



Strathspey Woodlands

Land Management Plan Brief

Vision

Strathspey Woodlands through the centuries have met the needs of both local people and the nation - it shall continue to do this through this millennium.

In future years it will remain a vibrant ecosystem, with a wide variety of tree ages and types, with significant international and national biodiversity value. Equally, it will remain a socially important forest providing for the needs of local people and visitors to the area who will draw inspiration from the wild land characteristics of the forest.

Diversity will be an important element in what will be predominantly a native forest, with quiet areas "left for nature" and others which will continue to provide opportunities, through employment and tourism, in the area.

1. Project Background

Strathspey Land Management Plan (LMP) is an amalgamation of **Glenmore, Inshriach, McAlpine and Upper Rothiemurchus** forest blocks. Strathspey now stretches from Pityoulish in the north to "Woods of Glentromie" in the south, and from West of the B970 by Kingussie to the "Stac na h-loaire" hill in the east. Strathspey covers an area of approx. 9208 ha of largely native coniferous forest.

The forest blocks contain a wide variety of habitats which supports some of the most specialised species and habitats in the country. The predominately native crop has commercial significance, as well. Equally, the plan area and its surroundings are socially important forests providing both for the needs and livelihoods of local people and for exceptional recreational experiences to visitors who will draw inspiration from the wild land characteristics. Sitting within the catchments of the River Spey, these areas play a significant role in water management. The forests form very prominent features of the local landscape; they are also highly visible from multiple viewpoints in the surrounding mountain ranges of the Cairngorm National Park; this makes forest management design on a landscape level a high priority.

Glenmore (originally approx. 3500 ha in size) was acquired by the Forestry Commission in 1923. In 2013 the McAlpine plantation (308 ha in size) became part of the district on a 99 year lease, followed by Upper Rothiemurchus in 2014, which was bought from Rothiemurchus estate, adding a further 2500 ha to the National Forest. Also as part of this acquisition, the 99 year lease for the McAlpine plantation was incorporated into total ownership. Both McAlpine and Upper Rothiemurchus have been managed separately. As with this Land Management plan, they will be merged and become part of the "Glenmore", forest block.

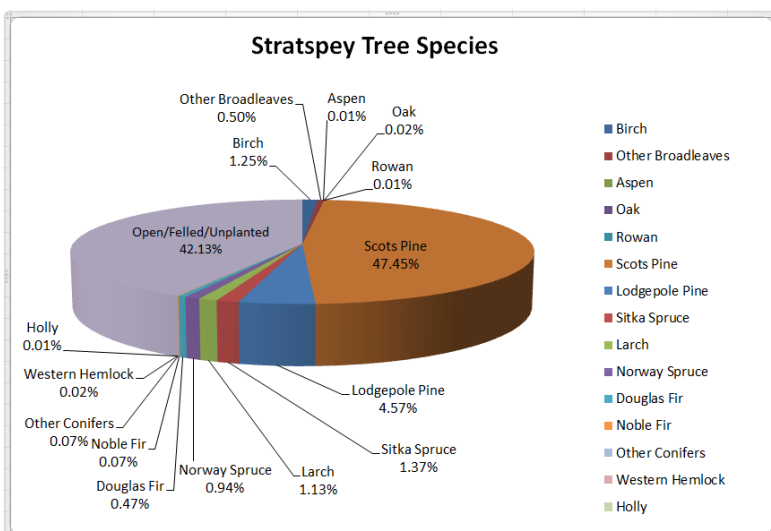
The Inshriach forest block covers an area of 3308 ha. The northern part was purchased by the Forestry Commission in 1937, the southern part in the late 1950ies.



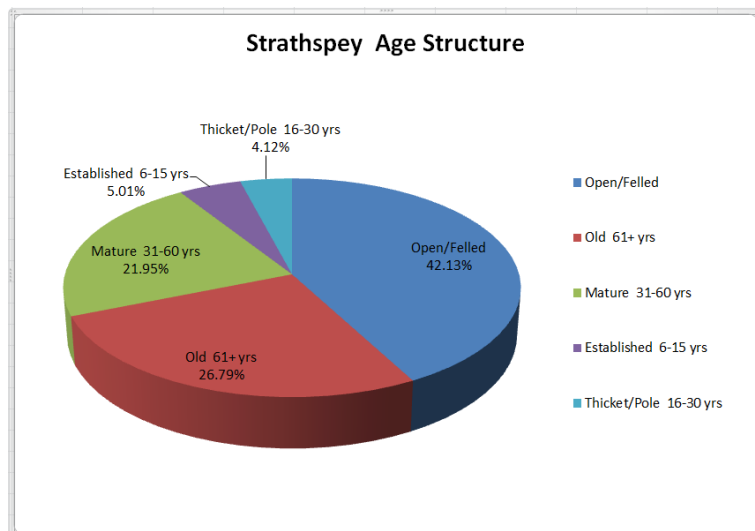
Strathspey LMP area is part of "Cairngorms Connect", a partnership of neighbouring land managers, committed to a bold and ambitious 200-year vision to manage and enhance habitats, species and ecological processes across a vast area within the Cairngorms National Park. More details can be found at <http://cairngormsconnect.org.uk/>.

Current growing stock:

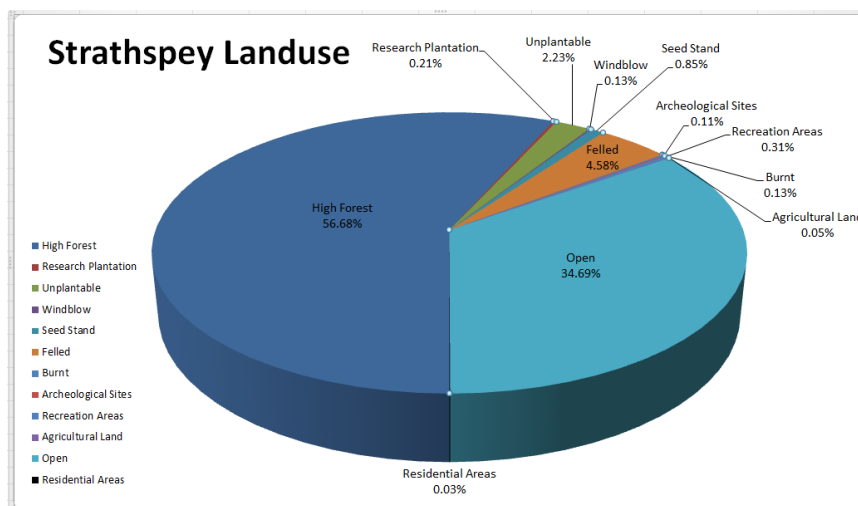
Strathspey Tree Species



Strathspey Age Structure



Strathspey Landuse



2. Project Objectives /Outcomes

A Land Management Plan delivered in accordance with [United Kingdom Forestry Standard](#) (UKFS) and [the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard](#).

A Land Management Plan which delivers against the relevant objectives of the [Inverness, Ross and Skye District Strategic Plan](#) and [Forest Enterprise Scotland Corporate Plan](#).



A Land Management Plan that delivers value for money and is achievable within current management and financial resources.

2.1 Strategic objectives for Strathspey Woodlands based on IRS Strategic plan 2014-2017 (extended to 2019)

- **Healthy:**
 - Reduce risk to people and the environment through sustainable forest management and manage tree diseases such as DNB, whilst building resilience for a changing climate.
- **Productive:**
 - Optimise the productive potential of commercial Scots Pine crops and encourage high-quality native timber production over the long term.
 - Continue to take a pro-active approach in commercial and recreational thinning activities to ensure a continuous forested landscape for the future, especially in visually prominent areas
 - Avoid large scale, clear-fell-based industrial forestry management principles to highly recreational areas. Apply more social forestry management guidelines including thinning, but respond swiftly to impacts like wind blow.
- **Treasured:**
 - The forests to be promoted as a key asset for the region and the country; forests considered to be easily accessible, have outstanding views, and to be a venue for events.
 - Promote a proactive approach in connecting and linking the people with Strathspeys woodlands
 - Maintain the scenic aspects of the hillsides that are prominent in the landscape
 - Maintain and improve the internal design of the woodlands to provide views to surrounding rolling hills.
 - Ensure removal of non-native trees (including regeneration) from Caledonian Forest Reserves.
 - Manage deer populations (in collaboration with neighbours) to achieve natural regeneration of Native Pinewoods and establishment of tree-line forests.
 - Upgrade and continue to invest in recreation facilities.
- **Access:**
 - Working with partners we will raise awareness of the woodlands as an easy-to find, easy-to-access asset and event venue.
- **Cared for:**
 - Work closely with communities, neighbours, agencies and other stakeholders to protect and enhance the special features of this area.



3. Project Scope

3.1 Key features and known issues that will influence the development of management proposals for the whole plan area

Recreation (High Priority)

All woodlands are very important recreational facilities, with Inshriach as a quiet alternative to the busier Glenmore. They have a long history of recreational use, which is shown by the establishment of a Forest Park in 1948 - only the second such designation in Scotland (after Argyll).

Glenmore:

The forests receive around 350,000 visitors per annum who come to enjoy the many and varied activities along with many who pass through on their way to the ski slopes. A range of walks are available catering for all abilities. Currently, over 50 km of tracks, trails and forest roads are present on FLS land. Other, more specialist pursuits include winter sports, orienteering, mountain biking and water sports (Loch Morlich). In addition, specialist events are held in the area, such as the annual sled dog rally.

The presence of other attractions such as Scotland's National Outdoor Training Centre at Glenmore Lodge, The Cairngorm Youth Hostel, Cairngorms Funicular, Loch Morlich Watersport centre and many associated local outdoor activity centres and shops are also important in attracting and serving visitors' needs.

The Glenmore Forest Park Visitor Centre is the focal point for much of the activity in the area. From here visitors can find out more about the forest and its environment and management. The displays are changed frequently to reflect the latest ongoing projects and serve as an important educational resource.

The centre is also home to the local recreation staff that runs an extensive programme of activities throughout the year including visitor centre management, guided walks and school visits, publications as well as themed and guided walks. This has become a bigger challenge through the last planning period due to ongoing budget cuts.

Inshriach:

Facilities for walking have been provided at Uath Lochans and Feshiebridge. Cross-country skiing and cycling routes are provided using the existing forest road network. There are no active plans for future development of the recreational facilities but Inshriach Forest is of sufficient size to allow sensitive development to meet the wider needs of Strathspey.

Inshriach and Glenmore:

FCS has worked collaboratively with neighbours, tourism and recreation stakeholders to ensure co-ordinated delivery of recreational and education activities and events on the national forest estate. This will continue to be one of the main objectives for the next ten years.

Strathspey forests are also home to a few protected species; in order to avoid disturbance that could be damaging to species populations, ongoing zonation will need to take place to ensure recreation helps deliver bio-diversity objectives;

Landscape (High Priority)

Area of the plan covers a part of Speyside where the magnificent Cairngorm mountains tower over the great forests of pine and birch. Although forest, the area has great variety with distinctive landforms, wildlife, colours and textures as well as less tangible qualities of naturalness, remoteness, cultural continuity and recreational exploration.



The forests of Strathspey are extensive, filling the broad bowl around Loch Morlich between Glenmore, Rothiemurchus, Inshriach and up towards Glenfeshie and on the lower hills next to the Cairngorm massif. The forests are diverse making a patchwork of open heath and bog, lochs and lochans, dynamic rivers, open mature pine trees, young dense conifers, delicate light birch woods, mountain hillsides, screes, and extensive plantations and broad cleared areas. The contrast of colours is notable between the dark venerable pine forests and the light airy birch, the purple heather, turning brown in the winter and the bright greens of the grasses becoming yellow and then bleached as the year progresses. Across the forest area there is a dominance of natural sounds adding to the special qualities of the place.

Although large these forests are diminished in scale by the massive features of the Cairngorm Mountains beyond.

Visibility:

Depending on where they are viewed from, the forests of the Strathspey LMP are seen as part of grand panoramas or framed views. Because of the undulating nature of the landform and enclosure the forests from within the Glenmore bowl are restricted while the surrounding hills are prominent. The main exceptions to this are the views over Loch Morlich to the forest edge on the south side of the loch and views from elevated sites in the village. However, there are extensive views of the forest from higher elevations, the car parks at Allt mor and Allt na Ciste, the mountain restaurant on the Ptarmigan, parts of the ski area, the access to the Northern Corries and the popular ridge walk from Meall a'Bhuachaille.

Views across the meadows of Inverdrue are to the mature open pine forest on the dramatic rounded slopes below Creag Fhiachlach, Cadha Mor and Carn Eilrig on the edge of the Cairngorm Plateau.

Distant views of Inshriach forest are visible from the main trunk road through the Highlands with the western slopes of Creag Dubh and Creag Far-leitre and the area to the south of Drumguish the most prominent. Long distance views are also gained from Carn Ban Mor ridge in good weather. The remaining views are largely internal and particular attention has been paid to the effects around the existing recreation facilities.

Timber Production and Transport (Medium priority)

Where possible the establishment and management of the forest at Glenmore will use natural processes. The reduction in deer numbers to sustainable levels has allowed natural regeneration to flourish throughout the area. Whilst this has increased the amount of native tree regeneration it has also increased the potential for non-native regeneration. The main intervention in many areas will be the clearance of non-native tree regeneration; this is undertaken as a part of a rolling programme throughout the forest design plan area informed by regeneration surveys.

Felling will utilise the most appropriate silvicultural system relating to the objectives for that area. Where the priority is removal of non-native tree species, the system used will generally be clearfell followed by replanting or natural regeneration dependent on site conditions and seed source availability. Where possible, clearfell coupes are designed to be sympathetic to the landscape whilst providing stable boundaries at the edges. Coupes are generally separated with a 5-10 year age gap to allow the replanted trees to become established. Within the largely Scots Pine areas management will be by low impact silvicultural systems.

Thinning of former plantations will be variable density in order to promote structural diversity. This means that while a smaller proportion of the stand will remain unthinned, other parts will be thinned to around 40% of their original stocking density. The opportunity can also be taken at this time to enlarge any existing gaps to encourage regeneration. During subsequent thinnings the actual area thinned can be progressively reduced leaving sections of the stand at every stage of thinning.



intensity. This will ensure a continuum of habitat types for species such as Capercaillie which require different densities throughout their life cycle. In this way the forest can continue to produce timber whilst encouraging flora and fauna and attaining a natural structure.

Whilst native pine is regenerating throughout the area, it appears to be a slow process (10 years and longer); as a result, some areas will require some additional input in the form of planting SP on sites where this species may not regenerate well, and in the form of planting species which are absent; the necessity to plant will reduce as regeneration becomes established and a stronger seed source is created.

Most of the Strathspey woodlands are in the CPI (Caledonian Pinewood Inventory) zone. The action plan for DNB (Dothistroma Needle Blight) identifies a high risk of introducing new strains of the fungal pathogen into this zone by planting pine sources from anywhere but within any of the CPI areas. As a result, planting of "non-CPI SP" within a 600m buffer around the CPI zone is severely restricted. In a few exceptional circumstances planting of SP will be considered, for example *"....where there is an agreed current need to take action to protect the future integrity of priority species habitat such as Capercaillie..."* (Forestry Commission Scotland, Policy Guidance, 2017). This would apply to Strathspey, whose woodlands are mostly within the CPI buffer zone. However, only SP planting stock grown in a nursery within the CPI site is to be used, from seed collected within that CPI site. Furthermore, the seedlings are subject to inspections in the nursery and post-planting on site; if seedlings were found to be infected with DNB they are supposed to be removed. This rather strict application of the action plan makes it very difficult to grow a stock of CPI-SP seedlings for planting sites in Strathspey.

Based on SNH's "Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Plans", a 5% threshold of felled ground (in relation to total forest cover) awaiting restocking/ regeneration has been agreed with Forest Conservancy and SNH. This will ensure that change in forest structure takes place in a more controlled manner, seeking to reduce the potential impact on birds and other species. Currently, this threshold of felled (and non-restocked) ground has almost been reached in the Strathspey woodlands. As a result, no further felling will be approved until a solution is found to restock some of the currently felled areas with SP. This plan will address the "SP planting restriction" within the CPI buffer zone and present a restocking plan for the felled areas to ensure further harvesting can take place again.

Biodiversity (High priority)

Strathspey woodlands contain a variety of habitats which supports an even more diverse range of species.

Several habitats and species have been identified as particularly important. Key species in the forest at present include the Red Squirrel, Capercaillie, Wood Ants and specialist flora of native pinewoods. Protection of the Red Squirrel is largely a case of making the forest less suitable for Grey Squirrel in strongholds such as Inshriach. This will be achieved by preferential use of small seeded broadleaves such as Birch, Rowan and Aspen rather than larger seeded species such as Oak. The retention of some areas of non-invasive Norway Spruce will also benefit Red Squirrels.

Capercaillie are protected through creation and enhancement of suitable habitat (which varies throughout the year). FCS have been partners in various projects which have carried out enhancement measures for this bird over a number of sites including Strathspey.

Where designations are in place then management and protection for these species and habitats will be in co-operation with other organisations generally through an approved management plan. **In general, management of habitats is the key objective for the Strathspey woodlands as this will provide suitable conditions for the whole range of species dependent upon that ecotype.** Species protection and enhancement follows broad principles identified in national species



action plans which outline the major causes of decline and possible measures that can be taken to halt or reverse declines.

Habitat protection is considered over the whole area but largely on designated areas. In the case of SSSI's there are agreed management plans which outline the possible measures required to maintain the site in favourable condition and also notes any activities which may have an adverse effect on the site. For SPA's and SAC's, guidance and their participation is sought from SNH staff.

Strathspey woodlands (especially Glenmore) have important areas of Native Pinewoods. Native Pinewood is a habitat listed in the European Directive on Habitats and Species. The areas within the forest have been developed into the Cairngorms "Special Area of Conservation (SAC)" to enhance their conservation status.

Water (high priority)

Inshriach has a number of water features within its boundaries and is a dominant feature in the catchment of the Rivers Feshie and Spey into which it drains. The River Feshie is a SSSI with an agreed Management Plan in place. A number of private water supplies are fed from within the forest and during felling operations these will receive special care and attention; restocking will be sympathetic to reduce the risk of interference with these in subsequent rotations.

Glenmore lies within an undulating upland bowl of glacial origin flanked by the Kincardine hills to the NE and the northern corries of the Cairngorm massif to the south. There are a number of lochs in the area of which Loch Morlich is the largest. In the southern part of the forest, the watercourses of the Allt Mor and Allt na Ciste cut into the fluvioglacial deposits creating shifting, boulder strewn beds.

Water quality management within the forest environment is outlined in the Forest and Water Guidelines. In general the adoption of this recommended guidance for operations coupled with the naturalisation of watercourses will protect and improve water quality. The introduction of riparian zones consisting of naturally distributed open space and broadleaves and the removal of non-native conifers from riparian areas will create more natural and diverse watercourse boundaries.

4. Inclusion (Key documents to be produced or included)

- 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
- Prior notification determination



5. Exclusion

- Detailed site specific management plans (work plan)

6. Project Organisation

LMP Team: responsible for undertaking the revision;

Colin Leslie	Environment Forester; Lead of Planning Group
Joachim Boehm	Planning Forester
Martin Macpherson, Duncan Manson	Operations Forester
Liam Matheson	Civil Engineer
Keith Black	Planning Coordinator
Russell Cooper	Wildlife Ranger Manager
Brian Duff	Recreation Forester
Marcin Baranski	FM Forester
Ruairidh MacLennan	Land Agent

Project Sponsor	Doug Mitchell	Planning Manager
Strategic direction	Forest District Management Groups	
Scottish Forestry	Agata Baranska	Development and operations advisor

7. Time frame

Initial consultation (Screening)	Jan 2019
Draft plan completion	July 2019
Detailed consultation	September 2019
Review of commentary & amendments	October 2019
Internal review	November 2019
Submission	Jan 2020



8. Risks

- Unstable timber markets and future windblow events could influence management proposals
- Tree disease could have an impact on management proposals

9. Stakeholders

Statutory Stakeholders:

- Cairngorms National Park
- Forestry Commission
- Highland Council
- SNH
- SEPA
- Community Councils

Other Interest:

- Badaguish Centre
- Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group
- Deer Management Groups
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Neighbours
- Reindeer Company
- RSPB
- Armed Forces
- Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
- Visit Aviemore
- Buglife
- Cairngorms Cycling Club
- Camping and Caravan Club
- Glenmore Lodge
- HIE
- Loch Morlich Water Sports
- Mountaineering Council For Scotland
- Plantlife
- Ramblers Association
- Scottish Orienteering Federation
- Scottish water
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- SYHA
- Scotways



- Siberian Husky Club of GB
- Sled Dog Association
- Species Specialist Groups
- Spey Fishery Board
- Strathspey Sailing Club
- Timber Customers
- Visitors
- Visit Scotland
- Woodland Trust
- SSE
- Rothiemurcus Estate