



Appendix XII: Silvicultural Prescriptions

Location

The core recreation area for Leanachan Forest is focused on Gleann Domhanaidh between the North Face car park on the west of the forest and Nevis Range. The old ski access road and the Puggy Line define the width of the corridor and its eastern boundary is around the Allt Criche. It also encompasses the main public access road to the forest and Nevis Range.

The area has been identified through observation, discussion with recreation managers and visitor surveys as being the area of highest public use and potential for further recreation expansion.

Vision

Good quality, well maintained recreation facilities and the quality of the woodland and environment within which they are set are key elements of the visitors' experience and desire to return to the area.

The silvicultural vision for the recreation zone is a woodland of mixed predominantly conifer species and ages and a well-defined riparian area of wet woodland and open space. Additional small scale work along path and forest road edges will be used to create and maintain interest and more open areas.

The Land Management Plan (LMP) shows the area to be managed as a Low Impact Silvicultural System area (LISS). The principle system to be used will be small scale clearfell with thinning of the matrix of trees where possible – called here irregular shelterwood. There will also be some small clearfells within the recreation area (average coupe size 3ha) as not all the stands lend themselves to thinning.

The overall aim is

- a) to develop the riparian corridors with native species as the framework for the area and
- b) to maintain a full range of conifer age groups from newly established to 60+ years with a few veteran trees and stands.

Summary of principles of management for conifer and mixed stands within the interactive zone

Restocking

- Native woodlands along the riparian area are developing well and the main focus here is on removal of exotic conifer and encouraging natural regeneration of native species such as birch, alder, rowan and willow. Oak would be a component of on the drier ground but,

due to the importance of Leanachan as a red squirrel stronghold, oak will not be introduced. Native Scots pine will be planted in small quantities as an alternative.

- On the better soils away from the riparian area the existing Sitka Spruce stands will be replaced with mixed stands of Douglas fir, Grand and Noble firs to achieve greater species diversity in the conifer woodland. These stands must be thinned in the future to allow them to develop into open stands of large, mature trees. They will also contribute to supporting a population of red squirrels.

Young conifer

- Plan for first thinning at the silvicultural optimum i.e. to retain the crown quality
- First thinning should be a line and light matrix thinning
- Subsequent thinning to be crown thinning
- Natural regeneration of Sitka spruce likely to occur over most of the area based on the current observations. Up to 30% of the conifer stand composition as non-native conifer will be accepted but respacing and thinning should favour other species. Within the native woodland up to 15% non-native conifer is accepted.

Existing Mixed Sitka Spruce/Birch stands

- This will be more site specific prescriptions depending on location and long term objectives as well as current age.-
- Where the development of a more coniferous forest is desired preference in thinning will be

Scots pine> Spruce and firs> Lodgepole pine

Mid-rotation conifer

- Main focus to create small group felling areas to develop the age structure and create greater structural diversity.

Summary of principles for management of woodland along linear features in interactive zone

Detailed prescriptions are needed for the trails to develop interest and variety for users. The main structure can be set in a plan but the detail will need to be adapted to the conditions during the operations. The principles for treatments of these zones include -

Road and trail margins

- retain veteran and character trees
- regularly thin the adjacent conifer stands
- where thinning of the whole coupe is not possible - manage a 25m corridor on either side of path (average width) removing suppressed trees and create variable density of trees and species
- create scallops of open ground to vary the crop edge
- thin out dense natural regeneration from edges
- encourage broadleaves along path edges
- open up small burns as features
- create some viewpoint
- remove brash and produce from the 25m corridor

Upland burn riparian areas

- Remove conifers other than veterans, from the burn sides to allow more light to the water and to create features of interest.
- Managing for a mix of open space and native broadleaf will both protect the water quality and provide access opportunities for visitors.