

Barcaldine Land Management Plan Brief

Introduction

Barcaldine Forest covers 2633.8ha. It lies 11 miles north-east of Oban. The forest was planted in phases over the last 140 years, with a mix of early estate plantings and later commercial conifers. Commercial conifers have generally grown well, with much of the forest now in its second rotation. Sutherland's Grove is a tourist destination within the forest and is the focus for a network of footpaths and bike trails.

Progress and issues (previous FDP)

A number of general issues and events have arisen within the plan. These include:-

- ◆ Forest resilience to climate change would encourage further species diversification.
- ◆ Plant health issues have resulted in bans on planting larch, ash and Lodgepole pine (with the exception of Alaskan provenance in mixture with spruce).
- ◆ New policy guidance relating to the conservation of deep peat may impact on the existing proposals to restock areas of low yield class Sitka spruce.
- ◆ National policy is now to restore about 85% of Ancient Woodland sites. The former Forest Design Plan (FDP) future species map was updated to reflect this change. Non-native species arising on some sites is an issue. Policies relating to acceptance and management of non-native species on PAWS sites have been evolving over the last few months with particular reference to Barcaldine, including acceptance of recent planting of Copper beech. Is planting of Scots pine an option?
- ◆ New policy to consider replacing SS > YC20 with other species due to loss of structural quality of fast-grown SS.
- ◆ The former FDP is being replaced by a Land Management Plan (LMP), which seeks to look more widely at subjects both within and without the plan area.
- ◆ Some proposed CCF areas have blown down and been cleared following thinning; others have not been thinned and need to be reconsidered. Policy on thinning needs reviewed as Forest Gales suggests late thinnings will shorten rotation lengths by up to 25 years and precipitate windblow in some cases, as evidence suggests. This undermines use of the plan area for volume storage. Connected to this is the need for prescriptions for Visitor Zone management.

- ◆ Windblow above Benderloch posed risks to the footpath and potential issues of disturbed material falling onto the A828, requiring intervention. Felling above Benderloch is still to be completed. Access to the winch coupe to the north was agreed with Iain Munro, with a forwarder track to be built for access. Ops have previously suggested working both coupes together. The skyline is sensitive, hence taking the whole coupe over the skyline is necessary. Do we need to take the Phase 3 coupe as well?
- ◆ Windblow by Achanreir was raised as a concern by SSE posing a threat to a powerline, which was subsequently dealt with.
- ◆ Two coupes beside the A828 near the Sealife centre pose a risk to the public road. One is approved by is awaiting planning consent for road access upgrade followed by PN for short spur. The other area, nick-named the 'roundel', requires internal agreement on access, scope of felling and subsequent approval.
- ◆ The management agreement with Marine Resource Centre (MRC) expires in 2019. It requires FCS to produce quinquennial catchment management plans to advise MRC of planned operations. The last quinquennial plan expired in 2014 and was renewed earlier this year.

The Mid-term review for the plan in 2010 concluded that the plan remained fit for purpose, but with the need for and having been subject to several amendments for felling and road construction. Attention was drawn to the loss of landscape design intent to vary the upper planting boundary above Eas na Circe, due to infilling of designed open space largely with broadleaved regeneration. This area is an Ancient Woodland site, the upper edge of which coincides with the march fenceline. There is little evidence of broadleaved regeneration above the fenceline.

Two proposed mountain bike tracks were also discussed - Sutherland's Grove to Glen Creran, and connecting the NACC track to Am Maoilean, neither of which had been implemented and no funding was available. Use of small felling coupes in LISS areas was also discussed in the review, as a means for encouraging broadleaved regeneration on PAWS sites. This has not been taken forward, although clearance of some windblown pockets has achieved this suggestion in consequence. The Mid-term review also noted the increase in rhododendron infestation. A district strategy was to be drawn up (national strategy now in place). The current status of infestation is unclear. Landscape enhancement was given a high priority under objectives in the previous plan. Two areas addressed in the plan, the southern forest edge by Beinn Lora and the forest edge at the head of Glen Salach, were redesigned as per the plan. Most other objectives were only to be achieved over a longer timescale, including restructuring, PAWS restoration, and reduction of acidification of the Abhainn Teithil through conifer removal.

Plan Objectives

The role of Scotland's National Forest Estate focuses on 6 key themes:-

- **Healthy** - achieving good environmental and silvicultural condition in a changing climate
- **Productive** - providing sustainable economic benefits from the land
- **Treasured**- as a multi-purpose resource that sustains livelihoods, improves quality of life, and offers involvement and enjoyment
- **Accessible** - local woodlands and national treasures that are well promoted, welcoming and open for all
- **Cared for** - working with nature and respecting landscapes, natural and cultural heritage
- **Good value** - exemplary, effective and efficient delivery of public benefits

The plan will deliver on these themes in the following ways:-

Productive

- Timber production – conifers and hardwoods, including thinning.
- Productive broadleaved planting at various locations
- Road construction - contribution to the 75Km target in the Strategic Plan - only a couple of spurs required in west Barcaldine.

Cared for

- Enhancement and protection of habitats.
- Follow management plan for Glen Creran Woods SSSI.
- Landscape improvement that responds to landform and respects natural features.
- Protection and enhancement of cultural heritage assets in accordance with UKFS guidance in 'Forests and Historic environment'.
- PAWS restoration.
- Development of habitat networks.

Treasured

- Improvements to Visitor Zones.
- Landscape improvements through species diversification and restructuring.
- ATC management of Sutherland's Grove

Healthy

- Increase resilience to Climate Change through species diversification, remove diseased trees and plant alternatives.
- Implementation of Deer Management Plans.
- Area managed under LISS will be increased (mainly restored PAWS sites).

All themes:-

- To comply with UKWAS guidance for certification.
- To comply with UKFS.
- To comply with all other relevant guidance and policies, FD Strategic Plan and overarching FCS plans.

Critical Success Factors

The following outcomes are required:-

- Commercial timber production requires completion of felling of 437.0ha over the first 10 years of the plan and 400.6ha of restocking.
- Roding – construction of 0.91Km of new roding and one forwarder track of 0.7Km required to facilitate felling of the Phase 1 coupes, and 0.4Km in Phase 2.
- ◆ Timber production from felling yielding 26.0Km³ in Phase 1 and 28.9Km³ in Phase 2.
- PAWS restoration (98.6ha) requires completion of the felling program.
- Landscape enhancement requires implementation of the felling and restocking designs.

Stakeholder consultation

In addition to the FD's statutory stakeholder's (SNH & Argyll & Bute Council), SEPA is routinely consulted. Scottish Water will be consulted in relation to the public water supplies. The RSPB, Confor and SSE have also asked to be routinely consulted. The Ardchattan Community Council will be consulted. Neighbours, where identifiable, will also be consulted, but residents around Barcaldine and Benderloch will not be mailed directly due to the complexities of identifying them. Suggested neighbours for contact identified so far: Argyll Pottery, Sealife Centre, Barcaldine Caravan Park, North Ledaig Caravan Park, other local tourist facilities, Scottish Sea Farms, Glen Creran Estate, Ardchattan Estate, Scottish Water, Barcaldine Primary School, Barcaldine Community Association, Benderloch community, cyclists groups, Achinrier and Achacha. Other possibilities are; Home Farm, Mill Farm and other adjoining estates if owners can be identified. A drop-in public consultation exercise will be held when draft proposals have been prepared. Information will be posted on line on the FCS website at various stages of the plan development, with the approved plan eventually being made available here.