



# Laide and Aultbea Community Woodland



## **Woodland Management Plan 2014 to 2034**

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## SECTION A: DESCRIPTION OF WOODLANDS

### A.1 Property Details

**Table 1 Property Details**

Owner and Applicant	Laide and Aultbea Community Woodland
Agent/Director	Andrew Jackman, Rowan Lodge, Aultbea Ross-shire, IV22 2HU
Payee	Laide and Aultbea Community Woodland C/O Peter Jarosz Lochview House Ormiscraig Aultbea Ross-shire, IV22
Main Location Code	749/0116
Company Registration Number	SC249676
Scottish Charity registered Number	SC034434
Business Reference Number	164283
Forest Plan Area	85.4 hectares

### A.2 Location and Background

➤ **Map 1: Location Map**

Laide & Aultbea Community Woodland (LACW) is a charity registered in Scotland, and a company run entirely by volunteers. LACW directors have managed the woodland since 2003, when it was purchased for the community. The woodland is situated in the West Highlands, in the parish of Gairloch within the area covered by Highland Council. The main meeting point for the woodland is the car park at grid reference NG 894/907.

The woodland, including two inland lochs, extends to 85.4 hectares and is set amongst some of the most dramatic and distinctive scenery in the British Isles and is popular with both locals and visitors to the area. The importance of the surrounding landscape is recognised through the Wester Ross National Scenic Area designation.

The woodland was planted by the Forestry Commission in 1964 and was a predominantly conifer plantation. It also includes 2 Lochs numerous water courses and an abundance of flora and fauna. The Woodland is managed primarily for recreation with biodiversity and conservation also being main objectives. Following extensive storm damage in 2005 a large area of windblown trees has been cleared and replanted with native species under the old SFGS and FRDP schemes.

The next phase of management outlined in this plan will focus on further removal of windblown exotic conifers, management of riparian areas and consolidation of the

existing woodlands. Footpath improvements and the construction of a woodland building will also be investigated.

### **A.3 Existing Schemes**

There are currently no active woodland grant schemes or felling licences for the woodland. Use of SRDP Land Managers Options, (LMO) for Improving Access has been utilised over the previous 5 years

### **A.4 Stakeholder Engagement**

#### **➤ Appendix 1: Laide and Aultbea Community Woodland Scoping Report**

Stakeholders were invited by letter, dated 6<sup>th</sup> October 2013, to comment on the proposals. The scoping report detailing all responses can be found in Appendix 1: "Laide and Aultbea Community Woodland Scoping Report". Although there were no key issues highlighted during this process comments from a previous scoping exercise carried out on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2011 have been included in the 2013 Scoping Report. The main features highlighted during the process were as follows:-

#### **A.4.1 SNH Comments**

- Consideration of native species for commercial use to decrease landscape and biodiversity impacts.
- Potential for the development of a tree nursery.
- Deer control
- Highlighting the NSA that LACW is situated in. Suggested guidelines to be followed
- European Protected Species
- Breeding Birds protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Other species affected by open space and riparian management

SNH also offered sources of information on the management of fresh water pearl mussels and stated their approval of other aspects of the proposed scope.

#### **A.4.2 SEPA Comments**

- Highlighting the Water Framework Directive classified water bodies relating to the site.
- Fresh Water Pearl Mussel management. Highlighting EPS & LBAP status. Suggested liaison with SNH
- Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) should include riparian invaders not just *Rhododendron ponticum*. Suggested liaison with Wester Ross Fisheries Trust.
- Private water supplies
- Redundant Structures which may impact on any watercourses
- Regulatory advice - Highlighting the importance of Forest and Water Guidelines, cultivation/ drainage and riparian zone, oils storage

## A.5 Long Term Vision and Management Objectives

The long term vision for LACW is to continue to protect the unspoilt natural and cultural landscape character, habitats and species whilst encouraging responsible use of the woodland by visitors.

This will be achieved through integration of the following management objectives:

**Table 2 Long Term Vision and Management Objectives**

<b>Heading</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
<b>Silviculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversify age structure</li> <li>• New planting design to create more wind firm boundaries</li> <li>• Restructure non-native plantations to native woodland</li> <li>• Move towards LISS in future</li> <li>• Develop a Deer Policy</li> <li>• Consider Climate change</li> <li>• Consider future pest and disease management (i.e. in selection of species)</li> <li>• Manage Willow copse</li> <li>• Employ a forest manager</li> </ul>
<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income making woodland to help towards Forestry sustainability, to include development of market for Willow, firewood and non-timber forest products.</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve appearance in the landscape.</li> <li>• Improve the internal landscape by removing areas of windblown Lodgepole pine and opening of glades and watercourses.</li> </ul>
<b>Biological</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and enhance as many N&amp;LBAP habitat/species as possible.</li> <li>• Manage habitat for Fresh water pearl mussels as to best practise.</li> <li>• Agreed control of specified invasive species.</li> <li>• Implement Deadwood Policy.</li> <li>• Improve riparian areas</li> </ul>
<b>Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage existing facilities and improve public access</li> <li>• Tree inspections in high access areas.</li> <li>• Develop a woodland building.</li> </ul>
<b>Archaeology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to protect sites of archaeological value and interpret them to the public where possible.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase use for woodland skills training and education</li> <li>• Improve interpretation</li> <li>• Develop series of educational walks.</li> </ul>

## A.6 General Site Description

### A.6.1 Topography

The woodlands are classified as being set on Moorland-Heather, Moorland-Grass Bog Peatland, Plantations-Coniferous. Height ranges from sea level to around 150 metres. The majority of the woodlands have a northerly aspect.

### A.6.2 Geology and Soils

The geology of the area is mainly Torridonian sandstone. The soils are base-poor, consisting largely of peats, peaty gleys, peaty podzols and rankers. Also includes two Lochans and numerous watercourses.

### A.6.3 Climate

A cool, wet and windy oceanic climate prevails. Using data from Forest Research's Ecological Site Classification version 3.0, summer rainfall is 665mm, while winter rainfall is 972mm. Wind is a limiting factor with average DAMS score in excess of 16. Gale force winds are frequent in winter.

### A.6.4 Hydrology

Numerous burns feed into the main Sand burn, which feeds directly into the sea at Laide. There are two freshwater lochs in the centre of the woodlands Loch Na Cathrach Duibhe and Loch Na Creige both draining into Sand burn. All water bodies within the woodlands are at a minimum of 'good ecological status/potential'.

### A.6.5 Public Access / Visitors

#### ➤ Appendix 2: Walking Trail Guide

It is estimated that between 8-10 thousand locals and visitors per annum visit the woodlands.

There is currently a Wildlife hide situated at Loch Na Creige built using funds provided by SNH. A car park is provided at the main entrance with space for 15 cars. A smaller car park is also available on the northern corner however there is limited access from this site.

The interpretive panel in the car park provides a panoramic photo listing the mountains in the background, a brief history and a walking trail guide (*Appendix 2*) showing five way-marked trails that begin from the car park. The main red trail is now listed as a core path. It is proposed to upgrade the existing footpaths during the life of this plan. With the exception of constructing a path linking the northern car park to the main trail it is not proposed to add any further paths, this will allow some parts of the woodland to remain undisturbed. LACW have their own website regularly updated with photos, quarterly newsletters, meeting minutes and future plans. [www.laidewood.org.uk](http://www.laidewood.org.uk)

### A.6.6 Community Building

LACW have for some time envisaged the concept that a building in the woodland would prove an invaluable asset for the local community. The proposal is to erect a simple log cabin type building in the wood designed to fit into the woodland environment incorporating the latest renewable and energy saving systems. This is to be a functional building giving a main area which could be used for display, workshops, meetings etc. Two small offices one for LACW own administration purposes and the other for Tourist information or general community use, a kitchen module and toilets. A simple layout but one that can be added to if necessary later, but one which would fulfil the needs of all the groups using the wood at present and provide a wet weather stance if required. It will also add to the safety of Laide Wood by providing telephone facilities whilst activities are taking place and a comfortable first aid station should any one fall ill or injure themselves.

### A.6.7 Archaeology

No scheduled ancient monuments exist within the woodlands. There is however a small dry stone building known as “the Butts” this would be the target end of a rifle range. Although it is no longer working it all still remains and would have been used by the TA and home guard during World War 11.

### A.6.8 Flora and Fauna

The woodland provides a variety of habitats associated with conifer plantations, waterfalls and watercourses. A brief ecological survey has been carried out by Tania Mackenzie and is detailed below.

Table 3 Flora

Habitat	Species (common name)	Species (scientific name)
<b>Woodlands</b>	Hybrid Larch Sitka spruce Lodge pole pine Scots pine Grand fir Rowan Ash Willow Honeysuckle Wood Sorrel Bluebell	Larix X eurolepis Picea sitchensis Pinus contorta var latifolia Pinus sylvestris Abies grandis Sorbus aucuparia Fraxinus excelsior Salix spp
<b>Open Ground</b>	Heather Bog Myrtle Primrose St.Johns Wort Milkwort Tormentil Butterwort Sundew	

<b>Wet Areas</b>	Speedwell Lesser Celandine Bog Asphodel	
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**Table 4 Fauna**

<b>Birds</b>	<b>Mammals</b>	<b>Insects</b>	<b>Amphibians</b>
Tawny Owl Heron Woodpecker Red Grouse Woodcock Coot Long tailed Tit Great Tit Wren Tree creeper Robin Sparrow (Tree and House) Dunnock Buzzard	Badger Deer (Red and Roe) Fox Mole Otter Pine Martin Stoat Weasel	Dragonfly Dung beetle Whirligig beetle Drinker moth Tiger moth Speckled wood butterfly Water skater Mayfly Midges	Freshwater Pearl Mussels Trout Common eel

#### **A.6.9 Non-Native Species:**

A small amount of *Rhododendron ponticum* exists within the woodland but is not currently spreading. Lodgepole pine is now seeding into the new native woodland blocks and in some cases is suppressing the native broadleaves. Various attempts have been made in the past to eradicate this from the broadleaf blocks using volunteers to hand pull and cut, unfortunately this has had limited success.

#### **A.7 Woodland Description**

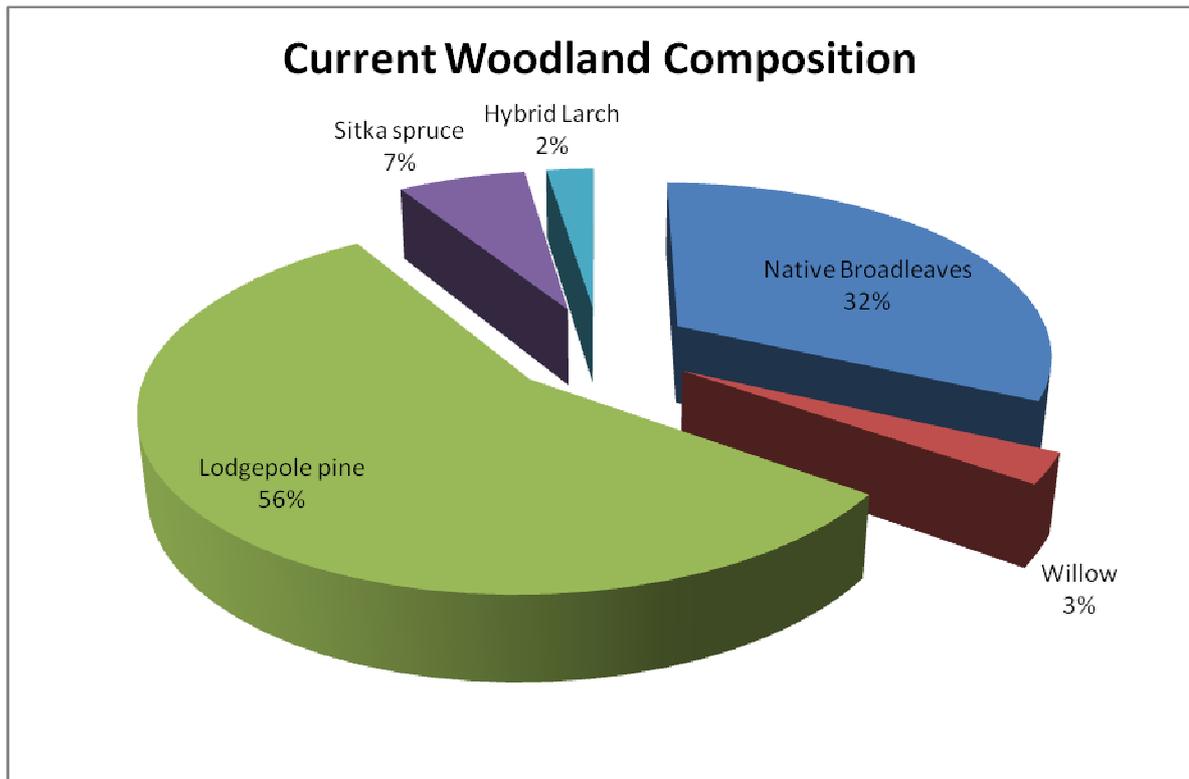
- **Map 2: Woodland Compartments**
- **Map 3: Current Species Map**

The woodlands (without lochs) comprise of eight compartments ranging in size from 1.9 to 21 hectares with a total area of 82.4 hectares. Following severe storm damage in 2005 new native planting schemes have been introduced as part of the re-structuring of the exotic conifers, this currently covers 26.2 hectares, 32% of the total woodland area.

**Table 5 Woodland Description**

No	Name	Woodland Type	Description	Area
1	Willow	Salix viminalis	Willow block planted in 2008 as a trial block for possible use as craft material, bio fuels or cuttings sales.	2.3
2	Field	Block of Lodgepole pine	Planted in 1964 trees have little windblow and act as a screen and protection to the new planting in the adjacent block	3.9
3	Cpt 3	New native planting/Scots pine block	Native planting establishing well, Scots pine planted in 1964 and part thinned in 2012	9.1
4	Cpt 4	Mature Lodgepole pine with occasional Sitka spruce	Severe windblow currently throughout this cpt. Large riparian area in the centre, freshwater pearl mussels found in the watercourses.	20.0
5	Loch na Creige	Mature Lodgepole pine/Sitka spruce, two lochans.	Original planting 1964 most trees in good condition. Waterfall and two lochans contained within this compartment. Small amount of fire damage in northeast corner. Also contains wildlife hide and footpaths.	11.3
6	Sponsor tree	New native planting	Planted in 2007 on a well drained compartment, mainly sessile oak with a mixture of native broadleaves. Lodgepole now starting to become established in this block	2.8
7	Cpt 7	Mature Lodgepole pine/Scots pine	Original 1964 planting mainly Lodgepole pine interspersed with small blocks of Scots pine. Some windblow starting to occur. Fire damaged area on south boundary. Some open ground.	21.0
8	Roadside	New native planting	Southeast facing slope with riparian area at the base. Native broadleaves planted in 2007	12.0

**Table 6 Woodland Composition**



**SECTION B: SURVEY INFORMATION**

➤ **Appendix 3: Moth Survey**

All survey data is available to view from the website:-  
<http://www.laidewood.org.uk/downloads.cfm> or by contacting John Rippin, LACW  
 Director at Aultbea Butchers

**Table 7 Survey Information**

Survey	Surveyor	Date
Freshwater Pearl Mussel Survey:	Dr. Lorna Brown	June 2004
Ecological Survey	Tania Mackenzie	March 2004
Moth Survey	Dr Barry Blake	March 2012
Protected Species Survey	Dr Jeff Lewis	October 2004
Fungi Survey	Bruce Ing	September 2013

## SECTION C: ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION

### C.1 CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS

#### C.1.1 Site Constraints

Table 8 Site Constraints

Factor	Constraints	Opportunities
Soils	Poor nutrient status soils, deep peat and waterlogged areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept that regeneration may take several decades to establish</li> <li>• Monitor the status of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Consider that hand fertilising may be necessary to bring saplings through the establishment stage</li> </ul>
Access	Poor access for future harvesting operations and any machinery access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible use of extraction routes as conversion to footpaths.</li> <li>• Use of low ground impact harvesting machinery</li> </ul>
Windthrow	Soil type, exposure and tree species impacting on tree wind firmness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversion to native broadleaves.</li> <li>• Open planting design.</li> </ul>

#### C.1.3 Visual Impact

Table 9 Visual Impact

Factor	Constraints	Opportunities
Fences	Obtrusive enclosure created within an open landscape.	Top deer fence could be removed once trees have established and can tolerate light deer pressure.
Woodland	Unsympathetic planting and species choice in a visually sensitive area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructure woodland to favour native species and enhance landform features.</li> <li>• Planting design to breakup straight edges.</li> <li>• Leave larch on perimeter to help breakup straight edges</li> </ul>

### C.1.4 Ecological Impact

**Table 10 Ecological Impact**

Factor	Constraints	Opportunities
Windblow and exotic tree species	Limited and/or slow regeneration of native species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program of phased removal of exotic trees and gradual conversion to Native tree species.</li> <li>• All operations will take place out with sensitive periods</li> </ul>
Non-native Species	Lodgepole pine regeneration threatens the integrity of the native woodlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue programme of Lodgepole removal.</li> <li>• Fell to waste.</li> </ul>
Riparian areas	Important for Fresh Water Pearl Mussels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All operations will be in strict accordance with UKFS Forest and Water guidelines.</li> <li>• Introduction of broadleaves and open ground</li> <li>• Clear windblown exotics from watercourses</li> </ul>

### C.1.5 Herbivore Impact

**Table 11 Herbivore Impact**

Factor	Constraints	Opportunities
Deer	Browsing from resident deer population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With a deer fence there is very little damage from deer.</li> <li>• Monitor damage on a regular basis</li> </ul>
Mink	Threat to native species	Use of mink traps, currently none found but they are in the area

## C.2 LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

### C.2.1 Landscape Assessment

LACW is set in the Wester Ross National Scenic Area, recognising the significance of the landscape in a national content. The woodland is set within the corridor between the villages of Laide and Aultbea and can be viewed from the main A832 on the approach to Laide from the north.

The straight edges of the boundary of the woodland are broken up with larch planted on the west side, future felling and restructuring will soften the edges of the remaining boundaries by planting with native broadleaves.

### C.2.2 Concept Design

One of the Community Woodlands key objectives is the gradual conversion of the mainly exotic tree species to native broadleaf/Scots pine woodland. This would increase biodiversity and visitor enjoyment and develop the woodlands as an important asset for the community.

There are many watercourses throughout the woodlands and the area to be clear felled will be re-stocked taking into consideration the riparian areas.

Areas of trees damaged by a fire in 2009 will be felled to improve the visual impact both from the woodland walks and the main road.

A building is proposed to be erected adjacent to the main car park details of this are covered in A.6.6 Community Building.

There is currently an area of 2.3ha planting with *Salix viminalis* this could provide an opportunity for establishing a micro business, using this plantation for weaving, huddle making, firewood, willow slip sales etc.

An opportunity also exists to develop and interpret the WW11 rifle butts perhaps as part of the WW11 trail that exists around Loch Ewe.

## SECTION D: MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

### D.1 Silvicultural Policy

Conversion to mainly native woodland over the next 50 years. Priority will be given to Sessile oak where planting conditions allow. Riparian areas will be sensitively planted using native broadleaves and open glades. A small pocket of willow will be retained for use by the community and a small area of Norway spruce will be planted as a Christmas tree crop. The felling of the remaining exotic conifers mainly Lodgepole pine may be determined by natural process but the first phase will be carried out during this plan.

### D.2 Prescriptions

- **Map 4: Felling/Thinning Plan**
- **Map 5: Restocking Map**

### D.2.1 Restructuring Felling and Planting

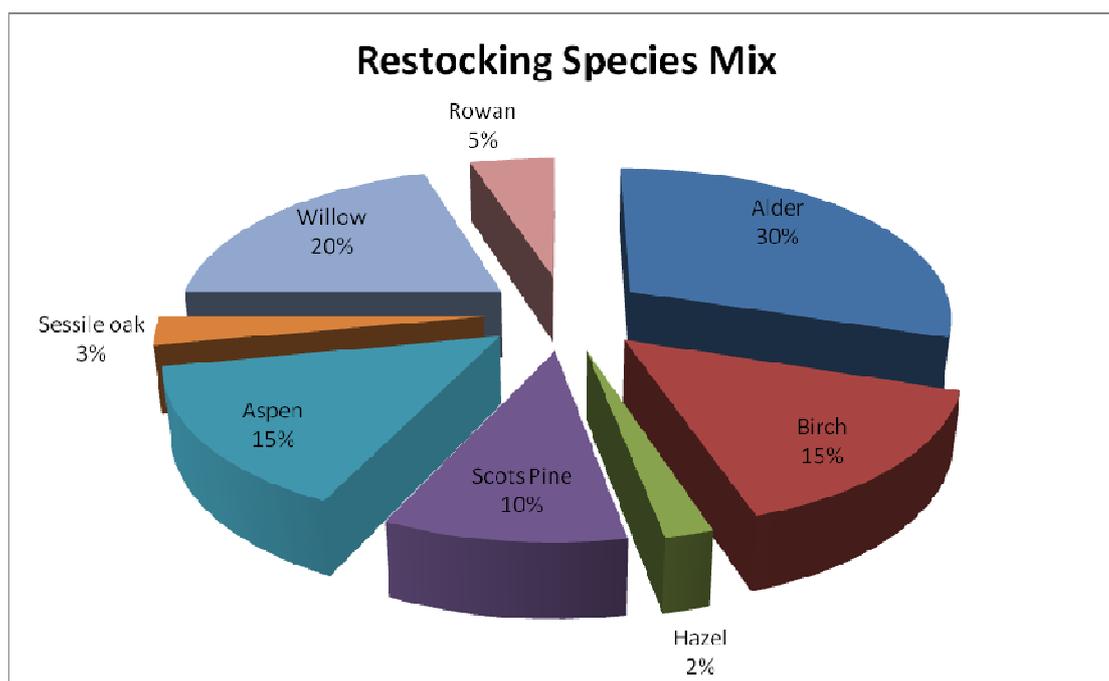
All restocking will be carried out within 5 years of clear fell. Stocking densities will be a minimum 1,600 per ha for Scots pine and 1,100 per ha for broadleaves, planted at variable densities as suits micro-site conditions. Restock site will be monitored and maintained throughout the establishment phase, with losses being replaced to maintain the stocking density. All restocking will be achieved by planting. Planting positions will be prepared by brush raking and shallow excavator mounding.

Seed zone 102 will be used for all native stock. Should this seed zone be unavailable an adjacent seed zone will be used and the FCS guidance note followed. Prior to adjacent seed zones or any other seed being used FCS will be consulted to agree what zone should be used.

**Compartment 4:** 20 hectares of exotic conifers mainly Lodgepole pine will be clear felled in phase one. The estimated volume is approximately 1760m<sup>3</sup>. The timber will be tendered as a standing sale and worked with low ground impact harvester/forwarder. Site access is via The Smiddy car park and loading area. This site is extremely boggy and contains sensitive riparian areas and will prove to be difficult to clear. The advantages far outweigh the difficulties of extraction with the re- development of the riparian area. It is expected that costs of felling this block will result in a loss to the Community Woodland and all avenues will be looked into at ways to raise sufficient funds to undertake this operation.

Restocking will consist of mixed native broadleaves and Scots pine. Most of the site consists of peaty podzols where peat depth increases to > 50cms, species choice will be limited to birch, willow, rowan and alder, where peat depth is shallower an element of Scots pine can be introduced. Species percentages are shown on the table below. On the riparian areas planting advice will be taken from Wester Ross Fisheries and SNH.

**Table 12 Compartment 4 Restock Species Mix**



**Fire Damaged Area (Compartment 7e):** The fire damaged pine adjacent to Loch Na Cathrach Duibhe will be felled and the timber utilised for local firewood. As this is a small area with easy access restocking will be with Norway spruce

### **D.2.2 Thinning**

Thinning will use motor manual felling and low impact extraction methods with resulting timber used by the Community Woodland Saw mill or locally for firewood.

All thinning blocks are small Scots pine compartments with a total area of 1ha, these will be selectively thinned to encourage fuller crown development and increase the amenity value of the stands. Approximate volume = 44m<sup>3</sup>.

### **D.2.3 Enrichment Planting**

There will be some minor enrichment planting carried out in compartments 3, 6, and 8.

### **D.2.4 Deer Management**

As the woodland is deer fenced browsing is not an issue. Regular checks are carried out on the fence condition and newly planted trees.

## D.2.5 Public Access

### ➤ *Map 6: Access Map*

LACW will continue to welcome public access by maintaining and enhancing the established visitor facilities and events programme.

Hazardous tree surveys will continue to be carried out. Recommended works will be undertaken as identified by the surveys.

## D.2.6 Non-native Species Removal

Lodgepole pine now establishing on the native planting sites will be felled to waste. There are currently no other threats.

## D.3 Summary of Operations

**Table 12 Summary of Operations**

Phase	Location	Restructure Planting	Restructure Felling	Thinning (Ha)
		(Ha)	(Ha)	
Phase 1: 2014 - 2018	Compartment 4		20.0	
	Compartment 3a			1.1
	Fire Damaged Area, Cpt 7e		0.8	
Phase 2: 2019 – 2023	Compartment 4	20.0		
	Compartment 7a			0.5
Phase 3: 2024 – 2028				
Phase 4: 2029 – 2034				
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>20.0</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>1.6</b>

## D.4 Tolerance Table

Table 13 Tolerance Table

	<b>Adjustment to felling period*</b>	<b>Adjustment to felling coupe boundaries</b>	<b>Timing of restocking</b>	<b>Changes to species</b>	<b>Changes to road lines</b>	<b>Designed open space**</b>
<b>FC Approval normally not required</b>	Fell date can be moved with 5 year period.  Where separation or other constraints are met.	1.0 ha or 10% of coupe area – whichever is less.	Up to 2 planting seasons after felling.	Change within species group eg evergreen conifers or broadleaves.		Location of temporary open space eg deer glades if still within overall Open Space design.  Increase by 0.5ha or 5% of area – whichever is less.
<b>Approval of exchange by letters and map</b>		1.0 ha to 5 ha or 10% of coupe area – whichever is less			Additional felling of trees not agreed in plan.  Departures of >60m in either direction from centre line of road.	Increase of 0.5ha to 2ha or 10% - whichever is less.  Any reduction in open space.
<b>Approval by formal plan amendment may be required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Felling delayed into second or later 5 year period.</li> <li>•Advance felling into current or 2<sup>nd</sup> 5 year period.</li> </ul>	> 5ha or 10% of coupe area.	Over 2 planting seasons after felling.	Change from specified native species.  Change between species group.		More than 2ha or 10%.  Any reduction in open space in sensitive areas.  Colonisation of open areas agreed as critical.

\* Felling sequence must not compromise UKFS advice on adjoining crops.  
Felling progress and impact will be reviewed against UKFS at mid term review.

\*\* Tolerances subject to an overriding maximum of 20% open ground.

**Appendix 1:**

**Laide and Aultbea Community Woodland Scoping Report**

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**Appendix 2:**  
**LACW Walking Trails**

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**Appendix 3:  
Moth Survey**

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**Appendix 4:**

**Maps**

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