

Farm woodland case studies

Carbeth Farm Balfron



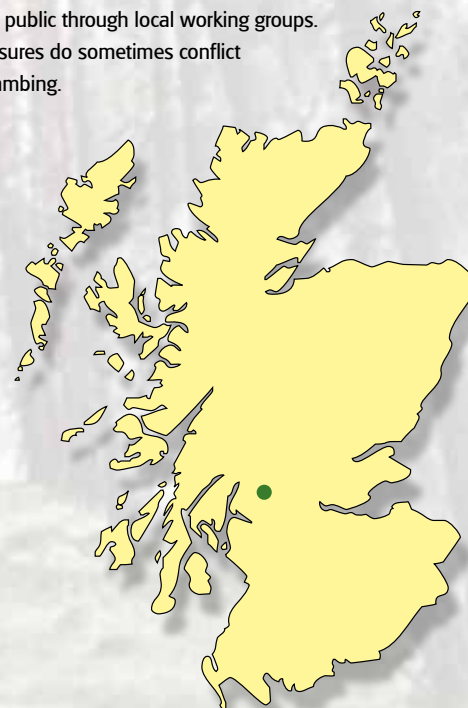
Daye Tucker

Daye Tucker took ownership of Carbeth Farm at the beginning of the new millennium. Extending to 166 hectares, it is sympathetically managed to introduce innovative ways to tackle farming and climate change challenges in the absence of a Single Farm Payment. The land at Carbeth is largely good to moderate agricultural land which Daye is cautious of taking out of grazing under any of the prescriptive SRDP forestry options. At present, the onus is on large blocks of woodland which make no provision for the small scale plantings which Daye feels are more suited to farms such as Carbeth..

There are four core paths intersecting the farm that link the villages of Killearn and Balfron and a great deal of effort goes into management of access and educating the public through local working groups. However, public access pressures do sometimes conflict with the shoot and during lambing.

Due to changes in weather patterns over the years, the ground at Carbeth can no longer support intensive arable or cattle production systems. To minimise the grazing pressure of her sheep enterprise, Daye utilises tups with targeted Estimated Breeding Values, enabling the production of more lambs per ewe. Her two flocks of breeding ewes, a pedigree Lleyn elite flock and a Lleyn/Suffolk commercial flock make up 135 head in total.

The eight horses Daye has at livery enjoy shaded summer grazing in fields.



Woodland comprises roughly 25% of the farm, incorporating a mix of commercial, long established and riparian woodland. The farm, has policy fields graced by "champion" trees, remnants of a bygone era. Daye feels the woodland was formerly under-managed, with inappropriate, unsympathetic plantings driven by forestry grants. Previous felling was insensitive and damaging due to the scale of extraction machinery. She believes the aesthetic and environmental value from the woods at Carbeth far outweigh any transient, monetary value. The landscape value of Carbeth is outstanding and provides a visual pleasure which Daye feels should be, but isn't, recognised as providing a public good.



Making the woodland work for the farm

The existing plantations at Carbeth are not commercially viable, although there are small pockets of woodland which could produce products such as fencing and quality hardwood. Firewood is an important commodity for a farmhouse heated by three wood burning stoves. Wind blow from extreme weather events creates demands on time but has also created a wood fuel business and replanting opportunities.

Four woodland plots receive SFGS Farmland Premium Scheme payments which help cash flow. Secondary benefits include environmental benefits, including protection of watercourses against erosion and diffuse pollution, habitat linkage and increased cover for game birds.

Daye struggles with the prescriptive constraints of SRDP which are often inappropriate for special properties like Carbeth that have amazing heritage landscapes which owners are trying to protect and develop for future generations with little or no support under the existing SRDP measures.

How it all adds up: the costs and benefits of farm woodland

Although the financial logic of planting trees can be identified at Carbeth, the actual value of trees on Carbeth cannot be quantified in simple economic terms. They provide additional benefits to the owners in less defined ways. Four woodlands were established in 2006 totalling about 12 hectares. The woodlands were established under the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS). The capital costs associated with establishing the woodlands was covered by the capital grants of the SFGS and the establishment of the woodlands has resulted in a reduction of the area of land let out on seasonal grazing lets. The annual management grants payable under the SFGS are £300/ha for 15 years and the income forgone is the grazing rent currently valued at £250/ha. As there is no SFP or LFASS payments attached to this land, the equation is simple. Whether or not the new woodland will receive future area payments is unclear. As the woodlands have become established, they have added greatly to the quality of the shoot and will in time produce income from thinning and felling.

Looking forward: where do we go from here?

There is no doubt that Daye has enormous respect not only for Carbeth's past and the people who worked and crafted its landscape but for the skills and enthusiasm of those who wish to do so today. She is offering an opportunity to one of the New Young Entrants to build a small herd of Whitebred Shorthorns. Supporting this particular endangered breed fits well with the native breed ethos of the Carbeth business model.

A woodland skills social enterprise is based at Carbeth where the training of disaffected young people from Glasgow schools creates a symbiotic partnership that contributes in a small but increasing way to managing the woodland.

Daye would like to further develop the concept of agro-forestry on the farm. She may increase the area of commercial and amenity woodlands but this will depend on the development of more flexible, less prescriptive planting grant schemes from RPID.



The James
Hutton
Institute

Aberdeen
Craigiebuckler
Aberdeen AB15 8QH
Scotland UK

Dundee
Invergowrie
Dundee DD2 5DA
Scotland UK

Tel: +44 (0)844 928 5428
Fax: +44 (0)844 928 5429
info@hutton.ac.uk
www.hutton.ac.uk