

# Achnashellach

Land Management Plan: 2015 - 2025

Plan brief

## Appendix 4: Plan Brief

### Background information

This Land Management Plan is a full revision of the Achnashellach Forest Design Plan 2006 – 2016. Achnashellach forest itself lies within Glen Carron in Wester Ross and covers an area of approximately 1535Ha. The forest is split north and south by the River Carron, the A890 and Inverness to Kyle railway which runs along the valley floor. Occupying a significant percentage of the upper Carron catchment the forest is in a unique position to positively influence the ecology of the river and it's recovering stock of Atlantic salmon and sea trout. The Forest was the fourth acquisition made by the Forestry Commission in 1921 and the area has a long history of forest management and woodland cover. There are notable remnants of native pinewood scattered across the southern area totalling an area of approximately 57ha and as such is of considerable conservation interest. Set amongst iconic mountain scenery the area is very popular with walkers visiting the Achnashellach munros's and increasingly as a destination for mountain biking.

### Strategic influence

The management of Forestry Commission Scotland's national forest estate is guided by The Role of National Forest Estate and strategic directions (2013), which identifies six aspirations that the National Forest estate is:

- **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, respecting landscapes, natural and cultural heritage.
- **Good Value,** exemplary, efficient and effective delivery of public benefits.

Drawing on these key themes Inverness, Ross and Skye Forest District (IRSFD) prepared a three year Strategic Plan in 2014. This plan establishes links with the National Strategic Directions document and sets out the district vision, priorities and objectives under which IRSFD plans are prepared. The IRSFD Strategic Plan ensures that land management activities compliment and enhance the local economic, social and ecological individuality of each design plan area.

The ethos of the key themes and district commitments made in the strategic plan were used as the basis for the development of the aims and objectives of this Land Management plan (LMP).

### Vision

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

### Aims

- Restoration of Caledonian Pinewood, broadleaf woodland and open habitat within the Carron valley over the next fifty years.
- Provide opportunities for sustainable rural development through small scale renewables projects and woodfuel production.
- Manage the forest sympathetically to the landscape and improve the visitor experience.
- Manage the forest and open habitat in a manner that positively contributes to the ecological condition of the River Carron
- Timber production, optimise the productive potential of the existing forest and develop native timber production over the long term.
- Reduce risk to people and the environment through sustainable forest management.

The table below outlines the strategic aims, objectives and details how progress against these targets will be monitored.

Aim	Objective	Monitoring
<p><b>Restoration of Caledonian Pinewood, broadleaf woodland and open habitat within the Carron valley over the next fifty years.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure long term viability of core pinewood remnants by reducing the threat of Dothistroma Needle blight; achieved through clearfelling of all adjacent Lodge pole pine stands within the 10 year period and control of invading non native regeneration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core pinewood areas will be monitored regularly to detect presence of disease in mature trees and areas of regeneration.</li> <li>Implementation of the felling proposals will be reviewed annually through the delivery of the harvesting programme and formally at year five &amp; ten.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of riparian woodland along the River Carron flood plain and it's main tributaries; whilst restoring a natural mosaic of upland oakwood, birchwood and pinewood through the wider forest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the future habitat and species proposals will be reviewed annually through the establishment programme and natural regeneration monitoring programme and formally at year five and ten.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversify the age structure of the core pinewood remnants by ensuring natural regeneration is successful and allowing the creation of canopy gaps through natural mortality of veteran trees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core pinewood areas and regeneration zones will be monitored routinely and results recorded to inform deer management, disease control and requirement for vegetation management.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the bio-diversity of the forest and open habitat by supporting the colonisation of underrepresented &amp; absent native species.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring for the presence of black grouse and natural regeneration of juniper will be undertaken.</li> <li>Implementation of the future habitat and species proposals, which includes enrichment planting with aspen, juniper and dwarf birch, will be reviewed annually through the establishment programme and formally at year five and ten.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain deer numbers within the forest that are conducive to establishing natural regeneration &amp; restocking of Scots pine and native broadleaves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deer counting will be undertaken to determine population numbers, assess impact on establishing trees and open habitat; this information in turn will be used to inform cull targets.</li> <li>Core pinewood areas and regeneration zones will be monitored routinely to record deer impact on regeneration.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eradicate rhododendron from the wider forest and control spread adjacent to seed sources. Look for opportunities to work with neighbouring land owners to achieve a holistic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A watching brief will be maintained to identify the presence of rhododendron throughout the forest and inform control works.</li> </ul>

	solution.	
<b>Provide opportunities for sustainable rural development through small scale renewables projects and woodfuel production.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Green Highland Renewables in the North West Scotland Lot to develop potential run of river hydro schemes, following due process, that are environmentally sensitive and provide a community benefit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress on all renewable schemes will be monitored quarterly by the Forest Renewables programme board</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with community groups to explore opportunities for community owned small scale renewables schemes from the 2014 residual offer and the National Forest Land Scheme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress on all renewable schemes will be monitored quarterly by the Forest Renewables programme board.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities to develop and support the local woodfuel market through the sale of small round wood.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This will be an ongoing process principally lead by the local Operations team. Progress against this will be formally reviewed at year five and ten.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage the forest sympathetically to the landscape and improve the visitor experience.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the LMP felling &amp; restocking proposals, designed in liaison with the FCS landscape architect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the felling and future habitat and species proposals will be reviewed annually through the delivery of the harvesting and restocking programme and formally at year five &amp; ten.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain the level of access to the forest for the public.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining levels of access during forest operations will be monitored through the district work plan process, site management and 75% site visits.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-locate car park to an improved position and enhance signage &amp; interpretation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery will be monitored through annual work programmes and formally at year five and ten.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove failed commercial crops, prioritising highly used visitor routes and areas of ecological importance and re-establish native woodland.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery will be monitored through annual work programmes and formally at year five and ten.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove redundant internal fencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities for deer fencing removal will be identified during the work plan process and 75% harvesting visits.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage the forest and open habitat in a manner that positively contributes to the ecological condition of the River Carron</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve our understanding of the hydromorphology of the River Carron by seeking specialist advice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This will be formally reviewed at year five and ten.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Within the period of the plan re-establish riparian woodland along Allt Coire a' Bhianidh and the old flood plain to reduce bank erosion, establish suitable levels of shade and enhance nutritional input into the aquatic ecosystem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the felling and future habitat and species proposals will be reviewed annually through the delivery of the harvesting and restocking programme and formally at year five &amp; ten.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eradicate rhododendron from the from the plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A watching brief will be maintained to identify the presence of rhododendron</li> </ul>

	<p>area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open to working in partnership with organisations such as Wester Ross Fisheries Trust and the University of the Highlands and Islands on research projects associated with the River.</li> </ul>	<p>throughout the forest and inform control works.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will be an ongoing process principally lead by the local Environment team. Progress against this will be formally reviewed at year five and ten.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Timber production, optimise the productive potential of the existing forest and develop native timber production over the long term.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the LMP felling &amp; restocking proposals, designed in liaison with the FCS landscape architect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the felling and future habitat and species proposals will be reviewed annually through the delivery of the harvesting and restocking programme and formally at year five &amp; ten.</li> <li>• Commercial restocking will be undertaken to OGB4 standard and will have stocking density assessed at year one and five.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake cost effective remedial works on well stocked second rotation stands with productive potential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will be delivered by the operations team; all crops will be monitored for signs of nutrient deficiency up to canopy closure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reduce risk to people and the environment through sustainable forest management.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradually restore the steep unstable slopes of the northern forest to low density native woodland to stabilise the slopes long term.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist advice will be sought by geo-technical engineers to plan and undertake operations on steep unstable slopes. This will inform civil engineering works, timber harvesting and restocking works.</li> <li>• Implementation of the felling and future habitat and species proposals will be reviewed annually through the delivery of the harvesting and restocking programme and formally at year five &amp; ten.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the integrity of all watercourses &amp; private water supplies during management operations and into the long term.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement for protection of watercourses and water supplies is a prerequisite of the forest and water guidelines. Special measures will be identified through the work plan process and it will be monitored through good site management and 75% site visits.</li> </ul>