

South Loch Ness

Land Management Plan 2026 – 2036

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



Property details	
Property Name:	South Loch Ness
Grid Reference (main forest entrance):	NH 514 208
Nearest town or locality:	Inverness
Local Authority:	Highland Council

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1.0 Objectives and Summary

1.1 Plan overview and objectives

Plan name	South Loch Ness
Forest blocks included	Erchite, Farigaig, Dunmaglass, Camus, Knockie, Glen Brein
Size of plan area (ha)	4,388 ha
Location	See Map 1 – Location & Viewpoints

Long Term Vision
50 Year vision The biodiversity and quality of the native woodlands, open habitats and designated sites will have improved due to continuous effort of managing open space, rewetting, removal of invasive non-native species and increased age and species diversity. The resilience of these ecologically valuable areas will have increased due to complementary management on adjacent ground. Populations of red squirrel as well as species associated with deadwood are thriving as a result of proactive management to benefit these species. The forests within the South Loch Ness LMP area will be actively used by the local communities for recreation; Walking, mountain biking, horse riding and other forms of recreation will be commonplace. The overall age distribution of the forest will be more varied with better access into coupes allowing for more timely interventions.
Management Objectives
1. Diversify tree species and age to mitigate against climate change and disease 2. Reduce the percentage of larch within the plan area to protect against the spread of <i>Phytophthora Ramorum</i>. 3. Produce high quality sawlog for local timber markets while maintaining landscape characteristics of the area. 4. Restore peatland in line with current guidance 5. Retain recreational facilities and look for opportunities to work with local user groups to improve facilities 6. Manage deer population to enable natural regeneration and prevent unacceptable damage to restock sites 7. Improve access into various area where harvesting has not been possible in the past.
Critical Success Factors
• Larch Spp removed from plan area to protect against P Ram • A steady flow of timber will need to be supplied to the market from South Loch Ness to and achieve the other management objectives • Deer densities need to be reduced to a level to allow for natural regeneration and more varied restock species. • Restoration Of PAWS areas • Condition of SSSI to be improved from current condition.

1.2 Summary of planned operations

Table 1: Summary of operations over the plan period

Summary of Operations over the Plan Period	
Clear felling (gross)	565.5 Ha
Thinning (potential area)	245.62 Ha
Restocking (gross)	941.69 Ha
Afforestation	0 Ha
Deforestation	31.22 Ha
Forest roads	2041m
Forestry quarries	0

The forest is managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard – the standard endorsed in the UK by the *Forest Stewardship Council and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification*. Forestry and Land Scotland is independently audited to ensure that we are delivering sustainable forest management.

2.0 Analysis and Concept

The planning process was informed by collecting information about the woodland, which is presented in **Appendix 1 – Description of Woodlands**, **Map 2 – Key Features** and **Map 3 – Key Water Features**. During the development of this plan we have consulted with the local community and other key stakeholders, and a Consultation Record is presented in **Appendix 2 – Consultation Record**.

Below lists the objectives for the site and how the key features present opportunity or constraint. The Analysis of these form the concept for this LMP. Different management options for achieving the plan’s objectives were considered against the constraints and opportunities identified during scoping and consultation. The preferred approach is summarised on **Map 4 – Analysis & Concept**.

Table 2 : Analysis and concept

Objective	Opportunities	Constraints	Concept
Diversify tree species and age to mitigate against climate change and disease	High percentage of mature trees makes it economically viable to restructure. Some of these are on slightly better soils which allows for species diversification Good access across most of the block will improve chance of success Removal of larch as a preventative measure against <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> frees up good ground for other species	Constraints such as LEPO and PAWS as well as SSSI’s/SPA’s and SAC’s limit use of non-native species. In large parts of South Loch Ness species choice is very limited due to low fertility and very wet soils Continuous Cover Forestry is difficult or impossible in the majority of the South Loch Ness LMP area due to the limited rooting depth and high exposure.	A mix of group shelterwood felling, continuous thinning and clearfelling will be used for the necessary restructuring across the block. Where possible, the least intensive method will be chosen but due to instability and lack of fertility sites will sometimes need to be either clearfelled. Where clearfelling takes place restock will be designed to allow for smaller coupes in the future. All opportunities will be sought to diversify species composition. Where there are no soil fertility or environmental constraints alternative conifer species will be used. Native broadleaves will be planted and protected in forest edges, around waterbodies and on operationally difficult ground.

Produce high quality sawlog for local timber markets	Soils in South Loch Ness allow for the growing of high quality sawlog Timber markets are close-by increasing timber value	General yield classes are low due to infertile soils Rooting depths are generally poor Certain blocks are poorly roaded which means extra roading work is required to get access to these blocks.	All productive areas in South Loch Ness will be thinned where possible to ensure highest quality of timber. Higher yielding species such as firs and spruces will be used in more nutrient rich areas using group or single tree selection. Overthinned areas will be transformed to ensure maximisation of yield.
Restore peatland where this is in line with current SF and NatureScot guidance	Planted areas on deep peat are getting ready for harvesting Without high inputs of fertiliser, heather control and/or ploughing, lower yielding areas on deep peat are unlikely to be economically viable for forestry going forward	Some areas consist of a mosaic of peat and mineral soils which in the future may make forest management difficult.	A thorough assessment of peat depth and forest performance will be carried out to ensure guidance is adhered to. Peatland restoration design will be done to ensure roadside frontage for future forests.
Retain recreational facilities and look for opportunities to work with user groups to improve facilities	Objectives such as diversifying age and species structure will likely improve recreational value as well resilience.	Recreational use and operations exclude one another for safety reasons which can lead to negative impact on either Limited budgets for creation and maintenance of recreational facilities	Good communication and cooperation with user groups will result in minimal disturbance to recreation as a result of forest operations and input from user groups can be used to improve recreational value
Manage deer population to enable natural regeneration and allow restocked sites to develop	Ongoing harvesting programme within LMP area will provide opportunities to improve access and open ground to shoot in.	Undergrowth limiting opportunities for shooting High recreation limiting opportunities for shooting Different management objectives of neighbours can lead to conflicts in management Steep slopes and neighbouring roads make shooting in certain areas very tricky	Access for wildlife managers will be retained and enhanced. Where necessary palatable species will be tubed to ensure successful establishment.
Reduce the percentage of larch within the plan area to protect against the spread of Phytophthora Ramorum	The Great Glen is one of the main routes which P. Ram could spread to the East coast from the West coast of Scotland. Reducing the amount of larch in the Great Glen can block off this spread by reducing the host species	Larch is often in steep, hard to access areas which may require roading, geotechnical and complex felling techniques to safely fell further adding to costs and complexity in planning.	Improve access and roading into larch stands. Programme in geotechnical surveys where budget allows.
Establish riparian woodland along watercourses	Establish riparian woodland will reduce risk of polluting watercourses during future operations as well as improving the aquatic habitat and providing corridors of native low intervention woodland	Deer numbers might make it difficult to establish more palatable species Most riparian areas have currently got a non-native crop on them which is not ready to be felled yet	Riparian zones will be planted after the current crop reaches an economically viable age for felling. This will allow for the operations to be integrated in adjacent restock works and should result in better ability to manage deer and lower cost of establishment Where necessary tubes will be used to ensure successful establishment.

3.0 Management Proposals - regulatory requirements

This LMP was produced in accordance with a range of government and industry standards and guidance as well as recent research outputs, recognised at the time of its production. A full list of the current standards and guidance which guide the preparation and delivery of FLS LMP’s can be found in Appendix 14.

3.1 Designations

Map 2 – Key Features and Map 3 – Key Water Features show the location of all designated areas and significant features. Any deep peats are indicated on Map 9 – Soils with peat depths for relevant sites found on Map 11 – Peat Depths. Scheduled monuments are shown on Map 2 – Key Features and Map 12 – Historic Environment and listed in Appendix 4 – Environmental Features.

Table 3 : Designations and significant features in the South Loch Ness LMP area

Designations and significant features		
Feature type	Present	Note
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Yes	See Map 2 – Key Features
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	No	
Special Protection Area (SPA)	Yes	See Map 2 – Key Features
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Yes	See Map 2 – Key Features
World Heritage Site (WHS)	No	
Scheduled Monument (SM)	Yes	See Appendix 4 – Environmental Features and Map 12 – Historic Environment
National Scenic Area (NSA)	No	
National Park (NP)	No	
Deep peat soil (>50 cm thickness)	Yes	See Map 9 - Soils
Tree Preservation Order (TPO)	No	
Biosphere reserve	No	
Local Landscape Area	Yes	Loch Ness and Duntelchaig, See Map 2 – Key Features
Ancient woodland	Yes	See Map 2 – Key Features
Acid sensitive catchment	No	
Drinking Water Protected Areas	Yes	See Map 3 – Key Water Features

3.2 Clear felling

Sites proposed for clear felling in the plan period are identified as Phase 1 and Phase 2 coupes on **Map 5 – Management Coupes**.

3.4 Scale of proposed felling

1.1 Table of Clearfelling (Phase 1)										
Coupe No.	Total Area (Ha)	Spp by Ha (SS)	Spp by Ha (SP)	Spp by Ha (LP)	Spp by Ha (NS)	Spp by Ha (Larch)	Spp by Ha (X con)	Spp by Ha (BLeaf)	Open Land by Ha	Monitoring Comments
03115	25.8	5.1			0.3	1.7	10.1		8.6	PAWS restoration felling on steep ground.
03351	9.5	0.0	0.0		6.2	0.2	1.8	0.3	1.0	Adjacent restock must be further progressed before felling, likely later on in phase 1 felling
03517	23.2	18.6		0.4		0.1	0.1		4.1	Combine with MC 03931
03589	10.7				5.3	1.1	1.5	0.8	2.0	
03931	3.4	3.1							0.3	Combine with MC 03517
03557	15.6	3.6	9.7			1.6	0.5	0.2		
03558	5.1	0.5		3.1			0.5	0.7	0.3	
03819	54.0	9.9	24.0	4.6		2.9	3.8	3.4	5.4	
03891	4.6		1.2			2.5			0.9	
03382	9.4	3.2	1.4		0.5	0.0	2.1	0.0	2.4	
03620	26.6		11.0	12.1		1.9		1.1	0.5	
03970	20.8	12.9	0.5	0.7			0.5		6.2	Restock with NBL to restore PAWS and expand neighbouring SSSI.
03971	18.4	6.9					5.9		5.6	
03660	9.3	6.6	1.6	0.3					0.7	Tie in with 03538
03538	14.3	11.7	0.8						1.7	
03384	31.4	12.3	0.9	0.2	0.9	0.1	14.8	0.0	2.3	
03518	41.2	9.3	6.1	20.5		1.5			3.8	Restock potential peatland restoration however due to current windblow cannot do full survey until trees felled
03402	31.8		27.8					3.0	1.0	
03822	26.3	18.4						5.3	2.6	
03939	2.1					2.1			0.0	Tie in with 03518
Totals	383.4	122.1	85.0	41.8	13.1	15.7	41.5	14.7	49.4	

1.2 Table of Clearfelling (Phase 2)										
Coupe No.	Total Area (Ha)	Spp by Ha (SS)	Spp by Ha (SP)	Spp by Ha (LP)	Spp by Ha (NS)	Spp by Ha (Larch)	Spp by Ha (X con)	Spp by Ha (BLeaf)	Open Land by Ha	Monitoring Comments
03214	21.5	5.3	3.8		0.2	9.5	0.3	0.0	2.5	Steep Ground felling
03062	12.3	0.2	2.1			8.3	0.3		1.4	
03280	15.2	7.1	6.0		1.7	0.4				Conversion from LISS due to lack of previous thinning
03626	4.3	0.3	2.3		0.2	0.7	0.7		0.2	
03604	27.0	24.3		1.4		0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	
03017	21.3	4.6			0.7	0.2	15.8	0.0		PAWS restoration felling on steep ground. There are many sign of remenants throughout coupe which must be protected during felling
03584	17.1	13.0		3.1				1.0		
03113	19.6	8.3	4.6	1.0		0.0	0.0	0.0	5.7	
03102	21.5	9.3	0.0	1.7		1.1	4.1	0.0	5.4	
03401	22.3		2.2			19.4	0.2	0.3	0.2	
Totals	182.1	72.3	21.0	7.1	2.7	39.6	21.4	1.3	16.6	

Table 7: Scale of Proposed Felling Areas (clearfell)

Scale of Proposed Felling Areas										
Total Woodland Area			4388 ha							
Felling	Phase 1	%	Phase 2	%	Phase 3	%	Phase 4	%	LTR, MI & NR	%
Net Area (ha)	383.4	8.7	182.2	4.1	205.8ha	4.7	120.2ha	2.7	878.54	20

3.5 Thinning

Potential sites for thinning in the plan period are identified on **Map 7 – Thinning Coupes**.

This covers an area of 245.62 ha

Thinning will normally be carried out at, or below, the level of marginal thinning intensity (removing no more than 70% of the maximum MAI, or YC, per year). Higher intensities (no more than 140 % of maximum MAI, or YC, per year) may be applied where thinning has been delayed, larger tree sizes are being sought or as part of a LISS prescription. In all cases work plans will be created to provide detailed thinning prescription before work is carried out and operations will be monitored, checking pre and post thinning basal areas.

1.5 Table of Thinning (Phase 1 & 2)					
Coupe No.	Total Area (Ha)	Thin Year	Species	Prescription for Thinning (including subsequent planned intervention)	Monitoring Comments
3001	28.6	2027/28	DF/SS	First line Thinning	
3002	40.24	2025/26	MC/ MB	Low scale thinning to preserve views and remove dangerous trees in woodland neighbouring Loch Ness. Non native species will be targeted.	
3003	15.43	2030/31	SS/JL	First line Thinning	
3004	42.71	2030/31	SS/HL	First thinning to target larch where appropriate	
3005	13.65	2030/31	SS/JL	First line Thinning	
3006	26.38	2030/31	SS/LP	First line Thinning	
3007	34.88	2028/29	MC	First line Thinning	
3008	43.73	2030/31	MC	Group Shelterwood thinning	Regeneration to be monitored to inform timing of next interventions
Total	245.62				

3.6 Other tree felling in exceptional circumstances

FLS will seek to map and identify all planned tree felling in advance through the LMP process. However, in some circumstances small scale tree felling will be required where this may not be possible and where it may be impractical to apply for a separate felling permission due to the risks or impacts of delaying the felling.

Felling permission is therefore sought for the LMP approval period to cover the following circumstances:

Individual trees, rows of trees or small groups of trees that are impacting on important infrastructure (as defined below*), either because they are now encroaching on or have been destabilised or made unsafe by wind, physical damage, or impeded drainage.

**Infrastructure includes forest roads, footpaths, access (vehicle, cycle, horse walking) routes, buildings, utilities and services, and drains.*

The maximum volume of felling in exceptional circumstances over the plan area covered by this approval is 75 cubic metres per calendar year.

A record of the volume felled in this way will be maintained and will be considered during the five year LMP review.

[N.B. Trees may be felled without permission if they: are of less than 10 cm diameter at breast height (1.3 m); pose immediate danger to persons or property; are completely dead; or are part of Authorised Planning Permission works or wayleave agreements].

3.7 Restocking / New Planting

Proposed restocking and new planting is shown on **Map 6 - Future Habitats and Species** and detailed in the tables below. Overdue restocking is coloured orange, and will be prioritised for the first phase of the plan.

1.6 Table of Restocking														
Coupe No.	Total Area (Ha)	SS (Ha)	LP (Ha)	SP (Ha)	NS (Ha)	Larch (Ha)	Other Con. (Ha)	Native Mixed B/Leaf	Other B/Leaf	Open (Ha)	Year	Fell Year	Restock Method & Density (Restock/Nat Regen/Alt Area/Coppice/Open)	Monitoring Comments (Including any reason not to restock)
03274	39.28	9.04					9.04	17.87		3.33	26/27	15/16	Restock	Overdue restock
03753	32.68						16.35	6.53		9.8	26/27	16/17	Restock/ beat up	Previously restocked but regen to be managed and potential beat up
03889	50.2							35.14		15.06	26/27	18/19	Restock	previously failed regen coupe, to be planted with low density birch due to poor ground conditions.
03303	39.4	16.59	0	16.6	0	0	0	0	5.03	1.19	26/27	19/20	Regen/ Restock	Currently being allowed to regen however will be beaten up as areas of conifer have not come through
03347	26.59	7.12	7.12					7.04		5.31	26/27	19/20	Restock	Overdue restock
03473	13.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13.2	0	26/27	19/20	Regen/ Restock	Overdue restock, tie in with 03303
03790	15.56	6.23	0	6.23	0	0	0	0	0	3.1	26/27	19/20	restock	Overdue restock
03818	41.05	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	41.05	0	26/27	19/20	regen	low density broadleaves, currently regenerating with broadleaves
03065	1.22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.22		27/28	20/21	Regen	
03331	7.03	3.52	0	2.11	0	0	0	0	0.7	0.7	25/26	21/22	Restock	Overdue restock
03722	35.45	5.37	0	0	0	0	3.58	26.5	0	0	26/27	21/22	restock	Overdue restock
03270	23.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18.54	4.56	27/28	22/23	Restock	Tie in with 03062
03537	38.38	23.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.67	7.68	27/28	22/23	Restock	
03629	22.75	11.38			4.55			4.55		2.27	28/29	23/24	restock	
03673	10.32	0	0	8.25	0	0	0	0	0	2.07	28/29	23/24	restock	
03771	10.16	10.16									38/39	23/24	restock	
03351	9.52	0	0	0	0	0	5.72	0	1.9	1.9	30/31	25/26	Restock	Hot plant after felling due to low weevil numbers and neighbouring weed competition.
03517	22.8	22.39	0	0	0	0	0	0.41	0	0	30/31	25/26	restock	
03819	54	30.75	0	0	0	0	15.8	0	6.07	1.38	31/21	25/26	restock	
03891	4.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.6	0	0	30/31	25/26	restock	
03931	3.55	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.73	0.82	30/31	25/26	restock	

03660	9.27	4.36					4.36			0.55	31/32	26/27	Restock	
03115	25.77	0	0	4.44	0	0	0	0	15.68	5.65	28/29	26/27	Restock	Area on steep slope to be hot planted to help restabilise slope
03382	9.48	0	0	0	0	0	0	8.53	0	0.95	31/32	26/27	Restock	
03557	15.29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12.23	3.06	30/31	26/27	restock	
03620	21.92	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10.96	10.96	31/32	26/27	restock	
03970	20.76	0	0	5.86	0	0	0	0	13.54	1.36	32/33	26/27	restock	
03971	18.39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12.88	5.51	31/32	26/27	restock	
03402	31.79			31.2				0.47		0.1	29/30	27/28		
03518	40.19	12.16	0	23.5	0	0	0	2.57	0	2	32/33	27/28	restock	BL to be planted beside Loch Knockie
03939	2.08	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.08	0	32/33	27/28	restock	
03384	31.47							28.32		3.15	35/36	29/30		
03538	14.25	4.27	4.27	0	0	0	0	0	2.85	2.86	34/35	29/30	restock	OG and BL to be put in wet areas
03558	5.08	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.12	2.6	0.36	34/35	29/30	restock	
03660	9.26	4.63	0	0	0	0	4.63	0	0	0	34/35	29/30	restock	
03822	26.32	26.32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33/34	29/30	restock	
03017	21.29	0	0	0	0	0	0	18.29	0	3	31/32	30/31	Regen/ restock	PAWS restoration, to be monitored for regen as ample seed source from mature remnant trees.
03214	21.55							21.55			36/37	31/32	Restock	
03584	17.11	10.27		6.84							36/37	31/32	restock	
03626	4.34	3.04		1.3							36/37	31/32	restock	
03280	15.31						15.31				37/38	32/33	Restock	
03113	19.67						19.67				37/38	32/33	Restock	
03401	22.27			12.5			9.82			0	37/38	32/33		
03604	27.02	10.81	10.81	2.7						2.7	35/36	32/33	restock	
03062	12.31	0	0	0	0	0	0	9.85	0	2.46	34/35	33/34	Restock	Hot plant due to steep slopes and proximity to road.
03102	21.55						4.55	12.7		4.3	39/40	34/35	Restock	
03589	10.71	0	0	0	0	0	0	8.61	0	2.1	29/30	26/26	restock	
Total	941.69	221.4	22.2	121	4.55	0	108.83	187.51	170.93	104.78				

If the Restock or natural regeneration should fail to reach 1600 stems per hectare (Native Broadleaves) or 2500 stems per hectare (Productive Conifers) the site will be beaten-up to the required planting density. This will be assessed at year 3 and year 5 after planting with beat up by at least year 5.

3.8 Species diversity and age structure

The following tables show how the proposed management of the forest will help to maintain or establish a diverse species composition and age-class structure, as recommended in the UK Forestry Standard.

Stands adjoining felled areas will be retained until the restocking of the first coupe has reached a minimum height of 2m. Where this is not possible (e.g. due to windblow risk or disease), the planned approach to achieving height separation between adjacent coupes will be achieved through delayed felling.

Table 12: Species diversity

Plan area by Species						
Species	Current		Year 10		Year 20	
	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%
Sitka spruce	804	18	748.1	17	744.7	17
Scots pine	393.9	9	426.2	10	439.3	10
Larches	146.8	3	68.6	2	55.8	1
Lodgepole pine	196.1	4	118.9	3	74.7	2
Other conifers	118.7	3	149.2	3	222.1	5
Broadleaves	825.5	19	1037.7	24	1116.9	25
Open ground	1375.56	31	1375.56	31	1375.56	31
Other	526.34	12	462.64	11	357.89	8
Total	4386.9	100	4386.9	100	4386.9	100

Figure 1: Bar chart demonstrating species diversity and land use

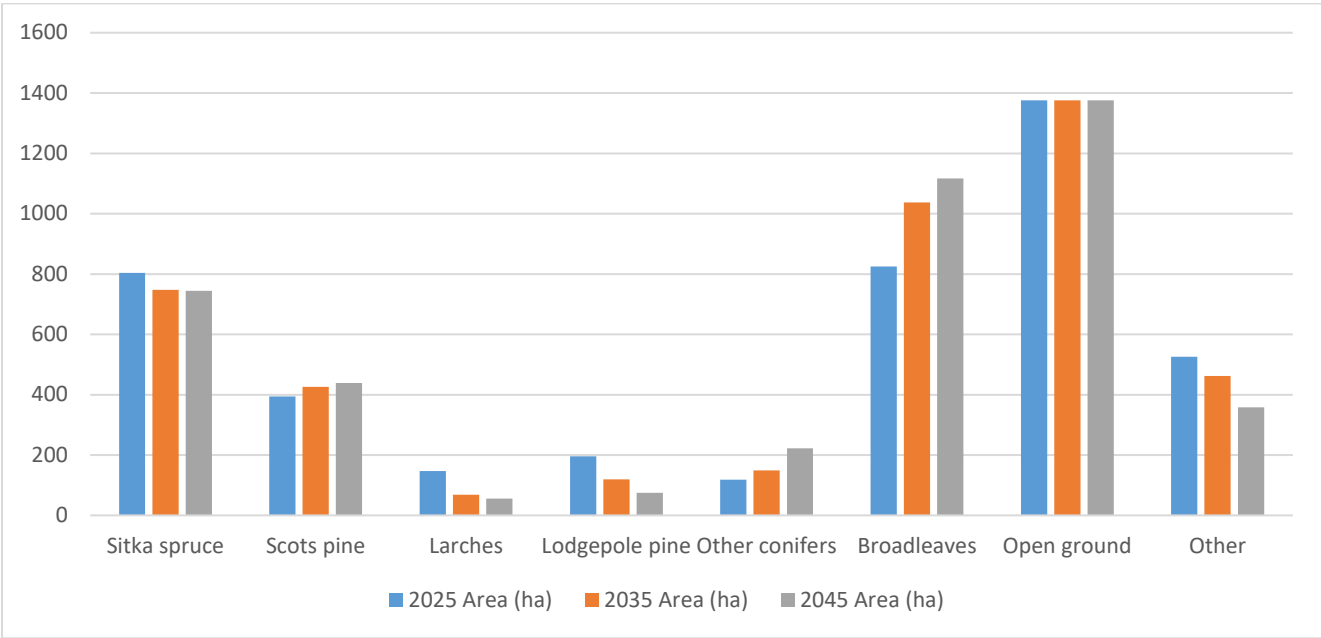
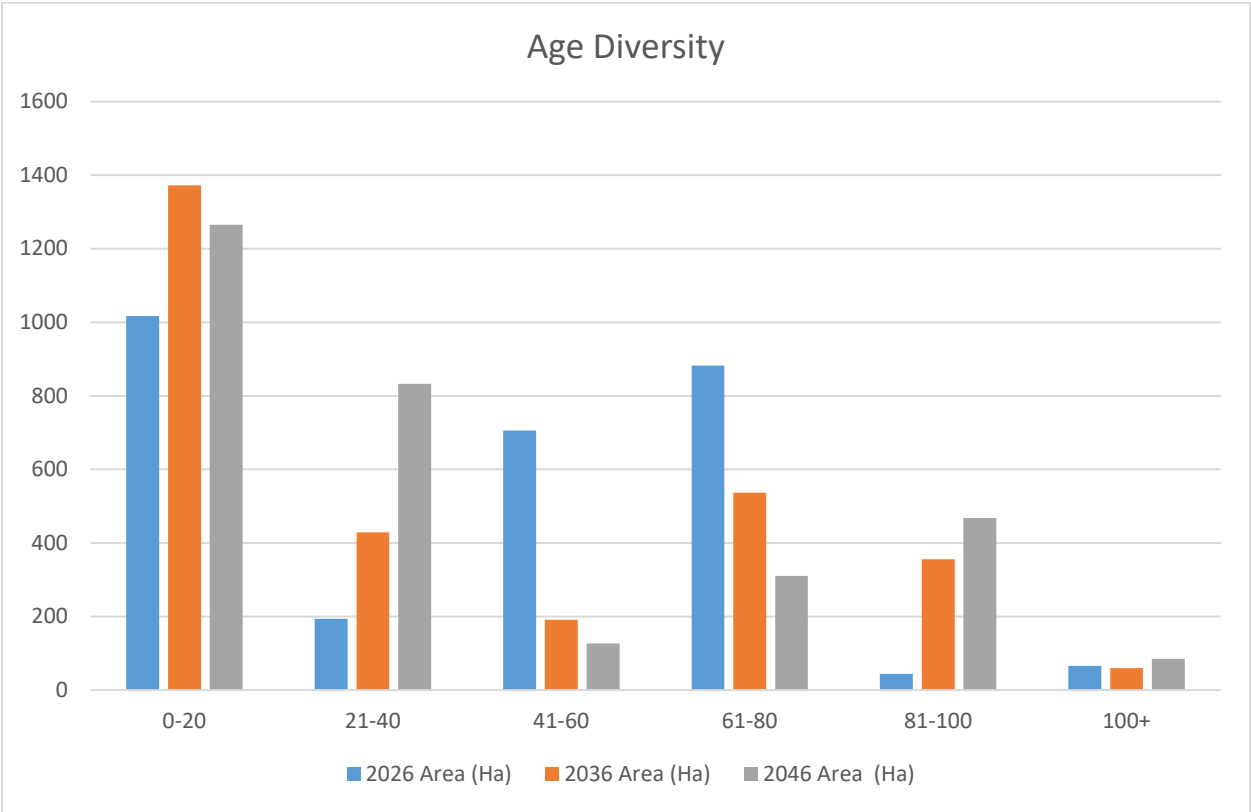


Table 13: Age diversity

Plan area by Age						
Age Class (years)	Current		Year 10		Year 20	
	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%
0 – 20	663	35	1372.1	47	1265.1	41
21 – 40	230.4	7	428.4	15	833.1	27
41 – 60	506.9	24	191.4	7	127.1	4
61 – 80	746.6	30	536.7	18	310.1	10
81 - 100	41.4	2	355.3	12	468.2	15
100+	62.1	2	60.1	2	84.7	3
Total	2910.1		2944		3088.3	

Figure 2: Bar chart demonstrating age diversity



3.9 Road Operations and Quarries

Planned civil engineering operations are shown on **Map 15 – Roads and Civil Engineering**.

Table 4: Civil Operations

Forest Road Upgrades, Realignments, New Roads and New Quarrying				
Phase	Name / Number	Length (m)	Year	Operation
1	Glen Liath Extension	1101	25/26	Road extension
1	Whitefield SLN	940	30/31	Road extension

3.10 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Any operations requiring an EIA screening opinion request are shown in the table below. The corresponding screening opinion request forms are presented in **EIA screening opinion request form** which is available upon request.

Table 55: Environmental Impact Assessment Summary

EIA projects in the plan area		
Type of project	Yes / No	Note
Afforestation	No	
Deforestation	Yes	
Forest roads	Yes	
Forestry quarries	No	

3.11 Tolerance table

Working tolerances agreed with Scottish Forestry are shown in **Appendix 3 – Tolerance Table**.

4.0 Management Proposals – guidance and context

4.1 Silviculture

4.1.1 Clear felling

Coupe detail can be found in **section 3.2** and **Map 5 – Management Coupes**.

Most clearfelling will employ conventional short-wood felling prescription: use of track based harvester machinery felling, snedding and cross-cutting trees into product lengths, then lifted and transported by track forwarder to roadside where the timber is stacked and latterly uplifted by timber lorries. Prior to any operations all operational detail and constraints will be carried out through the internal FLS work planning process. This involves walk over surveys to determine/ confirm any environmental and operational constraints and mitigation which will be required. This is then passed on to the timber merchant/ operators at the pre-commencement meeting and monitored throughout the operation.

Clear felling within this plan area is primarily driven by windblow, forest health concerns, and the strategic timing of interventions to support natural regeneration and long-term forest resilience. In the Erchite area, the felling programme will continue in line with Phases 3 and 4 of the previous plan, focusing on the restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). This involves the removal of non-native species and restocking with appropriate native species. Where possible native broad leaf species will be retained, especially when they are within or close to designated sites, these areas will also enhance riparian zone and left and a seed source. Felling will take place close to the designated lochs of Loch Bran and Loch Knockie, NatureScot have been consulted and all guidance will be followed as detailed in the designated site plan. This felling will enhance the designations as the removal of non native spruce and planting of native broadleaves will increase water quality and improve neighbouring water edge habitats.

The beech trees adjacent to the lower Foyers road (MC 03551, 03057 and 03589) will be reviewed due to the potential risk they pose to road safety. Where we think there may be a problem we will employ a tree surveyor and engage with local stakeholders before any operation is undertaken, emergency work notwithstanding.

Larch will also continue to be removed to improve resilience against *Phytophthora ramorum*. Steep and unstable slopes are scheduled for felling, with ongoing development of appropriate working methods. Given the area's visibility from the A82 and Urquhart Castle, all felling and restocking operations are designed to maintain and enhance the landscape value.

In Fairgaig Wood, felling efforts will focus on restructuring the age profile of the woodland. Phase 1 will target older stands that are beginning to suffer windblow, aiming to recover timber value. Lodgepole pine planted on wetter, peaty soils will also be felled due to poor growth and signs of Dothistroma needle blight (DNB). Felling along the Loch shore will prioritise PAWS restoration and the conservation of existing PAWS features, while preserving the area's landscape character.

In the Camus block, felling will concentrate on PAWS restoration in the southern coupe, with the long-term goal of extending the habitat of the adjacent Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The high proportion of larch in this block will be removed in phases, with careful planning to protect the visual amenity of the area, which is prominently viewed from the A82 and the Great Glen Way.

Felling in the Knockie block will be limited due to its age structure and current management approach. One coupe will remove non-native Lodgepole pine (LP) and Sitka spruce (SS) from wet ground, where windblow has affected large areas. The LP in this area is also infected with DNB.

There is no planned felling in this plan period in Glen Brein or Dunmaglass.

4.1.2 Thinning

The thinning coupes can be viewed in **Table 8 - Thinning** and on **Map 7 – Thinning Coupes**.

Opportunities for thinning within the South Loch Ness Land Management Plan (LMP) area are limited during this plan period, primarily due to the predominance of even-aged, over-mature stands. Combined with the area's relatively high DAMS scores, thinning these mature crops would likely result in significant windblow. Many of these coupes are already exhibiting signs of windthrow, making further thinning inadvisable.

A distinction can be made between exposed, peaty ground, dominated by Lodgepole pine and Sitka spruce, and better-drained, less exposed soils which are more suitable for species such as Scots pine. For further detail, refer to Map 9 – Soils. The soils in this area are predominantly peat, gley, and ironpan types, all of which restrict rooting due to induration or the presence of impermeable layers. Rooting depth often does not exceed 40 cm, significantly affecting stand stability.

Thinning must therefore be carried out with caution and at appropriate times to maintain crop stability. Stands that have not been previously thinned, or where thinning has been delayed, are often no longer suitable for intervention and will instead be clearfelled when conditions are optimal. This is particularly relevant for older coupes in the South Loch Ness area.

The majority of thinning during this plan period will involve first thinnings of younger spruce crops. These operations aim to establish thinning racks to promote wind firmness and ensure that subsequent thinning can occur without increasing the risk of windthrow.

Map 7 – Thinning Coupes identifies the coupes where thinning is planned or may be considered. Thinning will be undertaken to improve timber quality or to encourage a desired species composition, with selection based primarily on crown health, form, and species. An outline thinning prescription for upcoming coupes is provided in **Table 8 – Thinning** in **Section 3.5**.

In addition to standard silvicultural thinning, two other areas are highlighted on the thinning maps:

- **Roadside buffers:** Regular management is required to prevent moisture retention in road surfaces and to keep roadside ditches clear. This involves felling or mulching regenerating trees.
- **Riparian zones:** Management here focuses on the removal of non-native regeneration, which can outcompete native broadleaved species essential for a healthy riparian ecosystem. Removal will occur when non-native populations become problematic.

4.1.3 Low Impact Silviculture Systems (LISS) / Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF)

Continuous Cover Forestry has advantages over clearfell and restock management systems where it can be implanted successfully. It positively contributes to soil health, carbon capture, ecology and forest aesthetics (Forestry Commission, 2008). For these reasons, FLS has looked to maximize areas of CCF in previous LMP's. To allow for use of these systems a site has to be thinnable and, as mentioned above, South Loch Ness has very limited opportunities for CCF. Restocking within a CCF system is usually achieved through natural regeneration, more details of which can be found in section 4.1.6 . As a result there is 43.73 Ha in this plan which are managed as CCF as show in **Map 5 – Management Coupes**. This area will be managed using the Group Shelterwood system as outlined below.

Group Shelterwood

This system regenerates a mature stand by cutting small holes within the original stand. Depending on the shade tolerance of the species holes are generally between 1 and 3 tree lengths but potentially bigger depending on land form, aspect and species. When working with shade tolerant species such as Norway spruce and Western hemlock small gaps will be used whereas in crops with light demanding species such as larch and pine much larger holes will be cut. As a rule gaps within Group Shelterwood systems will not exceed 0.5 ha to ensure the maximum benefit of the CCF system is maintained. Full regeneration of the stand will generally take place over 4 phases. Regeneration will be monitored and if there are not significant signs of regeneration after 5 years the area will be restocked.

4.1.4 Long term retention (LTR) / Minimum intervention (MI) / Natural reserve (NR)

The South Loch Ness LMP area contains 878.54ha of LTR, MI and NR sites, these are illustrated spatially in **Map 5 – Management Coupes**. These sites will be managed in accordance with FLS guidance for the respective management types which can be supplied on demand.

Of this, 33.95ha is under the strictest designation of Natural Reserve. Natural Reserves will be protected indefinitely and only very specific operations are allowed, these operations will have to enhance the features of the Natural Reserve or will be necessary by law (e.g. SPHN). The areas have been selected on their size, ecological value and significance in the landscape.

Minimum intervention areas are found in pockets around Foyers and Farigaig and at several other places. These contain a large variety of habitats. Some are riparian areas with broadleaves, most contain trees at low densities interspersed with pockets of open ground resulting in open grown, stable trees and large variation of habitat at a small scale. They are also contained in the SSSI and PAWS areas so non native removal will continue in these areas. Beyond non-native removal no felling is anticipated, except where trees may become unstable and threaten a core path, trail, road or infrastructure.

Several areas of Long-term retention have also been identified. These are generally plantation origin crops which will be retained because of specific environmental or landscape features they contain or to ensure a good age distribution within an area. No felling is anticipated, except where trees may become unstable and threaten a core path, trail, road or infrastructure.

4.1.5 Tree species choice / Restocking

Restocking will be done according to **Map 6 - Future Habitats and Species** and **Appendix 5 - Restock Prescriptions**. A variety of restock prescriptions are proposed dependent on the main objectives of the area in question. Stocking densities, species and main objectives are given in these restock prescriptions.

Restocking in productive areas will aim to maximise the productive capacity of the forest. The brief guidelines below will be followed to ensure adequate restocking:

- All restocking will be monitored by Foresters and SDA's will be carried out 5 years after planting to ensure required densities are being achieved. Where planting native species the correct seed zones will be identified and used.
- To obtain maximum benefits from restructuring, contiguous restocking areas will not be less than 1 ha per individual shape (except in CCF areas) or exceed 40 ha unless forest health issues, open habitat restoration feasibility or windblow dictate otherwise.
- Restock coupes adjacent to the forest roads should be restocked to within 5 metres of the forest road for at least 30% of the coupe frontage to facilitate future access and to limit potential for soil disturbance of compaction.
- Areas of non - productive broadleaved trees within productive coupes will be located where they will be of greatest ecological benefit; along drainage channels, adjacent to open ground, other broadleaf woodland or around archaeological features to enhance their setting.
- Commercial restocking will not be undertaken on soil types 9e, 11c, 11d due to the intensive drainage regimes and high fertiliser inputs that would be required to achieve successful establishment.

A delay/ slow growth in restocking in certain coupes will be caught up during the duration of this plan. In some cases this delay in restock has had a knock on effect on adjacent felling coupes. As per standard practice, restock sites will be monitored and appropriate intervention will be carried out. This intervention could be in the form of weeding, beat ups and potential additional fertiliser. In particular MC 03889 in Knockie is a marginal site with large areas of ground either deep peat or shallow soils on bed rock. As such all plantable areas will be planted with broadleaves while the deep peat and other unplantable areas will be left as managed open ground.

Another site where a delay in restocking will be dealt with within this plan period is MC 03753 This coupe has previously been restocked with Scots pine with a large amount of open ground left in the hope of regenerating as these areas were not suitable for ground preparation techniques employed on site. This has resulted in a younger regenerating crop of mixed conifers. Due to the steep ground and highly visible nature of the site it would be impractical to remove this regeneration so this will be managed through respacing and stocking density surveys done regularly to ensure that the required stocking density is achieved. Where the stocking density is low a beat out will be carried out.

The LMP seeks approval for restocking of areas felled prior to the plan period, species enhancement operations and in those coupes felled within the first 5 years of the plan. The conventional 5 year following period generally means that all coupes felled in the second phase of the plan will be restocked beyond the approval period. Where pine weevil numbers are expected to remain low following felling, restock will take place directly or shortly after felling. In order to secure approval for the restocking of coupes felled in the second phase of the plan the restock proposals for these coupes are also shown on **Map 6 – Future Habitats and Species**.

The Restocking Strategy for Scotland's National Forest Estate aims to minimise chemical usage in restocking (i.e. application of insecticides and/or herbicides) by considering adequate ground preparation at site level, and using tactics such as delayed planting (i.e. applying five year following) to achieve this.

4.1.6 Natural regeneration

Natural regeneration will be used within the next plan period in areas where regeneration success can be achieved, there is a seed source, low browsing pressure, suitable ground conditions and evidence of regen already present. To ensure appropriate stocking in these areas ground preparation such as screeing and/or scarifying might be used to optimize the seedbed. Monitoring of regen sites will begin monitoring after coupes are felled and a decision made at year 5 as to whether to continue to allow to regenerate or to restock by conventional means. Stocking density and species will be monitored through the natural regeneration survey program. If stocking density is too low it will be beaten up to the target density by year 5. If the natural regeneration is too dense it may be necessary to respace, clear and restock. Where the natural regeneration is not the desired species it will be considered against the plan objectives and tolerance table and either accepted (with a plan amendment if necessary) or removed.

There should be a preference for natural regeneration of broadleaf areas (to maintain provenance and improve the chances of establishment) but where this is unlikely or has not been successful then these areas should be planted/beaten up to the required stocking density and site requirements. In those areas where recruitment is insufficient supplement planting will take place.

It is expected that some of the riparian zones, designed open ground and broadleaf areas will fill in with natural regeneration of both conifers and broadleaves. This will be managed in such a way as to ensure that, where practicable, it does not significantly impose a negative impact upon the objectives of the plan or create a negative impact upon the watercourse in terms of shading and acidification.

4.1.7 New planting

There is no new planting is proposed during this LMP.

4.1.8 Wildlife Management

The Deer Management Plan can be found in **Appendix 9**.

4.1.9 Fire

FLS continues to work closely with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to prevent and tackle wildfires that threaten Scotland's National Forests and Land. FLS support SFRS in their lead role for fire prevention and suppression through creating annual fire plans, maintaining a duty rota, and providing additional logistical support. FLS's primary objective is always to protect people's health, safety and wellbeing. A detailed fire risk assessment of the South Loch Ness plan can be found in **Appendix 11 – Fire**.

4.1.10 Tree health

A key objective of this Land Management Plan (LMP) is to enhance the forest's resilience to climate change, pests, diseases, and windthrow. Several pests and diseases are currently affecting forests, and more are expected to emerge due to climate change, increasing the complexity of forest management. One of the most significant current threats is *Phytophthora ramorum*. In southern and western Scotland, outbreaks have led to widespread dieback and large-scale removal of larch. To mitigate its impact, Forestry and Land Scotland published its Larch Strategy (FLS, 2022), which guides the management of larch within the South Loch Ness LMP area. As noted in section 4.1.1, most of the forests lie within the 'PAZ less vulnerable zone', where no mandatory felling targets apply.

This plan has considered the potential implications of *P. ramorum* outbreaks and proposes the removal of larch in selected areas. These areas have been chosen either because the larch stands are nearing their economic felling age and can be harvested alongside other operations, or because they are difficult to access, which would complicate rapid response if infection occurs. This approach aims to reduce infection risk while maximising financial return.

However, the long-term objective is not the complete removal of larch from the South Loch Ness LMP area. As outlined in the *Phytophthora ramorum* Action Plan (Scottish Forestry, 2021), the purpose of the PAZ is "to eradicate local infections by felling affected trees rapidly after detection." The plan also acknowledges that larch in this zone "may still have a long-term future." Given larch's suitability for low-nutrient soils, its biodiversity value, and its potential for natural regeneration, it will continue to be used in mixture with Scots pine in accessible areas. This ensures that, should a Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) be issued, removal can be carried out efficiently and cost-effectively. This strategy will be reviewed regularly in light of *P. ramorum* developments.

Dothistroma Needle Blight (DNB) affects parts of the LMP area, particularly impacting species in the *Pinus* genus. It causes premature needle loss, reducing timber yield and potentially leading to tree mortality. In previous years, high infection levels led to widespread felling in the Knockie and Glen Brein blocks. One remaining area of infected lodgepole pine in Knockie will be removed as a Phase 1 coupe to prevent further deterioration. Other affected coupes will also be felled during this plan period.

Large pine weevil (*Hylobius abietis*) continues to constrain forest management. Population density assessments will be conducted to determine the optimal timing for restocking. Ideally, restocking will occur within one to two years of felling to minimise nutrient runoff and reduce herbicide use. The *Hylobius* Management Support System will guide these decisions. If weevil populations are too high, early restocking could result in high mortality or excessive pesticide use, which is undesirable. In such cases, a fallow period of up to five years may be applied. Where gorse presents a significant threat, restocking may proceed immediately after felling to ensure successful establishment. If necessary, pesticide application may be used to prevent crop failure.

4.1.11 Road operations, Timber haulage and other infrastructure

Map 15 – Roads and Civil Engineering shows the existing forest road network, quarries, planned new roads, powerlines and agreed Timber Transport Routes.

Most of the South Loch Ness LMP area has a well-developed road network, and therefore only limited new roading is proposed. Where new roads are being built Prior Notification will be applied for from the Highland Council. The only new roads planned are at Carn Dubh and Whitefield. The Carn Dubh road will provide access to a clearfell area that currently has limited access and insufficient space for stacking, turning lorries, etc.

Several quarries are located throughout the South Loch Ness LMP area, although not all are currently in use.

Haulage will primarily use forest roads and Agreed Routes. Where Consultation Routes are required, Forestry and Land Scotland will liaise with the Highland Council to address any haulage restrictions.

Several vital powerlines run through the South Loch Ness LMP area. These lines are essential components of the Scottish grid. Future restocking will ensure adequate open ground and/or low-growing broadleaves are maintained near the lines to enhance resilience.

A critical 33 kV powerline runs through Inverfarigaig and feeds electricity into the grid from the power station at Foyers. Opportunities will be sought to improve the resilience of this line by setting back the forest where operations are planned, provided this does not compromise the stability of the remaining crop. At restocking, open ground and/or low-growing broadleaves will be incorporated around the line to safeguard it in the future.

There are multiple renewable energy projects in planning across South Loch Ness. While these are not expected to have a major impact on the forest, access arrangements and potential wayleaves may be negotiated as necessary.

4.2 Biodiversity

4.2.1 Designated sites

Designated sites in the area are listed in **Table 3** in **3.1** and shown in **Map 2 – Key Features**. The DSP can be found in **Appendix 8 – Designated Site Plan** and the EIA is available upon request. There are six designated sites in the area: Ness Woods SAC, Loch Knockie and Nearby Lochs SPA, Knockie Lochs SSSI, Easter Ness Forest SSSI, Loch Bran SSSI, and Inverfarigaig SSSI. Monitoring is undertaken by the beat forester and environment ranger, and concerns or updates elevated to the environment manager. A summary of proposed management for each site is provided below.

Ness Woods SAC and Easter Ness Forest SSSI

Ness Woods SAC is designated for its native woodland habitats and otter populations. Easter Ness Forest SSSI overlaps with the SAC and shares many of its features. The primary pressures on these sites are herbivore browsing and competition from invasive non-native species (INNS). As outlined in [Appendix 9 – Deer Management Plan](#), deer culling will be increased in these areas. In addition, non-native tree removal will continue. While surrounding seed sources have been reduced, ongoing management is required to prevent regeneration. Opportunities to enhance otter habitat within the LMP area are limited, and no major works are planned within the SAC in the foreseeable future.

Loch Knockie SSSI and Loch Knockie and Nearby Loch SPA

Although limited operations are planned in this area, all activities must consider the breeding season of the Slavonian grebe. The felling of coupe MC 03518 and subsequent restocking with native species within the buffer zone of Loch Knockie will help improve water quality and enhance habitat for the Slavonian grebe. **Loch Bran SSSI**

The site is currently in favourable condition. However, public access will be managed to reduce trampling and path braiding. If necessary, a walkway will be constructed to further protect sensitive areas.

Inverfarigaig SSSI

The felling and restocking of coupe MC 03931 with native broadleaves will complete the removal of mature non-native trees from the SSSI. Additional non-native species removal will continue throughout the site. As noted above, deer culling will be targeted in this area to reduce browsing pressure and support native woodland regeneration.

4.2.2 Native woodland

The Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (Scottish Forestry, 2022) provides an overview of the condition and extent of natural and semi-natural woodland across the country. According to the survey, herbivore impacts in the South Loch Ness LMP area range from medium to very high. As a result, the deer cull will be increased and more strategically targeted to reduce browsing pressure. Native woodland will be expanded along the shores of Loch Ness in areas bordering designated sites as well as areas of PAWS throughout the plan area.

Riparian woodland planting will follow the guidance set out in **Appendix 5 – Restock Prescriptions** and will primarily consist of native broadleaved species. This will be carried out over stages where any riparian areas in felled areas will be planted with native broadleaves and Open ground. The projected increase in broadleaved cover is illustrated in **Section 3.8**.

4.2.3 Ancient woodland / Plantation on Ancient Woodland sites (PAWS)

Ancient woodland sites are shown on **Map 2 – Key Features** and detailed in **Appendix 4 – Environmental Features**. As indicated in the appendix, a significant proportion of PAWS areas are under threat, primarily due to the presence of non-native species such as Norway spruce, Sitka spruce, and larch. A secondary pressure is overgrazing by deer and other herbivores, which is being addressed at a landscape scale through collaborative deer management with neighbouring landowners.

In areas identified as Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) that still exhibit remnant native woodland features, restoration to native woodland will be undertaken following felling. In addition, extensive native woodland establishment is planned along all watercourses within the LMP area.

While PAWS restoration remains a long-term objective, the approach is evolving. Rather than applying blanket restoration across all PAWS areas, efforts will now focus on those sites with the greatest ecological potential — particularly where remnant native woodland features are still present. The assessment of PAWS sites will also consider their connectivity to the wider forest and landscape, ensuring that restoration efforts are not undermined by surrounding non-native species. This targeted strategy ensures that resources are directed where they can deliver the greatest biodiversity and habitat value, while recognising that some PAWS areas have limited remaining ancient woodland characteristics.

Future management operations will prioritise native species, aiming to phase out non-native species over successive rotations while protecting and enhancing remnant native fragments. Norway spruce may be retained or planted in small proportions within PAWS areas, subject to agreement with the FLS Environment Team, where it contributes to biodiversity objectives such as supporting red squirrel habitat.

At Inverfarigaig, the removal of non-native species and their replacement with native trees will contribute to the restoration of PAWS sites to native woodland.

In addition to PAWS, large areas within the South Loch Ness LMP are classified as Long Established Plantation Origin (LEPO). Management and restocking in LEPO areas will be guided by the quality of existing habitat, proximity to ancient woodland remnants, and the long-term potential for native woodland restoration.

4.2.4 Protected and priority habitats and species

A detailed list of protected and priority habitats and species within the South Loch Ness LMP area is provided in **Appendix 4 – Environmental Features**.

All forest management operations are subject to a planning process prior to commencement, which includes a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) to identify the presence of important habitats and wildlife. Work plans are adjusted as necessary in accordance with NatureScot buffer zones and seasonal timing restrictions to avoid disturbance (NatureScot, 2022). Opportunities to further protect species or enhance habitats are also identified during this process.

Any operations likely to disturb protected species will be carried out under licence from NatureScot and will follow the assessment and mitigation measures specified in the licence conditions.

The majority of forests within the LMP area are designated as a red squirrel stronghold. All proposals have been assessed against the Forestry Commission Scotland Practice Note *Managing Forests as Red Squirrel Strongholds* (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2012), in consultation with the FLS Environment Team. The proposals are in line with the recommendations set out in this guidance.

4.2.5 Open ground

Priority open habitats within the plan area are described in **Appendix 4 – Environmental Features** and shown on **Map 2 – Key Features**, along with their associated management objectives.

During restocking, opportunities will be sought to create high-value open habitats in areas of extreme infertility, waterlogged soils, or where they can buffer existing open habitats. Several lochans and pools across the LMP area provide valuable habitat for a wide range of species. Following the removal of the current crop, these features will be surrounded by open ground and native planting to enhance their ecological value.

Restock prescriptions, as detailed in **Appendix 5**, include provision for the retention and creation of open ground within coupe designs to support biodiversity and landscape objectives.

4.2.6 Dead wood

Deadwood Management in Felling and Thinning Operations

Opportunities to retain or create deadwood will be identified during the planning stages of all felling and thinning operations, with priority given to areas offering the highest ecological potential. Valuable deadwood and key deadwood zones will be clearly marked on contract maps to ensure their protection and enhancement.

Natural reserves will provide some of the most promising conditions for the development of both standing and fallen deadwood. Where safety allows, standing mature dead trees will be retained, as they offer critical habitat for a wide range of species.

All deadwood will be managed in line with the Scottish Forestry Practice Guide *Managing Deadwood in Forests and Woodlands* (Humphrey & Bailey, 2012), and the FLS internal guidance document *Deadwood Management – Guidance for Staff* (FLS, 2021).

4.2.7 Invasive species

Very few invasive non-native species (INNS) are present within the South Loch Ness LMP area. A list is provided in **Appendix 4 – Environmental Features**. Presence of INNS is limited and therefore impact on the native habitats is small. Extensive INNS removal has been carried out in the past and currently populations are monitored and removed as necessary.

4.3 Historic Environment

Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) and other heritage features can be found on **Map 2 – Key Features** and **Map 12 – Historic Environment**. Most notable is Dun Deardail, which contains the remains of a small hillfort. Detail of the SAMs can be found in **Appendix 4 – Environmental Features**. The protection and enhancement of significant archaeological sites is a key objective on all forests and land managed by FLS and the method is stated below. We will follow the guidance issued by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in Forestry and Scheduled Monuments (2025).

Our key priorities for archaeology and the historic environment are to undertake conservation management, condition monitoring and archaeological recording at significant historic assets; and to seek opportunities to work in partnership to help to deliver Our Place in Time: the historic environment strategy for Scotland (2014) and Scotland’s Archaeology Strategy (2015). Significant archaeological sites will be protected and managed following the UK Forestry Standard (2023) and the FCS policy document Scotland’s Woodlands and the Historic Environment (2008). Harvesting coupes, access roads and fence lines will be surveyed prior to any work being undertaken in order to ensure that upstanding historic environment features can be marked and avoided. At establishment and restocking, work prescriptions remove relevant historic environment features from ground disturbing operations and replanting. Where appropriate, significant historic assets are recorded by archaeological measured survey, see active conservation management and may be presented to the public with interpretation panels and access paths. Opportunities to enhance the setting of important sites and landscapes will be considered on a case-by-case basis (such as the views to and from a significant designated site).

The Regional Historic Asset Management Plan includes conservation management intentions for designated historic assets on the National Forest Estate. Details of all known historic environment features are held within the Forester Web Heritage Data and included within work plans for specific operations to ensure damage is avoided. Significant historic environment features will be depicted on all relevant operational maps.

Areas of historic environment interest should be checked both on FLS’s internal historic environment records and also with the Council’s HER prior to the commencement of forestry activities. Any upstanding features should be clearly marked, both on the ground and on operational maps. Care should be taken to avoid any damage to surviving structural elements.

Regular monitoring of the SAM’s in the LMP area will take place and subsequent tree/vegetation removal will be planned with the results from the survey and in liaison with HES and the FLS archaeologist. Sites will be prioritized based on the (potential) impact of vegetation on the SAM. When tree felling takes place near SAM areas opportunities will be sought to remove any remaining trees from the SAM and/or buffer zone. As per UKFS regulations a 20m buffer will be applied to SAM areas in which there is a presumption against restocking. Scheduled Monument Clearance will be applied for with Historic Environment Scotland if operations could impact SAM’s. During the workplan preparation the site and potential impact to the SAM will be carefully assessed by our Environment team and a decision whether to apply for clearance will be made. Operations near the SAM are not to take place until clearance from Historic Environment Scotland has been received.

Unscheduled monuments we are currently aware of will be part of the pre-operation checks, and their condition and location noted in the work plan. They will be buffered to at least 5 metres. Where we discover new unscheduled monuments we will report them to our archaeology team, HES, and the council archaeology team prior to work starting.

4.4 Landscape

See Map 1 – Location and Viewpoints, Map 8 - Landscape, Appendix 6 – Landscape and Appendix 10 - Visualisations

4.5 People

4.5.1 Neighbours and local community

FLS has actively engaged with the neighbours and local community for this land management planning exercise through an extensive consultation process. Signs were put out to notify visitors of the LMP revision and known neighbours and all community councils were contacted at scoping and consultation.

Several neighbours have taken an active interest in the development of the plan and their aspirations have been incorporated where they do not conflict with the objectives of the plan and are consistent with FLS' approach to land management. Details can be found in **Appendix 2 – Consultation Record**.

4.5.2 Public access

FLS is the largest provider of outdoor recreation in Scotland, and we welcome over ten million visitors per year to the forests we manage. The forests and land we look after play a key part in Scotland's 'natural health service', providing spaces where people of all ages can spend time enhancing their physical and mental health through play, exploration and relaxation. We want to do what we can to make sure that as many people as possible, from all backgrounds can enjoy their visit. To help facilitate visits we provide a network of facilities including car parks and waymarked trails above and beyond the network of Core Paths (See **Map 2 – Key Features**). In some busier areas we offer public toilets and visitor centres. These facilities and opportunities are promoted via the FLS website and through a series of free leaflets. Where there are waymarked trails, on site information is also provided. The specific facilities within this Land Management Plan area are discussed below.

There are also many forests without formal facilities, and visitors are welcome to explore under a right of responsible access as described by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) and laid out in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. This ensures everyone has statutory access rights to most of Scotland's outdoors, if these rights are exercised responsibly, with respect for people's privacy, safety and livelihoods, and for Scotland's environment. Equally, land managers have to manage their land and water responsibly in relation to access rights and FLS will only restrict public access where it is absolutely necessary, usually for safety reasons, and will keep disruption to a minimum. We will continue to consult and communicate with the local Access officer where work may affect the trail and core path network.

Events

Previously hosted events within the South Loch Ness LMP area include the UltraX race which runs through the block. The routes for the Loch Ness Etape and Loch Ness Marathon also run through the area with the LMP area providing a backdrop for these events. Many other smaller events take place under the right of responsible access, without the need for formal permission. FLS is supportive of events hosted in the South Loch Ness area but will assess applications for events against the designated Vulnerable Zones (Map 13 – Vulnerable Zones) to help limit and reduce disturbance. Recreational pressures will be managed carefully within these areas for the benefit of local habitats and FLS will look for alternative locations and/or timings in case a negative impact is expected by the FLS Environment Team.

Recreation Facilities within South Loch Ness

There are formal car parks at Inverfarigaig and Dalrag and Camus, however these will no longer be managed by FLS with Dalrag and Camus closed and Inverfarigaig transferred to community ownership through a CATS Scheme. The parking layby at Loch Bran is an unofficial parking area however there are information boards about the SSSI, this is not actively managed however will be repaired if it gets to a state of disrepair. The various layby and parking areas along Loch Ness are managed to allow for members of the public to access Loch Ness. The main one of these is the Changing house layby which is larger and have information boards etc at the site.

There are various waymarked and publicised trail within the LMP Area. The South Loch Ness Trail is a long distance path which runs from Fort Augustus to Inverness. It is a popular route and can be combined to form the Loch Ness 360 and also an alternative to the Great Glen Way on the North of the Loch. The trails of the seven lochs is another long distance path which goes through the LMP area. Its starts and finishes at the Inverfarigaig car park. The Lochan Tòrr an Tuill Trail is a shorter way marked circular trail which starts at the Inverfarigaig car park as well. Where these paths run on the national forest Estate FLS will carry out inspections and maintain the paths. We will also look for opportunities to work with neighbours to collaborate on path maintenance.

On top of these facilities informal usage is common throughout the forests in particular At Erchite and Farigaig.

We are working to maintain our current recreation infrastructure, though the ability to do so in future depends on available funding. We will remain open to working with communities to facilitate suitable projects on FLS land. The number of visitors in the area has grown over the recent years and we continuously assess whether the current infrastructure is sufficient and look for opportunities to expand the offering where necessary and when funding is available.

Woodland Management in Visitor Zones

Visitor Zones have been identified in areas where FLS encourage and manage access or where the woodland managed by FLS interacts with popular visitor sites or access routes. In these areas, single trees or small groups of trees will be removed when necessary to protect facilities, infrastructure and trails, or to enhance the setting of features, or to maintain existing views.

Woodland in these zones will also be thinned, or trees re-spaced, for safety reasons (including to increase visibility to ensure that sites are welcoming and feel safe) and where it is necessary to enhance the experience of the forest setting, through the development of large trees, or preferential removal of trees to favour a particular species.

4.6 Soils

4.6.1 Protection and Fertility

Brash mats (or alternative measures) will be used to protect sensitive soils on areas where harvesters and forwarders are being used. Felling residue will usually be left on site to allow nutrient recycling, with consideration for the practicalities of restocking.

The extended fallow periods (generally up to five years) that are required prior to restocking, to allow pine weevil populations to abate, have the negative effect of compounding nutrient deficit because nutrient released from decaying leaf litter will have largely been flushed from the site by the fifth year. Therefore it is possible that post planting applications of fertiliser, containing phosphates and potassium, might be required on the upper (more nutrient poor) margins of the forest with further remedial applications required in some crops in line with industry best practice (Taylor, 1991).

However, appropriate choice of silvicultural mixtures and well-timed heather control is preferable to fertilizer application. In this plan the choice of species has taken into account the fertility of the site to the extent that it anticipates no fertiliser will be used during restock and woodland creation. Broadleaf species will be incorporated within silvicultural mixtures to improve soil function and encourage a sympathetic and characteristic field layer to develop.

4.6.2 Cultivation

Where required, the choice of ground cultivation technique will consider the short-term benefits for establishment against any long-term side effects on tree stability, access for future forest operations and the environment. There will be a preference for the least intensive technique.

A mix of scarifying, mounding and flat/screef planting will be used depending on soil type, weed growth, geomorphology and the desired species.

Scarifying will like be used in those areas where natural regeneration of Scots pine is desirable.

4.6.3 Deep peats

As can be seen on **Map 9- Soils** the South Loch Ness LMP area contains large expanses of deep peat. These have been assessed in detail in light of recent changes to policy regarding restock on deep peat in response to the climate and biodiversity crises.

As a rule we refer to the guidance ‘Deciding Future Management Options for Afforested Deep Peatland’ (Scottish Forestry, 2015) on any deep peats to determine our future management options to ensure biodiversity and climate benefit. Deforestation and subsequent peatland restoration is therefore proposed for areas of Glen Brein as per **Map 11 – Deforestation**.

Deforestation and subsequent peatland restoration requires 11b soils, as found in most of the South Loch Ness LMP deep peats, to be either hydrologically connected to priority habitat or of low fertility. For most of the sites proposed in this LMP the first of these applies and the priority habitats connected to areas of deep peat are found on **Map 11**. As detailed in **Appendix 2.2** some sites are not hydrologically connect to priority habitat and proposed deforestation and peatland restoration is done on the basis of low fertility.

Forestry and Land Scotland has extensive experience with the restoration of peatland and has developed a tried and tested method. Restoration will involve careful removal of crops and subsequent drain blocking, reprofiling and stump moving to raise the water table.

4.7 Water

For more detail regarding management of water and catchment see **Appendix 7 – Water and Catchments Management** and **Map 3 – Key Water Features**.

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