



Glenachulish LMP Summary

Glenachulish forest covers 1,121 ha of commercial conifer plantation, native broadleaved woodland and open ground, extending from sea level to an elevation of 1,020 metres. It sits within a National Scenic Area and is highly visible in the landscape, especially from the northern and eastern approaches. The forest is well used for recreation - it is a key access route to nearby Munros and forest roads and tracks are used regularly by walkers, trail and mountain bike riders. Much of the forested area is Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) and there are significant areas of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) on higher slopes and along watercourses. Many remnants of ground flora and bryophytes associated with ASNW remain, for example along watercourses and in boulder fields. Glenachulish is part of Scotland's rainforest network and lies close to existing native woodlands locally.

Objectives

Key management objectives focus on restoration of native woodland across the whole forest; protection of ASNW remnants and veteran trees; some production of broadleaved timber in non- PAWS areas; landscape and visual amenity; access and tree health.

What is planned?

Over the course of this rotation, the current commercial conifer crop will gradually be replaced by native broadleaves and Scots pine. The PAWS areas will be restored to native woodland through natural regeneration while elsewhere, some planting of site-appropriate locally native species will enhance the diversity of native species and complement natural regeneration. Successful establishment of young trees will depend on effective reduction of browsing pressure by deer and livestock ingress and on control of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) such as Rhododendron, and natural regeneration of other non-native species.

Some Norway spruce will be retained for longer in the NW part of the forest, to benefit Red squirrels. Where possible, in small areas outwith the PAWS / ASNW areas, stands will be managed as productive broadleaves and Scots pine where conditions are suitable. Restocking proposals will aim to protect steep slopes and conserve soils, while diversifying the species composition and age structure of the forest.

The felling Plan is designed to restore the native woodland in a sustainable way while continuing to produce timber over the period of this rotation. In places, safety and technical requirements for the steep unstable slopes have determined the size, shape and layout of felling coupes, particularly in the NW part of the forest. The need to reduce browsing pressure and to control

INNS and non-native regeneration have also constrained felling design and the rate of restoration to native woodland.

The next 10 years

Although full restoration of the whole forest to native woodland will take a long time, significant changes will be made during the 10 year lifetime of this Plan. Much of the lower slopes will convert to native broadleaved woodland within the first 10 years. Gradually, native broadleaves and Scots pine will be established on higher slopes, eventually transitioning the PAWS back to native woodland. But unstable slopes will need to be restocked rapidly to protect slope stability and planting will be required in these zones unless advance natural regeneration of desired species occurs.

The focus for felling in the first 10 years will be to tackle the steep slopes in the NW part of the forest and to maximise the removal of larch through the harvesting programme, in response to the threat of *Phytophthora ramorum*. A further priority is to protect veteran native trees and areas of highest ecological value.

Future forest

Restoration of native woodland in Glenachulish, within Scotland's rainforest network

Glenachulish forest contains some valuable ASNW remnants and extensive areas of PAWS, much of which has high ecological value due to the presence of ancient woodland remnants that have survived along the frequent burn sides and boulder fields - this is rainforest biodiversity. Once restored, the forest can make a valuable contribution to the network of Scotland's rainforest remnants in this part of the West coast of Scotland. Eventually, lower slopes will be colonised by oak and birch, with other species such as aspen, hazel, rowan, holly, hawthorn and bird cherry forming part of the canopy and understorey. Some naturally regenerating ash may also develop in places if trees prove resistant to *Chalara*. Eventually, on upper slopes, commercial conifer stands will be replaced by birch and Scots pine, with rowan, hawthorn and other native species able to tolerate the more exposed conditions. Riparian woodland of alder, willow and downy birch will develop along watercourses. Native trees and shrubs will regenerate onto the open hill, creating a scattered woodland at higher elevations that transitions into open ground, providing ideal habitat for iconic birds of prey such as the Golden eagle as well as ground nesting birds and various mammals.

Scotland's rainforest

Scotland's temperate rainforest, also known as Atlantic woodland or Celtic rainforest, is a unique habitat of ancient and native woodland, open glades, boulders, crags, ravines and river gorges. These areas are rich in lichens, fungi, mosses, liverworts and ferns.

Temperate rainforest can only be found where there is a high level of rainfall, year-round mild temperatures and clean air. This is a rare habitat – these climate conditions cover less than 1% of the planet!

In Europe, temperate rainforest can be found on the Atlantic coastlines of Britain, Ireland, Norway, France and Spain. But the best rainforest habitat in Europe is found in Scotland. Where the influence of the Atlantic ocean is strongest, the effect is termed 'hyper-oceanic' - these conditions are found across the central part of NW Scotland, as well as some areas of the Borders, the Lake District, north Wales and SW England. As well as climate, the rainforest also needs very clean air for oceanic bryophytes and lichens to thrive, which is one reason why Scotland still holds onto its rainforest.

In Scotland, only around 30,000 ha of rainforest is left – an area slightly bigger than Edinburgh – these sites have retained their rainforest biodiversity. Scotland's rainforests face a multitude of threats and are a priority for protection, expansion and management.

For more information, visit the website of the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest - www.savingscotlandsrainforest.org.uk