

INTEGRATED LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

CASHEL FOREST

March 2017

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The Royal Scottish Forestry Society Forest Trust

1. Preface

This Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) has been produced for Cashel Forest by the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority in partnership with the Royal Scottish Forestry Society (RSFS) Forest Trust, which owns and manages the land at Cashel, all with the aim of agreeing actions to improve the financial and environmental sustainability of the land holding of Cashel and enhancing the delivery of the aims of the RSFS Forest Trust.

The aims of the ILMP are:

- to provide a strategic context and framework for the land holding at Cashel;
- to advise on how best to join-up or integrate the various land uses on a landscape scale, both within the single land holding of Cashel and those of the neighbouring land holding interests to their mutual benefit; and
- to help the land manager deliver optimum public benefits as defined by their objectives yet underpinned by a viable economic return, where possible, from the land holding.

1.1. Introduction to the Holding

Cashel is located on the east side of Loch Lomond, 5km north of Balmaha and is owned by the charitable Forest Trust Company of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society. It is managed by a board of directors.

The site was purchased in 1996 with a grant from the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust and the primary aim is to demonstrate the restoration and regeneration of Scotland's native woods through sound forestry practice, all for the benefit of the public.

The area of Cashel is 1253 ha comprising mainly hill ground and woodland with a small area of in-bye. The hill ground, approximately 850 ha, has been traditionally managed as hill livestock grazing, though there has been no domestic livestock grazing for 20 years.

Appendix 1 gives more information about the holding.

2. Vision & Objectives

2.1. Long-term Vision

The Trust's key aims are the promotion of education, outreach, recreation and public amenity. Appendix 2 provides a list of services that Cashel provides both to the market and in terms of public benefits. Cashel is a "*project designed to restore and regenerate Scotland's native woods to their original splendour through sound forestry practice.*"

The long-term vision for Cashel, at the end of the next 20 years, would ideally lead to the following outcomes:

- Woodland cover has increased from 2016 levels through natural regeneration and additional planting providing shelter as well as biodiversity, landscape and flood management benefits;
- Silvicultural thinning has been fully implemented in the areas with timber production potential supporting local timber utilisation and fuel for heating all the buildings at Cashel;
- A fully-functioning Visitor Centre has been developed servicing many different groups of people providing a location for educational trips as well as conference facilities. There is a full programme of educational and recreational events across the year run by dedicated staff based at Cashel;
- The recreation and tourism potential of Cashel is being realised including development of the additional buildings around the rear of the farmhouse and VC
- A network of 'all access' paths has been completed allowing the full range of public enjoyment of Cashel;
- Action has been taken to manage the open ground at Cashel whilst encouraging appropriate woodland expansion through natural regeneration;
- Since the peatland restoration works were carried out in 2018, the condition of the blanket bog has improved and the number of species reliant on this habitat has increased;
- Collaboration with neighbouring land managers has resulted in changes in grazing management (livestock and deer) which in turn has improved the condition of key semi-natural habitats across the farm, particularly heathland and blanket bog;
- Due to the above and other targeted measures, black grouse have re-colonised as a breeding species. Other key species and habitats have also thrived; and
- Some land is rented out for additional seasonal cattle grazing to provide income and conservation grazing benefits.

2.2. Objectives /Projects Summary

The table below highlights the project *opportunities* at Cashel and a short summary of the over-arching aims that the project wishes to address.

Objectives/Project	Description/Summary of potential options to deliver desired outcomes
Conservation	Following a Conservation Audit, apply for grant funding (AECS & FGS) to enhance the environmental aspects of Cashel and maintain its biodiversity. Consider other management practises to improve the condition of the existing habitats.
Peatland Project	In Partnership with SNH and LLTNPA, apply to the SNH Peatland Action Fund to improve the condition of the priority peatland habitat.
Site Development	Develop the courtyard & associated buildings to provide facilities for multiple users after an appropriate feasibility assessment.
Access	Visitor access through the farm is expanded, enhanced and well-managed and upland paths sustainably maintained.
Education	Continue to develop the education enterprise, by liaising with and investing in user groups.

3. Table of Actions

The table of actions is a detailed list of the potential actions agreed between the LLTNPA and Cashel as likely to deliver the desired outcomes:

Objective/Project Title	Action	When	Who
Registration of Business	Conclude the registration of the business with RPS/SGRPID	March 2017	Cashel
Apply for <u>AECS</u>	The following options and capital items should be considered: <u>Habitat Mosaic Management</u> <u>Bracken control</u> <u>Moorland Management</u> & as part of this: <u>Summer Hill Grazing of Cattle</u> <u>Deer management</u> <u>Upland Habitat Impact Assessments</u> <u>Deer helicopter counts</u> <u>Ditch blocking</u> (as part of peatland restoration)	March 2018	LLTNPA
Woodland	Continue to develop management of the woodland, outlined in a Long Term Forest Plan agreed with FCS, including silviculture thinning different areas of oak woodland, managing bracken and controlling deer browsing to encourage natural regeneration, Investigate <u>FGS</u> opportunities for woodland management and other options (deer management/access/habitat/recreation)	On-going but by end 2017	Cashel
Peatland Restoration	Work up a peatland plan with SNH/LLTNPA Peatland Officer to apply to SNH Peatland Action Fund to carry out a Peatland Survey and subsequent Peatland Restoration Works	March 2018	LLTNPA/ SNH

Deer Management	Collaborate with stakeholder in re-forming East Loch Lomond DMG to manage deer on a landscape scale	End of 2018	LLTNPA/ SNH
	Review the approach to deer management to make it more consistent with forest management and expansion objectives	July 2017	Cashel
Site Development	Consider Visitor Centre and associated buildings development as well as options for developing visitor accommodation, if appropriate and in line with the Local Development Plan and identified tourism opportunities.	March 2018	Cashel/LLTNPA
SRDP – <u>Improving Public Access</u>	The scheme provides standard capital cost grants for upgrading paths, covering a wide range of costs from signage to drainage to resurfacing paths etc. Manage infrastructure	June 2017	Cashel
Education	Investigate options provided by Alison Cush for potential users of site.	2018	Cashel

Appendix 1: Current Holding Analysis/ Information

1. Holding info

Holding Number:	818/0015
Holding Name:	Cashel
Business Name & BRN:	143495
Total Area (acres/ha):	1253 ha
Tenure and Management Obligations:	Forest Trust Company of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society
Contacts:	Syd House Chair RSFS Forest Trust Cashel [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Nander Robertson Chairman RSFS Central Region The Garrigue, By Kippen FK8 3JN T. [REDACTED] M. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

2. Agriculture

Since 1996, there has been no sheep grazing on the open hill. The in-bye fields (9.55 ha) beside the B837 have been let for grazing to neighbouring local farmers (including grazing by belted Galloway cattle).

3. Forestry, Woodlands & Trees

The Forest Plan will describe the management objectives and approach to woodland management and expansion at Cashel in more detail. This is a key document for the Trust given their interest in woodlands and the key woodland objective for the land holding at Cashel.

The holding rises from shore level to 580 metres, and therefore can represent most of the different woodlands types which are native to Scotland – there is some remnant existing mature oak woodland (previously managed for oak coppice) along with younger birch and alder regeneration.

Between 1997 and 2005, some 400ha of the more suitable ground has been planted with native mixed broad leaf and Scot Pine in appropriate woodland types and associations. Some of the higher elevation planting has failed for a variety of reasons so the remaining woodland area is around 300 ha.

There is additional scope for some planting (50 ha or so) on the lower slopes as well as considerable potential to expand the woodland area by natural regeneration subject to integration with other conservation and open ground objectives and sensitivities. Successful regeneration of native broadleaves has taken place at neighbouring forest areas managed by FCS and the Trust will seek to emulate this success at Cashel.

There is a 70ha commercial productive forestry block in the middle of Cashel (sold by the previous owner to a private forestry company). Relations with Fountain Forestry, who manage this woodland, are positive and there is further scope for liaison on deer management as well as the future of this woodland area once the existing productive conifer crop is felled (which is likely to be in the next 10 years or so).

4. Sporting

4.1. Deer Management

4.1.1. Deer Management Plan

Red and Roe deer are present on the holding. In recent years the deer return submitted by the shooting tenant to SNH showed that around 15 to 20 deer were being culled per annum. A new shooting tenant was appointed in May 2017 with a remit to increase the cull level to reduce deer browsing and allow natural regeneration to occur and allow expansion of the woodland area out from existing areas. The new tenant will also be encouraged to

collaborate with neighbours and statutory bodies on a strategic approach to deer management across the east Loch Lomond area.

A deer management plan will be required as part of the proposed Forest Plan. This will outline in more detail the approach to deer management.

4.1.2. DMG

The East Loch Lomond DMG used to cover the area south of Loch Arklet to Drymen; this ceased to function due to a breakdown in communications and differing land use objectives. SNH, Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG) and LLTNPA are keen that discussions are started again to formalise collaborative deer management in the area. The Forest Trust will seek to support any new initiatives on collaborative deer management.

4.2. Predator Control

At present, there is no active predator control at Cashel

5. Subsidies & Grant Schemes

Following a fallow period, the Forest Trust at Cashel has now re-engaged with RPS/SGRPID and successfully re-registered the land holding thus facilitating access to grant funding as suggested in this Integrated Land Management Plan. Funding can now be applied for from the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP), such as Agri-Environment and Climate Scheme (AECS), Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) and Improving Public Access (IPA). There is a new application for the latter (May 2017).

6. Conservation, Environment & Climate Change

6.1. Conservation Management

Much of the management of the site is centred on the woodland and a full conservation and habitat audit would allow for future planning with grant funding to further enhance the biodiversity of the site. A 'bio-blitz' was held at Cashel on 3rd June 2017 whereby volunteer 'experts' with specific biodiversity interests assessed the land holding at Cashel to assess what was there during that short 'snapshot'. Once this exercise has been written up it may help guide future conservation assessments.

There are various species and habitat studies in place at Cashel, including a long-term nest box study by Glasgow University. This will be integrated into the overall conservation monitoring of Cashel.

6.2. Designated Sites

There are no designated areas on the holding; however the Rowardennan Woodland SSSI and the Loch Lomond Woods SAC are nearby and the oakwood remnants at Cashel feature many of the same qualities as these designated woodland sites. Any related woodland management proposals at Cashel for these woods would seek to enhance any conservation qualities

Name	Desig.	Feature	Condition	Pressures listed:
Rowardennan Woodland	SSSI	Upland Oak Woodland	Favourable	Forestry operations and over-grazing from deer and goats.
Loch Lomond Woods	SAC	Western Acidic Oak Woodland	Unfavourable	Forestry operations, bracken and over-grazing from deer and goats.

6.3. Habitats & Species

6.3.1. Key Habitats

Key Habitat List	Present on the Holding & Area (ha)
Heath / moorland	Much of the higher ground at Cashel is open moorland – this will be a mosaic of dry and wet dwarf shrub heath, montane habitats, upland grasslands and blanket bog.
Peatland	There is about 830ha (tbc after further assessment) of SNH Priority 1 Peatland on Cashel (much of which is also referred to as heath/moorland).
Native or semi-natural woodland	Approximately 300ha of oak, Scots pine and birch woodland
In-bye	Approximately 9.5ha

6.3.2. Key Species

Key Species List	Notes
Rhododendron	No evidence of any presence
American Skunk Cabbage	Not present
Japanese Knotweed	Not present
Himalayan Balsam	Not present
Giant Hogweed	Not present
Red/Grey Squirrel	Some red squirrels; no evidence of any significant grey squirrel presence
Water voles	Present (FCS survey data)
Black Grouse	Present
Other species identified on site:	Adder, Green Hairstreak Butterfly, frogs, toads, slow-worm, Small pale-bordered Fritillary, Ringlet Butterfly, Drinker Moth, Dark Green Fritillary, Pine Marten, Otter, Red & Roe Deer, Sparrowhawk, Large Emerald Moth, Common Lizards, Grass Hopper, Tortoiseshell Butterfly, Fox Moth.

7. Historic buildings/monuments

There are no listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and gardens & designed landscapes

8. Renewable Energy

8.1. Hydro-Electric

The Forest Trust have entered into a leasing agreement with DHG Hydro Ltd who installed a run of river 500kW hydro scheme in 2014 on the Cashel Burn. This arrangement brings a steady income into the Forest Trust.

The Trust will seek to develop any other renewable energy opportunities especially in relation to its own buildings and properties. Realistically, this is likely to be biomass or solar based systems.

9. Buildings

Property Name	Type	Use	Potential
The Forest Centre: 3 rooms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hall • The Library • Smaller Meeting room 	7m x 15m Toilets 5m x 10m ~5m x 5m	Meeting Rooms/ Exhibitions	Education/Exhibitions/ Meetings/Local Conferences/Local Events
The Barn	Open Barn with solid wood picnic benches and gravel floor	Visitor Shelter	Education Venue/ School trips
Courtyard & bothy	Hard core ground	Storage	Repair and develop remaining outbuildings currently not in use for accommodation/business units/catering subject to feasibility assessment
Stone barn workshop	Traditional stone building	Leased as a workshop	Workshop and possible future accommodation

10. Commercial, including Tourism & Visitor Experience

An outline has been written for a potential wood related visitor attraction which can be found in [Appendix 3](#). This includes developing the existing buildings and courtyard into multi-use facilities for visitor centre, education, conferences, and wood related businesses.

11. Access

11.1. Existing routes, potential for new routes and any problems

There are marked 3 paths which have been developed on the site varying in length from 1.5 to 6.5km to which the public have access 365 days a year. These can be seen on the Cashel website: www.cashel.org.uk. The Trust has some best 'guesstimates' of visitor numbers but would wish to obtain better knowledge of existing visitor numbers by monitoring the result of existing and new paths via some form of traffic measuring device (subject to finding the resources to pay for this).

Subject to discussions with Kenny Auld (Recreation and Access Adviser) in 2016 who suggested that any development of the existing pathways would be hugely beneficial to the area and would work well with the other potential site plans.

Accordingly, an additional path project has been identified which proposes:

- to establish a new 'least restricted' trail in the lower woodland north west of Cashel Burn known as 'the Oakwood Trail';
- Create a new "All Abilities" path in the form of a circuit via the hydro shed;
- Upgrading the existing Memorial Way to 'least restricted' and include a link to the Donald Dewar Memorial; and
- Interpretation throughout the woodland.

An application under the SRDP's Improving Public Access was submitted in May 2017 seeking funding support for this project. In completing the application, it became evident, based on specialist footpath construction advice, that the grant offered under the IPA may not be sufficient to pay for all the necessary work required under the conditions of the grant. The Trustees will want to ensure that adequate funding is available and there is little or no risk to the financial position of the Trust before entering into any agreements to undertake and pay for the necessary work, a principle which the Trust must comply with for all activities and projects undertaken.

12. Education

In October 2016, Alison Cush (Education and Inclusion Adviser) gave advice on the partners, resources and other initiatives that would provide information on the options that could be available for Cashel. It was suggested that contact be made with the following to gauge what groups would like to use Cashel for and this would then determine the route that Cashel could follow.

- Learning for Sustainability (which encompasses Outdoor Learning) - Vision 2030+ and links to Education and the Sustainable Development Goals etc.
- Outdoor Learning - the Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning, every child in Scotland has an entitlement to Outdoor Learning.
- Learning about Scotland - learner journeys for Loch Lomond: - examples of demonstrating the links to the curriculum.
- The Great Trossachs Forest self-led activity packs - self led education resources which were produced to enable links to The Great Trossachs Forest with the Curriculum for Excellence. Consultants produced these, and then some teacher training promoted them. Available as downloads with a limited print run.
- Outdoor and Woodland Learning (OWL) - (I had mentioned that there was hopefully two local groups being considered – West Dunbartonshire and Forth Valley, which could provide a good network of practitioners etc.).
- The Shieling Project - the residential education programme that immerses young people in the landscape. Great model that could be replicated with a different focus / scale.
- Teaching in Nature - the Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) programme we deliver for teachers in partnership with SNH. We introduce the teachers to the place (i.e Cashel) and they then develop curricular delivery to link that place to their class subject or topics / projects etc. They are then funded to bring their classes to the place, and deliver the activities themselves.
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) - major focus for Scottish Government including gender balance in STEM subjects.
- Developing the Young Workforce - practical and skills based work experience is also a major focus for Scottish Government.

Promoting forestry and other outdoor education is a major objective of the Trust but has relied on the input of volunteers to date. Much has been achieved through activities, visits and educational outings. The Trust would like to raise this aspect to another, more regular level, including liaison with the bodies mentioned above, but will need to access the resources so to do. Nevertheless, the Trust will seek to have an expanded programme of events at Cashel for 2018 which will help take forward this approach.

13. Marketing, promotion and social media:

Marketing will be an important aspect of the development of the holding, determining the users and their requirements will help define the various projects.

There is a website (www.cashel.org.uk) that sets out the aims and objectives and informs the public as to the facilities and other visitor information.

Appendix 2: Goods & Services

Market Goods & Services	Public/Ecosystem Goods & Services
Venison & Deer stalking	Primary production (food, fibre, timber, energy)
Timber	Food security
Conference Facilities Outdoor team building and volunteer events	Animal health and welfare
Hydro powered energy	Genetic resources (e.g. livestock breeding)
	Biodiversity
	Landscape
	Climate stability – carbon storage
	Water purification
	Rural vitality
	Recreation

Appendix 3: Visitor Centre



RSFS Forest Trust – Cashel Millennium Forest

Potential Visitor Attraction

Cashel is a c.1200 ha former hill farm, situated in The National Park on the East side of Loch Lomond, some 5km north of Balmaha. The site was purchased in 1996 with a major grant from the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust. The primary aim, as stated in 1996 is **to demonstrate the restoration and regeneration of Scotland's native woods through sound forestry practice for the benefit of the public.**

Approximately 300ha of the more suitable ground has been afforested with native broad leaf and Scot Pine. Planted between 1997 and 2005 these provide an attractive ambience within which 3 paths have been developed varying in length from 1.5 to 6.5km to which the public have access 365 days pa.

Cashel Forest is now at a stage of development that requires the Trustees to consider how the public's' interests might be best served in the future; possibly by linking exemplar native woodland management with education about the need for intervention and the wood product outputs that result from silvicultural practices.

There is very little opportunity for the public to absorb the "story of wood" ie seedling to tree and from tree to end product. A wood related visitor attraction might include the following educational features:-

1. An exhibition telling the story of seedling to end product and how different species suit different end uses.
2. The myriad way in which wood based products feature in every aspect of our daily life and the process by which they are derived from wood – EG paper handkerchiefs, cotton reels, particle board flooring, laminated roof joists etc.
3. An auditorium suitable for small scale conferences that would have a career advisory loop video lasting some 15 minutes with individuals explaining in 30/45 seconds their wood related jobs, e.g. plant breeding scientist, architect calculating how wood might be used, engineers running sawmills, forest rangers, Tree surgeons etc.
4. The visitor Centre might be housed in a state of the art multi story wooden building educational in itself and with a 360 degree roof top viewing platform taking in the loch and forest.
5. The courtyard could be developed with artisan wood related businesses selling their wooden goods but also offering training in wood related skills and possibly stabling for horse loggers in the summer season enabling active demonstration of low impact logging
6. Use of Biomass to heat the premises combined with a wood burning stove outlet/advisory centre.

