

Mid Term Review of	Braehour FDP
Forest District	North Highland

File reference	030/516/275
The FDP was approved: Date	01.03.2013
The FDP expires on: Date	28.02.2023

Amendments: **No amendments to the FDP were submitted up to the MTR**

Date sought for approval	Coupe reference	Details	Approved?	Comments
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Internal Stakeholder Meeting: Date	02.10.2017
Present	M. MacDougall, T. Cockerill, H. MacKay, R. MacLeod, S. Fraser, S. Jack, H. MacLean, D. Ross, I. Allsopp, A. Smyth, D. MacAskill, A. Baranska

Strategic feedback from external stakeholders since approval of FDP:

In November 2017 SNH has completed monitoring of bird features on Strathmore Peatlands SSSI. Above monitoring is part of SNH's national programme of monitoring special features on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and RAMSAR sites. This particular monitoring was completed for: Dunlin, Golden plover, Greenshank and Breeding bird assemblage. All the above features were found to be in good condition (details in 'Site Condition Monitoring on Strathmore Peatlands SSSI' attached to this form). SNH commented that '(...) this result reflects the good management on the relevant part of the site. We expect these features are likely to remain in good condition if existing management practices continue'.

1. Was the plan implemented properly?

Felling: Is this on target now, and for period of FDP? In the table below list those coupes that should have been felled in the first 5 year approval period and have not yet been felled. Also list those coupes that have been brought forward and felled.

Felling on target. Coupes that are delayed and/or were brought forward listed below:

Felling Coupe No.	Proposed felling period	Revised Felling year	Area (ha)	Comment
05112 (part of Coupe 1)	2013-2017	17/18		Currently active site

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05110 (Coupe 2)	2013 - 2017	19/20		
05106 (Coupe 3)	2013 - 2017	17/18		Currently active site

Thinning: An assessment of the % completed, and the % of thinnable area. Is it successful? Are there issues with windthrow? Do riparian areas need thinned?

Entire FDP area is under 'no thin' regime.

Restocking: Is this to the plan and tolerances? Has the timescale been affected by the felling?

Restocking on target. Restocking of part of Coupe 1 (05113, 05134 & 05112) felled between 2014 and 2017 is programmed for 2018/19. Part of the area is to be restored to peatland.

Restocking Coupe No.	Proposed planting year	Actual Planting year	Species changes	Area (ha)	Comment
N/A					

Road programme: Is this on target now, and for period of FDP?

Road programme reviewed as part of MTR. As compared with roading proposals approved in 2013:

- North Braehour Spur (2859m): the route was altered and the length reduced to 1540m (more details in amendment form and proposed management coupes map attached to the MTR form);
- West Braehour Spur (949 m) is no longer required;
- Timber Transport Route East (656m) is no longer required;
- Timber transport Route West was delivered.

Permissions: Has determination on any related permissions (EIA NoPD,AA) been obtained, if relevant?

EIA screening opinion request for revised new road line and river crossing is attached to MTR form.

2. Has the implementation of the plan to date met the stated objectives?

This includes compliance with current National and FD Strategic Plan, UKWAS and UKFS requirements, If it has not met the stated objectives, review the FDP brief. If there is no brief, write a retrospective one. Cross reference to any additional plans, to be included as an appendix

Yes, the only action proposed and approved under Braehour FDP in 2013 that was decided to be revisited at the MTR stage is creation of 193.3 ha of new native woodland in the northern part of the forest block. After site investigation it became apparent that 130.77 ha of the area proposed for new planting, located on the site of former peat extraction operation, is unsuitable for planting and should be restored to active bog. The remaining part of the proposed new planting – 36.8 ha- located along Burn of Olgrinbeg (part of River Thurso SAC) and it's tributaries, was investigated and found to contain significant areas of deep peat. The potentially plantable area is also constrained by protective buffers around archaeological features. The

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subject of new planting was discussed at the internal scoping meeting, and a site visit, attended by members of Planning and FM teams took place on the 9th of January 2018. It was agreed that the more sustainable approach will be to carry out new planting (on a significantly smaller scale than in the original proposal) at the time of restocking of adjacent coupes (proposed to be felled within next 5 years) – outwith the current FDP approval period. As a result **we are not proposing to carry out any new planting within remaining 5 years of Braehour FDP approval period**. We're proposing to change the prescription from 'native' to 'riparian woodland' to better reflect the type of woodland that is likely to develop. The areas where the above type of woodland will be established, both by planting and natural regeneration, is shown on Future habitats map as 'riparian woodland'.

Objective	Objective met?	Comment/ Action taken
Climate change	Ongoing	Restock species discussed at 75% meeting to match to site conditions. The extensive peatland restoration proposals for Braehour will ensure that deep peat areas will benefit from drain and furrow blocking to increase the water table and encourage bog vegetation, while broadleaf and conifer trees will be concentrated on more ground suitable for woodland. Planting of new riparian woodland will enhance and protect water environment.
Timber	Ongoing	The harvesting programme is constructed taking the PF figures into account. While allowing for dealing with windblow clearance and removal of crops infected with <i>Dothistroma Needle Blight (DNB)</i> . All harvesting coupes have a workplan in place before any work starts on site. We're committed to maintaining UKWAS compliance. We're committed to planting productive species on suitable soils. We will use pathogen resistant species as nurse for productive crop and reduce the use fertiliser. Creation of new riparian woodland will increase the area covered by broadleaves, while the deep peat areas adjacent to designated peatland sites will have peatland restoration operations carried out.
Environmental quality	Ongoing	The only waterbody with classification status mention within the FDP back in 2013 is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20645 Burn of Olgrinbeg – Good status (no change since previous classification); However, there is significant number of watercourses within the forest block that are not registered by SEPA, but are either tributaries to Burn of Olgrinbeg or directly to River Thurso (SAC). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20637 River Thurso (Loch More to sea) – Good status (no change since previous classification) New native woodland planting proposed in FDP back in 2013 was reconsidered and revisited: the former peatworks (over 130 ha) were considered unsuitable for

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		<p>planting reducing the new planting proposal to 36.8 ha. In addition, the type of proposed woodland is now changed from 'native' to 'riparian'.</p> <p>Considerable area that remains to be harvested (due to wind blow and tree health pressures) will require high management standards to be applied in order to prevent possible negative impact on aquatic environment. Forest and Water Guidance and Controlled Activities Regulations (CAR) will be adhered to.</p> <p>All sites will be surveyed prior to operations.</p>
Biodiversity	Ongoing	<p>Peatland restoration is a big part of the FDP proposals. Felling is ongoing, and increased rate of felling, caused by the need to clear windblown and DNB infected crops mean that the adjacent designated peatland sites will benefit from improvement in hydrology (brought by removal of non-native conifers, restoration of deep peat sites to open bog and establishment of low density successional woodland) sooner than anticipated. Breeding waders, present on Strathmore Peatlands SSSI, will also benefit from conifer removal.</p>

3. Are the aims and objectives of the plan still appropriate?

This should compare the long term objectives, item by item if appropriate, with a measure of whether the objectives are likely to be achieved over the rest of the FDP period, and whether there are any knock on consequences such as landscape, changes in priority species or habitat issues. Take into account changes in the aspirations / requirements of external stakeholders since approval of FDP: (from file).

To achieve this, organise a meeting of the team including district forester, planning forester, recreation forester, operations forester, woodland officer, biodiversity manager, landscape architect, ranger manager (approx 1hr?). Visit parts of site highlighted during meeting (approx. 1/2 day with FDM and District Forester). If there have been changes in the aspirations / requirements of external stakeholders, which are relevant, update the FDP brief.

Objective	Issue	Comment
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recovery of maximum amount of wood fibre; Matching productive conifer and broadleaf species to site conditions; Supply of firewood for domestic use; We will make sure that we don't contribute to a decline in quality status 	Valid objective

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	<p>of any waterbody within or affected by FDP area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built productive relationship with SEPA & Caithness Salmon Fisheries Board 	
Timber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timber production will be managed using Production Forecast (PF) and workplans; • UKWAS compliance will be maintained; • We will use correct species and origins of trees • Area of productive conifers will be limited to parts of forest where there's no conflict with biodiversity objectives; • Restoration of peatland habitats will be a priority; • We will adopt the use of pathogen resistant species to nurse productive crops in order to reduce the use of fertiliser; where the heather is the limiting factor we will use herbicides as an alternative to fertiliser; • The inclusion of riparian woodland will have significant impact on % of FDP area covered by broadleaves ; 	Valid objective.
Environmental quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest forms a part of River Thurso SAC catchment – water protection a priority; • Hi rate of felling due to habitat restoration as DNB clearance – highest management standards will be applied to prevent possible negative impact on aquatic environment; • Forest & Water Guidelines and Controlled Activities Regulations will be adhered to; • We will work with Historic Scotland & FES archaeologist to deliver programme of heritage protection and conservation works; • All sites to be surveyed prior to operations 	Valid objective
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of peat sites – developing guidance & consultation with SNH, RSPB & FES ecologist; 	Valid objective

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjacency to designated sites with peatland interests had driven formulation of the FDP proposals; • We will continue our active involvement with local schools and volunteer groups to deliver environmental projects; 	
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4. Do proposals for the remainder of the 10 year approval meet the current objectives, standards and country vision

Analyse the proposals for the remainder of the 10 year approval against FDP brief, Forest District Strategic Plan, Scottish Forestry Strategy any updated OGB's, policies or guidelines: Talk to FDM about any current or proposed issues, policy changes, external stakeholders, e.g. economic circumstances, new survey, changes in management of adjacent land, changes to legal boundary or access, changes in the social/heritage context, new community aspirations, new recreation sites, new archaeological information.

	Yes
Are the proposals still achievable with the resources?	
Has SCDB been updated to reflect boundaries on the ground?	Ongoing for SCDB. Coupe layer to be updated following the Mid-Term Review.

Observations

To highlight anything that may need closer monitoring, but does not need an amendment

No

Summary	Please tick one as appropriate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Plan is still relevant to the FDP area, and reflects the FD's and external stakeholders aspirations for the restructuring of the forest. The operations planned for the remainder of the approval period will help deliver the original brief, therefore no alterations to the brief are necessary. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing plan requires some adjustment but within the scope of exchange of letter or formal amendment as defined by CSM 06 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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- Existing plan requires significant change to the proposals or the timing of these which will require revised submission.



Signed, Author, job title	Agata Baranska Planning Forester
Date	29.01.2018

Plan approved by FDM for the remainder of the 10 year approval	
Signed Job Title	<i>MMacdonald</i> Forest District Manager
Date	29/01/18

Appendix

Depending on complexity of forest, include and reference any maps in appendices.

- Braehour FDP approved management map



Map 5 - Management
Coupes.pdf

- Braehour FDP approved CSM6 map



Map 7 - CSM6.pdf

- Braehour mid-term review proposed management coupes map



Braehour MTR
proposed managemer

- Braehour FDP approved future habitats map



Map 6 - Future
Habitats.pdf

- Braehour mid-term review proposed future habitats map



Braehour MTR
proposed Future habi

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- Braehour FDP MTR CSM6 map – Planned operations



Braehour MTR CSM6
map.pdf

- Braehour FDP MTR amendment form



Braehour
amendment form sign

- Braehour mid-term review Designated sites planning



Braehour MTR -
Designated Site Planr

- Braehour FDP Environmental features map



Braehour -
designated sites.pdf

- Supporting Document – Appropriate Assessment for Braehour FDP in relation to Peatlands SPA



Supporting
Document - Approprie

- Braehour FDP MTR Management prescriptions



Braehour MTR -
Management prescrip

- Braehour FDP MTR proposed tolerance table



Braehour MTR
Tolerance table.doc

- Site Condition Monitoring on Strathmore Peatlands SSSI



Strathmore
Peatlands SSSI site cr

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- Braehour FDP MTR – EIA screening opinion request form



EIA-screening-opinion-request-form.doc