



River Spey at Kinchurdy Farm

Riparian Buffer Strip Creation – Interim Report

August 2018

Background

The west bank of the River Spey upstream of Boat of Garten had been identified as being in poor condition due to erosion and grazing pressure from livestock, particularly over-wintering cattle. Severe poaching is destabilising the banks and leading to diffuse pollution, which left unmanaged has the potential to breach SEPA's General Binding Rules (GBR). There are some existing riparian trees consisting predominantly of mature alders, but no evidence of regeneration, which is suppressed by browsing.

In the spring of 2018 the Spey Catchment Initiative in partnership with the landowner, Reidhaven Estates, embarked on a project to restore the riparian zone by fencing out livestock and planting native broadleaf trees to supplement natural regeneration of riparian woodland. The aspiration is to create a continuous riparian corridor of low density, naturally distributed woodland about 7.5 km long between Boat of Garten bridge (NGR NH 947 192) and Dalfaber (approx. NGR NH 912 134). The downstream section up to the boundary of Kinchurdy Farm was fenced and planted in 2014-15 under the Life+ Pearls in Peril project and there is existing riparian woodland at the Dalfaber end.

The project aims to achieve sustainable, long term improvements to the riparian and riverine environment at the site by:

- Reducing poaching causing sediment run-off
- Stabilising river banks and reducing erosion
- Protecting/improving in channel habitat and water quality, including suitability for Fresh Water Pearl Mussels and other qualifying species
- Improving riparian habitat through woodland creation/enhancement
- Achieving benefits to water quality and riverine habitat provided by riparian trees and other vegetation
- Achieving GBR compliance.

Funding has been made available through grant support from the Cairngorms National Park Authority matched by Reidhaven Estates. Trees and tree guards are being supplied at no cost to SCI by the Woodland Trust.

Progress to date

Phase 1 of the project was delivered in April and early May 2018. A 660m strip of the bank at the downstream end of the farm was stock fenced, with planting of approximately 720 mixed broadleaf trees completed during the first week of May.

Despite the extremely dry conditions and high temperatures over the summer, the planted trees have taken well with losses only in single figures, thanks largely to regular watering by the estate ghillie. Some trees have already emerged from their guards, and the more vulnerable species have been re-tubed to protect them from browsing. The field layer vegetation has quickly grown back in response to removal of grazing pressure and the bare, eroded areas of soil and sand are already mainly re-vegetated.

The before and after photos attached illustrate the rapid changes at the site.

The improvements have been well received by fishermen using the beat and other recreational users, and farming operations have not been adversely affected.

Next steps – Phase 2

Although not yet confirmed, good progress is being made towards securing funding and estate agreement for fencing and planting a strip extending a further approx. 1.2km upstream during autumn/winter 2018/19.

Penny Lawson
Spey Catchment Initiative Project Officer

08 August 2018

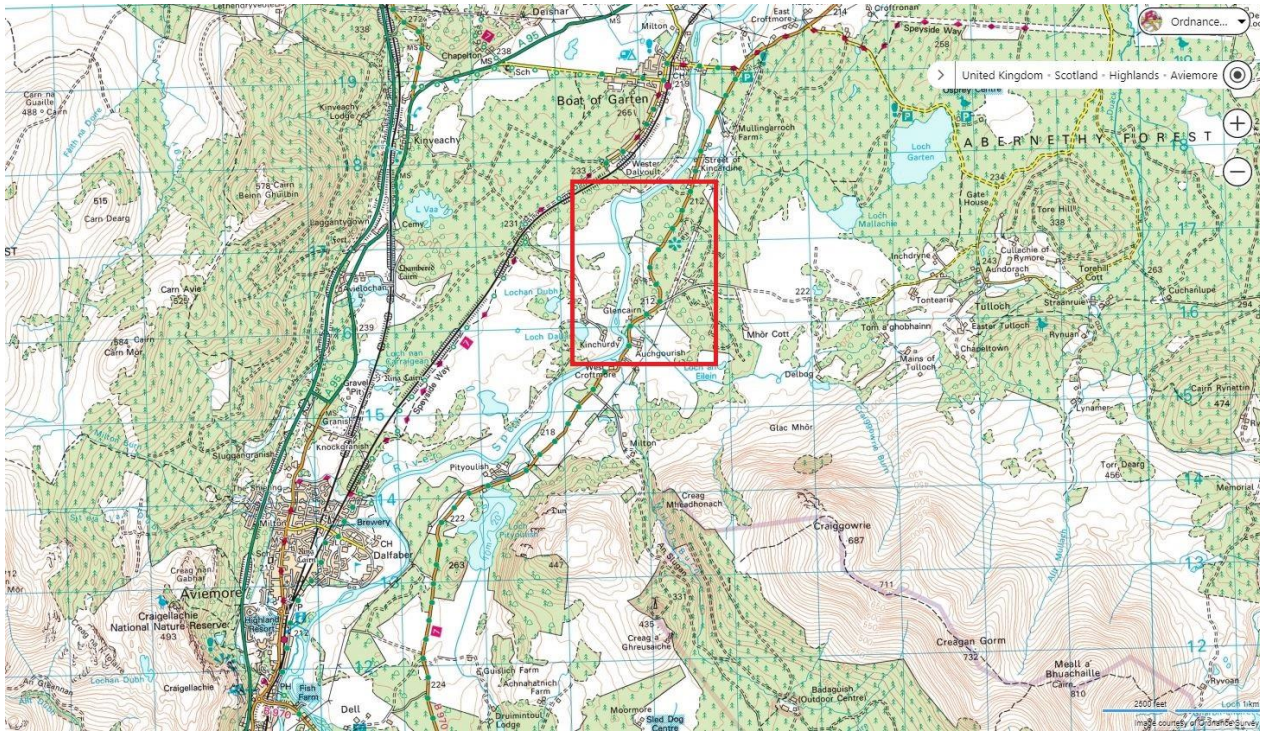
Before (March 2018)



After (August 2018)



Location Map



Site Map

