

Carradale Land Management Plan

Overview

The management of the Carradale Forest area is currently being reviewed. Once approved the Land Management Plan will provide felling, thinning and restocking permissions to cover the next ten years (2020 – 2029), as well as a strategic direction for the next twenty years.

Carradale Forest consists of 4 Forest Areas these being: High Clachaig 1124Ha, Deucheran 3366Ha, Deer Hill 850Ha & Grogport 1363Ha.

The Forest is currently stocked with the following Species Groups:

Species Group	Area Ha	%
Mixed Conifers	418	6%
Mixed Broadleaves	368	5%
Open Ground	2591	39%
Sitka Spruce	3326	50%
Total	6703	100%

Following ongoing restructuring of the forest the age class is diverse with Mixed Broadleaved areas dating back to 1850 and Mixed Conifers to 1940. Widespread planting of Sitka Spruce commenced in 1962 and many of these areas have been felled and are growing the next rotation of trees.

Plan Objectives

The Objectives for the Carradale Land Management Plan are:

- Provide sustainable productive forest with a diverse range of species, taking into account future threats of climate change and disease.
- Prioritise the removal of Larch to help reduce the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum*.
- Identify and prioritise deep peat areas for peatland restoration.
- Protect and enhance cultural assets and key wildlife species/protected habitats, whilst removing invasive species.

- Work to support renewables energy developments to help fit them to the landscape and be integrated with other land management objectives.
- Maintain key recreational infrastructure, including the view from Deer Hill, and the use of Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS) where possible.
- Liaise with the local communities to ensure an understanding of their issues & opportunities and Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) proposals.
- Identify and prioritise Ancient Woodland Sites (AWS) for restoration and protection.

What the Plan will mean to the Forest and factors considered so far

By following the objectives outlined above the Land Management Plan is likely to alter the proportions of the species groups and open ground areas, with the Sitka Spruce area declining and a commensurate increase in the areas of Mixed Broadleaves, Mixed Conifers and Open Ground. Significant areas of new open ground are likely to be created as a result of peatland restoration. Many areas of the forest are challenging for productive forestry and Sitka Spruce remains the tree best suited to produce timber and sequester high volumes of carbon over much of the site.

Advances in plant breeding and silviculture mean that where Sitka Spruce can be grown well it is now capable of very high growth rates and this aids climate change mitigation and provides a sustainable carbon friendly material to support industry and employment. This compensates to some extent for the decline in the gross area of Sitka Spruce. At the same time an increase in the area of alternative productive conifer species will increase the forests resilience and create landscape and ecological diversity. Expanding the broadleaved area and restoring Ancient Woodland sites to a Native Broadleaved cover will improve ecological linkages and benefit a wide range of species. Most of the Ancient Woodland Sites within the Plan area already carry a diverse Native Broadleaved cover and this will aid the recovery of areas which had been planted previously with conifer species.

The forest is managed to respect and protect the habitat for a range of iconic species including Golden Eagle, Hen Harrier and Red Squirrel. The planning process seeks to aid this approach.

The felling proposed within the first five years of the plan (Phase 1: 2020 – 2024) are targeted at areas where wind is beginning to damage the stands. There is scope in some areas to expand the areas of Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) where the forest is sheltered and management access is good. Bringing young stands of appropriate species on suitable sites into CCF management is the best approach, as

mature unthinned stands can be unstable once thinned. Given the aesthetic, landscape and ecological benefits that CCF can deliver then it is proposed to assess the mature stands around Carradale with the objective of managing this as CCF where practicable.

The Forest offers a range of informal and formal recreational routes with the Kintyre Way and Forest Walk on Deer Hill being popular routes. It is proposed to maintain these formal routes. Many of the Forest Roads end in dead ends which limits the options for informal circular walks and cycles. Linkage of the road network to facilitate timber haulage offers potential to increase the options for informal access.

There are a range of archaeological features across the forest and felling and restocking will seek to preserve these features and enhance their setting.

The wider landscape is an important consideration in the Plan process and the impacts on views will be assessed and mitigated where appropriate.

Maintaining water quality and the management of flooding on the Carradale Water will be important considerations within the plan.

The management of the forest and the planning process will seek to work synergistically with other land uses including farming and renewable energy generation.

Multipurpose Forestry can deliver many benefits to society both nationally and locally, and the plan process seeks to maximise these benefits. We are seeking your views on how to achieve this and would welcome your input.