underpin the guidance are set out in SPP1: The Planning System:

- ❖ Sustainable development
- ❖ Economic competitiveness
- ❖ Social justice
- ❖ Environmental quality
- ❖ High standards of design
- ❖ Integrated transport

The urban woodlands within the WIAT area contribute in some degree to all of these themes. All three strands of sustainability i.e. environmental, social and economic are reflected in the proposed role of Falkirk's urban woodlands :

- ❖ **Social justice.** Access to a managed local woodland for all our communities where 40% of households have no access to a car. There should be a focus on the provision and management of a woodland resource accessible to disadvantaged communities.
- ❖ **Environmental quality.** Woodlands constitute a tremendous resource for wildlife, local communities and visitors.
- ❖ **Economic competitiveness.** Woodlands contribute in a tangible way to the image of the area for local communities and visitors. Woodlands can also directly create jobs and income from emerging sustainable industries such as woodchip fuel and biomass, and they can also help support the tourism and leisure industries.

Scottish Forestry Strategy

The Scottish Executive's Scottish Forestry Strategy is based on 3 overarching principles :

- ❖ Sustainability -through sustainable forest management
- ❖ Social Inclusion - through helping to provide opportunities for all and helping build stronger communities
- ❖ Forestry for and with people

Many of the principles expressed in the Scottish Forestry Strategy support the outcomes of the Falkirk Urban Woodland Strategy. A key aspect will be to ensure that funding momentum for urban woodlands is continued and targeted in current and future Forestry Commission grant aid reviews, to ensure the continued delivery of work on the ground.

Central Scotland Forest (CSF)

In recent National Planning Policy Guidelines on Natural Heritage (NPPG14) and Rural Development (NPPG15), the Central Scotland Forest (CSF) is given significantly enhanced planning status, calling for its inclusion and promotion in central belt local authority structure and local plans. The Falkirk Council Structure Plan recognises CSF's importance to the landscape and economy of the council area and its potential to enhance its image. Management and promotion of the CSF is the responsibility of Central Scotland Forest Trust.

The CSF has already changed the face of Falkirk considerably. Falkirk's legacy of industrial past has left some scars which have been transformed by landscape improvements, creating a setting for new businesses as well as recreational opportunities in many community woodlands across the area. The young and old woods offer great opportunities for community engagement and improving quality of life and health. These multiple benefits from Falkirk's urban woodlands are worthy aspirations of a strategic approach and partnership focus.

It is over 10 years since the visionary Falkirk Greenspace Initiative Strategy, (a local expression of the CSF), was produced. There has been tremendous partnership effort over this time with 654,750 trees planted on over 301ha of land and 282 ha of woodland managed within the Greenspace study area (which closely mirrors the WIAT study area of this strategy).

The commitment of Falkirk Council, public agencies such as Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forestry Commission working with Central Scotland Forest Trust, Falkirk Environment Trust, private companies, community groups and individuals shows what can be achieved. This strategy seeks to continue and develop the partnership approach.

This strategy is directed on refocusing Falkirk Council and partnership priorities on social and economic regeneration outcomes as well as continuing the environmental protection and enhancement priorities that have motivated owners, managers, custodians, communities and partner organisations.

4. LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

The Falkirk Council Area

Falkirk Council area has a population of over 145,000, a land area of some 300sq.km and is located at the heart of Central Scotland at the axis of both east-west and north-south strategic road and railway links.

Despite its relatively small geographical extent, the area's landscape exhibits great variety. The settlement pattern is a network of small to medium sized towns. The principal town of Falkirk, with a population of around 36,000, is centrally located and serves as the main shopping centre.

Falkirk Strategic Community Plan

The general importance of our local heritage was recognised in the vision of the Falkirk Strategic Community Plan (2005 - 2010). It stressed the need to protect and enhance these assets and environment through :

- ❖ Creating and sustaining an environment in which people want to live, work and visit.
- ❖ Increasing jobs, income and enterprise for all our citizens.
- ❖ Improving health and wellbeing.
- ❖ Improving the performance of the local economy and tourism.
- ❖ Enhancing lifelong learning and opportunity.
- ❖ Creating a sustainable local environment and improving transport.
- ❖ Regenerating our communities.
- ❖ Enabling our citizens to live safely.
- ❖ Stimulating working partnerships amongst agencies, organisations, citizens and communities.

The Falkirk Urban Woodland Strategy, through the protection and enhancement of the woodland resource, will help Falkirk Council and its partners deliver these key themes of the Strategic Community Plan.

Sustainable Falkirk Strategy

The protection and enhancement of the natural environment is also recognised as contributing to the principles of sustainable development. Action in this area is recognised as one of several quality of life indicators in the Sustainable Falkirk Strategy.

Other Council Strategies

The approach being developed in this Falkirk Urban Woodland Strategy will also complement other existing and proposed elements of Council policy including : The Council's Corporate Plan, Culture and Leisure Strategy, Community Learning Strategy, Heritage Strategy, Falkirk Greenspace Strategy, Falkirk Area Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Outdoor Access Strategy, Health Improvement Plan and forthcoming Physical Activity Strategy and Action Plan.

The strategy will also provide for real opportunities for community participation, engagement and empowerment through the development and management of local community woodlands.

Current Development Plan Policy Context

Commitment to woodland planting and management is reflected at a local level within the Falkirk Council Local Plan Finalised Draft Written Statement and Plan 2007.

An extract of relevant policies from the Development Plan relating to trees and woodland are summarised in Appendix 1.

Key Development Plan Policy Proposals and Opportunities

The following sites are key "proposals and opportunities" that have a woodland element in Falkirk Council's approved Development Plan:

BO'NESS

EN.BNS2	Kinneil Kerse 1 (Western Foreshore)
EN.BNS3	Kinneil Kerse 2
EN.BNS4	Carriden / Crookies
EN.BNS5	Kinnigars Wood
EN.BNS6	Kinneil Estate

BONNYBRIDGE AND BANKNOCK

EN.B&B3	Bonnyfield Road
EN.B&B4	Bonny Water

FALKIRK

EN.FAL5	Mungal / Cauldhame Farm
EN.FAL6	Falkirk Ecopark
EN.FAL7	Hallglen Haven
EN.FAL8	Bantaskine Park
EN.FAL9	Roughcastle

LARBERT & STENHOUSEMUIR

EN.L&S1	Bellsdyke / Hill of Kinnaird
EN.L&S2	Royal Scottish National Hospital, Larbert

The above sites will therefore be targeted as priority sites for woodland creation and management (see Map 9).

5. URBAN WOODLAND AUDIT & GIS METHODOLOGY

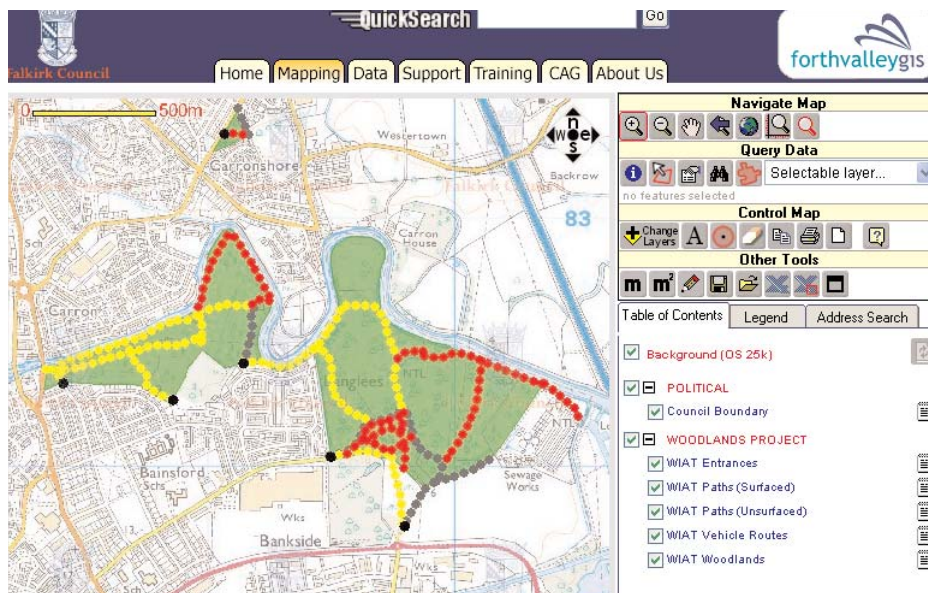
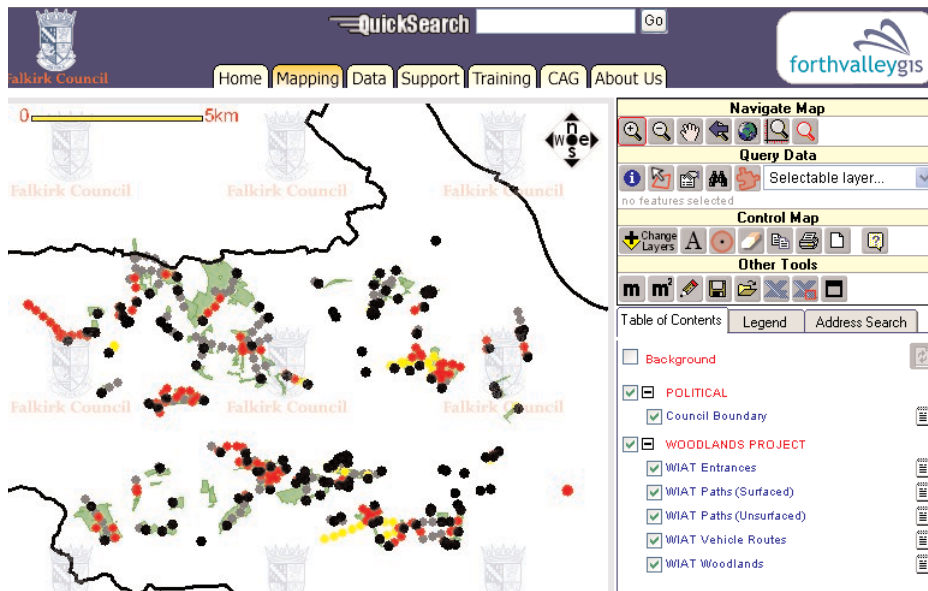
Limit of Audit and Strategy - WIAT Boundary

The audit and strategy is limited to the boundaries of the "Woodlands In and Around Towns" area shown on Map 1.

Woodland Audit & GIS Outputs

For the purposes of the audit the WIAT area was divided equally between Falkirk Council and Callendar Estate staff. A desk study was undertaken based on aerial photography interpretation followed by a ground truth survey to capture required woodland management information.

This information was recorded on an agreed pro-forma (See Appendix 2). This element comprised the majority of resource effort for the study. A contract was let to Forth Valley GIS to deliver GIS outputs from the audit to an agreed project proposal and methodology (See Appendix 3). An example of the GIS outputs obtained is shown on Geolink page examples below :



6. SUMMARY OF URBAN WOODLAND RESOURCE, ANALYSIS and Mapping

The audit examined existing woodland cover, its location, age, condition and quality. 240 individual sites extending to 1500 ha have been audited and can be seen on Map 1. These represent a significant urban woodland resource. Many smaller woods have yet to be added to the system database. Further woods will be added and there will be ongoing work on data management.

The audit revealed the following key types of woodland:

- ❖ Policy Woodlands - e.g. Callendar Estates, Bantaskine Estate, institutional parkland (hospitals) and agricultural parkland
- ❖ Landscaped parks - municipal parks with major woodland components
- ❖ Riparian valleys most notably the Rivers Carron and Avon
- ❖ Motorway and road corridor network: and
- ❖ Many recent additions of new woods delivered as part of the Falkirk Greenspace Initiative

It is evident the area has an abundance of woodland within the Strategy area, however the quality of the woodland is very mixed.

There are some well managed woods such as the mature Callendar Wood and the much younger community wood at Abbotshaugh, Langlees where local people are involved with management and the woodlands are cherished and well looked after. Many woodlands however, are neglected and suffering from vandalism, fire raising and fly tipping.

A number of new woods have been established, mainly through the efforts of CSFT. Some of these are now established and require to be included in a future maintenance programme.

Within the urban limit, there is a significant woodland resource. This tends to be characterised by small, mature but neglected woods, often on areas of derelict or under used land.

Beyond the urban limit are a number of shelterbelts and woodland strips, planted many years ago as part of 19th century agricultural improvements. These woods make an important contribution to the landscape and provide potentially valuable wildlife corridors but are generally in very poor condition and in many cases in danger of being lost. This is particularly the case in the area to the south and east of Polmont.

The river valleys of the Carron and Avon, the canal corridors and the valleys of a number of smaller streams running through the area have important remnants of riparian woodlands. Some of this woodland is relatively intact, such as at the Avon Gorge, but most is fragmented and poorly managed and suffering from inappropriate development.

A number of the woodlands in the Strategy area are recorded in the "Inventory of Ancient, Semi-natural and Long Established Woodlands" and as a result are an important biological resource. With the exception of Torwood and Callendar Wood, the inventory woodlands tend to be fragmented and in poor condition. Few are managed in accordance with the Forestry Commission advice on managing ancient woodland sites.

Access provision within the woodlands is mixed, although there are examples with high quality well used paths. Much of the path network is informal, generally in poor condition and not suitable for those with mobility problems.

Analysis

Analysis is based on three elements of PAN 65 (Planning and Open Space); quantity, quality and accessibility. The approach aims to assess the existing size and distribution of woodlands in relation to a range of quality measures and proximity to local populations:

- ❖ Quantity - establish the amount (ha) and location of woodland.
- ❖ Quality - attempt to benchmark or rank woodlands in terms of levels of management, funding investment, proximity to regeneration areas and ecological quality etc and scope to improve quality through management.
- ❖ Accessibility - an accessibility analysis, within neighbourhood areas, to assess the proximity of woodlands to communities, schools and regeneration priority areas. Distance thresholds were defined for the purposes of this assessment.

Mapping

Due to the amount of existing GIS information available and the results from the woodland resource audit, geographic analysis is best displayed in a range of maps (see Appendix 4). These are as follows:

- Map 1: Overall existing urban woodland resource in study area.
- Map 2: Woodland resource in relation to riparian woodland primarily along: Rivers Carron & Avon (and major tributaries), Forth & Clyde Canal, Union Canal. This prioritises the two main riparian corridors of the Rivers Carron and Avon, as well as other key green space corridors such as the canal corridors and the Westfield/ Middlefield corridor.
- Map 3: Ancient/semi-natural woodland (current & potential buffer 300m) with preferred areas for expansion within 300m working towards Forest Habitat Networks as part of the LBAP process.
- Map 4: Woodlands and nature conservation designation sites.
- Map 5: Housing land allocation sites and adjacent woodland. This focussed on the need for protection, management plan preparation and implementation through the planning process including possible developer contributions for management, as well as scope for advance structure planting.
- Map 6: Falkirk Council's priority regeneration areas based on Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation, in relation to nearest woodland resource.
- Map 7: Path network in relation to woodland sites. Accessibility analysis of woodlands and communities is needed to reveal those communities with or without access to local woods within 1000m.
- Map 8: Vacant and derelict land in relation to on-site or adjacent woodland, where woodland rehabilitation may be a priority.
- Map 9: Development Plan environmental proposals and opportunities with a significant woodland element.
- Map10: Primary and secondary schools in relation to woodland. Accessibility analysis of woodlands from schools to reveal those with or without access to local woods within 1000m.
- Map 11: Tree Preservation Orders and other woodland.

7. PRIORITY THEMES, ISSUES and ACTIONS

The following are priority themes to be addressed. A description of possible actions is given for each and these actions are further described and specified in the Action Tables in Section 9.

Priority Themes

- 1) Woodland accessible and close to where people live
- 2) Woodland as a gateway to the town
- 3) Woodland and health
- 4) Woodland as a classroom
- 5) Woodland as a nature reserve
- 6) Woodland brought into management
- 7) Woodland profile and resources
- 8) Woodland as an economic resource

1) Woodland accessible and close to where people live

The strategy attempts to set and assess accessibility standards. The following benchmark standards were used as models:

- ❖ English Nature - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards in Towns and Cities (ANGSt model)
- ❖ The Woodland Trust - Woodland Access Standard

The following standard is proposed:

Woodland, minimum size of 1 ha and above.

- ❖ That no person should live more than 1000m from their nearest accessible woodland of at least 1ha.
- ❖ That there should be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 5km of peoples homes.

Action - Test the above criteria using the following approach.

- 1) Map out all woods in study area - buffer 1000m around woods, then analyse walking route to entrance points of the wood. Highlight communities and schools that meet standard and those communities / schools that do not have access to woods of at least 1ha.
- 2) Map out all woods of 20ha - buffer 5km around woods, then analyse walking route to the closest entrance points of the wood. Highlight communities / schools that meet standard and those communities / schools that do not have access to woods of at least 20ha.

Action - Analyse the accessibility of entrance points to local woodlands for local communities on the basis of actual walking routes rather than on “as the crow flies” distances.

Community Engagement

Getting local people involved in their local woodland forms a key part of the Urban Woodland Strategy and will deliver several benefits.

- ❖ **Enriching people's lives.** - Allowing the local community a say in the future of their local woodland engenders a genuine sense of ownership and will provide opportunities for people to improve their local area through volunteer action.
- ❖ **Changing perceptions.** - Many urban woodlands are associated with antisocial behavior, fly tipping, littering and fire raising. Some woods are perceived as dangerous or no go areas for a majority of the community. Encouraging local involvement will challenge these perceptions and provide a focus for tackling anti-social behaviour and other problems which sometimes can blight urban woodlands.
- ❖ **Tackling Social Exclusion.** - The delivery of the strategy will be targeted on priority regeneration areas.
- ❖ **Fundraising.** - Many potential funders require evidence of community involvement, with some funding sources only available to constituted community groups. Local community involvement will improve the prospects of external funding for the management, maintenance and improvement of local urban woodlands.

Within the strategy area, there are some excellent examples where community involvement has significantly improved the value of a local woodland project, for example at Langlees and Shieldhill. Elsewhere attempts to encourage greater participation have lacked support, particularly at the early stages of community engagement when a high level of support and reassurance is required. Through the implementation of the urban woodland strategy every community should have the opportunity to get involved in decisions affecting the future of their local woodland.

At present, there are six community groups allied to woodlands only operating within the urban woodland strategy area. These groups are supported by a variety of organisations including, Falkirk Council, CSFT, Forest Enterprise, Callendar Estate, Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Falkirk Environment Trust. In each of these cases support is provided on an ad hoc basis and there is only limited liaison between the groups. In order to achieve the stated objectives, it is intended to employ an urban woodland ranger whose principle role would be to engage with local communities, support the development of community groups and act as liaison contact between community groups and the woodland owner. An initiative to secure funding for such a ranger post is currently under way involving Falkirk Council, the Forestry Commission, CSFT and Callendar Estate.

Information about what is happening locally and how people can become involved in their local woodland is not readily available. The success in realising the benefits of physical improvements to the woodlands is crucially linked to the provision of good quality, up to date information.

Action - The Council and its partners will continue efforts to secure a dedicated woodland ranger to coordinate and deliver the following remit.

- ❖ Providing support to the existing community groups interested in woodland action.
- ❖ Facilitating the development of new community groups and providing ongoing support.
- ❖ Providing support and encouragement to the owners of woodlands to embrace the concept of community involvement.
- ❖ Providing information about what is happening in local woods on the web, with advice about how local people can get more involved.
- ❖ Organizing an annual gathering of existing community groups and potential new groups to share good practice and encourage greater participation.

2) Woodland as a gateway to the town

The importance of natural edges and features such as woodland for defining the development envelope and landscape setting of towns should not be underestimated. The study area is undergoing a process of change, decline in some areas and significant improvement and development in others.

The form, condition and appearance of the town's landscape setting is crucially reliant on existing and proposed woodland. It's condition affects the image and the perception of the area and contributes to the aims of the "My Futures in Falkirk" Initiative.

This strategy will seek to strengthen the link between woodland planting and management and the development plan process, focusing on "edges" and "corridors" to create landscape structure as follows:

- ❖ Safe-guard natural edges - existing woodland
- ❖ Reinforce weak edges and horizons with new woodland
- ❖ Restock fragmented edges with new woodland
- ❖ Create new edges with woodland based on existing landscape features
- ❖ Use new development to create edges and corridors of woodland

Priority

- ❖ Urban edges and corridors fully integrated with a woodland landscape setting for the town.
- ❖ Advance structure planting of a new woodland/landscape framework to provide appropriate settings for future development.
- ❖ Priority woodlands identified for protection and enhancement through the development plan/control process.

3) Woodland and health

Accessible woodland with improved paths, close to where most people live provides an invaluable respite from the stresses of modern living. Improvement of access to local woodlands will give increased opportunities for other agencies and partners, and local communities to use this resource for health walks.

Actions

- ❖ Improve links with actions in Falkirk Council Health Improvement Plan and the forthcoming Physical Activity Strategy and Action Plan.
- ❖ Link improved woodlands with Paths to Health schemes, through information and promotion to staff, agencies and Braveheart Groups. Promote woodlands as venues for health walks.

4) Woodland as a classroom

Over the last few years, staff in the Council's Education Service have come to realise the potential woodlands have as an educational resource. Woodlands are recognised as:

- ❖ Providing a rich resource for a range of learning experiences.
- ❖ Being a living example of 'sustainability' as trees are a renewable natural resource.
- ❖ Woods are often close to homes and schools and can be accessed relatively easily.
- ❖ They are robust environments that can accommodate many people and different activities.
- ❖ They can be valuable as classrooms which stimulate the senses and the desire to learn.

Woodlands in and around towns can provide great opportunities for a hands-on learning experience in a variety of 'outdoor classrooms'. This not only will use local resources but ties in very well with the environmental education curriculum. Ultimately, this will improve the life of these young users and hopefully they will take their enthusiasm for woodlands into adulthood.

At present, the Council's Education Service does organise excursions into woodland areas, particularly to Callendar Woods, to carry out activities under the auspices of the John Muir Trust Awards. This award scheme is recognised nationally and it aims to encourage appreciation of the environment and to foster responsibility and stewardship in the participants.

Actions

- ❖ Identify where there is a lack of a woodland within 1 km of schools within the area and develop a strategy for redressing the shortfall either through improving access to existing woodlands or establishing new ones.
- ❖ Identify woodlands that are close to schools but are not in a suitable condition for use as an outdoor classroom.

- ❖ Take action to tackle the problems identified above by prioritising these sites and targeting future management plans and funding bids on the woodlands that offer the greatest educational benefit.
- ❖ Organise trips to timber using industries such as sawmills and a timber processing plant.
- ❖ Produce a booklet or series of leaflets on woodlands and different woodland types in the Falkirk area that can be visited.
- ❖ Work with the Forestry Commission and other WIAT steering group partners to develop a local “Forest Education Initiative” to promote understanding and appreciation of the environmental, social and economic potential of the woodlands in and around Falkirk.
- ❖ Promote increased involvement with the John Muir Trust Awards
- ❖ Get more pupils out into woodland areas for use as outdoor classrooms. This could involve the proposed woodland ranger in partnership with educational professions and interested parents
- ❖ Develop a series of educational packs on, for example, timber production and its use, woodland habitats, care of woodlands, and the history of woodlands in the Falkirk area.

5) Woodland as a nature reserve

The Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan (FABAP), draws attention to the status of this habitat across the Council area where there are approximately 1130 hectares of broadleaved and mixed woodland comprising about 3.9% of the area's total land cover. “The vast majority (about 836ha) of this woodland is semi-natural, with the remaining 294ha being of broadleaved and mixed woodland is of plantation origin.”

There are about 100 areas of long-established woodland within the Falkirk Council area, covering approximately 571ha. Of these 100 sites there are 88 sites within the WIAT boundary area. In addition there are 54 ancient woodland sites, covering 425ha, that have been planted with conifer trees. Of these 54 sites there are 35 sites within the WIAT boundary area.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) : 5 sites with broadleaved and mixed woodland are protected by SSSI designation:

- ❖ Carron Glen
- ❖ Avon Glen
- ❖ Carron Dams
- ❖ Howierig Moss
- ❖ Island Farm

Wildlife Sites - 18 woodlands are wildlife sites and all are within the WIAT boundary area.

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)- 10 woodlands are SINCs. Of these 9 are within the WIAT boundary area.

Better management of existing woodlands will become increasingly important as the resource ages. "The lack of appropriate management in our woodlands" is identified as an issue in the FABAP.

Actions

- ❖ Prepare a rolling programme of audit and management plan production for agreed priority sites, including sites of ecological importance within the WIAT area. These need to be agreed from the audit by the FABAP Woodlands group in association with the proposed WIAT Steering Group.
- ❖ Promote the management and expansion of a Forest Habitat Network.
- ❖ Identify where connections can be made between existing woodland blocks with new planting which will facilitate movement of wildlife. There also could be scope for extending and joining up existing path networks in these link woodlands.
- ❖ Identify ancient semi-natural woodland expansion areas within the urban area and 1km buffer.
- ❖ Prioritise partnership efforts in these areas to assist in creating a Native Woodland Habitat Network throughout the urban core.
- ❖ Commission a GIS based desk study to identify the semi-natural woodland framework for the development of a Native Woodland Habitat Network throughout the Falkirk Council area. This will identify the core woodland areas of high biodiversity value and those areas where new native woodland expansion should be concentrated with a view to species dispersal from core areas.

6) Woodland brought into management

Preparation of effective urban woodland management plans has already been initiated by a range of partners including, Falkirk Council, CSFT, SWT, Callendar Estate and woodland agents on behalf of private landowners. It is the intention to map and maintain a GIS database showing those woodlands that have a woodland management plan (active or not) and those woods that do not. This information should give a rolling programme of management plan delivery over the lifetime of the strategy to ensure that priority woods without plans are surveyed and plans drawn up in consultation with partners.

Action

- ❖ Ensure all priority woodlands within the WIAT area of Falkirk Council have a woodland management plan in the next 5 years and devise a rolling programme of management plan delivery.

The role of the WIAT Steering Group.

There is already an established WIAT Steering Group. It is envisaged the role of the steering group will need clarification and refinement to ensure the effective delivery of the strategy.

Action

- ❖ Review the role, composition and administrative arrangements for the WIAT Steering Group in consultation with partners.

7) Woodland profile and resources

There is currently no one stop shop for information on access to woods in the Falkirk area. A number of organisations have produced information, either on the internet or in printed leaflets, but this is done on an ad hoc, individual basis.

Action

- ❖ Rationalise and improve the information about the availability of woodland opportunities. Set up a dedicated web page, that partners can add to/link with, to promote as wide a range of accessible woodlands as possible. Ensure that this information is linked to the promotion of the successful and developing path networks.

8) Woodland as an economic resource

Some of the woodlands in and around Falkirk potentially lend themselves to commercial activity and/or supporting other sectors of the local economy. At some locations it may be appropriate to develop the commercial potential of woodlands in order to help sustain them economically.

- ❖ **Woodchip fuel** - there is increasing interest across Britain in the development of woodchip as fuel, particularly for heating and combined heat and power systems. It is a long established fuel in some parts of Europe where it is recognised as being efficient and low cost, as well as being environmentally-friendly. Local suppliers tend to be used and it is of course a renewable energy source. The main problems generally occur on the supply side, related to storage (it is bulky) and variations in quality.
- ❖ **Biomass fuel** - like woodchip, this is a growth sector across the country. Biomass is sourced from materials other than mainstream woodland timber e.g. certain grasses, short rotation coppiced willow and poplar, thinnings and fellings of trees in urban parks, roadsides and domestic gardens, and commercial waste timber (if untreated). It has similar advantages and disadvantages to woodchip.

Action - woodchip and biomass

- ❖ Set up a subgroup of the urban woodland partnership steering group (see Page 47) which would (a) investigate the scope for developing a commercially viable model for wood chip and biomass fuel supply at local scale; (b) develop a supply chain for wood fuel across the Falkirk area; (c) work with others in this emerging industry to promote woodchip and biomass as a fuel source.
- ❖ Small woodland owners - the owners of small private woodlands may identify commercial opportunities, but feel unable to capitalise on them due to their limited personal resources. By working together co-operatively, economies of scale might be realised to make certain ventures into viable propositions.

Action - small woodland owners

- ❖ Commission a feasibility study examining the potential of establishing a “small woodland co-operative” or similar body.
- ❖ Tourism and Recreation - Falkirk is growing its tourism economy. The recent, highly successful creation of the Falkirk Wheel has focussed national attention on the area and other visitor attractions such as Callendar House and Park, the Bo’ness and Kinneil steam railway and various Roman sites along the Antonine Wall (now the UK’s nominated World Heritage Site).

Well-managed and well-presented urban woodlands could contribute to the area’s tourism appeal by improving the visual attractiveness of the landscape and by adding variety to visitors’ stay. It is notable that all of the major attractions are in close proximity to woods. Much progress has been made on developing path networks in these areas. However, there may be additional scope to develop path connections and linkages between the attractions via woodland areas, or to create or upgrade visitor facilities in those woodlands which are adjacent to tourist attractions.

Even if woodlands cannot generate much direct visitor expenditure in their own right, what they can do is assist in extending the length and quality of stay of visitors.

Action - tourism and recreation

- ❖ Convene a working group with the operators of local visitor attractions to investigate and develop the opportunities for their customers to make more use of woodland areas.

8. PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

An even spread of resources across the woodlands in the study area is unlikely to result in the level of action that is needed to deliver the vision and to tackle the major issues that some of the woodlands and communities face.

A series of priority areas is advocated where new planting and woodland management would have the biggest impact on the quality of life of local communities.

The following are suggested priority areas found from the audit and analysis:

At **the former RSNH Hospital site and Glenbervie** the grounds of the current and former hospitals have mature tree groups creating an attractive enclosed landscape. Recent landscape structure planting at Glenbervie and the Falkirk Wheel Park and Ride has extended this style of planting to create high quality settings for new business development. The site of the proposed new Health Care Trust hospital at the former RSNH Hospital site Larbert, offers huge potential both for the protection and enhancement of the existing policy woodland and the provision of a new quality woodland structure planting to offset impacts and provide a setting for the new hospital. Falkirk Council, through a development brief and planning conditions for the site, intends to work with a range of partners to secure the future management and maintenance of this asset for the benefit of locals and visitors. Further opportunities for biomass energy production from this estate for the hospital, are also evident. This could finance savings for running costs and fund essential management and maintenance of the wooded estate in the hospital site.

Between **Kinnaird and Carronshore** are the remnants of designed parkland landscapes. These are large scale and high quality landscapes which are over-mature, in serious decline and require management and restocking. Some replanting has occurred in Kinnaird and other areas, further planting preferably in association with improved access where possible should be a priority.

Middlefield/ Westfield Gateway from the River Carron to Beancross is flat carseland, with few distinguishing features. In such an open landscape, fragmented urban edges, power lines and service corridors, industrial sheds, new roads and declining agricultural use, create a discordant and unattractive urban fringe. A new landscape structure is required to assimilate the range of current and future uses and infrastructure. The Westfield/ Middlefield Gateway site is a key strategic development site and much partnership effort is engaged towards progressing this strategic opportunity. This includes the development of a landscape structure as part of The Helix, which is likely to have a large woodland component. The Helix is an ambitious project to transform the landscape between Falkirk and Grangemouth into a thriving environmental community. Project partners are Falkirk Council, Central Scotland Forest Trust and BritishWaterways.

At **Larbert and Carmuir**, the valley landscapes are smaller in scale, with mixed tree cover creating attractive settings for agricultural and residential uses. Protection and conservation is required to safeguard the form and scale of the landscape. Woodland structures in the riparian woodland of the River Carron, structure planting and woodland within the Crematorium and Larbert Ponds represent a significant resource. Additional tree planting on Falkirk Golf Club at Carmuir by CSFT will contribute significantly to this area, as it will be highly visible from the main railway line.

The **River Carron** corridor has seen a significant increase in new woodland in the provision and access:

- ❖ Community woodlands created by CSFT at Abbotshaugh and Cobblebrae, Langlees.
- ❖ New riverside woods created as part of the Mungal Riverside development owned and managed by Scottish Woodlands
- ❖ Riparian woodlands created at Lochlands, Larbert by CSFT on Callendar Estate land with upstream expansion planned.

There are some remaining gaps in the access and riparian woodland network, most notably between Larbert and Denny. Completing the network is seen as an important objective of the Strategy

The **River Avon** corridor in comparison to the Carron has significantly more mature riparian woodland, where the emphasis should be on management, and enrichment planting. These areas include woodlands at Avondale and Birkhill to Kinneil Mills. Further upstream mature riparian woodland extends from Manuel House through Muiravonside Country Park. New supplementary planting along the River Avon corridor has taken place where possible with landowner support and partnership funding. The most notable has been in association with the River Avon Heritage Trail from Linlithgow Bridge downstream to Kinneil Mills

The **Canal** green corridors, whilst not particularly associated with large areas of woodland, are an important access and wildlife resource. The regeneration of the lowland canals has provided the impetus for environmental improvements along the canal corridors. The improvement and creation of new wildlife and access linkages is an on going process. Continued partnership working between British Waterways Board (BWB) and adjoining landowners is seen as a priority for the strategy.

The **Braes** area is seeing a significant expansion in housing development. The woodland resource in this area is relatively limited and often fragmented. The provision of new woodlands will provide a improved setting for existing and proposed housing and has the potential to be delivered as part of the development process. There are a number of streams cutting through the Braes area with remnants of riparian woodland. The strategy will consider how to promote better management and expansion of these to create strong wildlife and access corridors.

Callendar Estate is a major owner of urban woodland throughout the area including Dales Wood, Chasefield Wood, Drum and Tamfourhill, Lionthorn and Westquarter Glen north of Shieldhill. Partnership working with Callendar Estate has helped to deliver Callendar Wood into community management under the stewardship of the Forestry Commission. The development of this strategy has also facilitated successful funding bids for Lionthorn and Westquarter Woods. The continued partnership with the Estate is a key component of the Strategy which will help ensure management plans are prepared for the remaining urban woodlands within the Estate's ownership.

The **road & motorway corridors** represent challenges and opportunities. There are significant levels of woodland planting associated with roads and motorway. However, most of this planting may be in shallow soils associated with road formation, on steep slopes, planted with relatively short lived pioneer species such as birch and willow species. Many are unthinned and show evidence of windthrow. Although these are a significant resource for aesthetics, the image of the area and for biodiversity, their recreational use is limited by their narrow width and inaccessibility. On this basis, these woodlands are in a lower priority for the strategy.

9. ACTION PLAN TABLES

The action plan tables are based on the eight key themes of the strategy and summarise the issues and actions to be addressed.

The issues have arisen from the audit (both policy and woodland resource audit) and analysis process. The assumption is made that the outstanding commitments from the Council's Structure and Local Plans, covering woodland protection and enhancement, as well as partner strategies such as the Central Scotland Forest Strategy, will remain key priorities for action.

The actions have followed from these issues, and detail exactly what is proposed with suggested targets and dates.

1. Woodland accessible and close to where people live - a community resource.

Overarching Issue : Continuing on the success of the outdoor access strategy to provide path networks that link communities to and within local woodlands. Encourage the community use and ownership of local woodlands, with community ranger support to assist community groups with an interest in local woods.

Specific Issues **Initial Proposals for Action** **Priority/Timescale**

Access

Progress Outdoor Access Strategy and Core Path Planning within and to key Woodland sites. Ongoing

Community Engagement

Provide continued support to owners and community groups. Ongoing

Submit Ranger bid 1FTE post. by end 2006

Organise annual "gathering" of owners and community group representatives. 1 p.a.

Accessibility Analysis

Tackle shortfalls for communities with poor or no access to woodlands; identify planting areas and or improved path linkages between communities and woods. Set out rolling programme action plan by final strategy production.

2. Woodland as a gateway to the town - improving the landscape, setting and image.

Overarching Issue : The quality of woodlands in and around town is an indicator of the quality of the area. Planting and managing existing woodland has a key role in realising the objectives of the "My Futures in Falkirk Initiative" to improve the environment of business and housing as well as the quality of life for local residents and visitors.

Specific Issues	Initial Proposals for Action	Priority/Timescale
Securing woodland protection and enhancement adjacent to business locations	Identify economic development sites and adjacent woodland or potential for new woodland as advance structure planting.	Rolling action plan set out in Strategy
Securing woodland protection and enhancement adjacent to housing land sites	Identify existing housing land sites and adjacent woodland or potential for new woodland as advance Structure planting.	Rolling action plan set out in Strategy
Effective use of planning gain, conditions and Section 75 Agreements for woodland enhancement	Target above woodlands/sites with no management plans Engage in management plan production with key costs/ objectives, in advance of and to assist planning process to ensure developers or their agents deliver enhancements or developer contributions.	By end 2006 Set out rolling action plan 2006
Lack of up to date Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on WIAT	Revise SPG on "Trees and Development" with key WIAT site objectives	Draft by end of 2006. Final 2007.

3. Woodland and health - a resource for physical activity.

Overarching Issue : As well as improving air quality, accessible woodland, with improved paths, close to where most people live and work provides an invaluable respite from the stresses of modern living. Working with the "Braveheart" programme the improvement of local woodlands will give increased opportunities for other agencies and partners working with local communities to use this under used resource for health walks.

Specific Issues

Improve links with actions in Health Improvement Plan, & Physical Activity Strategy and Action Plan

Initial Proposals for Action

Officer attendance at cross service working groups. Ongoing

Identify key woods - prioritise those adjacent to communities with poorer health indices. End 2006

Link "Paths to Health" schemes with enhanced woodlands resources

Information and promotion to all staff, organisations, community and Braveheart groups on the existence of enhanced woodlands as venues for paths to health walks. Ongoing

Increase the number of woodland walks promoted in future print runs of "Short health & scenic walks" leaflet and promote group awareness as part of the Braveheart walking development programme. x3 woods promoted p.a.

Priority/Timescale

4. Woodland as a classroom - a forest education initiative.

Overarching Issue : Woodlands in and around towns provide hands-on learning opportunities in a variety of "outdoor classrooms". This supports the educational curriculum with particular relevance to environmental education. By developing the Forest Education Initiative in the Council the aim is to link and engage schools and young people with their local woodland.

Specific Issues

No suitable woodlands close to schools

Identify where there is a lack of a woodland within one km of schools and develop a strategy for resolving the shortfall either through better access provision or by establishing new woodlands.

Identify where woodlands might be sufficiently close to schools but are in an unsuitable condition to be used as a teaching resource.

Take action to tackle problems identified above by prioritising future management plans and funding bids towards woodlands that offer an educational benefit.

Lack of use of local woodlands as a teaching resource

Help facilitate the use of local woods as an extension to the classroom by involving the proposed woodland ranger in partnership with educational professionals including Environmental Support Teacher to promote woodland as a teaching resource.

Work with the Forestry Commission and FEI partners to establish a local FEI to promote the understanding and appreciation of the environmental, social, and economic potential of the woodlands in the area.

Initial Proposals for Action

Priority/Timescale

End 2006

End 2006

2007 to 2008

End 2006 and ongoing thereafter

Ongoing

5. Woodland as a nature reserve - key biodiversity sites.

Overarching Issue : There is a wide range of nature conservation designations covering many of the woodlands within the study area. The importance of these woodlands and other non-designated woodlands to biodiversity is fully recognised in Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan (FABAP) - Broadleaved and Mixed Woodland habitat and is reflected in management and land use decisions.

Specific Issues

Link to and deliver outstanding key FABAP woodland targets

LBAP Woodland Group to prioritise outstanding LBAP targets on woodland sites with nature conservation designations for WIAT steering group to progress management plan production and implementation.

Initial Proposals for Action

Priority/Timescale

Study needed (BEETLE Forest Research model) to inform Forest Habitat Network for area.

Commission a GIS based desk study to identify the semi-natural woodland framework for the development of a Native Woodland Habitat Network in Falkirk Council area, identify the core woodland areas of high biodiversity and recommend those areas where new native woodland expansion should be concentrated with a view to species dispersal from core areas.

Identify preferred ancient semi-natural woodland expansion areas within study area, with 300m buffer.

Identify Areas where partnership effort and expansion should be prioritised to deliver a native woodland habitat building on existing ancient woodland areas in WIAT area.

Enhancing biodiversity within the wider woodland resource.

Ensure all management plans fully consider opportunities for woodland enhancement for biodiversity and recognise the benefits of such actions for communities, education etc as well as wildlife.

6. Woodland brought into management - to co-ordinate partnership effort.
 Overarching Issue : To achieve action in all other themes, woodlands will need an agreed management plan to deliver action.

Specific Issues	Initial Proposals for Action	Priority/Timescale
Lack of a co-ordinated approach	Set up & administer regular steering group.	Established 2006 Ongoing
Need to increase managed woodland	Agree an annual programme of priorities to produce 5 Woodland management plans p.a. 2007 -2011. Implement 7 woodland management Plans 2007	to 5 p.a.ongoing 25 in total. Start 2006 2007 -2011. 2006/2007
Delivery of priority sites for new planting	Implement 18 woodland management Plans 2007 - 2011 Steering group & partners to investigate barriers & mechanisms to overcome to achieve new planting in these areas to establish a proposed new structure planting / Forest Habitat Network Deliver key priority windfall sites	2007 - 2011 2006/2007 - Ongoing Ongoing

7. Woodland profile and resources - increase the availability of information and resources.

Overarching Issue : Securing the financial resources to achieve the above actions is vital to the success of this strategy. A continual improvement of the resource over the next 5 years will also need a campaign to raise the awareness, at various levels, of the local urban woodland resource and the contribution it can make to the quality of life in the area.

Specific Issues

There is a general need to raise awareness and understanding of the urban Woodland Resource within the WIAT area in the Council, partners and wider community

Initial Proposals for Action

Publicise the strategy, GIS audit and other site specific information on the Council website. 2006

Produce information on the significance of urban woods using a range of media over the life of strategy. 2006-2011

Co-ordinate an annual WIAT gathering for 1 p.a. owners & communities

Prepare and update SPGs on key tree and woodland issues aimed at improving awareness for the public and developers 2006

There is a need to review the resource dedicated to WIAT in light of established commitments and actions defined in this strategy

Review current work plans and reallocate staff within Development Services to action strategy, allocate to one additional part time FTE post 2006

Use of consultants & partners to implement key issues such as management plan production and implementation 2006-2011

Explore the options for cross service project teams to implement specific projects and actions. 2006-2011

Identify woodland on Council service account holders across a range of services. 2006-2011

Priority/Timescale

7. Woodland profile and resources - increase the availability of information and resources.....cont'd.

Overarching Issue : Securing the financial resources to achieve the above actions is vital to the success of this strategy. A continual improvement of the resource over the next 5 years will also need a campaign to raise the awareness, at various levels, of the local urban woodland resource and the contribution it can make to the quality of life in the area.

Specific Issues

Partnership funding

Initial Proposals for Action

Priority/Timescale

Explore umbrella funding bid for entire strategy. package 2006-2007

Lobby central government to provide and secure SFGS / WIAT funding. continue to 2006

Continue successful multi-partnership package assembly. funding Ongoing

Encourage and facilitate community applications towards strategy/community priorities. Ongoing

8. Woodland as an economic resource -

Some of the woodlands in and around Falkirk potentially lend themselves to commercial activity and/or supporting other sectors of the local economy. At some locations, it may be appropriate to develop the commercial potential of woodlands in order to help sustain them economically.

Specific Issues	Initial Proposals for Action	Priority/Timescale
Woodchip and Biomass	Set up sub-group of urban woodland partnerships to investigate commercially viable model for woodchip and biomass fuel supply at local scale.	2007 - Ongoing
Small woodland owners	Commission feasibility study examining potential for a "small woodland owners co-operative" or similar body.	2007 - 2008
Tourism and recreation	Convene a working group or liaison with partners within existing structures to investigate and develop opportunities in woods around visitor attractions.	2007 - Ongoing

10. MAKING IT HAPPEN

The audit, and analysis highlight the enormous potential of Falkirk's urban woodlands. Fortunately action and investment in the urban woodlands of Falkirk already has been taking place for many years through sustained partnership action under the guidance of the Development Plan, the Falkirk Greenspace Initiative and Central Scotland Forest Strategy. However there is a need to make full use of the existing woodland assets in the Falkirk area, and this will be achieved by directing and targeting future partnership working and co-ordination.

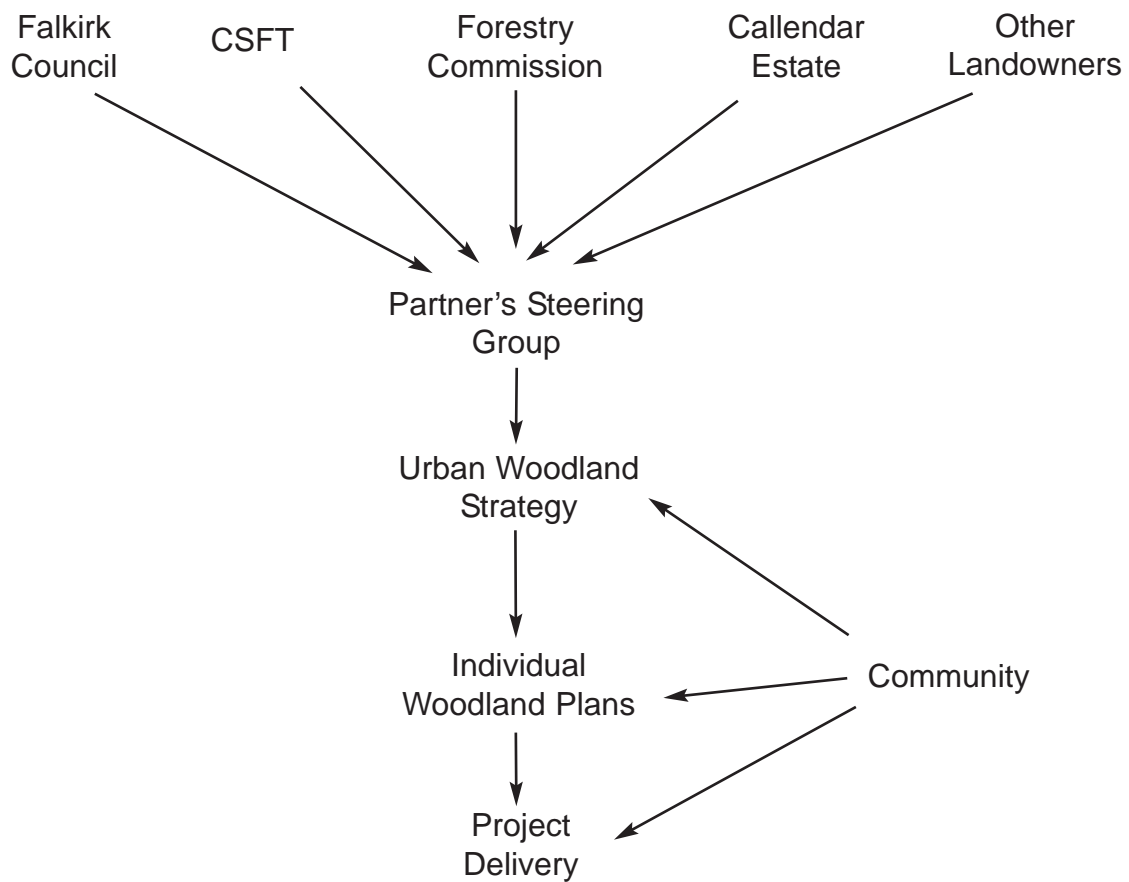
Many existing structures and processes are in place to deliver the strategy. However some further clarification of roles and responsibilities across a range of agencies may be required to ensure delivery to the agreed priorities. Making use of the spatial planning system in Falkirk has always been a priority with strong planning policy support for green space action and the creation of woodland with possible developer contribution. Amongst other outcomes this has resulted in securing key woodland assets, their creation and or long term management. This tool, when used in conjunction with the actions and priorities arising from this strategy, should further direct and improve outcomes for woodlands in and around the urban areas of Falkirk.

Partnership support

At present there are a number of organisations and agencies involved in the management of the urban woodland resource in Falkirk, including the Council, the Central Scotland Forest Trust, the Forestry Commission, SWT, Callendar Estate and other landowners. Whilst there has been some informal cooperation and coordination between the various interests it has tended to be on an ad hoc basis without any strategic direction. Community involvement is sporadic and opportunities to work together are being missed.

In order to ensure the delivery of the strategy in a coordinated way a partnership steering group has been established. Initially this would involve Falkirk Council, CSFT, the Forestry Commission and Callendar Estate. The steering group should meet twice a year to agree the key actions required for the delivery of the strategy and ensure effective coordination of effort. Other woodland owners and local groups may join the steering group as the strategy is rolled out. By coordinating efforts in this way there will be a greater opportunity for communities to have a say in what happens in their local area.

The model below demonstrates how the steering group would work.



At this stage it is not envisaged that there would be a community representative on the steering group. However it is possible that in the future communities might become owners of their own woodlands at which point it would be appropriate for them to join the steering group.

GLOSSARY

SFGS	Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme
WIAT	Woodlands In and Around Towns Initiative
FUWS	Falkirk Urban Woodland Strategy
GIS	Geographical Information System
CSF	Central Scotland Forest
CSFT	Central Scotland Forest Trust
SWT	Scottish Wildlife Trust
FC	Forestry Commission
CPP	Community Planning Partnership (priority regeneration areas)
NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
PAN	Planning Advice Note
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
SPPs	Scottish Planning Policies
FET	Falkirk Environment Trust
BTCV	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
FVGIS	Forth Valley Geographical Information Systems

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APPENDIX 1: Development Plan Policies

Table 3.2 The Green Network

Resource/Designation	Policy	General Description
Countryside	EQ19	All areas outwith Urban and Village Limits which are subject to general presumption against development in the interest of urban containment.
Green Belt	EQ20	Special areas of countryside between settlements where stronger policy presumption against development operates. Identified on Proposals Map.
Falkirk Greenspace	EQ21	Network of urban fringe and open space where landscape, access, recreational and habitat improvement is particularly promoted. Shown diagrammatically in Structure Plan. Constituent proposals shown on Proposals Map.
Open Space	SC12	Areas of open space, mostly within the urban area, protected for their amenity, recreational or ecological value. Identified on Proposals Map.
Areas of Great Landscape Value	EQ23	Areas of special landscape character where landscape impact will be particularly important in assessing proposals.
Ecological Sites	EQ24 EQ25	Sites which are protected because of their ecological value. Includes hierarchy of international, national and local designations which are identified on the Proposals Map, but also habitat types and species identified through the LBAP process and other features and corridors which may not be formally designated.
Trees and Woodland	EQ26	Sites containing trees, woodland and hedgerows which are of amenity, landscape, recreational, economic or ecological value. Sites within the Inventory of Ancient Woodlands are accorded particular status. Only TPOs are identified on the Proposals Map although some areas are formally designated as Ecological Sites.
Watercourses	EQ27	All rivers, streams and canals which serve a landscape, recreational, ecological or land drainage function. Not formally identified on the Proposals Map, although some areas are formally identified as Ecological Sites.
Coastal Zone	EQ28	Coastal strip along the Forth Estuary identified according to criteria set out in PAN53 and within which special criteria are applied to ensure integrated management of coastal defence, ecological, development, recreational and water quality interests.

APPENDIX 2: WIAT Woodland Survey Form

WIAT Woodland Survey Form - Basic Information

Surveyed By:	
Date Of Survey:	
Woodland Name:	
Woodland Location:	
Woodland Area (ha)	
Grid Reference (6 figure) Of Centre Of Area (mark x on plan for GIS)	

Ownership

C. Est.		F.C.		Other	
C Estate Tenant Name & Address					
F Council Service					
Other Owner Name & Address					
Is the woodland managed	Yes		No		
Owners comments/issues/objectives					

Contract Information

Existing For. Comm. Contract?	Yes		No	
Contract Number				
Other Information				

Management Access

Is Woodland Accessible For Maintenance/Extraction Vehicles From An Adopted Road?	Yes		No	
Grid Ref. (6 figure) of main access point on edge of wood				
Comments On Vehicle Access				

APPENDIX 2: WIAT Woodland Survey Form

Recreational Access

Other Access Points			
Grid Ref. (6 figure) of other access point on edge of wood			
Grid Ref. (6 figure) of other access point on edge of wood			
Grid Ref. (6 figure) of other access point on edge of wood			
Grid Ref. (6 figure) of other access point on edge of wood			
Internal Path Network			
Vehicular Track (bound stone/surfaced/unsurfaced)	Yes		No
Surfaced Paths (pedestrian/cycle/horse)	Yes		No
Unsurfaced Paths (pedestrian/cycle/horse)	Yes		No
Comments on Recreational Access (level of use/condition etc)			

Woodland Composition

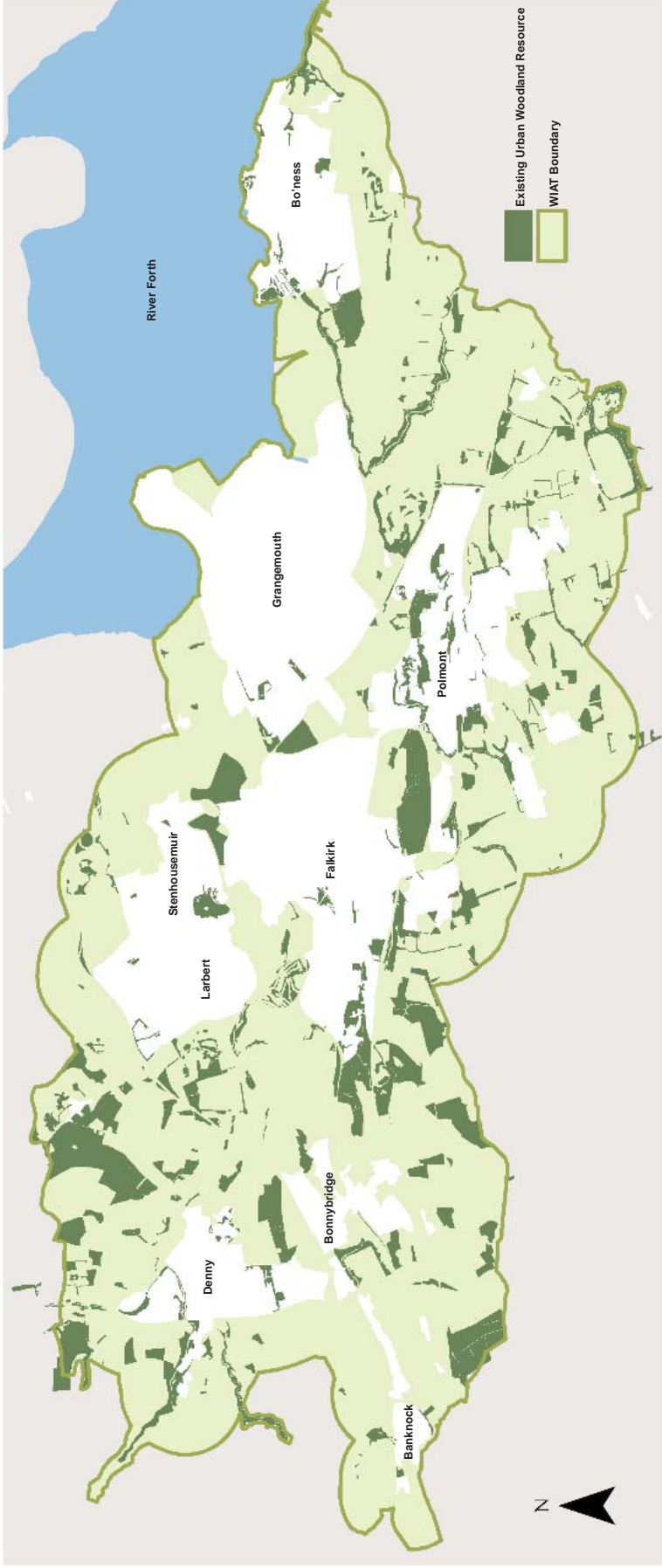
Broadleaf	Yes		No		Comments (species/condition)
Conifer	Yes		No		Comments(species/condition)
Mixed B'Leaf & Conifer	% B'leaf		% Conifer		Comments(species/condition)
Age Classes	0-10 years	11-35 years	36-80 years	80 years +	
%					
Any Other Comments					

APPENDIX 3 Geographical Information System (GIS) Project Proposal

Forth Valley GIS were contracted to assist Falkirk Council and Calendar Estate with the GIS elements of data capture and management. The data captured through the audit was forwarded to FVGIS to carry out the following :

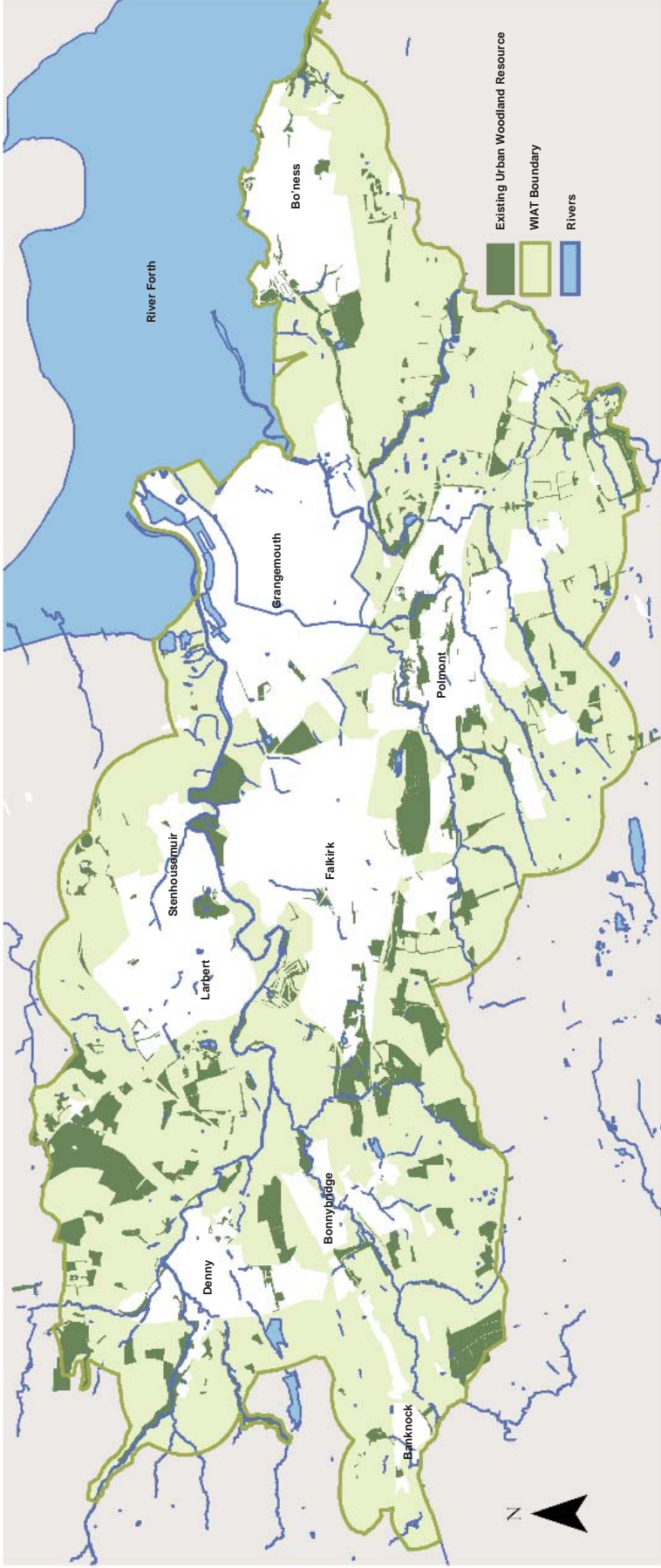
- Stage 1:** Spatial Data Audit and Metadata: FVGIS identified and collated all relevant sources of woodland, path, track and entrance data from project partners and third party data sources (OS MasterMap, Getmapping Aerial Photography, SNH Ancient Woodland, Forestry Commission, Central Scotland Forest Trust) and created associated metadata in the Corporate GIS Data Catalogue.
- Stage 2:** Data Capture and Map Production: FVGIS digitised woodland polygons and updated associated attribute fields to an agreed template. FVGIS also digitised linear vehicular routes, surfaced and un-surfaced paths for woodland sites to the nearest Falkirk Council adopted road. FVGIS created a draft map of woodland sites, entrances and routes / paths for quality control checking by Falkirk Council and Callendar Estate.
- Stage 3:** Create Data Maintenance Plans: FVGIS developed GIS data maintenance plans and associated procedures for woodland sites, vehicular routes, surfaced, and un-surfaced paths. FVGIS identified associated roles and responsibilities for data maintenance, which Falkirk Council will implement. FVGIS stored the 5 data sets created at stage 2 above in the Corporate GIS data warehouse (Geostore) and make this information available in the Corporate GIS Portal (Geolink).
- Stage 4:** Strategic Woodland Analysis: FVGIS assisted Falkirk Council in the development of a qualitative model for the assessment of the most valued woodland sites to the local community that will enable prioritisation based on alignment with key strategic policies at Council and National levels. FVGIS conducted an accessibility analysis of woodland sites for local populations based on Scottish Executive data zones and adjacencies of woodland entrances. FVGIS developed an ArcView Personal GeoDatabase based on the woodland audit pro-forma of woodland management information and incorporated the five GIS datasets created at Stage 2 - woodland sites, vehicular routes, surfaced and un-surfaced paths and entrances.

Map 1 : Overall existing urban woodland resource



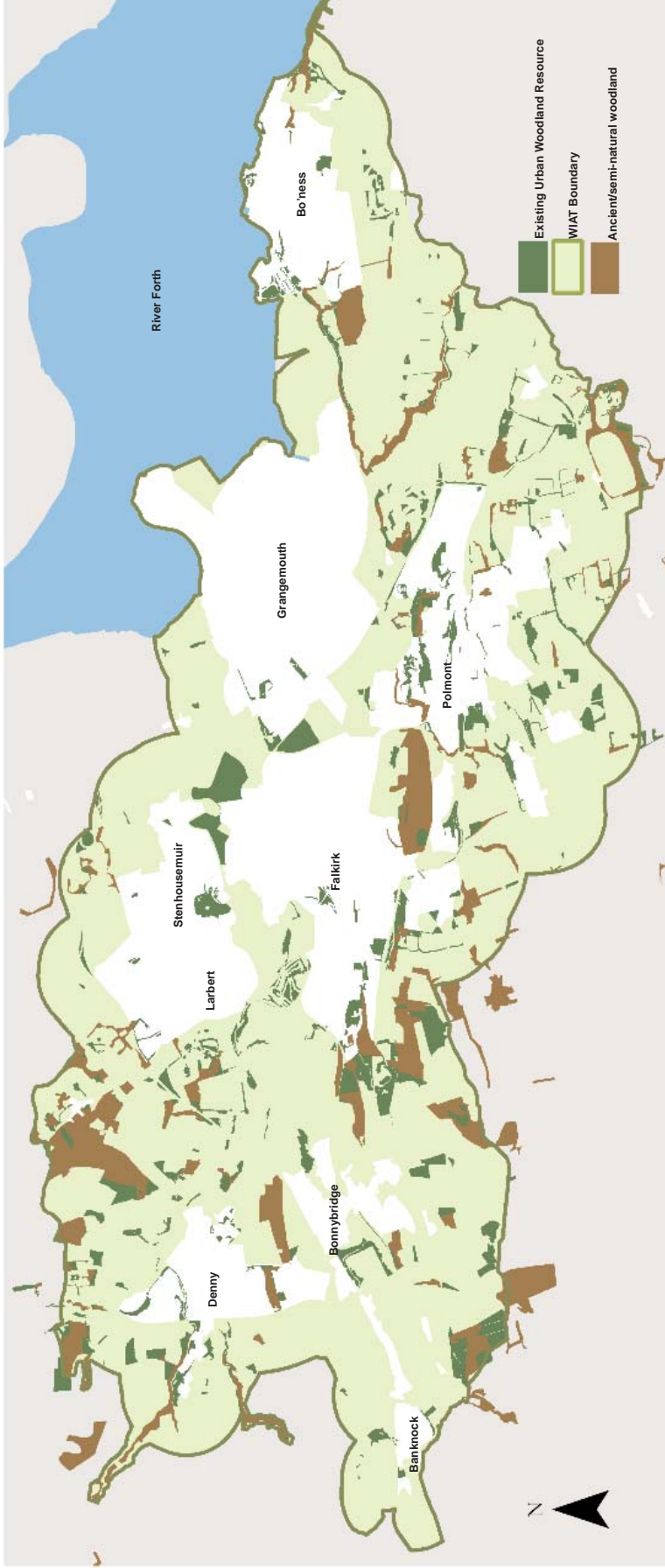
Map 1 : Overall existing urban woodland resource

Map 2 : Woodland resource in relation to riparian woodland



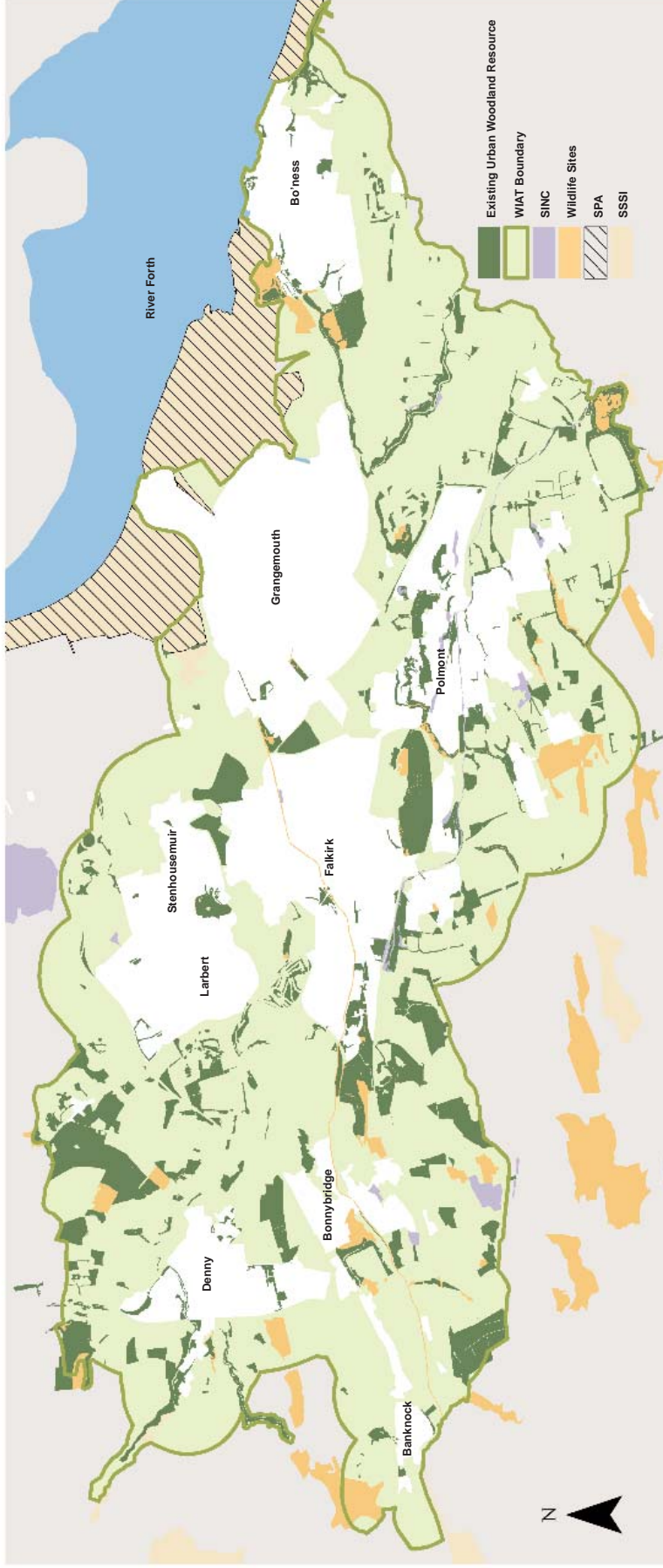
Map 2 : Woodland resource in relation to riparian woodland

Map 3 : Ancient/semi-natural woodland



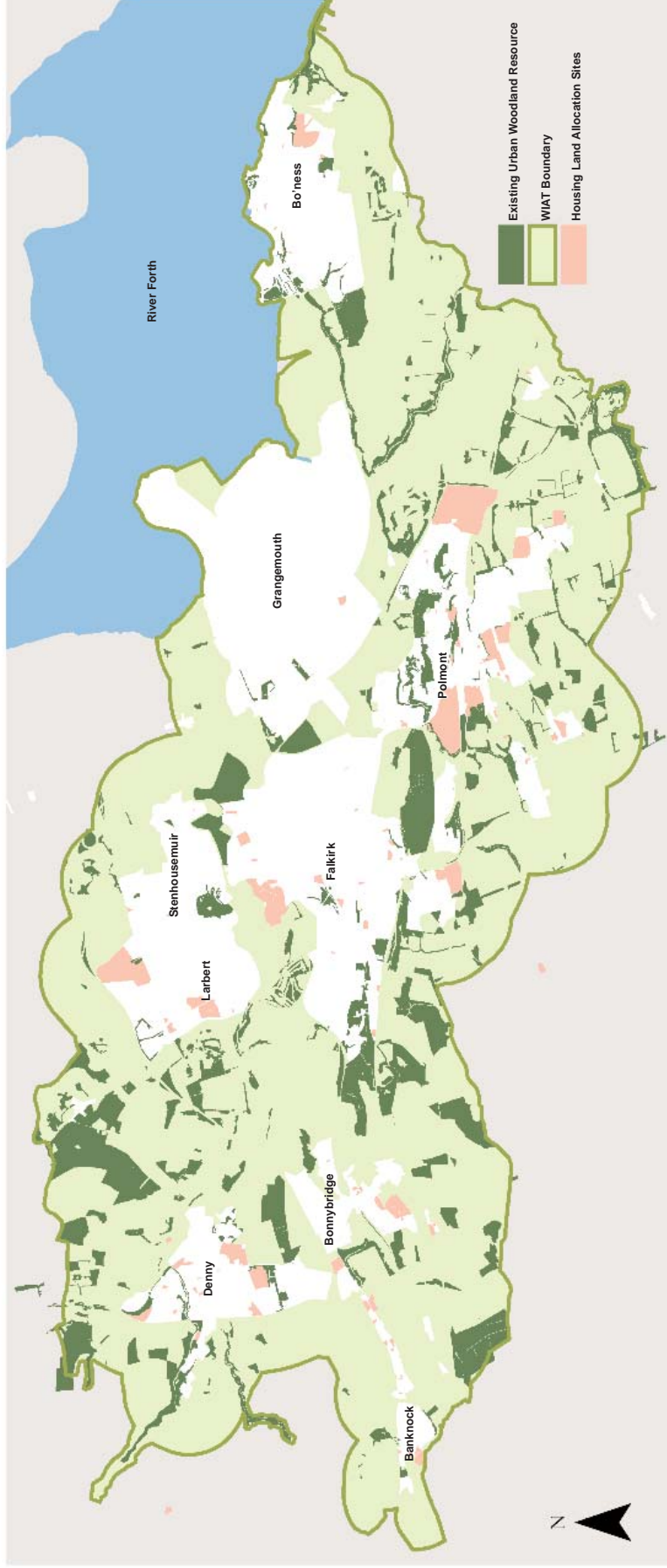
Map 3 : Ancient/semi-natural woodland

Map 4 : Woodlands and nature conservation designation sites



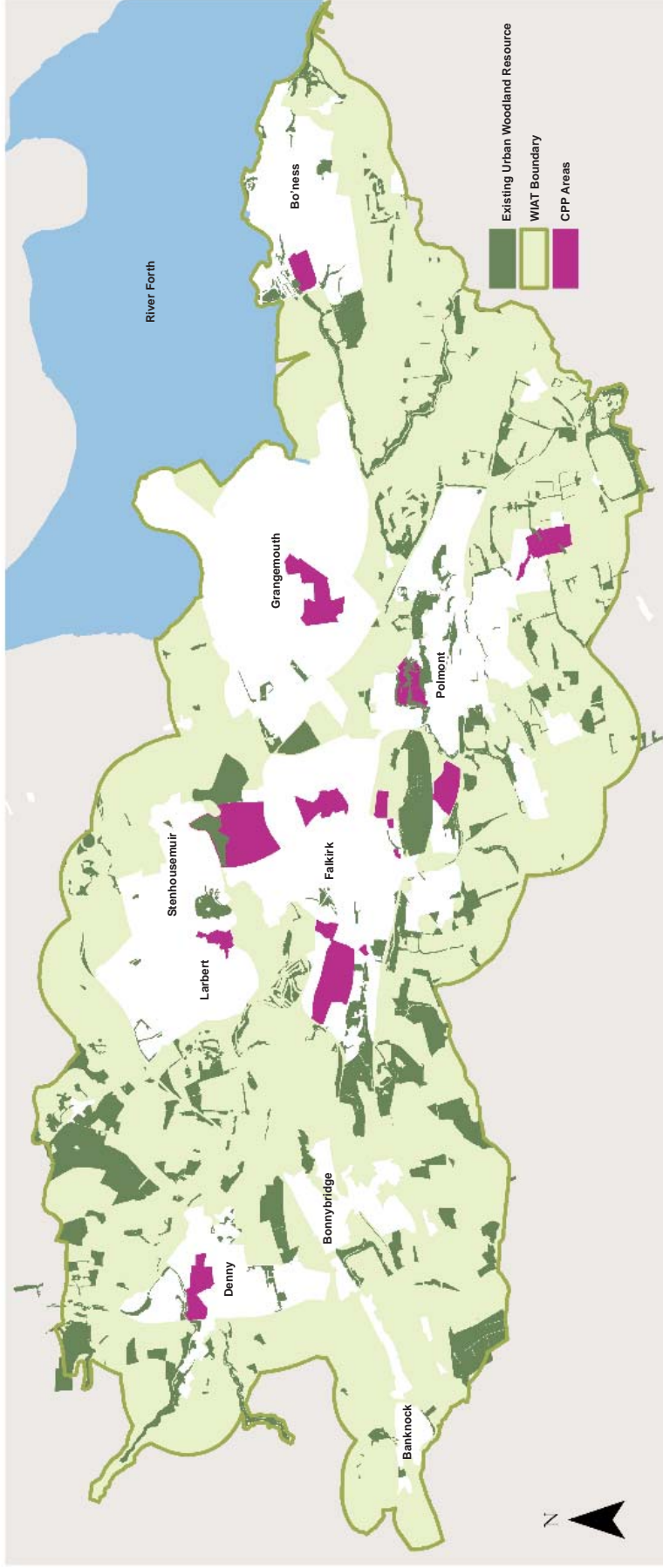
Map 4 : Woodlands and nature conservation designation sites

Map 5 : Housing land allocation sites and adjacent woodland



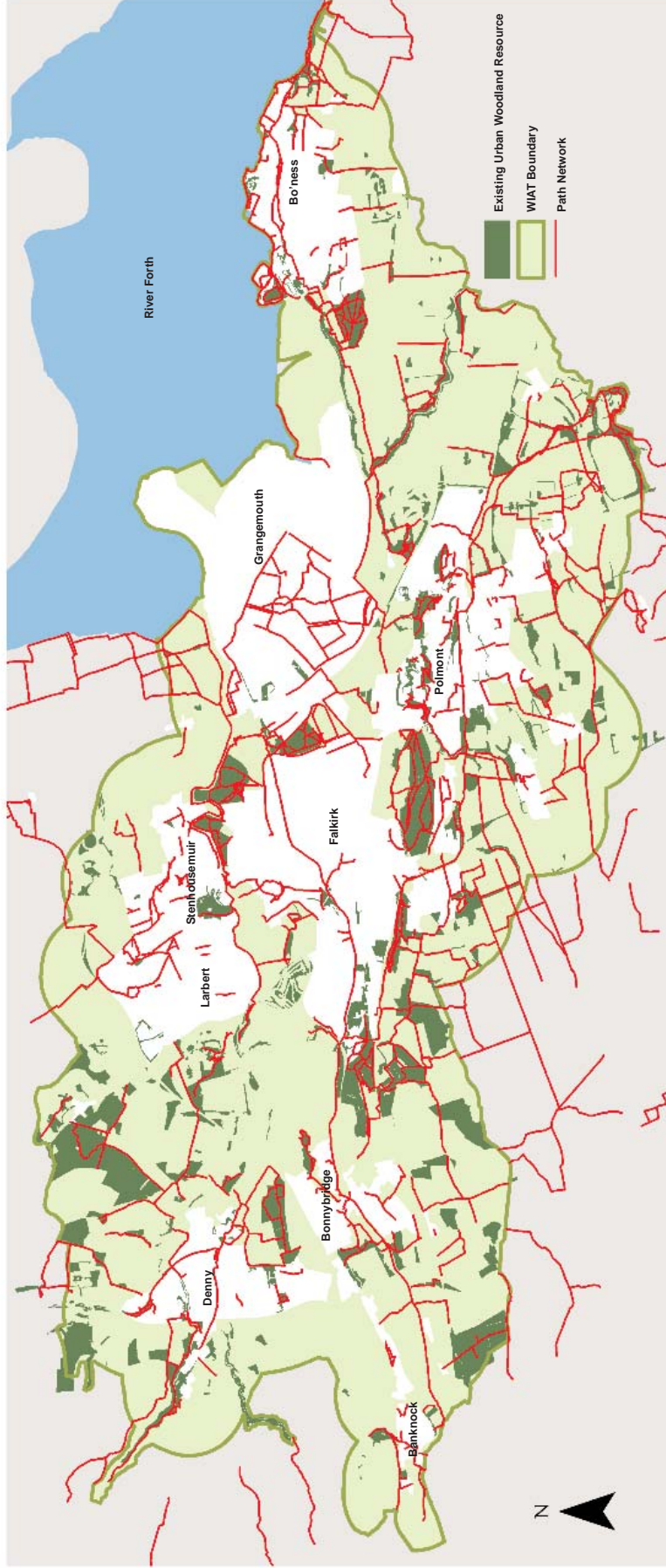
Map 5 : Housing land allocation sites and adjacent woodland

Map 6 : CPP priority regeneration areas in relation to nearest woodland resource



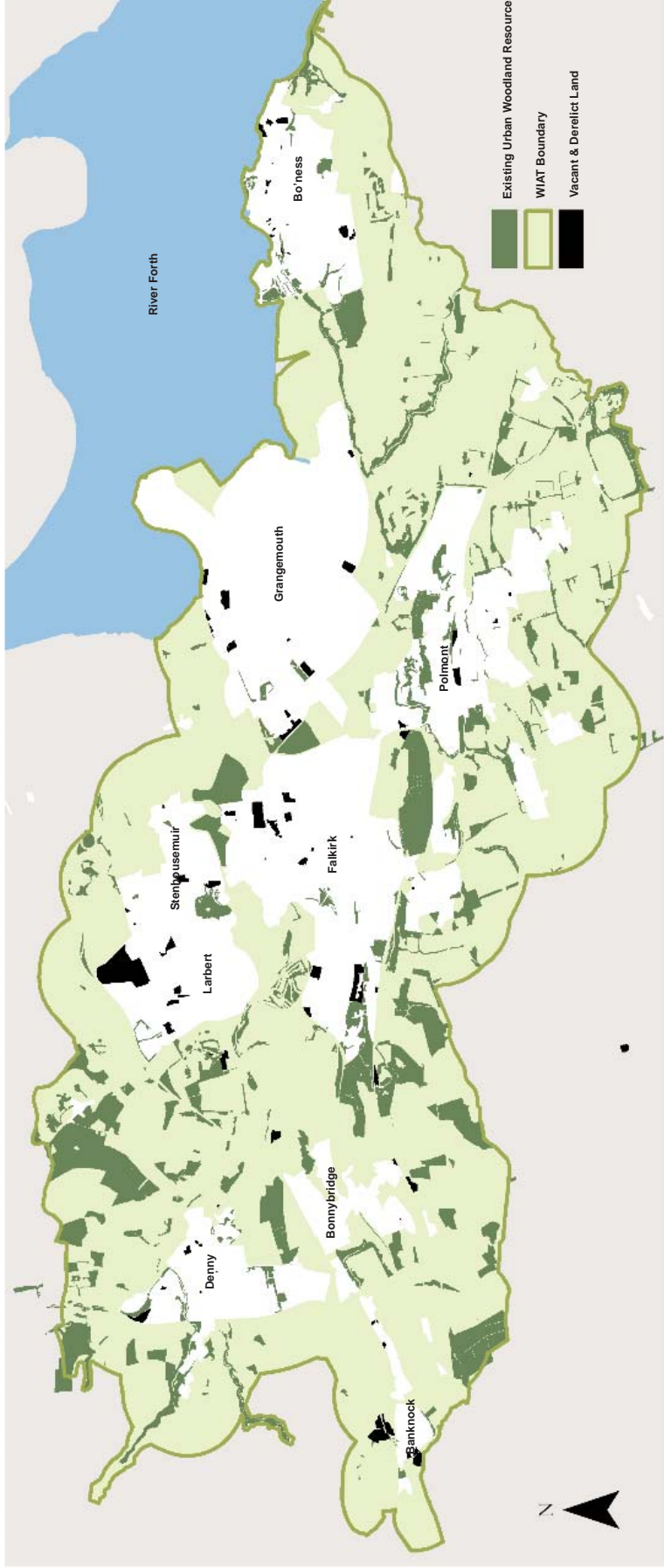
Map 6 : CPP priority regeneration areas in relation to nearest woodland resource

Map 7 : Path network in relation to woodland sites



Map 7 : Path network in relation to woodland sites

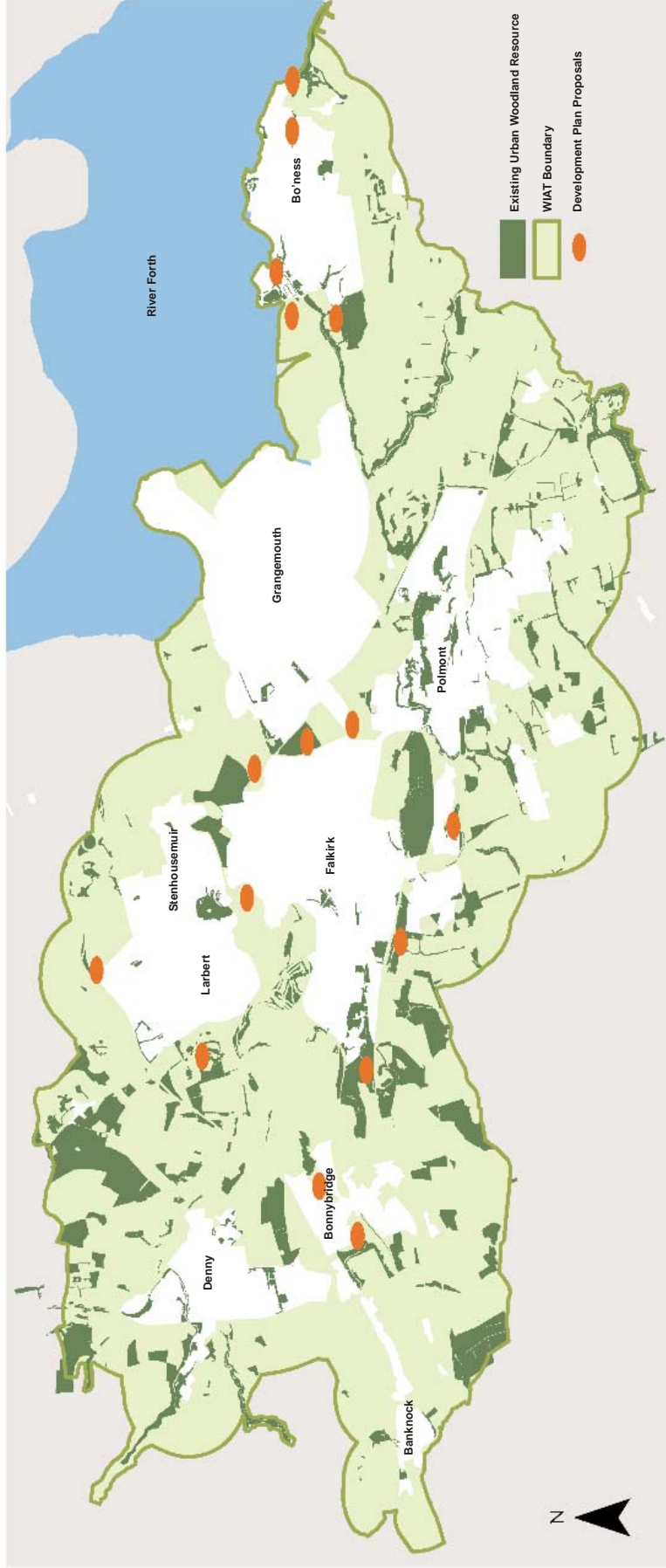
Map 8 : Vacant and derelict land in relation to current on site or adjacent woodland



Map 8 : Vacant and derelict land in relation to current on site or adjacent woodland

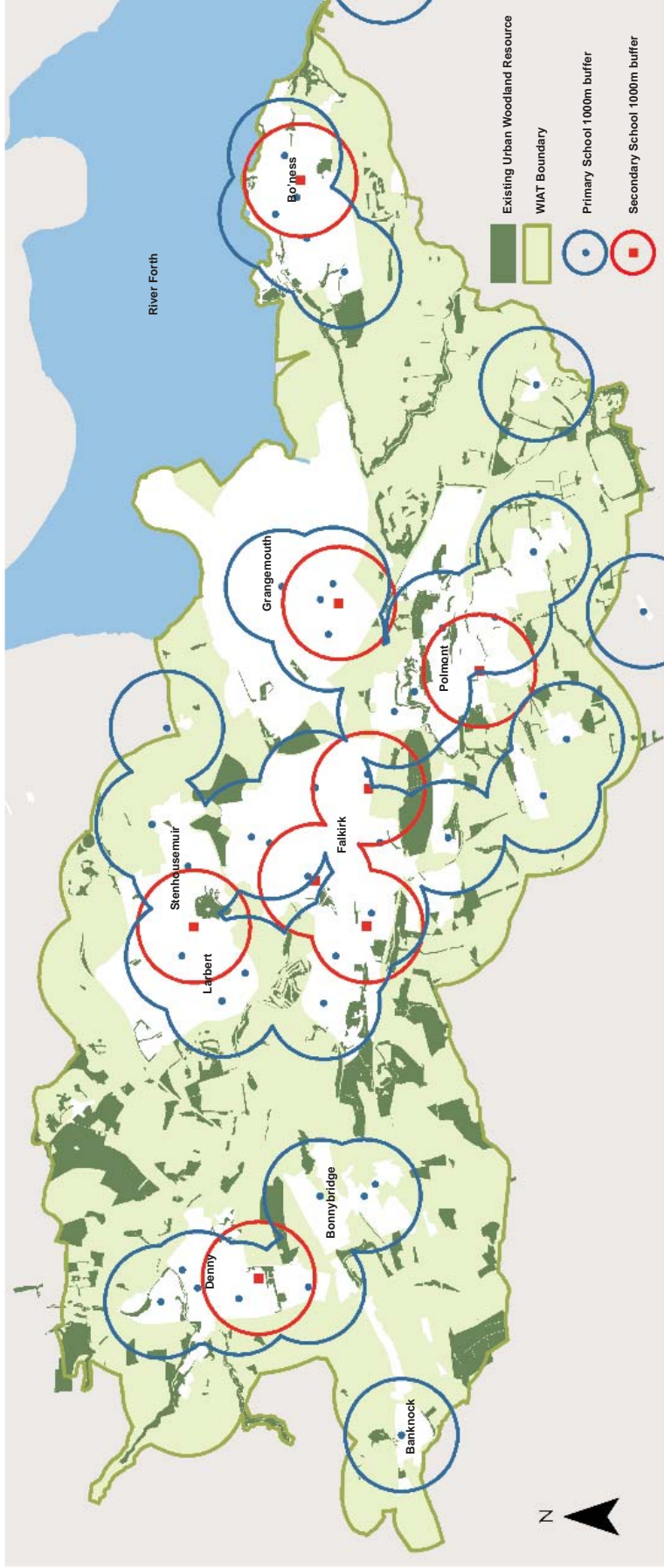


Map 9 : Development Plan environmental proposals and opportunities with a significant woodland element



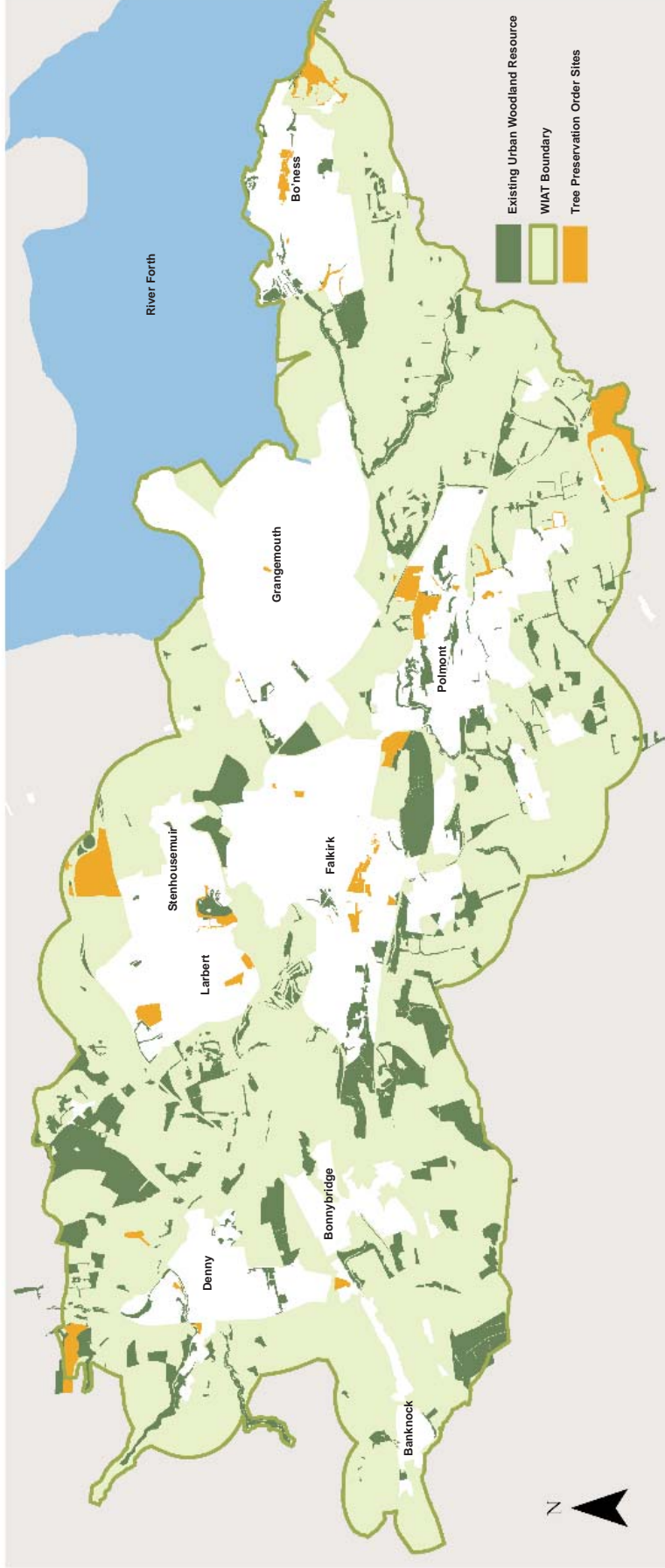
Map 9 : Development Plan environmental proposals and opportunities with a significant woodland element

Map 10 : Primary and secondary schools in relation to woodland



Map 10 : Primary and secondary schools in relation to woodland

Map 11 : Tree Preservation Orders and other woodland



Map 11 : Tree Preservation Orders and other woodland



Falkirk Council

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