

Case Study

First Thinning

at Myreton Farm



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Clive Streater lives at Myreton, near Keith in Moray.

In 1997 Clive decided to plant seventy two hectares of commercial forestry under the Grampian Forest Challenge Fund, leaving just a few paddocks around the house.

The woodland is predominantly Sitka spruce as shown in the table below. It was planted in two phases in 1998 and 2001.

Species	Area, ha	%
Sitka spruce - clones	6.20	8
Sitka spruce - improved	40.12	56
Sitka spruce - unimproved	10.87	15
European Larch	2.92	4
Scots pine	1.42	2
Mixed broadleaves	4.57	6
Open broadleaves	4.61	6
Productive broadleaves	1.37	2
Other land	0.61	1
Total	72.69	100

Thinning

As the crop matures it is important to thin it every five years or so, starting at about twenty years of age. Sitka spruce is a semi-shade bearing species and benefits greatly from the removal of the poorer and smaller trees in the crop to allow more room for the best trees to grow. The objective is for the crop to contain in excess of 65% sawlogs by volume when clearfelled at about 45 years of age. Clive expects the final crop to produce over 450 tonnes per hectare and to have produced another 250 tonnes per hectare in thinnings.

Timber sale

Clive employed a local forestry consultant as his agent to sell the timber as a competitive standing sale between the sawmillers and timber merchants in the region. The successful purchaser arranged and paid for all the harvesting, extraction and haulage; paying the owner an agreed sum per tonne for each category of timber. The agent prepared a sale contract, invoiced for the timber on Clive's behalf and supervised the work. The first thinning covered about 40 hectares of the better growing crops in the more accessible areas and yielded over 70 tonnes per hectare. This included the felling of an older small shelterbelt and four rows of roadside trees to create space for road improvements.



The importance of competitive tendering.

The timber should be offered to as many people as possible – this ensures the best price. Sixteen local sawmillers and merchants were invited to offer for this sale. Four offers were received and on the tonnage harvested these were worth :-

- 1 £31,512**
- 2 £26,418**
- 3 £24,326**
- 4 £22,701**

Such a range in offers is not unusual. The agent's selling costs were about 9% of the gross income shown above.

Most of the crop was thinned by removing every fifth row to create access racks and then lightly thinning the remaining four rows.

The out-turn is shown in the table below.

Category	Price £/tonne	Total tonnage	%
Chip-wood	10.00	2,963	97.2
Spruce pallet	17.50	23	0.8
Sawlogs	32.00	49	2
	Total	3,035	

The spruce crops are growing rapidly on these fertile ex-arable soils and much of the crop is Yield Class 24. This means that the maximum average annual increment is 24m³/ha per annum. This table shows the average stocking in some plots after the thinning, and the quantities removed.

	Thinning yield	Main Crop after thinning
Yield Class	-	24
Age	-	20
Top Height	-	15.5 m
Number	750 /ha	1,600 /ha
Average Diameter	-	18.5cm
Basal area	-	43.6 m ² /ha
Volume	70 m ³ /ha	150 m ³ /ha

Websites

www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/

www.farmingforabetterclimate.org

www.usewoodfuel.co.uk

What happens next?

Some of the income from this harvesting will be reinvested in upgrading an access track to full forest road specification. In two or three year's time this will allow Clive to thin the slower growing and less accessible areas left unthinned in 2017. The areas thinned in 2017 will be thinned again in 2022.

Harvesting about half the woodland every three years will provide a regular, tax free income for the next twenty years.



Further information on events and publications on farm woodlands can be found at www.fas.scot/topic/farm-woodlands/

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