



Muirkirk LMP

2024-2034

We manage Scotland's National Forest Estate to the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard – the standard endorsed in the UK by the international Forest Stewardship Council® and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification. We are independently audited.

Our land management plans bring together key information, enable us to evaluate options and plan responsibly for the future. We welcome comments on these plans at any time.



The mark of
responsible forestry



Version History

Version	Date	Comments
1.0	18/03/2024	Initial draft
1.1	22/03/2024	Text and format changes
1.2	25/03/2024	Text changes



A. Description of Woodlands

A.1 Property Details

Property Name:	Muirkirk		
Grid Reference:	Main entrance NS 6821 2652	Nearest town or locality:	Muirkirk
Local Authority:	East Ayrshire Council		
LMP Plan area:	168.6ha		

A.2 Location and Background (see M.1)

Muirkirk comprises three blocks lying to the north (Grid Ref NS 691 280) and West (Grid Ref NS 683 261) of the village of Muirkirk on the A70 in East Ayrshire, some 13 miles west of the M74. The site has been the location of significant industrial activity in the past, yet it is now well on its way to becoming established woodland following the woodland creation undertaken as per the previous LMP.

A.3 Existing Schemes & Permissions

Type (e.g. Felling Permission)	Ref. No.	Details
Muirkirk FDP Felling Permission	FDP 218	Current LMP covering the management area which expires 21/04/2024

A.4 Stakeholder Engagement

There were no issues raised during the initial internal scoping meeting which would require a need for active management intervention on the site over the lifespan of the 10-year plan period. As the vast majority of this LMP area is new woodland creation, which is successfully establishing, teams are content to continue responsive management on the site.

Ongoing responsive management actions can be seen in section B below alongside reference to the conditions of the LMP area.

A public consultation is being held between 22nd April and 20th May via an online webpage and on-site signage.



A.5 Long Term Vision and Management Objectives

Vision

Whilst the woodland continues to establish the vision for the site remains the same. This is to provide high quality timber of both soft and hard woods, enhance the biodiversity value of the site and serve as a valuable recreational asset to the local community.

Management Objectives

No.	Objectives (including environmental, economic and social considerations)	Indicator of objective being met
1	Production of quality hardwood timber	Pruning of productive hardwood areas (within LMP lifetime); thinning and successful harvest of crop (out with LMP)
2	Establishment of crop for softwood log production	Continued growth of coniferous forest areas with little to no damage evident at the end of the LMP period
3	Maintenance of a valuable recreational asset for public use	Continuation of frequent use by the local community
4	Increased biodiversity and habitat value	Continued establishment of new woodland leading to the creation of opportunity to diversify the age structure and species of the flora in the area.

A.7 Woodland Description (See M.2)

The current woodland is largely made up of trees within the 0-10 years age class (see **Table 3**), thus making the character of the woodland that of a young forest area which is still establishing. Though there are some elements of more mature trees, these are sparse and few throughout the site and largely exist as remnants of previous land use. Additionally, there is an area of older broadleaves in the SW corner of the block east of the town where ~5ha of remnant trees of a shelterbelt plantation and previous natural regeneration are evident.



A.7.1 Community and Recreation

The entire LMP area is regularly used by the surrounding communities of Muirkirk and Smallburn who have a history of informal recreational access pre-dating the purchase of the area by FLS for woodland creation.



Table 1 – Area by Land Use

Land Use	Area (ha)	%
Open Ground/Agriculture	97.3	58
Woodland	71	42
Open Water	0.3	<1
Total	168.6	100

Table 2 – Current area by species

Species	Area (ha)	%
Aspen	2.6	4
Beech	4.4	6
Common alder	7	10
Goat willow	2.3	3
Hawthorn species	0.7	1
Hazel	1.8	3
Lodgepole pine	1.2	2
Downy birch	6.1	9
Blackthorn	0.1	<1
Rowan	1.4	2
Silver birch	4.2	6
Grey willow	2.2	3
Sessile oak	8.7	12
Scots pine	0.1	<1
Sitka spruce	24.6	35
Other birches	3.8	5
Total	71.2	100



Table 3 – Area by Age

Age class (years)	Current	Year 20
	Area (ha)	Area (ha)
0-10	65.8	0
11-20	0	0
21-30	0	65.8
31-40	0	0
41-60	1.6	0
61-80	0	1.6
81-100	0	0
100+	3.8	3.8
Total	71.2	71.2

B. Management Proposals

B.1 Silvicultural Practice (See M.4)

In line with the management objectives of producing quality timber, crops will be thinned when they reach an appropriate size though this point in time lies beyond the scope of this LMP with the first thin likely to be ~2035 for conifers within the block and ~2040 for the broadleaves. The northern block lies in exception to this due to high levels of exposure with the majority of the area scoring above DAMS 16.

Where productive broadleaf crop is concerned, formative pruning works will be carried out to ensure adequate form. The first pruning is due to commence in 2024, with further pruning to be dependent on growth and form subsequent to this action. The second pruning will likely occur after 2028 depending on assessment.

B.2 History and Prescriptions



B.2.1 Felling

No felling within the lifetime of this LMP.

B.2.2 Thinning

Due to the young age of the crop, there will be no thinning operations within the lifetime of this LMP.

B.2.3 Long Term Retentions (LTR) / Minimum Intervention (MI) / Natural Reserves (NR) (see M.2; M.3; M.5)

History: There is a designated MI area in the Southern block, which was present when the LMP area was purchased as remnant farm woodland and provides important habitat and landscape benefits.

There is an area of pre-existing conifer in the NE block which has suffered some wind damage which was a potential concern due to the proximity of the area to powerlines; however, the direction of falling has been away from the powerlines and the remaining standing crop has been deemed wind-firm.

Prescription: The pre-existing conifer crop in the NE block will be designated as LTR given its contribution to the habitat value of the area.

B.2.4 Restocking Proposals / Natural Regeneration

No Restocking within the lifetime of this LMP.

B.2.5 Hydrology (See M.5)

History: Two watercourses run through the southern block to the west of Muirkirk: Garpel Water and the river Ayr. After works by the Ayrshire Rivers Trust (ART), the latter of these two watercourses has improved in SEPA classification from 'Poor' to 'Good' whilst the former remains at 'Poor' status due to source pollution. Previous planting of riparian broadleaves will be maintained into maturity along these watercourses to assist in the improvement of their status.

Prescription: Due to there already being improvement in hydrology and wetland habitats from the initial round of woodland creation, further riparian planting and habitat creation will be delayed until the next LMP period so as to achieve greater age class diversity throughout the plan area. This will serve to maximise the environmental benefit of the block. There is potential interest from ART in a re-meandering the river Ayr in the south block; however, as their resources are currently being directed towards other projects there is no view to enact such a project at present. Consequently, established communications between FLS and ART on the subject will be maintained until such a time as such a project is deemed viable for both parties.



B.2.6 Wildlife Management

History: Wildlife management has been successful in the area through both effective fencing and control although some evidence of browsing is present along lower branches.

Prescription: In light of this, management will continue as is and fencing will remain in place for the present until trees reach a greater height and maturity.

B.2.7 Road Operations

History: The site currently has several good quality roads which will continue to be maintained throughout the lifetime of this plan.

Prescription: A new road in the northern block to the west of Muirkirk will be considered at 5 Year Progress review and if required an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion Request may be submitted towards the end of the LMP period so as to facilitate thinning operations which will occur in the next LMP period.

B.2.8 Public Access

History: As noted, the site receives frequent public access. Despite this, community engagement through our Visitor Services team has shown that no recreational infrastructure is desired by local users with free access around the site being preferable to designated pathways.

Of the two bridges in the southernmost block, one has been closed due to its deteriorated condition whilst the other is currently being reinforced and designated for pedestrian only access to ensure a continuation of block-wide public access.

Prescription: No current desire from the community for adjustment or improvement of public access due to a preference for a less-managed feel.

B.2.9 Historic Environment (See M.5)

History: The only heritage feature present within the LMP area is an underground bunker in the northern block. This has been welded shut to prevent misuse and damage from anti-social behaviour.

Prescription: No further management of historic features required.

B.2.10 New Planting

History: Over 65 Ha of new woodland was planted under the last LMP, resulting in the vast majority of the current woodland being within the 0-10 years age class (see Table 3)

Prescription: No further woodland creation is proposed and management will focus on the existing young crops by way of formative pruning.