

ATTADALE ESTATE-LONG TERM FORESTRY PLAN UPDATE-MARCH 2019

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The long term vision for Attadale Estate's woodlands is to increase the quality and extent of native woodland habitat through new woodland creation and the encouragement of natural regeneration within the existing woodlands, thereby providing forest habitat networks both within the estate's woodlands and beyond.

As part of this, all of the non-native conifer woodlands will be clear felled over 2 years, 2018-19, to allow the estate to convert these areas to native woodland. Greatly enhancing and expanding the nationally important Caledonian pinewoods and the ancient semi-natural woodlands across the estate.

The felling areas are currently stocked with a mix of Lodgepole pine, Sitka spruce and larch. Across Scotland Lodgepole pine is suffering from a disease called Dothistroma Needle Blight (DNB). This causes defoliation which can continue year on year and gradually weaken the tree, significantly reducing timber yields. It can also eventually lead to death of the tree. Current guidance from the Scottish Forestry advises the prompt removal of highly susceptible species such as Lodgepole pine in order to reduce inoculum levels of the pathogen to prevent infection to the adjacent Caledonian pinewood zones.

The felled areas will be replanted in 2021 with a mix of native Scots pine, birch, hazel, aspen and willows to better reflect the ground conditions and the surrounding environment. The inclusion of open ground responding to natural edges, watercourses and flushes will allow the new native woodland to appear more fitting to the landscape.

It is proposed to enclose both areas within one perimeter fence; this will enable the site to be managed as one unit creating more naturalised woodland. The nationally designated Caledonian Pinewood situated along the Allt a'Ghiubhais burn will be protected within this fence encouraging natural regeneration of the pinewood.

To compensate for the loss of cover/forage within these areas, previous WGS native woodlands situated along the Eas Ban will gradually be opened up over the next 5 years. The existing fence lines will be dropped in sections identified by the estate staff to allow gradual incursion. A baseline regeneration survey has been carried out within these woodlands which has shown the sites to have established well, with significant areas of natural regeneration both inside and out with the fence lines providing enough significant woodland cover to support a healthy deer population. The woodlands will be surveyed annually to assess the impact the deer will have on the vegetation and woodland habitat. Fixed plots will be located throughout to allow damage levels to be monitored with control measures taken promptly as appropriate.

The total area within these sites is approx. 28ha. Although this is significantly less than the felling areas, the sites will provide a better quality cover and forage environment.

The estate is also proposing to create 4 new native woodlands at Glen Ling, Blackwater, NNR Restructuring and CPI Expansion. This will enclose approx. 286ha. Glen Ling is to be fenced and planted in 2018/19, Blackwater in 2020, CPI Expansion in 2020 and the NNR restructuring during the restocking in 2021.

The design of the new native woodlands at Blackwater, Glen Ling, NNR Restructuring and CPI Expansion has taken account of the need for movement of deer between neighbouring estates. The Glen Ling scheme includes 2 large deer passes that have been created along the River Ling as requested by Inverinate Estate. The internal woodland designs have included open habitat for deer control, to provide suitable sight-lines and opportunities for culling as the woodland establishes across the site and matures. These locations are associated primarily with burn-sides and other areas of open ground on the upper slopes of the hill.

The expansion of native woodland across the estate will improve the fragmented habitat networks within the CPI zones and remove the visually intrusive redundant fence lines from the landscape.

The alignment of the deer fences have been chosen to reduce the overall length of the fence line, avoid deer tracking pressure and reduce its visibility from the main viewpoints. The Joint Agency Statement & Guidance on Deer Fencing has been applied to assessing the viability, construction and routing of the fence lines.

The new fences will be walked monthly by estate staff or Galbraith, and more frequently in times of snow and bad weather, to ascertain if there is any pressure from deer on the fence. Pressure will be evidenced by tracking undermining the fence. If any significant tracking occurs the population density will be reviewed.

The welfare of any displaced deer will be monitored and if necessary actions taken to avoid any welfare issues.

Once the woodland has established beyond damage in balance with deer populations, fences will be reduced to stock height or removed as appropriate.

The estate have recently entered into the Forest Stewardship Council® [FSC] certification scheme which confirms that the forest is being managed in a way that preserves the natural ecosystems and benefits the lives of local people and workers, all while ensuring it sustains economic viability.

The scheme provides an independent assessment of compliance with the law, forestry codes of practice and guidelines. Examples of assessment subjects include health and safety, training and contractor qualifications, environmental impacts of forest operations – including wildlife, habitats, archaeological features, soil and water protection.