



Scoping Report

Raera

Long Term Forest Plan

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This document contains important information from the proposed long-term forest management plan.

Consultees are asked to respond by the **7/12/2024** with any additional comments or currently unidentified key issues which should also be considered to:

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Email Subject: Raera Consultation

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1. Description of Forest and Plan Outline.

Raera Forest extends to 2136ha consisting of a single forest block. The forest lies approximately 3 miles North of the village of Kilmelford and approximately 12 miles South of Oban. The forest is accessed from 2 entrances on the A816, Glen Gallian NM855179 & Oude Bridge NM854165. The woodland is owned by a private individual with Tilhill Forestry as the woodland managers. (see Map 1 – Location Map)

The forest was originally planted between 1969 & 1986 with its current species make up 70% Sitka spruce, 5% Other conifers, 5% Broadleaves 20 % Open ground/Open Water. The site is made up from a wide variety of soils, soil depth, geology & drainage which have created a varied crop throughout the forest. There are no areas of significant windblow however, with the varied topography there is a mosaic of yield classes causing minor areas of checked crop.

The Scottish Rural Development Programme identifies a need to increase the contribution to the diversity and character of landscape from Scotland's woods and forests through restructuring planted woodlands. As a result, it is important now to create a Long-Term Management Plan covering the period 2024 to 2043, to identify opportunities to protect and enhance existing features of importance. The plan will also cover diversification of the age and species classes of the forest, by restructuring the remainder of the first rotation crop. The continuing felling phase is due to commence in 2025.

The Forest Plan will set out the operations, in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard, required to improve the ecological and environmental value of woodlands. This will focus on improving the relatively even-aged conifer woodland for biodiversity and scenic value, and therefore enhancing the ecological stability in the longer term, by restructuring its age and species composition. The Forest Plan will also link to the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme to allow the production of Certified, sustainably managed timber into the future.

It is anticipated that the plan will be completed in 2024 and grant claimed within the 2024/25 Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) year.

In particular the Plan will:

- Record the current characteristics of Raera Forest.
- Set out proposals to restructure the conifer plantation.
- Summarise the status of the woodland and identify the important opportunities and constraints that affect it.
- Identify the long-term policy for the woodland, set and prioritise objectives and provide a rationale for the stated management prescriptions.
- Include felling and restocking proposals, an indication of proposed roading developments and an overall management strategy covering a 20-year period up to 2044.
- Set out specific measures to maintain or enhance those areas identified as of high environmental value.
- Set out on-going monitoring criteria and establish a Plan Review process at 5 yearly intervals.
- Be in accordance with The UK Forestry Standard and The UK Woodland Assurance Scheme Requirements.

The Owner's objectives are as follows:

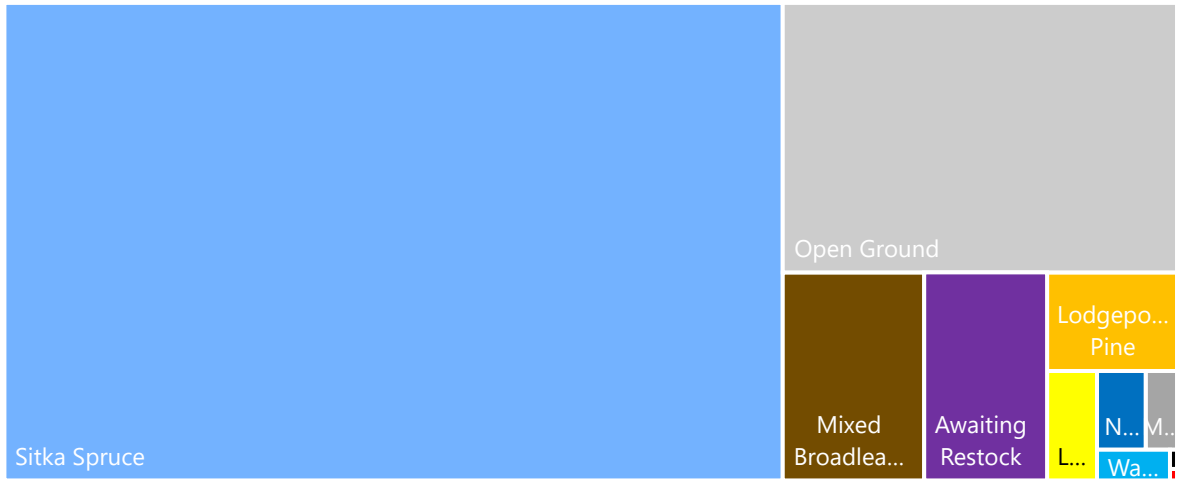
- To obtain the maximum possible financial return from the timber crop using sustainable silviculture.
- To maintain and enhance the landscape contribution, amenity, and conservation value of the forest and to protect ancient monuments.
- To improve the biodiversity of the forest with the objective of creating a sustainable, balanced, and dynamic forest ecosystem capable of supporting sustained timber yields.
- To improve the access to the forest blocks and secure their future as commercial woodlands.
- To manage the forest in accordance with UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) Standard.

Current Species by Area

Species	Area (ha)	% of Area
Larch	21.01	0.98%
Lodgepole Pine	48.97	2.29%
Mixed Conifers	9.45	0.44%
Norway Spruce	14.59	0.68%
Scots Pine	0.32	0.01%
Sitka Spruce	1418.08	66.39%
Mixed Broadleaves	111.81	5.23%
Open Ground	405.03	18.96%
Water	8.52	0.40%
Quarry	0.54	0.03%
Awaiting Restock	97.68	4.57%
Grand Total	2136	100.00%

Species by Area (ha)

- Larch
- Lodgepole Pine
- Mixed Conifers
- Norway Spruce
- Scots Pine
- Sitka Spruce
- Mixed Broadleaves
- Open Ground
- Water
- Quarry
- Awaiting Restock



2. Consultees.

The Forest Plan process will require consultation with the following Statutory consultees and interested parties:

Consultee	Contact
Scottish Forestry	panda.cons@forestry.gov.scot
SEPA	adminsupportwest@sepa.org.uk
Nature Scot	argyll_outerhebrides@nature.scot
Argyll & Bute Council	centralvalidationteam@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Argyll & Bute Planning	planning.olandi@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Argyll & Bute Roads	James.Jackson@argyll-bute.gov.uk
A&B Council private water supply	pws@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Scottish Water	protectdwsources@scottishwater.co.uk
West of Scotland Archaeological Services	equiries@wosas.glasgow.gov.uk
RSPB	Stephanie.Cope@rspb.org.uk
Argyll RSG	dikanderson@googlemail.com
Scottish & Southern Renewables	jim.harvey@sse.com
Argyll TTG	s.stuart@outlook.com
Kilninver School	enquiries-kilninver@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Kilmelford and Kilninver Community Council	info@kilmelford.com
Seil & Easdale Community Council	secretary@seilandeasdalecc.co.uk

Neighbouring Landowners/Householders & Other interested parties:

Name
Raera Farm
Blaran Cottage
Kilchoan Melfort Trust
Ardmaddy Estate
Kilchoan Estate
Kilninver Estate

3 Designations

Raera forest is within the Local Landscape Area for Melfort/Knapdale.

4 Ecological interests

Argyll & Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Habitat Action Plan for Planted Coniferous Forest. This HAP cited the threats to this habitat as:

- Wind-throw and fire.
- Uniform age and species composition of forests.
- Damage by pests and disease.
- Potential for shorter rotations due to improvement made in species/timber research.

The impacts cited are:

- Loss of timber.
- Reduction of suitable habitat for key species.

The objectives stated to maintain and improve this habitat are:

1. Ensure that at least 1% of existing conifer woodland is set aside as long-term retention to improve diversity.
2. Monitor progress with re-structuring conifer forests.

Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Raera Forest has approximately 37.2ha of ancient woodland within its ownership. This woodland is not classified as a UK BAP due to the species makeup of the site however the habitat action plan for Atlantic Oak woodlands will be relevant and the objectives applied to Raera's ancient woodland.

The objectives stated to maintain and improve this habitat are:

1. To maintain and enhance the condition of existing Atlantic woodland.
2. To expand the area of Atlantic woodland, primarily through natural regeneration, creating links between existing severely degraded resources.
3. To restore areas of Atlantic woodland which have been severely damaged by, for example, *Rhododendron ponticum* or Sitka Spruce.

During operations this area is to be protected and monitored to ensure the woodland does not become unfavourable habitat. It is expected with the increasing focus on deer control in the property there will be increasing levels of regeneration within the ancient woodland. Monitoring of the woodland will occur on a 5 yearly interval to assess the quality of the woodland in line with current guidance.

PAWS (Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites)

Raera has approximately 20.89ha of PAWS which have been previously recorded as ancient woodland which have been subsequently planted with conifers, these areas have been partly restored with 7.48ha replanted or regenerated with broadleaf species made up of local provinces, the remaining 12.81ha will be restored once these areas have been felled. The preferred methodology will be to allow, if possible, to have them restored using natural regeneration with neighbouring existing broadleaves however it may be required to plant additional stock using local seed zones.

These sites will be monitored to ensure they are in favourable condition for restoration and any additional observations noted.

The Long Term Management Plan for Raera will identify and review the ecological threats as they apply to the woodland and it will set out objectives and work proposals that will mitigate against the impacts resulting from the stated threats and help this woodland meet the biodiversity objectives.

Whilst further survey may identify other key species that utilise the habitats provided by Raera the following are known to be present:

1. Red squirrel
2. Lichen
3. Otter
4. Pine marten

In all cases, the Long Term Management Plan for Raera will identify and review the ecological and environmental threats as they apply to these species, and others if identified through the planning process, and it will set out objectives and work proposals that will mitigate against the impacts resulting from the stated threats and help this woodland contribute to their conservation in future.

Deer Management

A deer management plan to protect the restock of trees will be included within the Long Term Forest Plan.

5 Historical and Cultural Interests

There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the Raera.

Canmore as a record of 15 historic monuments within the boundary of the forest, these are all associated with the cultural heritage of the area with the monuments a legacy of the previous land use and local population.

#	Feature	Location	Notes
1	Allt Dellermaig	NM 8018 1726	Track
2	Ath fiaclath	NM 8415 1709	Stone
3	Ath fiaclach	NM 8437 1714	Cairn
4	Barnacollach	NM 8082 1580	Farmhouse
5	Blaran	NM 8563 1718	Shieling Hut (possible)
6	Blaran	NM 8546 1728	Sheepfold
7	Cnoc cul nan uamh	NM 82538 17217	Field boundary
8	Corriencraig	NM 8170 1885	Farmhouse
9	Creag nan Cuilein	NM 8219 1635	Field Boundary
10	Craig nan Cuilean	NM 81995 17108	Farmhouse
11	Cave of the Crags	NM 8254 1722 NM 8250 1450	Cave / Flints
12	Laggan-an-airgid	NM 85300 18300	Quarry
13	Leckie	NM 8410 1910	Township
14	Leckie	NM 8444 1900	Sheepfold
15	Lochan na hairigh	NM 82920 18680	Building (possible)

The Long-Term Forest Plan will provide an opportunity to determine the proximity of these features to proposed operations, and to ensure that adjacent operations are carried out in a manner which will protect and enhance these features, both during operations and setting out replanting of the woodland. Should any additional features be discovered post-harvest, then Historic Scotland will be made aware, and they will be incorporated into the restock design to help safeguard in the future.

6 Landscape Interests

Raera falls within the Knapdale/Melfort Local landscape Area (LLA), this is a non-statutory designation designated within the Local Development Plan. LLA's are areas of regional importance in terms of their landscape quality which were previously identified as Areas of Panoramic Quality.

The eastern edge of the woodland is visible from the A816 with native broadleaves zones screening commercial conifer crops, however wide-ranging views of the forest are limited by the topography. Forest operations adjacent to the public road have been planned to ensure landscaping objectives are met, and the visual impact of felling and restocking operations are minimised through coupe shape and use of long-term retentions [Photos 1].

Raera is sited on an undulating plateau and faces all directions, sloping down to the A816 along the majority of the eastern boundary. With the purchase of Melfort Forest which is now part of the southern part of Raera an increased area is visible to the public road, the felling in this area has been designed to mitigate the impact on the landscape value of the area.

7 Access

Public Access

There are no existing Public Rights of Way, Proposed Core Paths or Long-Distance Footpaths which directly affect Raera.

The creation of the Forest Plan will identify current amenity use and whether increased provision could or should be considered.

The outdoor access code will be applied to the forest.

Timber Haulage

Timber haulage utilises existing forest roads & tracks within the property with 2 entrances onto the A816 at Glen Gallian (NM 855 179) & Oude Bridge (NM 854 165).

The internal road network extends over 32km and is maintained in an ad hoc manner with major upgrades planned to access either new areas of timber or where the road structure requires major repairs. It is expected an additional 2500m of new road will be constructed and 4500m of major upgrade in this plan period.

8 Felling and restructuring

Raera forest is a mid-1st rotation forest with felling first commencing in 2006, the forest has a complex matrix of crop with the common place range of yield classes due to topography, aspect and soil conditions within the micro sites.

The remaining felling coupes of the 1st rotation will be all felled within 20-year plan period excluding 1 felling coupe and any remaining Long Term Retention (LTR) & NR (Natural Reserves) it is also expected the start of the 2nd rotation crops will be felled within the 20 year plan period subject to growth.

It is expected during the felling there will be area of checked or slower growing crops which will be left to for LTR, these areas are retained to provide visual diversity and a conservation resource. Whilst it is hoped that a significant proportion of the retained crop will stand it is expected that some wind damage will occur, however this is likely to add to the conservation value of the crop through additional deadwood provision. These will be minimal intervention areas, with any intervention only likely to occur on health & safety or biosecurity grounds.

Raera is certified through the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme and so any timber sold from the forest will be traceable back to Raera through the Chain of Custody process, in accordance with UKWAS requirement 2.2.4.

The restocking proposals are designed to meet the objectives of the forest owner, the UKFS and UKWAS. The restock map shows the intended increase the levels of diverse conifers, and through the planning process this design will be refined to ensure that the right trees are selected for the right place (soils, localised site conditions etc).

Proposed felling and restocking plans can be seen in the map appendices.

9 Summary of key issues

Table to be added post consultation.

10 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Constraints & Opportunities

Appendix 2 - Felling Phase Plan

Appendix 3 – Restock Map

Appendix 4 – Consultation Responses (to be appended post-consultation)