LMP Brief and Introductory Information for Initial Stakeholder Meeting

Introduction

The plan for Cologin covers 270.1ha. It is located 2 miles south of Oban, and hence qualifies for inclusion in the FC’s WIAT scheme. It is primarily a commercial conifer forest with some amenity hardwoods. No harvesting or roading has been undertaken to date. The surrounding land is predominantly low grade agricultural land. Loch Gleann a Bhearraidh borders the northern part of the forest, and is public water supply for Oban.

The forest area was acquired in two stages. Cologin Farm was acquired in 1967. Achalic was acquired in 1984. The area was planted between 1984 and 1987. A forest walk was constructed. Full crop assessment was undertaken in 2013.

Progress (on previous plan)

The previous plan was an indicative plan, comprising a single map with annotated objectives. Indicative plans were produced as a means of gaining FC plan approval where no operations planned over its 10 year life. This plan expired on 25/01/2015 and was extended to 31/08/2015.

The indicative plan brief identified users/viewers of the forest, including motorists, walkers, fisherman using the reservoir and local residents. In terms of context, it described the forest as having a distinct character, because of its varied terrain and orientation, occupying the top and upper slopes of a ridge. It raised issues of lack of roading, woodland forming a barrier to habitat networks, visibility from the A816, uniform species and lack of integration, and the presence of a reservoir and its catchment. The indicative plan highlighted angular forest boundaries as another issue. It also stressed the need for a design solution that catered both for the commercial and landscape/habitat needs, suggesting a balance was needed.

The indicative plan analysis and concept primarily addressed landscape issues, making suggestions as to how these would be dealt with in a full plan. These included development of native woodland and riparian networks, integration and diversification of tree species, use of species choice to accentuate landform, improvement to and provision of a circular forest walk, and modification of the forest edge to integrate with the surrounding landform. It identified visually sensitive areas, with a significant viewpoint along the south side of Loch Feochan on the A816. It also suggested areas in which Phase 1 felling would ideally take place, based on a road running down the spine of the block. This felling was proposed for 2015, but has been unachievable due to lack of an agreed access over which to haul timber.
Construction of a circular forest walk with some enhancements has been undertaken. All other issues remain unaddressed, but the issues raised and solutions suggested largely remain valid.

**Issues**

- No agreed access for timber haulage. No agreement to haul timber from the western section across the eastern section. No access for light vehicles.
- The forest walk is enclosed and uninspiring. Parking to access the forest walk is on private land.
- Sensitivity of public water supply
- Need to restructure – should have started by now. Current assessments suggest the forest will be vulnerable to wind damage as soon as forest roadline felling and coupe structuring commences. Some pockets of windblow now evident.
- Need for further landscape enhancement and integration into the wider landscape/habitat network. The current broadleaved woodland is 50% non-native.

**Plan Objectives**

The role of Scotland’s National Forest Estate focuses on 6 key themes:

- **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

The plan will deliver on these themes in the following ways:

**Productive**

- Timber production – commercial conifer areas; explore productive hardwood options when crops are mature.
- Road construction - contribution to the 75Km target in the Strategic Plan.

**Cared for**

- Enhancement and protection of open habitats.
- Landscape improvement that responds to landform and respects natural features.
- Development of habitat networks.
- Contribution to the 20% target for broadleaved woodland cover.

**Treasured**
- Improvements to visitor zones.
- Landscape improvements through species diversification and restructuring.

**Healthy**

- Increase resilience to Climate Change through species diversification, remove diseased trees and plant alternatives.

**All themes:-**

- To comply with UKWAS guidance for certification.
- To comply with all other relevant guidance and policies, FD Strategic Plan and overarching FCS plans.

**Summary of Proposals**

The Forest District’s Strategic Plan for West Argyll Forest District includes a vision statement, to which each individual Land Management Plan (LMP) will make a contribution. The District Vision Statement states that ‘West Argyll FD will be a key land manager in Argyll, producing quality timber for the market, providing sustainable employment in both the public and private rural sectors, and opportunities for renewable energy projects. We will also provide well-managed native woodlands for wildlife and places for enjoyment for visitors and local communities’. The Cologin LMP revision contributes to the District Vision by seeking the following outcomes:-

**Economic context**

- Approval for 101.3ha of felling, to be completed within the plan period, and 84.6ha of restocking by natural regeneration is being sought, for completion within 10 years of felling.
- Timber production from felling yielding 10.2Km3.
- Construction of a new road requires EIA approval for 2.2Km of new roading, track and felling approval for 3ha of associated roadline felling within the first five years of the plan.

**Environmental context**

- Creation of habitat networks design framework for the woodland.

**Social context**

- Implementation of measures commensurate with its designation as a WIAT Woodland, primarily associated with landscape enhancement and access provision, through appropriate design.
- Protection of the public water supply for Oban through design of adequate riparian buffers.
Stakeholder consultation

In addition to the FD’s statutory stakeholder’s (SNH & Argyll & Bute Council), SEPA is routinely consulted. Scottish Water has been consulted in relation to the public water supply. The RSPB, Confor and SSE have also asked to be routinely consulted (although in the case of Cologin, there are no powerlines in or adjacent to the forest, so no consultation is necessary). Kilmore Community Council will be consulted. Neighbours, where identifiable, will also be consulted. A drop-in public consultation exercise will be held when draft proposals have been prepared. Information will be posted on line on the FCS website at various stages of the plan development, with the approved plan eventually being made available here.