

Summary of Proposals

Executive Summary

Easter Ross Forests are part of the National Forest Estate (henceforth referred to in this plan as 'the Estate', managed by Forestry Commission Scotland on behalf of Scottish Government Ministers and the Scottish people.

Easter Ross Land Management Plan (LMP – formerly referred to as 'Forest Design Plans') has been prepared in line with the UK Forestry Standard (2011), UKWAS guidelines (2012) and the Scottish Forestry Strategy (2006). The local Forest District Strategic Plan has been used to give local context to the Strategic Directions Plan for Scotland's National Forest Estate (2013) and inform the plan brief which will guide the vision for integrated land management for the next twenty five years. Forestry Commission Scotland's long term planning is aligned to Scottish Government Scotland Performs objectives and the Scottish Government Land Use Strategy.

Summary

The plan has been prepared to take into consideration the seven key themes of the Scottish Forestry Strategy. The key priority areas that drive the proposals contained in this plan are:

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

Appendix 6 – The Land Management Plan Brief gives full details of the priority objectives for this plan area. In addition it provides details of how the Forest District will monitor the delivery of these objectives and which member of the Forest District team will be responsible for that monitoring.

Proposals for the future management of the Estate in this plan area are made in accordance with all current industry best practice guidelines and have been prepared following full consultation with the relevant agencies, community representatives and external stakeholders.

Operations arising from the approval of this plan will also comply with all current FCS guidance and any subsequent revisions published during the plan approval period.



Five of the six FCS Priority Species have been recorded in the Plan area; red squirrel, black grouse, capercaillie, juniper and pearl-bordered fritillary

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Setting and context

The management of Forestry Commission Scotland's National Forest Estate is guided by the National Strategic Directions (2013), which identifies six aspirations that will influence integrated land management within our boundaries:

- **Healthy** – achieving good environmental and silvicultural condition in a changing climate.
- **Productive** – providing sustainable economic benefits from the land.
- **Treasured** – as a multi-purpose resource that sustains livelihoods, improves quality of life, and offers involvement and enjoyment.
- **Accessible** – local woodlands and national treasures that are well promoted, welcoming and open for all.
- **Cared For** – working with nature and respecting landscapes, natural and cultural heritage.
- **Good Value** – exemplary, effective and efficient delivery of public benefits.

Drawing on these key aspirations North Highland Forest District (NHFD) have drafted a three year Strategic Plan (2013 – 2016). The plan establishes links with the national priorities underpinning these aspirations, detailing local priorities upon which NHFD plans will be founded. The NHFD Strategic Plan ensures that land management activities compliment and enhance the local economic, social and ecological individuality of each LMP area. This plan aims to provide local context to the national aspirations and key priorities by detailing local priorities that will support us in achieving sustainable integrated land management across all areas of the National Forest Estate.

Appendix 1 – The Forest Planning Framework in Scotland gives context to the purpose and scope of this Land Management Plan. In compliance with UKFS this is a strategic indicative plan intended to state the objectives of management and how sustainable forest management will be achieved by signposting the relevant guidance and best practice and spatially identifying management aspirations.

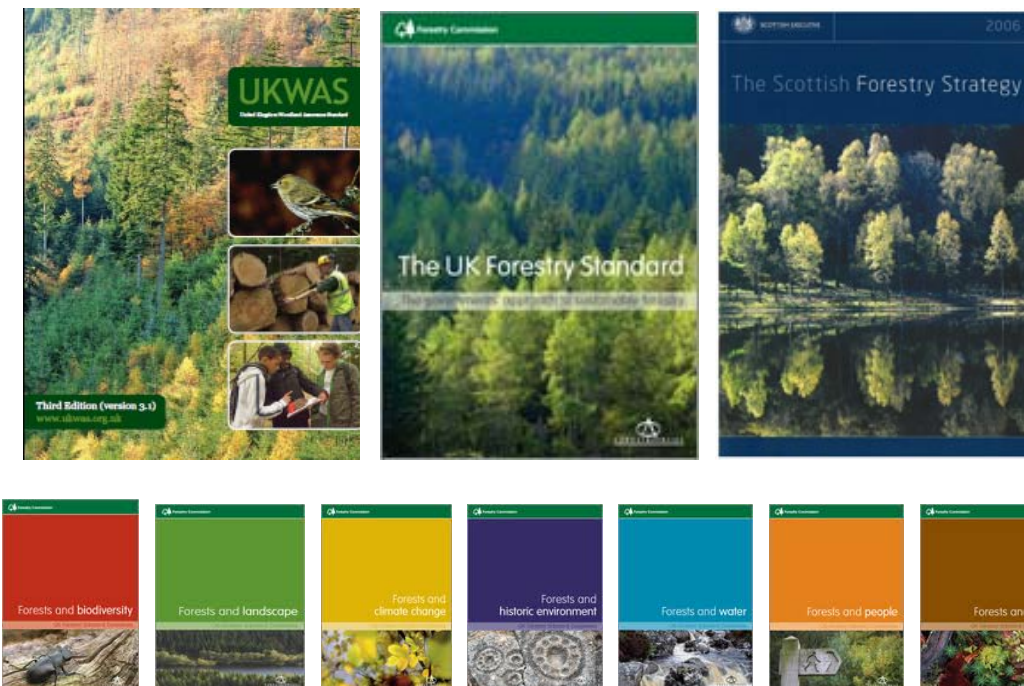
This plan also provides a means to communicate our proposals to the neighbouring communities and stakeholders and serves as an agreed statement of intent against which implementation can be checked and monitored (see **Appendix 6 – FDP Brief** for details of the monitoring proposed).

Appendix 1 indicates the levels of operational plans that sit below, and are informed by this LMP. In compliance with UKFS the operational plans detail specific implementation detail including:

- Potential hazards to workers and forest users
- Operational detail specific to machine use
- Safeguards and mitigation measures to protect the immediate site and, by association, the wider forest
- Detail of post operations planning including the treatment of any waste materials identified.
- Contingency planning

Stakeholders requiring this level of information should contact the North Highland Forest District Operations Team following approval of this plan.

Appendix 2 – Key Policies and Guidance details the external policy drivers for the proposals in this plan. Current industry and FC guidance will be complied with during any operations associated with this plan, including any subsequent guidance revisions published during the plan's ten year approval period.



1.2 History of Plan

The production of this Easter Ross Land Management Plan is the full ten year revision of the following documents:

- Morangie Forest Design Plan 030/516/083
- Morrish More Forest Design Plan 030/516/248
- Struie Forest Design Plan 030/516/287
- Scotsburn Forest Design Plan 030/516/288

Previously the plans had each covered their individual areas however to better address issues of landscape design, water catchment management and biodiversity conservation NHFD have merged the plan areas and the plan number from Morangie FDP has been adopted for the full area: 030/516/083. The term 'Land Management Plan' better reflects the wider scope of the document in dealing not only with forestry, but with designated site planning, open ground management, scheduled ancient monument planning and general integrated land management issues. The documents key function remains to seek approval for felling and restocking over the next ten years.

The plan area is situated to the north and west of the seaboard villages of Easter Ross, to the west of the Burgh of Tain and east of the Skiach to Fearn B9176 road known as 'The Struie' (**see Map 1 Location & Context**). The area is bounded to the north by the Dornoch Firth and to the south by the Cromarty Firth and sheds water into both catchments.

Included are the woodlands of Cnoc Navie, Dorrachan, Wilderness, Marybank and Leinster Park in the Scotsburn Forest, Mid Fearn and Dounie in the Struie Forest and the small coastal woodland of the Morrish More east of Tain. The forest of Morangie makes up the bulk of the plan area including the woodlands of Bogrow, Tain Hill, Rose Hill, Lamington, Strathrory and Inchindown.

These forests are owned by Forestry Commission Scotland and cover 7307 Ha of which approximately 5508 Ha (75.1%) is productive forest and 7.0 Ha (0.1%) research plots of planted origin. The majority of the remaining area, totalling around 1854 Ha is land currently felled in fallow (356 Ha – 5%), internal open space (1401 Ha – 19%), open water (20 Ha – 0.3%) and land under other management or unplatable (15 Ha – 0.5%).

Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris* – SP), is by far the most predominant conifer in the productive high forest at just under half the stocked area. Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis* – SS) forms significant elements of the crop on wetter and poorer soils, generally in pure stands but also in mixture with lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta* - LP). On the higher slopes of Strathrory Forest, where large areas of peats and gleys are found LP was also planted in pure crops.

Norway spruce (*Picea abies* – NS), european larch (*Larix decidua* - EL), japanese larch (*Larix kaempferi* - JL) and douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* - DF) are planted in varying mixtures on drier soils.

Broadleaf species include common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), aspen (*Populus tremula*), downy birch (*Betula pubescens*), goat willow (*Salix caprea*) and some sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*). In general broadleaf species are confined to the riparian areas and in general are an underrepresented component of the forest.

Significant areas of Planted Ancient Woodland (PAWS) are mapped throughout the south of the plan area, with smaller areas also noted between Bogrow and Rose Hill in the Morangie Forest. Common juniper (*Juniperus communis*) has been recorded. Woodland is thought to have been largely oak - ash dominated, with scots pine and birch woodland extending higher up slopes.



Conservation swiping operation at Scotsburn Pinewood Photo G Findlay NHFD