

Achnashellach Land Management Plan

Revision Brief

Introduction

This brief provides a formative outline for the revision of the Land Management Plan (LMP) for the open land and forests that Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) own and manage in Glencarron around the Craig and Lair communities. At the outset of the Plan revision process, this Brief provides an indication of the general direction of management (i.e. a long term Vision), lists and maps the key issues and factors that will influence this current direction and presents some analysis of the current composition of the land in terms of its use and the diversity of tree species and ages within its component woodlands.

The purpose of the Brief is to give stakeholders sufficient indication of the emphasis and objectives of our management *at the outset* of Plan revision so that they may feedback comments (supportive or critical) or suggest alternative objectives and management. These can then be given due consideration, alongside feedback and recommendations made by FLS staff and other statutory stakeholders in the process of drawing together a new ten year LMP for this area.

This Brief is accompanied by four maps:-

Map 1 – Location

Map 2 – Key Features & Issues

Map 3 – Indicative Management/Felling

Map 4 – Indicative Future Woodland Composition

1. Project scope

The LMP revision process ultimately results in a new Plan being approved for the period 2025 to 2035. In terms of adherence to national forest policy and regulation, the new Plan must align with the [Scotland's Forestry Strategy](#) (2019-2029), [Forestry and Land Scotland's Corporate Plan](#) (2022-2025) and then be delivered in compliance with the [United Kingdom Forestry Standard](#) (UKFS) and the [United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard](#) (UKWAS).

The main outputs from the LMP revision are new felling and restocking proposals for the next ten years. **Maps 3 and 4** show how this work would be enacted if the long term management proposals given in the *last* Plan were continued without further alteration through this current revision process (i.e. they are 'indicative'). We will also review our management of designated and environmentally valuable sites within the LMP area; how we manage for and anticipate tree health issues and the control of non-native plant species; and what civil engineering work is envisaged to deliver the management proposed. A record of the engagement undertaken with local and statutory stakeholders is maintained throughout the review process and this record is ultimately incorporated as an appendix in the final published Plan.

The LMP revision process can be split into four distinct stages: Scoping, Drafting, Consultation and Submission. Currently the Achnashellach LMP is at Scoping stage - when FLS look for input from wider stakeholders regarding their own expectations and recommendations as they relate to the landholding.

Any interest in a potential Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) application, new renewable energy proposals or the management of on-site public access and recreation infrastructure are not part of a LMP revision process which - as the name implies - is focussed essentially on land management. Nevertheless FLS would welcome any comments or ideas in this regard during revision as these can be passed to the most relevant FLS staff for further consideration and engagement within their own sphere of work.

2. Background

FLS’ Achnashellach landholdings extend to 1,517 hectares - occupying two distinct areas north and south of river Carron and public road/rail corridor (see **Map 1**). The current composition of land use is presented below in **Figure 1**:-

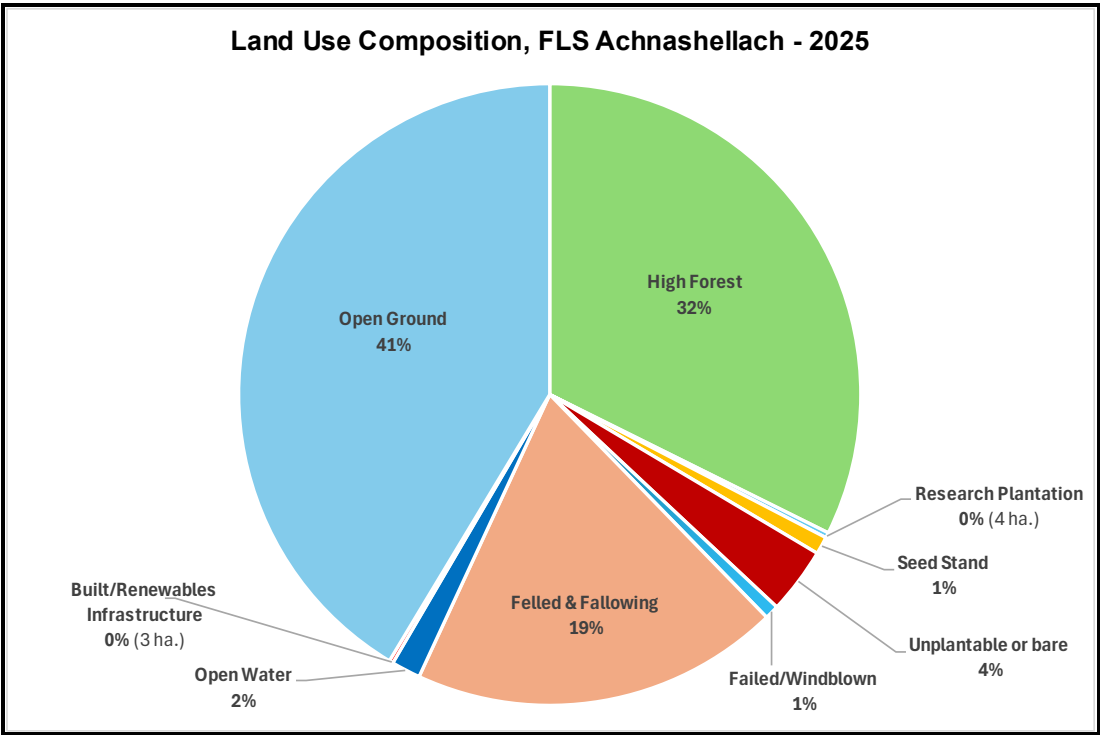


Figure 1: Current land use in FLS’ Achnashellach LMP area

As illustrated, roughly half (51%) of the land area is either standing High Forest or currently felled awaiting new tree establishment, either by restocking or natural regeneration. ‘High Forest’ includes areas of native woodland as well as non-native coniferous woodland planted during the twentieth century and managed primarily for timber production. 41% of the landholding is open ground – unimproved grassland or moorland (wet & dry heath, mire and bog habitat types).

The composition of tree species within forest areas (i.e. ‘High Forest’ & ‘Fallow’) is shown below:-

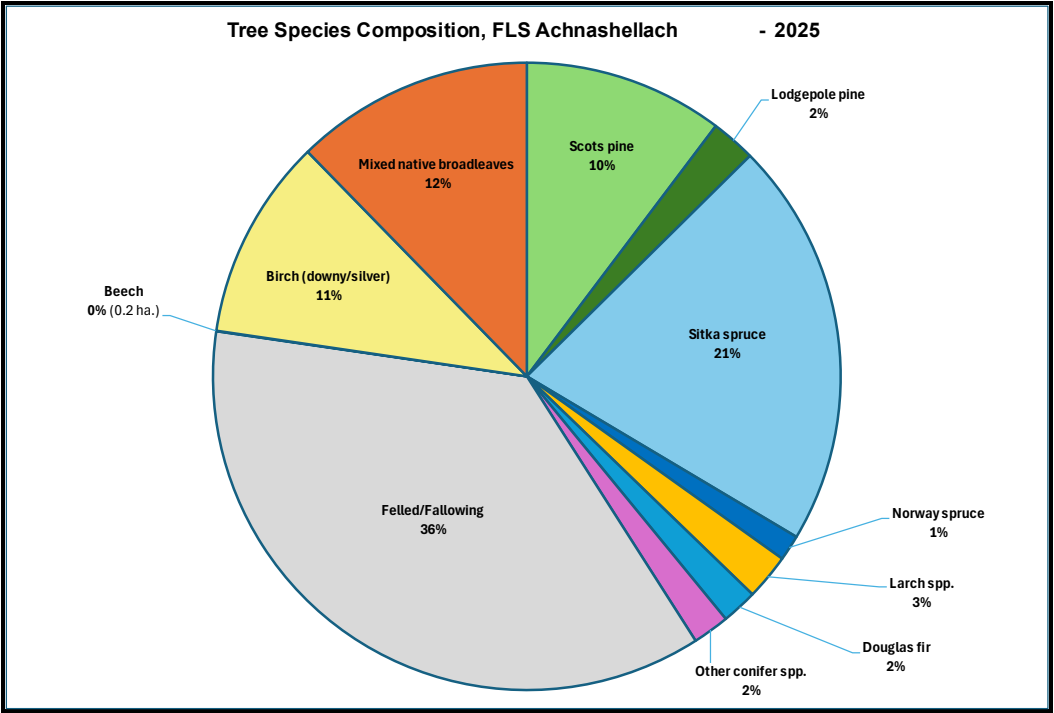


Figure 2: Current tree species composition as a percentage of forested land in FLS’ Achnashellach LMP area.

Map 2 – Key Issues & Features illustrates key areas and site features influencing current objectives and thus management as well as highlighting ancient semi-natural woodland, areas of Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) and Long-Established woodland of Plantation Origin (LEPO). The map also shows the core pinewood surrounded by a 100 m regeneration zone and a further 500 m ‘buffer’ beyond this.

Figure 3 illustrates the age class distribution of trees in the High Forest category and gives – in tandem with tree species composition (above) - an indication of the *diversity* of forest habitat present as different flora and fauna can require specific woodland conditions (age, stature, shade, humidity, longevity etc) to persist and thrive.

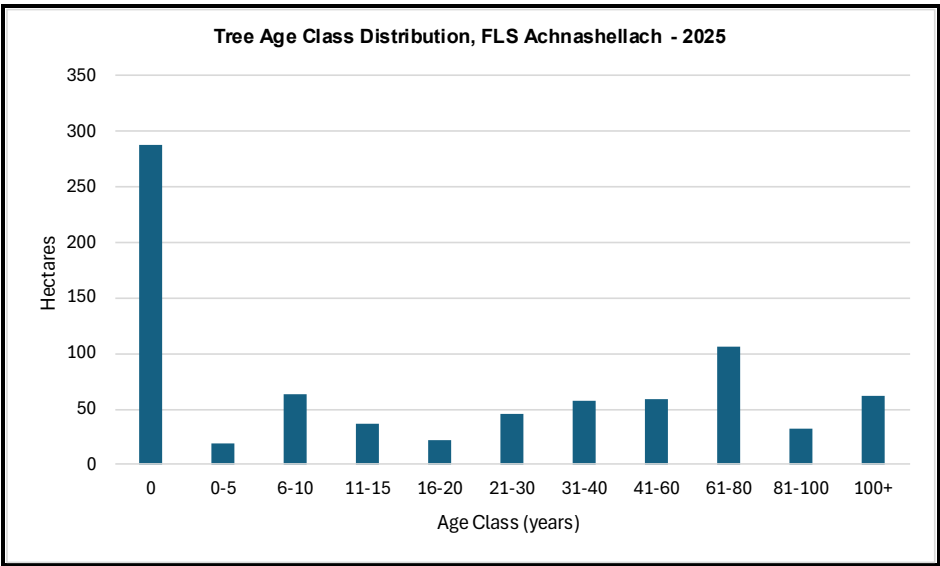


Figure 3: Current Age Class distribution for forested land in FLS’ Achnashellach LMP area.

3. Draft Plan Objectives

The following **issues/features** were considered of primary importance in the evolution of the last Plan (at 2014/15) and may continue to be identified as such. They may be supplemented by (or replaced by) new or alternative themes identified through the internal and external scoping process. They are presented here to give context and to provide a starting point for stakeholders to consider FLS' past management and to potentially propose novel or alternative objectives:

- Fragmented native woodland in a largely de-forested landscape (*western pine- & wet woodland etc*).
- Access to mountains & wild land (*popular area with Munro walkers & climbers*).
- Opportunities for sustainable rural development (*potential hydro schemes, fragile rural economy, limited employment opportunities*).
- Slope and soil management - steep, potentially unstable, slopes above houses, trunk road & railway.
- Landscape & scenery: iconic West Coast road & rail routes with dramatic glen & mountain scenery.
- River Carron catchment - salmon fishing & conservation interests.

The over-arching **vision** of the last LMP (2015-2025) was:

To restore Achnashellach to a sustainable native woodland ecosystem that compliments the scenic beauty of the Wester Ross landscape, whilst supporting and providing opportunities for rural development.

The main **objectives** of the 2015-2025 LMP were:

- Restore Caledonian pine & native broadleaf woodland & open habitats across the Plan area over the next 50 years
- Provide opportunities for sustainable rural development: small-scale community renewables & wood-fuel production.
- Manage the forest sympathetically to landscape character and improve the visitor experience.
- Timber: optimise productive potential of existing forest, develop native timber production over the longer term.
- Reduce risks to people & the environment through sustainable forest management – to build overall habitat resilience to climate change.

4. LMP Revision Timetable

What	When
Scoping (Internally then Externally)	Feb - April then May-June 2025
Stakeholder feedback follow-up. Draft Plan evolution	June and July
Local presentation of draft Plan & final internal review	Late June or early July
Incorporation of feedback into final draft	Late July
LMP submission for approval to Scottish Forestry	Early August 2025