

# OUR VIEW ON SCOTLAND

---

---

## FEATURES

---

Taking control with climate and nature-positive land management

---

Winds of change – offshore and onshore opportunities

---

Fortune favours the bold in new development plans

---



# Welcome to Bidwells' Spring Newsletter

Never in my darkest moments did I think I would be writing the introduction to our newsletter against the backdrop of war on European soil. The situation in Ukraine can only be described as truly horrific and tragic on every level, our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Ukraine.

I had hoped to be focussing on the very good economic recovery which we have experienced as COVID moves into a managed endemic phase which we will live with for many years I suspect. The drive towards net zero will continue and I believe there will be even more focus on wind and all forms of renewable energy as we sever our reliance on Russian oil and gas.

The rural economy fared extremely well during 2021 and along with other rural success stories our business grew by 30% on the back of high volumes of activity in the Forestry, Renewable Energy and Natural Capital sectors. To service the many substantial projects to expand Scotland's electricity grid we launched a Grid and Infrastructure team to support farmers and landowners in this complex arena. This agile team has years of experience in negotiating with developers on our clients' behalf.

We very much look forward to the annual round of social events taking place this year and after two years it will be a real

pleasure to spend time with clients, professional peers and friends. We look forward to that very much.

I hope you enjoy our newsletter and please do pick up the phone or e-mail us if you have anything we can help with.



**Finlay Clark**  
Managing Partner, Scotland  
01738 630 666  
finlay.clark@bidwells.co.uk



## TAKING CLIMATE MITIGATION IN OUR OWN HANDS

### So, was last November's COP26 in Glasgow a success or failure? Writes Andy Turnbull, Head of Natural Capital and Sustainable Investment

Well, it depends which commentators you listen to. Most agree there were steps forward in terms of affirmations and pledges by nations for their climate ambitions, and finalisations of rules around reporting of emissions and international carbon trading. However, this can all feel a bit "high level" and, dare I say it, "posturing" and has a sense of "so what?" about it.

I attended some fringe events during the conference and can honestly say that I was moved by the gravity of our situation. Presentations by leading climate, biodiversity and ocean scientists really hit home the catastrophe that is looming and largely made by our human hands.

Our current emissions' levels - and therefore temperature trajectory - will lead to catastrophic weather events and humanitarian crises (think 200 million "climate migrants" moving across international borders by 2050) if CO<sub>2</sub> is not checked and removed from the atmosphere. And the biodiversity story is equally shocking. The UK has lost around half of its wildlife and plant species as a result of human and land development since the Industrial Revolution - the country is ranked in the bottom 10% in the world and worst among the G7 when it comes to biodiversity scoring. The global picture is not great either with the Sixth Mass Extinction of wildlife on earth accelerating.

It's safe to say things aren't looking great. However, in the past 12 months we have seen an explosion of positive interest from landowners, businesses and investors looking to invest in natural capital, helping to mitigate the climate challenge and enhance nature. There appears to have been a significant shift with participants no longer wanting to sit on the side-lines or wait for a "big change" from governments. Instead, our



clients are taking action, which makes both environmental and economic sense.

I would suggest that in many quarters there has been some internal reflection on how we have arrived at this situation and what the opportunities are to get out of it. It is becoming more and more challenging for land managers to justify feeding stags bails of silage in eroded greenhouse gas-emitting peat hags during the winter months - much like it is becoming more challenging to overgraze the uplands and suppress CO<sub>2</sub> removing tree cover. Likewise, a wide range of businesses - from consumer goods to pharmaceuticals are reviewing their operations and looking at where they can make improvements and also invest to compensate for their operational impacts. At this intersection there

can be real scope for delivery of much needed Nature-based Solutions to society's needs.

The policy and societal direction appears pretty clear - we must move to a more sustainable world - and land managers can currently do this voluntarily with a significant level of "carrot" available (grants, inward private investment etc) or reluctantly when the "stick" comes along (land carbon taxation, statutory deer numbers etc.). It is the progressive early adopters that may be set to benefit the most by demonstrating good stewardship and a holistic forward-thinking approach.



**Andy Turnbull**  
Head of Natural Capital and Sustainable Investment  
andy.turnbull@bidwells.co.uk



## NATURAL CAPITAL – GROWING WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Interest in natural capital continues to grow at pace, and not just within the landowning community but amongst investors too. This growth has been mirrored within Bidwells, with our Natural Capital and Sustainable Investment team quadrupling in size (from one to four) since last September.

Underpinning this interest in natural capital is the realisation across all sectors that our economies and societies are embedded in and dependent on natural systems. A stable climate, healthy soils, clean rivers and flourishing ecosystems are no longer viewed as 'nice-to-have', but as essential natural assets, from which we derive all kinds of monetary and non-monetary value and, ultimately, economic stability.

Adopting a natural capital approach can be as simple as acknowledging these dependencies, and accounting for them properly. Those businesses that get to grips with this quickly are likely to stand themselves in good stead, as more and more of what economists traditionally considered to be 'externalities' come to be valued financially.

Carbon is a good example of this. A substance that had been largely ignored until this century, it has now become an important commodity, underpinning unprecedented interest in native woodland creation, peatland restoration and other 'Nature-based Solutions'. This in turn has led to increased demand for land with the potential for natural capital enhancement, inflating prices and rendering traditional valuations redundant as some rural estates change hands for multiples of what their sale price was only two years ago.

**Download our new research paper here: The reality of the UK's net zero ambition: the role of carbon capture**

[www.bidwells.co.uk/what-we-think/rural-outlook-2022/rural-outlook-carbon-capture](http://www.bidwells.co.uk/what-we-think/rural-outlook-2022/rural-outlook-carbon-capture)

## NATIVE WOODLAND CREATION CONTINUES AT PACE

As with peatland restoration, the political climate for expansion of native woodland cover across Scotland continues to be favourable, and the voluntary carbon market is further incentivising the planting of native schemes under the Woodland Carbon Code.

Trading within this market is largely values-driven – it is voluntary, after all. For buyers of woodland carbon units, this means that the perception of biodiversity enrichment and community benefit matters. Since the market's inception it has allowed carbon from native woodlands to command a

premium, relative to the credits generated from commercial forests.

This premium, coupled with the fact that native woodlands can grow in places unsuitable for commercial forestry, is leading many landowners to conclude that the astute land use 'on the hill' may be the creation and expansion of more natural woodland. As and when other ecosystem markets such as 'Biodiversity Net Gain' arrive in Scotland, the incentive to plant native trees might become more powerful still.

From the Bidwells' team's point of view, we already take these other ecosystem services and co-benefits into account when working with our clients. Designing multi-functional schemes that deliver



for people, wildlife and the climate is not only the right thing to do, it is likely to be prudent in the long run, too.

## PEATLAND RESTORATION – AN EMERGING ‘GREEN’ INDUSTRY

The increasing focus on natural capital has been a boon for Scotland’s peatlands. Long considered to be unproductive wastelands, the value of these important habitats is being re-appraised, as we start to quantify the many ecosystem services they deliver. Covering 23% of Scotland’s land mass, our peatlands store an estimated 1.7 billion tonnes of carbon, more than 30 times the amount contained in all our woodlands and forests.

The problem is that historic land management, such as drainage and overgrazing, has damaged these fragile wetlands. In their degraded state, Scotland’s peatlands have become a net source of greenhouse gases, being currently responsible for more than 9.5 million tonnes of CO2 emissions annually – equivalent to 20% of the country’s total net emissions!

As a result, the Scottish Government has made peatland restoration a priority, with £250m in funding available to support this activity over the next decade. This in turn is attracting private investment, as landowners delivering peatland restoration



can certify their projects under a domestic carbon standard, the Peatland Code, which allows their projects to generate ‘verified emissions reductions’ (otherwise known as carbon credits) that can then be sold to businesses who want to mitigate their climate impact.

Within this favourable political and economic context, our team’s peatland experts are helping landowners to capitalise, both figuratively and literally, on the support for restoration. Working with colleagues in the Government’s Peatland ACTION programme, we are appraising, designing and delivering peatland restoration projects across thousands of hectares of upland Scotland on behalf of our clients.

These projects are time-consuming, detailed schemes and often delivered in challenging high-altitude environments, but the rewards for our clients can be immense. Peatland restoration can transform a landholding from carbon source into carbon sink; generate a reliable, long-term source of revenue from the sale of verified emission reductions and deliver increased public goods for society. It is a genuine win-win-win.

**Matt Hay standing beside a peat hagg in the Scottish Highlands.**

## THINKING STRATEGICALLY ABOUT NATURAL CAPITAL

One of the advantages of adopting a natural capital approach is the requirement to think holistically about the land and how it is managed. It isn’t just a case of finding suitable areas for peatland restoration or woodland creation, but rather working with clients to develop long-term strategies for their entire landholdings that are ecologically coherent, where the ‘whole estate’ impact is greater than the sum of its parts.

This may mean looking beyond carbon, for instance at watercourse re-wiggling (yes,

that is a technical term), opportunities for renewable power generation, species translocations, or implementing regenerative grazing. It is also vital that land managers baseline their natural assets, and record any changes going forward, so that they can understand and communicate the positive impacts they are having on their land.

As the work of the Scottish Land Commission brings the public interest to the fore, it is going to be increasingly important for landowners to evidence what they are doing to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises on their land, and what public goods are flowing from their estates. Our team is preparing to work with several clients who want to

implement these monitoring and reporting frameworks now and get ahead of the curve.

I have no doubt that our Natural Capital & Sustainable Investment team will continue to grow and develop quickly over the coming months as we rise to the challenges of operating in a fast-evolving space. It is exciting to see how rapidly natural capital is moving up the agenda right across the board, and we are confident and ready to help our clients navigate this increasingly important sector.



**Matthew Hay**

Associate, Natural Capital and Sustainable Investment.  
matthew.hay@bidwells.co.uk

## SCOTWIND LANDFALL PRESENTS OPPORTUNITIES

**In current times we are all in need of some rather more positive news and in the context of the pursuit of a sustainable future, the recent announcements from Crown Estate Scotland that the preferred ScotWind round two bidders have finally been selected after a lengthy tender process, is certainly welcomed. Writes Nicola Beaumont, Partner, Energy & Renewables.**

There is, however, much work ahead to successfully deliver this 25GW of predicted new offshore renewable energy generation over the next decade or so. This is in addition to the 10.3GW either already operational or in the pipeline.

Notwithstanding extensive distances of subsea cabling and substations, offshore generation still has to connect to a National Grid substation on terra firma but first via a converter station typically located near the landfall destination. Such coastal zones present unique environmental challenges to overcome. The engineering design inputs are generated by an impressive line-up of experts from geomorphologists to ecologists, from metocean scientists to civil engineers, but let's not forget the fundamental requirement of land to host such works.

And so we see yet another evolution of land use.

In addition, a balance of technical, environmental, significant designations, landscaping and local community considerations will influence the routing of

onshore cable corridors - but a key factor in the developers' cost assessments will also be to minimise the linear distance. If consultation is conducted sufficiently early in the development process, then landowners should become aware of the potential for facilitating such cabling in reasonable time in order to input into routing plans.

A number of factors will influence the attributable income potential to landowners but consider (at the point of exercising an Option Agreement) the monumental sums paid by the respective developers in option fees will be a drop in the ocean, excuse the pun!



**Nicola Beaumont**  
Partner, Energy & Renewables.  
nicola.beaumont@bidwells.co.uk

A new dawn for offshore wind. Wind turbine components pictured at Port of Nigg.



Credit: Crown Estate Scotland



As we grow our renewables capabilities alongside an increase in network capacity, battery storage is becoming an essential component.

## ELECTRICITY STORAGE IS KEY TO OUR NET ZERO FUTURE

Large scale battery storage systems are quickly becoming an essential component of our electricity network as it adjusts to the requirements of a future powered by renewable energy.

According to the National Grid Electricity System Operator (ESO), the UK may require up to 13GW of electricity storage by 2030 to add the flexibility required to cope with the intermittent nature of renewable power generation. These storage facilities will be essential to help keep the lights on during periods of lower renewables generation in a net zero UK and the projected capacity represents a ten-fold increase on current installed levels.

Electricity network upgrades can create opportunities for landowners (whose land may otherwise not have the right

attributes for other forms of development) to benefit from the growth in green energy infrastructure and there is currently significant interest from developers looking to find suitable battery storage sites throughout Scotland.

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) are generally found in the form of containerised lithium-ion batteries and will occupy a relatively small footprint at around two or three acres for a medium-sized project. As such, they can often be designed to successfully limit the visual impact on the surrounding landscape.

Successful locations will depend on the intended use-case, however, properties within three kilometres of a sub-station or electricity line with available capacity are preferred.

The planned Skye reinforcement line, which will run from Fort Augustus to Ardmore, along with a range of line

upgrades throughout the east coast, are good examples of projects where network capacity is currently being created to support future onshore and offshore renewables developments but which are also creating opportunities for battery storage along the network route.

Our Energy and Renewables team has recently successfully advised landowners on a number of battery storage projects and is seeing growing interest for new sites. If you own land which could be suitable, or if you receive a proposal from an interested developer, we are well placed to offer advice.



**Fraser Smith**

Senior Energy & Renewables Consultant, Perth  
fraser.smith@bidwells.co.uk

## LANDOWNERS KEY TO ESSENTIAL GRID EXPANSION

**The drive towards a carbon neutral world is manifest all around us, and none more so than the way in which electricity is transmitted from those who make it to those who use it. Writes Clive Meikle, Partner, Head of Grid and Infrastructure.**

The Scottish Government's commitment to achieving net zero relies heavily on the generation of renewable electricity. And we're making great strides - in 2020 renewable generation met 90% of the electricity needs of Scotland. However, these 'green' electricity demands will continue to rise as both heating and fuel move away from traditional fossil fuels. In addition, Scotland has vast renewable energy capabilities and there is no doubt these will be employed to help supply electricity throughout the UK, and possibly further afield. The Scottish Government aims to double the amount of onshore wind by 2030 (an additional 8GW) and create up to 23GW of offshore wind.

But all of this new generation needs to be connected, which means significant expansion of the electricity grid. The companies responsible for the transmission and distribution of electricity in Scotland - SSEN and SPEN - have many substantial projects ongoing and more in the pipeline. These include the creation of wholly new overhead and underground lines, together with the refurbishment of existing lines and expansion of, or creation of new, substations. This will support specific generation proposals, together with providing a wider network reinforcement to address growing demand from consumers. The increasing number of offshore wind projects being developed around the coast of Scotland will also have a significant effect on many areas of the electricity grid.

These improvements have the possibility to impact significantly on farmers and landowners who find themselves on the route of existing or new lines. New electricity lines are rarely welcomed by those affected, but taking advice from an experienced professional can help bring the best result, including minimising the impact of the construction process and securing the best financial recompense.



## Sometimes small changes, such as the repositioning of a pylon, can significantly improve the long-term impact of the line.

The creation of a new electricity connection can be a major undertaking and electricity companies require to address physical and environmental constraints as well as concerns of local communities. Informed and supported landowners can feed into the design stage where sometimes small changes, such as the repositioning of a pylon, can significantly improve the long-term impact of the line.

It is also vitally important that landowners consider fully the proposed method of construction. Erecting new pylons will often require temporary roads to be installed, which is itself a major undertaking involving plant and HGV movements for the installation and eventual removal. Landowners should seek to understand during the planning phase where these roads will be installed and accessed, and how the land will be reinstated post-

construction. Increasingly, electricity companies seek to retain the temporary roads in perpetuity for their own use e.g. access to "pulling points", often at strategic corner towers.

Landowners might sometimes seek to retain the temporary roads after the line is installed where this serves some useful purpose on the property. However, local authorities can sometimes be resistant to what they see as the creation of a new hill track, and landowners will require to seek consent directly for the long-term retention of these tracks but if they are usefully located these can be a significant asset to the landowner.

The drive for a fully renewable generated electricity network is in full swing - and with added necessity. Landowners will be playing an important part in realising this ambition. Therefore, it is essential that they have adequate clarity, advice and professional support if and when the developers come knocking.



**Clive Meikle**

Partner, Head of Grid and Infrastructure  
clive.meikle@bidwells.co.uk



How we produce electricity may be changing but it still requires adequate infrastructure to meet consumer demand.

## BOLD AMBITIONS REQUIRE SWIFT ACTIONS

**The Scottish Government published the Draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) at the end of 2021 and this now sets the tone and key priorities for future development across Scotland. Writes Andrew Wood, Head of Development and Planning (Scotland).**

One of the objectives of the Framework is to increase the rural populations of Scotland and deliver vibrant communities in all rural areas. There are many bold objectives in the document linked to the Scottish Government's ambitions for the economy. Many of these goals are linked to the environmental impact of development and how this can be mitigated and also be designed in a way that improves and benefits the wellbeing of those in a community. The location and detail of developments to meet these goals will be vital to ensure they are aligned with the overarching policies.

The publication of the framework will now trigger the delivery of the next round of local authority prepared Local Development Plans (LDPs). This will commence with a call for sites and then the publication of an Evidence Report prior to the preparation of the proposed new plan. The Proposed Local Development Plan will then go forward, after consultation, for examination by Scottish Ministers, before being approved as the Adopted Local Development Plan for each area.

## Getting advice early and entering into dialogue with the local authority planning team is a vital part of the process

The key issue that landowners must be aware of is the next round of LDPs will have a 10-year timeframe, rather than five years under the previous legislation.

Local authorities are already gearing up to prepare these LDPs in many areas. Getting advice early and entering into dialogue with the local authority planning team is a vital part of the process to get your land identified as a development site. If you take into account the four to five-year preparation time of the plan and the 10-year period it will last for, you could be waiting much longer than 10 years to have a go at promoting your land again. It is a slow and lengthy process.

We act for a wide range of landowners and currently have approx. 2,500 homes under option to housebuilders on sites throughout central Scotland which are actively being promoted to local authorities, and a further 700 in the planning process. In the last year we have secured planning on four major sites for circa 750 new homes which are either under construction or a start on site is imminent.

The Taylor Wimpey site being developed at Maybury on the edge of Edinburgh; the new Crossford site at the Dunfermline westerly expansion with Stewart Milne

The Taylor Wimpey site being developed at Spencerfield at Inverkeithing is just one example where we have brought forward a site via option and promotion agreement with the respective landowner and achieved a successful development outcome.



# STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

Group; Upper Victoria at the northerly expansion of Carnoustie with Persimmon Homes; Stanley, Perthshire with Muir Homes and; Middleton, Pitlochry with A&J Stephen are all examples of the recent spread of successful sites. All of these were brought forward via option and promotion agreements with the respective landowners and have led to successful development and planning permissions.

A number of these sites have taken well over 10 years from inception to a deliverable planning consent and that was in a system that was expected to operate on a rotation of five-year local plans. However, we have seen that the actual plan period was rarely adhered to and for various reasons - whether it was a shortage of resources or technical oversights - it was not uncommon for it to take seven or more years for a plan to be adopted and, in some cases, much

longer. The new 10-year plan is supposed to deliver a faster, clearer and more certain planning process. However, time will tell as recent performance of the planning process does not indicate that matters will speed up.

## Time is our enemy

The majority of the aims and ambitions of Draft NPF4 are laudable and can be justified and supported, but it is time that is our enemy. Whether providing new homes to support our population, market housing or affordable, the reality is that (even with a favourable wind and rose-tinted glasses) if you have a site that is excellent and meets all the criteria but it is yet to be allocated in the LDP, a build start in five-years' time could be viewed as optimistic.

Beginning now, if we assume it will take a local authority two years to prepare a Local Development Plan and a further two years to get it adopted, we are already heading into 2026. For a development of any scale, due to all the upfront design and surveys that are required (and some of these could be carried out in tandem with the LDP), it is likely that it will take a further two years to obtain planning permission - if you're confident. So, all going to plan, we are well into 2027/28 at the earliest before a land sale can be expected and that is assuming your site is designated to deliver housing in the LDP at that time.

It is for all these reasons that prompt action - whether promoting the land personally or entering into an option and promotion agreement with a developer - is key to getting the process started. The rewards for this, or future generations, can be very good.

**Listen here to our latest podcast in association with Scottish Land & Estates (episode 10):**

**[www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk/resources/podcast](http://www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk/resources/podcast)**



**Andrew Wood**  
Head of Development and Planning (Scotland)  
[andrew.wood@bidwells.co.uk](mailto:andrew.wood@bidwells.co.uk)

# PLANNING SUCCESSES

## SPIRITED START TO THE YEAR FOR PLANNING TEAM

**Our planning team continues to expand its portfolio of clients across multiple business sectors throughout the whole of Scotland. Writes Corinne MacDougall, Associate, Planning.**

Increasingly, we are being appointed to deliver 'major' scale developments which require the added management of multidisciplinary teams and the ability to draw upon our resourcing and professional connections.

One of the key projects we have been involved with is the new malt production facility in Rothes Moray on behalf of Simpsons Malt Ltd. Working closely with the client, we submitted the Planning Permission in Principle application on time for the 100,000 tonne malting facility. Part of the process involved a five-hour online public consultation event which was later followed up by a further five-hour face-to-face event in Rothes.

The planning application submission was supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), managed and prepared by us alongside a suite of other supporting documents, and we await Moray Council's pending decision.

## PIONEERING REDEVELOPMENT

Towards the end of 2021, we were appointed as planning advisors to support Forestry & Land Scotland's pioneering Newton Nursery redevelopment which will facilitate new and innovative ways of working to maximise growing success against an increasingly challenging environment. The project will include new modern buildings, systems and machinery that will automate processes and support ongoing development at the site near Elgin.

This appointment ties in directly with the proposed commitments of the Draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), which identifies the 'Northern revitalisation' area of Scotland as being able to act as a strategic carbon and ecological 'mitigation bank' that can make a major contribution to

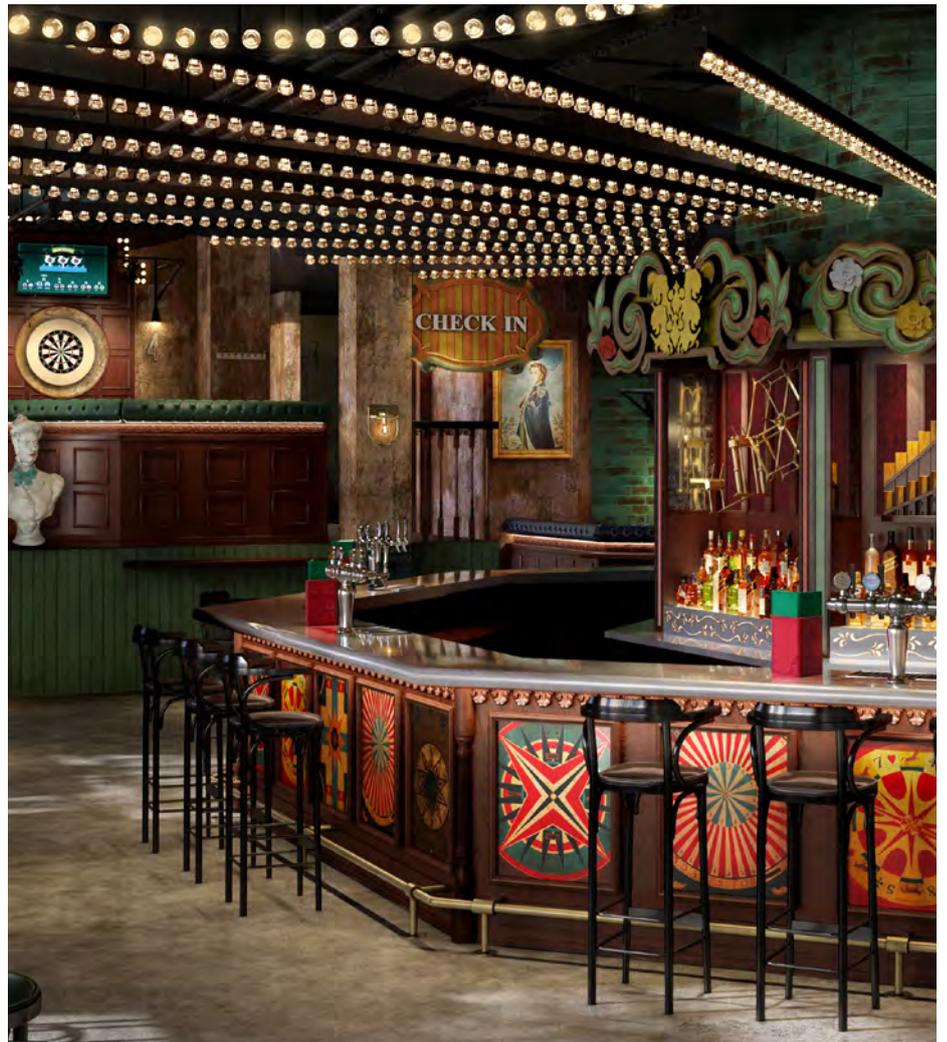
Scotland's climate change commitments. The Draft NPF4 confirms a programme of investment in forestry, woodland creation, native woodlands and peatland restoration will play a key role in reducing Scotland's emissions, providing investment opportunities, supporting ecosystems and biodiversity and benefiting current and future generations.

## CITY CENTRE SITES ON TARGET

We have enabled Flight Club's first social darts venue in Scotland. Earlier this year we obtained planning, listed building and advertisement consents for internal and external alterations to a Category B listed building in Glasgow's Central Conservation Area at 280 George Street, Glasgow. The timely success of these consents was underpinned by close monitoring of the applications and engagement with the planning case officer.

We also won an appeal against Glasgow City Council's refusal of advertisement consent for The Ark pub at North Frederick Street, Glasgow - also within the city's Central Conservation Area. The Reporter's assessment concluded that the proposed signage would be seen as part of the overall refreshed design of the public house and would respect the original design of the building, rather than appearing as an addition. Importantly, the character and appearance of the conservation area, in relation to amenity, would not be adversely affected.

Enabling Flight Club's first venue in Scotland.



# PLANNING SUCCESSES



The masterplan for the new mixed-use development at Castlandhill, Rosyth.

## MASTERPLANS TAKE SHAPE

On behalf of Alfred Stewart Property Foundation Ltd, we have been appointed to provide a range of planning consultancy services, including a masterplan, Local Development Plan (LDP) representations and planning applications for a phased residential development, woodland park and leisure facility at Castlandhill, Rosyth.

In advance of making representations to the next draft Fife LDP, and to assure the client's development aspirations are at the forefront of Fife Council's thoughts, our team has commenced early engagement with Fife Council's planning and economic development departments and Rosyth Community Council.

Wedge Homes has also appointed Bidwells to prepare and submit a 'major' planning application for residential development as part of the wider Luncarty South land use

allocation within the Perth & Kinross Local Development Plan 2 (adopted November 2019). The instruction includes the preparation of a masterplan by our Urban Design Studio, community consultation and the co-ordination and preparation of an EIA.

We are continuing our relationship with Peel Land and Property by preparing and submitting a planning application and supporting information for a change of use of a 20,000 sq ft unit at Straiton Retail Park (adjacent to the Edinburgh City Bypass). We were able to successfully negotiate planning permission under delegated powers which then allowed Marks & Spencer to open the first of their larger format food stores in Scotland.

In addition, we subsequently co-ordinated and submitted a planning application, including retail impact assessment, for the redevelopment of the lower terrace at the retail park, enabling Lidl to occupy the first phase of the redevelopment.



We continue to represent Peel Land and Property as they seek to further develop Straiton Retail Park on the outskirts of Edinburgh.

Bidwells team is also currently progressing pre-application enquiry discussions with Glasgow City Council in respect of a new retail scheme at Glasgow Harbour on behalf of Peel Land & Property.



**Corinne MacDougall**  
Associate, Planning  
corinne.macdougall@bidwells.co.uk

## PLENTY OF CARROT TO ENCOURAGE GREEN MANAGEMENT

**With climate, carbon, biodiversity and many other environmental concerns currently high on the agenda, farmers, landowners and land managers are under increasing pressure to play their part to improve the situation. Writes Amy Kincaid, Rural Surveyor.**

Many cannot afford to sacrifice income from their land (either through less intensive management or reducing the productive area) without some sort of financial compensation. Additionally, even on currently unproductive areas, environmental projects often need initial outlay with no guarantee of any payback or at what value.

However, the transition to greener and more sustainable methods of land management is not all about decreased financial viability and “stick” – there is plenty of “carrot” too.

There are many ways in which landowner and rural business incomes can be boosted by various environmental schemes. An obvious source of funding are grants and subsidies which provide a range of options. For example, the Nature Restoration Fund supports capital projects to restore wildlife and habitats, addressing biodiversity loss and climate change. The National Test Programme provides funding to support carbon audits and nutrient management

plans which will help define baseline indicators that seem likely to determine future agricultural support payments. Peatland ACTION supports the restoration of degraded peatlands, limiting the volume of carbon they release.

Additionally, the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) provides funding for both capital and management projects which encourage land to be managed in a more environmentally sound way. The options under the scheme are wide ranging – from payments for retention of winter stubble to wetland creation, away wintering sheep and organic farming, amongst many others. Some of these options can last for five years, with annual payments. There is also funding available for capital items, such as rhododendron control, slurry storage or restoration of river banks to name but a few.

## Environmental land management can add value to new or existing diversified enterprises.

Environmental land management can also boost income by adding value to new or existing diversified enterprises. As consumers become increasingly environmentally conscious, enterprises such as holiday accommodation, farm shops and wedding venues that boast eco-credentials are in greater demand. Nature restoration projects or net zero

businesses can be a powerful marketing tool and encourage increased revenue for many business initiatives. Healthy and biodiverse habitats with a range of species can also provide opportunities for new diversification projects such as photography courses or wildlife tours.

Another source of income is carbon units, currently available through the Woodland Carbon Code or Peatland Code. There are more carbon codes currently under development for other land uses which sequester carbon e.g. soil, hedgerows and saltmarsh codes, but these are not yet finalised. Carbon codes allow landowners to carry out projects that sequester carbon (or limit the release of carbon in the case of peatland), verify the number of carbon units that the project is abating and then either trade these units or keep them to mitigate internal emissions. With the carbon market burgeoning and more emitters looking to engage, carbon units have the potential to generate valuable income for land-based businesses.

Although many of these income streams alone do not provide the perfect answer to the future of land management, they can contribute towards enhanced biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions, whilst simultaneously helping make land holdings more financially viable.



**Amy Kincaid**  
Rural Surveyor  
amy.kincaid@bidwells.co.uk



## WOODLAND MARKET SHOWS NO SIGN OF SLOWING

**The forestry market remain buoyant and the demand for well-appointed Sitka spruce dominated plantations continues, driven by both institutional investors and investment funds, who continue to hold significant reserves looking to invest in medium to large-scale commercial woodlands. Writes Denis Torley, Partner, Forestry.**

The close of 2021 continued to see strong demand and prices for woodlands of all types as well as for planting land. The John Clegg / Tilhill Forest Management Report (November 2021) suggests that in open market sales, plantation prices have risen over 20% year on year.

In the north east of Scotland, mature

commercial plantations have continued to attract strong interest, consistently achieving over £30,000 per stocked hectare, as buyers seek value outwith the traditionally very competitive market for such crops in south west Scotland. This strengthening of demand in the north east is supported by the high levels of investment by the processing sector in the region over recent years. Medium-scale commercial farm woodlands, planted in the late 1990s/early 2000s under the Grampian Challenge Fund, are now coming into production, with those appearing on the property market attracting strong interest.

Age and scale continue to be determining factors in values achieved with exceptional prices continuing to be paid for fast-growing second rotation Sitka spruce crops at thicket stage. The unprecedented prices of such crops seen in 2019/2020 has continued into 2021.

These values were underpinned by continuing strong timber prices, and both these factors are also driving the increase in values of planting land. Additionally, aspirations to enter the carbon trading market via the sequestration of carbon by new woodland creation is pushing demand in the market. New land for afforestation is now regularly achieving in excess of £10,000 per hectare. A desire to rebalance investments and expectations that carbon values will rise in the medium-term are having an impact. However, projects seeking to enter this market will require to pass the Woodland Carbon Code's additionality test which is currently under review. Clarity on this issue may well influence the market in the near future.



**Denis Torley**  
Partner, Forestry  
denis.torley@bidwells.co.uk

## A GREAT TIME TO BE INVOLVED

**As we slowly return to our office environments (albeit in a hybrid working pattern) it is noticeable, just by scanning our staff location sheet, that Bidwells has enjoyed a marked period of growth. Writes Katrina Candy, Head of Communications (Scotland).**

Our teams are expanding and specialising in exciting new areas as we predict and address shifts in client focus and meet the demands of increasingly sophisticated investment and development markets.

Over the past six months, since our last magazine, we have welcomed new colleagues into our forestry, energy and renewables, natural capital and sustainable investment, planning, marine and estate management teams and we're still recruiting. We're bringing on board key people who recognise our ambition and our drive to deliver the best possible service to our clients.

How we manage our property assets has never been more important with an imperative and responsibility to get it

right for the planet. At a time when new technology and players are being brought to the renewables and infrastructure market and a whole mix of opportunities await those eager to invest in and enhance our natural capital, we are at the sharp end of facilitating projects which have a positive impact on climate and society.

Now is a great time to join Bidwells and we are looking to add experienced professionals to our Estate Management & Professional, Renewables and Forestry teams in all three of our office locations. We're seeking to speak with candidates who are looking for their first graduate role within a consultancy through to experienced senior professionals at partner level. If you or someone you may know is looking for a new position and you would be keen to have an informal chat about what opportunities we have available, please get in touch.

For the full job descriptions, please visit: <https://bidwells.livevacancies.co.uk> or contact:

**Gemma Pluck**  
gemma.pluck@bidwells.co.uk

## EVENTS DIARY

- Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust Scottish Auction – 5 May
- SLE annual conference (exhibitor) – 17 May
- Royal Highland Show Breakfast Briefing with Shepherd & Wedderburn – 24 June
- GWCT Scottish Game Fair (sponsor of the education arena) – 1-3 July
- Grantown Show – 11 August
- The Bidwells Rural Seminar Series – dates and venues TBA

**As we make a gradual and considered return to offices, we are looking forward to welcoming more new members to the team.**



**Aberdeen**

01224 974130

**Perth**

Broxden House  
Lamberkine Drive  
Perth PH1 1RA  
01738 630666

**Inverness**

Elm House, Cradlehall Business Park  
Inverness IV2 5GH  
01463 796050

**Fort William**

Carn Dearg House  
North Road  
Fort William PH33 6PP  
01397 702433

Bidwells is a trading name of Bidwells LLP, a limited liability partnership, registered in England and Wales with number OC344553. Registered office: Bidwell House Trumpington Road Cambridge CB2 9LD.

**[bidwells.co.uk](https://www.bidwells.co.uk)**