

Dalchork

Land Management Plan revision brief

Introduction

This document gives an outline for the Land Management Plan (LMP) revision of the forests, waterbodies and open ground managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) within the extent of our property at Dalchork, by Lairg. In this brief the proposed vision and background will be outlined and the project timeline proposed, with the aim of ensuring all stakeholders are informed of the revision process, the potential changes to management, and have the ability to feed in to the process at an early stage.

This document is accompanied by 5 maps;

Map 1 – Location

Map 2 – Key features

Map 3 – Management coupes (to be revised)

Map 4 – Restocking species (to be revised)

Map 5 – Issues and opportunities - Scoping

1. Project scope

This LMP revision will result in the new plan that will run from 2023-2033. The new plan will realign with the any changes in strategy, policy and guidance implemented over the last decade. FLS will ensure the new plan is in line with [Scotland's Forestry Strategy](#) (2019-2029), [Forestry and Land Scotland's Corporate Plan](#) (2022-2025). It will be delivered in accordance with the [United Kingdom Forestry Standard](#) (UKFS) and the [United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard](#) (UKWAS).

The main focus of the revision will be changes to our felling and restocking proposals – the current (old) proposals can be seen in maps 3 and 4. We will also be reviewing our approach to the management of designated and environmentally valuable sites, tree health, civil engineering work and engagement with local communities. This is to be updated through both internal and external consultation as well as desk and site based research.

The LMP process can be split up in four stages; scoping, drafting, consultation, final plan submission. Currently Dalchork is in the Scoping stage. At this stage FLS is looking for input from stakeholders regarding their concerns and plans relating to the Dalchork block.

Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) applications, community agreements, renewable agreements and leases will not be part of the LMP revision but FLS is welcoming comments or ideas. These will be processed alongside the LMP revision and where necessary might influence one another.

2. Background

The block of Dalchork is situated in central Sutherland, North Highlands, about 5km north of Lairg. It is not contiguous with other FLS blocks, but does adjoin a private forest along its southern edge. **(Map 1 – Location)**

The block covers a total of 10,276 ha of which approximately 3213ha (31%) is productive forest, 6185ha (60%) is open ground and 539ha (5%) is currently lying fallow, awaiting either restocking or conversion to peat bog.

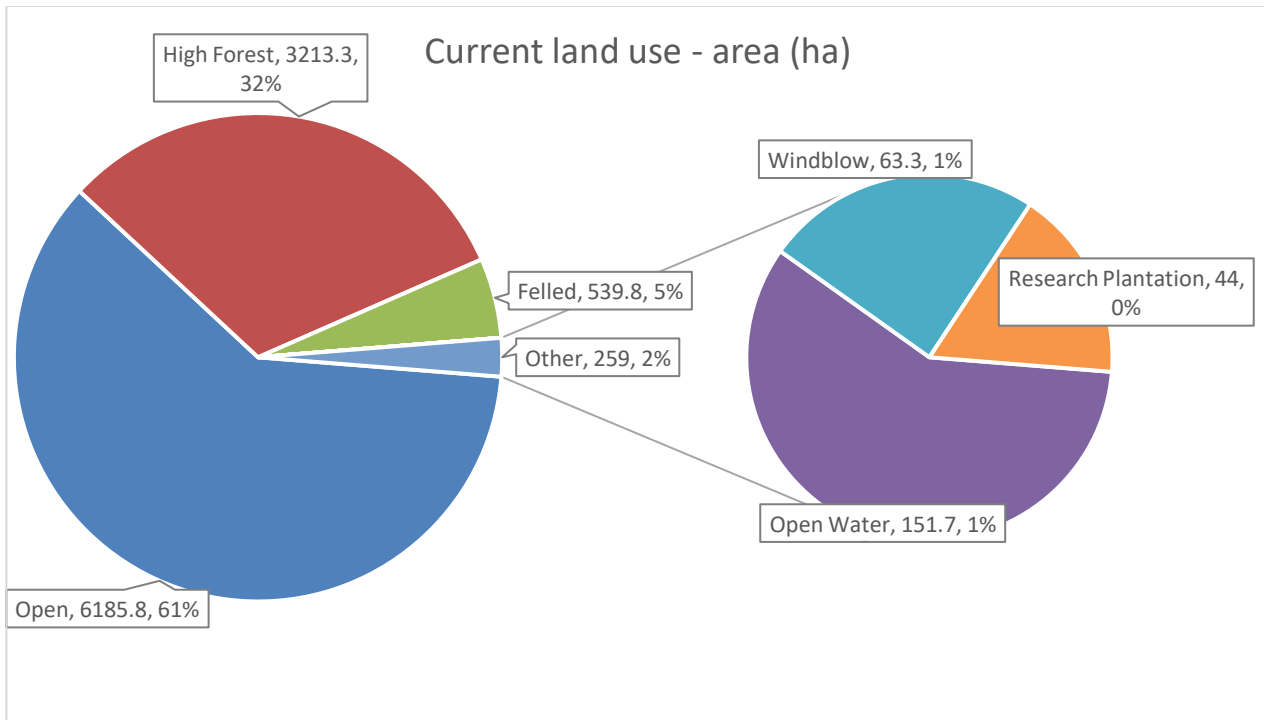


Figure 1: Current land use in the Dalchork LMP area

The history of forestry is very short here – before the current crops were planted in the mid 1980's all that had been planted previously was a few research plots in the 1960s. There is no ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) or long established of plantation origin (LEPO) within the plan area.

As can be seen in the chart above, 2/3rds of the block is currently open ground. Dalchork has been one of premier sites for peatland restoration, this proportion is likely to increase in the new plan, as further suitable sites are identified.

The soils throughout the block are generally of low fertility and high moisture, which reduces the range of suitable species **(Figure 2)** and quality of the harvested product. There are better soils at the southern end of the block, between Lochs Beannach and Tigh na Creige. This is accordingly where the better trees in the block grow.

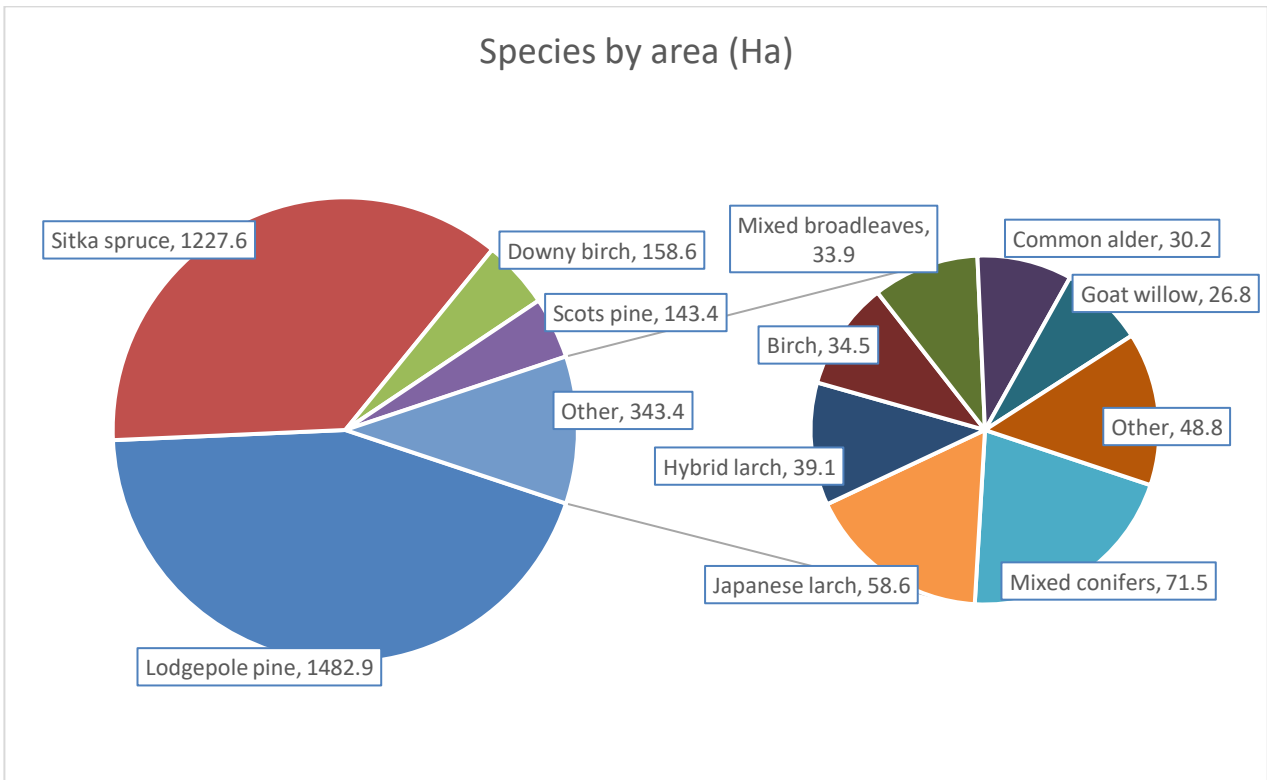


Figure 2: Current Species Composition in percentage of the forested land in the Dalchork LMP Area

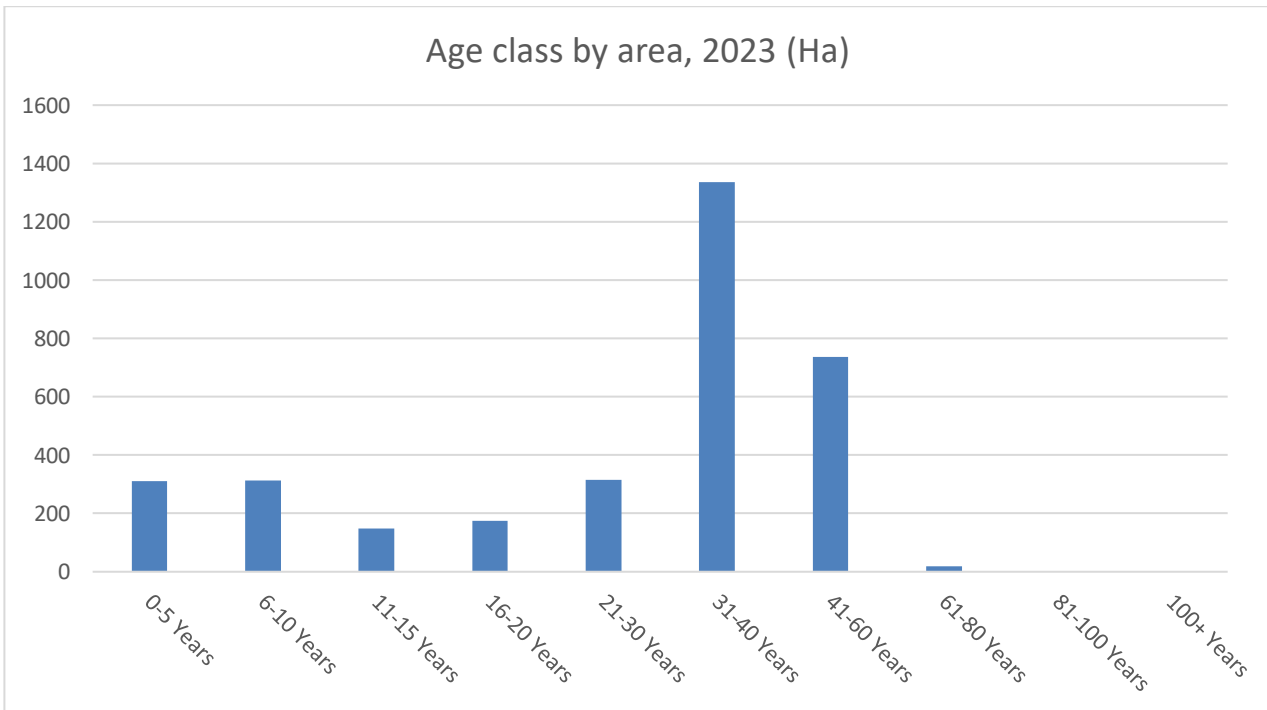


Figure 3: Age distribution per hectare for forested land in the Dalchork LMP area

The following designated sites are in or near the Dalchork LMP area:

Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands - SPA/SAC/SSSI/Ramsar

Ben Klibrek - SSSI

Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors - SPA

Ben Klibrek – Armine Forest - Wild Land Area

Foinaven – Ben Hee - Wild Land Area

In addition there are 20 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, including the large shieling at Cnoc a' Bhreac and the township settlement at Dalnessie.

3. Draft Vision

10 Year vision

By 2023 all of the ground suitable for peatbog restoration will have been identified, and much of the felling required prior to restoration will have either happened or be programmed to happen.

Peatland edge woodland be well on the way to establishment, providing a new habitat type in the landscape, and softening the visual change from bog to forest.

Native broadleaves and conifers will increase in coverage across the site – both on the niche habitats in the peatbogs which support them, and in the productive stands in the southern end of the block.

The watercourses in the plan area will benefit from the ongoing establishment of riparian woodland – broadleaves which fringe the water, providing shading and a buffer to forestry operations.

50 Year vision

The restoration of the peat bogs will be complete, and the land will be actively storing carbon whilst also providing a habitat for numerous species. The peatland edge woodland will provide further cover and integrate the two landscape types together. The productive stands will continue to grow fibre and pallet wood, but from a larger range of species, in more sensitively designed coupes. The watercourses and lochs will be clean and healthy, due to the establishment of riparian woodland, function peat bogs, and more sensitive forestry practices. The mosaic of habitat types will benefit wildlife, and increase space for nationally protected species.

4. Key Issues and Opportunities

During the internal scoping a variety of issues and objectives have been identified. These are shown spatially on **Map 5 – Issues and Opportunities – Scoping**.

- Work with neighbours to reduce deer numbers and expand woodland habitat where opportunities arise.
- Continued and improved protection of protected species, such as Divers, Water voles and freshwater pearl mussels.
- Maximise peatland restoration at a landscape scale.
- Expand native broadleaf woodland management to develop markets and maximise productive capacity from broadleaved woodlands.
- Accommodate the increasing number of overhead powerlines proposed.

5. Time Frame

What	When
Scoping	July 2023
Draft Plan Completion	October 2023
Consultation	November 2023
Review Draft	December 2023
Internal Review	January 2024
Submission	February 2024