

REPORT ON
PROPOSED WOODLAND SALES

by

Forest Enterprise

1. PORTMOAK MOSS, SCOTLANDWELL

1.1 Woodland

Made up of blocks of sitka spruce, hybrid and japanese larch, Scots pine, Norway spruce with some lodgepole pine and silver fir. There are some old Scots pine along the eastern edge. Birch grows along the side of the drains and is mixed with larch on the western side. The only other broadleaf is oak, of which there are a few mixed with the mature Scots pine. Most of the conifer is sitka spruce

No commercial thinning has taken place. Some conifers have been removed from stands of birch within the wood. The growth of conifers is generally poor with windblown areas near Wellburn and on the western side. The latter is of no commercial value, which might also be true of the rest of the wood. A substantial bridge will need to be built across one of the drains for extraction. This lowers the economic value of the crop substantially.

The general appearance of the wood is dark and dismal, save where birch on the northern edge allow in more light.

1.2 Access

The right of way and circular walk are well used. The timber boardwalks on the circular walks are in good order, being about four years old. However, some, if not all, components are made of untreated timber.

The use of the wood has increased since the circular walk was upgraded, waymarked and included in one of Forest Enterprise's leaflets. This is seen from the puddling of the peat surfaces of the paths. This happened to the right of way when the wood was only used by locals. The right of way through the wood has been by-passed by another path for this reason. However, the right of way has now recovered.

Since all of the paths are on peat these walks cannot take a great deal of pressure and the wood cannot be promoted beyond local use.

Several deep drains have been cut into the peat on the south side of the wood. Deep drains also circle most of the wood. For these reasons, access could not be promoted off paths for fear of people falling into the drains. The drains within the wood are only likely to be filled in if the wood were purchased by a public body.

1.3 History

The moss is one of only two remnants of an extensive bog which once surrounded Loch Leven and extended into adjacent low-lying valleys. Portmoak Moss was cut until quite recently by locals who had rights to cut peat. There is a photograph in Kinross Museum showing locals at work.

There is much local interest in this wood and I am sure many would like the freedom to roam over the entire wood.

The conservation value of the wood at present is poor, but its future value is very high. Ideally, all the conifers except some mature trees, or edge trees should be felled. Although the moss is no longer active, it could be restored to some extent by raising water-levels. This could be done without flooding adjacent land. These measures would also make the moss a more interesting feature to visit.

1.4 Questions Arising

- i. If the District Council did not acquire the wood, would the new owner be given a grant to replant if the wood were felled? Account must be taken of the poor crop at present against the preferred status this area has under the Forest Indicative Strategy.
- ii. What are SNH's views?
- iii. What are the present arrangements for the replacement of boundary fences which are all in poor shape?
- iv. If an access agreement were entered into, but the new owner did not intend to manage the wood, who would be responsible for clearing paths in the event of a major wind-blow?
- v. Suppose the wood were clear-felled and the new owner wanted to harvest the remaining peat, would the District Council have power to stop this (a) to maintain access and (b) to preserve the feature?

1.5 Recommendation

- (a) Investigate the possibility of Forest Enterprise clear-felling the majority of the site and SNH taking over the moss as part of the NNR for conservation and access.
- (b) Find out if Forest Enterprise would first clear-fell the wood or sell it as a standing crop - making sure the new owner of the trees would clear most of them - then sell the land to the District Council or SNH.
- (c) Find out if SNH would take on the wood as it stands.
- (d) Failing these the District Council should enter into an access agreement to cover the right of way and circular walk and in principle for unrestricted access. Purchase is a possibility but this must be approached with caution.

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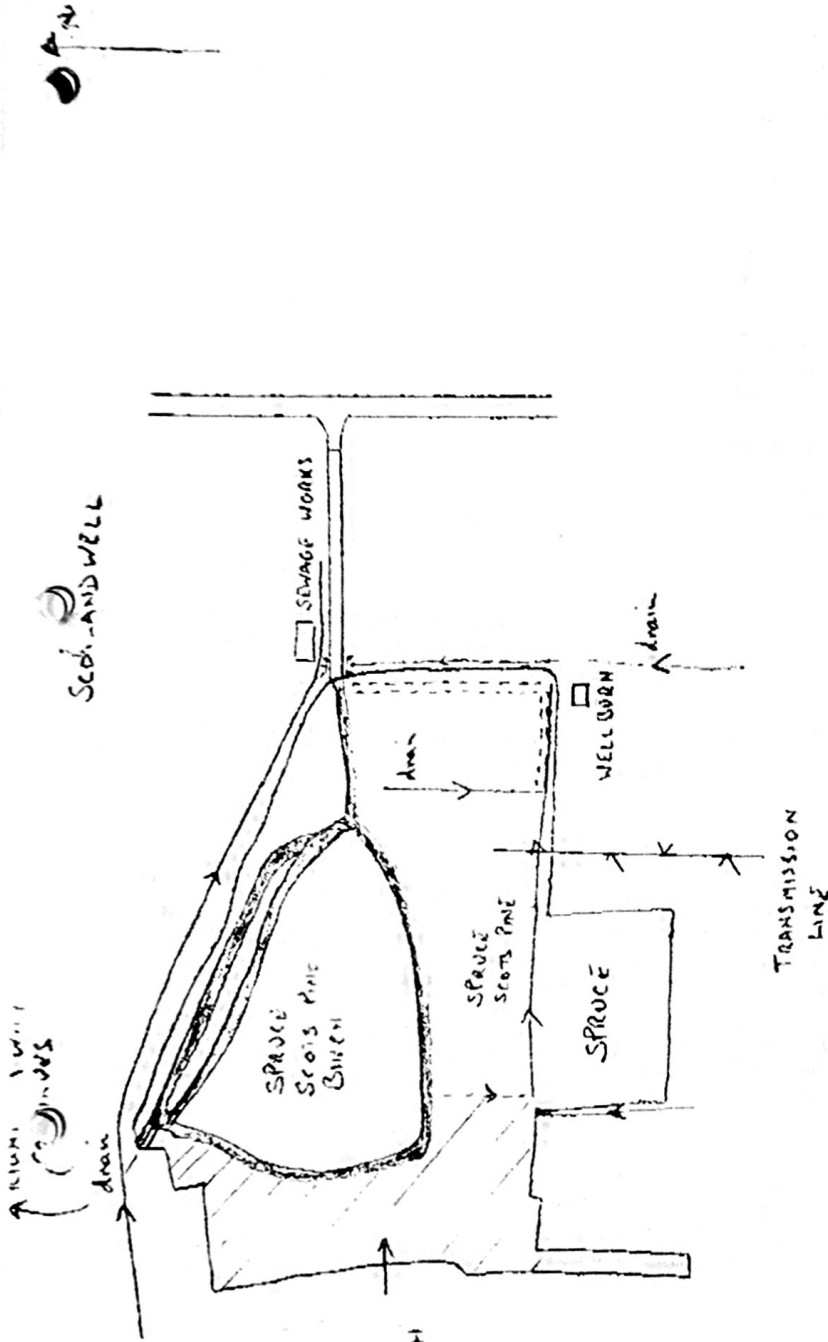
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SEWAGE WORKS

WIND BLOWN LARCH & BIRCH

SPRUCE SCOTS PINE BIRCH

SPRUCE SCOTS PINE

SPRUCE

WELL ORN

TRANSMISSION LINE

GRAHAMSTONE FARM

— = MAIN PATHS

— = MINOR PATH

— = DRAINS

Valuation Office

J G Menzies FRICS
District Valuer
Tayside

Overgate House
Marketgait
Dundee DD1 1RA

Mr P D Clark
Area Land Agent
Forest Enterprise - South Scotland
Aberfoyle District
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STIRLING
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Your reference : LD/224/ABF
Our reference : RJI/HMCV 85438
Please ask for : Mr Lee

Date : 13 February 1995

Dear Mr Clark

**ABERFOYLE FOREST DISTRICT
PORTMOAK MOSS, SCOTLANDWELL**

I refer to your letter of 4 January 1995 in which you requested my opinion of the open market value of Portmoak Moss Wood at Scotlandwell. I understand that Forest Enterprise propose to sell the wood to the Woodland Trust under its sponsorship arrangements.

DESCRIPTION

Portmoak Moss Wood lies a short distance to the south west of Scotlandwell village in Kinross on fairly level ground, part of the Loch Leven Basin. The wood extends to 42 hectares of which 41 are planted. The land elevation here is 110 metres above sea level and rainfall is about 35 to 40 inches per annum in this area. As indicated by the name, the ground consists of deep peat with sluggish drainage channels. Trees grown on this medium can of course become shallow rooted and subject to wind throw and some wind throw was in fact noted in the plantation near the south eastern end.

Access to the boundary of the wood is quite good with 2 bottomed tracks leading from the B920 but there are no forest roads formed within the wood itself and bridging of a small burn is required if vehicles are to gain entry. The wood has a longish fence line due to its irregular shape but this is by no means exceptional.

The tree species are varied with over 60% conifers planted between 1960 and 1963, 20% 55 year old scots pine with the remainder birch. Of the mid aged conifers roughly half are Sitka spruce. There are several clearings within the wood and tree quality is quite mixed as the wood appears to be largely unthinned and has suffered accordingly. The stated yield classes however appear to be fairly average for the area.

Public access to the road has been encouraged along a marked trail and I understand that in recent years, volunteers have begun to recreate the original mixed woodland within the area. I understand that there is a pedestrian right of way along the northern edge of Portmoak Moss.

The woodland is fenced but is by no means rabbit or deer proof.

Hydro electric have a wayleave right to cross the woodland but it was noted on inspection that the pylons had been removed as stated in the correspondence. I have treated the 1 hectare of land affected as plantable ground.

There is an old derelict curling bothy situated by the former curling pond to the east edge of the wood but I understand that this building does not lie within the boundary of the subjects.

VALUATION CONSIDERATIONS

The drawbacks with Portmoak wood lie in the lack of formed forestry roads within the plantation, the deep peat soils which only encourage shallow rooting and the lack of thinning over the years. Also as stated above, there has been some wind throw by the south eastern part of the wood. I consider the quality of the plantation to be very average without particular appeal to the woodland investor. However, regard has been paid to the grants available for restocking or natural regeneration and the tax advantages in woodland ownership.

The wood has its attractions in the amenity it provides, the wildlife and in the interesting peat banks themselves and of course it is convenient of access. However, the pedestrian right of way and present public access arrangements are a drawback to the potential private purchaser particularly were the shooting to be developed. At present the shooting rights would be worth very little.

OPINION OF VALUE

I am of the opinion that the current open market value of Portmoak Moss Wood is fairly stated at **£75,000 (SEVENTY FIVE THOUSAND POUNDS)**.


The terms and conditions of sale are as stated in your letter of 14 November to the Woodland Trust. In particular it is assumed that full access rights to the wood will be given as I understand there may still be some doubt on this.

The above figure should be considered to remain valid for a period of six months only from the date of this report.

The stated opinion of value is based on the understanding that this transaction is exempt from VAT. However should this assumption be, or become, incorrect then the stated opinion of value should be treated as an inclusive of VAT figure.

I trust this will suffice for your present purposes but should you require further assistance please let me know.

Yours sincerely


DISTRICT VALUER

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