



Bealach Land Management Plan Summary

The Bealach Land Management Plan (LMP) area covers 1,874 ha of primarily conifer forest and open hill, located between Duror and Appin and stretching from the coastal margin of Loch Linnhe at the A828, to an elevation of 640 metres on the slopes of Fraochaidh.

Bealach LMP was approved on 10/02/2020 and runs for 10 years.

Sitka spruce is the predominant species, with oak/hazel/birch woodland along the riparian areas and birch on upper slopes and extending beyond the forest boundary on higher ground. The forested area was mainly planted in the 1970's, with smaller areas of 1980's, 90's and more recent planting, and modest areas of native broadleaved woodland in riparian and on hill sides. Limited harvesting has been undertaken previously but newly constructed forest roads facilitate felling and restocking and further roads are planned, to access coupes in the south.

The strategy now is to maintain tree cover within the forested area rather than pulling back, as well as raising the tree line in places by accepting natural regeneration of native broadleaves further up the hill. Proposed is a modest increase, over time, in the proportion of Sitka spruce and other conifer species but also an increase in broadleaf trees, mainly through natural regeneration in riparian zones, along rides and forest edges.

Vision

The prime focus at Bealach will continue to be timber production, while protecting and expanding native broadleaves (in riparian and on upper slopes) and other priority habitats.

Lack of visibility from outwith the forest and low recreational use mean that felling programmes can be bolder, creating larger coupes and sequencing to accommodate road construction programmes, within the framework of good landscape and visual amenity.

The native broadleaved riparian woodland will be expanded through natural regeneration, with limited planting of locally native species where necessary; linking PAWS/ASNW with other areas of remnant native woodland through corridors of open broadleaf habitat.

Suitable habitat for Chequered Skipper butterflies will also be extended by planting native broadleaves (and natural regeneration) to link to riparian woodland.

Elsewhere, the focus will be on commercial conifer plantations producing sawlog timber for local and distant markets, with higher quality timber production focused on the more accessible and better- quality ground to the North and East of the Salachan burn.

Within this area to the East, the catchment is sensitive to acidification and morphological pressures from conifer species, so conifers will be kept back a distance from gullies to create a buffer zone of 20 m from the larger burns/gullies and 10 m from streams/gullies < 1 m wide.

All operations will be planned to protect the catchment and water environment.

To help slow the spread of Phytophthora, larch will be removed during clearfell harvesting operations and from accessible adjacent coupes where this would not create wind blow problems.



Some roads will be completed early to facilitate larch removal in the event of a Statutory Plant Health Notice.

Areas previously identified for Long Term Retention will now be harvested during the felling cycle.

Where conifers are in check due to site conditions in both northern and southern sections of the forest, the less accessible stands will be allowed to grow on and develop as mixed successional conifer / broadleaved woodland. The more accessible stands will be harvested but not replanted. Instead, natural regeneration of broadleaved and conifer species will be allowed in these areas, which will be managed eventually for timber production if growth rates and quality are acceptable, or for natural heritage interest if not. A transition period of mixed broadleaves and conifers may give way to primarily broadleaves in some areas and conifers in others. The slow growth, sparse tree cover and many open areas provide good hunting habitat for raptors and other priority species. These areas will be left to develop naturally.

The primary objectives for the plan area are

- Maximise returns from conifers and productive broadleaves, where growing conditions support this
 - Maintain conifer woodland by restocking felled areas to the timber line where appropriate, focusing to the East and North of the burn and by planting adjacent open ground, avoiding areas of natural or cultural heritage interest
 - Protect the vulnerable catchment area in the eastern section of forest north of the burn by creating buffer zones to keep conifers well back from gullies and burns and managing operations to minimise felling impacts on the riparian zone
 - Simplify conifer felling and restocking cycles; optimise road construction cost/benefit and for better fit in landscape
 - Conservation management of existing Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland / Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (ASNW / PAWS) and expansion of native woodland in riparian zones and across hill, to link existing PAWS/AWS areas
 - Strengthen riparian broadleaved woodland by planting and encouraging natural regeneration of native broadleaves; managing for productive broadleaved woodland where possible
 - Maintain existing habitat for Chequered skipper butterfly and identified areas of priority open habitat throughout the LMP area - through maintenance of grass sward and open broadleaved canopy
 - Maintain access for existing recreational uses

Total Plan Area	1,874 hectares (ha)
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Summary of Land Management Plan Proposals

Species Breakdown	(current)	(end of plan period)
Sitka spruce	585 ha (49%)	627 ha (51%)
Birch and other broadleaves	125 ha (10%)	244 ha (20%)
Larch	87 ha (7%)	65 ha (5%)
other conifers	28 ha (2%)	39 ha (3%)
Open space/ successional	376 ha (31%)	248 ha (20%)

Planned Operations	2019– 2029 plan period
Felling	199 ha
Thinning	11 ha
Restocking	193 ha
New planting / nat. regen.	34 ha
Existing broadleaved natural regeneration strengthened in riparian areas	89 ha
Existing broadleaved natural regeneration strengthened on hill slopes	43 ha
Road construction	7 km
Significant Environment / Conservation Features	
Designated sites	No designated sites but significant areas of PAWS/ASNW along Salachan Burn
Minimum Intervention	62.07 ha – ASNW in main riparian zone, on slopes (for Chequered skipper butterflies) and in larger gullies.
Natural Reserve	27 ha
Caledonian Pine Wood	No Caledonian pinewood remnants present
Priority Species 1	Chequered skipper butterflies
Priority Species 2	Pine marten
Priority Species 3	Red and black grouse on open ground within LMP area (outwith forested areas)



Critical Success Factors:

- The construction of approximately 9.5 km of forest roads (about 7 km between 2019 and 2028) is essential to implement the phased felling of clearfell coupes, selective felling of conifers from PAWS/ASNW and thinning of potentially productive broadleaved stands
- Adequate control of browsing:
 - Deer control will be essential for the establishment of broadleaved and soft conifer species within the prescribed timescale and to protect key habitats
 - Careful timing of planting will be required, to minimise risk of Hylobius damage
- The phased felling of commercial conifers in 199 ha over the first 10 years is required, to restock commercial conifers; restore native woodland on PAWS sites and develop open broadleaved habitat in riparian areas, including felling conifers in approximately 14 ha of PAWS
- The establishment of windfirm edges during felling will be key to reducing wind blow risk and damage

Consultation and Further Information:

Council area: Highland Council

Community Council: Duror and Kentallen Community Council; Appin Community Council also have an interest as the LMP area is contiguous with Appin forest.

Consultation: online consultation, with responses received from SNH, SEPA and Appin Community Council

For further information on the Plan, please contact the planning team at enquiries.west@forestryandland.gov.scot



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Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba

Location map



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Bealach forest location

Author: Mandle Currie
Scale @ A3: 1:50,000
Date: 10/06/2019

Legend

Forest Roads

— Forest Roads

Blocks

■ Blocks

Land Management Plan Areas

■ Land Management Plan Areas



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