

A design brief for Ashiestiel LMP

The Ashiestiel Land Management Unit comprises predominantly open rough pasture fields connected to the east of the Elibank forest block. The management unit covers 186 ha and is located 6 km east of Walkerburn within the Tweed Valley, South Scotland. Purchased in 2018, it is part of Scotland's national forests and land, owned by Scottish Ministers on behalf of the people of Scotland, and will be managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS).

The Ashiestiel Land Management Plan (LMP) defines the management prescription for ten years from initial establishment (2023-33), and presents the vision for the long-term management of the area. The main management objectives in this plan focus on sustainable softwood timber production, native woodland connectivity, retention and expansion, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

An Analysis and Concept map has been produced to complement this design brief. It presents the draft management objectives, and highlights the opportunities and constraints for key issues.

The concept for the LMP focuses on delivering relevant national policy and has been developed around the following key drivers:

- Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan 2018-2032
- Climate change and adaptation programme 2019-2024
- Forestry and Land Scotland Corporate Plan 2019-2022
- Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029
- 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity

The plan will contribute to the first three outcomes of the Forestry and Land Scotland Corporate Plan as shown in table 1 (Corporate outcomes and operational actions not relevant to this plan have been removed). The full corporate plan can be viewed [here](https://forestryandland.gov.scot/images/corporate/corporate-plan/FLS-Corporate-Plan-2019-2022-v2.pdf);

Table 1, Ashiestiel alignment with the FLS Corporate Plan 2019-2022

Outcomes from the FLS corporate plan	Operational Actions for delivery under Outcomes include:	LMP Actions / Prescriptions
Outcome 1: Supporting a sustainable rural economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing the national forests and land in accordance with the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) to ensure that timber and other products produced by FLS are guaranteed to be from a sustainably managed resource Developing our forest planning processes to ensure long-term sustainable productivity of the national forests and land Providing a sustainable supply of timber to Scotland's timber processing sector Implementing the Restocking Strategy for the national forests and land and develop a new plant and seed supply strategy Work proactively with our tenants and stakeholders to identify potential added-value opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a land Management Plan for Ashiestiel that meets the requirements laid out by the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and UKWAS. Utilising the best soils on site to grow high yielding forest crops and with good access to existing forest roads will ensure we can maintain a steady flow of thinnings which will contribute to the volume to the surrounding blocks production outputs which has good links to an already recognized timber transport route. Where possible alternatives to spruce will be employed across the site to assist with increasing the diversity of productive species across the National Estate and also contribute to adding resilience from climate change. Ashiestiel marches on adjacent land not within FLS ownership which gives opportunity to engage and work with neighbouring land holders and the local community to assess other opportunities in joined up land management objectives.
Outcome 2: Looking after Scotland's national forests and land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing the national forests and land to further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity Collaborating with partners on integrated landscape scale approaches to habitat management and restoration Taking specific conservation actions for vulnerable priority species (e.g. red squirrel, capercaillie, black grouse) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashiestiel has high potential for native biodiversity. Existing well-developed scrub woodland communities are scattered throughout the site and lie within a mosaic of other semi natural woodland types. Maintaining and enhancing these would contribute to our commitments to an eco-system approach and substantially increase the broadleaf cover of the connecting block – Elibank. Opportunity to liaise with neighbours and statutory bodies to investigate potential to link native woodland habitat (SSSI) with

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an asset management approach to the historic environment within Scotland's forests and land • Working with neighbouring land managers to undertake landscape-scale control of rhododendron to conserve ground flora and improve habitats • Continue to implement the Larch Strategy in order to reduce the rate of expansion of <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> 	<p>Ashiestiel upland willow scrub assemblage. Further defragmenting woodland connectivity within the Tweed Valley.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of open ground and wet willow scrub will assist with reducing impact on red and amber listed data book species surveyed on site (Curlew, Skylark, Meadow pipit and Reed bunting). • Protect and buffer the existing archaeological features on site. • Use of alternative productive species alongside enhancing and maintaining the existing native woodland community with local provenance material to give resilience and adaptability to the local and wider forest block from climate change.
Outcome 3: National forests and land for visitors and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to engage communities in decisions relating to the management of the national forests and land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community engagement meeting will be held with feedback and comments feeding into and assisting with the LMP design process.

Draft objectives

Primary objectives

1. Utilize high yielding softwood species to contribute to the surrounding FLS blocks productivity
2. Retain the connectivity of the varying biodiverse native habitats through the site and expand where appropriate.
3. Mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change with fast growing conifer species sequestering carbon.