



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba

South East Fife Woods Land Management Plan

Public Scoping Information Summary



Introduction

Forestry and Land Scotland are the Scottish Government agency responsible for managing Scotland's national forests and land. All our forests are managed to the [UK Forestry Standard](#) and are independently certified under the [UK Woodland Assurance Standard](#).

[Land Management Plans](#) detail how we intend to manage a specific area of land over a ten year period, with outline proposals for a longer timeframe. These plans are reviewed every five years, and renewed every ten years. They are strategic documents and are succeeded by more detailed operational work plans for specific operations.

This document provides a summary of our management proposals for the South East Fife Woods over the next ten years and your feedback will be used to help inform these proposals.

Land Management Plan Area and Management Objectives

The South East Fife Woods Land Management Plan (LMP) will cover the four sites of Benarty, Pitcairn, Cardenden and Cullaloe. Covering a total of 420ha, these woodlands are located between Kirkcaldy and the M90 in Fife, close to the smaller settlements of Ballingry, Lochgelly, Cardenden and Auchterderran (see map 01).

These woodlands make an important contribution to the local landscape and 'green networks': providing important recreation, health and wellbeing benefits for the local communities, and habitats for wildlife (e.g. see map 02). They contain a variety of coniferous and broadleaved species of different ages, reflecting the individual history and location of each site.

Over the last ten years there has been a range of management activities carried out at these sites, including: felling, thinning, woodland creation, and replanting (restocking) – with an overall increase in the area of young and broadleaved woodland.

Over the next ten years, our proposed objectives for these sites are to:

1. Maintain attractive woodland settings which provide amenity, landscape and recreational value within the context of local settlements and green networks.
2. Continue to produce a range of products which support positive management, financial sustainability, and the rural economy.
3. Maintain and enhance woodland habitats where possible; including native woodlands and areas of benefit to priority species such as red squirrel.
4. Prepare for and address threats posed by tree pests and diseases such as *Phytophthora ramorum*, and improve general woodland resilience (e.g. to windblow).
5. Establish new areas of productive woodland which will contribute to sustainable timber production, long-term carbon sequestration and a low-carbon economy.

Summary of management proposals for the next 10 years

The main operations proposed at each site over the next 10 years are outlined below and on maps 03, 04, and 05. In addition, we may also conduct smaller-scale management work, as required, throughout the woodlands during this period (for example, maintenance of recently established areas of trees). Although a wide range of issues have been considered in developing the LMP so far, in order to keep the information brief only the main issue(s) have been included for each site, while some overarching considerations such as public access are outlined on page 4 of this document. Woodland creation proposals for South Dundonald Farm are described in more detail in the *South Dundonald Farm Woodland Creation Summary* document and on map 06. No operations are proposed at Cullaloe (see map 07), with around half of this site currently under lease to a third party for mineral extraction ([Planning Application : 19/03702/EIA](#)).

Please contact us if you wish to discuss any of the following proposals in more detail.

Benarty (map 03)

What?

- Clearfell c.9ha of mature Sitka spruce and larch, and replant with diverse conifer (e.g. Douglas fir) and native broadleaves.
- Thin up to 3.8ha of mixed conifers adjacent to Ballingry

When?

- Clearfell between 2025 and 2030 – planned for 2028/29
- Thin between 2025 and 2030 – planned for 2025/26

Why?

- The clearfell stand has become unstable and suffered from windblow in recent years, while larch is also vulnerable to *Phytophthora ramorum*. Coniferous replanting will tie in with areas established in 2019 to allow more practical and streamlined future management.
- The intended outcome of thinning is to develop greater tree stability and encourage the growth of larger individual trees for amenity and biodiversity value.

Key considerations:

- Timber haulage from this forest exits onto a narrow unclassified public road. We will consult with Fife Council, the local Timber Transport Project Officer, and other parties as required, in order to mitigate any impacts on road infrastructure, traffic and communities.
- The site is located within a Local Landscape Area, and connects to the Benarty Hill LNCS, Lochore Meadows Country Park and Loch Leven National Nature Reserve. Our proposals aim to complement these sites by re-establishing a greater area of native broadleaf species, while maintaining cohesive manageable areas which fit within the surrounding landscape.

Pitcairn (map 04)

What?

- Thin c.42.5ha of Sitka spruce and larch established in 2014, retaining shelterbelts if possible.
- Upgrade up to 2km of access track along Torres Loan and construct new turning area and additional access points into the woodland to facilitate the above management.

When?

- Road upgrade and thinning will take place between 2025 and 2030 and is currently planned for 2028/29, although this may be delayed subject to tree growth rates.

Why?

- Thinning should help to improve woodland resilience, including through the targeted removal of larch, and improve habitat value, future management options, and timber quality.

Key considerations:

- The site is highly visible and the 'four sevens' shelterbelts are seen as a local landmark but likely to require felling in future due to poor condition, or to facilitate short-term access.
- Management access is limited by wayleaves, shelterbelts and distances from Torres Loan.

Cardenden (map 05)

What?

- Thin/Coppice c.10.5ha* sycamore, birch and Sitka spruce in the New Carden Plantation.
- Clearfell c.1.8ha mature Sitka spruce in the New Carden Plantation, in conjunction with above LISS management and replant with native broadleaves.
- Thin/LISS fell** c.14.5ha* mixed broadleaves in Sunnyside Plantation, and underplant with alternative broadleaves (e.g. sweet chestnut), and/or native broadleaves (e.g. oak).
- Thin/LISS fell** c.14.5ha* (understorey) birch in Tullylumb Plantation and underplant with alternative conifers (e.g. European silver fir, western red cedar).
- Clearfell c.1.8ha semi-mature Scot's pine at the Tullylumb Plantation and replant with alternative conifers (e.g. European silver fir, western red cedar), as above.
- Thin/respace c.13.8ha* dense birch and mixed conifer regeneration in Tullylumb Plantation.
- Thin up to c.40ha* mixed Sitka spruce, larch and broadleaves in Bairns Bridge Wood, Carden Den, and at South Dundonald. Thinning in Carden Den will be small scale and low intensity.
- Create c.45ha of new woodland at South Dundonald Farm.
- Underplant c.3.6ha young sycamore at South Dundonald with European Silver Fir.
- Upgrade c.400m of access track and construct new turning area at the Tullylumb Plantation.
- Construct new entrance and up to 450m forest road, with turning area, at South Dundonald.

*These are strategic proposed areas – the actual area of operations is likely to be significantly smaller.

**Low-impact Silvicultural System (LISS) felling will resemble a heavy thinning, or small group felling of ≤ 0.25 ha.

When?

- Thinning, respacing and LISS felling will take place throughout the 10 year period, depending on the growth of individual stands and resource availability. Respacing in the Tullylumb Plantation and thinning in New Carden Plantation are higher priorities and likely to be delivered between 2025 and 2030. LISS felling in the Tullylumb Plantation and Sunnyside Plantation are lower priorities and may be delivered between 2030 and 2035, or beyond. Clearfelling in New Carden and Tullylumb will be carried out along similar timescales.
- Restocking and underplanting will be timed to follow the respective felling interventions, or coincide with woodland creation at South Dundonald.
- New woodland establishment is likely to take place between 2025 and 2030.
- Road construction and upgrades will be timed to facilitate the respective operations above.

Why?

- Thinning, coppicing and clearfelling at New Carden aims to improve biodiversity and amenity value by increasing the proportion of native species and improving structural diversity.
- Thinning/LISS felling and underplanting at Sunnyside and Tullylumb is intended to improve sustainable management options by introducing additional species which could improve timber production and stand diversity, and contribute to amenity and biodiversity value.
- Thinning and respacing at Tullylumb, Bairns Bridge, and South Dundonald will improve stand structure, biodiversity value, future timber production/quality and management options.
- Thinning in Carden Den would be solely to improve stand structure and amenity value.
- New woodland creation at South Dundonald is intended to provide future timber production, long-term carbon sequestration, and expand on woodland habitats in the surrounding area.
- Underplanting at South Dundonald will link the established areas of conifer with the new woodland creation, and enhance areas of poor establishment from 2014.
- New and upgraded access at Tullylumb and South Dundonald will be required to facilitate thinning/LISS management and woodland creation respectively.

Key considerations:

- The small scale and fragmented nature of some of the woodland areas and individual stands/species components can make practical management more challenging. To overcome this we are exploring a range of delivery, management and planning options to enable important low-impact interventions such as thinning and respacing to be carried out.
- The woodland creation at South Dundonald will involve a localised change in land use, and more detail is provided in the separate *South Dundonald Farm Woodland Creation Summary*.
- Within the Carden Den and Cardenden village there have been some historic issues with slope stability and flooding, respectively. These have been linked to environmental events and the current and proposed management activities are not believed likely to affect slope stability or surface water runoff. In future, mature Sitka spruce in the Carden Den may become more vulnerable to threats such as storm damage and fire, and therefore phased clearfelling of these areas may be undertaken in a future Land Management Plan.

Other key considerations relevant to all sites:

Public Access

These forests make an important contribution to public access in Fife and there are numerous popular recreational routes within and around the sites including several core paths, rights of way, and the Fife Pilgrim Way, which passes along Torres Loan at Pitcairn. Forest management operations will impact access to some sections of some routes for limited periods at Benarty, Pitcairn and Cardenden. This disruption will be short-term and temporary and, where possible, routes will be kept open or suitable diversions provided. The Local Authority Access Officer will be consulted as appropriate on any closures and/or diversions prior to operations.

Wildlife and Heritage

Some areas of these woodlands have been established for over a century and contain a range of wildlife and heritage features. Where possible, areas of coniferous woodland will be retained over a longer period to benefit red squirrels and the condition of native semi-natural and long-established plantation (LEPO) woodlands will be maintained or enhanced. Otherwise, key habitats, species and heritage features will be identified prior to, and protected during, operations, in line with the latest relevant guidance. The design process has also considered the inclusion of minimum intervention areas to benefit woodland raptors and species such as pine marten, although high levels of public access may limit breeding opportunities for some species.

Tree Health and Woodland Resilience

Due to the risk of infection by [*Phytophthora ramorum*](#), we have developed contingency plans to remove infected trees, if required, which may result in additional felling in all four woodlands. These areas of possible additional felling are shown on map 08. In addition, small areas of larch will be removed pre-emptively where possible through regular operations. As part of our planning process, we also consider a range of other environmental threats such as drought, flooding, fire and storm damage, and aim to mitigate these through appropriate management, for example by implementing thinning where stand stability and operational access allows.

Other

Please contact us via the details below if you wish to highlight any other considerations which are important to you, or to discuss any of our proposals in more detail.

Contact us

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