



Tilhill
Forestry

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Scoping Information

Balinoe

Long Term Forest Plan

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This document contains important information from the proposed long-term forest management plan.

Consultees are asked to respond by **4PM on 1st December 2025** with any additional comments or currently unidentified key issues to be considered to:

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1. Description of Forest and Plan Outline.

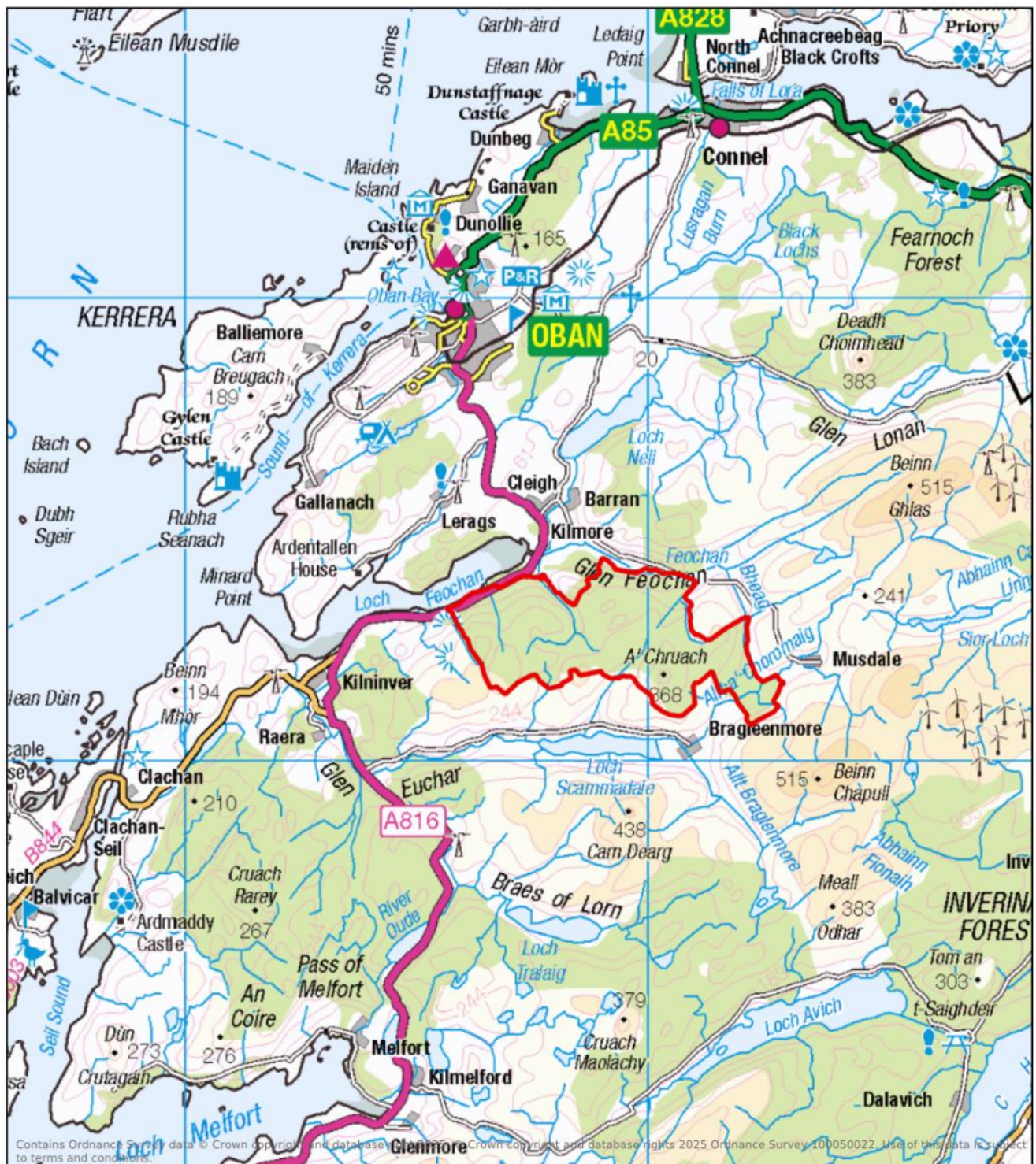


Figure 1: Balnoe Location

Balnoe Forest is situated 8 miles south of Oban at the head of Loch Feochan, and extends to 1326.7 Ha. The woodland is bound by the A816 on its north-western flank, Glen Scammadale in the south and Musdale in the north and east.

It is owned by an individual who has owned the forest since 2011 and has employed Tilhill to manage their forest since acquisition. Balnoe was an old farm acquired by The Forestry Commission and planted from the mid 1970's to the early 1990's.

A map detailing the location can be found in Appendix 1.

The main access is from the A816 near Dalmara Cottage. NM 864 237

The following Ordnance Survey Maps cover the area:

- 1: 50,000 OS Landranger Map sheet 49 - *Oban & East Mull*

10 years ago, the forest comprised 57% Sitka spruce (SS), 21% open ground (OG), 15% Larch spp, 3% broadleaves (MB) and the remaining 4% other conifer species (OC), with almost two thirds having been planted in the 1970's. Now, the 1326.7ha comprises x% SS, x% OG, x% JL, x% MB and x% OC.

This new plan will review management actions that may be required due to changes in conditions in the forest (e.g. for climate change future proofing, impacts of windblow / pest & disease, etc.), with the effects of *Phytophthora ramorum* having had a significant impact on the last plan period.

The updated LTFP sets out the planned operations for the next 20 years in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS). The Owner's objectives are as follows:

- To obtain the maximum possible financial return from the growing crop through sustainable harvesting and restocking, and the practice of sound silviculture.
- To maintain and, where possible, enhance the landscape contribution, amenity and conservation value of the forest and to protect identified ancient monuments.
- To develop and maintain the biodiversity of the forest with the objective of creating a sustainable, balanced and dynamic forest ecosystem capable of supporting sustained timber yields.
- To safeguard the ecological status of water flowing in natural watercourses within the forest.
- To manage the forest in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS).
- To manage the forest sustainably in accordance with the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme Standard (UKWAS), ensuring that it is FSC and/or PEFC certified.

This forest is currently managed under the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and will continue to be so.

Species by Woodland Area

The current species mix in Balinoe is per the following tables:

Table 1 - Current Species

Species	Area (ha)	%
Sitka spruce	771.15	58.14%
Larch	74.78	5.64%
Douglas fir	21.87	1.65%
Lodgepole pine	24.82	1.87%
Other conifer	13.19	0.99%
Restock Areas	35.77	2.70%
Mixed broadleaves	57.34	4.32%
Open ground	327.37	24.68%
Total	1326.29	100.00%

Table 2 - Current Species Categories

Species Categories	Area (ha)	%
SS	771.15	58.14%
XC	134.65	10.15%
MB	57.34	4.32%
OG	327.37	24.68%
RS	35.77	2.70%
Total	1326.29	100.00%

Topography

Topographically the property is diverse with all aspects represented. The predominant aspect is northerly as it slopes down to Loch and Glen Feochan. Elevation at Balinoe ranges from close to sea level along the northern boundary with the A816 trunk road adjacent to Loch Feochan rising to 366m at the peak of A'Cruach.

Geology and Soils

The majority of Balinoe falls within map unit 501 (Soil Survey of Scotland, Macaulay land Use Research Institute) with peaty gleys dominating and peaty podzols on the steeper ground. The parent material occurs as till in embankments in valleys and on hillsides.

The remainder falls within map unit 479 to the lower elevations at the north, it is dominated by brown forest soils with substantial amounts of brown rankers.

Hydrology

The majority of Balinoe sits on a ridge running east to west with many water courses flowing from the ridge to the extremities of the forest. The largest water course in the forest is the Eas Raineach which bisects the forest along the route of the Core Path before turning west and heading onto the Loch Dubh plateau. The Eas Raineach exits the forest to the NW out into the neighbour's land at Feochan Estates. This is a very steep water course and has the potential to carry a lot of water in spate and is therefore vulnerable to diffuse pollution.

Due to the steep face of the forest along Loch Feochan, there are many steep watercourses all flowing into the loch. There is the Allt Cnipoich Mor in the west and the Eas Mor which helps drain the Loch Dubh plateau. Heading east round to Craigentaggart, there is the Craigentaggart Burn and the Eas na Conghair. Again, both very steep and both are vulnerable to diffuse pollution. The next major water course is the Allt Easna h-Airigh. Most of the river does not flow inside the forest boundary but many of its tributaries and head water do. This water course is less vulnerable as there will not be much in the way of adjacent forestry activity.

In the Braglenbeg section of the forest there is the Feochan Bheag watercourse running along the boundary with its head waters based in the A'Chruach hill. The main water course in this section of forest is the Allt a' Choromaig which flows from the NE to the SW. This is a water course that can carry large volumes of water from the entire Musdale catchment. It is often in spate when there are large amounts of rain fall. Due to the nature of this water course, it is vulnerable to diffuse pollution.

The last major water course is the Eas Ruuadh which flows south out of Balinoe, through Scammadale. Like all the burns in Balinoe it is steep, and its head waters are more vulnerable to diffuse pollution than the lower sections, as the lower sections flow through a new woodland creation site.

All the water courses in Balinoe are mapped and are monitored throughout adjacent operations. When works are planned and implemented the most up to date version of the Soil and Forest Water Guidelines are adhered to. Also, mitigation plans for high-risk operations (e.g harvesting) have to be in place and approved by the landowner representative before any works commence.

Adjacent Land Use

The adjacent land use is agriculture on all sides of the forest, predominantly sheep and cattle farming. There are small gatherings of houses at various points around the forest, all of which will be consulted as part of this plan.

2. Consultees

The Forest Plan process will require consultation with the following Statutory consultees and interested parties:

- Argyll and Bute Council (Historic Environment Department, Roads Department, Planning Department)
- Forestry and Land Scotland
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Kilmore & Kilbride Community Council
- NatureScot
- RSPB
- Scottish Forestry
- Scottish Raptor Study Group
- Scottish Water
- SEPA
- Timber Transport Forum
- West of Scotland Archaeology Service

Neighbouring Landowners/Householders & Other interested parties:

- Scammadale Farm
- Glen Feochan Estate
- Kilbride Farm
- Braglanbeg Farm
- Barndromin Farm
- Residential Neighbours
- Stalking Syndicate

3 Designations

Ancient Woodlands - The Native Woodland Survey of Scotland¹ (NWSS) surveyed all native woods and near-native woods currently present on ancient woodland sites, as well as all other planted woods on ancient woodland sites (PAWS). Ancient woodlands usually have a high value for natural and cultural heritage because of their long history of continuous woodland cover. Ancient and semi-natural woods (i.e. those where the current stands appear to be naturally regenerated rather than planted) are the woodland category that generally has the highest

¹ [Scottish Forestry Map Viewer \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

biodiversity value.

There are areas of Ancient Woodlands of Semi Natural Origin and Long Existing Woodlands of Plantation Origin along the North face of the forest, with the majority coinciding with streams feeding down to River Nell and/or Loch Feochan

These areas provide core areas of habitat and biodiversity within the Estate and so will be managed for these attributes, with felling only occurring if there is a need under health and safety or pest and disease concerns (i.e. windblow, or ash dieback making a tree unsafe).

No other formal designations are assigned within the forest boundary

Table 3 - Designations

Designation Type e.g. SSSI, Scheduled Ancient Monument, Shellfish waters, Habitat or Species Biodiversity Action Plan	Site Name e.g. Barry Buddon links, Finlaggan castle,	Designated Feature Affected e.g. Atlantic Oakwood, black grouse, marsh fritillary, Grade 1 building, sensitive water body	Management Activity impacting on feature e.g. track, change in grazing management, new planting	Nature of Impact Pos/neg provide further detail in Sections 1.2 – 1.5
Habitat Action Plan	Balinoe	Native Woodland	Long Term Forest Plan	Positive
Habitat Action Plan	Balinoe	Planted Coniferous Forest	Long Term Forest Plan	Positive
Habitat Action Plan	Balinoe	Rivers and Streams	Long Term Forest Plan	Positive
Ancient Woodland	Balinoe	Long-Established of Plantation Origin Ancient of Semi-Natural Origin	Long Term Forest Plan	Positive

4 Ecological interests

Argyll & Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Habitat Action Plan for Planted Coniferous Forest. This HAP cited the threats to this habitat as:

- Wind-throw and fire.
- Uniform age and species composition of forests.
- Damage by pests and disease.
- Potential for shorter rotations due to improvement made in species/timber research.

The impacts cited are:

- Loss of timber.
- Reduction of suitable habitat for key species.

The objectives stated to maintain and improve this habitat are:

1. Ensure that at least 1% of existing conifer woodland is set aside as long-term retention to improve diversity.
2. Monitor progress with re-structuring conifer forests.

Habitat Action Plan for Native Woodlands. Semi natural woodlands provide a habitat for a range of key species including Bats, Red squirrel, Pine Marten, Fungi and Lichens which are likely to utilise the habitat provided by some of the native woodlands on the lower slopes to the north of Balinoe.

The objectives stated to maintain and improve this habitat are:

1. To maintain and enhance the condition of existing Native woodland.
2. To expand the area of Native woodland, through restructuring.
3. Control of invasive species e.g. *Rhododendron ponticum*.

Habitat Action Plan for Rivers and Streams. This HAP cites the threats to this habitat as:

- Physical modification and management for drainage or flood prevention.
- Abstraction of water.
- Diffuse or point source pollution.
- Use of adjoining land for intensive agriculture.
- Mineral extraction.
- The spread of non-indigenous species.

The renewed Long Term Management Plan for Balinoe will identify and review the ecological threats as they apply to the forest, and it will set out objectives and work proposals that will mitigate against the impacts resulting from the stated threats and help this woodland meet the biodiversity objectives.

Whilst further survey may identify other key species that utilise the habitats provided by Balinoe the following are known to be present:

1. Bats
2. Lichen
3. Red Squirrel
4. White Tailed Eagle
5. Golden Eagle

In all cases, the renewed Long Term Management Plan will identify and review the ecological and environmental threats as they apply to these species and it will set out objectives and work proposals that will mitigate against the impacts resulting from the stated threats and help this woodland contribute to their conservation in future.

Deer Management

A deer management plan to protect the restock of trees will be included within the Long Term Forest Plan.

5 Historical and Cultural Interests

There are 15 National Monument Record of Scotland (NMRS)/Scottish Site & Monument Record sites within Balinoe or surrounding the perimeter. None of these are recorded as Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings.

These are summarised below:

Table 4 - Archaeological Features

ID	Longitude	Latitude	WoSAS_Pin	Site_name	Type
1	189900	723600	1154	Craigentaggart	Cup and ring markings
2	190330	723240	1376	Allt Eas na h-alrigh	Shieling huts
3	190450	723350	1376	Allt Eas na h-alrigh	Shieling huts
4	190455	724091	62669	Dalnacabaig	Clearance cairn
5	190569	724094	62669	Dalnacabaig	Clearance cairn
6	190573	724127	62669	Dalnacabaig	Clearance cairn
7	190573	724176	62669	Dalnacabaig	Clearance cairn
8	190614	724114	62669	Dalnacabaig	Clearance cairn
9	190625	724119	62669	Dalnacabaig	Clearance cairn
10	190637	724120	62669	Dalnacabaig	Clearance cairn
11	190665	724101	62669	Dalnacabaig	Clearance cairn
12	185750	723250	1153	Knipoch	Platforms
13	186410	723520	12983	Knipoch	Building
14	189210	723750	44506	Craigentaggart burn	Structure wall
15	189670	723150	44505	Eas na Conghair	Shieling hut

For features that lie within the planned restock areas, an appropriate buffer zone will be applied at the time of restocking to further mitigate any risk from future operations.

Furthermore, the coffin stone, located at NM 89042 22253 along the old coffin route will also be preserved for its historical interest.

All further forestry work will be conducted in a manner that protects, and conserves features of historical and cultural interests, and due diligence undertaken before any forestry work to identify any new features that may still be unidentified.

6 Landscape Interests

The most prominent view of Pennyghael is from across *Loch Feochan* to the North, with the views from the South generally masked by the topography. There are also some filtered (by topography and vegetation) views from the A816 and the village of Kilmore.

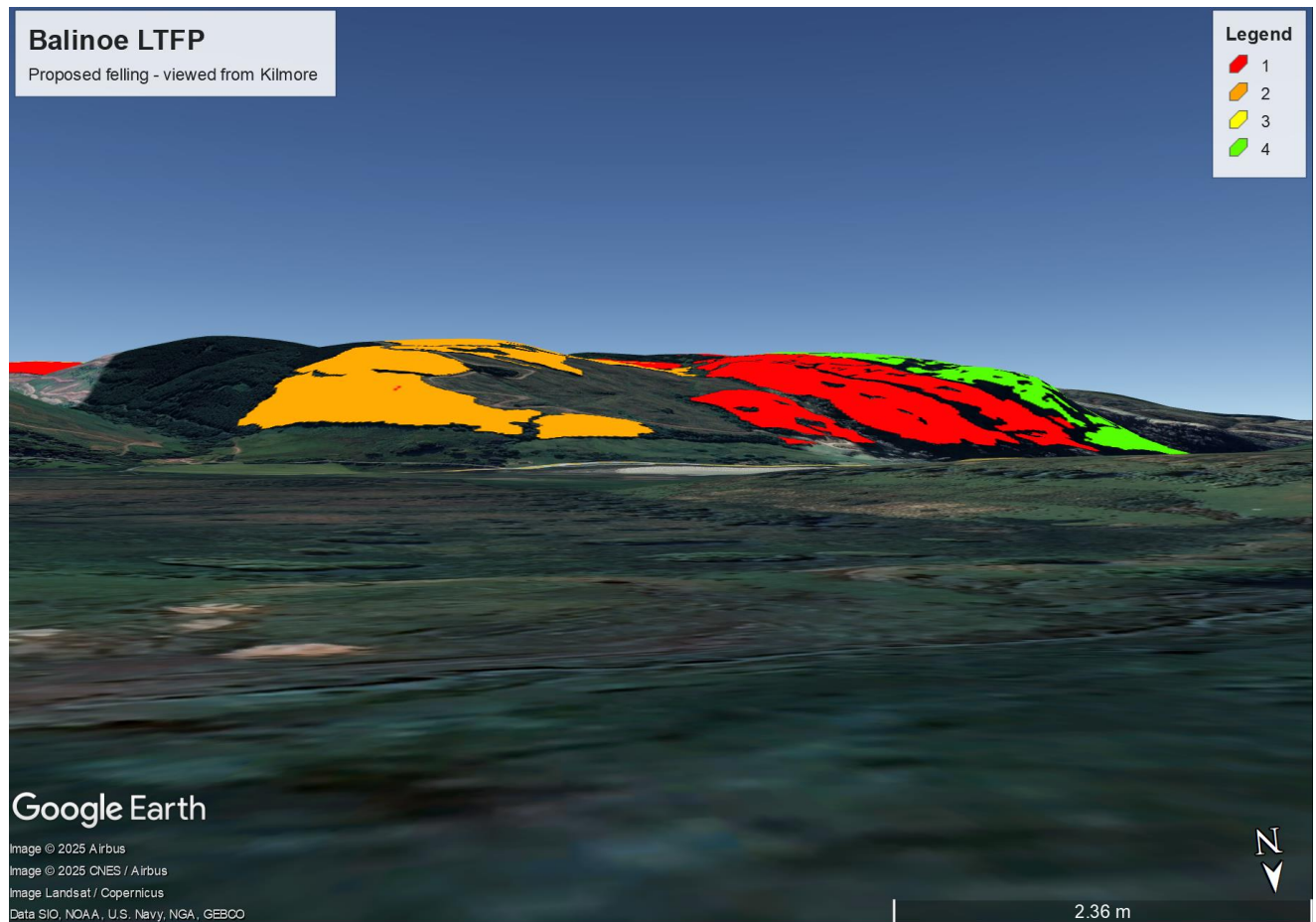


Figure 1 - Front face felling proposals viewed from point near Kilmore.

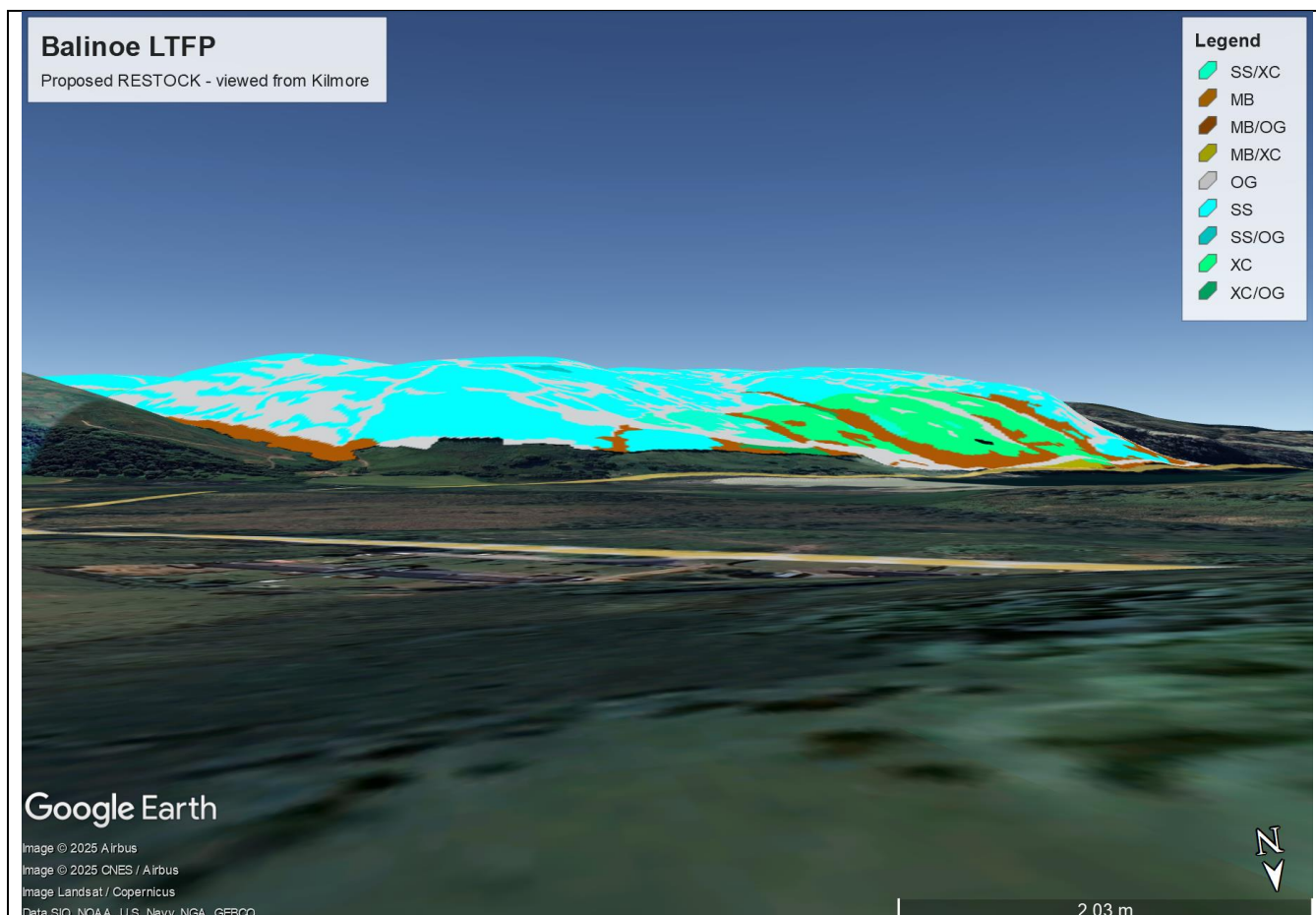


Figure 2 - Front face restocking proposals viewed from point near Kilmore.

The renewal of the forest plan will allow the potential landscape impact of planned forestry operations to be considered and an appropriate level of landscape design to be carried out, though the above visualisations show the proposed drafts in the landscape to aid consultees prior to commenting.

Landscape Character Assessment²

Landscape Character Type 57: Rugged Craggy Coast and Islands - The Craggy Coast and Islands Landscape Character Type encompasses the coastal area of rocky crags and lochs between Oban and Loch Craignish, and the near shore islands of Kerrera, Seil, Luing and Shuna. It also includes many of the offshore islands to the south and west of these areas. Outcrops of slate have produced a distinctive coastline and islands with a long history of slate quarrying on Seil and Luing.

Key Characteristics

- Small scale, diverse topography and complex landform.
- Distinct seascape context.
- Undulating, low moorland with low coastal cliffs and distinctive dark ledges of slate jutting into the sea.
- Intricate, deeply indented coastline of narrow sea lochs, long fragmented peninsulas and chains of rocky off-shore islands.
- Slanting rock strata are prominent and are reflected in the wedge-shaped form of the outlying islands.
- Open rocky moorland predominates, with pockets of pasture on more fertile land near villages. • Well settled and well frequented.
- Extensive broadleaf woodland, small settlements, farmland and policy landscapes on more sheltered sections of coast. Otherwise few trees.

² [Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions | NatureScot](#)

- Patches of bog and peaty marsh in low-lying hollows.
- Few trees, except near settlements.
- Distinctive slate stone walls.

Landscape Character Type 40: Craggy Upland - Argyll – The Craggy Upland - Argyll Landscape Character Type is found in several locations in the north and north-west of Argyll and Bute. It forms a higher core area which comprises an irregular upland plateau lying either side of and around the head of Loch Awe, a smaller area north of Loch Creran, on the south-east peninsula of Mull in the Loch Spelve area, and on the upland cliffs of the Kyles of Bute.

Key Characteristics

- Upland moor with irregular, rather amorphous landform.
- Rounded knolls, rock outcrops and numerous lochs in low-lying hollows and glens.
- Open moorland predominates, but extensive conifer plantations camouflage the landscape pattern in some areas.
- Oak-birch woodland on lower slopes.
- Stone walls enclose an irregular patchwork of pastures within glens on margins of moorland.
- Isolated farmsteads and small villages in sheltered sites within glens.
- Numerous archaeological remains, often concentrated on rounded knolls on lower slopes.
- Historic intricate, irregular landscape pattern in glens.

7 Access [Appendix 1]

Although various servitude rights of access exist in title, the primary access for all forest management and harvesting purposes is the access shared access with Dalmara Cottage and Cala na Sith from the A816 located at grid reference NM 86484 23730. Any other access points are not proposed for use by heavy vehicles, though they may be used for forest management purposes.

Where access is shared ongoing maintenance is according to use, though it is recognised that timber haulage will be the primary driver for required maintenance.

There is one historic Public Right of Way, through the forest known as The Coffin Road from Glenfeochan to Scammadale, which has been adopted by Argyll & Bute Council as a Core Path - C172(a) - Loch Feochan to Loch Scammadale.

The forest owner recognises their obligations under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to passively permit responsible access and to carry out all forest operations responsibly and with consideration to people exercising their access rights.

8 Felling and Restructuring [Appendices 3 & 4]

Whilst a plan has been in place for the last 10 years, initial plans changed significantly due to the rise in *Phytophthora ramorum* infections in the locality and the extent of Larch planted through the forest area. As such, draft felling proposals have been formulated by trying to remove as much of the Larch as early as possible, and given that the larch is planted in groups within Spruce crops at all corners of the forest, this has resulted in the felling programme, along with some individual coups being slightly larger than they otherwise would have been. Beyond removing the risk of *P. ramorum*, the next objective for the commercial areas will be to maximise on the financial value of the timber asset.

A draft felling plan can be seen in Appendix 3. The areas proposed for felling, and their size in relation to the forest area are shown in the tables below:

Table 5 - Fell Phase Areas Felled Areas Only)

Fell Phases	Area (ha)	% of forest
Phase 1	169.06	12.75%
Phase 2	193	14.55%
Phase 3	88.67	6.69%
Phase 4	110.81	8.36%
Total Felled Area	561.54	42.34%
Total Forest Area	1326.23	100.00%

Table 6 - Fell Phase Areas (Entire Forest)

Fell Phases	Area (ha)	% of forest
Phase 1	169.06	12.75%
Phase 2	193	14.55%
Phase 3	88.67	6.69%
Phase 4	110.81	8.36%
Mid-Rotation	407.52	30.73%
Restock Areas	33.73	2.54%
Long Term retention	14.48	1.09%
Natural Reserve	33.82	2.55%
Open Ground	275.14	20.75%
Total	1326.23	100.00%

The restructuring of Balinoe will be managed according to UKFS and to UKWAS, which require minimum areas of open ground, native broadleaves and maximum proportions for monocrops. These have recently changed, with greater emphasis on diversity in the current version of UKFS meaning that all clear-felled woodlands will be more species and habitat diverse following clear fell and restocking.

UKFS stipulates the need to protect watercourses and private water supplies through harvesting and all other forestry operations. These will be identified through pre commencement meetings and risk assessed according to the operation being conducted.

As such the restocking proposals (see Appendix 4) incorporate greater open ground to protect watercourses and water supplies. Additionally, due to the large areas of Larch, that were expected to be retained for diversity now being felled, there is a need to introduce more diversity to make up the difference. This will be achieved through increased planting of broadleaved area, and the introduction of four new diverse conifer coups.

The first of these 2 coups are located on the slopes to the north of the forest, and have been selected both for the better soils present, and as the introduction of different colours and textures in these areas will have a positive landscape impact, in helping to break up the Sitka spruce within the most prominent view of the forest (as the larch had done in the previous rotation).

Additionally, all 4 have been selected due to their proximity to the road, reflecting the increased management input required in establishing diverse conifers, and they have been selected as large distinct areas, as opposed to smaller areas spread throughout the forest, to enable them to be fenced if deer management cannot be undertaken to the level required for successful establishment.

Species selection in these areas will be finalised post harvesting, when fuller analysis of the sites soils and conditions can be undertaken. These are currently shown on the restocking map as XC, but it is expected that Noble fir (or other fir species) and Western red cedar will be utilised on the front face for maximum contrast with the surrounding SS, and greater landscape impact. Scots pine and Norway spruce will likely be used on the southern area where conditions are suited. The remaining areas are of varying site conditions and are likely to contain Lodgepole pine on the flatter, wetter parts of the site, with Serbian spruce, and possibly some of the other species listed above, on the better areas. Final species mixes on these sites will be put to Scottish Forestry for approval prior to planting taking place.

Based on the proposals, the restock composition (area equivalent to the sum of all 4 felling phases) is shown in Table 7 below, with the resulting forest composition shown in Table 8.

Table 7 - Restock Areas (Felled Areas Only)

Species	Area (ha)	%
SS	477.82	85.09%
XC	33.97	6.05%
MB	29.47	5.25%
OG	20.28	3.61%
Total	561.54	100.00%

Table 8 - Restock Areas (Whole Forest Composition at Year 20)

Species	Area (ha)	%
SS	826.87	62.35%
XC	113.71	8.57%
MB	85.39	6.44%
OG	300.26	22.64%
Total	1326.23	100.00%

Total other species (non-SS)	199.10	15.01%
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9 Summary of Key Issues (Updated following consultation)

10 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Map: Balinoe Location & Access

Appendix 2 – Map: Balinoe Concept Map

Appendix 3 – Map: Draft Balinoe Felling Map

Appendix 4 – Map: Draft Balinoe Restocking Map