Woodland Grazing Plan

Note: Links take you to guidance in the relevant sections of the Woodland Grazing Toolbox

1: Introduction

1a General information about the plan

Date of plan: 12/05/2020
Plan period: 5 years
Plan produced by: Rowan Associates as part of a SRDP Rural Priorities scheme, case no. 13976.
Existing/past surveys and management plans: Biodiversity Management Plan and Woodland Condition Survey produced in 1997 (WGS ref: 013222900). Butterfly survey 2005 and 2010.

1b Woodland management objectives

Summarise your long-term objectives (aims) e.g. ensuring woodland continuity, and short-term objectives, e.g. encouraging natural regeneration. Woodland grazing must help meet one or more of your short-term objectives.

The long-term aim of management is to ensure woodland continuity and enhance biodiversity.

Stock were taken off the wood in 2008, since when there has been a small amount of natural regeneration but the field layer has become rank. The short-term objectives of this plan are to manage the woodland and open ground to:

- preserve the biodiversity of the woodland glade and open ground habitats by reducing the rankness of the field layer
- encourage further tree regeneration on woodland edges, safeguard existing regeneration and allow the development of a woodland understorey.

These objectives are achievable through an agreed and monitored cattle grazing regime combined with effective deer control.

2: Woodland description

Location: Fort William

Total area: 46.8 ha.

Altitudinal range: 5m. – 110m.

Physical attributes (climate, geology & soil types): Moderately high rainfall, mild winters. Variable metamorphic rocks with acid soils. Wet, flushed, mineral-rich soils at the lower, northern end of the woodland. Two minor watercourses, with steeply sloping banks in places.

Conservation designations: No formal designations. The oak woodland is classed as 'ancient woodland'. Charcoal hearths and a ruined stone dyke occur within the oak woodland.

3: Habitat types *You will need a habitat map to complete the following sections.*

3a. Native woodland site types

Woodland site type or site type mosaic	**Total area (ha)**	**Key features,** including Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat. Include a brief description of the site type/mosaic, including approximate percentages of mosaic components.
Acidic dry	10.5	Upland Oakwood BAP. Oak dominant but hazel locally frequent. Mosses and liverworts on oak and hazel. Red squirrel.
Acidic dry	5.8	Upland Birchwoods BAP. Red squirrel. Some patches of wetter birch woodland (NVC W4) with a *Molinia*-dominant field layer (5%).

Neutral/base-rich wet	3.1	Wet Woodland BAP. Alder and willow woodland. Herb-rich field layer. Red squirrel.
Acidic dry	0.6	Established regeneration of birch with some willow, c. 60cm. in height.

3b. Habitat types other than native woodland

Open ground and non-native woodland habitats

Habitat type or habitat mosaic	**Total area (ha)**	**Key features,** including BAP habitat, if present. Include a brief description of the habitat or habitat mosaic. Include approximate percentages of mosaic components.
Acid grassland	5.5	Contains small patches of bracken with a grassy understorey (5%).
Heathland/acid grassland mosaic (70%/30%)	19.9	Supports a colony of marsh fritillary butterflies in a patch of damp, moderately herb-rich grassland. Localised, browsed birch and willow seedlings.
Bracken	0.6	Understorey variable, locally with a grassy understorey (c.95%). Some denser stands with leaf litter dominant in the understorey (5%).
Conifer woodland	0.8	Mature stand with impoverished field layer.

4: Condition, biodiversity and cultural heritage objectives of key habitats

See Assessing Herbivore Impact in Woodlands: An Observation-based Method for additional guidance

Key woodland or open ground habitat	**Current condition**		**Primary biodiversity and /or cultural heritage objectives**	**Desired condition**	
	Herbivore impact level	**Structure class**		**Herbivore impact level** *(Short term, ≤ 5 years)*	**Structure class** *(Long term, >10 years)*
Acidic dry woodland (birch/oak woodland)	Low	5	Maintain existing woodland cover with canopy gaps. Maintain or increase red squirrel population	Low	7
Neutral/base-rich wet woodland (alder woodland)	Low	5	Maintain existing woodland/open ground mosaic. Maintain or increase red squirrel population	Low	7
Established regeneration	Medium	3	Increase woodland canopy cover through natural regeneration	V. low to low	4
Acid grassland	V. low	1	Maintain area as open ground, enhance biodiversity	Medium to high	1
Heathland/acid grassland mosaic	Low	1	Maintain area as open ground. Maintain or increase marsh fritillary population	Low to medium	1
Bracken	Absent	1	Reduce density & rate of spread of bracken	Medium	1

5: Constraints

Using the headings below, outline any constraints or issues that may affect the implementation of your grazing plan.

Grazing tenure & availability of stock/graziers:
The grazier will be the tenant farmer. He has stock on adjacent land that will be available for woodland grazing.

Availability of monitoring personnel:
The monitoring programme will be established with the help of a professional woodland surveyor. Ongoing monitoring will be undertaken by the tenant farmer. Specialised monitoring for marsh fritillary butterflies will be undertaken by volunteers.

Obligations:
The WGS has finished. There are no outstanding obligations.

Wild herbivore management:
The wood is browsed by red and roe deer. Currently there are an estimated 10 deer/100ha. (see attached Woody Wood Deer Management Plan). Deer numbers will be reduced to less than 5 deer/100 ha. and numbers monitored as specified in the deer management plan. The deer controller will be the tenant farmer.
There are no rabbits.

Obstacles to stock movement:
There are no obstacles to stock movement.

Incompatible biodiversity or cultural heritage objectives:
Low grazing levels should be compatible with all biodiversity objectives, though bracken treatment may be required if cattle fail to have sufficient impact on bracken spread. Localised tree regeneration has occurred despite a fairly high deer population. A combination of stock re-introduction and a reduction in deer numbers should allow regeneration to continue whilst improving habitat for invertebrates. Stock will preferentially graze acid grassland habitat.

Other constraints:
New stock fencing will be required. Fencing will avoid damage to archaeological features.
Access for stock is via adjacent fields. No cattle handling facilities will be needed.

6: Grazing management

6a: Grazing management units

Describe how the wood will be grazed, e.g. as one or more grazing management units. Show the areas of the management units and any operations required to achieve your biodiversity and cultural heritage objectives, such as exclosure fences, on a ***Grazing Management Map.***

The wood will be grazed as one management unit. If new regeneration is not becoming established at the end of 5 years, consideration will be given to dividing the wood into 2 management units or establishing a regeneration exclosure.

6b: Grazing regime

For each grazing management unit, describe the species & breed of grazing animal, the initial stocking density required to achieve your biodiversity/cultural heritage objectives & whether grazing will be seasonal or year-round.
A stocking density calculation should be included as an appendix to this plan.

Grazing management unit 1:
Initially 9 heifers (Luing cattle) to be grazed for 100 days, August to October. Numbers to be adjusted according to results of monitoring. A reduction to 7 heifers for 100 days anticipated if natural regeneration is being held in check.

Grazing management unit 2:

7: Monitoring and review

Under the headings below, describe your monitoring programme for tracking the success of the grazing plan

Method of monitoring:
The Herbivore Impact Assessment Form will be completed for the 6 habitats listed in section 4. Results will be compared with previous monitoring visits to determine progress and adjustments needed, if any, to the grazing regime.

Frequency & timing of monitoring:
Twice a year, immediately before the start of grazing and shortly before grazing is due to end.

Who will undertake the monitoring:
The tenant farmer/grazier

8: Actions

8a Grazing regime *Summarise what you propose to do to achieve your biodiversity and cultural heritage objectives.*
Note that the yearly breakdown can only be provisional – you may need to adapt it according to the findings of the monitoring programme.

Grazing Management Unit *(from section 6a)*	**Grazing regime** *(from section 6b)*			**Frequency of monitoring** *(from section 7)*	**Year**
	Species/breed	**No. of animals**	**Duration of grazing**		

One unit	Luing cattle (heifers)	9	August to October	Twice a year	2020-2025

8b Other operations & activities *(e.g. stock fencing) Show operations on the Grazing Management Map*		
Quantity	**Operation**	**Year**
800 m.	New stock fencing	2020
0.6 ha.	Bracken control	2020
2.3 ha.	Natural regeneration, native woodland	2025

To complete your Woodland Grazing Plan, include the following:

- Habitat Map
- Grazing Management Map