



Appin Forest

Draft Land Management Plan Summary

The Appin Land Management Plan (LMP) covers 645 ha of land extending from sea level to 437 metres, located near the settlement of Appin, about 31 km NE of Oban. The forest comprises a mosaic of Semi-Natural Woodland (SNW) and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS); areas of mixed conifers and broadleaves; a component of commercial conifers and large tracts of open ground including some agricultural land (the in-bye portion of which has recently been disposed).

The forest is highly visible in the landscape and forms an important backdrop to the coastal scenery of North Lorn; the Lynn of Lorn National Scenic Area lies adjacent to the SW boundary of Appin forest. The 2021-31 LMP should be viewed in the context of the wider group of linked forests under Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) management in this part of North Argyll and the Strategic Plan that will guide management across this wider area.

Appin is a small forest but the associated open ground extends northwards to Bealach and there is potential for continuous native woodland cover from Appin to Bealach. The intention is to join Bealach and Appin into one LMP in future. The forested hill (Dallens Hill) is an important feature in an historic landscape that is of national importance and future management will create a better fit with landform and enhance the landscape character, which is defined by the native woodland and open ground habitats.

The forested area covers about 285 ha, with 96 ha under broadleaves and 90 ha under conifers, the rest of the area has been felled. More than 50% of the land holding is open ground, dominated by a series of mountain ridges running parallel to the coast; 316 ha of the open ground has been identified as plantable.

Although the conifer mix is fairly diverse across a relatively small area, there is a significant area of larch, which will be felled at a suitable opportunity. The major areas of conifers were established between 1930 and the 1970's (with the largest area of planting in the 1960's) and a more recent area of 2nd rotation restocking but there are small areas of old, mature conifers and broadleaves.

Felled areas are covered with advance regeneration of a range of conifer and broadleaved tree species. Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) including Rhododendron, Western hemlock and in this context beech, are spreading through the forest. Rhododendron is encroaching from neighbouring ground to the South and although work is ongoing to control this incursion, an area of which was subject to a Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) for *Phytophthora ramorum*, there remains an extensive spread. Bushes occur on rock outcrops, cliff faces and steep slopes that are difficult to treat and there is ingress onto the open hill. The construction of ATV tracks will facilitate this ongoing vegetation control as well as assisting deer management. The forest contains 11.6 ha of larch, most of which will be removed in the first 5 years of the LMP.



Restoration of at least 85% of PAWS on FLS land is a priority but in Appin, it is not feasible to attempt this until the INNS are under control. Therefore, the plan is to accept existing natural tree regeneration, which is extensive; weed/clean out undesirable species, including Sitka spruce; implement a thinning programme at an early stage and then manage as Continuous Cover Forestry. Over time, native broadleaved and conifer species will be favoured, eventually transitioning to native woodland in the PAWS areas.

Mature specimen conifers, veteran trees and all native broadleaves will be retained, along with standing dead wood where this does not present a hazard but mature Western hemlock and beech trees are seeding into felled areas and road /track sides and will be felled at the earliest opportunity. Larch trees will be felled early where possible or access established to enable felling in the event of an SPHN. Conifer stands planted in the last 15-20 years will be thinned and managed as CCF where possible. The exception is the felled coupe at the South- end of the forest, which is not suitable for establishment of broadleaves or mixed woodland at this stage due to the high degree of Rhododendron infestation in the vicinity. Here, Sitka spruce will be planted as this species has the greatest potential to cope with the competition and unfavourable conditions that prevail. The hill face on this side is highly visible and is a major feature in the landscape when viewed from the South and nearby settlements, so the planting will be diversified as far as possible under the circumstances, by including a birch/ Sitka mix further up the hill, transitioning to mixed and broadleaved woodland further North and West. It may then be possible eventually, to establish broadleaved woodland on the hillside here in the longer term, if the Rhododendron can be controlled adequately.

Watercourses will be protected during harvesting operations, conifers removed and riparian corridors of native broadleaved woodland developed that will link with existing native woodland and the open hill.

The strip of land between the A828 road and the shore will be managed to retain views and ensure that the area is safe.

The native broadleaved scrub woodland that currently covers the ridges extending North towards Bealach will be expanded, eventually linking with native woodland at Bealach to form continuous woodland along the three mile stretch.

Opportunities for growing more areas of productive forest will be explored, focusing on broadleaves. Coupe sizes will be small- scale, reflecting the landscape character. Archaeological and conservation features and priority habitats and species will be protected. New ATV tracks will make some of the heritage features more accessible for visitors.

Total Plan Area = 645 ha



Objectives

- Focus conifer production on the most suitable areas (in the context of the wider group of linked forests) and review options on steep and marginal ground, to optimise production and continue to contribute to regional timber production targets and maximise returns
- In the longer term, once invasive species are under control, enhance and expand native woodland in SNW/PAWS zones, through removal of non-native conifers during subsequent thinning cycles and by promoting natural regeneration of locally native species. In the short term, accept and manage the existing natural regeneration of mixed species that occurs
- Work with neighbours to manage deer populations, to minimise grazing / browsing pressure on planted and naturally regenerating trees
- Continue to remove Rhododendron and other Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)
- Plan for timely pre-emptive removal of larch in response to the previous identification of Phytophthora ramorum on Rhododendron stands
- Review long term felling and restock plans in the South and West-facing slopes in the southern section of the forest, to enhance visual amenity and reflect priorities for timber production, landscape and environment
- Develop options for woodland creation on some of the open ground in the northern section of the forest block, while protecting priority open ground habitats

Summary of Land Management Plan Proposals

Species Group	Current – 2021		Year 10 – 2031	
	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%
Sitka Spruce	48.4	7.49	30.6	4.74
Norway Spruce	22.8	3.53	5.5	0.85
Larches	11.6	1.8	3.52	0.54
Mixed Conifers	27.7	4.3	42.48	6.58
Mixed Broadleaves	1	0.15	0	0
Native Broadleaves	121	18.73	135.8	21.02
Successional / felled/ open Space	159.36	24.67	173.96	26.93
Managed internal open space	17.25	2.67	17.25	2.67
Total	409.11	63.33	409.11	63.33
Open hill	233.73	36.18	233.73	36.18
Agriculture				
Open Water	3.16	0.49	3.16	0.49
Total	646	100	646	100



Planned Operations	2021– 2031 plan period
Felling	35.72 ha
Thinning	54.06 ha
Restocking	115.07 ha

Significant Environment / Conservation Features	
Designated sites	0
Minimum Intervention	77.69
Natural Reserve	0
Long Term Retention	0
Caledonian Pine Wood	0
Priority species 1	Wood ants
Priority species 2	Red squirrels
Priority species 3	White tailed eagles

Critical Success Factors:

- Effective control of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) is essential to achieve successful tree establishment in restock coupes
- Control of grazing / browsing by deer or livestock, to enable establishment of conifer and broadleaved tree species
- Timely implementation of weeding, cleaning and thinning programmes to manage existing natural regeneration for productive forestry and over a longer period, to transition to native woodland in PAWS sites
- Implementation of an effective thinning programme in established conifer / mixed stands as early as possible
- Late thinning and restocking of more mature stands, to manage as CCF
- Resolution of access issues on ground to North of LMP area - this will inform options on development of an area of commercially productive native woodland or whether this will be non- commercial native woodland



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba

Consultation and Further Information:

Council area and Community Council: Argyll and Bute Council; Appin Community Council

Consultation: events / consultees: A consultation event for the LMP Brief was held on 10th January 2020

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