

Laggan Woods

Land Management Plan revision brief

Introduction

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

This document is accompanied by 4 maps;

Map 1 – Location

Map 2 – Key features, Issues and opportunities - Scoping

Map 3 – Management coupes (to be revised)

Map 4 – Restocking species (to be revised)

1. Project scope

This LMP revision will result in the new plan that will run from 2024-2034. The new plan will realign with the any changes in strategy, policy and guidance implemented over the last decade. FLS will ensure the new plan is in line with [Scotland's Forestry Strategy](#) (2019-2029), [Forestry and Land Scotland's Corporate Plan](#) (2022-2025). It will be delivered in accordance with the [United Kingdom Forestry Standard](#) (UKFS) and the [United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard](#) (UKWAS).

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

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

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

2. Background

Laggan Woods are situated in the Upper Badenoch area within the West of the Cairngorms National Park. The forest lies 13km south of Newtonmore and straddles the A86 which connects Strathspey with the Great Glen. It is not contiguous with other FLS blocks, but does adjoin a private forest to the southwest. **(Map 1 – Location)**

The plan area is divided into three blocks: Gorstean, Blackwood and Feagour. The forest covers a total of 1329 ha, composed of approximately 855ha (65%) productive forest, 307ha (23%) open ground and 160ha (12%) fallow ground awaiting restock.

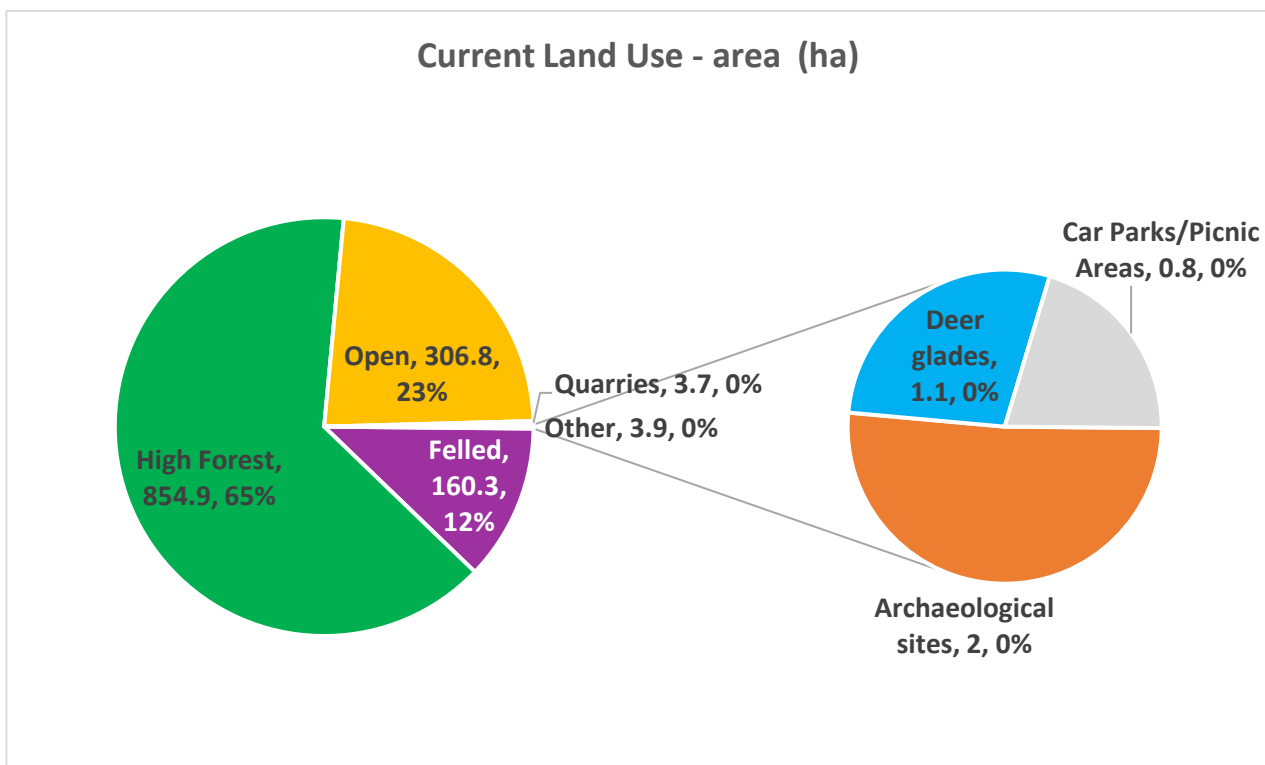


Figure 1: Current land use in the Laggan Woods LMP area

Apart from ninety hectares of older Scots Pine woodland, most of the forest was planted between 1953 and 1964. Restructuring of the forest was started in 1997/98 when the 1st Forest Design Plan (FDP) was prepared.

The open ground is mainly composed of upland heath with pockets of deep peat/bog habitats. A strip of open ground was also created to accommodate the wayleave required for the Beaully Denny power line in the Faegour block in 2015.

Tree species choice and the quality of the timber produced are influenced by the soils which are predominantly brown earths, surface-water gleys, peaty gleys, podzols and flushed blanket bogs. The podzolic and peaty soils are generally suitable for low fertility tolerant species such as pines, larches and birch. Brown earths and gley soils generally have a higher nutrient regime and permit the planting of a wider range of species, including Spruces, without fertiliser application. The range of species currently growing in the plan area are shown below (Figure 2):

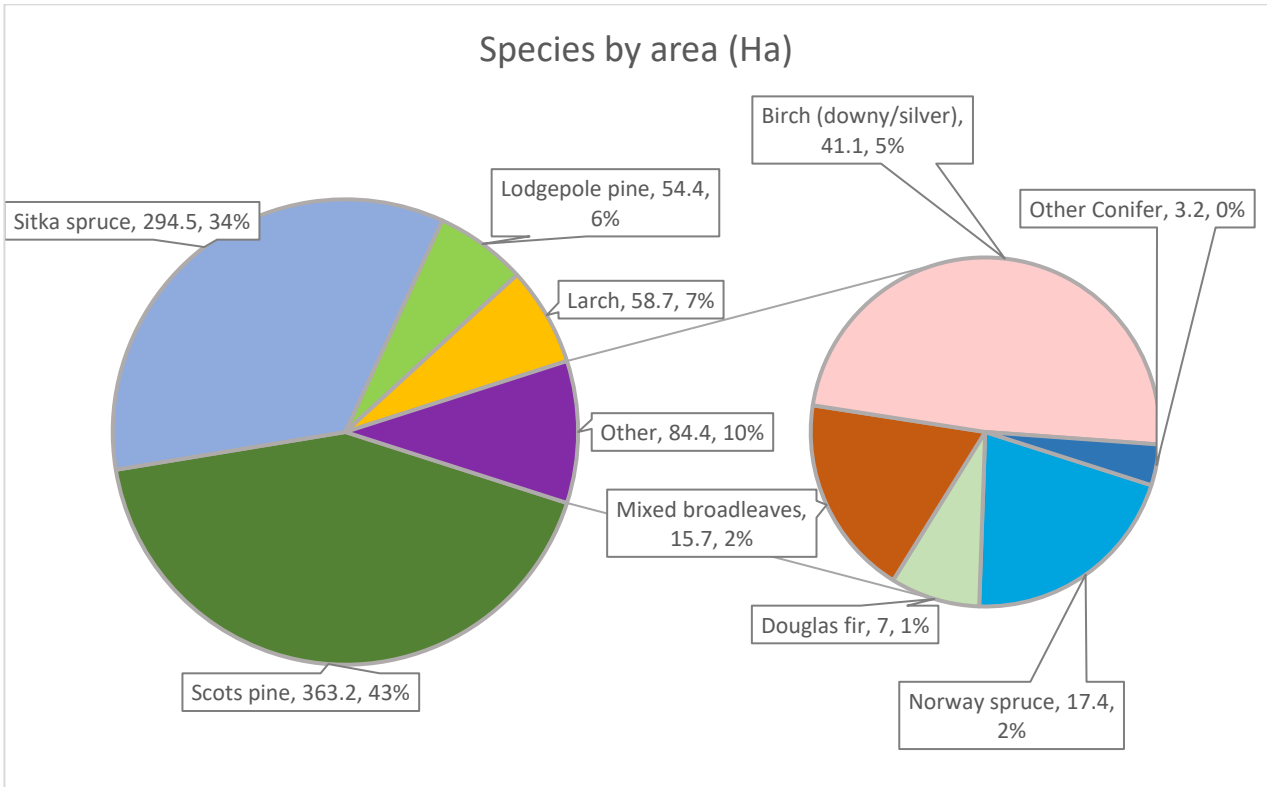


Figure 2: Current Species Composition in percentage of the forested land in the Laggan Woods LMP Area



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

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

Cairngorms National Park

River Spey SAC/SSSI

3. Draft Vision

10 Year vision

The main objectives for the Laggan Woods LMP remain broadly the same. The forest is valued for its recreation and community involvement alongside timber production, and it continues to contribute to all of these. In view of the ongoing climate and biodiversity crisis, adaptation and resilience to climate change and protection and safeguarding of biodiversity is an even more important element of the new plan.

The current age structure of the forest is being levelled out through timely felling and restocking as well establishing a thinning programme to increase opportunities for Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) in the future.

Buffers around riparian zones and private water supplies have been identified and established to protect these areas going into the future whilst increasing habitat connectivity.

Areas of degraded peat and important open habitats have been identified and restored or protected to increase their value as carbon sinks as well as improving habitats for a range of species.

Existing coupe shapes which work with the landscape have been retained and programmed felling and restocking takes account of the landscape qualities of the area.

50 Year vision

The forest contributes to the local timber market by providing a range of timber products. The native woodland, peatland and clean water courses support healthy populations of priority species, particularly those associated with pine woodlands and open habitats. These areas of high natural capital are part of a wider habitat network, connected to the surrounding area.

The overstorey necessary for Continuous cover forestry (CCF) is established and contributes to an uneven age and height forest structure. This allows selective thinning to provide a steady and periodic income, whilst increasing the forest's resilience to climate change, pests, and diseases. Where CCF is not possible, clear fell coupes have been designed to fit within the landscape.

Private water supplies are protected by native woodland buffers and the forest is valued and enjoyed by locals and visitors using the network of paths and trails. We continue to work with Laggan Forest Trust to ensure the forest provides community benefits.

Collaboration with neighbours has reduced the local deer population to a sustainable level, with minimal browsing of young trees, allowing for the establishment of native woodland and successful CCF.

4. Key Issues and Opportunities

During the internal scoping a variety of issues and objectives have been identified. These are shown spatially on **Map 2 – Key Features, Issues and Opportunities – Scoping**. The most important ones are identified below:

- The current age distribution is limited, reducing the resilience of trees to climate change and resistance to fungal infections. Regeneration programmes therefore need to be upscaled and deer management increased to enable the successful establishment of the tree species necessary to ensure a more stable and resilient forest in the future.
- As the most southerly LMP area in North Highland Region, Laggan forms a buffer from the spread of *Phytophthora Ramorum*, a disease that can kill infected larch. Early removal through thinning and clear felling will be important to reduce the threat from *P. ramorum*.
- Laggan Forest Trust have recently established a blue mountain bike trail to complement the suite of other trails on FLS ground at Laggan Wolftrax. They also manage the café and toilets beside the main carpark at Gorsteane. We will continue to work closely with the Forest Trust to find opportunities for the community and to ensure the safe management and removal of timber from the forest.
- As part of the Cairngorms National Park and The Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor Local Landscape Area, the smaller coupes that have been designed and established during the last plan revision should be retained to ensure the forest fits within the landscape. Woodland development on neighbouring ground also has the potential to create contiguous forest cover that will enhance the landscape as well as creating and connecting habitat networks.
- There is good internal access to most of the forest stand and timber markets are available to the east and west. This increased flexibility in the market will allow a range of timber products to come out of the forest and support opportunities for thinning.
- Several UKBAP habitats and species are found within Blackwood and the removal of regenerating non-native trees in the area will benefit these as well as the PAWS. However, there may be some conflict between woodland establishment and the retention of open habitats and this will have to be considered to ensure suitable management is identified.

5. Time Frame

What	When
Scoping	Internal – September 2023 External - November 2023
Survey and Analysis	October – December 2023
1st Draft – key maps	December 2023
Consultation/ Plan Development	December – January 2024
Review Draft	February 2024
Internal Review	February 2024
Submission	March 2024