

## 2.0 Analysis of previous plan

A scoping meeting was held on 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 involving key Forest District staff, to analyse the aims of the previous plan and to agree objectives for the FDP brief. More detail of this meeting can be found in **Appendix IV – Internal Scoping**. The key objectives for each plan area are detailed in the table below:

Forest >	Dornoch 030/516/283	Achormlarie 030/516/308 (indicative plan)	Rogart 030/516/223
Objective			
Timber production	Use of ATC systems and introduction of age diversity.	Enhance the productive capacity of the forest.	Expand the native species element of the forest.
Biodiversity	Creation of new native woods and linkage with existing habitats.	Create habitat networks to support key species including hen harrier and black grouse	Improve quality of riparian zones by allowing natural broadleaf expansion.
Water quality	Compliance with Forest & Water Guidelines.	Improve water quality.	Comply with guidelines
Heritage	Compliance with guidelines; preparation of SAM management plans.	Protect and enhance the significant archaeological sites.	Protect and enhance archaeological sites.
Landscape	Use of ATC to minimise visual effect of productive forestry.	Structure coupes to fit landform and improve stability.	Enhance the visual quality of the area.
Social	Communication with consultees & wider consultation with general public.	N/A Social influence on future management wasn't expected.	Communicate with consultees & stakeholders.
Recreation	Maintain and improve current facilities.	N/A Recreational interest wasn't expected.	Develop recreational facilities in co-operation with local groups.



Loch Beinn Domhnaill, Achormlarie. Photo A. Baranska NHF

Original Plan Objective	Did plan implementation meet the objective?	Does the objective remain desirable or achievable?
<p><b>Timber production</b> – develop the use of ATC (use of low impact silvicultural systems designed to increase age and species diversity)</p>	<p>Significant areas of Dornoch blocks are currently managed according to LISS principles. That management regime is beneficial to the forests managed with recreation/public access as main objective (Skelbo, Camore) and complements the landscape within the Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area (NSA). Part of the Duchess Countess plantation is also currently managed as an ATC coupe. Scots pine crop is quite stable in Dornoch area, with very limited wind damage. DNB is present in the crop and it's monitored annually – the development of the disease is slow and up to date didn't force any early felling.</p>	<p>The objective of increasing the area under LISS (ATC) remains as an important target. The decline of crops infected with DNB is difficult to predict, and although clearfell must remain as the preferred method of treatment, soils and climate are suitable for expansion of LISS within the Dornoch area.</p>
<p><b>Timber production</b> – enhance the productive capacity of the forest.</p>	<p>Due to the crop age structure no felling carried out in Achormlarie.</p>	<p>Timber production remains very important in all East Sutherland LMP forests. In Achormlarie, here are areas of poor crop on deep peat, but some areas of high yield class SS had been identified during the recently undertaken attribute survey. Given the characteristics on the block: soils (deep peat, podzolic iron pan, unflushed blanket bog), high water table, species composition (majority LP, SS and SS/LP mixtures with some SP and Larch on drier ground) and terrain, the block will be managed under clearfell system.</p>
<p><b>Biodiversity</b> - create new native woodland and linkage with existing habitats/improve quality of riparian zones by allowing natural regeneration.</p>	<p>Native woodland element was introduced into restock proposals during the previous plan period, concentrated in riparian zones and on forest boundaries improving the linkage with the woodland/riparian habitats within and outside FC ownership.</p>	<p>It remains an important target. In all forest blocks within the LMP area the native woodland area still needs to increase to deliver various environmental benefits. Natural regeneration of native broadleaves will be accepted, but planting will also be required.</p>
<p><b>Biodiversity</b> – create habitat network to support key species including hen harrier and black grouse (Achormlarie)</p>	<p>Since the approval of the previous plan, the Strath Carnaig and Strath Moors SPA &amp; SSSI were established. It was recognised, that the open areas within Achormlarie block are vital hen harrier habitat (currently open ground is about 26% of the area).</p>	<p>A legal obligation and a key aspiration, continuing to enhance habitat for hen harrier and black grouse and general biodiversity gain will remain a priority of management.</p>
<p><b>Water Quality</b> – comply with the Forest and Water Guidelines/ improve water quality.</p>	<p>The operations conducted during the period all complied with the Forest and Water Guidelines relevant at the time.</p>	<p>One of the policy areas that has developed over the plan period. Riparian and aquatic habitat protection is now recognised as a major contributor to climate change mitigation and in the Highlands plays a significant role in the local economy (fisheries). A full review of proposals is appropriate and the former targets are now recognised as too limited. Tributaries to River Evelix in Achormlarie block are now recognised as having potential significant influence on freshwater pearl mussel habitat.</p>
<p><b>Heritage</b> – protect and enhance archaeological sites/ prepare SAMs management plans, comply with guidance.</p>	<p>All SAM plans within the plan areas have been reviewed and the required work has been undertaken in line with Historic Scotland approvals. All known archaeological features are now recorded in GIS to allow improved identification and management of all heritage sites.</p>	<p>The target of having 100% SAM plan coverage remains appropriate to allow the implementation of appropriate conservation work.</p>

## East Sutherland Land Management Plan 2015-2025

Original Plan Objective	Did plan implementation meet the objective?	Does the objective remain desirable or achievable?
<b>Landscape</b> – Use ATC to minimise visual effect of productive forestry/ enhance the visual quality of the area.	ATC system plays important role in preserving the character of popular visitor destinations (Skelbo, Camore) and enhancing the Dornoch Firth NSA. In Rogart, coupe shapes were largely driven by management responses to windthrow. Where possible coupe boundaries were shaped to reduce their impact on the landscape.	The proximity of the plan area to the Dornoch Firth National Scenic area and the place it occupies surrounded by centres of population and encircled by the A9 and the A839 means that landscape improvement should remain as a high priority for future management.
<b>Landscape</b> – structure coupes to fit landform and improve stability (Achormlarie, Rogart)	As stated above, Achormlarie FDP was not implemented in regard of this objective, as there was no felling up to date. In Rogart, the forest edges along the sheep pass were restructured to blend with the landscape. Broadleaves were planted along the watercourses.	The target remains a high priority for future management. Felling coupes (Achormlarie) had been design to complement the landform (big coupes on hill tops, smaller further down the slopes and in valleys) and to use existing windfirm boundaries. In Rogart block, forest edges visible from minor Lairg to The Mound (A9) public road will be managed to improve the blocky appearance of the forest.
<b>Social</b> – communicate and consult with stakeholders.	The Rogart and Dornoch Forest Design Plans both had mid term reviews during the plan period and the appropriate level of consultation been undertaken. In addition, when amendments were required the level of consultation determined by conservancy was undertaken. However this is another area where policy and practice are developing and improving. We recognise that we should be striving to consult and include an increasing number of stakeholders not only during planning consultations but throughout the life of the plan. The work with the Rogart community to construct recreation facilities is an example of good practice adopted by the FD. Skelbo has been the site of increasing education and social inclusion programmes for the years, including work with Dornoch schools on Rural Skills programme.	Due to increasing public interest in management of the National Forest Estate, communication and engagement with our stakeholders is crucial to successful delivery of the Scottish Forestry Strategy and NHFD District Strategic Plan. There is high public interest in Rogart and Dornoch Blocks, where local communities actively engage in management of their local woodlands. Achormlarie, due to its remote location, so far attracted little public interest. It remains a very important target.
<b>Recreation</b> – maintain and improve current facilities	During the previous plan period works were undertaken to improve the existing visitor facilities in Skelbo and Camore. Visitor car parks	Skelbo and Camore remain the main visitor destination in Dornoch area, therefore the target remains a high priority. New recreation “master plan” detailing the management and improvement proposals will be developed in 2015.
<b>Recreation</b> – develop recreational facilities in co-operation with local groups.	In recent years a network of new footpaths was created in Rogart forest, as a co-operation between the FD and the Rogart Community.	New agreement between the NHFD and the Rogart Community is currently being prepared. It remains a valid objective.