**Appendix:**

**Land Management Plan Scoping Brief**

East Loch Awe Land Management Plan

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Introduction

The East Loch Awe (ELA) Land Management Plan (LMP) covers ~9692Ha and comprises of three forest blocks;

* Ardchonnel ~ 524Ha
* Eredine ~ 4335Ha
* Brenchoillie ~4832Ha

The forest blocks are associated not only by their geographic proximity to each other but also by their similar attributes, such as their climate, topography, soils, age, infrastructure and strategic timber haul route.

It is located to the south-west of Inverary and roughly stretches between the A83 and Loch Awe. It is primarily a conifer timber productions forest, but with renewable energy generations making a significant contribution to the commercial aspect of the plan area. The forest was acquired in sections, the oldest parts in the 1930’s. One section above Brenchoillie Farm is leased from Argyll Estates.

This LMP will replace the currently approved LMP, ref LMP-02-2017, expiring 26-6-2027. During the Mid-term review it became apparent that the LMP requires significant amendments to meet current Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) objectives, Scottish Government targets and other policies and guidelines.

Silvicultural potential

The current climate is classed as Warm Moist on the lower slopes grading to Cool Wet on the upper slopes; continentality is low. The Soil Moisture Regime ranges from very wet to slightly dry with wet being the dominant type. The Soil Nutrient Regime ranges from Medium to Very Poor. Climate projections point to a warmer climate with lower summer rainfall and higher winter rainfall.

The underlying geology is typically aligned north-east south-west and this alignment is reflected in the grain of the landscape. The sequence of alternate ridges & dips creates alternate areas of thin soils and peaty rankers grading through deeper pits with lochans in the hollows.

The Douglas Water flowing south to Loch Fyne & the Abhainn a’ Bhealaich and Kames river flowing north to Loch Awe largely cut across the grain of the landscape, although the headwaters and tributaries do follow the grain.

The dominant soils are ironpans with varying degrees of induration, peaty podzols, peaty surface water gleys & brown surface water gleys. There are pockets of upland brown earths on the lower slopes, with pockets of deep peat on the upper slopes alternating with peaty rankers across the undulating landform. There is no history of erosion. Fertility is typically moderate on the lower slopes, but low on unflushed peats and skeletal soils at higher elevations. With the current practices to reduce the use of fertilizers and the intensity of ground preparation/site drainage compared with first rotation establishment, site productivity might be increased in the second rotation through improved planting stock from the nursery.

Harvesting has cleared most of the original plantings on the lower slopes. First rotation crops on upper slopes are now being harvested. Restructuring of the lower parts of the forest has been ongoing for the last 20 years. Statutory Plant Health Notices (SPHN) affecting larch and Western hemlock have been issued within the last six years. The forest currently lies within the Risk Reduction Zone for dealing with Phytophthora ramorum, with the boundary of the LMP adjoining the Priority Action Zone to the north.

There are numerous lochs and watercourses in the ELA LMP area, with the quality of the main ones shown in the table below:

**Table: East Loch Awe major watercourses and their status**

| **Watercourse** | **Status** | **Status justification** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Abhainn a’ Bhealaich | Moderate ecological potential | HEP; Riparian vegetation & forestry |
| River Add | Moderate ecological potential | HEP; Riparian vegetation & forestry |
| Leacann Water | Bad | Riparian vegetation & forestry |
| Douglas Water | Bad | HEP; Riparian vegetation & forestry |
| Allt Beochlich | Good | N/A |
| Allt Blarghour | Good | New HEP may alter current status |
| Kames Water | Good | New HEP may alter current status |

There are public water catchments for Inveraray, Furnace and Eredine as well as numerous private water supplies (PWS).

Existing crop

Approximately 58% of the LMP area is forest, and 42% open, with the pie chart below showing percentages and the table below showing the conifer/broadleaf cover in terms of area, and shown visually in the pie chart.

**Chart: Pie chart showing the land use as a percentage**

**Table: Conifer and broadleaf areas in the LMP**

|  | **Area (Ha)** | **Percentage (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Conifer | 5512 | 95 |
| Broadleaves (BL) | 310 | 5 |
| Total | 5822 | 100 |

Sitka spruce is the dominant tree species, making up 87% of the conifer component (82% of the planted species).

The species breakdown can be seen visually in the pie chart below as species percentage.

**Chart: Pie chart showing the species breakdown as a percentage**

The forested area of East Loch Awe is predominantly first rotation mature crop. There has been little age diversification, with the table below showing the age class distribution for the forests in the LMP.

**Table: Table showing the age class distribution**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age**  | **Area (Ha)** | **Area (%)** |
| 0-10 years  | 742.80 | 13 |
| Establishing crop |
| 11-20 years  | 595.70 | 11 |
| Thicket Stage |
| 21-40 years  | 686.30 | 12 |
| Pole Stage |
| 41-60 years  | 3365.5 | 60 |
| Mature crop |
| 61+ years  | 231.20 | 4 |
| Old Forest |
| **Total** | **5621.5** | **100** |

Yield classes (YC) across the LMP area vary from YC 2 for broadleaves to up to YC 24 for Sitka spruce, with the average for the productive crop as YC 12-14.

There is a reasonably element of larch within the LMP area, 2.75% of the forested area. Due to the risk of *Phytophthora ramorum* pre-emptive felling of young larch might be required, with mature larch being programmed in phase 1 (years 1-5 of the LMP).

**Operational Access**

The forests have a current road network totaling approx. 120km, allowing economic operational access. There are access rights over a number of the roads for renewable schemes and neighbours. Road upgrades and maintenance will be essential to ensure the suitability of the roads for forest operations and access.

The East Loch Awe Timber Haul Route starts in Eredine Forest block off the B840 near Braevallich on the east of Loch Awe and runs east through the forest block, then through Brenchoillie Forest and joins the A83(T) at Brenchoillie near Auchindrain, north of Furnace.

**Natural Environment**

The very north-eastern section of Brenchoillie Forest running along the A83 lies within Argyll & Bute Council local landscape designation of West Loch Fyne (Coast). The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) has the blocks situated in “Craggy Upland”, with the Loch Fyne edge of Brenchoillie Forest as “Plateau Moor and Forest- Argyll”.

Much of the upper areas are open, with priority habitats, or under poorly performing conifers. Some of these areas were formerly allocated to timber volume storage and remain largely untouched and un-roaded. These areas also offer most potential for peatland restoration, which will undergo further assessment to identify suitability for habitat restoration, peatland edge woodland, or productive conifer restock, as well as soil surveys undertaken.

Upper areas are bordered by open hill estates including windfarm developments. Upper areas also contain numerous lochans and support a range of important wildlife species, including priority/protected species.

Lower areas are more diverse, including some Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF), Ancient Woodland Sites (AWS), and adjoining settlements and houses. Red squirrels are common in these areas, the forest being designated a Red squirrel stronghold.

Views across Loch Awe, particularly from settlements and recreation facilities, are important. More distant views are seen from the eastern shore of Loch Fyne and more limited views from the A83.

**Cultural Environment**

There are five Scheduled Monuments (SM) within the plan area;

* SM4146 Innis Chonnel,crannog 300m NE of Loch Awe
* SM4214 Innis Errich,chapel & burial ground
* SM291 Ardchonnel Castle & Island of Innis Chonnel, Loch Awe
* SM4159 Barr Mor,dun
* SM4173 Ardchonnel,long cairn 1200m ENE of Loch Awe

There are several undesignated features across the plan area which are recorded in the heritage layer, such as heritage features, lochs, quarries, agricultural features, old drove roads, all of either local, regional and national significance.

**Community Use**

Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) has a carpark situated on Loch Awe edge off the B840, Ardray. Although there are no formal trails in the forest blocks, the core path from Braevallich to Furnace (C119(c) run through the middle of Eredine and Brenchoillie forests.

Due to the location Eredine and Brenchoillie forests, local villagers may access the forest.

**Neighbouring reservoirs/fisheries/renewables**

There are currently ten renewable schemes within the forests of the LMP, eight hydroelectric and two windfarms

The newly installed Inveraray-Crossaig powerline runs thought Brenchoillie Forest block.

**Wildlife**

The predominant deer species in ELA is Red, with smaller number of Roe deer present on the lower areas Eredine and Brenchoillie forests. Current deer assessment numbers are approx. 18.5 deer/km2.

The deer and other damaging herbivore numbers are monitored and controlled by FLS wildlife management teams.

External deer fencing exists along the southern side of Eredine forest and into the southern edge of Brenchoillie. From the River Add in Brenchoillie forest along the eastern edge is stock fencing. There is a short section of deer fencing from Auchnabreac along the northern edge where FLS forest is adjoining neighbouring forest. Stock fencing is then in place along the open hill boundary. A section of deer fencing exists along the boundary above Portinnisherrich. Deer fencing surrounds the Ardchonnel forest block.

To establish native woodland and species diversity, deer control will be a key management requirement.

Strategic drivers

To realise the vision as set out in the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2019-2029, six priorities for action have been identified for implementation:

* Ensuring forests and woodlands are sustainably managed
* Expanding the area of forests and woodlands, recognising wider land-use objectives
* Improving efficiency and productivity, and developing markets
* Increasing the adaptability and resilience of forests and woodlands
* Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands
* Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands

To demonstrate how we will have regard to the Forestry Strategy in our work, we have identified the relevant Forestry Strategy ‘Priorities for Action’ in our Corporate Outcomes section of the second FLS Corporate Plan 2022-2025. These, alongside key issues and site specific challenges, have informed our draft land management objectives, as illustrated in Table 12 below.

Draft Land Management Plan Objectives

* Maintain sustainable quality timber production.
* Develop a programme to remove most larch in phase 1 or phase 2 if phase 1 not feasible.
* Ensure compliance with UKFS & UKWAS.
* Ensure that coupes are well scaled and shaped and roads sited to relate to landscape character and scenic quality. Scale, shape and plan coupes to maximise cost efficiencies for felling and access provision and re-establishment effectiveness.
* Protect current and new infrastructure in plan area- access rights for third parties, B840 (east loch awe road), East Loch Awe strategic haul route, forest accesses, tracks, powerlines, core paths etc.
* Protect and identify opportunities for renewables and their associated infrastructure, ensuring that these are integrated with other land use objectives.
* Add diversity in both terms of age and species across plan area, identifying continuous cover forestry (CCF) opportunities, Ancient Woodland Sites (AWS) & priority habitats, improving the resilience of the plan against climate change, threats and diseases.
* Protect and enhance the Scheduled Monuments (SMs) and heritage features.
* Provide scope and opportunity for potential increased recreational use by local communities and tourists, as well as enable/compliment the community action plans, and provide opportunity for appropriate and well managed integration with neighbouring land owners.

Stakeholders

Scottish Forestry (SF)

Argyll & Bute Council- Planning/Access/Roads/Flooding

Nature Scot (NS)

Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)

Inveraray Community Council

Glenorchy and Innishail Community Council

Furnace Community Council

Dunadd Community Council

Argyll Fisheries Trust

Historic Environment Scotland (HES)

Royal Society of Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Argyll Timber Transport Group (ATTG)

Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (SGRPID)

West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS)

Scottish Wildlife Trust

British Conservation Society

British Dragonfly Society

Argyll Raptor Study Group

Neighbouring land owners/Internal properties

Scottish Water (SW)

Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE)

Loch Awe Improvement Association

Triodos Renewables plc

Innogy Renewables UK Limited

DHG Hydro

Gilkes Energy

Coriolis Energy

Hydroplan