

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Setting and context

The plan for Central Mull combines existing full plans for Aintuim, Lettermore and Salen; and adds the Crannich block and northern block of Glen Forsa, also known as Kilbeg, and which were only covered by indicative plans. Combining the plans is part of a wider strategy of efficiency savings, linking areas where there are shared values and adopting a more strategic view of forest management. The plan is one of a planned suite of four covering the island. None of the plans, apart from Lettermore, have been particularly affected by the introduction of the Mull Strategy planning document in 2004. The strategy is now dated and will not be replaced, although some of the guiding principles remain valid. The strategy introduced considerable reductions in the upper planting lines, which is reflected in restocking undertaken in Lettermore since the plan was written.

The Lettermore block lies on the north-eastern side of Loch Frisa, extending north to the B8073 and Loch Carnain an Amais (Mishnish Lochs). The upper part forms a long, open ridge, with the prominent hilltop Speinne Mor within the plan area. The north-eastern side of the ridge descends to the plantation boundary of the FC Aros Forest and private open hill ground of Ardnacross to the east. The southern boundary is largely the Aros River, with a short section bordering the A848. The plan area includes the Lettermore small-holding and fields at Ledmore. It also includes the Mull forest office (Aros) and associated forest buildings. The main forest road serves as a timber haul route for the FC Quinish Forest. The private North-West Mull timber haul route runs through the western side of Crannich, along a section of the Aros – Dervaig minor public road and then up through the Lettermore block onto the A848, the minor road being largely unsuitable for timber traffic. The forest has been much used for the Mull Eagle Watch.

The Aintuim block lies south-west of Loch Frisa, extending north to the B8073. The northern section is mostly open land, its western boundary being undefined, marching with open hill ground of Aintuim Farm. The afforested section has as its northern boundary, Aintuim Farm. It spans the Aros – Dervaig minor road, with the River Bellart forming the south-western boundary. The southern boundary is formed by the public road, with the Crannich block south of that. The north-eastern boundary is formed in part by Loch Frisa (northern section) and the Tenga Estate (southern section). A field beside Achnacraig is currently proposed as a building plot.

The Crannich block lies south of the Aintuim block, Crannich Farm and the Aros-Dervaig road. It forms part of the backdrop to the village of Salen. To the north-east is the Glen Aros Estate. To the south is the private Killiechronan Forest. There are no connecting roads or paths between the two forests. To the south-west is open hill land of the Torloisk and Killiechronan Estates.

Salen Forest lies to the south of the B8935 and A849. North of this are the Glen Aros Estate and Killiechronan Forest. The other boundaries march with the Benmore and Glen Forsa Estates. A variety of landuses adjoin on the estates, including Ancient Woodland on Guala Buidhe, Loch na Daimdh and open hill ground. The easternmost spur descends into Glen Forsa.

The northern block of what was known as the FC's Glen Forsa Forest is included due to its proximity to Salen Forest. Several parts of Gen Forsa Forest to the south have been sold leaving only one block at the southern end bordering the A849, which is more closely associated with the forest blocks forming the South Mull FDP. The northern block straddles the River Forsa. The eastern boundary incorporates and adjoins an area of Ancient Woodland known as An Carnais. Open land adjoins on all other sides, including an area of upland fen, partly retained as open space within the northern tip of the woodland. The River Forsa and its banks to a distance of 15 foot either side are owned by the Glen Forsa Estate.

Loch Frisa is owned by the riparian neighbours of the loch, of which the FC is therefore the major owner. However, the ownership is not reflected within the plan boundary as it has not been spatially legally defined.

SNH and Argyll & Bute Council are the Forest District's statutory consultees. The Community Council has been made aware of the plan revision proposals. Historic Scotland is routinely consulted regarding the scheduled ancient monuments in the plan area. The RSPB are also consulted due to the various bird sensitivities in the area. The Consultation Record provides a summary of all formal correspondence, issues raised and FD responses (see appendix).

The woodlands are managed primarily for timber production, but there are increasing environmental and social pressures influencing management. Key plan objectives from the design brief can be summarised as follows: -

Commercial timber production.

New planting

Full PAWS restoration.

Development of habitat networks.

Landscape improvement.

Enhancement and protection of habitats benefiting key species, notably raptors.

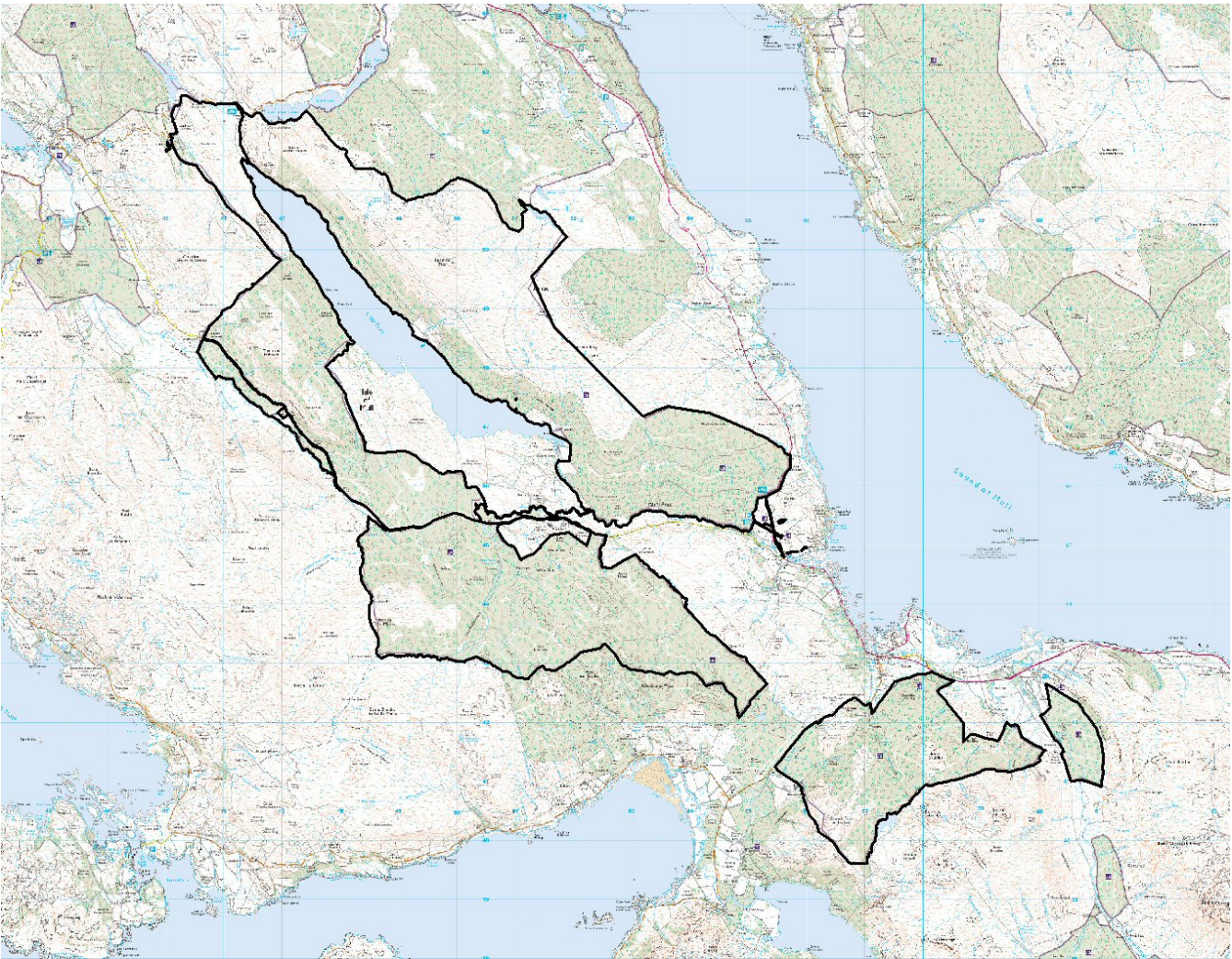
Incorporation of a review of open space prescriptions.

Construction of new forest roads.

Protection and enhancement water features and water supplies.

Protection and enhancement of cultural heritage assets.

To comply with UKWAS guidance for certification.



Location Map

1.2 History of the woodlands

Aintuim was acquired in several parts, 1958, 1966 and 1967. The western half of Aintuim was planted between 1966 and 1974, whilst the eastern half was planted between 1982 and 1988. Felling commenced in 2010.

Lettermore was acquired in 1928 and was planted in several periods. The northern section was planted between 1935 and 1940; with felling commencing around 1990 and restocking from 1993. This section was largely clearfelled without restructuring. The Ledmore section was planted in 1952, with felling commencing in the mid 1990's and restocking from 1998. The eastern section contained older woods dating from 1920, which were cleared and replanted in the late 1980's without restructuring.

The remainder was mainly planted between 1972 and 1990, along with a couple of fields on the eastern edge in 2001. One coupe has been felled and restocked as a Forest Research Climate Change Agenda species trial in 2011. This trial, known as Project REINFORCE, is one of 37 sites across Europe using the same 30 tree species. Three provenances of each tree species are included in the trial. There is also a short-rotation forestry trial adjacent to it.

Crannich was planted between 1978 and 1986. No felling has been undertaken so far, but a felling licence has recently been obtained for a coupe in order to meet a local Open Market Sale request. Salen was planted in three sections; that nearest the village between 1961 and 1964; the western section in 1970 and the eastern section in 1983, apart from an old shelterbelt dating from 1930. Felling in the older block started in 2008. The western section contains a significant amount of native woodland on Ancient Woodland sites. More than half of this section is open hill land. A sizeable section of the eastern part has failed due to poor soils.

Kilbeg was planted in 1972/3. No felling has taken place. There is extensive recent windblow of LP in the block. Gravel has been extracted from the River Forsa in the past, with some graded material still on site.

The North-west Mull community timber haul route was constructed in 2011 through the Crannich section. The section across the Aros River into Lettermore was built in 2012. The line of the section through Lettermore was felled in 2012 and is awaiting construction. This section was added to by-pass the difficult exit onto the A848 at the forest office.