

Long Term Forest Plan

Aigas Community Forest

Scoping Report

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Aigas Community Forest
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Appendix 1

Aigas Community Forest Long Term Forest Plan – Scoping Document

Appendix 2

Email responses during Scoping Process

1. Introduction

Name of Property	Aigas Forest
Application reference number	15FGS01473
Grid reference of main forest entrance	NH 464 419
Business Reference Number	183052
Main Location Code	79/434/0181
Forest Plan Area	254.89 ha

Scoping was held by correspondence, with each consultee being sent either a printed, dvd or electronic copy of the Scoping Document (Appendix 1). Four public copies of the Scoping Document were put to the Aigas Field Centre, Aigas Golf Course, Kilmorack Hall and the Beaully Library. An electronic copy of the Scoping Document was also put on the Aigas Community Forest website. Residents in the local community were notified by flier in the post. A message was posted on the ACF facebook page and an email was sent to all company members. A consultation walk was also scheduled for the 30th January, as a chance for consultees to come and ask questions before sending in their responses. This walk was postponed due to bad weather till the following Saturday, 6th February.

2. Participants

Organisation	Name	Address	Telephone	Email
Neighbour	Andrew Leaver & Amanda Bryan	Northview, Crask of Aigas	01463 782 597	andrewleaver@aol.com
Neighbour	Catherine Guthrey (owner of Moalnaceap)	41 Barrowpoint Avenue, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5 3HD		
Neighbour	Sheana Clark (Owner of Taigh and Laggan)	38A Dancer Road, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4LA	01463 782 483, 02088 789 970, 07740868823	
Neighbour	Ross ?			
Neighbour	Barbara ?	Southview, Crask of Aigas		
Neighbour	Graeme Scott	Smithy Cottage, Crask of Aigas	01463 783 390	g.scott35@btconnect.com
Neighbour	Russell Ross		01463 782 419	
Neighbour	Carol Masheter			carolmasheter@soirbheas.org
Neighbour	Phil Masheter			phil.masheter@gmail.com
Neighbour	Peter Smith		07858491637	psmith862@gmail.com
Neighbour	?			
Neighbour	?			
Neighbour	?			
Aigas Field	Warwick Lister-	Aigas Field	01463 782	Warwick@aigas.co.uk

Centre	Kaye	Centre, Beaulieu, IV4 7AD	443	
Aigas Mains	Peter Masheter	Aigas Mains, Aigas, Beaulieu, IV4 7AD	01463 782 423	peter@aigas-holidays.co.uk
Beaulieu Angling Club	Paul Pacey	Airdliosta, Drumchardine, IV4 7BE	01463 831 258	
BTO	Hugh Insley		01463 230 652	Hugh.insley@btinternet.com
Grilldove Ltd & Erchless Estate	Tom Luthman	Spey House, Dochfour Business Centre, Inverness, IV3 8GY	01463 223 888	tl@johnclegg.co.uk
Highland Council	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grant Stuart 2. Archaeology Unit 3. Stewart Eastaugh 4. Alistair MacLeod 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forestry Team, Glenurquhart road, Inverness IV3 5NX 2. Highland Council Archaeology Unit, Planning and Development Service, Glenurquhart road, Inverness, IV3 5NX 3. Access Officer, Highland Council, Round Tower, Inverness Castle, Inverness IV2 3EG 4. Community services, Glenurquhart road, Inverness, IV3 5NX 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 01463 702 250 3. 01463 255 287 4. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. grant.stuart@highland.gov.uk 2. her@highland.gov.uk 3. stewart.eastaugh@highland.gov.uk 4. alistair.macleod5@highland.gov.uk
Cluanie Farm	John Graham	Cluanie Farm, Breakachie, Beaulieu, IV4 7AE	01463 782 534	johngraham@joncol.co.uk
Kilmorack Community Council	Steve Byford	2 Broallan, Beaulieu, IV4 7AH	01463 783 864	Steve.byford@ffordes.com

Lovat Estates		High Street, Beauly, IV4 7DA	01463 782 205	info@lovat-estates.co.uk
Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust		Corff House, Beauly, Inverness, IV4 7BE	01463 783 505	info@nbft.co.uk
North of Scotland Archaeological Society	Roland Spencer-Jones	8 Ruisaurie, Beauly, IV4 7AJ	01463 782 636	Roland.spencerjones@gmail.com
RSPB	Darrel Stevens	North Scotland Regional Office, Etive House, Beechwood Park, Inverness, IV2 3BW	01463 715 000	Darrel.Stevens@rspb.org.uk
SEPA	Aden McCorkell	Graesser House Fodderty Way, Dingwall Business Park, Dingwall, IV15 9XB	01349 862 021	Planning.dingwall@sepa.org.uk
SNH	Nathan McLaughlan	South Highland Office Dingwall, Fodderty Way, Dingwall Business Park, Dingwall, IV15 9XB	01349 865 333	Nathan.Mclaughlan@snh.gov.uk
SSE	Ninian Clark	Harvesting Manager, Programmes Group North, SSEPD, Henderson Road, Longman Industrial Estate, Inverness, IV1 1SN	01463 728 309	Ninian.clark@sse.com

3. Identifying the key issues

3.1. General

Aigas forest is situated on the A831 south of Beauly, in Strathglass. From a landscape point of view the steep slopes in the forest to the NW of the road form a backdrop as vehicles pass along the road; this is also true of the views from the Aigas Golf Course and Aigas Field Centre. Residence on the other side of Strathglass, across the river, as well as those further North East in Strathglass also look onto the forest making it quite significant in the local landscape. A landscape analysis will be carried out on the forest.

Aigas Community Forest bought the ~260ha forest in March 2015 with the view to produce a range of benefits to the area. The planned benefits incorporate the 5 E's of Environment, Economy, Enjoyment, Energy and Education. In general Aigas Community Forest are looking to strike a balance between Conservation and Commerce that will allow us to improve the biodiversity of the forest, produce timber, support local jobs, provide recreation and volunteering opportunities, and build links with the local school. In order to achieve this ACF see a conversion to Continuous Cover Forestry as key; to this end ACF main to convert as much of the forest as possible to CCF in this rotation. Where this is not possible we aim to clearfell and restock in a sympathetic manner, with eth next rotation either being managed under continuous cover or as long term retention. In this way ACF aims to even out future cashflow making the regular employment of local people in the forest possible.

A number of protected species, including several schedule 1 species, are either resident or use the forest. ACF aims to restore and improve habitat for these species. The Beaully river runs adjacent to part of the forest with several small burns running through the forest as into it, with planting being very close to these burns. There are areas of PAWS and LEPO throughout the forest, as well as some areas of deep peat that were planted. Restoration of these Ancient woodlands, peatlands, wetlands and riparian woodlands are also key aims.

At present there is a network of trails running through the forest consisting of old estate tracks, the forest road, informal walking trails and Mountain bike trails. The aim is to maintain these trails where appropriate at present and to provide car parking facilities in the forest. A separate access plan will be developed in the coming year to assess to present trail network, look at the feasibility of extensions, plan and budget any operations required, and identify funding needs.

3.2. Key Issues

The key issues highlighted during scoping were

- Disturbance to wildlife and protected species and the need for monitoring and habitat enhancement
- Disturbance to local residents and local businesses
- Access to the forest
- Diffuse pollution
- Habitat restoration - peatland, wetland, wet woodland and Ancient Woodland
- Collaboration with neighbours and community involvement
- Education

A list of all the issues that were identified in the scoping responses are presented in table 4 with the measures that will be taken to address them. These responses are also shown in Appendix 2.

3.3. Surveys Requested

- 1 Peat Depth Survey – Although not specifically requested the response by SEPA strongly suggested that ACF carry out a peat depth survey. ACF already intended to do this.
- 2 Monitoring of protected species – the Aigas Field Centre and RSPB.

4. Addressing the key issues

4.1. Aigas Field Centre

Issue Raised	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be taken	Notes
<p><u>AFC Views</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFC currently uses forest for its business • Opportunity for better management taking account of community interests & education opportunities • Harvesting decisions impacting on neighbouring businesses • Conflicts between nature conservation and Commercial forestry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on phasing of some operations • Impact on harvesting operations • Impact on both conservation and commerce aims for ACF • Impact on planning of operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with AFC • Maintain and enhance consultation with community and community involvement • Careful planning of harvesting operations • Design to consider Forestry Practice Guide “Forest Design Planning” • Follow forest and Water Guidelines during harvesting and restocking operations • Aim to balance Conservation with Commerce 	<p>As part of a grant agreement with The Aigas Trust we have already agreed to the main body of these issues</p>
<p><u>Conservation with Commerce</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict with conservation and commerce making financial stability and creation of jobs difficult to achieve • Definition of CCF to be adopted • Higher Broadleaved percentage required in restocking plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on social, economic and ecological aims of ACF • No impact – CCF definitions vary as much as the management systems under them. They all follow the same principles though • Impact on future revenues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strive to be a model of creative community management • Aim to balance Conservation with Commerce • Select a suitable system for conversion and subsequent management • Select species suitable to site • Explore timber production from native broadleaved species 	
<p><u>Community</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request a broader description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of the term 	<p>Silviculture is the management of a stand of trees, including the</p>

<p>on how silviculture can actually deliver community benefits</p>		<p>silviculture needed</p>	<p>surrounding environment, to give the greatest outcome for your given objectives. Taken as this to say 'use silviculture to provide community benefit' or 'to create a forest that people actually want to be in' these statements become self-explanatory.</p>
<p><u>Ancient Woodland Restoration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for identification of potential extensions to restoration areas on appropriate soil profiles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline application of Ancient Woodland restoration principles in plan 	<p>ACF has already made a commitment to restore Ancient woodlands, however this is planned to be carried out in a way that fits with the rest of the forest management at Aigas Forest. ACF therefore aims to provide potential for ancient woodland habitat to expand over all relevant sites in Aigas Forest whilst production of crops continues.</p>
<p><u>Deer</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disagreement over porosity of fence on neighbours ground Present estimated to be low, deer numbers fluctuating Conflict with AFC's business in rut 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on success of restocking and regeneration Impact on neighbours tourist business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with neighbours over fence repairs, deer control and monitoring Control and monitor deer in line with Best Practise Guidance Develop a Deer Management Plan Set buffer zone near AFC land for start of season till November 	<p>I think there may be some confusion as to which fence the scoping document refers to.</p> <p>Majority of the fence has now been made deer proof. Neighbour on other side of porous section also agrees with aim to lower deer numbers.</p> <p>Also working with AFC and Aigas Mains to select a deer controller that all are happy with</p>
<p><u>Zone 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present crop on deep peat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on restocking design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow FC Practice Guide – 	<p>Already considered a main aim for the plan</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black grouse present on adjacent hill 		<p>Deciding future management options for afforested deep peat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow guidance note LUPS-GU27 – Use of trees Cleared to Facilitate Development on Afforested Land 	
<p><u>Zone 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate action required for loch restoration • Need for open space in this zone • Resident population of breeding Crested Tit (schedule 1 species) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on phasing of operations and silvicultural systems used • Impact on Harvesting operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with AFC on restoration and to SEPA “Pond, Pool and Lochans” guidance • Set up monitoring programme for schedule 1 species and loch • Manage deadwood 	
<p><u>Zone 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Squirrels (LBAP species) present and breeding • Scottish Corsbill (Schedule 1 species) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on harvesting operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow FC Practice Note “Red Squirrel Conservation” • Set up monitoring programme for LBAP and schedule 1 species • Plan future operations to avoid important times of year for these species – nesting period, etc. 	
<p><u>Zone 4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping along bottom edge by golf course and Field Centre • Crested Tit (Schedule 1 Species) Present and breeding • Zone important to Red Squirrel (LABP species) and Scottish Crossbill (Schedule 1 species) • Part of Zone 4 is in catchment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on harvesting operations • Impact on phasing, timing and extent of operations • Impact on neighbours business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with neighbours to minimise impact on neighbours business and to provide continuity of habitat over ownership boundary • Design to consider Forestry Practice Guide “Forest Design Planning” 	

<p>for Aigas loch with soil stability an issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFC use directly adjacent ground for much of the year 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow forest and Water Guidelines during harvesting and restocking operations • Set up monitoring programme for protected species 	
<p><u>Zone 5</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase to Broadleaved component • Important corridor for Red Squirrels (LBAP species) • Badger setts not actually in Zone 5 but on adjacent ground. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on harvesting operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow FC Practice Note “Red Squirrel Conservation” • Set up monitoring Programme for protected species 	
<p><u>Zone 6</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unstable soils likely to lead to erosion and diffuse pollution • Red Squirrel (LBAP species) dependant on zone • Peregrine falcon (Schedule 1 species) roost site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on silvicultural system used • Impact on harvesting operations • Impact on timing and phasing of operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carefully consider type and size of silvicultural systems employed, as well as restock • Follow forest and Water Guidelines during harvesting and restocking operations • Follow FC Practice Note “Red Squirrel Conservation” • Follow guidance on Peregrine & consult AFC • Set up monitoring programme for protected species 	
<p><u>Zone 7</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used by Badgers – invertebrate rich soils • Unstable soils likely to lead to erosion and diffuse pollution • If path network developed signage would be needed to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on silvicultural system used • Impact on harvesting operations – timing, site management • Impact on access provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carefully consider type and size of silvicultural systems employed, as well as restock • Follow forest and Water Guidelines during harvesting and restocking operations 	

prevent disturbance to Schedule 1 raptors nesting near by		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow guidance on Badgers & set up monitoring programme for protected species 	
<u>Broadleaved Native Woodland</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific commitment to broadleaved woodland or native woodland by natural regeneration in scoping document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on future restocking design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACF does intend to use natural regeneration where possible ACF also intends to increase the native broadleaved component of the forest 	
<u>Deadwood</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only passing reference to deadwood in scoping document. AFC holds that deadwood should be a stated aim at the IUCN recommended level of up to 500m³/ha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on viability of ACF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to deadwood creation but at a lower, sustainable and achievable level with a view to increasing this where possible in the future 	Most stands at Aigas Forest are currently below 300m ³ /ha making 500m ³ /ha impossible. Even as an aspirational aim ACF feels that this would have too serious an impact on the productivity of the forest thus jeopardising the whole project.
<u>Wetlands</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More potential for opening up wetlands AFC would like to see wetland areas identified on a map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on forest planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify wetland through survey Plan to open wetlands – to be shown in plan 	This is something that ACF are keen to do. However ACF felt that identifying specific wetlands that are to be opened, some of which could be unmappable inside restocks, would not be appropriate for a scoping document
<u>Woodland Clearing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No clear reference to woodland clearings in scoping document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow UKWAS 	ACF has stated that they would follow the UKWAS in order to becoming certified. Designed open space is a requirement of UKWAS
<u>Felling Coupes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFC would like to see a clearly stated undertaking to keep felling coupes as small as possible, to maintain habitat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow UKWAS Specifically state in the plan 	Has been stated many times verbally during various community consultation events

connectivity and to monitor potential disturbance to and destruction of established wildlife communities and protected species			
<u>Bio-security</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFC believes Pine Tree Lappet Moth to be naturally occurring and native to highlands Ash present in Zones 6 & 7, likely to be fatally infected In AFC's opinion Ash and Elm should continue to be planted to help build resistance to disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue co-operate with PTLM studies and work within restrictions Continue to manage Ash present in hope that they aren't fatally infected 	Currently a Plant Health Order prohibits all imports of ash seeds, plants and trees, and all internal movement of ash seeds, plants and trees

4.2. RSPB

Issue Raised	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be taken	Notes
Would welcome a robust monitoring process in the plan designed to safeguard protection of nesting sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on management planning and future operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up monitoring programme 	A monitoring programme run by AFC staff has already started and will continue. BTO and RSPB also monitor in the area
Operations should avoid nesting seasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on timing of operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid harvesting in nesting season Consult AFC staff on timing for species present 	
Grouse marking of any deer fencing used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact – ACF aims to manage the forest without deer fencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control deer by other means, mark fences in the event of having to use deer fencing 	
Rabbit netting is known to be a barrier to brood movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact to forest management, very few rabbits in area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow FC Technical Note 19 – Fence Marking to Reduce Grose collision 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on existing fencing – some has rabbit netting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove old fencing where it is identified as being a problem 	
Provision of feeding and breeding habitat for Black Grouse – glades with natural regen & blocking associated drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on restructuring design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow UKWAS requirement for designed open space Restore peatland 	
Afforested deep peat – restoration of areas of deep peat. Potential for lower density planting of native species & furrow and drain blocking whilst retaining Scots pine standards?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on restructuring design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow FC Practice Guide – Deciding future management options for afforested deep peat 	RSPB - 'Given the very high public profile of this forest it could be a great opportunity to showcase examples of peat restoration management'

4.3. SEPA

Issue Raised	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be taken	Notes
<u>General Issues</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans should include analysis of environmental risk of proposals Advice on SEPA website should be referred to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive impact on planning – will help to make a better plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include analysis in plan Read advice on website 	
<u>Flood Risk</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small areas of zone 7 identified as being at risk of surface water flooding Several small water courses that drain areas under consideration that have not been modelled so may be at medium or high risk of flooding The plan should consider impact of operations on downstream receptors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on restructuring design, as well as harvesting and restocking operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider flood risk on watercourse present Follow Forest and Water guidance Implement monitoring process 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring before, during and after operations may need to be implemented in this catchment 			
<p><u>River Basin Management Planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEPA would welcome specific reference to UKFS Forest and Soils No water bodies within or adjacent to the plan area that are currently less than good ecological potential -emphasize and maintain this water quality Identification of any inappropriately designed or redundant structures for removal/improvement Morphological and ecological improvements should also be considered Control of invasives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on management planning Impact on harvesting and restocking operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow UKFS Forest and Soils section in particular Monitoring before during and after any harvesting and restocking operations Survey water courses in forest for potential improvement Control invasive species 	
<p><u>Felling and Planting Proposals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan should give clear information on environmental protection considerations Diffuse pollution – compliance with UKFS and Water Environment Regulations Harvesting operations on steep slopes – diffuse pollution, soil erosion and impacts on downstream receptors Plan should provide information on minimum buffer zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on management planning and restocking design Impact on harvesting and restocking operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhere to UK Forest Standard Adhere to UKWAS Comply with Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations (CAR) Follow Forest and Water Guidelines 	

<p>between forest edge and water bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of wetland features in restocking proposals and wet woodland restoration 			
<p><u>New supporting Infrastructure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan should include information on any access provisions needed to deliver the proposals in the forest plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on management planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include relevant Access provisions 	
<p><u>Carbon balance and impacts on peat</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals in the plan should comply with guidance • Areas with peat depth >45cm should not be planted • Plan should demonstrate that all areas of new planting avoid areas of deep peat, with proposals not affecting hydrology of adjacent bog habitats • Recommendation of the development of a peatland restoration plan for zones 1 & 2 • Peatland restoration operations should ensure that as much woody material is removed for site as possible • Refer to guidance note LUPS-GU27 – Use of trees Cleared to Facilitate Development on Afforested Land – application of mulch may be appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on management planning • Impact on harvesting operations • Impact on restocking design • Impact on future roading design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out peat depth survey • Develop a peatland restoration plan • Follow Guidance note LUPS-GU27 – Use of trees cleared to facilitate development on afforested land 	<p>An aspirational access road connected zone 6 with the main body of the forest was included in the scoping document</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access roads – not mentioned if any are planned for access to Zones 6 & 7. SEPA can provide advice on any new tracks proposed in plan >4km 			
<p><u>Use of waste on site</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals to make use of any waste wood on site should be outlined in plan • Plan should justify felling to waste proposal in Zone 7 and outline how this will be carried out and to what extent • Proposals should comply with SEPA guidance – Management of Forestry Waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on Management planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow SEPA Guidance – Management of forestry Waste 	
<p><u>Pollution prevention and environmental management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to pollution prevention guidelines. • Engineering works in or adjacent to water environment likely to need authorisation • Ditches connected to water courses should be addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on Management planning • Impact on roading design and maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with Water Environment (Controller Activities) (Scotland) Regulations (CAR) • Follow Forest and Water UK Forestry Standard Guidelines 	
<p><u>Regulation requirements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of regulatory requirements to be found on SEPA website – regulations section. Advice can also be sought from Dingwall office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact on management planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow guidance and seek advice where necessary 	

4.4. Phil Masheter

Issue Raised	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be taken	Notes
Trees blowing across fence lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on phasing of operations Impact on restructuring design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Aigas mains over windblown trees at present Redesign forest edges to prevent windblow damage to fences in future 	

4.5. Karen Botten

Issue Raised	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be taken	Notes
Disturbance by increased access past their house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on access provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider in separate access plan to be developed 	The house in question is not on the road running through the Crask of Aigas which ACF has already said they would not increase access on. This request is in line with those of the rest of the Crask residents
Concern over noise levels from glamping site and outdoor classroom, depending on extent and location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on future plans for outdoor classroom and holiday accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider in separate access and business plans to be developed 	Related to the previous note
Concern over operational usage over old road and that it be blocked again after operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on harvesting operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure that the old road is blocked to vehicular access after operations to prevent unsociable usage 	

4.6. Russell Ross

Issue Raised	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be taken	Notes
Disturbance to wildlife in zones 5, 6 & 7 due to increased public access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on extent of access provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider in separate access plan to be developed 	

Security of rock netting along roadside in zone 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on road users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check liabilities and highlight with relevant organisation 	
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4.7. Steve North

Issue Raised	Impact on Planning/Management	Measures to be taken	Notes
Deadwood – not all windblow should be taken out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on Harvesting operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate leave windblow in place to help increase overall deadwood volumes 	
Viewpoints – could be clearer aims/objectives for opening up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on restructuring design • Positive impact on public access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider opening key viewpoints during designing restructuring 	

5. Surveys

5.2. Ecological surveys

Aigas Field Centre staff are currently surveying the red Squirrel, Crested Tit, Dragonflies and Damselflies over the whole of Aigas forest. Moth surveys are also planned by AFC staff.

Aigas Community Forest has also had an Ancient Woodland Survey carried out by the Ancient Woodland Restoration Project – Great Glen and Three Firths; a joint project between Woodland Trust, RDI Associates and the Heritage Lottery Fund. This survey was completed in 2015

These surveys will be used to inform future monitoring and management planning.

5.3. Archaeological Survey

An Archaeological walk over survey is currently being carried out by the North of Scotland Archaeological Society

Appendix 1 – Aigas Community Forest Long Term Forest Plan – Scoping Document

Aigas Community Forest Long Term Forest Plan – Scoping

Background

Aigas Community Forest secured the ~700 acre Aigas Forest in March 2015; six years after the community first agreed to seek to buy the forest to deliver a wide range of benefits for the area. During this time there have been a number of community consultations and a Business Plan and other documents have been developed which set out the objectives of the organisation and our intentions for the forest. It is on the basis of these plans that we were able to demonstrate our ability to deliver wider public benefits and so secure financial support to purchase the forest from the Scottish Land Fund and others. Our overall objectives are summarised as the 5 E's:

Environment: Woodland management which will combine a mixture of replacement conifers, appropriate broadleaves to enhance biodiversity and improve amenity and small areas of open space for biodiversity enhancement.

Economy: Use of the forest's resources to create or support local businesses and jobs and to produce a sustainable income source for the effective management of the Forest over the long term.

Enjoyment: Development of a path network, wildlife viewing opportunities and associated visitor infrastructure taking advantage of existing key viewpoints. This is to include all abilities access and will build on existing roadside/ River Beauly access. Based on this we will build a range of cultural and heritage events and activities based around the community's close connection to the land.

Energy: To exploit existing renewable energy opportunities through the production of fire wood and to explore the viability of other renewable energy technologies in keeping with our community ethos.

Education: To participate in the Forest Education Initiative and provide a resource for local primary schools, Aigas Field Centre, who run an extensive education programme for all ages, and others including Highland Council Rangers. Also to build skills within the community through a volunteering programme.

Access to all of Aigas Community Forest's plans and documents can be found on our website: www.aigasforest.org.uk

Introduction

In order to deliver our objectives we need to have in place a Long Term Forest Plan (LTFP) approved by Forestry Commission Scotland. The previous Forest Enterprise LTFP for the forest, based on clear-felling and restocking large blocks, would not meet the community's needs if implemented. We are therefore undertaking a complete revision.

As part of this process we are required to undertake a 'Scoping Exercise' which involves consulting with both statutory stakeholders (e.g. Scottish Natural Heritage, the Highland Council and SEPA) and non-statutory stakeholders including neighbours, the wider community and other interested parties. This document forms part of that consultation.

The following document outlines the concept for the new Long Term Forest Plan for Aigas Community Forest. This document aims to inform the reader of the issues that have already been

highlighted, and how the plan will deal with these issues. It is designed to create discussion on the concept and these issues in principle and the final detailed plan will reflect this feedback. It must be noted that while every effort will be made to take on board what we hear, the final plan must deliver two things: Firstly, we have to ensure we meet the requirements of the funders who provided the money to purchase the forest for the community, this includes delivering a wide range of public benefits, and secondly, we must deliver good forest management which should be both technically and financially viable.

It should also be noted that over the last 12 months we have already been talking to a lot of people about how to implement our plans and any issues they might have. To date we have:

- Spoken to neighbours and Scottish Natural Heritage about deer management
- Had a number of community walks to consider recreation and access provision and taken advice from Highland Council access staff on this matter
- Spoken to staff at Teanassie Primary School about their requirements
- Taken advice from the Woodland Trust about management of Ancient Woodland areas within the site
- Taken advice from Aigas Field Centre about biodiversity and sensitive species on the site
- Undertaken technical surveys of the forest looking at the soils and current state of the tree crops to inform future plans

This work has helped inform the proposals we have set out in this document.

Your Views

We would appreciate your views on:

- What you currently use Aigas Forest for
- What you like about the forest and what you don't like
- What issues or concerns you have
- What opportunities do you think there are
- What you think of our proposals

We would also welcome comment on other issues that may not have been highlighted. Responses should be sent either by post to Andrew Leaver, ACF Secretary, Northview, Crask of Aigas, Beauly, IV4 7AD, or by email to donnied@aigasforest.org.uk

We will respond within the scoping period, correspondence will then be included in the final scoping report that will be produced before the development of the Long Term Forest Plan begins.

Our Plans

In terms of forest management we would like to convert Aigas Forest to a more diverse woodland incorporating public access, while still generating local jobs and income for management. The forest at present is very evenly aged having largely been planted in the 1960's. Traditional commercial management would see this clear felled in large blocks and restocked with predominantly conifer species. Our aim is to move, where possible, to continuous cover forestry (CCF), retaining permanent tree cover but producing timber from thinning and selective felling. This will however take some time to achieve. We will be able to start converting most areas of Scots pine within the woodland to CCF immediately as the trees are slow growing, and/or have been thinned in the past, and will respond to further thinning. However some other areas will require clear felling and restocking

before CCF can be delivered as the trees are too large and will be susceptible to windblow. We will also remove trees from areas of deep peat and diversify tree cover to include mixed broadleaves particularly in riparian zones (along watercourses), on steep ground (to help slope stability) or to assist landscaping.

Aigas Forest is an extensive area and while we will follow a number of broad principles set out below in managing the whole forest we have zoned the forest to help describe management priorities and activities in different sections as the nature of the land, the current tree cover and the issues are different in each zone. The zones are shown in the LTFP Scoping Zones map and each is described in turn. The overarching principles that apply to the whole forest are:

- We will follow the requirements of the UK Forest Standard (UKFS) which deliver sustainable forest management and which would enable us to be accredited under the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS). (Information on the UKFS can be found at www.forestry.gov.uk/ukfs)
- We will work with neighbours and local businesses to ensure that wherever possible our activities are complementary to their needs.
- We will deliver our responsibilities as a landowner under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and in addition deliver facilities for access that facilitate good forest management.

The following activities have been identified as applying across the whole forest and as such they have been described below rather than in each zone and only referred to in the 'zoned' text.

The LTFP Scoping Zones map shows how the forest has been zoned; each zone is then discussed in more detail.

Conservation with Commerce

The overriding theme in this concept is to create a forest that provides in terms of both conservation and commercially. Looking after the ecology of the forest will take equal footing with commercial production. This should allow ACF to produce a forest that is healthy, attractive, is financially sustainable and provides jobs in the local community. This is in keeping with the ACF vision:

“A productive working forest providing measurable social, economic and environmental benefits for local residents and visitors alike.”

ACF feels that Continuous Cover Forestry is the best way to achieve this. Where possible a conversion to CCF will be carried out; where a conversion is not possible CCF management will be the aim after restocking. The aim through all future management will also be to diversify the age and species structure of the forest.

Community

Providing for the local community is an overarching priority. The aim of ACF as an organisation is not only to provide facilities for the local community as it is today, but also to create a sustainable and highly productive forest for the future. A forest that will provide local employment, and also, through links with local schools, organised events, recreation and other engagement opportunities will help to build a greater 'forest sense' in future generations. Although some of this will be delivered through the provision of the facilities mentioned above a greater part will be delivered through silviculture, purely by creating a forest that people want to be in. Therefore community benefit will be at the heart of any decision making, and will always be considered during any operations carried out in the forest.

Archaeology

The North of Scotland Archaeological Society is in the process of surveying the forest. This survey should be completed by spring 2016. Moving forward ACF will be working with NOSAS to protect any important archaeological features identified and then to develop recreation opportunities around these sites.

Ancient Woodland Restoration

During the first half on 2015 the Ancient Woodland sites at Aigas Forest were surveyed and a report produced as part of the Ancient Woodland Restoration Project – Great Glen and Three Firths. This is a joint project between the Woodland Trust and RDI associates and is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. In this report the ancient woodland sites were assessed with recommendations given for future management to maintain and restore these sites. Ancient Woodland restoration will be an overarching aim in the new Long Term Forest Plan. As such Ancient Woodland remnants will always be favoured during silvicultural operations and, for areas that are in a threatened or critical condition, restoration will always be sought.

Deer Control

No deer control has been carried out in Aigas Forest for a number of years; consequently there are at present very high deer numbers in the forest. In most areas even regeneration from the most unpalatable tree species is struggling to establish, showing that if deer numbers were left as they are natural regeneration and restocking of the crop would largely be unsuccessful. The whole of Aigas Forest along with our neighbours (Aigas Field Centre and Aigas Farm) ground has been deer fenced by other landowners, from roadside to roadside. This deer fence is shown in the LTFP Scoping Zones map. The aim for deer management in Aigas Forest would be to work collaboratively with our neighbours inside the fence to reduce the deer numbers, and our neighbours outside the fence to help maintain it. Discussions are currently ongoing about partnership working arrangements to achieve this.

Recreation

Although the provision of recreational facilities such as car parking, paths and mountain bike trails will be touched on in this document where it affects forest management, a detailed access and recreation plan will also be developed to deal with this in more detail.

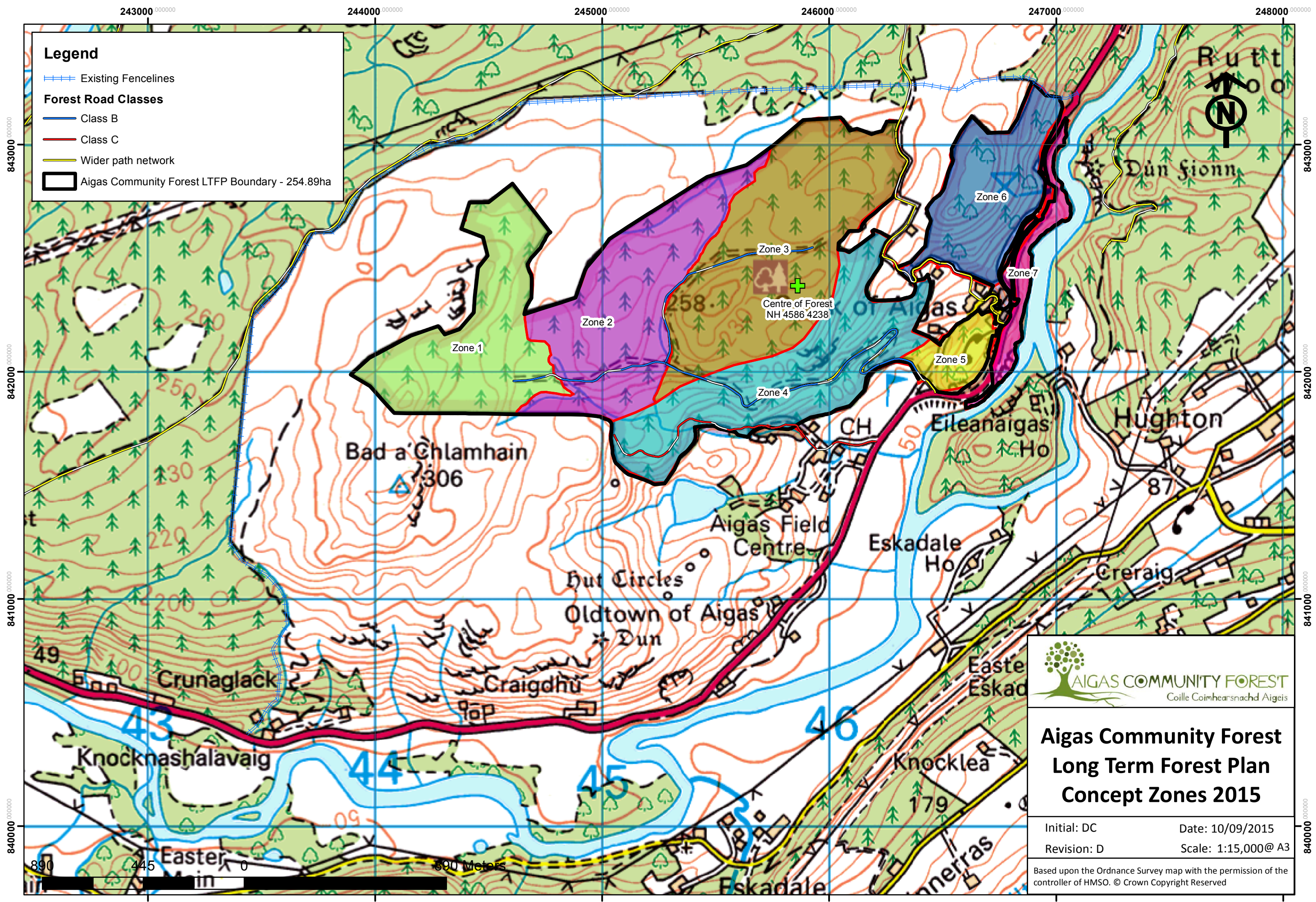
Bio-security

As is mentioned in this scoping document Pine Tree Lappet Moth (PTLM) has been found in Aigas Forest. A number of studies into the population of PTLM are currently using Aigas forest and we intend for this to continue. Due to the forest being in what is currently considered a high risk zone for PTLM the movement of timber off the site is restricted from mid-May to the end of August, with practical bio-security measures being put in place during harvesting operations. As these studies are on-going, no conclusions have yet been reached as to whether or not any treatments are needed or what these treatments may be if they are. However if a treatment is decided upon in the future we could be issued with a plant health notice, forcing us to carry out the treatment. This could significantly affect the plan we are looking to put in place. At this time, although still unclear, it does not look likely that this is going to happen.

Another potential disease threat to the forest is Dothistroma Needle Blight (DNB). While this has not yet been found at Aigas the lack of thinning in some areas of non-native conifers would leave the forest susceptible to this disease. Statutory control measures are not being issued for DNB. It is felt that the problem is too widespread for large-scale felling as a control measure to be practical or

cost-effective. However if DNB is found in the forest future timber yields from the current crop would be affected in these areas. Future management through CCF, with its associated thinning, would largely mitigate against DNB being a long term problem.

Chalara Ash Dieback is also spreading throughout Scotland at present. Chalara is a fungal disease in Ash trees that causes crown dieback and bark lesions. Once the trees are infected it is usually fatal. If this disease does make it to Aigas Forest it is not likely to have a significant impact as there are not many Ash in the forest at present. This could, however, have a significant impact on the choice of species available to restock with in areas with richer soils.



Legend

- +—+ Existing Fencelines
- Forest Road Classes**
- Class B
- Class C
- Wider path network
- Aigas Community Forest LTFP Boundary - 254.89ha

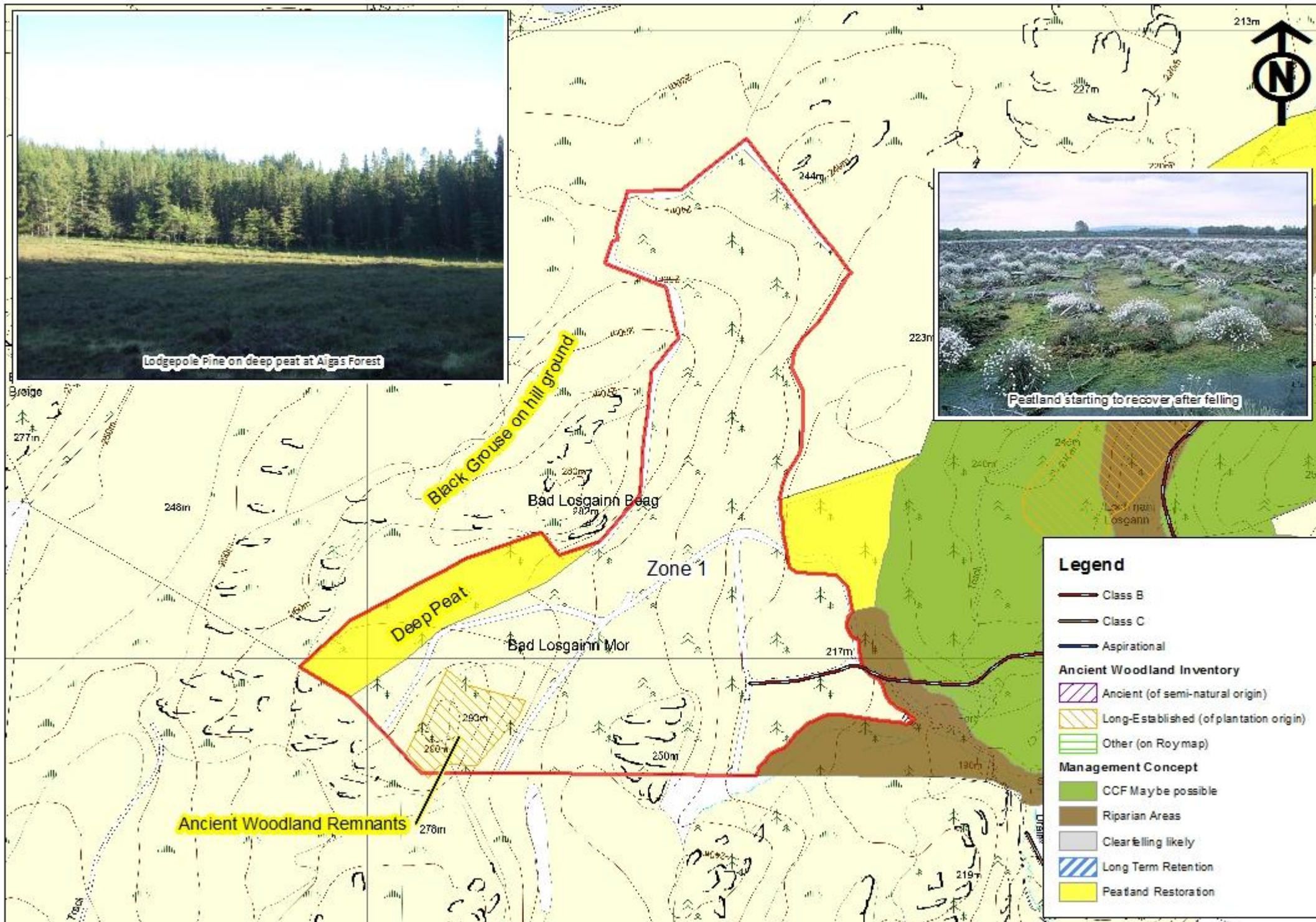


**Aigas Community Forest
Long Term Forest Plan
Concept Zones 2015**

Initial: DC Date: 10/09/2015
 Revision: D Scale: 1:15,000@ A3

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Zone 1 - Bad Losgainn



Priorities

Our priority in this area is to improve biodiversity, removing tree cover from deep peat and to convert to CCF where possible.

- Increasing biodiversity.
- Removal of tree cover from deep peat.
- Firewood production.
- Future conversion to Continuous Cover Forestry in better areas.

Opportunities & Constraints

- Although not of great value in terms of timber this zone would provide a lot in terms of biodiversity.
- Deep peat areas pose problems for harvesting and should not be replanted under current guidance; peatland restoration would be a good option.
- Most exposed to prevailing Westerly winds and provides protection to rest of forest.
- The Scots Pine has been thinned allowing a greater range of management options.
- Black Grouse present on adjacent moorland.

Actions

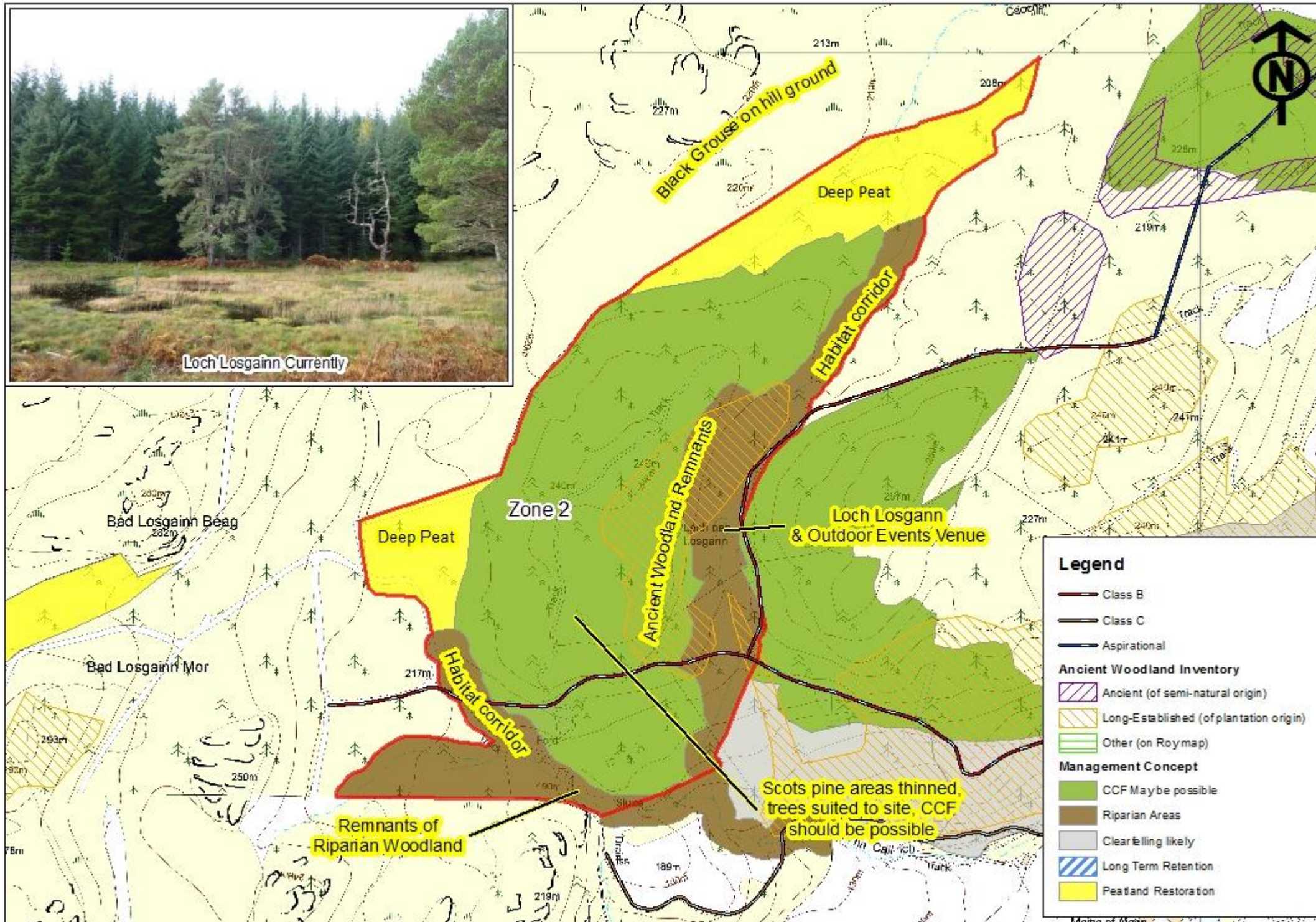
- Peatland restoration (tree removal and drain blocking).
- Thinning of Scots Pine for future conversion.
- Felling Lodgepole Pine and Sitka Spruce, restocking with suitable native species where appropriate.
- Soften edges to favour Black Grouse through scattered planting in restocked areas, or by feathering the existing crop.
- Reduce deer numbers to aid natural regeneration.

Description

Zone 1 is the least accessible area within the forest and lies at the top of the hill abutting areas of open moorland. It is not visible from within Strathglass. The terrain in this zone is quite gently undulating or flat, the flattest areas tending to be deep peat (>45cm deep). This Zone is also on the poorest soils; as a consequence the trees have not grown very fast.

The main tree species present are Scots Pine and Lodgepole Pine on the wetter areas, some of which have started to blow over. There are also a few patches of Sitka Spruce and Japanese Larch around some of the edges.

Zone 2 – Loch nan Losgann



Description

Zone 2 mainly consists of elevated ground towards the back of the site and is not readily viewed from within Strathglass although visible from across the Glen. It consists of free draining soils, with a fringe of wetter areas, ranging from deep peats to water logged soils. The main tree species present are Scots Pine on the elevated ground, again with some Lodgepole Pine on the wetter areas. There are still some remnants of riparian woodland along the watercourses and lochside, as well as some remnants of Ancient woodland. The main forest track extends through much of this area and is well used for recreational purposes.

Priorities

The priority for this area is to retain as much of the Scots Pine as possible converting it to CCF and facilitating public use of the current track while providing other facilities particularly around Loch nan Losgann. There is scope for increasing biodiversity along watercourses and of the loch itself which has been drained and is gradually infilling.

- Increasing biodiversity, ancient woodland and riparian restoration.
- Restoration of loch. Habitat and species surveying to be carried out first. Work to be guided by Aigas Field Centre.
- Recreation provision – paths, events venue by Loch nan Losgann.
- Future conversion to Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) in better areas.
- Timber and firewood production.

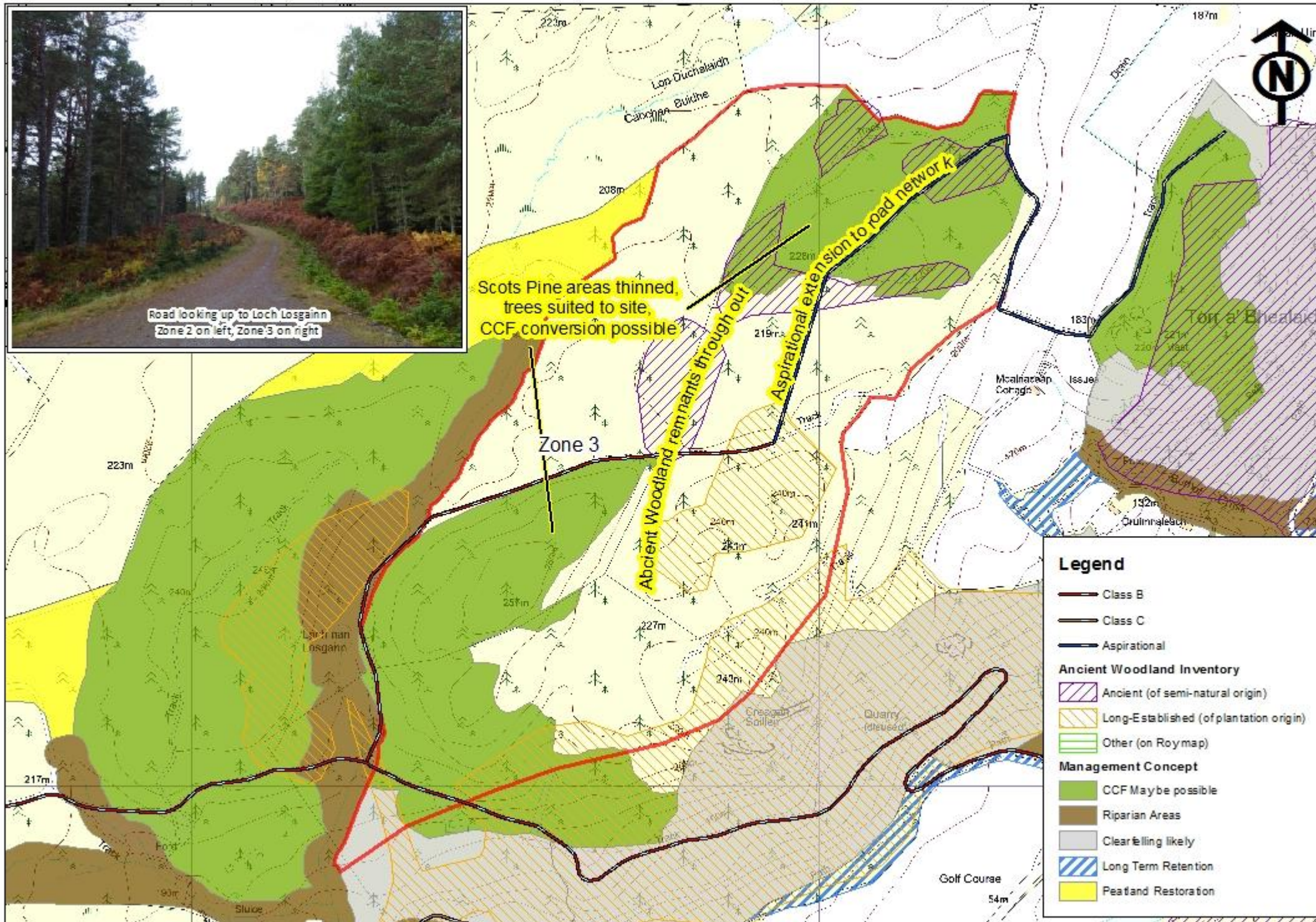
Opportunities & Constraints

- The Scots Pine in this Zone has been thinned; conversion to CCF in this rotation should be possible. Poor provenance is an issue, limiting end use.
- Riparian restoration would create habitat corridors through the forest.
- Existing amphitheatre created by borrow pits, adjacent to loch makes good outdoor venue.
- Peatland restoration would be a good option for deep peat areas.
- Black Grouse present on adjacent moorland.

Actions

- Thinning of Scots Pine for future conversion also to favour ancient woodland remnants.
- Improve provenance of Scots Pine through planting as part of CCF management.
- Peatland and riparian restoration.
- Restoration of loch and surrounding area with creation of an outdoor venue.
- Develop and maintain appropriate access facilities, as identified in access plan.
- Soften edges to favour Black Grouse through scattered planting in restocked areas, or by feathering the existing crop.
- Reduce deer numbers to aid natural regeneration.

Zone 3 – Top of the Hill



Description

Zone 3 lies at the top of the hill face that is visible from Strathglass and Kilmorack. It has two small hills in it with a broad peaty flat between. There is a little steep ground on the edges of the hills. The main tree species are Scots Pine, Lodgepole Pine, Sitka Spruce and Douglas Fir. The Scots Pine has previously been thinned however there are also small areas of windblow appearing. The other tree species have not been subject to thinning and are mature / over mature. There are some remnants of ancient woodland in this zone. This zone is also being used for a number of studies on Pine Tree Lappet Moth. Recreation and access take place in this zone linked to the main forest track and a number of informal paths. It is also used by local mountain bikers. The main forest track currently terminates in this block.

Priorities

The priority for this area is to retain as much of the Scots Pine as possible converting it to CCF and managing informal access. There is scope for increasing biodiversity in line with restoration of ancient woodland and sympathetic management along watercourses. Informal access will be provided for and agreement reached with local mountain bikers over management of their trails.

- Increasing biodiversity, ancient woodland restoration.
- Recreation provision – paths, MTB trails.
- Conversion to Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) in better areas, starting with some of the areas that have already blown.
- Timber and firewood production.
- Continue co-operation with Forest Research PTLM studies.

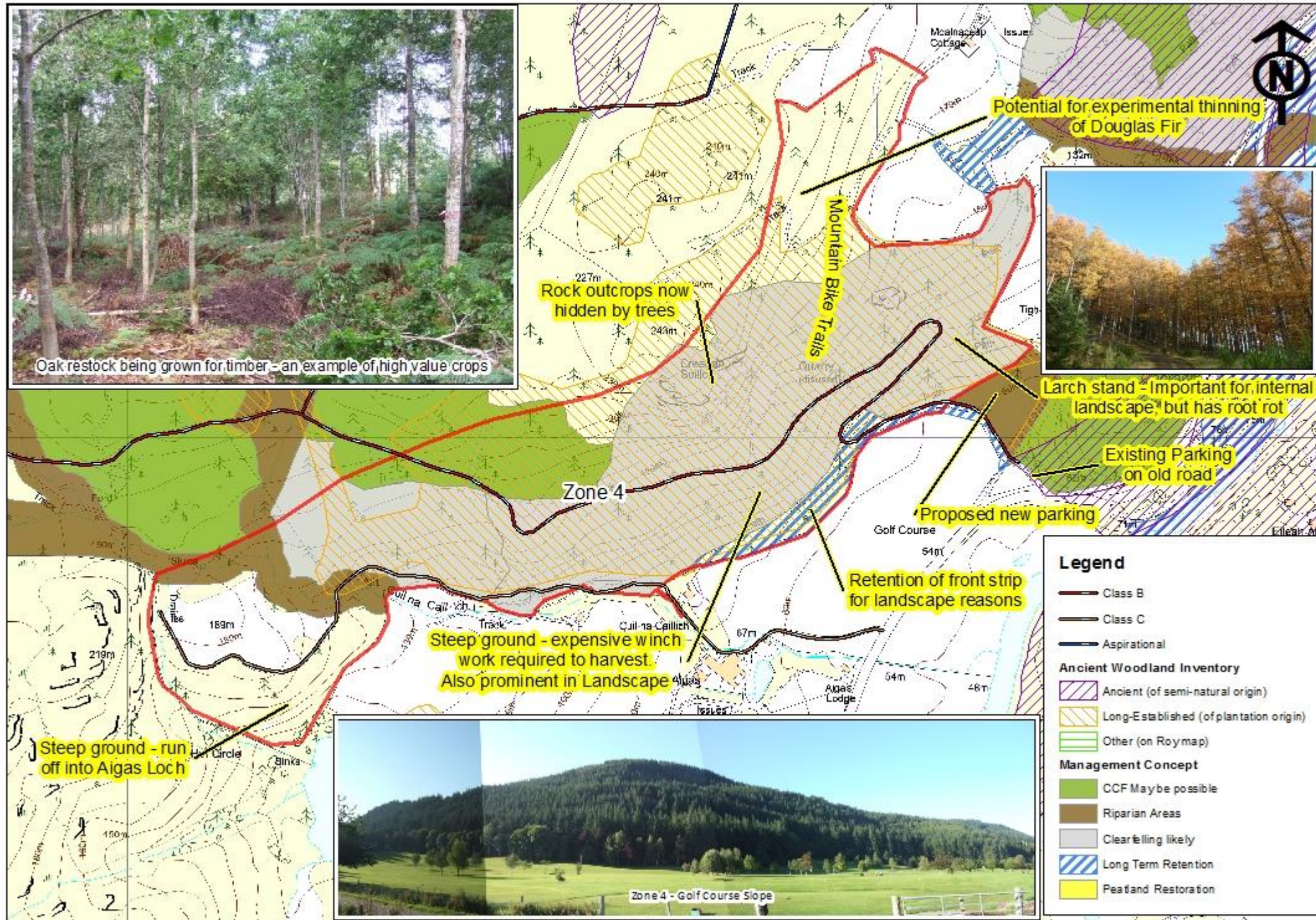
Opportunities & Constraints

- The Scots Pine in this Zone has been thinned; conversion to CCF in this rotation should be possible.
- Windblow appearing which will require management.
- Poor provenance of Scots Pine as well as past thinnings not managing to produce good branching habits have produced poor quality timber in this rotation. Poor provenance also makes natural regeneration less viable for the next rotation.
- Black Grouse present on adjacent moorland.
- Area favoured by mountain bikers.
- Scope to extend forest track to provide access to Zone 6.

Actions

- Thinning of Scots Pine for future conversion; also to favour ancient woodland remnants.
- Thinning to favour ancient woodland features.
- Restoration of wet woodland areas where appropriate in hollows.
- Species diversification and improvement of provenance through planting as part of CCF management.
- Soften edges to favour Black Grouse.
- Reduce deer numbers to aid natural regeneration.
- Develop and maintain appropriate access facilities, as identified in access plan.
- Work with local mountain bikers to manage trails.

Zone 4 – Golf Course Slope



Description

Zone 4 comprises the steep afforested slope which provides the backdrop to the A831, Aigas Golf Course and Aigas Field Centre so is very prominent in the landscape. The main tree species are Douglas Fir, Norway Spruce, Sitka Spruce, Scots Pine and Larch. Very little in this zone has been thinned and some areas of windblow have already appeared. The Norway Spruce shows considerable signs of deer damage and the Larch is suffering from a form of rot which weakens the roots and lower stem. Most of this zone appears in the Ancient Woodland Inventory. Soils are good, though not stable on the slopes.

Priorities

The priority for this area is to manage the conversion to CCF while being sensitive to both landscape and soil stability issues. This area has the greatest potential to generate high quality timber for income generation but this needs to be done in a way that is compatible with remnant ancient woodland and the interests of neighbouring businesses and residents. This Zone also provides the key public access point to the main forest block.

- Landscape.
- Keep soils stable.
- Increasing biodiversity, ancient woodland restoration.
- Future high value timber production, in the next rotation, under CCF management.
- Recreation provision – paths, MTB trails.

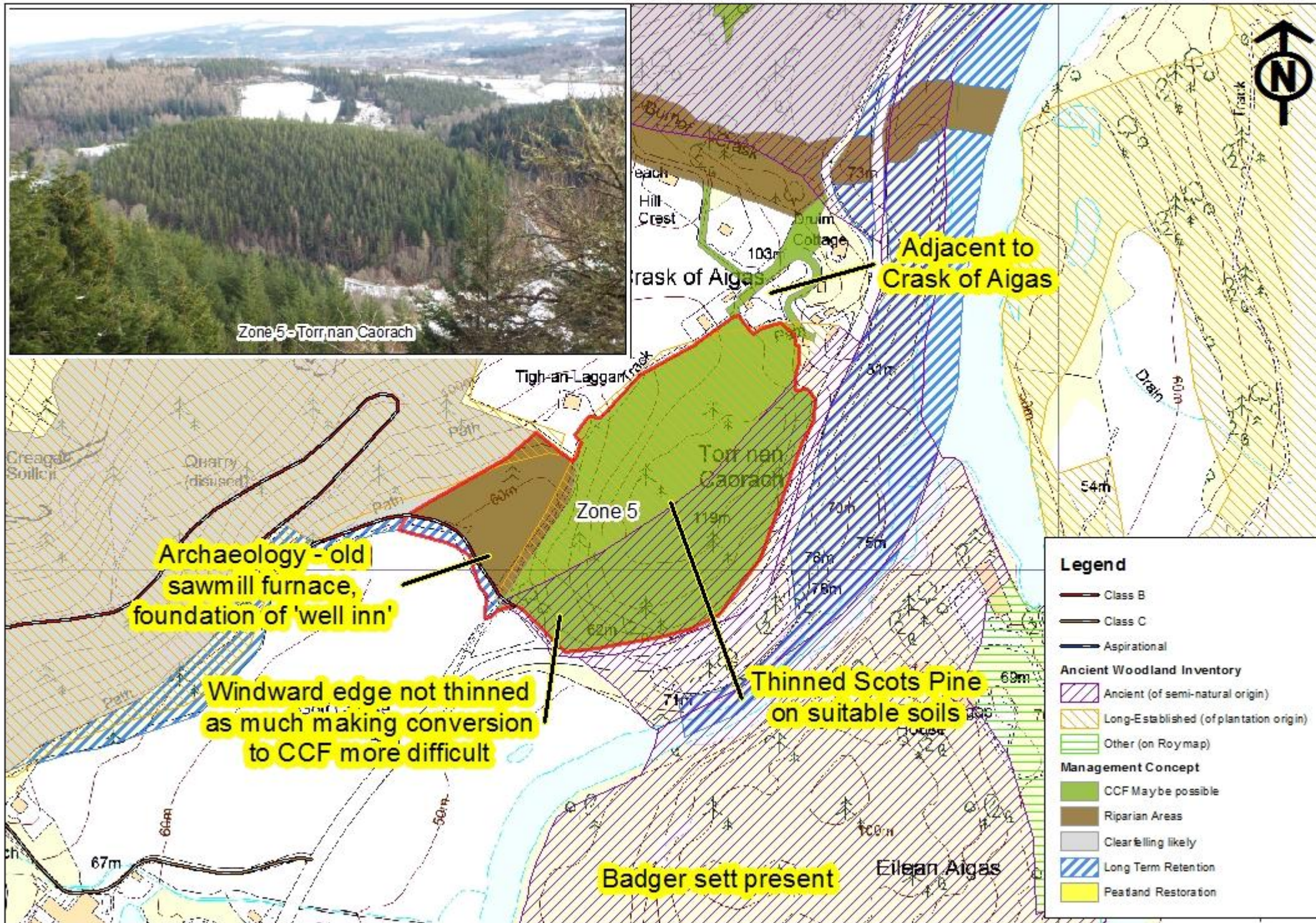
Opportunities & Constraints

- Much of the ground will require expensive winch work during harvesting.
- Due to a lack of thinning CCF management will not be possible in most of this zone, with the exception of one small area where experimental thinning could be carried out as part of the Ancient Woodland restoration.
- Any harvesting on slopes above Aigas Loch would have to be carefully managed to prevent run off into loch.
- Unstable soils and prominence in the landscape mean that large clearfells would be less advisable.
- Good quality soils mean that this zone has the greatest potential for income generating timber crops.
- Area favoured by mountain bikers.

Actions

- Retain woodland fringe adjacent to Aigas Golf Course.
- Small scale clearfelling and restocking program to address mature/ over mature timber.
- Restock with high value crops to help make future harvesting more viable.
- Actively manage future crops to produce better quality timber; CCF management as well as pruning main crop, thinning nurse crop, future under planting, etc.
- Thinning to favour ancient woodland features.
- Provision of paths and MTB trails.

Zone 5 - Torr nan Caorach



Description

Zone 5 is a rocky knoll that lies between the Crask of Aigas and the A831. It is prominent in the landscape and important to residents of the Crask of Aigas. The main access road to the forest is to the West of this block. This zone mainly consists of thinned Scots Pine on a small hill with good soils. The Pine is well suited to this site, but again is of poor provenance. Despite high deer numbers natural regeneration of some broadleaved species is establishing in the zone. Most of this zone appears in the Ancient Woodland Inventory and is in a secure condition. There is a small area of wet open ground where there are a number of archaeological features.

Priorities

The priority for this Zone is to convert to CCF but to undertake little intervention. A car park and interpretation will be provided adjacent to the main access road attracting visitors away from the Crask to minimise disruption to local residents.

- Conversion to CCF management with consideration of landscape issues.
- Increasing biodiversity, ancient woodland restoration.
- Facilities to support recreation provision.
- Protection and interpretation of archaeology.

Opportunities & Constraints

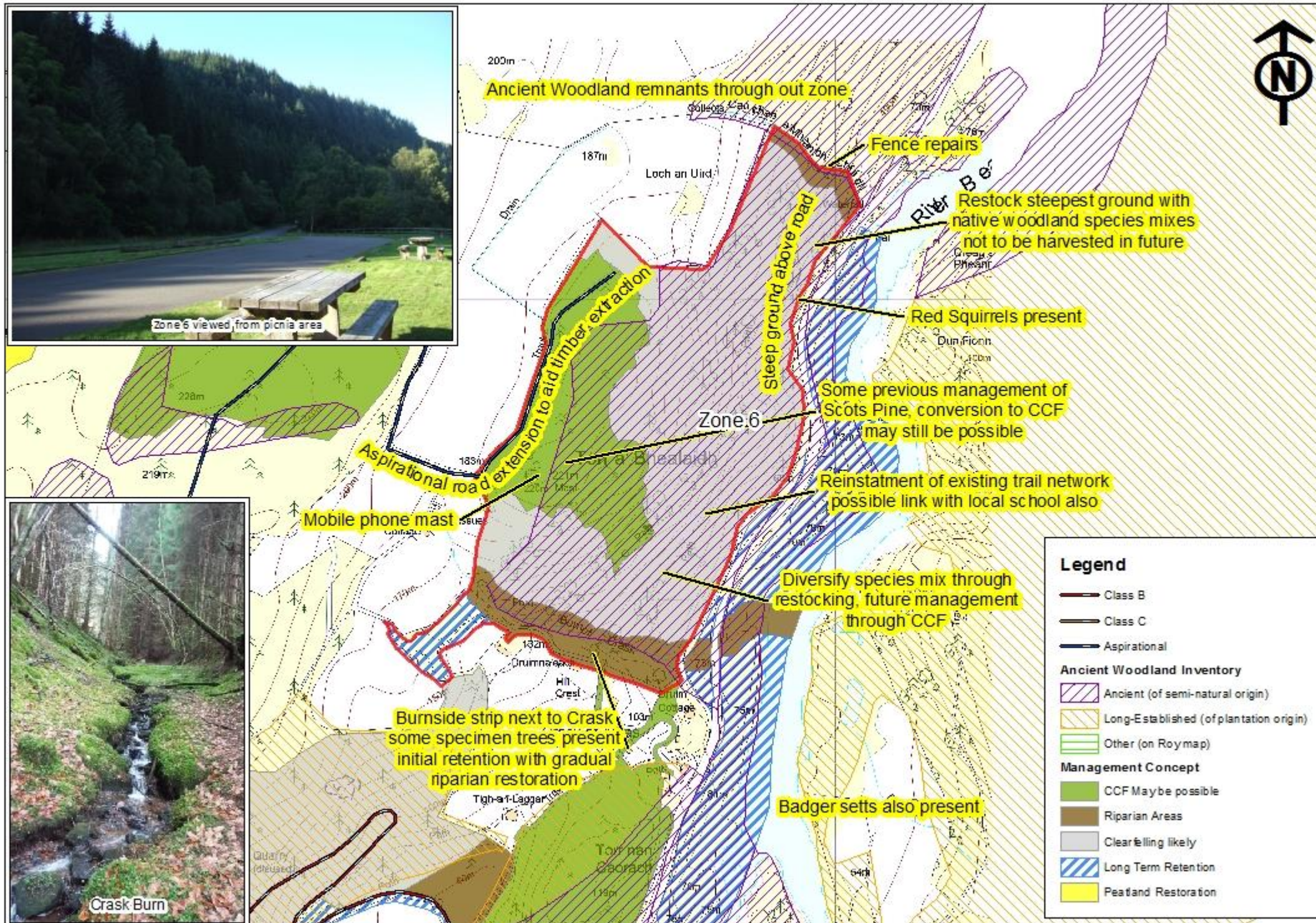
- Being next to the Road and Crask makes it prominent in the landscape.
- Potential for significant disruption to local residents during operations.
- Windward edge has different species and has not been thinned as much. Stability still good so conversion to CCF possible.

- Badger sett present.
- This zone also contains some prominent archaeology.

Actions

- Conversion to CCF management.
- Use small scale harvesting operation to minimise impact to local residents.
- Create car park adjacent to forest road, signing people into main forest block and away from Crask.

Zone 6 – Torr a' Bhealaidh



Description

Zone 6 is a steep hillside North of the Crask of Aigas and is adjacent to the A831 with Scots Pine on top and a mixture of Spruces and Douglas Fir on the slopes leading down to the road, some of which are precipitous. Although soils are generally rich on these slopes they are not stable. The forestry in this area is very mature and overdue for harvesting. Most of this zone holds the highest designation for Ancient Woodland but is in a critical state. This zone has an existing trail network and is regularly used by local residents. The mobile phone mast is also in this zone.

Priorities

The priorities for this zone are to fell and restock with native broadleaves to meet Ancient Woodland and soil stability objectives and to provide appropriate access and educational facilities.

- Increase biodiversity, ancient woodland restoration and sensitive management of riparian zone.
- Recreation and view point provision to provide access to visitors from roadside and to enhance local residents' access provision.
- Restock without losing soils on steep slopes and manage for long term slope stability.
- Future conversion to CCF where possible in this rotation, where not in next.
- Develop connection with local school.

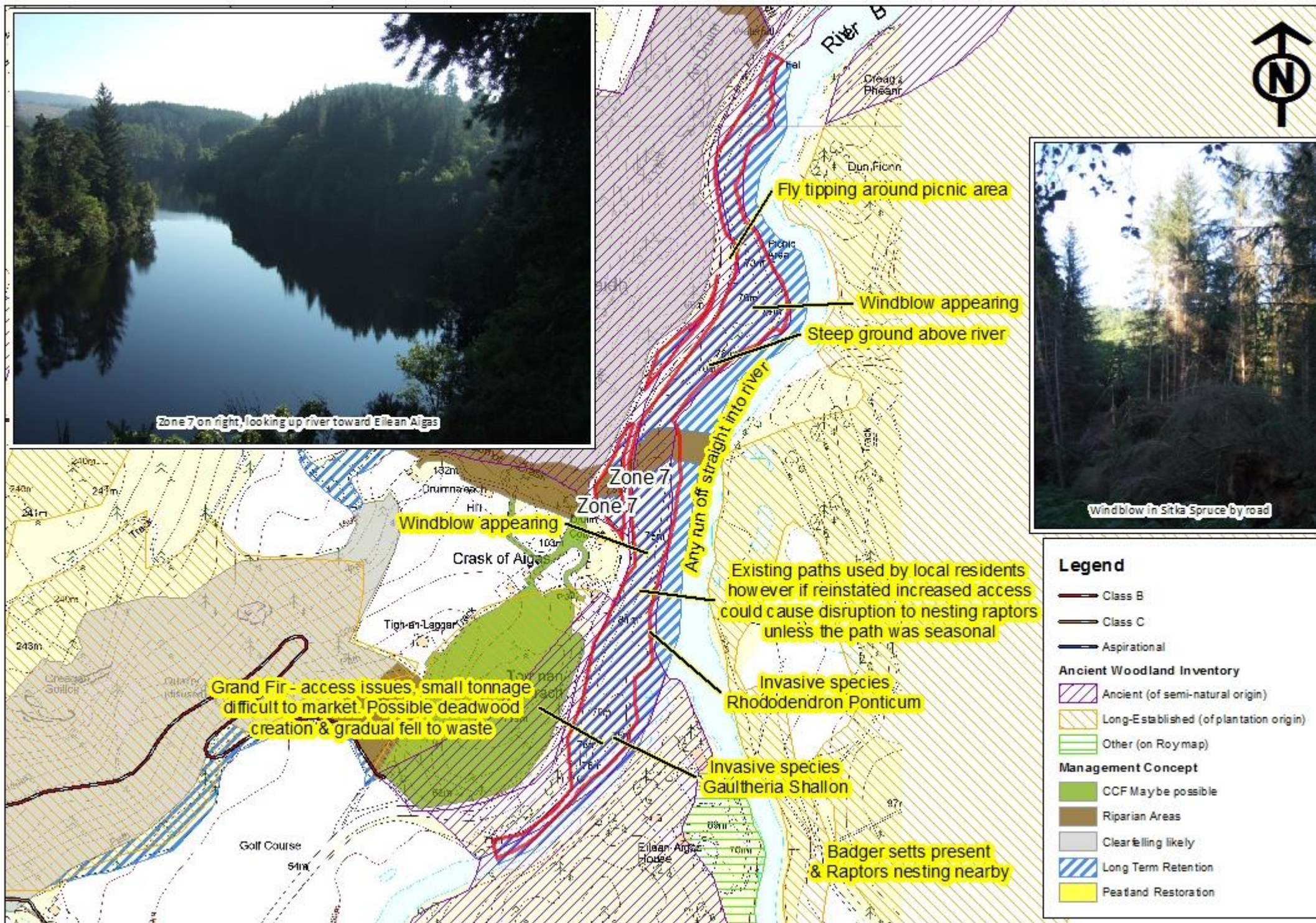
Opportunities & Constraints

- Steep slopes above main road, the most challenging ground to harvest at Aigas. Likely to be expensive and loss making.
- Potential for significant disruption during operations not just to locals and traffic but to raptors nesting nearby.
- Unstable soils on slopes above road.
- Lack of road access to top of slope an issue for harvesting.
- Significant access opportunities as good viewpoints and scope for linking to local primary school.
- There is a stream running from top to bottom at the West of this zone which could be turned into a nice feature and would also screen clearfell behind.
- Ready access to services enable opportunity for tourism accommodation (glamping) facilities to generate income.

Actions

- Considered felling and restocking of steep slopes with broadleaves to manage for long term slope stability.
- Consult with Aigas Field Centre on operations to minimise disruption to raptors.
- Improve habitat for Red Squirrels.
- Reinstatement paths network and appropriate viewpoints/ interpretation.
- Investigate and create path link and outdoor classroom with local school.
- Manage income generation potential through mast lease and possible visitor accommodation provision.

Zone 7 - Riverside



Description

Zone 7 comprises the strip between the main road (A831) and the Beaulieu river. It mainly consists of Broadleaved species with two small stands of mixed Spruce and Douglas Fir and another small stand of Grand Fir. There are a number of specimen trees present as well. There are invasive species present in this zone (Rhododendron ponticum & Gaultheria Shallon). All of this zone holds the highest designation for Ancient Woodland and is threatened. There is a locally maintained parking and picnic area adjacent to the forest within this area which is extensively used by visitors for viewing the Beaulieu river and a range of breeding bird species.

Priorities

The priorities for this area are to manage for Ancient Woodland and biodiversity priorities providing improved access to viewpoints and short walks without increasing disturbance to wildlife.

- Removal of invasive species.
- Clear and restock stands of Spruce before more windblow occurs.
- Restock without losing soils on steep slopes, bearing in mind run off into river.
- Conserve the ground flora present.
- Develop interpretation and sensitive access to river viewpoints (may be site for all abilities access).
- Minimise disruption to nesting raptors nearby.

Opportunities & Constraints

- Steep slopes above river, harvesting will have to be carefully managed to prevent run off into river.
- Potential for significant disruption during operations not just to locals and traffic but to raptors nesting nearby.
- Lack of access an issue for harvesting.
- The most intact woodland ground flora in the forest is in this zone.
- Good parking facilities but public experience limited by lack of footpaths etc.

Actions

- Remove invasive species.
- Consult with Aigas Field Centre on operations to minimise disruption to raptors.
- Harvest what can be reached of conifers and restock with native woodland species.
- Deadwood creation followed by gradual felling to waste of conifers that cannot be reached.
- Investigate and develop options for improving access provision sensitive to potential for wildlife disturbance.

Appendix 2 – Scoping Responses – by correspondence

Andrew Leaver

From: Nathan McLaughlan <Nathan.McLaughlan@snh.gov.uk>
Sent: 02 February 2016 16:31
To: 'donnie@aigasforest.org.uk'
Subject: Aigas Community Forest - Scoping

Dear Donnie

Aigas Community Forest – Long Term Forest Plan Scoping

Thank you for consulting us on the above plan. We have no specific comments to make regarding this plan.

Kind regards,

Nathan

Nathan McLaughlan
Operations Officer, Inner Moray Firth
South Highland

Scottish Natural Heritage
Fodderty Way
Dingwall Business Park
Dingwall, IV15 9XB

Tel: 01349 865333
Email: Nathan.mclaughlan@snh.gov.uk
www.snh.gov.uk

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Thoiribh an aire airson adhbharan gnothaich, 's dòcha gun tèid sùil a chumail air puist-dealain a' tighinn a-steach agus a' dol a-mach bho SNH.



Aigas Field Centre

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A response to the Aigas Community Forest Scoping Document for inclusion in the final Scoping Report. by Aigas Field Centre – January 25th 2016.

This response is a collective contribution by Aigas Field Centre Directors, Aigas Trust Trustees, Aigas Field Centre ecologists and non-scientific staff. Meetings were held during January 2016 to collate individual responses and agree the following:

1. The views of Aigas Field Centre:

- a. AFC currently uses the forest for environmental education for adults and school groups; for biological recording; for ecotourism and for recreation.
- b. AFC regrets that historically the forest has been so badly managed; that it is so rigidly designed for commercial production and that native broadleaved trees have been excluded. We are delighted that ownership has passed to ACF; that nature conservation will at last be acknowledged in the Long Term Forest Plan; and that the interests of the community will be at the heart of all decision making.
- c. AFC is apprehensive that hasty or unsympathetic harvesting decisions could impact negatively on neighbouring businesses, on scenery and on tourism. We are also concerned that conflicts between nature conservation and commercial forestry will cause management difficulties, and that some of the economic projections/aspirations may prove very difficult to achieve.
- d. AFC sees many opportunities for education, recreation and community involvement, but above all AFC believes that there is an opportunity to establish a role model for creative community management and conversion of a former commercial plantation into a living forest.
- e. AFC is fully supportive in principle of ACF proposals outlined on the ACF website and in the scoping document. We further believe that an absolute commitment to full community engagement will be necessary to achieve ACF's stated goals.

2. **The Scoping Document.** Aigas Field Centre (AFC) congratulates ACF on the allocation of zones and agrees the boundaries. These zone maps are very clear and very helpful.
3. **The Long Term Forest Plan.** AFC is keen to collaborate very closely with the development of a Long Term Forest Plan and its execution.
4. **Conservation with Commerce.** AFC heartily endorses the stated commitment to the 'ecology of the forest on equal footing with commercial activities', and will endeavour to assist with this admirable concept. However we caution that this may prove to be very difficult to achieve. See specific comments under zones. We note the commitment to financial stability and the provision of jobs within the forest. We would value further detail on these two points. How many jobs are envisaged? Providing what services and benefits? And how can they be sustained financially? We also note that Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) is proposed as the most effective means of delivering the stated benefits. We applaud the concept of CCF but question whether this means the Forestry Commission's definition and regulation of CCF or the wider European practice of CCF in countries like Norway and Germany? We note that where formal CCF conversion is not possible, CCF management will be adopted after restocking. Does this mean adopted to FC standards, or the wider European definition? We would favour the latter because it is not limited to commercially productive tree species. To deliver the stated aim of 'ecology on an equal footing with commercial...' a broad diversity of broadleaved trees will be necessary in all restocking plans.
5. **Community.** We endorse and share the commitment to community and that it will be at the heart of all silvicultural decisions, but we would value a broader explanation of how 'silviculture...by creating a forest that people want to be in' will actually deliver community benefit.
6. **Archaeology.** We endorse and approve the stated commitment to work with NOSAS.
7. **Ancient Woodland Restoration.** AFC endorses the commitment to the identification and restoration of ancient woodland remnants. It would be most helpful if potential and viable extensions to these restoration areas for ancient woodland could be specifically defined in the scoping document on appropriate soil profiles to give a better idea of ultimate size and shape. See comment under zones.
8. **Deer Control.** AFC does not agree with the statement that 'the whole of Aigas Forest along with our neighbours' ground has inadvertently been deer fenced by other landowners, from roadside to roadside.' This is misleading. While long stretches of deer fencing do exist, much of it is in poor condition. Consequently ACF is extremely porous with deer entering and leaving the forest at will and at many different points. At the time of writing (January 2016) random spot surveys carried out by AFC ecologists indicate that current deer levels are very low and probably below the agreed acceptable level of ≤ 5 deer/k². We recognize that this could change at any time and

that on-going deer monitoring and control will be necessary. We endorse the stated commitment to working closely with neighbours to monitor and assist with deer control as is required by the Scottish Government's Wild Deer National Approach (WDNA). AFC also wishes to record formally that staff and groups of the public regularly operate in and around the Aigas forest at dawn and dusk and from wildlife hides adjacent to the forest until long after dark, continuously from March until November. For safety and disturbance reasons we rely upon close consultation and collaboration over this issue.

9. **Recreation.** AFC notes that a separate recreation plan will be developed and hopes to be included in consultation over potential conflicts with nature conservation and environmental education.
10. **Zone 1.** AFC is of the opinion that this zone, much of which is peatland and blanket bog, should never have been planted. We endorse the removal of commercial trees for firewood and the maintenance of the small areas of ancient woodland and hope that this can be extended. We further endorse the plan to restore areas of peatland. We agree that this zone has great potential for biodiversity. However we recommend natural regeneration rather than re-stocking. The disturbance during removal of the present failed plantation would facilitate rapid natural regeneration. This would greatly benefit the locally increasing black grouse population and deliver a broader biodiversity.
11. **Zone 2.** AFC believes this zone holds great potential. We see the riparian woodland along watercourses as an essential reservoir for biodiversity and habitat connectivity for a wide variety of organisms. We applaud the proposal to extend these laterally and recommend the creation of small scale clearings into which native woodland can expand. We endorse the restoration of the forest's only loch. This requires immediate action to create open water, maintain water levels and extend the wetland surround. AFC will willingly participate in this wetland restoration. We further recommend that forest clearings are created in this zone for the benefit of wild flowers and invertebrates. This zone also holds a resident population of breeding crested tits (*Lophophanes cristatus*) - a Schedule 1 protected species. We request that this be acknowledged in the scoping document.
12. **Zone 3.** AFC believes this zone to be the heart of the community forest. The ancient woodland sites are valuable and well worth extending. It is also one of the sites where red squirrels (a Local Biodiversity Action Plan species) and Scottish crossbills (*Loxia scotica* - a Schedule 1 protected species) are present and breeding. We endorse the plan to restore wet woodland sites and hope that additional areas of open wetland will also be created. We request that this be acknowledged in the scoping document.
13. **Zone 4.** This zone is very important scenically with potential impact on the Aigas Golf Course (AGC) and AFC. AFC believes this sensitivity should be more adequately acknowledged in the scoping document and the areas identified for retention for scenic reasons need to be increased in width and length. We would also value a specific commitment to close consultation

with ourselves and AGC. We agree that harvesting in this zone is likely to be very expensive and unprofitable. We believe that large clearfells should be ruled out altogether in this zone and special attention should be paid to ancient woodland restoration and extension. We suggest that felling to waste and to create dead wood should be carefully considered. This zone also holds a resident population of breeding crested tits (*Lophophanes cristatus*) - a Schedule 1 protected species, and is very important for red squirrels and Scottish crossbill also a Schedule 1 protected species. We request that this be acknowledged in the scoping document. We appreciate the map acknowledgement of the steep ground above and very close to Loch Cuil na Caillich, which is the AFC water supply. These soils are unstable and a buffer zone will be required. We also reiterate the point made at 8 above, that AFC staff and wildlife watching groups of the public are present adjacent to this zone from March until November each year. We would value detailed commitment in the scoping legend to close consultation with AFC and a further commitment to close collaboration on this issue in the future forest plan and any harvesting proposals.

14. **Zone 5.** Because of its prominence in the landscape and proximity to the Crask of Aigas, AFC considers this zone to be ideal for careful conversion to continuous cover of predominantly Scots pine, but with a strong commitment to extending the native broadleaf component already present. Torr nan caorach is also an important corridor for red squirrels and we would like this recorded in the scoping document. The noted presence of badger setts is slightly misleading because these setts are not on ACF land. AFC has been monitoring and recording these badger setts and their productivity for many years and would appreciate close consultation over ACF activities in that area.
15. **Zone 6.** AFC believes this zone presents some very serious challenges. The soils are rich but very unstable on steep slopes into the burn. We believe it will be impossible to prevent soil erosion and to create effective silt traps. SEPA is likely to object to any silt running into the River Beaully and its feeder burns. We further believe that native broadleaved woodland is the best way to stabilise and enhance these soils. This must rule out clearfell. There are also red squirrels dependent upon this zone. We value and appreciate the commitment to consultation with AFC over seasonal (March – August) disturbance to Schedule 1 raptors nesting nearby and would like to point out that an ancient peregrine falcon roost associated with the nest site is within this zone. AFC will assist wherever possible.
16. **Zone 7.** This zone also presents serious problems. AFC endorses the removal of invasive species, particularly *Rhododendron ponticum*. There are invertebrate rich soils in places beside the A831, and these are regularly worked by badgers for earthworms. Existing broadleaf woodland, particularly birch, and its associated ground flora should be protected, extended and enhanced. Soil erosion and siltation are again very likely and SEPA is bound to be involved as a statutory consultee. AFC endorses the formation of a path network and the repair of old estate paths along the river. It will be necessary to provide signage to avoid disturbance of nesting

Schedule 1 raptors nearby. AFC will assist with this if required. AFC endorses felling to waste to create deadwood.

17. **The Legend.** We feel that the legend provides insufficient detail of who might undertake activities such as path planning, biological surveying and recording, community liaison, which NGOs and statutory bodies ACF will work with, etc., etc.
18. **Broadleaved native woodland.** The scoping document makes no substantive commitment to broadleaved woodland or to native woodland by natural regeneration. AFC believes that these are essential components of the stated commitment to ecology and to biodiversity. We would like to see this specifically identified in the document.
19. **Deadwood.** There is only passing reference to deadwood in the document. AFC holds that deadwood should be a stated aim at the IUCN recommended level of up to 500 m³ per hectare.
20. **Wetland.** AFC applauds the restoration of the one named lochan in the forest (zone 2), but we believe that there are many more areas of potential wetland that can be opened up. We would like to see these identified and actively cited in the scoping document and the forest plan.
21. **Woodland Clearings.** In order to achieve the forest's potential for biodiversity – wild flowers and Lepidoptera in particular - it will be necessary to create many small woodland clearings on different soil types. AFC would like to see clear reference to woodland clearings in the document so that these can be carried forward to the forest plan.
22. **Felling coups.** There is no indication in the scoping document as to the size and extent of proposed felling coups. While we recognize that this will be dictated to some degree by commercial viability, we would like to see a clearly stated undertaking to keep felling coups as small as possible, to maintain habitat connectivity and to monitor potential disturbance to and destruction of established wildlife communities and protected species.
23. **Economic Analysis.** There is no economic analysis in the scoping document at all, and yet there is reference to creating jobs. AFC believes that more detail is required in this area, particularly on markets and products (firewood, fibre, biofuel, saw logs, chips and pellets, etc.), and what sort of jobs are envisaged.
24. **Bio-Security.** Pine tree lappet moth (*Dendrolinus pini*) has been recorded at AFC over many years. Our opinion is that this is a native moth, which occurs naturally in the Highlands and in particular at Aigas. AFC is cooperating with the Forestry Commission in monitoring this potential pest insect, but on the grounds that if it was going to become an infestation it would have done so long ago, we do not believe that damage from infestation is likely to occur. *Chalara* ash dieback is now present in Strathglass and it is inevitable that it will spread. There is considerable ash natural regeneration in Zones 6 and 7; it is therefore likely that these trees

will become fatally infected. Dutch elm disease (*Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*) is also currently killing wych elms in Strathglass. AFC subscribes to the school of thought that replanting these species may eventually achieve immunity and should therefore be continued.

END

Response authors include:

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Jenna Berry B.Sc. – Aigas Ranger
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Marjory Sandilands – Aigas Field Centre Administration
Sheila Kerr – Aigas Field Centre Secretary
Lesley Cranna M.Sc. - SNH North Manager (retired) and Aigas Trustee
Diana Gilbert Ph.D. – Woodland Specialist and Aigas Trustee
Warwick Lister-Kaye – General Manager & AFC Ltd., Director.
Sir John Lister-Kaye Bt., D.Sc., D.Univ., OBE – AFC Ltd., Director

Date of submission January 27th 2016.

Andrew Leaver

From: Tom Luthman <tl@johnclegg.co.uk>
Sent: 02 February 2016 12:33
To: donnie@aigasforest.org.uk
Subject: LTFP Scoping Response

Donnie,

Many thanks for allowing us a chance to see and comment on your LTFP scoping proposals. John Clegg & Co represent Grilldrove Ltd, who currently lease Erchless Forest from Erchless Estate. I have also passed on your documents to the Estate, and have asked that any comments go to you directly.

From Grilldrove Ltd's point of view, we have no concerns over your plans and wish you the best of luck. We share a common interest in effective deer management and I look forward to working together.

Regards

Tom

**Tom Luthman BSc, BA(Hons)
Forester**

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John Clegg & Co

CHARTERED SURVEYORS & FORESTRY AGENTS

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Andrew Leaver

To: Stewart Eastaugh
Subject: RE: Aigas Community Forest Plan Scoping

Hi Stewart

Thanks for getting back to me. We are currently doing an audit of the paths that we have in the forest with the view to developing an access plan later in the year, or next year, depending on how things go with producing the forest and deer management plans. I'll involve you in the future consultations as well.

Cheers

Donnie

From: Stewart Eastaugh [<mailto:Stewart.Eastaugh@highland.gov.uk>]
Sent: 27 January 2016 11:41
To: 'Donnie Chisholm (donnie@aigasforest.org.uk)'
Subject: Aigas Community Forest Plan Scoping

Hi Donnie,

Thanks for the CD.

I've taken a look at the plan on-line and note that you intend to produce an access and recreation plan at a later date. That's probably the point for me to comment if you're looking for it.

Good luck,

Stewart Eastaugh

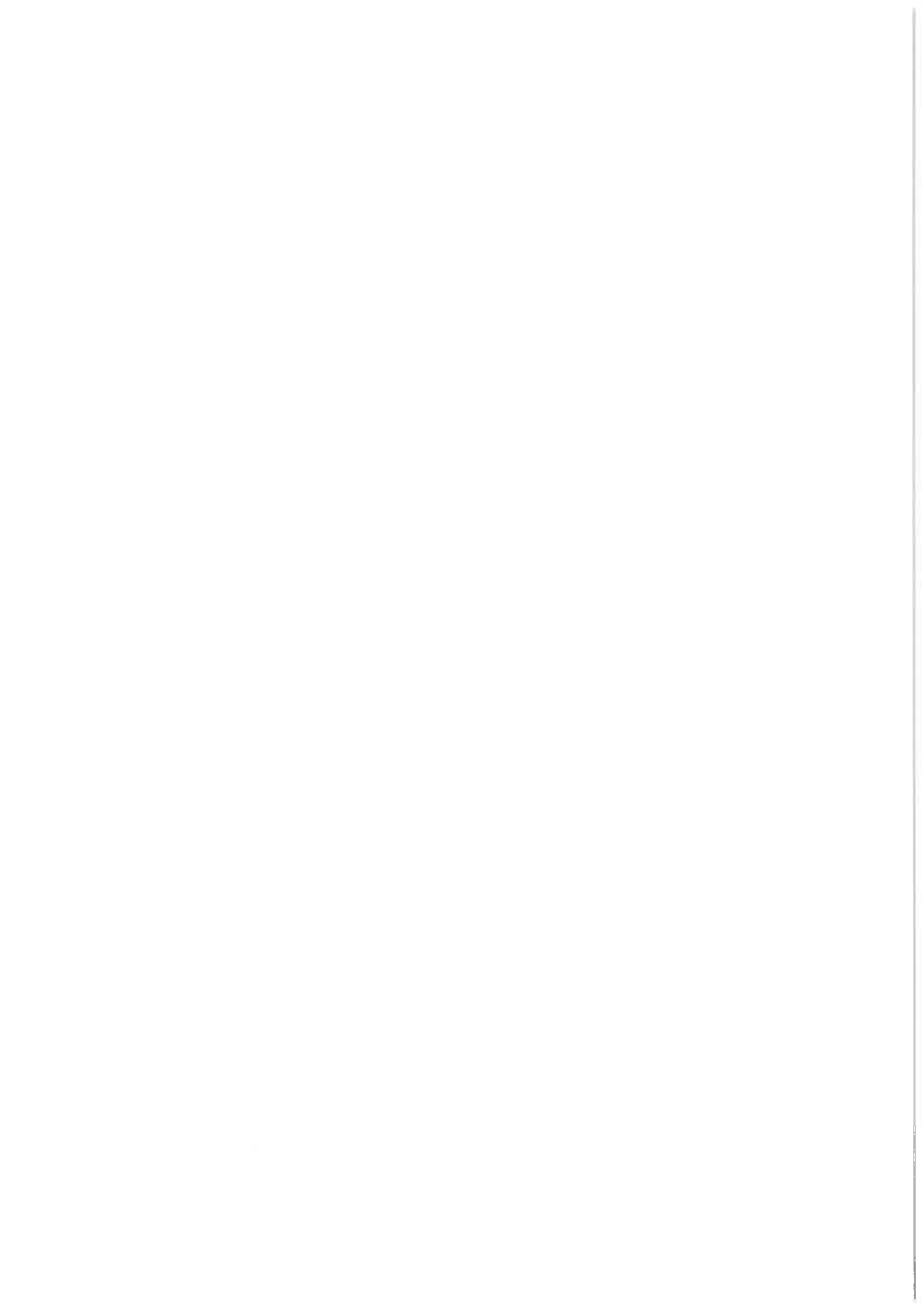
Access Officer, Inverness and Nairn
Environment and Economic Development
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Mura h-eil na beachdan a tha air an cur an cèill sa phost-d seo a' buntainn ri gnothachas Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd, 's ann leis an neach fhèin a chuir air falbh e a tha iad, is chan eil iad an-còmhnaidh a' riochdachadh beachdan na Comhairle, no buidhnean buntainneach, agus chan eil am post-d seo na phàirt de chunradh sam bith mura h-eil sin air innse.

Listening * Open * Valuing * Improving * Supporting * Partnering * Delivering
Èisteachd * Fosgailte * Luach * Leasachadh * Taic * Com-pàirteachas * Libhrigeadh



Our ref: PCS/144737
Your ref: None

Andrew Leaver
Aigas Community Forest
Northview
Crask of Aigas
Beauly
IV4 7AD

If telephoning ask for:
Aden McCorkell

8 February 2016

By email only to: donnie@aigasforest.org.uk

Dear Mr Leaver

**Forestry Act 1967
Scoping consultation
Long Term Forest Plan Scoping
Aigas Community Forest**

Thank you for your consultation email which SEPA received on 12 January 2016. Good forest plans can help deliver multiple benefits for people, the environment and the Scottish economy.

We are pleased to see that the Plan incorporates actions in response to good practice guidelines, for example moving away from traditional commercial management and towards continuous cover forestry (CCF), producing timber from thinning and selective felling instead of clearfell. We welcome this opportunity to provide advice on the draft plan to ensure that all issues within our remit have been addressed prior to the formal submission of the plan for consultation.

1. General issues

- 1.1 Your plan should include a clear analysis of the environmental risks of the proposals accompanied by information on how they will be addressed and, where necessary, mitigated. For example, it should show on maps of 1:2,500 scale or more detailed, areas of peat greater than 50cm, watercourses, lochs and wetlands, and setback of planting and infrastructure from these.
- 1.2 The advice on our website should be referred to. General advice on forestry in relation to our interests can be found on the [Forestry](#) page of our website. RBMP information may be found on the [RBMP information sources](#) page. Other information is identified in the sections below.

2. Flood risk

- 2.1 The majority of land identified in the seven zones of the Plan is located out with the medium likelihood (0.5% annual probability or 1 in 200 year) extent of the SEPA Flood Maps. For background information please note that the SEPA Flood Maps have been produced following a consistent, nationally-applied methodology for catchment areas equal to or greater than 3km² using a Digital Terrain Model (DTM) to define river corridors and low-



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lying coastal land. The maps are indicative and designed to be used as a strategic tool to assess flood risk at the community level and to support planning policy and flood risk management in Scotland. There are some very small areas identified as being at risk of surface water flooding and Zone 7 lies adjacent to the River Beaully. In addition there are several small watercourses which drain the areas under consideration with catchment areas of less than 3km² and as a result were not modelled using a Digital Terrain Model (DTM). We therefore need to raise awareness that these areas may potentially be at medium to high risk of flooding. The plan should consider impact of the works on flood risk to downstream receptors. For example, impact on flows, sediment transport, capacity of culverts and potential blockage of culverts need to be considered. Measures may need to be put in place to prevent increase in runoff or woody debris from entering watercourses. Monitoring before, during and after works may need to be implemented on this catchment.

- 2.2 There is no indication in the Scoping Document that new access tracks are planned as part of the Plan. If this does change as the Plan is finalised we would be happy to provide further flood risk comments, guidance and advice if and when any additional relevant information is submitted.

3. River Basin Management Planning

- 3.1 We welcome your reference to [The UK Forestry Standard](#) which identifies that forest management should protect and improve the water environment by ensuring that forestry pressures on the aquatic environment are addressed and thus contributing towards the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). In so far as our interests are concerned we would also welcome specific reference to the UKFS Forests and soil.
- 3.2 We have checked the RBMP records and can confirm that all water bodies intercepting the site are below the threshold for which SEPA holds data for. However, all designated zones outlined in the Plan drain towards the east into water body 20209 (River Beaully - Beaully Firth to Cannich). This water body is a Heavily Modified Water Body currently at Good Ecological Potential. The plan should highlight that there are no water bodies within or adjacent to the plan area which are currently at less than good ecological status/potential. The plan should emphasize the good quality of the surrounding water environment, which should be maintained.
- 3.3 Even when a water body is not downgraded opportunities still exist to deliver environmental improvement. We welcome reference in the Plan to increasing biodiversity along watercourses and restoring a loch (Loch nan Losgann in Zone 2) which has been previously drained. We also ask that the plan identify the location of any further inappropriately designed or redundant structures which could be removed or improved. Examples include the upgrading of a culvert to allow fish passage or removal of a redundant weir. Opportunities for morphological and ecological improvements should also be considered. Measures could include re-introduction of meanders in artificially straightened watercourses or the planting of appropriate broadleaved species at a suitable density.
- 3.4 We welcome the Plans reference to the removal of invasive species in Zone 7. We note that *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Gaultheria shallon* were annotated on the Zone 7 map. The plan should outline the management for proposed control and removal of both species. Please refer to the Forestry Commission practice guide "Managing and controlling invasive rhododendron" [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpg017.pdf/\\$FILE/fcpg017.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpg017.pdf/$FILE/fcpg017.pdf) as well as information on *Gaultheria shallon* available on the GB non-native species portal <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/factsheet/factsheet.cfm?speciesId=1578>.

4. Felling and replanting proposals

- 4.1 We welcome that the Plan's aim for future management will be to diversify the age and species structure of the forest. As the plan will give permission for the felling and replanting proposals outlined within it, it should provide clear information on how protecting the environment has been considered when deciding on the proposals (for example in relation to the timing of works or size of areas felled at the same time).
- 4.2 Diffuse pollution from planting and felling proposals is a significant threat to achieving and maintaining good water quality. The plan should confirm adherence to [The UK Forestry Standard](#) and related Forestry Standard Guidelines and comply with the requirements of the [Water Environment \(Controlled Activities\) \(Scotland\) Regulations \(CAR\)](#).
- 4.3 There are several areas of forested steep slopes where clearfelling is planned. The plan should address the risk of diffuse pollution from forestry operations and consider measures necessary to mitigate against soil erosion and sedimentation to sensitive receptors (watercourses) downslope. We welcome reference in the plan to mixed broadleaf planting on some areas of steep ground and in some riparian zones as a buffer to water courses. The plan should provide clear information on the minimum buffers to be included between the forest edge and each water body or abstraction. This should comply with [Table 5.1 of the UK Forestry Standard](#).
- 4.4 We welcome reference to the restoration of wet woodland areas in appropriate hollows as stated in Zone 3. Likely suitable species include birch, pine, alder or willow; species selection and relative balance between species will depend on local conditions. New native woodland proposals should consider how wetland features such as springs, flushes and bogs have been protected. This could include, for example, the commitment for planting to avoid wetland areas. We would also like to make note that we welcome the Plan's commitment to the restoration of ancient woodland.

5. New supporting infrastructure

- 5.1 We note that the Plan makes reference to the production of a detailed access and recreation plan which will separately define provisions for recreational facilities such as car parks, paths and mountain bike trails. However, in line with Appendix 1 of [Forestry Practice Guidance: Forest Design Planning](#) the plan should include information on any new infrastructure which may be required to facilitate plan proposals. For example, details should be provided of any new or upgraded tracks and new lay-down areas, borrow pits or temporary welfare facilities or new infrastructure to facilitate public access to the area. This supporting infrastructure should be designed to avoid engineering activities in the water environment wherever possible.

6. Carbon balance and impacts on peat

- 6.1 We note that areas of peat have been identified on site, specifically in Zones 1 and 2 of the Plan. The FCS guidance note "Deciding future management options for afforested deep peatland" states that a peat depth survey is not compulsory but improves reliability of the basis of the decision for future management. Proposals for any new planting or replanting should also demonstrate how they comply with the guidance outlined on the Forestry Commission Scotland [peatland habitats](#) webpage.

- 6.2 We welcome the Plan's reference that areas of deep peat should not be replanted. However we note that forestry blocks in Zones 1 and 2 share boundaries with peatland restoration sites. Restocking as 'peatland edge woodland' may be an appropriate method to manage areas between peatland restoration and restocking areas. Zone 1, under opportunities and constraints states that "deep peat areas pose problems for harvesting and should not be replanted under current guidance". It is our understanding that there will be no planting on peat >45cm depth, either as restocking or new planting and that the intention is to restore peatland where peat depth exceeds 45cm depth. The map should clearly demonstrate that all new planting has avoided these areas of deep peat and the text should outline the measures to be taken to ensure that the hydrology of any adjacent bog habitat is not compromised.
- 6.3 [The UK Forestry Standard](#) states that forest managers should "Ensure that wetland features such as springs, flushes and bogs are protected, and take opportunities to restore degraded features." We support the Plans proposal for peatland restoration in Zones 1 and 2 and the removal of trees from areas of deep peat with appropriate drain blocking. The plan identifies the areas for restoration, however should further outline the aims of restoration and the methods to be employed to achieve the outlined aims. We recommend that a peatland restoration plan outline the methods for application in zones 1 and 2 which justify site selection and delineation.
- 6.4 The afforestation of areas designated for peatland restoration should comply with Guidance Note LUPS-GU27 Use of Trees Cleared to Facilitate Development on Afforested Land. As a general rule, any timber of diameter greater than 7 cm, bark included, should be considered as merchantable timber, and hence will be harvested and extracted from the site for uses such as sawn timber, or small round wood (pulp, chipboard, biomass and firewood). Evidence should be presented in the Plan of the measures taken to establish that markets for all forestry material, including tree material of less than 7 cm diameter, utilising professional forestry expertise.
- 6.5 Please refer to Guidance Note LUPS-GU27 Use of Trees Cleared to Facilitate Development on Afforested Land, Section 4 Categories and uses of forest materials. It may be appropriate to apply mulch to create the physical requirements to encourage the regeneration of blanket bog habitat, however the amount of mulch should not inhibit light penetration or growth of existing plants.
- 6.6 There appear to be forest roads into Zones 1 – 5, however it is unclear from the map whether there is road access into zones 6 and 7. There is no indication in the Scoping Document that new access tracks are planned. If this does change as the Plan is finalised we would be happy to provide advice on any road or track proposals >4 km.

7. Use of waste on site, including felling waste

- 7.1 Proposals to make use of any waste wood on the site should be outlined in the plan. Zone 7 states the intention to fell to waste an area of Grand Fir. The plan should provide justification for any felling to waste instead of removal of timber > 7cm diameter, and expand upon how the fell to waste will be conducted, the volume of timber to be felled to waste, the particle size of the waste and the details of any proposed spreading (total volume of waste, depth of application, location and extent of area where chipped waste may be spread as mulch). The proposals should comply with our [SEPA: Guidance: Management of Forestry Waste](#).

8. Pollution prevention and environmental management

- 8.1 We expect forest activities to be carried out following the best practice guidance outlined in the UK Forest Standard Guidelines and other relevant best practice guidance outlined on the [Forestry](#) page of our website. Please also refer to the [Pollution prevention guidelines](#). Engineering activities in or adjacent to the water environment are likely to need authorisation under the [Water Environment \(Controlled Activities\) \(Scotland\) Regulations \(CAR\)](#) and should follow the related elements of the [Forests and Water UK Forestry Standard Guidelines](#).
- 8.2 The Opportunities and Constraints Map should identify whether the forest contains any drainage ditches which directly connected to the water environment. If this is the case there should be a commitment for these to be addressed.

9. Regulatory requirements

- 9.1 Details of regulatory requirements and good practice advice for the applicant can be found on the [Regulations section](#) of our website. If you are unable to find the advice you need for a specific regulatory matter, please contact a member of the operations team in your local SEPA office at: Graesser House, Fodderty Way, Dingwall, IV15 9XB Tel: 01349 862021

If you have any queries relating to this letter, please contact me by telephone on 01224 266736 or e-mail at planning.dingwall@sepa.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Aden McCorkell
Planning Officer
Planning Service

Disclaimer

This advice is given without prejudice to any decision made on elements of the proposal regulated by us, as such a decision may take into account factors not considered at the forestry proposal stage. We prefer all the technical information required for any SEPA consents to be submitted at the same time as the forestry proposal. However, we consider it to be at the applicant's commercial risk if any significant changes required during the regulatory stage necessitate a further forestry submission and/or neighbour notification or advertising. We have relied on the accuracy and completeness of the information supplied to us in providing the above advice and can take no responsibility for incorrect data or interpretation, or omissions, in such information. If we have not referred to a particular issue in our response, it should not be assumed that there is no impact associated with that issue. If you did not specifically request advice on flood risk, then advice will not have been provided on this issue.

Andrew Leaver

To: Jane Groves
Subject: RE: Long Term Forest Plan

Hi Steve

Thanks for your response and support. Thanks for your points as well, I am finding out things like people not being used to the timescales involved in a forest plan, or knowing about PTLM...I must spend too much time around other foresters...

Your other points are all things that we are thinking about, I guess they just weren't articulated into the final document.

Also the walk last weekend was postponed due to said weather! We're having a walk this Saturday morning instead now, starting at the forest gate at 0930, it would be good to see you there if you can make it.

Cheers

Donnie

From: Jane Groves [<mailto:grovesnorth@btinternet.com>]
Sent: 03 February 2016 17:45
To: donnie@aigasforest.org.uk
Subject: Long Term Forest Plan

Hi Donnie – haven't seen you for a while but I hope things are good with you. I did mean to come along last Saturday but the weather was too grim (as you'll know better than me!).

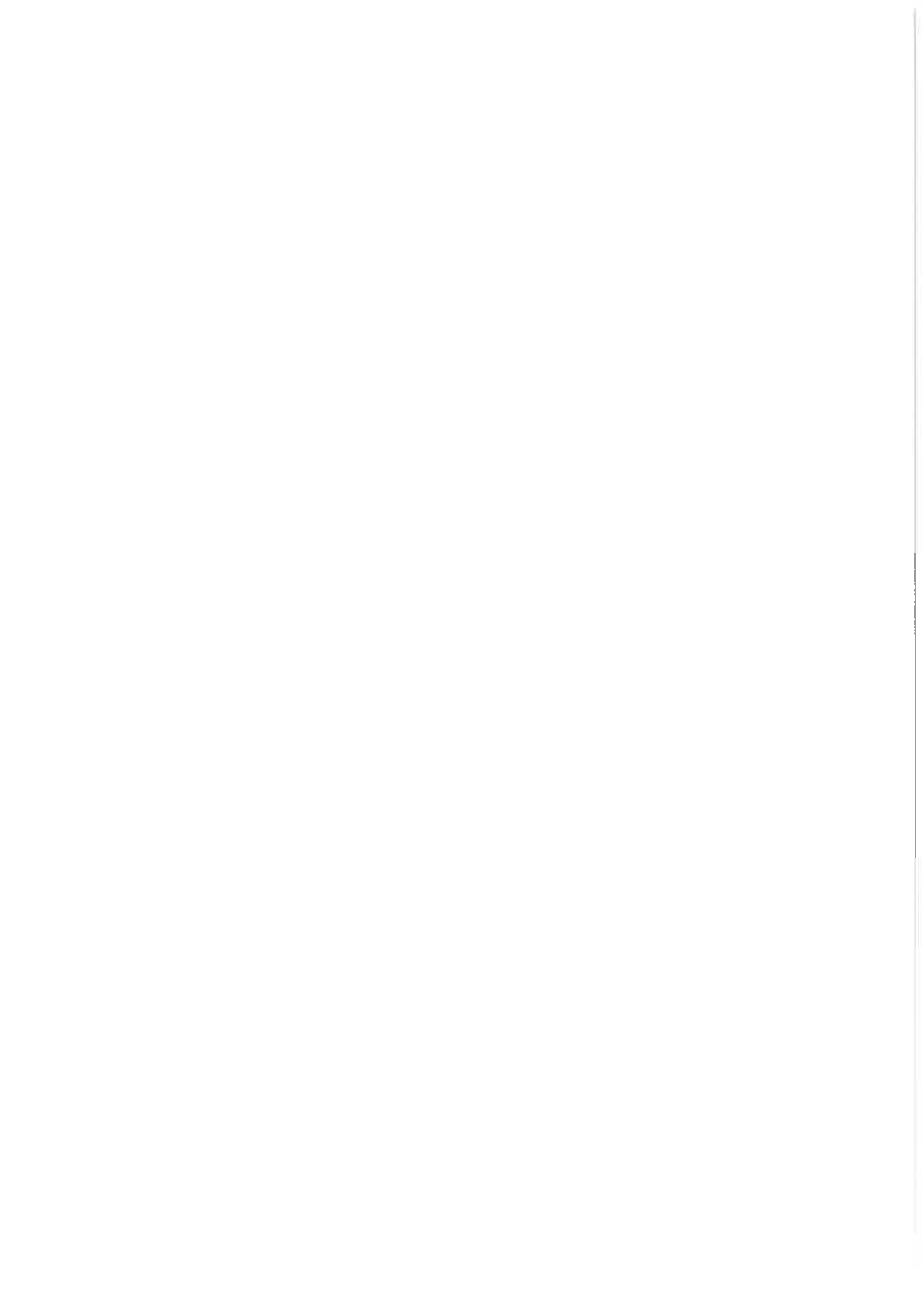
I've been looking at the scoping for the LTFP and I just wanted to register my support for what's in it. I support the objectives and general proposals, particularly the move towards CCF and spp diversification and the opening up/restoration of areas of peatland. I have no really substantive comments to make – just a few minor thoughts (some of them more for future reference):

- I think the introduction could perhaps have explained a bit more about the timescale for LTFPs and how they help ease the path for future funding and approvals. Many folk won't be familiar with these processes.
- The likely phasing of work will be an important part of the LTFP.
- I think it would be good to clearly recognise the value of retaining accumulations of dead wood in some areas – not all the windblow should (or could) be taken out.
- I think there could be a more explicit objective to identify and open up key viewpoints.
- I'm not sure that there will be a high level of awareness of PTLM and its implications.
- It would also be good to have an explicit mention of the need to collate information on key wildlife features to help future planning and management – something that visitors can help with eg ant hills, raptor nests, squirrel feeding areas, badger setts, butterfly glades etc

So the main thing is to congratulate you on what you've produced!

All the best

Steve



Andrew Leaver

From: Phil Masheter <phil.masheter@gmail.com>
Sent: 31 January 2016 17:56
To: Donnie Chisholm
Subject: Re: Aigas Community Forest Long Term Forest Plan - Scoping

Hi Donnie

Thanks for getting back. I now appreciate more the access problem with the trees above Pete Smith's house and concede that we may just have to continue to carry out repairs as they happen as a result of windfalls - we can discuss.

Disregard the existing track in zone 6. In retrospect due to its steepness and the loose ground it would likely be too hazardous as a public pathway. At the moment it is little better than a deer track with a lot of windfalls. There are no views to enjoy until you enter the field at the top of the hill.

Regards

Phil

On Fri, Jan 29, 2016 at 4:10 PM, Donnie Chisholm <donnie@aigasforest.org.uk> wrote:

Hi Phil

Thanks for your response. The trees along the fence line up at Maolnaceap are a concern that I would hope to address early in the plan period, naturally I will be looking for a solution to this that stops the same happening in the future. The area of Norway Spruce above Peter Smith has been put in as long term retention at the moment mainly as access to this area to extract any timber is a real problem. The original access to this block was off the Crask road, which obviously today's forest machinery would be destroyed quite quickly. Would access through the field be something that you would consider? Other wise to change the structure we would have to fell to waste, which would leave a lot of material behind, making planting harder as well as meaning that ACF wouldn't get any revenue from the timber to help offset the cost of the operation. Although I would prefer to get the timber out we could possibly do something like this if the budget allows. I will include both these issues in the scoping report and they will be addressed in the forest plan though. Incidentally the draft forest plan goes out for consultation before its final approval as well, so this will be an opportunity for you to read the plan and comment on how the issues that have been raised have been dealt with.

As the road up through the Crask isn't going to be used for forest operations it isn't included in the forest plan. I will take this concern to the board however for them to discuss. I'll make sure you're kept in the loop as they will obviously need to discuss this with yourself as well.

I'm assuming that that track you say would be nice to have more clearing in order to see the view are the tracks in Zone 6, i.e. to the peregrine viewpoint as it's known, is that right? That and the suggestion of the track to the corner of the field in zone 6 will also be included in the scoping report.

Kind Regards

Donnie

From: Phil Masheter [mailto:phil.masheter@gmail.com]
Sent: 22 January 2016 20:18
To: donnie@aigasforest.org.uk
Cc: peter@aigas-holidays.co.uk
Subject: Aigas Community Forest Long Term Forest Plan - Scoping

Hi Donnie

Its good to see some solid detailed plans of what is intended with the forest, well done

I have spent a number weeks over the last two years refurbishing fences that are on the edge of the forest. There are localised areas that are increasingly affected by trees crashing through the boundary fences during high winds (mainly around the Maulnaceup area). I know the plan is to plant further back from fences in the future, but when felling commences it would be good to try and plan for certain vulnerable areas to be cleared back from fences if possible. There are areas too where tree roots appear to be lifting fences.

There is an area directly behind Pete Smith's house which is earmarked for long term retention, however the small block of trees in there have been damaged by the wind last Winter and lifted the boundary fence. It would be good to remove this small block and replace with something more appropriate.

We use the road up through the Crask to Maulnaceup quite regularly for our business and recreational purposes. The road as you know is steep in places and does suffer at times when there is heavy rainfall. The road has become considerably busier during the last decade and this could potentially increase further. It would be good to budget for road repairs in the future as this road could do with some imported material and more metal gullies in strategic places would be an advantage.

We track through the wood regularly to watch Ospreys and walk dogs. It would be nice to have more clearings next to some of the steep tracks to enjoy the occasional view.

It would be good to clear an existing steep track in zone 6 that comes out near the corner of the field at the top of the hill. I am guessing that this may be a future track that could lead towards the school. At the moment it is impassable and with the current tree cover will be prone to blockages.

looking forward to hearing all the findings from the archaeology report.

Kind Regards

Andrew Leaver

From: Karen Botten <karen.kraze@virgin.net>
Sent: 15 February 2016 10:56
To: 'Donnie Chisholm'
Subject: RE: Aigas Community Forest Newsletter

Hi Donnie,

Our only concern about increased access to zone 6 in general is that we'd prefer that people weren't directed past our house. I think this concern was shared by others in the Crask and is why the main car park is proposed to go down on the forest track and the path was moved from the back of Peter Masheter's house. Obviously people already do access the existing trails by using the end of the old road that passes our house, but if signs were going to be put up to direct more people into the forest from the road we'd prefer them not to direct people that way.

The concern about the outdoor classroom and glamping are around noise levels. We really don't know what's envisaged for the outdoor classroom so this might be completely unfounded – obviously the local school kids being in the forest for a few hours a week would be completely different from building larger facilities that ACF would hope to be used by various groups as often as possible. I think glamping would be more of a concern to any residents who lived within hearing distance of it (e.g. for us, the clearing near the old road) as there would be noise overnight, and from a commercial perspective the aim would be to have it fully occupied as often as possible. There are other concerns as well, which you've probably already discussed or intend to, such as the need for someone to be available overnight to deal with any issues from either the campers or locals, the potential to disturb wildlife, the risk of fire etc.

We look forward to reading the scoping report / draft forest plan.

Regards,
Karen and Simon

From: Donnie Chisholm [mailto:donnie@aigasforest.org.uk]
Sent: 12 February 2016 12:09
To: 'Karen Botten'
Subject: RE: Aigas Community Forest Newsletter

Hi Karen

Thanks for getting back to me. I'm still writing the Scoping report so your comments will be included.

About pedestrian access to Zone 6; we will be including that in our future access plan. There will be consultation on that as well, which you will be included in. As to the size and scale of the glamping facilities these wouldn't be included in a scoping document anyway. The Scoping Document isn't meant to be prescriptive, and is only meant to give the concept of what is proposed. I can include that you have concerns about these, i.e. over the size and placement of glamping facilities and concerns about increased access to Zone 6. I will need you to confirm what these concerns are in writing though (in a reply to this email will be fine).

Also your concerns about the operational usage of the old road are noted and will be included in the Scoping Report.

You will be involved in another consultation on this plan as well. Once I have written the scoping report and it has been approved I will then prepare a draft forest plan. This then goes out for another 28 day consultation period prior to being approved. This would be your official chance to comment on the plan and how you feel the issues have been dealt with.

Cheers

Donnie

From: Karen Botten [<mailto:karen.kraze@virgin.net>]
Sent: 12 February 2016 11:39
To: 'Donnie Chisholm'; andrewleaver@aol.com
Cc: 'Simon Longman'
Subject: RE: Aigas Community Forest Newsletter

Hi Donnie,

Sorry we didn't get back to you. We planned to talk to you on the walk instead but then didn't make it, and have realised this morning that the consultation period has ended, so just a couple of questions!

It was actually the pedestrian access to Zone 6 that we were wondering about – really whether there are any plans to have signs to direct people into the forest via the old road from either the lay by at the bottom of the Crask, or the picnic area, but it sounds like that would be covered in future by the access plan? Would that also include further consultation before plans are finalised for things like the outdoor classroom and glamping? Without knowing the location/s or the scale and types of facilities that would be built it's difficult to comment on them.

You mentioned previously that the old road would be used for accessing some of the timber, which obviously isn't ideal for us but we understand the reasons behind it. Our main concern would be that it's blocked off again afterwards as it is now so that it couldn't be used as a parking area in the future.

Regards,
Karen

From: Donnie Chisholm [<mailto:donnie@aigasforest.org.uk>]
Sent: 18 January 2016 16:18
To: 'Karen Botten'; andrewleaver@aol.com
Cc: 'Simon Longman'
Subject: RE: Aigas Community Forest Newsletter

Hi Karen

There aren't any planned location for the glamping site or an outdoor classroom yet. There have been a few ideas (all with their own problems) but somewhere in zone 6 seemed appropriate when the scoping document was being written, though certainly for the outdoor classroom ACF would need to take advice from the school, so this could well change completely depending on what the school needs. As for access, at the moment we are just aiming to maintain the existing trails that are in use (for insurance purposes more than anything) any expansion on this would be pending the development of the access plan which will include its own consultation.

If you mean access from the road for forest operation then, as is marked on the map, we are planning on building a road into the top of the zone for future operations. We would however be looking to use the loop of old road for the first felling and restocking operation, this would be to replace the Spruce and Douglas fir on the flatter ground in the south of zone 6. This would be the most economical way for us to get that timber out. It is starting to show signs of windblow so the worry is that if we waited till we had a road in the top then it would blow and we would have lost that income, hence the urgency. We welcome your thoughts, concerns or comments on this though and indeed on anything else in the scoping document.

Cheers

Donnie

From: Karen Botten [<mailto:karen.kraze@virgin.net>]
Sent: 15 January 2016 14:41

To: andrewleaver@aol.com
Cc: donnie@aigasforest.org.uk; 'Simon Longman'
Subject: RE: Aigas Community Forest Newsletter

Hi Andrew,

I wasn't sure whether to send questions to you or Donnie so I went for both!

Could you please let us know whether there are planned locations or options for the glamping facilities, outdoor classroom and access from the roadside mentioned in relation to Zone 6 of the plan?

Thanks,
Karen

From: andrewleaver@aol.com [<mailto:andrewleaver@aol.com>]
Sent: 14 January 2016 10:31
To: andrewleaver@aol.com
Subject: Aigas Community Forest Newsletter

Please find attached a copy of the latest Aigas Community Forest Newsletter.

We are also delighted to share the outline of our Long Term Forest Plan and to invite feedback. This Plan not only lays out our felling and planting intentions but once approved by Forestry Commission Scotland allows us to undertake our first harvesting operations.

In terms of forest management we would like to convert Aigas Forest to a more diverse woodland incorporating public access and delivering a range of biodiversity benefits, while still generating local jobs and income for management. Our aim is to move, where possible, to continuous cover forestry (CCF), retaining permanent tree cover but producing timber from thinning and selective felling. This will however take some time to achieve

The outline of our plan entered a 28-day period of statutory consultation on January 12th. You can download a copy from our website - www.aigasforest.org.uk/library.asp. Copies are also available to view at Beaully Library, Kilmorack Hall, Aigas Field Centre and Aigas Golf Course or request a copy from the ACF Secretary, North View, Crask of Aigas IV4 7AD. We are also offering a consultation day in the Forest on 30th January with two opportunities to attend. Please take the time to read and comment on our ideas.

Best regards

Andrew

Andrew Leaver
Secretary, Aigas Community Forest

Follow us on Facebook - www.facebook.com/aigascommunityforest

Aigas Community Forest is a registered Scottish charity, No. SC041614

Andrew Leaver

From: PHILIP WEBB <fieldworkuk@btinternet.com>
Sent: 26 January 2016 20:42
To: Donnie Chisholm
Subject: Aigas Community Forest Scoping Response

Dear Donnie

I have read the [Aigas Community Forest Long Term Forest Plan – Scoping](#) document which provides a good description of overall objectives, however, it is disappointing the document does not include greater quantifiable detail of timing and areas planned for felling and restock. I understand the principles of Continuous Cover Forestry do not necessarily include these silvicultural practices, however, CCF does include thinning and not all areas are suitable for CCF.

In the absence of detailed information such as a twenty year phased felling plan and detailed five year work programme, I do not believe it is possible to provide a scoping response in respect of impacts on the local community, wildlife and access provision. In addition it is not possible to ascertain whether the generalised proposals are following best practice guidance for restoration of ancient woodland areas.

I therefore request the scoping exercise should include a specific five year work programme and outline twenty year phased felling and restock plan.

In response to a comment on page three of the document I would like to point out that following the requirements of the UK Forest Standard (UKFS) does not in itself enable ACF to be 'accredited' under the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS). UKWAS is a Standard, not a Certification Scheme. UKWAS is endorsed by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as the Standard to be used in the UK to demonstrate compliance with FSC's International Principles and Criteria. To achieve FSC Certification ACF will have to comply with all UKWAS Indicators (which go way beyond UKFS), and a number of other separately published FSC Standards which, for instance, specify more detailed requirements on use of pesticides and chain of custody documentation for timber sales. As I am a member of the UKWAS Steering Group I would be happy to advise on Certification if you require assistance.

I do not think I will be able to attend the open meeting this weekend but hope you get a good turnout with good weather.

Regards

Phil Webb
07970 388940
01463 782536

Filenote

Forest works group

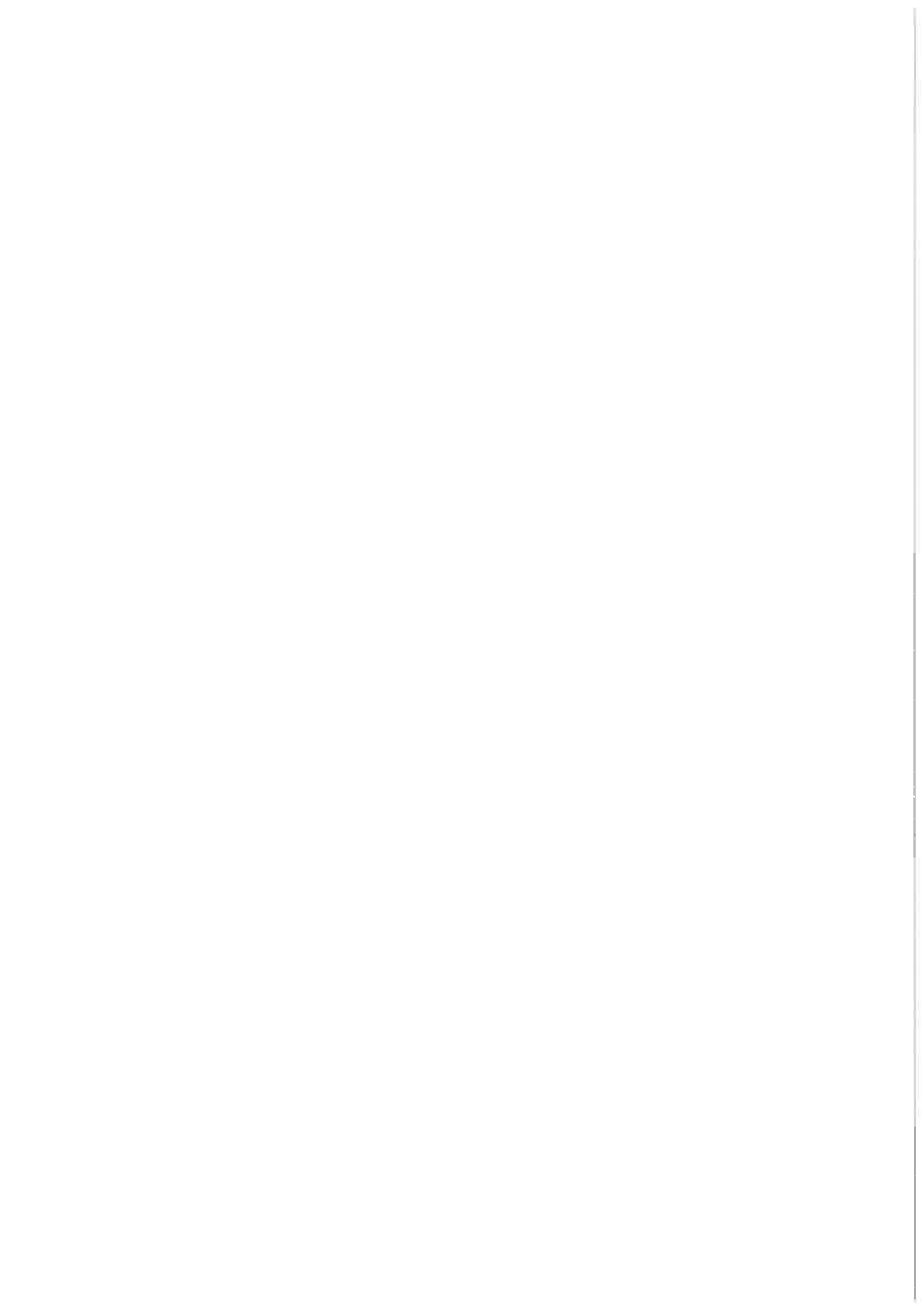
Meeting with Russell Ross, Crask of Aigas Resident.

On the 19th January 2016 I met with Russell at his house in the Crask to discuss his response to the LTFP Scoping document.

Russell's main concern was that wildlife would be disturbed if access in the zones around the Crask (zones 5, 6 & 7) was to be improved and that usage would subsequently increase. He said that he had noticed disturbance to various mammals in these zones in the past, resulting in them moving. He was also concerned by past reports of the raptors being disturbed, including the previous nesting season, resulting in them failing to breed. In his opinion any increase in access in Zone 5 -7 would only add to this. I told Russell that any development of access in these zones would be covered by our access plan (yet to be developed) which would have its own consultation and that for forest operation in these zones we don't have a 'free reign' and that there is legislation that we have to follow in order to minimise disturbance to any protected species, not just the species that he is concerned about.

Russell also expressed concern over the security of the rock netting above the road in Zone 5. He also expressed concern over the safety of a Sitka Spruce growing on the slope above his workshop.

DC



Donnie Chisholm
Development Officer
Aigas Community Forest
Northview
Crask of Aigas
Beauly
IV47AD

By email: Donnie@aigasforest.org.uk

Dear Sirs

Aigas Community Forest Long Term Forest Plan

Thank you for bringing the scoping for the above long term forest plan to the attention of RSPB Scotland please find our comments below.

We are pleased to see that one of the key overarching aims of this plan is to restore former ancient woodland to this site and we see this as one of the core aims of this plan. Another encouraging prospect of this plan is the environmental education aspect and we welcome the opportunity that this forest grants to bringing people, wildlife and the environment together in conjunction with the Aigas Field Centre. The proposed development of a suitable path network with wildlife viewing opportunities at existing key locations together with the suggested events program will help to build a closer relationship with the local community.

We would welcome a robust monitoring process in this plan to ensure that nests are protected within the forest complex. It must be ensured that there is adequate monitoring provision undertaken to safeguard the protection of nest sites. Therefore we would advise that monitoring is carried out before operations take place and that operations avoid the breeding season. Also leaving mature stands of trees within the forest will provide adequate suitable nesting habitat for birds of prey once forest operations are completed.

We recommend that deer fencing is marked to prevent collisions with black grouse. The standard spec would be 600mm width UV stable orange netting, or chestnut pales/sawn timber at 150mm vertical spacing on all fences we would recommend 300mm spaced chestnut pales/sawn timber. Rabbit netting is known to be a barrier to brood movement and we would recommend this is not used unless completely necessary. We also recommend forestry guidance note FCTN019 is adopted with regard to this. Black grouse often utilise wet flushes within the forest as feeding areas for young broods as insect diversity is high in these areas. The creation of glades with the encouragement of natural regeneration and the blocking of any associated drains can enhance suitable black grouse breeding and feeding habitat.

We welcome a constructive deer management plan which will be required in order to establish and maintain any new planting or natural regeneration of native woodland and eventually leads towards the

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Chairman, Committee for Scotland: Professor Collin Galbraith Director, RSPB Scotland: Stuart Housden OBE Regional Director: George Campbell

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removal of unmarked deer fencing. We welcome the collaboration you are seeking with adjacent landowners to achieve a successful program of deer management. We look toward Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to provide appropriate advice with its planning and implementation.

This plan is addressing the key biodiversity issues regarding areas of deep peat. RSPB Scotland feels that planting on deep peat should be avoided on peat exceeding 50cm deep as per Supplementary Guidance Note for FC Forests & Peatland Habitats. A good compromise might be to have a lower planting density of native species on areas of deep peat and to ensure a program of restoration is undertaken which involves drain and furrow blocking to rehydrate and restore deep peat areas whilst retaining scots pines standards to form a more open canopy situation. Given the very high public profile of this forest it could be a great opportunity to showcase examples of peat restoration management.

Yours faithfully

Darrell Stevens

Conservation Officer

South Highland

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