

Farm woodland case studies

Glencraigs Argyll



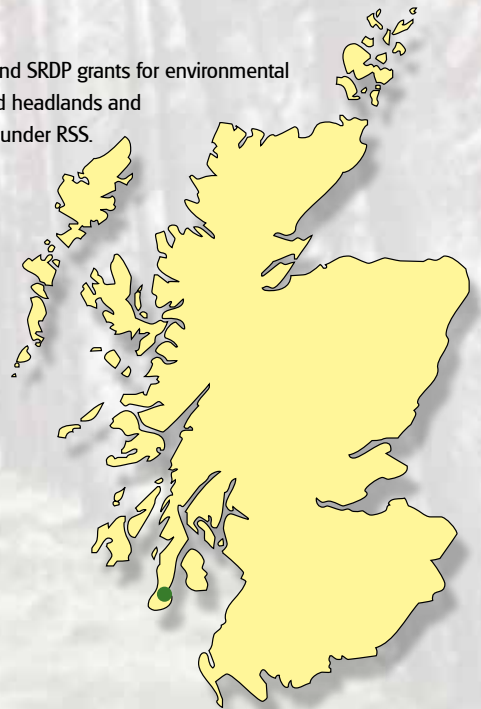
David Young

David is the fourth generation of Youngs at Glencraigs. Until recently, he ran 150 dairy cows on his 155 hectares of fertile farmland near Campbeltown. The dairy was the family business for many years but in 2001 following a changing economic climate for milk production, David made the decision to steadily reduce the dairy herd and replace it with what is now a herd of 70 Aberdeen Angus suckler cows and followers.

Transport costs to his farm are high and David would like to be self-sufficient in cattle feed and straw. At present, he harvests 28 hectares of spring barley and takes two cuts of silage from 32 hectares of grassland. His long term goal is to move away from a production focus to something with a more environmental focus.

At present, he receives LFASS and SRDP grants for environmental schemes like late cut silage and headlands and historically has received grants under RSS.

David wants to 'make the farm more attractive' and his enthusiasm for trees is apparent. 19 years ago there were only 20 trees on the farm; now there are over thirty thousand. He has an eclectic mix of commercial and environmental planting which sits well in an otherwise open landscape. There is a block of commercial softwoods and four areas of broadleaves planted predominantly for environmental benefit. To his delight, a recent survey by the RSPB noted thirty nine species of birds on the farm, nine of which are red listed.



In 1994 David planted a 5.7 hectare acre block of commercial softwood which will be ready for thinning or clear felling within the next 10 years. In the last 15 years, he has planted a further three blocks of broadleaves, totaling 53 hectares, in less accessible or wet and difficult areas of the farm. During 2012, with input from The Woodland Trust, he created a 0.4 hectare wood as part of the Queens Diamond Jubilee Celebration project.



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

The decision to plant trees at Glencaigs has been based on a mixture of economic profitability and a desire to create a pleasant and healthy living environment. The cost of planting 2 hectares of broadleaved woodland today would be £11,920 for which the grower would receive £6,282 in SRDP grants, resulting in a NET cost of establishment of £5,638.

5.7 hectares of commercial woodland would cost £12,100 resulting in £11,274 of funding from SRDP resulting in a net cost of establishment of £826. In addition, the grower would anticipate an annual income of £756 for 15 years and £1,926 for 5 years for broadleaf and commercial planting respectively with the expectation of a significant income stream from the commercial woodland.

Making the woodland work for the farm

The commercial softwoods will be utilised to fuel the 40 kW biomass boiler that David has installed to heat the farmhouse and farm workshop. He hopes to start using his own thinnings in 2014; until then he is buying logs from local sources. He has become a member of the Kintyre 'log group,' a body of like-minded farmers that have branched into woodland. He finds the meetings informative and supportive and enjoys the social outings.

The recently established hardwood plantations offer livestock a degree of welcome shelter from the extremes of weather that blow across the peninsula. The woods and hedgerows that David plans to plant will increase the environmental and aesthetic value of the farm considerably.

David has a strong sense of community and is proud to have the Jubilee Wood, planted by local school children and their families, on Glencaigs.



Looking forward: where do we go from here?

There is plenty of scope on the farm to plant more trees and David would be keen to do so. Recent improvements to the funding process make it likely that David will continue to establish woodland as he values trees and the aesthetic and environmental benefits that they bring.



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