

1.1 Fleet Basin LMP 2021 | Concept development

General

Fleet Basin is a commercial plantation “massive” that lies between two large Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Cairnmore of Fleet and Laughenghie & Airie Hills) and is contiguous with significant areas of FLS plantation to the north and west.

Proposed key objectives:

1. To produce a sustainable supply of timber
2. Improve water quality within Fleet Basin catchment(s)
3. Maintain and enhance plan area for priority species (Red squirrel and Black Grouse)
4. Contribute to the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan (Carbon sequestration)
5. Maintain and enhance heritage features across the plan area
6. Provide future resilience for pests and disease (continue to remove larch as per the National Larch Strategy)

Objective / Feature	Opportunity	Constraint	Concept
To produce a sustainable supply of timber.	Core area for timber production. Significantly contribute to regional timber production through revised felling, thinning and restock plans	Site conditions (DAMS, soils, elevation) not generally favourable for thinning and by default LISS Increased creation of open ground (including potential peatland restoration and enhanced riparian buffer zones) and additional BL areas may reduce commercial timber production capacity Extended crop rotation length for more permanent seed (food) source for Red squirrel (priority species) and improved water quality through reduced harvesting impacts may reduce timber production capacity	Maximise productive capacity through site specific and genetically improved restock
Improve water quality across failing Fleet Basin Acid Sensitive Catchments (ASC)	Improve catchment status and recovery through creation of additional open ground (includes potential for peatland restoration), creation of enhanced riparian buffer zones, revised felling / restock plans and increased species diversity particularly BL	Felling and restocking thresholds impacts (dependant on sampling outcomes) Resource availability and identified priorities Poor levels of successful BL establishment	Enhanced riparian buffer zones that exceed minimum guideline recommendations Identification of areas for peatland restoration Increased species diversity particularly the creation of protectable BL habitats

Objective/ Feature	Opportunity	Constraint	Concept
		Control (removal) of conifer natural regeneration within defined managed open ground	
Contribute to the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan (Carbon sequestration)	Identify priority peat type areas for restoration Creation of additional open habitats Improve environmental and water quality across catchment by reducing the loss of aquatic carbon	Deforestation and increased creation of open ground (potential peatland restoration) and BL areas will reduce commercial timber production capacity Loss of potential food supply for priority species (Red squirrel)	Identify priority areas for peatland restoration (or alternative) and action through clearfell and restoration techniques Conifer removal and creation of species diversity and peatland edge woodland habitat (also benefit Black Grouse)
Enhance plan area for priority species (Red squirrel and Black Grouse)	Maintain and enhance existing populations through creation of additional linked habitats and species diversity		Extended crop rotation length and potential for Long Term Retentions Creation and linking of additional species diverse appropriate habitats
Maintain and enhance status of heritage features.	Enhance heritage features	Little evidence of existing heritage features	Maintain heritage features as per UKFS and HES guidelines.
Maintain and enhance status of internal and adjacent designated SSSI; Lea Larks and Cairnsmore of Fleet NNR	Planned clearfell of plantation impacting on Lea Larks site Partnership working Raise sites' status to favourable	No direct influence on adjacent external site	Conifer removal and creation of species diversity / open space to enhance sites and benefit other priority species
Provide future resilience to pests/disease and continue removal of larch as per National larch strategy	Harvest larch within the management zone to limit the potential spread of <i>P. ramorum</i> Continue to diversify species through felling/ restocking plans.	Fragmented / isolated larch areas across the block constrain access Larch removal reduces visual and species diversity Larch removal represents diminishes potential food source for priority species Poor BL establishment	Include larch removal through incorporation into clearfell coupes Restock larch sites with site appropriate alternate species Consider options for alternative treatments e.g. fell to waste Design and locate open space control areas (with wildlife team) for protectable BL