Minginish Peninsula

Land Management Plan Brief

**1. Project Background**

Minginish Peninsula lies on the west coast of Skye. The forest is made up of two hills, An Cruachan and Beinn a Bhraghad, with Bealach Brittle between the two. The south part of the land holding is 1700ha and is rough grazing managed under an agricultural lease with sheep, cattle and horses. The north part of the land holding is 1800ha and is made up of steep faces on the east and west side with a central plateau.

The east face is highly visible from Glen Brittle and the iconic Cuillin ridge which are very popular for walkers, climbers, kayakers and mountain bikers and is a National Scenic Area. The car park in the north east of the block is used for an increasing number of visitors to the fairy pools- a series of pools in the Allt a Mhaim. The east face drains in to the River Brittle which is an important river for salmon. There is 1111ha of forested land with the oldest stands planted in 1930’s. The stands on the east and west faces have produced excellent timber with a high proportion of log product. The central plateau was planted in the 1980’s with Sitka spruce and Lodgepole pine which has shown poor growth of yield class 4-6 and some areas have failed to establish. This plan will cover the period 2017-2027.

**2. Project Objectives /Outcomes**

Maintain Minginish as a productive forest that delivers value for money.

Continue to manage and improve open habitats and maintain favourable condition for Golden and White Tailed Eagle.

Develop a Land Management Plan delivered in accordance with [United Kingdom Forestry Standard](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCFC001.pdf/%24FILE/FCFC001.pdf%20) (UKFS) and the [UK Woodland Assurance Standard](http://ukwas.org.uk/).

Develop a Land Management Plan which delivers against the relevant objectives of the [Inverness, Ross and Skye District Strategic Plan](http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/managing/plans-and-strategies/forest-district-strategieshttp%3A/scotland.forestry.gov.uk/images/corporate/pdf/InvernessRossSkyeDsp2014-17.pdf) and [Scotland's National Forest Estate and Strategic Directions](http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/images/corporate/pdf/FES-strategic-plan.pdf)

**2.1 Strategic objectives**

* **Healthy**: Adapting the National Forest Estate to climate change and build resilience to extreme weather events by diversifying structure and species and creating more windfirm stands.
* **Productive**: Continue to produce a sustainable supply of timber whilst retaining windfirm stands to maintain production at a constant level in to the future.
* **Treasured**: Investigate opportunities for partnership working with communities.
* **Access**: Help visitors to experience and enjoy the outdoor environment, encourage use of the estate for health benefits and outdoor learning.
* **Cared for**: Manage designated land to bring qualifying features into, or maintain, favourable ecological condition.

**3. Project Scope**

**3.1 Key features that will influence the development of management proposals**

* + Although the main forest block is not highly used for recreation the car park in Glen Brittle is heavily used for visitors to the Fairy Pools on the neighbouring estate. Visitor numbers in 2014 were approximately 70,000 with a high season average of 500 visitors per day but currently the car park only has 25 parking spaces. The local community have employed a consultant to design a new car park to accommodate 100 parking spaces, it is expected that the Minginish Community will use the Community Asset Transfer Scheme to acquire the additional land and manage the car park.
	+ Approximately half the land holding (1700ha) in the south of the block is under an agricultural lease that has been established in perpetuity. This area is part of the SPA for Golden Eagle, the Open Habitat survey results are shown in the table below.

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| **Habitat** | **Area (ha)** |
| UPLAND HEATHLAND | 1031 |
| BLANKET BOG | 772 |
| acid grassland | 165 |
| MARITIME CLIFF & SLOPE | 105 |
| FEN, MARSH & SWAMP | 91 |
| UPLAND CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND | 37 |
| coniferous woodland | 25 |
| UPLAND FLUSH, FEN & SWAMP | 5 |
| WET WOODLAND | 5 |
| improved grassland | 3 |
| OLIGOTROPHIC OR DYSTROPHIC LOCH | 2 |

* + The east face of the forest is highly visible from Glen Brittle and the Cuillin Ridge, both are within a National Scenic Area. It is therefore important that the LMP is sensitive to the landscape in the felling and restocking of this face, for example removing some remaining areas of clearfell (being sensitive to Sea Eagle roost sites) and removing straight and defined edges from the restock boundaries.
	+ A substantial area of Sitka spruce and Lodgepole pine planted in 1982 and 83 in the centre of the block have failed or are growing at Yield Class 4 and 6. There is potential here to restore the land to peatland in the wet areas and establish peat edge woodland (PEW) on the drier areas. The current crop will be retained until it provides enough volume so that a biomass crop is economically and practically viable. Some areas of mature trees will be retained to allow nesting platforms to be created. It would also be favourable to provide targeted feeding sites to divert eagles from the edge of the forest where it is thought they are more likely to predate lambs.
	+ Special Protected Areas (SPAs) exist on the agricultural lease and the open area in the centre of the block because of presence of golden eagle and white tailed sea eagle. Opportunities will be considered for how to improve Golden and Sea Eagle habitats whilst reducing predation of lambs on neighbouring land.
	+ There is an area (9.8ha) of sheltered Sitka spruce planted in the 1930’s. This is a known a nesting site for white tailed eagles. There is minimal windblow in this area and the stand looks very stable. This stand and adjacent area will be managed through minimum intervention. This means that the trees will be retained as long as possible to continue to provide eagle nesting habitat and specific ecological habitats that large trees and associate deadwood create.
	+ The area near the cuckoo road has been identified as prone to landslide. This will be considered when planning felling and restock for this area. FES policy is to establish mixed broadleaves on such sites which will not be harvested in the future and provide varied rooting structures which help stabilize the ground.
	+ Surveys for Dothistroma needle blight have been undertaken but there have not been any positive samples found in Glen Brittle. According to the FES DNB strategy any pine planted in Glen Brittle must be from a nursery that is free of DNB, this includes both Lodgepole and Scots pine.
	+ Notable archeological features at Kraiknish Dun and Kraiknish village within the leased area. This area will not have any active operations that could damage these features.
	+ The forest straddles two river catchments for the River Brittle and River Eynort (which includes Allt nam Fitheach) which are both of high quality according to SEPA records. All forest and civil engineering operations will be undertaken to avoid the risk of siltation in accordance with the [Forest and Water Guidelines](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/PDF/FCGL007.pdf/%24FILE/FCGL007.pdf%20%20) and [Forest and Soil Guidelines](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ukfs/soil%20).
	+ The current species distribution shows that 91% of the forested land is Sitka spruce and Lodgepole pine. To reduce the risk of negative impacts of climate change it is important to have a diverse species distribution, the LMP will therefore aim to reduce the reliance on these two species. There are opportunities for alternative conifers on the lower slopes of the forest.

**3.3 Known issues & opportunities to be investigated**

Road layout is good however road stone is locally hard to find and of poor quality. **There is an existing quarry that could be re-opened and as such it is planned to fell around the existing quarry in order to expand the quarry area.**

On the Glen Eynort face the forest roads have some sharp corners where bridges cross the gullies, these may require straightened for timber wagon access. Due to the steep forest road, it is not possible for timber wagons to head east over the Bealach Brittle. **There may be an opportunity to link the road from the plateau to the road at the Bealach to create a better access for timber wagons.**

Harvesting sites on the east face were extracted with harvester/ forwarder using forwarder tracks that were built. These are highly visible from Glen Brittle and the Cuillins. **Remaining coupes in this area will be harvested using skyline/winch where necessary to reduce the visual impact of forwarder tracks.**

Some restock sites are growing well, however some are in check. This is due to Phosphate deficiency from the underlying tertiary basalt. Where check has become obvious, phosphate fertilizing by hand will continue to be undertaken. Sitka spruce in mixture with larch have established well. It is important to increase the species diversity in Glen Brittle to increase the resilience of the forest to future climate change, including pests and diseases.

The high quality, high volume timber previously extracted from the east face would have been fertilized and thinned in the past, however FES will not have future budgets for this scale of fertilizing and thinning using skyline extraction. It is therefore crucial that the crops we establish here will continue to produce good quality timber without fertilizer and thinning and will be windfirm. **Restock species choice will increase the species diversity and will be chosen relevant to site type, self thinning mixtures with Sitka spruce will be investigated.**

An area of P1930’s Sitka spruce in the South West of the block is currently quite stable with minimal windblow and in a sheltered area according to GALES. This stand runs down to the sea and provides a good opportunity to mimic natural forests in the Pacific Northwest. **This stand will be maintained as a natural reserve to provide a diverse habitat of varied structure with standing and lying deadwood.**

In the far south of the block there are a number of remnants of coupes planted in the 40s and 50s. Where accessible these should be harvested to reduce the visual impact on the landscape. The two areas in the north have been identified as eagle roosting sites and so these will be retained.

Continue to manage and improve open habitats and maintain favourable condition for golden and white tailed eagle habitats in the Special Protected Area (SPA) by restoring peatland habitats where conifer plantation has failed, creating peat edge woodland and retaining some mature trees for nesting and roosting. The riparian woodland will also be established along current water courses to provide mature trees in the future. Improve eagle habitat by managing a stand of over mature Sitka spruce as minimum intervention in the south west of the block.

 **4. Inclusion** (Key documents to be produced)

 Management map

 Future habitat & species map

 CSM6 maps

 Water map

 Deer management plan

 SSSI management plan

 Open habitat management prescriptions

 Landform analysis & plan visualisations

 Summary of activities

 Appropriate Assessment

 EIA determination

 Prior notification determination

**5. Exclusion**

 Detailed site specific management plans (work plan)

**6. Project Organisation**

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| **LMP TEAM- responsible for undertaking the revision** |
| Ben Griffin | Planning Forester |
| Isabelle Destor | Environment Forester |
| Chris Nixon | Operations Forester |
| Mike Beveridge | Operations Supervisor |
| Russell Cooper | Wildlife Ranger Manager |
| Renate Jephcott | Landscape Architect |
| Ross MacMillan | Wildlife Ranger |
| Sally Phillips | Civil Engineer |
| Bruce Taylor | Recreation Forester |
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| **GOVERNANCE- Responsible for overall management of the project** |
| Project Sponsor | Doug Mitchell (Planning Manager) |
| Strategic direction | IRS FD Management Team |
| Forestry Commission Scotland | Martin MacKinnon (Development and Operations Advisor) |
| Silvicultural Advisor | Tor Stokes |

  **7. Time frame**

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| Internal Scoping Meeting | February 2017 |
| External Stakeholder and Community Consultation | February 2017 |
| Draft plan completion | March 2017 |
| Detailed consultation internal and external. | April 2017 |
| Review of commentary & amendments | May 2017 |
| Internal review | May 2017 |
| Submission of final plan | June 2017 |

**8. Risks**

* Plan takes longer to put together than June 2017.
* Stakeholders & community consultation is more complex and time consuming than anticipated.

Mitigation: If the above project milestones are not being met then this will be reported to the project sponsor. If the final deadline will not be met then an extension will be applied for from Forestry Commission Scotland however this will impact other Land Management Plans in the Forest District.