

Appendix IV – FDP Brief

Background Information

The Lael Forest Design Plan area is situated in Ross-shire, approximately five miles south of the village of Ullapool. The plan area extends to over 870 ha of largely mixed coniferous forests. The forest of Lael is predominantly productive with recreation also being a management priority. Landscape is an important issue, given the forest's close proximity to the main A835 tourist route to Ullapool, the far north west and the Western Isles. The forest is also prominent in the landscape when viewed from Ullapool and busy viewpoints on the A832 Dundonnell road. The woodlands are of significance for biodiversity having a high potential impact on water quality and containing significant PAWS area. Badger, pine marten, wildcat, peregrine falcon and red squirrel are also recorded locally.

Statement of Intent

The plan area will contribute toward biodiversity targets with full restoration of PAWS, expansion of native woodland and restoration of riparian woodland. In order to maintain the productive capacity of the forest in the long term, the remaining areas of productive soils will be assessed for site suitability to sustain timber production considering predicted changes in the local climate and restock species will be chosen accordingly. Areas affected by Dothistroma Needle Blight will be prematurely felled to protect forest health and maximise the amount of recoverable timber although at the time of this plan revision scots pine stands are among the healthiest in the forest district.

Brief & Objectives

The forest design plan will be drawn up in line with the Scottish Forestry Strategy's seven key themes, but with particular reference to those themes which are identified by the North Highland Forest District's Strategic Plan as significant in relation to the FDP area. These are:

- Climate Change
- Timber
- Community Development
- Access and Health
- Environmental Quality
- Biodiversity

The following paragraphs describe how North Highland Forest District will achieve the objectives listed above, with specific reference to the Forest District Strategic Plan.

North Highland Forest District Strategic Plan Target:	How This Forest Will Contribute:	How We Will Monitor the Achievement of This Target:
Key Theme One – Climate Change		
<i>(1.06) By using the Ecological Site Classification System and improved silvicultural techniques we will make increased use of resilient species to provide insurance for the future.</i>	The FD will concentrate productive conifer and broadleaves on appropriate soils, using species that will be resistant to pathogens.	Coupe objectives will be agreed at the harvesting 75% completion stage and recorded in the workplan by the Programme Manager. Achieve the area of restocking detailed in the coupe summary of this plan to be reviewed at years five and ten by the planning forester.
<i>(1.03) We will continue to support developing local woodfuel and biomass initiatives. We will also continue to grow our local firewood sales, both direct to customer and through local firewood businesses.</i>	We will prioritise the recovery of the maximum amount of wood fibre from sites. Where it is practical we will continue to provide firewood for local domestic users. We will work with the Ullapool Trust Community Woodfuel Project to identify suitable supplies from the NFE.	The Harvesting Forester will balance supply with demand, recording sales through local systems.
<i>(1.09) We will comply with Forest and Water Guidelines in a competent and effective manner.</i>	We will continue to enhance riparian woodland by the planting of appropriate species. We will ensure that we do not contribute to the decline in status of any water body within or affected by the FDP area. We will seek to build a productive working relationship with the Wester Ross Salmon Fisheries Board and SEPA to identify vulnerable areas and strengthen environmental resilience.	The condition of the affected water bodies will be monitored by SEPA. This will be considered as a critical factor at the Mid Term Review and be reported on by the Planning Forester.
Key Theme Two – Timber		
<i>(2.01) We will produce a forecast of timber production and match those predictions (currently 333m3/yr) to subsequent marketing plans.</i>	Production will be managed using the FD workplan system and coordinated by the FD programme manager to ensure programmes match forecast.	We will achieve clearfell production, in line with the management coupe plan and the volumes detailed in the coupe summary of this plan, explaining any variances where they occur. To be reviewed at years five and ten by the planning forester.
<i>(2.02) We will maintain our compliance with UKWAS, which will enable our customers to gain certification for their products for that and other associated certification schemes, e.g. FCS.</i>	UKWAS compliance will be maintained by employing sound management principles outlined in the Forest Design Plan.	We will continue to contribute towards national sustainability targets and will be audited by SGS at the determined frequency to ensure compliance.
<i>(2.04) We will choose species of correct origins (including improved stock) to best match our sites and will follow sound silvicultural practice to provide quality growing stock at the correct density.</i>	In the absence of Lodgepole pine, nutritional mixtures will include Sitka spruce in mixture with Japanese larch, Macedonian pine and other species appropriate to site and soils. Where possible ALP will be utilised.	We will agree species choice between operations and planning at harvesting 75% completion site meetings.

	On less challenging soils alternative species will be used to provide increased yields.	Compliance with agreed species choice will be monitored by the Programme Manager using the workplan system. Species choice and restocking boundaries will be monitored (10% of each year's programme) by the Planning Foresters on an ongoing basis and reported on at years five and ten.
<i>(2.05) We will work to increase the current annual thinning volume (26km3) and ensure all suitable areas are thinned.</i>	Where soils and exposure allow we will continue to maximise production and quality. We will seek to expand our thinning programme on steep ground, identifying resources through business planning systems.	Thinning will be monitored by the Programme Manager using the Thinning Control Programme.
<i>(2.06) We will continue to use self- thinning, nutritional species mixtures on sites with low fertility and on sites where thinning will result in crop instability.</i>	We will adopt the use of pathogen resistant species to nurse productive crops to ensure that fertiliser use is reduced. Where heather growth is a significant factor in low growth rates we will treat it with herbicides as an alternative to fertiliser.	Operations foresters will ensure that any programme of fertiliser is justified and approved following detailed foliar analysis.
<i>(2.13) We will increase the area of broadleaved woodland in the district from 1% to 5% by 2013.</i>	The inclusion of riparian woodland will have a significant impact on the proportion of the FD covered by broadleaf woodland. This will include expanding aspen dominated woodland. We will maximise the use of productive native broadleaved species where suitable soils coincide with PAWS.	The Environment Manager will ensure that riparian and other native woodland is monitored using existing spatial planning tools.
Key Theme Four – Community Development		
<i>(4.03) We will encourage communities that wish to become more involved in the management of, or outputs from, their local forests</i>	We will continue to work with the Ullapool Community Trust and with the wider community to identify suitable projects and funding opportunities.	The CRT Manager will monitor and record the outcomes of joint projects and will ensure local staff liaise with the groups mentioned.
Key Theme Five – Access & Health		
<i>(5.04) We will work with local access officers to identify those routes on the national forest estate that will form part of the core path network.</i>	We will continue to strengthen our relationship with the local access officer by regular communication. We will continue to improve the access route to Beann Dearg by improved internal landscaping.	Monitored by the Stewardship Forester and reported on through Business Monitoring Review.
<i>(5.05) We will protect public rights of way through woodland and take them into account in forest design and management.</i>	We will ensure that the status of the Core Path Network is protected during all operations and is enhanced by the forest planning process.	The Design Planning Forester will ensure that core paths are highlighted at revision stage and operations staff will liaise with local access office staff to ensure that access rights are protected.
Key Theme Six – Environmental Quality		
<i>(6.01) Detailed site planning and consultation with key stakeholder (particularly fisheries boards and SEPA), will be used to identify site and downstream issues for inclusion in subsequent operations.</i>	These forests form a fundamental component of the Loch Broom Catchment and all operations proposed will be carried out with water quality protection very much to the fore. SEPA has been a very helpful consultee during the scoping phase of this FDP revision.	The status of water bodies will be monitored at year five and ten reviews by the Planning Forester, using SEPA data.

<i>(6.05) We will take action to reduce sedimentation, including utilising higher quality roadstone.</i>	We will ensure that Forest & Water Guidelines and Controlled Activities Regulations are adhered to and that a robust network of riparian woodland is established. Extra measures will be taken when working coupes adjacent to Corrieshalloch Gorge to protect populations of <u>Lipsothrix ecucullata</u> . This will include siltation traps to reduce sedimentation and importing highest quality roading materials.	The Environment Manager will record the development of riparian woodland using existing FCS systems. Operations will be guided by the work plan process.
<i>(6.06) We will continue to include landscape as a major consideration in long-term forest planning and gradually resolve issues such as hard edges and unnatural geometric boundaries.</i>	We will design management coupes – working closely with the FCS Landscape Architect - to enhance the landscape with particular reference to the areas visible from the main tourist routes and Ullapool Village.	We will consult with the FCS Landscape Architect and ensure that landscape design follows best practice. Coupe shapes will be audited by the planning forester at years five and ten.
<i>(6.07) Where site or access conditions demand high cost solutions to landscape amelioration which cannot be delivered through conventional operations we will pursue the necessary additional resources</i>	The steep slopes of Creag an Fhithich above Inverbroom Lodge present a significant challenge for operations, however for landscape and biodiversity reasons it is important that the current larch crop is removed. We will secure the resources required to develop infrastructure to work these coupes safely and sensitively over the period of the plan.	The Programme Manager will incorporate the required roading into the operations programme, agreeing prescriptions using the workplanning process and will schedule the coupes through the BP process.
<i>(6.09) We will continue to improve the aesthetic value of the woodlands along major tourist routes to increase visitor enjoyment</i>	The A835 is a major tourist route, providing access to the north west and the Outer Hebrides. Lael Forest runs alongside the road for approximately 6 miles and the forest garden is adjacent to the road. We will establish native woodland along the full length of the forest, adjacent to the road to improve the aesthetic value of the forest and provide a visual and physical barrier between productive woodland and passing traffic.	The establishment of the native woodland will progress within the agreed management coupe phases. Progress will be monitored by the Design Plan Forester at 5yr and 10yr reviews.
<i>(6.10) We will continue to work with local archaeologists and Historic Scotland to protect the ancient monuments in our care and to ensure that cultural heritage issues are adequately addressed in any proposed developments (including acquisition of bare land).</i>	This FDP area has abundant archaeology, both scheduled and unscheduled. We will work with both Historic Scotland and the FCS archaeologist to deliver a programme of prioritised protection and conservation work. Operations will ensure that new coupes are surveyed prior to felling to ensure any undiscovered heritage interests are protected from unnecessary damage.	The Environment Manager will ensure that archaeology is monitored using the existing SAM Plan system and ensure that operations do not damage sites through using the workplan system.
Key Theme Seven – Biodiversity		
<i>(7.05) Progress will continue in restoring PAWS sites, normally by thinning to gradually remove the non-native species.</i>	Full surveys of the PAWS areas within the FDP area will inform the work programme, working towards full restoration. Where soils allow, we will restock PAWS with productive broadleaf species allowing the native flora to recolonise areas currently under exotic conifer plantation.	The Environment Manager will monitor the management and restoration of PAWS using existing environment systems.
<i>(7.07b) We will continue to restructure our large, even-aged, single species plantations through the forest design plan process. Improving species, age and habitat diversity will remain a priority.</i>	We will utilise a more diverse range of species and continue to promote the expansion of native woodland to enhance biodiversity. This will include supplementary species planting to expand riparian woodland. On PAWS sites we will use no less than 90% native species, concentrating on productive broadleaf species where soils allow.	We will expand natural reserve in line with FCS guidance, to be monitored by the Environment Manager using existing reporting mechanisms. We will commit a minimum of 5% of native woodland and 1% of plantation conifer as

	Where crop stability allows we will retain <i>P sylvestris</i> and <i>Larix</i> spp stands to help diversify the age structure of the forest. This will be concentrated in the main glen (north) of the forest. Enlarging the forest garden and managing it under LISS will also help us to achieve this target.	natural reserve across the FD – managed solely for biodiversity using minimum intervention. This plan's contribution will be monitored by the planning forester at years five and ten to ensure that these proposals do not compromise this target.
<i>(7.10) We will continue to take account of neighbouring designated sites during forest and operational planning with the aim of protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing their status.</i>	Deer management will take account of the need to contribute to the quality of Beinn Dearg and Fannich Hills designations. In the Braemore Wood the highest operations standards will be employed to ensure that water quality is not compromised for populations of <i>Lipsothrix ecucullata</i>	Deer Managers will continue to work with the North Ross Deer Mgmt Group to achieve realistic and effective population levels. Operations foresters will ensure that water quality is the priority in Braemore, adhering to Forest & Water Guidelines and Controlled Activities Regulations.
<i>(7.12) We will promote the profile and awareness of biodiversity requirements during stakeholder engagements, school visits and Forest Design Plan consultations and encourage active involvement in biodiversity projects by communities and volunteers.</i>	We will continue our active involvement with local schools and volunteer groups to deliver environmental projects.	The CRT Manager will monitor the delivery of educational and community events, coordinating through the business planning process. The Design Plan Forester will ensure that all relevant stakeholders contribute to the FDP revision process.

NB: The targets that are considered fundamental to the delivery of the aims of this forest design plan – the critical success factors – are highlighted in red in the table above. The delivery of these elements will be the primary factors by which the plans success is judged at mid-term and full review (5 & 10 yrs respectively)