



Appendix X - Meall Mor, Moy and Farr landscape and visual appraisal

All three woodlands that make up this plan are part of a forested belt that runs alongside the slopes, leading up to an extensive area of rolling moorland which spreads south towards the more hostile uplands and foothills to the Cairngorms.

The area is located in two of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) as defined by Nature Scot, 2019 & 1999 which largely reflect the changes in topography and land use: Type 227 Farmed strath-Inverness and Type 221 Rolling Uplands- Inverness.

The majority of the plan is within the Rolling Uplands LCT, however the transition from one LCT to the other is relatively gradual here. Much of the Meall Mor and Farr forests are the backdrop of the Farmed Strath LCT of Strath Nairn, around Daviot, Inverarnie and Farr.

In the areas of Rolling Uplands LCT in particular, afforestation has added some additional features to the smooth moorland slopes. The current forest restructuring (felling and restock) has augmented this with for example increased age and species diversity. For forestry works to complement the landscape character, they should follow forest design principles to ensure they relate to the underlying landscape character. Practicalities of forestry often mean some compromise is required however the aim is for solutions that fit into their surroundings.

Each forest area is looked at separately with guidance provided on how design can help integrate the restructuring with the surrounding landscape character.

Meall Mor

The forest covers extensive areas on north facing slope beside of Strath Nairn and wrap around the shoulder of Meall Mor and its south facing slopes above the A9 trunk road.

The landscape is one of transitions from the lower slopes above the farmed strath to open moorland and upland strath. Although mostly located within the Rolling Uplands LCT it has a strong influence over the character of Strath Nairn around Inverarnie and Farr due to its position on visible slopes above it.

Key landscape characteristics

- Extensive dipping slopes with ridges and hollows with some localised steepness.
- Slopes up to an undulating upland plateaux of large scale, smooth, rounded hills of similar height with some prominent peaks (Meall Mor)
- Conifer forests limited to the lower edges of uplands and strath sides.
- Open heather moorland of uniform colour and texture accentuating the landform above forest areas.
- Largely uninhabited area of forest with settlement located close to the western boundary on the base of Strath Nairn where it forms immediate backdrop to Inverarnie settlement.
- Forest forms backdrop to the dispersed communities of Daviot, Inverarnie and Farr and the A9 trunk road.
- Littlemill fulfils an important role in screening the quarry workings from the strath.
- Large scale of roading through forest, used for access to windfarm and other infrastructure reduces sense of remoteness.
- Scale and distance are difficult to judge across Meall Mor away from built structures such as pylons.

The forest is currently undergoing restructuring which has created large areas of clear fell in recent past. These have fragmented Meall Mor forest and left some isolated blocks and dark, linear features which are discordant with the smooth rounded landform.

Little Mill is largely separate from the main block and distinct in character. It is small in scale on base of Strath Nairn with intricate landform that defines the character of the block. It is popular for recreation and so requires careful attention.



Above: View from unclassified road west of Daviot. Meall Mor forest is seen as a large expanse on the hillsides above StrathNairn. Blocky straight edges are increasingly a characteristic on the hillside which is out of character with the smooth rounded shapes of the slope.

Forest design guidance for Land Management Plan proposals

- Reflect the change in scale in the design of forest felling and restock. Scale is small to medium in the strath, increasing to large on the upper slopes to the south west of the A9 corridor.
- At lower elevations there is more scope to vary shapes, increase interlock and respond to local landform. Reduce the scale of fellings in particular close to the settlement of Inverarnie and in Littlemill. Scale in this locality should reflect nearby field sizes and other such features.
- Across the upland adopt smooth simple felling and restocking shapes that flow with the underlying smooth simplicity of the hillsides (avoid blocky and right-angled shapes where possible).
- Avoid complex shapes or small retentions on upland slopes
- To avoid visual fragmentation of the hillside locate dead wood reserves where they connect with other woodland features rather than isolated on visible slopes
- Be aware of foreshortening and its effect on retained areas – it could create long dark narrow bands across the hillside when seen from below.
- Ensure planting around wayleave and riparian zones integrates with the surrounding forest. Vary width of planting so it ties in with surrounding topographic features.
- Design breaks in crop (rides etc) to reflect the simple round shapes of the hillsides. Plan rides and species boundaries to respond to the hillsides, avoiding lines that are perpendicular to the contours
- Summits and hill tops should be kept well clear of planting with upper margins shaped to balance the landform. Alignments should be designed to work with anticipated tree heights when crop is mature. Avoid simply replanting to former upper margins. Consult landscape architect where particularly visible.

Visibility

Meall Mor forest has a significant presence in local views. It is seen as an extensive bank of forest running along the southern slopes of Strath Nairn from Daviot as far as Farr. As mentioned above, it forms the backdrop to the communities – both clustered and dispersed across this part of the Strath. On the doorstep of much of Inverarnie it is very dominant in local views throughout the settlement.

It is a significant land mark feature of the A9 trunk road. Southbound, it is seen as a wide expanse of woodland filling the slopes ahead as the road sweeps south down past Daviot and then climbs up through it. South bound it is seen ahead wrapping around the landmark of Meall Mor, rising up from the side of road and framing its summit. To the west of the road it skirts the A9 alongside the dual carriage way. Recent felling for the planned junction works (part of the A9 dualling project) have had a significant impact on the roadside, opening up views out from the road and onto the wider forest and moor beyond.



Above: Meall Mor summit from A9: planted upper margin below summit will crowd open space around summit as forest grows. Landscape would benefit from a lowering of the upper margin so the resulting scale is commensurate with the landscape.

The ridges in landform both to the south and north of Strath Nairn limit views from further afield though it can be seen on slopes beyond Inverness where it is seen as a dark band around Farr Windfarm.

Moy

Located on the edge and side slopes and of a broad upland strath located towards the northern edge of an extensive range of rolling upland, close to the small settlement of Moy, and around the shores of the small Loch Moy.

Landscape characteristics are dominated largely by topography and the backdrop it provides to the settlement and neighbouring estate house with associated designed landscape.

Key characteristics

- Flat based upland strath with loch surrounded by mostly smooth rounded hills which rise to extensive tracts of open moorland
- Conifer forests limited to the lower edges of uplands and strath sides. The wooded side slopes skirt the upland strath either side of the A9 / railway corridor.
- Open heather moorland of consistent colour and texture accentuating the uniformity above forest areas.
- Largely uninhabited area of hills with small settlement limited to the floor of strath and glens.
- Neighbouring windfarm and A9 trunk road reduces sense of remoteness and scale of hills
- Scale and distance difficult to judge away from built structures.
- Forest forms backdrop to the settlement of Moy, the Moy Hall and its designed grounds and policies, Loch Moy and Lynemore. The wooded side slopes extend from the base of the slope to the edge of the moorland above. In the glen it has the effect creating enclosure around the clustered settlements and public roads.
- Forest is in the process of being restructured. Varied ages and species create complexity on an otherwise simple slope. This fragments the forest stand.
- The geometric shapes of mature larch (including the infamous zig zag), small bitty retentions, regular shaped restock areas and vertical rides combine to create a chaotic melange of woodland blocks which conflict with simple underlying character of the slope.



Above: Prominent zig zag firebreak draws the eye on all routes approaching Moy. Felling of it in a way that works with the underlying topography and hill summit above will make Moy forest more harmonious with the rolling uplands that surround the upland strath.

Forest design guidance for Land Management Plan proposals

- Design coupes to correspond with the summits of hills above Moy forest area. Avoid margins that run perpendicular to the slope or divide a prominent spur.
- Adopt simple felling and restocking shapes which respond to the underlying smooth simplicity of the hillsides (avoid unnecessary complexity in restocking to ease the fragmentation).
- Prioritise removal of mature larch where it forms geometric shapes on the most visible slopes.
- To avoid visual fragmentation of the hillside locate dead wood reserves where they connect with other woodland features rather than isolated on visible slopes
- Ensure planting around wayleaves and riparian zones integrates with the surrounding forest. Vary width of planting so it ties in with other landscape features.
- Reflect the change in scale of coupes, species blocks and other elements so it increases from small to medium with elevation,
- Design breaks in crop (rides etc) to reflect the simple round shapes of the hillsides.
- Align rides and species boundaries to respond to the hillsides, avoiding lines that are perpendicular to the contours



Above: Prominent zig zag firebreak is highly prominent from the A9 southbound carriageway.

Visibility

Moy forest has a substantial presence in views from the A9 trunk road, both north and south bound. Seen front and centre straight ahead as motorists head south exiting the current stretch of dual carriageway Moy forest spreads across the hillside ahead. The eye is drawn in particular to the very prominent zig zag of larch that cuts across the slope.

Northbound the afforested crest of the hill of Beinn na h-Iolaire cuts the skyline. The single white property of Tullochclury below contrasts with the dark forest draws the eye from the road creating the visual gateway to the Moy area.



Above: The house at Tullochclurry is a prominent landscape feature on approach to Moy as it contrasts with the forest backdrop on the smooth hills of this Rolling uplands landscape character type

Moy forest forms the backdrop to the cluster of houses of Moy and Lynemore and Loch Moy- it is seen by residents and visitors at close proximity. It is also viewed from the railway, most notably as a backdrop to the open flat meadows around Moy Hall and its policy woodland.

Farr

Farr forest is located on west facing slopes above main strath and around narrow deeply incised side glen of River Farnack and its tributaries and the Loch Farr reservoir.

The forest's setting is dominated by the area's topographic and historic character. Key points of note are:

- Narrow glen with public road from which forest is highly visible.
- Steep side slopes rising from glen with localised rugged hill tops and tors on edge of extensive rolling hills.
- Loch Farr area is influenced by 19th century estate's design and policy woodland plantings.
- Generally sparse settlement nearby comprising a few isolated houses along public road.
- New infrastructure to support windfarm within forest increases level of development around small single track public road.
- Overhead powerline with steel towers and associated wayleave cuts through forest up glen.

Farr forests form is centered around the narrow glen. Landscape features to note are:

- The skyline of open moorland with rocky outcrops is visible above planted treeline.
- It is currently in transition from one forest rotation to the next, with a diverse age structure created by felled coupes and restocked blocks

- Forest appears fragmented and at odds with the simplicity of the smooth hillsides (especially in autumn and winter).
- Fragmentation of the forest area is compounded by the pylon line and associated wayleave.
- The forest skirts a small unclassified road and a small number of houses.
- Scattered natural regeneration of conifers is occurring above planted treeline where soils allow
- The forest road with significant batters, runs parallel with contours creating an unnatural horizontal line through forest which draws the eye away from the organic shapes of the hillside.



Above: View from unclassified road near LochFarr. Forested hillside dominates views. Straight edges of species block following straight roadlines emphasize the line of the pylon line and are at odds with the rounded slopes, knolls and summits. Future restocking needs to have more organic shapes to mitigate this.

Recommend Land Management Plan proposals

- Aim to retain open space on hill tops and reduce height of planting in some locations to provide sufficient space around summits to remain easily visible even when trees are mature.
- Adopt simple felling and restocking shapes which respond to the underlying smooth simplicity of the hillsides (avoid unnecessary complexity in restocking to ease the fragmentation).
- Prioritise removal of mature larch where it forms geometric shapes on the most visible slopes and summits.
- Realign forest margins around hilltops and moorland edges where they are discordant with the landform so future forest margins follow landscape design principles.

- Avoid further visual fragmentation of the landscape by locating dead wood reserves only where they connect with other woodland features rather than in isolated locations on visible slopes
- Ensure planting around wayleave and riparian zones integrates with the surrounding forest. Vary width of planting so it ties in with surrounding topographic features.
- Reflect the change in scale which increases from small to medium with elevation, (in the size of coupes and restocking shapes etc).
- Design breaks in crop (rides etc) to reflect the simple round shapes of the hillsides. Plan rides and species boundaries to respond to the hillsides, avoiding lines that are perpendicular to the contours

Visibility

Farr is viewed as an extension of Meall Mor forest in views from within and across Strath Nairn. It forms the backdrop to Loch Farr, Farr House and grounds and surrounding fields. It is viewed by visitors to the loch and surrounding scattered houses.

Positioned either side of the narrow unclassified road from Farr to Strathdearn it is seen by road users.