



Forestry and  
Land Scotland  
Coilltearachd agus  
Fearann Alba

# East Loch Shiel Land Management Plan Scoping



View of East Loch Shiel from Glenfinnan

# 1.0 Introduction

This scoping document outlines the revision of the Land Management Plan (LMP) for the East Loch Shiel forests and land managed by Forestry and Land Scotland.

The proposed vision, objectives and background are described and the key strategic drivers that inform the Plan are provided. The purpose of this scoping is to ensure that all stakeholders are informed of the revision process and any potential changes to management, and they have an opportunity to feed into the process at an early stage.

The LMP forests lie in the heart of the Scottish rainforest zone and all share common themes: multiple habitat and landscape designations; single point of access; relative remoteness; high deer pressure; ancient woodland designations and adjacency to nationally and globally important deep peat habitats.

East Loch Shiel LMP includes the following three forest blocks occupying 3780.4ha:

Callop & Drumfern – NM 9301 7883 (730.65ha – acquired in 1962)

Loch Shiel – NM 8311 7290 ( 1810.7ha - acquired in 1927)

Achanellan – NM 7648 6765 (1239ha – acquired in 1973)

Achanellan and Loch Shiel Forests are connected by FLS Glenhurich Forest. Callop & Drumfern is separated from Loch Shiel Forest by a section of private Sporting Estate.

The LMP area is underlain with metamorphosed sandstones and siltstones, which support soils that are generally poor to very poor and relatively thin. The topography is generally moderate - steep with a north-west aspect and in combination with the wet climate, results in the continuation of nutrient leaching to lower slopes. This location receives 2500mm of rainfall annually. Elevation ranges from 5m ASL at the shore of Loch Shiel and the Dubh Lighe to 756m ASL at the summit of Sgorr an Tarmachain in Loch Shiel Forest. Exposure is relatively low in the afforested areas with Drumfern and east Callop the most sheltered and north Loch Shiel and south west Callop being the most exposed. Soils are highly variable and generally include: ironpans, peaty gleys and deep peat.

Open ground occupies 1859.9ha of which 1390ha is dominated by priority habitat.

Afforested land occupies 1920.5ha of which conifers represent 78% of species with broadleaf 22%.

Plan parameters:

Clear felling all economically mature conifer crops over the next 10 years, before they become susceptible to windblow, would also remove the seeding threat to existing native habitats and upcoming restored habitats. To achieve this would require full operational access in Achanellan Forest, involving the construction of 12,230m of forest roads, and a further 1170m of new roads in south Drumfern.

Securing restoration of native woodland and peatland habitats requires sustained deer management enabled by good access to difficult areas; tight existing strategic deer fences; construction of internal fences; and increased contractor resource for deer management.

Achieving all of the above requires large financial and contractor resourcing, both of which are currently limiting factors.

We can plan for these aspirations but realistically, we should hope to achieve the following by the end of the new plan period:

- Clear felling of all mature conifer crops in south Drumfern, enabled by construction of 1170m of new forest roading
- Clear felling of all mature conifer crops in south Loch Shiel Forest
- Clear felling of all mature conifer crops in east Achanellan outwith Corrantee, enabled by the construction of 5720m of new roading.
- Upgraded strategic fencing in Achanellan/Loch Shiel and Drumfern
- Upgraded and new ATV tracks in Loch Shiel and Achanellan Forests and the deer population lowered to less than 5/km<sup>2</sup>.

The maps that support this document are:

Location, Ancient Woodland Wider Context, Analysis, Key Issues – Deer, Key Issues – Environmental, Key Issues – Operational & Access, Concept

This management plan will replace and renew the previous, now expired, Forest Design Plans:

SF File Ref: Indicative - Achanellan

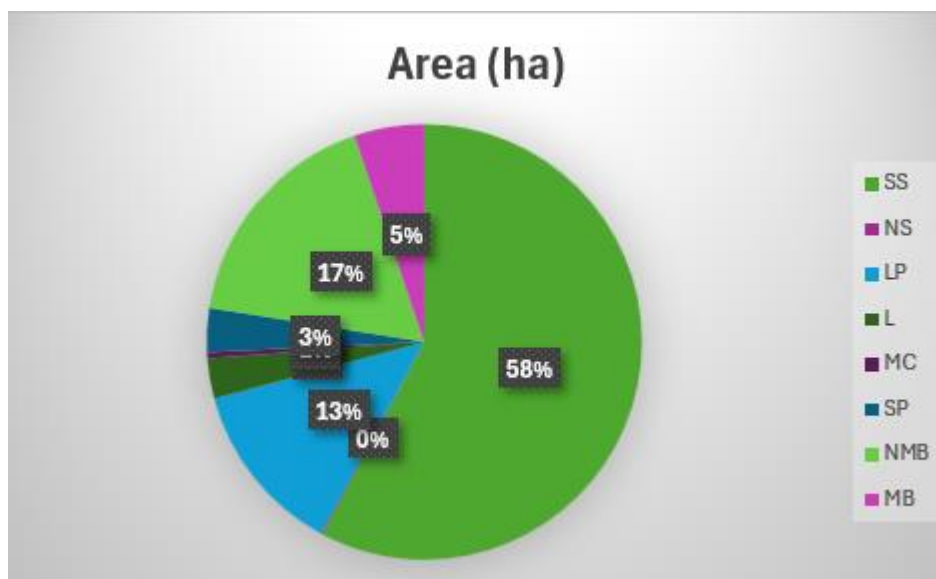
SF File Ref: 030/519/269 – Callop & Drumfern

SF File Ref: 030/519/257 – Loch Shiel

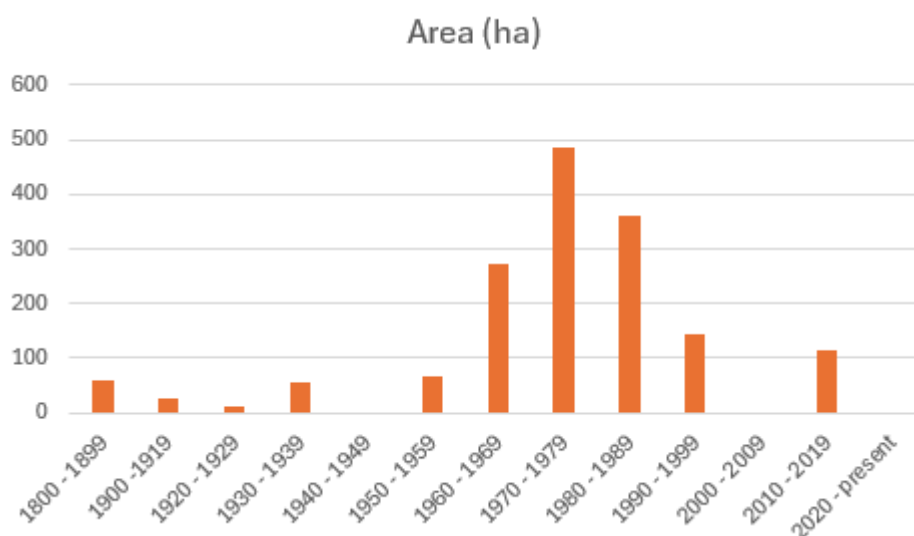
## 2.0 Background

### 2.1 Silvicultural Potential

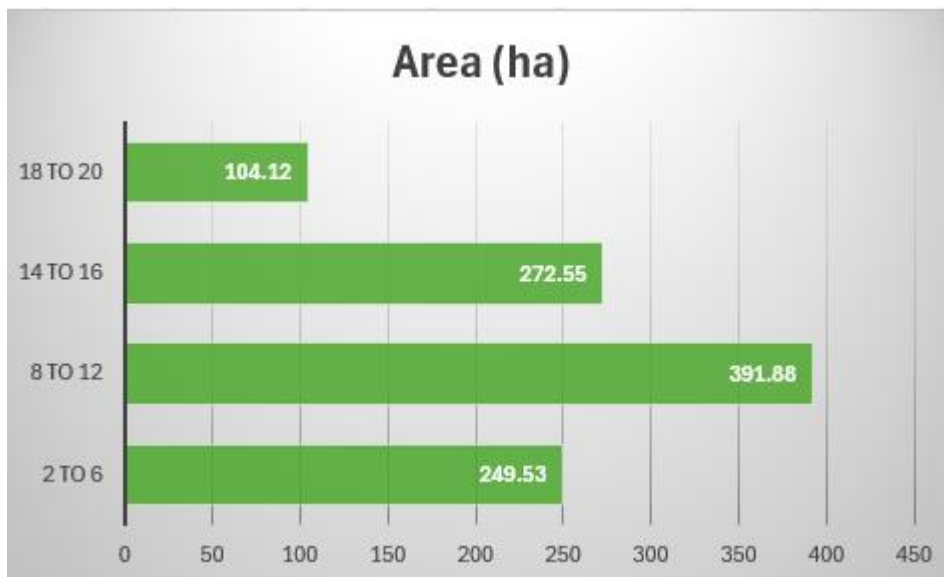
The existing conifer crop is dominated by sitka spruce. Other species include lodgepole pine, larch, Scots pine and mixed conifers. See the species composition pie chart below.



Around 11.% of the forest area is felled awaiting restock with 4% on bare/unplantable ground. The age class distribution reflects the large planting decades of the 1960s when Callop & Drumfern were acquired and the 1970s and 1980s after Achanellan was acquired. The planting in the 1990s reflect the establishment of second rotation crops in north Loch Shiel Forest. See the table below.



Much of these conifer crops are now mature and ready for harvesting, in particular Drumfern, South Loch Shiel and Achanellan. Some of the crops in Drumfern and South Loch Shiel are becoming over-mature and as such are beginning to blow down. The chart below reflects the growth rates in yield class groups of the dominant Sitka spruce crop.



The majority of the Sitka spruce crops are deemed to be productive and this reflects the high proportion of first rotation crops, which had drainage and fertiliser to promote growth rates. These along with the other conifer species should produce a range of wood products including sawlogs for construction. The high yield classes generally have the highest potential for sawlog production. Almost 25% of the sitka crop is unproductive with yield class ranging from 2 – 6. These are generally associated with deep peat areas, especially in north-western Drumfern and Scamodale in Loch Shiel Forest, as well as ranker soils found in Torran and Corrantee areas of Achanellan Forest. These poor areas of production offer the opportunity for a change in species and woodland land use.

## 2.2 Operational Access

Operational access is generally good in Loch Shiel Forest and in Callop and north Drumfern. Planned roading is required to enable harvesting mature crops in south Drumfern. Achanellan is currently devoid of roading in this mature conifer forest in an environmentally sensitive location.

## 2.3 Natural Environment

The environment is the key feature of this LMP. There are multiple environment designations; afforested deep peats adjacent to nationally and globally important bog habitats; multiple landscape designations; ancient semi-natural woodland (oakwood, upland birchwood, pinewood, wet woodland, upland mixed ashwood); Caledonian pinewood remnants; plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS); priority woodland habitat; Natural Reserves of semi-natural origin; watercourses; salmonid habitat; and open priority habitats (blanket bog, upland heathland, montane heath, upland flush/fen/swamp; fen/marsh/swamp; oligotrophic/dystrophic loch). Except for eastern Drumfern, all watercourses flow into Loch Shiel SSSI oligotrophic loch.

Designations that lie within parts of the LMP area are:

European importance:

- Loch Shiel Special Protection area – black-throated diver
- Moidart & Ardgour Special Protection area – golden eagle
- Ardgour pinewoods Special Area of Conservation – alder on floodplains & Caledonian forest.

National importance:

- Loch Shiel Site of Scientific Interest – black-throated diver, native pinewood, upland oakwood, bryophyte assemblage, chequered skipper & oligotrophic loch.
- Ardgour pinewoods Site of Scientific Interest – native pinewood, beetles, chequered skipper & reptile assemblage.

Notable species include otter; red squirrel, badger, pine marten, raptors, black grouse, salmonid species; wood ant colony, chequered skipper, dragonfly assemblage, rare beetles, reptile assemblage; veteran trees; bryophyte assemblage and lichens.

## 2.4 Cultural Environment

Heritage features are dominated by farming and woodland management structures. There are two nationally important/ Scheduled Monuments: Rubha and Fhaing Dubh (SM06236) a small settlement/fort on the shores of Loch Shiel in Loch Shiel Forest; and Corranree Lead Mine (SM05513) in Achanellan Forest. These are identified in the West Region Designated Historic Asset Register with a cultural significance score 5.

## 2.5 Visitor and Community Use

There are no formal recreational facilities within this LMP area. Scottish Outdoor Access Code conditions apply with the forest road network in particular offering access popular with walkers and cyclists.

Core path LO10.03 (Car park to Callop) links the Glenfinnan community with the pinewoods at Callop via the footbridge over the Callop river at Torran Giubhais and the forest entrance at the A830.

There are several historic claimed rights of way known as ScotWays tracks that partly affect the LMP area. They are:

- HL0045 – Dahl to Acharacle via Claish. This passes through the northern section of Achanellan
- HL0046 – Claish to Resipole. This clips part of Achanellan Forest at Torran
- HL0048 – Polloch to Kinlochran via Callop. Forest road LS1 is entirely affected by this route
- HL0091 – Loch Doilet to Scotstown. Coffin route and access to the former Corranree lead mines.

Forest operations will consider public access along these routes.

## 2.6 Landscape

The LMP lies in a relatively remote location with dramatic mountains and loch. This requires extra thought on land use and associated management in terms of impact on perception of landscape features.

Landscape designations that affect the LMP are:

- Loch Shiel National Scenic Area – nationally recognisable landmark and enduring cultural icon; long fine loch leading into the heart of remote and rugged mountains; hidden glens; rich cover of forest and woodland; one of the largest undisturbed lochs in Scotland and a haven for wildlife
- Wild Land Area 13: Moidart – Ardgour – complex range of irregular high, steep sided rocky mountains; deep long glens that penetrate the remote interior and contain a strong sense of seclusion and sanctuary; spectacular linear trench of Loch Shiel that cuts through the mountains, appearing awe inspiring in its form
- Special Landscape Area: Moidart, Ardgour and Glen Shiel – “covers a massive range of landscapes from north to south, including a mountain interior of spectacular grandeur. The combination of high mountains, glens and lochs extending over a vast area, coupled with difficulty of access and sparse habitation, produces a strong sense of remoteness and wilderness within the interior”. (Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas, Highland Council & SNH, Horner & MacLennan 2011)
- Landscape Character Areas: 234 – Lochs with Settled Edges; 238 – Rugged Massif – Lochaber; 239 – Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber; 240 – Rugged Coastal Hills – Lochaber and 242 – Expansive Moss.

## 3. Strategic Drivers

The revised Plan will realign with any changes in strategy, policy and guidance implemented over the last decade. The new Plan will be in line with *Scotland's Forestry Strategy (2019-2029)* and *Forestry and Land Scotland's Corporate Plan (2022-2025)*.

The Plan will be delivered in accordance with the United Kingdom Forestry Standard (UKFS) and the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS).

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

The current main focus for forest and land management in West Region is:

- Timber marketing strategy
- Civil Engineering - new roads infrastructure and upgrade implementation
- Scotland's Rainforest enhancement – priority habitats/native woodland restoration (rhododendron)
- Deer population management
- Peatland restoration
- Woodland creation
- Plant health monitoring and management.

## 4. Key Features and Issues

The following key features require consideration in the revised Land Management Plan:

- Various environmental designations that cover the LMP and adjacent areas
  - Forest and open land within national and European habitat designations
  - Loch Shiel – national and European designated water habitat into which much of the LMP land drains, as well as supporting black-throated diver
  - Ancient woodland designations including Scottish rainforest ecosystems, Caledonian pinewood, ancient semi-natural woodland and high quality plantation on ancient woodland sites (PAWS), containing veteran trees and other ancient woodland features
  - National and Local landscape designations affecting the entire area
- Two Scheduled Monuments: Corranree lead mine in Achanellan Forest and Rubha an Fhaing Dhuibh fort/settlement in Loch Shiel Forest
- Mature conifer crops on deep peat that lie adjacent to nationally and globally important bog habitats
- Watercourses and salmonid habitat
- Mature conifer crops in Achanellan forest which is devoid of operational access.

Key Issues and Challenges that must be addressed in the LMP revision:

- High deer population compounded by neighbouring Sporting Estate management; porous aging strategic fencing; areas lacking deer management access; and mature conifer crops sheltering deer - all negatively impacting successful native woodland regeneration



- Resilience measures to protect the single point of access for all forest operations in Callop, Loch Shiel and Achanellan Forests and for forest road LS1
- Planning and designing felling coupes (sequencing and timing) to best achieve:
  - Felling mature non-native conifer crops that pose a seeding threat to neighbouring designations, priority habitats and regenerating native woodland, including PAWS restoration sites
  - Felling of mature non-native conifers within the European designated Caledonian pinewood in Drumfern (Identify planned roading to enable the harvesting of this area)
  - sites.
  - The sequence of felling of mature first rotation crop throughout Achanellan Forest with consideration for managing windthrow risk
- Plan for the removal of non-native crops from around watercourses and the restoration of riparian woodland habitat.
- Manage Dothistroma infected mature lodgepole pines on deep peat soils in Drumfern which threaten the resilience of nearby Caledonian pinewood
- Find measures to discourage the unauthorised campfires taking place in designated woodland.
- Assessment of deep peat soils in Drumfern north and Achanellan West, to identify the extent of forest-to-bog restoration in the wider area for optimum management of carbon and bolster resilience of these connections with nationally and globally importance peatland habitats
- Identifying operational access into Achanellan Forest to harvest mature conifers in an area of high environmental sensitivities
- Plan the removal of invasive non-native species (INNS) such as rhododendron and grey alder, with the main focus initially on designated and priority woodland habitats.

## 5. Vision and Objectives

### 5.1 Vision

The vision is to have a fully restored landscape-scale native woodland habitat interspersed with restored forest-to-bog habitats, which connect with priority woodland and priority open habitats in the wider context. A well-developed Scottish rainforest ecosystem that is resilient in an uncertain climate.

#### 5.1.2 50 years

To have felled all invasive non-native crops in Achanellan, Loch Shiel, Callop and most of Drumfern Forest. To have a maturing Scottish rainforest ecosystem enabled by healthy ancient

semi-natural woodland habitat with all PAWS and riparian areas establishing or established as native woodland, with veteran trees and future veteran trees protected and enhanced.

## 5.2 Draft Objectives

- Identify viable operational access to initiate the restructuring of mature crops in Achanellan Forest and south Drumfern, with consideration given to the impact on the environment
- Clearfell all remaining mature crops in Loch Shiel South, to facilitate large scale native woodland restoration whilst minimising non-native regeneration (NNR) seeding threats. Plan for the early clearfell of localised non-native crops in this location
- Programme work for NNR removal in young establishing and established native woodland
- Remove infected Lodgepole pine in Drumfern and initiate forest-to-bog restoration where peats surveys indicate it is appropriate
- Secure establishment of all current felled and failed areas
- Programme work to protect and enhance veteran trees in designated woodland, Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and PAWS areas
- Improve the resilience of known Chequered skipper habitat through the removal of encroaching NNR. Consider the viability of managing these habitats by the controlled grazing of cattle
- Programme work to protect and enhance the Scheduled Monuments
- Plan new tracks for deer management access into currently inaccessible areas
- Upgrade strategic deer fences and manage the deer population to sustainable levels to secure healthy habitats and the regeneration of native trees and woodland flora
- Manage the Ardgour pinewoods SAC/CPI (Caledonian pinewood) so that it is establishing as native woodland habitat by the end of this plan period
- Manage public access to remove threats to European designated habitats from unauthorised and damaging activities.

## 6. Key Stakeholders

The Key Stakeholders for this LMP revision are as follows:

Scottish Forestry

NatureScot

SEPA

Community Councils: Acharacle, Glenfinnan & Sunart

Lochaber District Salmon Fisheries Board

Historic Environment Scotland

Highland Council: Access Officer; Environmental Health; Forestry; Historic Environment & Roads

Highland Timber Transport Group  
Forest Research  
East Loch Shiel Deer Management Group (DMG)  
Neighbours

## 7. Timescale

Information gathering and initial analysis and concept: April to July 2025

**Internal Scoping Consultation: 24/06/2025**

**Scoping Public Consultation: website: 20/10/2025 to 30/11/2025**

**Scoping Public Consultation events:**

- **Sunart Centre, Strontian 2-6pm 28/10/2025**
- **The Jetty Hut, Glenfinnan 2-6pm 30/10/2025**

Surveys, Analysis and site visits: August to December 2025

Concept, preparation of Designations Plan & HRA, drafting management options, prepare final draft, final draft internal consultation: Spring – Summer 2026 with final adjustments Autumn 2026

Final draft stakeholder/public consultation: website only: summer 2026

Submission to Scottish Forestry for approval: Winter 2026

N.B. The above dates may change, however dates in **bold** are fixed.

From 20/10/2025 the consultation documents can be viewed in the FLS website:

<https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/planning/consultations> look for East Loch Shiel Land Management Plan in the “West” section.