

Land Management Plan Brief, West Region LMP: Appin Date: 20/11/19	 Forestry and Land Scotland Coilltearachd agus Fearann Alba
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Description

The Land Management Plan (LMP) covers Appin forest, located NE of Oban and accessed from the public C class road, which joins the A828 at Lurignish. The forest and associated hill ground covers 700 ha, extending from sea level to 437 m and comprising a mosaic of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) 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 2020 -2030 LMP will be prepared in the context of the wider group of linked forests under FLS management in this part of North Argyll and the strategic plan that is being prepared to 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 woodland expansion to create contiguous native woodland from Appin to Bealach. The intention therefore, is to join Bealach and Appin into one Land Management Plan in future.

The western boundary of Appin forest runs alongside the A828; to the North, the forest bounds with Bealach (also under FLS management) and to the East and South, with private land. The forested area covers 285 ha, currently comprising 186 ha with standing trees – the rest of this area has been felled (95 ha) or has failed or suffered windblow (4 ha). Much of the felled area is visible from surrounding settlements. Of the area currently under trees, 96 ha supports broadleaves and 90 ha conifers. Most of these conifers were planted in the 1960's, with a further area planted since 2000 and small areas of old, mature conifers. The open ground extends to 416 ha, which includes 49 ha agricultural land and 316 ha of ground that is identified as plantable.

This forested hill is an important feature in a 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.

Social Factors

Appin forest lies close to the wider settlement of Appin and is very visible from the A828 through Appin and from Port Appin and Lismore. The site does not have high visitor numbers and recreational use is largely limited to local walkers. However, the southern end of the forest provides an important backdrop to the Appin coastal landscape and the forest is easily accessible from the A828 via the minor road at Lurignish.

Environmental Factors

The Lynn of Lorn National Scenic Area lies adjacent to the western boundary of Appin forest.

The southern half of the forest supports extensive areas of ASNW, PAWS and other long established woodland of plantation origin. Small areas of ancient semi-natural or long established woodland are scattered along the coastal fringe, with another larger area along the boundary with Bealach forest.

Appin forest lies in an area defined as lowland ridges and moss, with densely forested rocky ridges and a patchwork of marginal pastures in the glens. Specific landscape guidelines suggest that large-scale forestry would be out of scale, archaeology and its setting should be conserved, woodlands should be thinned and rhododendrons controlled.

The conifer forest extends part way along the ridge between Appin and Bealach and is a major feature in the landscape when viewed from the South and from Port Appin, Lismore and from Shuna Island.

Watercourses in Appin forest run into South Loch Linnhe, which achieved moderate status in 2014 due to water quality, although long term prediction is that it will achieve good status. The assessment indicated that condition of bottom living invertebrate animal populations was not good for reasons unknown because there were no obvious causes. Four private water supplies are taken from Appin.

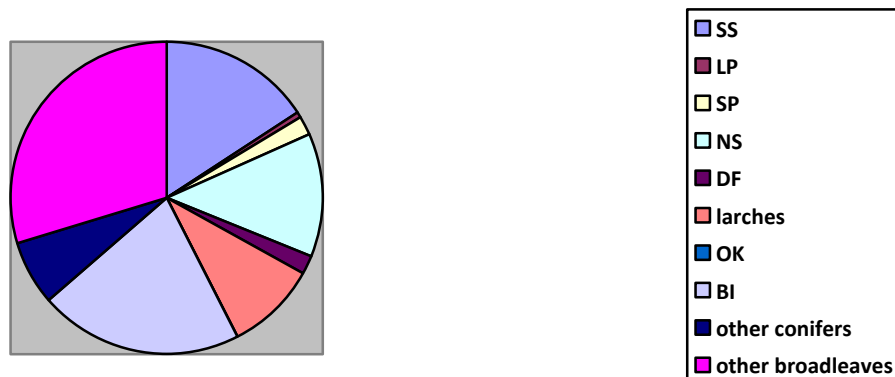
Priority species include Sea eagles, Wood ants, Red squirrels, butterflies, Black grouse (on adjacent ground); veteran Scots pine and Sessile oak.

There are 10 unscheduled ancient monuments in Appin forest.

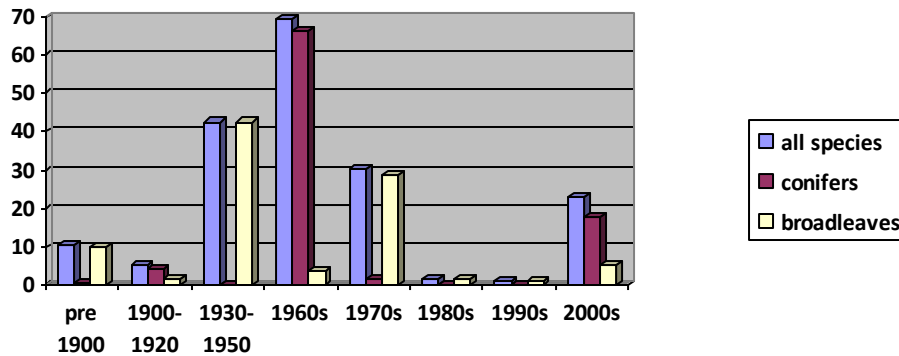
Almost 60% of the land holding is open ground, dominated by a series of mountain ridges running parallel to the coast. The open ground comprises part of an agricultural holding and includes areas of improved grassland as well as a mosaic of grassland, bracken, heathland and a complex of gullies and wet flushes. Watercourses run in short lengths straight into Loch Linnhe as well as in a NE-SW direction along gullies, extending to small lochans in the NE, where there is also an area of juniper bushes. Groups of scrubby birch run along the three mile stretch between the Appin forested area and Bealach.

Economic Factors

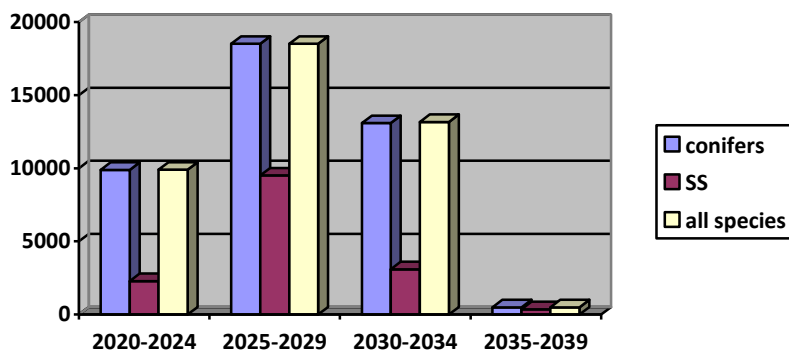
The forested area covers 186 ha including 91 ha conifers. Birch and other broadleaves cover the largest proportion of the forested area. Sitka spruce and Norway spruce are the most predominant conifers but there is also a significant area of larch (17 ha). The latter is at risk from *P. ramorum* which has already been found in the rhododendron. The plan will seek to fell the larch at the earliest suitable opportunity. The conifer mix is fairly diverse across a relatively small area.



The forest has an uneven age structure, with most of the area planted between 1930 and the 1970's. This reflects planting of both conifers (predominantly in the 1960's) and broadleaves (mainly established between 1930-1950 and in the 1970's). The major part of the forest area is open ground or under broadleaves and it will be a challenge to maintain diversity of productive conifers across a small area but species and structural diversity can be developed through establishment of continuous cover productive broadleaves and restoration of PAWS areas.

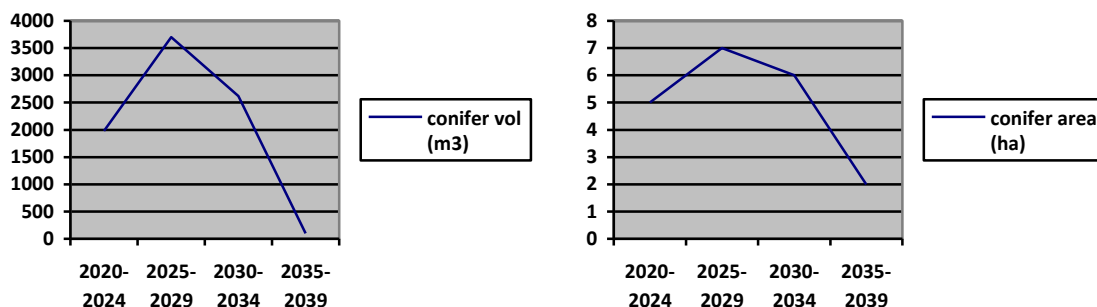


Volume (m^3) production for all conifers is predicted to spike during 2025-2029, based on the current LMP. Annual production will then drop and after 2034, it will fluctuate between 60 and 4,000 m^3 .



Estimated volume production (m^3) per fell period for the next 20 years

Annual volume production (m^3) and area felled for all conifer species:



The existing plan is for large areas to be converted to broadleaves and while diversifying age and spatial structure, maintaining a steady volume production here may be difficult. The felling

programme will be reviewed, in the context of the wider group of linked forests, so that stable volume production is maintained across the area as a whole. The balance between conifers and broadleaves will also be reviewed, to balance environmental, visual amenity and economic interests.

The forest's main recreational impact is on the visual amenity of the Appin area and this will be considered when reviewing fell and restock plans.

Achieving national priorities locally

The management of Scotland's National Forests and Land is guided by Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 – 2029 and the organisation's Corporate Plan and is informed by strategies on a range of topics, including land use, economy, climate change, biodiversity and the historic environment.

Scotland's Forestry Strategy sets out a 50 year vision:

“In 2070, Scotland will have more forests and woodland, sustainably managed and better integrated with other land uses. These will provide a more resilient adaptable resource with greater natural capital value that supports a strong economy, a thriving environment and health and flourishing communities.”

To support the 50 year vision, the Scottish Government has identified three objectives to deliver over the next 10 years:

- Increase the contribution of forests and woodland to Scotland's sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- Improve the resilience of Scotland's forests and woodland and increase their contribution to a healthy and high quality environment
- Increase the use of Scotland's forest and woodland resources to enable more people to improve their health, wellbeing and life chances

This Land Management Plan will help deliver on these objectives, in line with FLS corporate outcomes, to ensure clear linkages through the planning framework and implementation of national and regional priorities.

The brief is also guided by the National Spatial Overview, which has identified the broad focus of effort and investment challenges for this area.

Key contributions that Appin forest makes to our Priorities, Aims and Objectives are:

- Ecosystem services and additional public benefits – scenic quality and visitor attractions contribute to tourism income; sustainable timber production
- Other national commitments – PAWS restoration; rhododendron control; habitat management for chequered skipper butterfly; dealing with the potential impact of *P ramorum* on larch
- Contribution to financial sustainability – producing a range of softwood

LMP 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
- Continue to enhance and expand native woodland in ASNW/PAWS zones through removal of non-native conifers and encouraging natural regeneration of locally native species within a reasonable timeframe
- 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 species
- Plan for timely pre-emptive removal of larch in response to the previous identification of P. 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

Appendix: Key issues identified for the LMP

Corporate plan outcomes and priorities	<u>Key Corporate Actions</u>	<u>LMP priorities</u>
<p>Outcome:</p> <p>“FLS supports sustainable rural economy by managing the national forests and land in a way that encourages business growth, development opportunities, jobs and investments.”</p> <p>Priority:</p> <p>Provide sustainable economic benefits from the national forests and land</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure a sustainable balance between the resilience and productivity of the national forests and land ➤ Provide a sustainable supply of timber ➤ Implement the national restocking strategy ➤ Support Scottish tourism and the visitor economy through provision of visitor attractions ➤ Work to release value from rural development opportunities for reinvestment in the national forests and land ➤ Support commercial activity on the national forest estate which help to sustain rural communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Softwood timber production will be focused on areas where soil, topography, shelter and other environmental conditions will achieve the best growth and where cost effective infrastructure can support the necessary harvesting and forest management activities • Coupe size / shapes, felling sequences and restocking will be reviewed to better balance priorities of visual amenity; sustainable volume production; optimised costs/income; environmental benefits and resilience • Conifer species and the mix of broadleaves and conifers will be reviewed to balance visual amenity, environmental and economic interests. In particular, we will review restocking plans for the southern coupe, to maximise diversity and visual amenity as much as is possible, in a site where there is significant risk of encroachment of Rhododendron • Where possible, the existing natural regeneration will be retained and managed by weeding, cleaning and respacing to favour preferred species • Where conifers are grown, we will aim to maximise species diversity • We will review areas of steep ground to identify optimal restocking in these areas that balances economic benefit with safety and environment / landscape issues

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will consider opportunities to create and manage productive broadleaved woodland for firewood and small roundwood, using low impact management, where access permits and where it is compatible with conservation priorities • Broadleaves may offer longer term opportunities to contribute to local economic activity, encouraging value adding and job creation by encouraging small scale local markets such as wood turning and furniture making. Continuing forest management will help to secure / support long term downstream jobs • Local economic diversity will be encouraged by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintaining productive relationships with neighbouring landowners and businesses; ○ Giving consideration to requests / proposals from the community and local SMEs • We will support the Scottish Government's woodland expansion policy by encouraging natural regeneration of native woodland and by planting new conifer and broadleaved woodland in open ground where appropriate, linking the woodland between Appin and Bealach (avoiding priority open ground).
<p>Outcome: "Scotland's national forests and land are looked after; Biodiversity is protected and enhanced More environmental services are provided to people"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manage the forests and land to further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity ➤ Collaborate with partners on integrated landscape-scale approaches to habitat management and restoration ➤ Protect and enhance priority species ➤ Contribute to renewable energy targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will implement a programme to restore PAWS areas within a reasonable timeframe, by removing non-native conifers and invasive species and restocking by natural regeneration of native broadleaves, with enrichment planting if required • We will consider the potential for thinning 2nd rotation crops for production, as well as opportunities for growing productive broadleaves under continuous cover forestry

<p>Priority: Ensure forests and woodland are sustainably managed – by woodland expansion, increasing adaptability and resilience, and enhancing environmental benefits provided by forests and woodland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supporting forest research ➤ Manage the historic environment assets ➤ Work with neighbouring landowners to control non-native invasive species, e.g. Rhododendron ➤ Improve the resilience of forests and land to impacts of climate change and tree health threats e.g. Phytophthora ramorum ➤ Contribute to Scotland's national woodland creation targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In future, we will maintain tree cover by restocking with optimum / minimum fallow, continuous cover of broadleaves and management of ASNW/PAWS. We will balance fallow length with the need to control weed growth • We will review areas for Long Term Retention to improve diversity and ensure that older age classes are represented in the forest. A proportion of trees will be maintained to provide dead wood habitat, where this will have environmental benefit • Ground preparation techniques will seek to protect the soil and soil carbon at the same time as achieving rapid re-establishment of woodland cover • Wherever possible, we will improve wind resistance by encouraging green edges on roads and breaks, reinforcing riparian broadleaves to create natural breaks and environmental benefits • We will control invasive species including Rhododendron and Western Hemlock and will monitor for encroachment of Rhododendron from neighbouring ground and remove this as soon as possible • We will monitor the woodlands for significant tree pathogens such as Phytophthora ramorum, Hylobius spp. and Chalara fraxinea • We will strive to manage deer to fulfil our land management aspirations. We will work with Deer Management Groups and adjacent landowners to maintain good relations and ensure that views and objectives are taken into account • The forest management of Appin will contribute towards achieving the objectives of The River Basin Management Plan
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		<p>(RBMP) by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Designing new proposals so that they will not result in deterioration of any water body status, by creating open broadleaved habitat in riparian zones ○ By ensuring that forest activities are managed in such a way as to ensure they do not cause pollution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority open habitats will be maintained in good ecological condition. A clear rationale for planting open ground will be agreed • Archaeological remains will be protected
<p>Outcome:</p> <p>“Everyone can visit and enjoy Scotland’s national forest and land to connect with nature, have fun, benefit their health and wellbeing and have the opportunity to engage in our community decision making</p> <p>Priority:</p> <p>Engage more people and communities in the use and management of forests and woodlands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maintain walking and biking trails, for everyone to enjoy and gain health and other benefits ➤ Engage communities in decisions on management of forest and land ➤ Help facilitate local communities make use of the forest to benefit their communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The forests are open to all, within the framework of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and we will continue to promote best practice in relation to access • Links with Appin Community Council will be maintained and any requests to engage local communities and organisations in using and managing the woodland will be given serious consideration • Opportunities for volunteering, or for encouraging a more diverse range of people to use the forest, will be considered, focusing most on the native woodland areas
Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure health and safety of forestry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety considerations will inform decisions on restocking

<p>“FLS is a supportive, safe and inclusive organisation....”</p> <p>Priority:</p> <p>Sustain a safe working environment for people working in, and using our forests and promote healthier lifestyles</p>	<p>workers and users underpin all forest planning and operations</p>	<p>coupes on steep ground</p>
<p>Outcome:</p> <p>“FLS is recognised as a high performing, efficient and effective, financially sustainable organisation that continues to transform and adapt.”</p> <p>Priority:</p> <p>Deliver best value in the effective and efficient delivery of public service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet statutory duties as an executive agency • Maintain UKWAS certification • Align with Scottish Government targets on carbon emissions, waste, water and chemical use • Working collaboratively, openly and responsibly with partners and others to improve the management of forest estate • Enable and deliver continuous improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing restocking programme will be reviewed, to increase diversity of conifer species where possible and to maximise establishment of broadleaved species through natural regeneration • Woodland creation will diversify habitats, avoiding priority open habitats, to create a mosaic of woodland, heathland and wetland • All forestry operations will meet Forestry and Water guidelines • Managing the grazing impact of deer will facilitate natural regeneration of broadleaves; protect planted broadleaves and soft conifers; improve biodiversity and promote restoration and maintenance of priority open habitats • Stakeholders will be consulted on key amendments to planned forest management • We will participate in partnership projects, such as the landscape control of invasive species

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will maintain productive dialogue with neighbours and key stakeholders
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Stakeholders & consultation

- Scottish Forestry
- SNH
- SEPA
- Argyll and Bute Council
- Confor
- Appin Community Council
- Argyll and the Isles Coast Countryside Trust
- Appin Historical Society
- Appin Community Development Trust
- VisitScotland
- RSPB
- Butterfly Conservation Trust
- Neighbouring landowners