Dunollie Wood – DRAFT PLAN (Plan period – 2025 to 2030)

Management Plan Content Page

Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

The Woodland Trust owns and cares for well over 1,250 sites covering almost 30,000 hectares (ha) across the UK. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and almost 4,000ha of non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites and we have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. We also manage other valuable habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, heaths, ponds/lakes and moorland.

Our Vision is:

"A UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife."

To realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society, we:

- **Create Woodland** – championing the need to hugely increase the UK's native woodland and trees.
- **Protect Woodland** – fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland and veteran trees; there should be no loss of ancient woodland
- **Restore Woodland** – ensuring the sensitive restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes.

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

The following principles provide an overarching framework to guide the management of all our sites but we recognise that all woods are different and that their management also needs to reflect their local landscape, history and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives.

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity, safety and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.

2. We establish new native woodland for all the positive reasons set out in our Conservation Principles, preferably using natural regeneration but often by planting trees, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.

3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe. Where possible, we pro-actively engage with people to help them appreciate the value of woods and trees.

4. The long term vision for all our ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.

5. Existing semi-natural open ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.

6. The natural and cultural heritage value of sites is taken into account in our management and in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.

7. Land and woods can generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We therefore consider the appropriateness of opportunities to generate income from our Estate to help support our aims.

8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we encourage our woods to be used for local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.

9. We use and offer the Estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. We maintain a network of sites for long-term monitoring and trials leading to reductions in plastics and pesticides.

10. Any activities we undertake are in line with our wider Conservation Principles, conform to sustainable forest management practices, are appropriate for the site and balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

The Public Management Plan

This public management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with our long, 50 years and beyond, and our short, the next 5 years, term objectives for the management and enhancement of these features. The short term objectives are complemented by an outline Work Programme for the period of this management plan aimed at delivering our management aims.

Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and we continually monitor our sites to assess the success of our management, therefore this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

or contact the Woodland Trust

operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk

to confirm details of the current management programme.

A short glossary of technical terms can be found at the end of the plan.

Location and Access

Location maps and directions for how to find and access our woods, including this site, can be found by using the following link to the Woodland Trust web-site which contains information on accessible woodlands across the UK

https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/

In Scotland access to our sites is in accordance with the Land Reform Act (of Scotland) 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

In England, Wales and NI, with the exception of designated Public Rights of Ways, all routes across our sites are permissive in nature and where we have specific access provision for horse riders and/or cyclists this will be noted in the management plan.

The Management Plan

1. SITE DETAILS

Dunollie Wood

Location:	Oban Grid reference: NM857310 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. N/A
Area:	31.88 hectares (78.78 acres)
External Designations:	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin
Internal Designations:	Welcoming Sites Programme

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Location and history

Dunollie Wood stretches across the hills of Barra Mor and Barr Cruinn, with a small area of open ground to the North East of Barr Cruinn between the A85 and Park Primary School. It sits in a prominent position in the landscape overlooking Oban, Oban Bay and the island of Kerrera and is adjacent to the route to Dunollie Castle, Ganavan Sands and passed closely by various Calmac ferries. It is immediately adjacent to the A85, the main thoroughfare through Oban, the Cathedral, The Corran Halls community centre, and a number of hotels and B&B's.

The area remains in the ownership of Clan MacDougall and is leased to the Woodland Trust for a 99 year period that commenced in February 2019. The lease aims to improve the condition of this fragment of temperate rainforest within the wood (largely compartment 1b and 1f), connect this with the wider landscape and other fragments, and use the wood with its location and proximity to the town of Oban to educate, inform, and inspire people about woodlands, to raise the profile of Scotland's Rainforest and the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest, and to showcase management of the habitat.

The majority of the site is classed as Ancient Woodland 'Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin', appearing in the 1st edition maps in 1870. The woodland in its current scale appear on the OS second edition maps in 1898, with the Dunollie Housing scheme constructed in fields between the two hills, largely in the 1930's to 1960's. Mature policy woodland that forms the fringes of both Barra Mor and Barr Cruinn may well have spread further up the hills, and felled through the second World War as several very large decayed stumps indicate. Given the age of the birch and hazel woodland developed through much of the core, regeneration began in earnest shortly after this period. In the 1950's, two blocks of non-native conifers were planted, one purely of larch, and one a mix of larch, Douglas fir, and Sitka spruce. (compartment 1a and 1e respectively). Throughout the woodland, the ground flora and diverse lower plant assemblage is indicative of a long history of woodland cover throughout.

There are a number of historic features within the Western side of the woods. On the South Eastern side of Barra Mor, a small burial mound partially excavated contained a small tomb and cremation deposits along with domestic items, and on Creag Moraig, a hearth and cinery urn dating to at least 1750BC is on the North Western aspect. Along the cliffs of Barra Mor, there is a location where Viking runes have been carved, thought to have been done while sheltering in Oban Bay before venturing South.

Geology and Soils

The area sits on a thick layer of conglomerate rock of Devonian age. Along much of the Western side of Barra Mor, this is exposed in places and can clearly be seen as old sea cliffs with small basal caves. The nearby 'Dog Stone', formerly a sea bridge, would have connected over the now existing path to Dunollie Castle.

The soils are mostly well drained brown-earths with flushed peaty-mineral soils locally. This heavy soil together with the sometimes fragile conglomerate can create local areas of unstable ground, which has lead to three localised landslips caused through extreme rainfall events in the last five years.

Plant Communities

Ancient woodland indicator plants are frequent throughout the site and often dominant, particularly on Barra Mor with swathes of bluebells through much of the hill. As numbers of members of the public onsite increase, these sensitive plants have the potential to be impacted.

The fragments of oak woodland in compartment 1a and 1c would fit with the Upland oak Habitat Action Plan (HAP) and wych elm is a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species. The UK BAP fungus, Hazel Gloves was found onsite in 2020 by the Lorn Natural Group, and has since be found on a number of old growth hazel on Barra Mor annually.

The site is regarded as of international importance for its lichen assemblage from a survey undertaken in Spring 2024 combined with monitoring carried out in 2019. Through these surveys, 176 species are now known to the site including a number of species that are classed as Threatened or Near Threatened.

The site has an impressive list of invasive non-native plants including Rhododendron ponticum, Japanese knotweed, bamboo, and Gaultheria shallon. The assemblage of non-native plants combined with non-native conifer regeneration pose a significant threat to the integrity of the site.

Wildlife

The wood is home to a healthy population of red squirrels (a UK Species Action Plan priority species and LBAP species) which are a significant draw to the public and will be considered carefully when assessing the reduction or removal of non-native conifers. Roe deer are distributed through the wood and are having an adverse effect on the regeneration of trees in parts of the wood. A Herbivore Impact Assessment carried out in May 2024 rated impacts as 'Moderate/High'. Otters are known to utilise the Western edge of Barra Mor.

The UK BAP butterfly species, chequered skipper, was observed in sub compartment 1d in 2022, utilising the open glade habitat.

Services and Access

Given the location of this wood on the edge of the town of Oban and, with the Dunollie housing estate effectively within the wood, there are a number of water mains, power cables over and underground, and telephone cables. These are all mapped and sit within the sites hazard map and will be reviewed with each Management Plan review cycle or sooner if necessary.

The footpath to Dunollie Castle from The Corran Halls is a Sustrans Route (78) and the metalled path from this to the North East is a Safer Routes to School route, both adopted by Argyll and Bute Council. A network of paths and desire lines criss-cross Barr Cruinn from many informal access points behind houses and gardens, with a less defined route within or through Barra Mor. Part of the routes through Barra Mor and Barr Cruinn make up a waymarked promoted footpath that has increased public use of the woodland area. In compartment 1d, there is a partially metalled path from the A85 to Kerrera Terrace.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

The long term vision for Dunollie Wood is for a biologically rich semi-natural woodland habitat, which forms part of a functional woodland habitat network along the Argyll coast, an exemplar of management of Scotland's Rainforest within the West of Scotland that inspires and educates about the value of this habitat and woodland in general.

Invasive non-native plants will be absent by 2030, together with the gradual process of the reduction of non-natives trees in favour of native species appropriate to the site being well under way. This will take into account the landscape value of the mature beech fringe and the biodiversity value of sycamore. This will be done through a combination of protecting natural regenation and planting of suitable native tree species.

Regeneration of native tree species and the development of good basal growth on hazel will rebuild the almost absent shrub layer within the wood, shading out coarse vegetation such as bracken, which will maintain open ground locally, increasing the in wood diversity through the retention of small glades. This will be done through a reduction in browsing pressure from roe deer, through displacement via an increased footfall to the wood and protection where essential.

A well established, and supported group of local people will work as volunteers as the 'eyes and ears' of the site reducing anti-social behaviour and proactively working with the local community to manage and respect the wood. Working with the Primary Schools and High school, the site will be used for informal and formal education opportunities and will complement the work of the Dunollie Museum Castle and Grounds.

The site will provide an extensive area of quiet informal recreation to a wide range of users both from the local community and from further afield. There will be a network of paths providing a range of linear and loop routes suitable for a range of access takers and linking to the surrounding path network. Interpretation will be maintained and renewed as required to highlight the conservation value and historic interest of the site, which will be done collaboratively with partners.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 F1 Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin

Description
This key feature covers the majority of the site apart from compartment 1d between Park Primary School and the A85 and the open ground in the North Eastern edge of 1b and 1c on Barr Cruinn. Although this covers almost all of the woodland, the majority of 1b is semi-natural in origin through the regeneration of, mostly, downy birch and hazel following felling of the majority of the woodland in the early part of the 1940's. In compartment 1b in Barra Mor, the birch and hazel is better developed with some areas having been left unfelled, or less disturbed at least, with the western side showing some incredible examples of bryophytes of hazel. In compartment 1b on Barr Cruinn, the woodland is altogether younger and less developed, and may have had grazing pressure for a longer period resulting in this difference. 1c is a mature section of woodland with large oak, wych elm, beech and sycamore and a real blend of native and non-native through this. Compartment 1a is a planted beech policy woodland that has evolved into a gradually mixed woodland with sycamore looking to occupy the space left by failing beech. The beech are over mature with some beginning to pose risks to users of the paths and tracks and are dealt with on a proactive basis. These gaps are creating structural and species diversity of the fringe of the woodland. Rhododendron ponticum that was scattered through the site is almost completely controlled, with a few individual bushes discovered each year, with control and follow up a core part of the management of the site. Locally, bamboo, Himalayan honeysuckle, and variegated archangel are controlled. Japanese knotweed is on the very edge of the site with control being undertaken by Dunollie Estate. The ground flora has ancient woodland indicator plant species well represented, supporting the designation of long established woodland of plantation origin. Bluebells dominate swathes of the ground, ferns and greater woodrush are in more open or wetter areas.
Significance
Dunollie Wood contains one of the larger remnants of Scotland's Rainforest in North Argyll and improving the quality of the habitat here and connecting this with other nearby remnants will create a well-managed robust habitat within the area, and showcase work that can be replicated elsewhere across the West Coast. The juxtaposition of natives against non-natives provides the opportunity to gradually move the woodland from non-native into native-dominated woodland while sympathetically considering community, landscape and biodiversity

interests.

Opportunities & Constraints

There will be the opportunity for native tree species to move into areas currently dominated by non-natives, particularly beech, through the gradual removal of younger beech and, where appropriate, mature specimens. With the gradual expansion of the rainforest habitat, and linking to other fragments, species reliant on this habitat may expand in range and move.

Where beech is lost, there is the opportunity to plant suitable native species to diversify the native structure of the woodland.

Non-native plant control has been effectively undertaken in the previous five years, although the site is not yet free of this threat. Through the continuation of that effort, the site could be free of invasive non-native plants by 2030.

Tree planting and maintenance is a suitable task for volunteers, Scouts, and other community groups, creating opportunities for people to engage directly with the management of the site.

Ash die back is affecting all of the ash across the site, with many of these within a tree length of roads or houses being removed. The loss of this this species from the site will affect the species diversity.

The population of roe deer is a constraint to the establishment of young trees, although an increase in use by the public is reducing browse levels in some locations.

There is a legal agreement in place with National Trust for Scotland, as part of the lease from Dunollie Estate, to consult over significant changes to woodland management as part of the ground connected to Dunollie Castle.

Factors Causing Change

Phytopthera ramorum is throughout Argyll and in woodlands to the South and West of Dunollie, making it likely, given the prevailing winds, that this disease will infect the larch population in the wood. Given this would result in a Statutory Plant Health Notice (requiring removal of most or all larch), this would be a major factor.

An increase in use of the wood by people may displace roe deer and reduce browsing locally. This may, however, increase pressure in other locations within the wood.

Regeneration of Rhododendron ponticum and non-native tree, plant and shrub species will impact upon the diversity of parts of the site if not controlled.

Although not common, the loss of ash to Chalara in the life of this Management Plan is likely.

The establishment of beech regeneration throughout parts of the woodland, with the potential in time for this to shade out native ground flora.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The total area of ancient woodland will not diminish. The associated species assemblage will remain secure through sensitively removing non-natives tree and shrub species. Natural succession will remain dynamic within the woodland, resulting in an evolving age and species structure that is resilient in the face of tree disease impacting ash and larch in particular.

This key feature will be managed in an exemplary manner, encouraging other land owners and managers to nurture other remnant areas of Scotland's rainforest, creating connectivity along the West Coast.

Through the involvement of members of the local community in achieving elements of the work programme, a group of well trained and supported, engaged, enthusiastic volunteers will be key to achieving the aims of a wider local community taking pride and a sense of ownership of the wood.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Protecting native ground flora:
To reduce the threat of a new generation of beech establishing a densely shading canopy. This will be achieved by sweeping through the beech dominated areas with contractors felling all beech under the height of the native canopy by the end of the Plan period (December 2029) where powersaws are required. For smaller beech, work parties of volunteers and other groups to pull or cut using handtools. This will cover a total area of 15ha in sub compartments 1a, 1b, 1c, aiming to cover a 3ha area per year on average. As these trees will be relatively small, there is little value in recovering the timber and will only be done should there be a need for specific sections for community projects. This will leave the mature trees on the edge of the wood to seed again, but as they are an important landscape and cultural element of this woodland, they will be left to see out their natural lives unless they become a hazard.

To take a zero tolerance approach to invasive non-native plants, removing every one across the site, and to proactively remove illegal fly tipped garden waste to minimise the risk to the woodland, reporting offenders to the Police when possible. This will involve:
Annually visit and treating regrowth of Rhododendron previously controlled, and mopping up any remaining isolated bushes missed in previous five years.
Until removed, annually spraying with glyphosate patches of variegated archangel in five locations across the site.
Until removed, twice annually spray regrowth of bamboo in one location.
Until removed, pulling of Himalayan balsam from one location.
To visit and, if regrowing, dig up of Himalayan honeysuckle from two locations.
To visit and, if regrowing, pulling of remaining Gaultheria shallon from one location.
As part of the local contractors, volunteers, and Site Managers regular visits and patrols, to visit locations of regular dumping activity, and arrange removal of waste.

Where sycamore is dominant within sub compartment 1a, this will be permitted to remain. Throughout the rest of the woodland, young sycamore will be removed as part of the other tasks removing beech or rhododendron to ensure the core area of rainforest (compartment 1b and 1f) is not subject to further threat from this species.

Monitor herbivore impact assessment (HIA) in 2029 ahead of the next Management Plan review to assess impact of roe deer population on browsing as well as balancing the benefits of this reasonably light grazing for the significant lichen interest across the site.
Ensuring a diverse native woodland:
In five locations across the site (sub compartments 1a, 1b, 1e) where gaps have been created through the removal of beech, spruce, Rhododendron, or bamboo totalling around 2ha, to plant suitable native species dependant on the exact location. Species choice will consider future tree risk, ground stability, compatibility with soil and moisture, forest structure, and landscape value. Some planting has taken place in three of these. By the end of the plan period, to have diverse native mixed woodland establishing in all five of these. It is anticipated that further gaps are created through further loss of failing beech. Should additional gaps be created, to treat as above, with the long term aim of linking these gaps to replace the existing beech canopy with suitable native broadleaves.

Where there are existing glades in the woodland maintained through bracken density, grazing by roe deer, or other factors, to retain these to ensure there is a diverse woodland edge component to the woodland.

To identify ancient and/ or veteran trees under threat from younger trees beginning to shade them out and undertake the necessary management to provide them with the space and light to survive and flourish. This will primarily seek to rescue oak from silver birch in Barr Cruinn. By the end of the plan period, to have mapped all native ancient and veteran trees and have rescued those most at risk.

In sub compartment 1f, in the hollow to the east of the boardwalks, to plant 100 hazel by the end of the plan period to create a new cohort of hazel in this location that is particularly rich for lichen diversity reliant on this species. To be protected with plastic free shelters to ensure no grazing is excluded in a fenced off area.

To monitor the condition of the boundary fencing annually and replace/ repair where necessary.

4.2 F2 Planted Ancient Woodland Site

Description

The Planted Ancient Woodland (PAWS) elements to this site can be roughly defined into two broad areas: broadleaves in compartment 1a; and conifers in sub compartments 1a and 1e, with larch in part of sub compartment 1b. The broadleaved element is largely beech woodland thought to be policy woodland planted in association with Dunollie House in the late 1800's. This beech fringe along the Western side of Barra Mor facing the bay is of huge landscape value. The beech along the Western side also presents an ongoing potential hazard for users of the paths, and for homes nearby as they fail due to age. Through sub compartment 1a, non native invasive plants are present in small local areas, which are being managed through objectives within the Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin Key Feature (KF1).

The coniferous elements, the whole of sub compartment 1e, and part of 1a and1b, are European larch, Sitka spruce, and Douglas fir planted in the 1950's. In sub compartment 1e, some of the Sitka spruce and Douglas fir have grown to a substantial size and would be classed as over-mature, with wind blow significant in places. The larch in sub compartments 1a, and 1b, are exposed to onshore winds and have blown in places, creating an interesting micro habitat within the wood. Timber extraction of the trees in sub compartments 1a and 1b will be challenging given the

steep ground and while some could be extracted for demonstration purposes, it would be not be economically viable to remove. Thinning work in sub compartment 1e was undertaken in 2022 removing around 30% of the spruce and Douglas fir.

Through most of sub compartments 1a and 1e, beyond the areas where intervention has occurred, there is currently little in the way of ground flora due to low irradiance or lateral light. It is, however, likely that ancient woodland plants once were here and have been lost due to the establishment of the non-native canopy. The threat to ground flora is twofold: Firstly, the threat to the areas where the planted trees are and, secondly, the threat from the trees seeding into areas outside of the PAWS areas. In sub compartment 1a, beech is not necessarily regenerating under its own canopy, although sycamore are occupying canopy gaps following beech loss. Beech regeneration is, however, appearing throughout much of the woodland, and will be managed through objectives associated with KF1. In sub compartment 1e, there is little evidence of larch or Douglas fir regeneration, although Sitka spruce is regenerating well within and beyond this compartment. This is being dealt with via objectives below.

Within the compartments, there are no known native ancient or veteran trees. Some of the beech could be classed as veteran and will be permitted to live out the remainder of their natural lives, unless they become a hazard.

Deadwood is an important component within these areas and, when undertaking the condition assessment, was found to be higher in these compartments than elsewhere due to the size, density, and species of the trees.

Significance

Restoration of PAWS represents the only opportunity to increase the area of ancient woodland with semi-natural characteristics.

A healthy restored PAWS resource at Dunollie will connect the fragmented ancient woodland components, and ensure that the whole site operates as a functional ecosystem.

The Woodland Trust is committed to restoring all non-native conifer PAWS type woodland to Restored AWS (RAWS) in its ownership and to ensure the continuing survival and where possible enhancement of the ancient woodland components.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:
All work restoring the PAWS areas can be used to engage a wide variety of interested people and stakeholders through the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest, demonstrating sensitive long term management of woodland, reverting planted non-native areas back into native woodland that, with time, will become a functioning element of Scotland's rainforest zone once more.

The removal of Sitka spruce presents an opportunity to demonstrate a variety of techniques and practices to other landowners, managers and neighbours and work collaboratively on events using the wood or the techniques with Dunollie Museum, Castle and Grounds.

Constraints:
Allowing the mature beech to see out their natural lives, unless they become a hazard to users of the paths and to nearby houses, will result in an ongoing seed source for quite some years that will require management to reduce the quantity of young beech through the woodland. The landscape value of these trees is such that this is worth doing, particularly with the opportunity to engage local members of the community and schools with this work.
Roe deer pressure is classed as 'medium/high' across the site (from HIA lite methodology Spring 2024), and browsing is a constraint on successful regeneration of trees and ground flora. This is a reduction from 'high' in 2019 and likely attributed to the increase in public use of the site reducing browsing locally.

While the removal of Sitka spruce in the short term may be desirable, these tree species may be a food source for the red squirrel population, so gradual removal of these will allow squirrels to adapt to the other food sources available within the wood.

Forestry operations carry the risk of disturbance to sensitive species including birds, bats, red squirrels, and otters. Surveys in advance of carrying out work will be required, as well as careful planning & timing of the operations.

Archaeological remains can be damaged by forest operations. Any management interventions to favour PAWS restoration on the site of features identified, will need to carefully considered, with sensitive operations planned that minimise or avoid disruption.

There is a legal agreement in place as part of the lease, to consult with National Trust for Scotland over significant changes to woodland management.

Much of the ground along the edges of the wood are steep and possibly unstable, making the extraction of timber from some locations either very difficult or impossible without causing significant damage or at huge cost.

Factors Causing Change

Phytopthera ramorum is throughout Argyll and in woodlands to the South and West of Dunollie, making it likely, given the prevailing winds, that this disease will infect the larch population in the wood. Given this would result in a Statutory Plant Health Notice, this would be a major factor.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Ancient Woodland components in PAWS areas will be secure within a woodland habitat which (through long term continuous cover management) is developing, or has developed strong semi natural characteristics, including a predominance of native tree species, a varied structure, a diverse ground flora, frequent standing and fallen deadwood and the absence of any significant threats from invasive non-native species. Non-native tree species will be accepted as an occasional feature of the canopy, particularly beech as a landscape characteristic.

Specifically, in sub compartment 1a, there will be a managed transition from non-native dominated to native dominated through the encouragement of suitable natives via natural regeneration, seeding, planting, and protection as the over mature beech are lost through natural means or through safety management.

In sub compartment 1e, this will have moved from a non-native coniferous plantation to a young developing native broadleaved woodland with occasional non-native specimen trees with high landscape value, through a series of thinnings and non-native regeneration removal.

In sub compartment 1b, assuming ramorum has killed the larch, or forced removal of the larch, these locations will be developing into open hazel woodland with mini glades.
In the case of all compartments, the management will move the threat of further loss of ancient woodland ground flora from 'critical' to 'secure'. Deadwood will be over 20 cubic metres per hectare and will be both standing and fallen. With time, the volume of native deadwood will increase, as non-native trees become less frequent. Where possible, mature non-natives will retained as veteran trees that are of high ecological and landscape value.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Restoring Ground Flora and increasing the volume and frequency of deadwood:
In sub compartment 1e, to carry out a second 30% thin of Sitka spruce and Douglas fir by the end of the plan period, with a heavy emphasis on the lower part of the hill. This is to increase lateral light to encourage natural regeneration and re-establishment of native ground flora. Trees to be felled using power saw and skidded using winch to the woodland edge. Where timber is not readily extracted, to be left in situ to increase the valuable deadwood resource for saproxylic invertebrates. Timber to be taken to roadside and donated to the community.

In sub compartment 1a, as per KF1, encouraging the development of native woodland in gaps created through the removal of mature trees for safety reasons.

Managing the threat from Phytopthera ramorum:
With it being likely that larch will be infected with P. ramorum at some point in the life of this plan with the result that all larch will have to be felled within a six month period, it is anticipated by the end of the plan period that larch will have to be removed. If doing so:
In sub compartment 1b, fell all larch to the west of the main hollow where extraction is not practical without large scale damage to the site. Identify opportunities for large volume timber that can be milled onsite and extract milled product. If possible, to extract a small amount of timber to the western edge using horse, assessing this with a suitable horse handler.
In sub compartment 1e, to fell, extract through the gate and out to roadside by Dunollie Castle.
To plant hazel, oak, aspen at a density of 600 per ha to retain the open characteristics desired for lichen diversity.

4.3 F3 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Dunollie Wood is one of five Scottish rainforest sites owned or managed by Woodland Trust, a key partner in the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest, which is a voluntary partnership of more than 20 organisations that are committed to collaborative action for the benefit of the rainforest. Dunollie Wood is unique in its location having a large community on its doorstep with reasonable transport links, 4G, a free Wi-Fi town, and opportunities to demonstrate the wider management from land and water.

Dunollie Wood sits across two small hills, Barra Mor and Barr Cruinn, and dominates the coastal landscape of Oban. The lower slopes of Barra Mor with the mature beech policy woodland is striking and provides a stunning avenue walk along the coast side of the wood to Dunollie Museum, Castle and Grounds. The semi natural native woodland making the upper slopes of both woods give an array of colour and shape throughout the year. Between these two hills lies the Dunollie housing scheme. Effectively embedded within the woods, the residents of these homes are regular users of parts of the wood. Given the close proximity the woodland edge to many homes, tree safety inspections and communication with owners, particularly Argyll Community Housing Association and West Highland Housing Association is key.

One the western edge of the site is the one kilometre avenue walk (part of Sustrans route 78) and the Safer Routes to School route from the area known as 'The Witches' in sub compartment 1a through to Lorn Avenue, which are both metalled footpaths maintained by Argyll and Bute Council. Within the wood, is a waymarked trail through Barra Mor and Barr Cruinn, promoted through a large orientation panel sited in the Corran Halls car park.
In addition, there is a recently rebuilt route from the Witches towards the Castle and are several informal routes and desire lines accessing houses and viewpoints. In compartment 1d, to the North East of Barr Cruinn, a narrow partly metalled path runs from the pavement by the A85 to Kerrera Terrace and links to the Barr Cruinn network through the waymarked trail. The routes provide an experience through a variety of habitats, and excellent views over to the island of Kerrera and Oban Bay.

There is low level antisocial behaviour occurring in the wood with intentional fire setting, illegal fly tipping of garden waste, unauthorised tree felling, and littering through the site.

For the visiting public, parking can be found at the Corran Halls car park, with parking costing £1 per hour (2024). There are approximately 80 parking spaces with further parking available in another public car park across the road.

The site provides opportunities to engage with local people, visitors, schools, landowners and managers and a wide range of interest communities. Park Primary School sits on the very edge of the wood and, as a Gold Awarded Green Tree School, we would aim to work with the school to gain its Platinum award. Oban High School through the John Muir Award and Developing Young Workforce schemes will be encouraged to use the woods, working alongside staff, contractors, and local volunteers.

The core group of local volunteers will continue to assist with the management, monitoring, and supervision of the site, ensuring the wood is safe and welcoming. The tree seed collection volunteers will use the site a one of a number of local woodlands to collect suitable native seed for growing on to plant either back into the woodland, or as part of wider efforts to connect the woodland with other areas of rainforest in the local area.

Activities and low key events will be planned in the wood and will, where possible, work collaboratively with the staff

and volunteers at Dunollie Museum, Castle, and Grounds and other local community groups such as Oban Spring Clean, and BID for Oban to deliver a varied and attractive events programme for a range of locals and visitors alike.

Demonstration events will be planned to showcase sensitive woodland management, utilising local skills and knowledge and using the woodland resources in innovative ways whenever possible.

The orientation panel, trail head signage, and waymarkers provide low impact encouragement of visitors to explore the woodland, along a well maintained path route. There are two interpretation panels on the edge of the wood installed a number of years ago by Dunollie Estate as part of a previous project.

There are a number of historic features within the Western side of the woods. On the South Eastern side of Barra Mor, a small burial mound partially excavated contained a small tomb and cremation deposits along with domestic items. On Creag Moraig, a hearth and cinery urn dating to at least 1750BC is on the North Western aspect. Along the cliffs of Barra Mor, there is a location where Viking runes have been carved, thought to have been done when sheltering in Oban Bay while venturing South.

There are no benches or seating in the wood. At the moment, it is felt that these would encourage a concentration of anti social behaviour but could be reviewed if there is local justification that would have reassurance that issues around it would not negatively impact the wood or neighbours.

Significance

Of the five rainforest sites owned or managed by Woodland Trust along the West Coast, this wood has by far the largest nearby population, good transport links, and potential to be visited easily in a day from the central belt.

Oban has a population of at least 8500, all within walking distance of the wood, with the population swelling to over 25,000 in the height of the tourist season from overnight stays. The area receives over 72,000 overseas visitors per year.

The woodland provides the daily backdrop to the lives of so many people living, working, and visiting Oban. Every single person travelling through the town on the A85 or visiting Dunollie Castle or Ganavan Sands will come within a few metres of this wood. It provides a safe route to school, and is a picturesque and sheltered section of the Sustrans route 78, with current interpretation along the way.

It is of historical and geological interest, in addition to the biodiversity interest throughout the site.

The ability to demonstrate sensitive woodland management that is sympathetic to local requirements, benefiting the temperate rainforest habitat and with good transport links to tell the story to a wider audience is unique within the current five woodlands managed by the Woodland Trust in the West Coast.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:
Educate, inform, and inspire a wide range people about Scotland's rainforest, and Woodland Trust Scotland.

Increase the opportunities for quiet enjoyment of a stunning location through the management and low key promotion of the access into and through the wood.

Work closely with the neighbouring Primary schools and High school to integrate the wood within the Curriculum for Excellence, and look to use the John Muir Award, Green Tree School Award, Developing Young Workforce, and other opportunities available to have the pupils carrying out educational activities in the wood.

Collaborate with Dunollie Museum, Castle, and Grounds and other local community organisations to provide a varied diary of events that compliments each other's objectives whenever possible.

Provide neighbours with information on appropriate use of the woods through our 'Howdy Neighbour' leaflet to discourage litter and garden waste in particular.

The access, activities, and events will create additional attractions for visitors to come or stay in the Oban area and can compliment work already happening locally and at Dunollie, Museum, Castle, and Grounds. These can be promoted through the BID for Oban initiative, and play a role within large events such as the winter festival.

Increasing the Woodland Trust Scotland's visibility in the area will encourage more people to support the work of the organisation, protect trees, volunteer, and to approach us for assistance with planning issues around ancient woodland, woodland creation, and other events and activities surrounding the wider woodland of the area

Constraints:
Much of the edge of the woods are steep and access can be challenging, particularly for those unsteady of their feet. Beyond the metalled routes, there would be no provision for disabled users.

There is a legal agreement in place with National Trust for Scotland, as part of the lease, to consult over significant changes to woodland management, including access.

Staff resources are limited to deliver significant education and engagement. Through the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest, to seek partnership funding and initiatives to help deliver these objectives for the site and surrounding partners locally.

Factors Causing Change

Anticipating an increase in rainfall, and coming in more extreme bouts, water on the paths together with an anticipated increase in the number of people using the site would require a higher specification path network that is more expensive and labour intensive to manage.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To inspire the general public about Scotland's rainforest, its value and importance on a global scale. To showcase the management of a remnant of Scotland's rainforest, demonstrating good practice, using sensitive techniques sympathetic to the habitats, species and users of the wood. To build skills and experiences in the local community through events, activities, volunteering and educational opportunities that compliment those already provided through

Dunollie Museum, Castle, and Grounds, Winter Festival, BID for Oban and other initiatives.

Dunollie Wood will be a 'must do' as part of the suite of attractions in and around Oban for families and visitors looking for quiet enjoyment and environmental experiences, and be a space for peaceful recreation for local people. The entrance from the Corran Halls car park will be a welcoming space with high quality information directing people to the wood and Dunollie Museum, Castle, and Grounds beyond. Once in the wood, well-maintained built and natural paths with low key way marking will direct the visitor on a circular route taking in the rainforest zone and viewpoints.

The wood will be well respected by local people who actively take part in its future through volunteering, participating in events, and with very limited misuse of the wood, ensuring valuable habitats and species are not threatened by introduced species or pathogens from garden waste, or lost through fire. It will be seen as a valuable resource for the local economy as an attraction and, where appropriate, education, and craft.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Path maintenance and improvements:
Ensure the waymarked trail and high route to Dunollie castle remains safe and welcoming for visitors with a reasonable level of fitness through an annual programme of repairs where required, identified through volunteers and Site Managers visits.
Install a suitable bench at the Witches path junction, replacing the informal bench left by the sign.

To manage the site to be a safe and welcoming experience:
Remove all litter and garden waste through participating in the Oban Spring Clean event in March, as part of the Maintenance Contract, and through volunteers efforts on a regular basis.
To engage directly with obvious offenders dumping garden waste into the wood, found through site inspections.
To work with Police when necessary on illegal felling and fly tipping.

Events and Activities:
Support the Woodland Working Group to deliver a work party at least every two months through the year based on the work required for the site.
Support the tree seed collecting initiative to hold at least two collections on site per year, and to organize at least one tree planting opportunity for these volunteers per year when appropriate.
To invite pupils from Park Primary and Oban High School on site each year.
Oban Scouts to continue to the use the site regularly for practical tasks supported by volunteers when appropriate.
To collaborate with Dunollie Museum, Castle, and Grounds each year on potential events.
To further develop partnerships with other groups in the community as relevant to create mutually beneficial engagement opportunities.

Other:
To manage the woodland edge where it bounds houses, gardens, roads, heavily used paths and other features safely through regular tree inspection, or after storms and wind blow. On the A85, to proactively manage this bank to reduce the future potential threats along with those trees found to be in need of removal.

To monitor steep banks for landslip potential, quickly responding to slips when they occur. With one every second year due to heavy rain, these are likely to remain a feature of the management of this site going forward.

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	10.39	Beech	1898	PAWS restoration	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin
Covering the South West, North West and Northern aspects of Barra Mor, this sub compartment is largely made of mature to over mature beech planted as policy wood as part of Dunollie Castle grounds with a developing understorey, of sycamore in places. On the lower altitudes of the South Western aspect, some ash is present with signs of Chalara infection, wych elm, sweet chestnut, and oak. The beech fringe is widely valued as part of the landscape character of Oban, the avenue to Dunollie Castle, and the approach from the water. Near the top of Barra Mor within this compartment is an area of European larch that is prone to wind blow, and larch are also present as scattered single trees in the Northernmost corner. Rhododendron, bamboo, and Sitka spruce regeneration have all been removed from this sub compartment between 2019 and 2024. Vegetation is dominated by bluebells through the majority of this compartment with greater woodrush and dog's mercury on the steeper faces. Bracken can be locally dominant, particularly where large wind blow has not been replaced with young trees. Scaly- male fern and broad buckler fern are scattered through the compartment, particularly on the shadier areas. The topography nearby the boundary edge is steep, potentially unstable cliffs made of conglomerate rock that can be prone to crumbling in places and very steep vegetated ground on well drained soils with peaty flushes in the hollows. Moving further into the compartment, the ground remains steep throughout. There are a number of historic features within this compartment. On the South Eastern side of Barra Mor, a small burial mound partially excavated contained a small tomb and cremation deposits along with domestic items, and on Creag Moraig, a hearth and cinery urn dating to at least 1750BC is on the North Western aspect. Along the cliffs of Barra Mor, there is a location where Viking runes have been carved, thought to have been done while sheltering in Oban Bay while venturing South. The views from the South West side over Oban Bay are spectacular and attract access takers. This area can also be used for fires, dumping litter and garden waste, with the caves at the bottom of the cliffs.						
1b	6.12	Birch (downy/silver)	1898	Min-intervention	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Very steep	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
					slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	
Covering all but the South Western third of Barr Cruinn, using the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) boundary to demarcate this area, this sub compartment together with 1f is the core area of rainforest within the site. Much of the mature woodland in this area was felled for timber in the 1940's during the Second World War and has regenerated naturally since then, particularly in the last 20 to 30 years. There are several open areas, mostly dominated by bracken, with the bracken not encroaching under the canopy. Under the canopy, bluebell dominates with Molinia occupying the areas with damper soils. Mature Scot's pine, oak, and wych elm are scattered throughout. Young hazel and birch are regenerating vigorously in places aged 15 to 30 years, with little in the way of basal growth due to browsing. European larch are present in small pockets and individual trees on the Northern Western edge. Rhododendron has been removed from this sub compartment.						
1c	2.9	Oak (pedunculate)	1898	Min-intervention	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin
This compartment covers the South Eastern quarter of Barr Cruinn, almost purely from the top of bank down to the top of the wall adjacent to the A85, and the area behind The Corran Halls car park. The woodland here is dominated by mature pendunculate oak, wych elm, beech, and sycamore with bird cherry, rowan, birch, and holly all present. Given light, regeneration along this bank is very good due to the steepness of the ground and disturbance. A population of rabbits occupying a warren near the top of the bank could become an issue for young trees here. Sycamore is growing densely from cut stumps by the wall and can interfere with the street lighting and access along the pavement. Ground flora can be locally diverse. Along the top edge, bracken is abundant due to the large area of open ground to the North. Within the compartment itself, greater woodrush is present in patches, grass species, bluebell, wood sorrel and areas of bare ground. The overwhelming management priority for this compartment is the safety management for the users of the A85, pavement, and car park area and a proactive approach is required.						
1d	1.15	Mixed native broadleaves	1898	Min-intervention	Mostly wet ground/exposed site	

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
An area fringed to the East side by a thicket of ash, young birch, hazel, rowan and bird cherry as a strip regenerated along the side of the A85. The majority of this compartment sits within the wayleaves of power lines or phone lines so the potential to develop mature woodland in much of this is limited. Planting of willow, alder, and hazel will be possible although dense bracken will be a major constraint. Much of the ground is damp with seasonal water flows through from drainage on the A85 to a large drainage ditch on the North Western edge. Soft rush and bracken occupies most of the open ground.						
1e	1.24	European larch	1950	PAWS restoration	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin
An area of post war non-native planting (1950's) of European larch, Sitka spruce, and Douglas fir on the North Eastern side of Barra Mor, planted on steep to sloping ground to the boundary with the field. All species have grown well and micro habitats have developed within this area through wind blow, phoenix tree behaviour from the spruce, and developing quantities of deadwood through natural die off. The Sitka spruce would largely be described as over mature with many of the stems becoming buttressed and large at the base, making removal of these in the topography a challenge. Red squirrels are present in the woods, with larch and spruce being a known favoured food source.						
1f	10.15	Birch (downy/silver)	1898	Min-intervention		
Covering the top and Eastern side of Barra Mor, using the NWSS boundary to demarcate this area, this sub compartment together with 1b is the core area of rainforest within the site. Many of the mature trees were felled in the 1940's during the Second World War and has regenerated naturally since then, particularly in the last 40 to 50 years, while some areas look to have been left fairly untouched. Previously cut hazel has regrown well in places, particularly in the Western side of this compartment. There are several open areas, mostly dominated by bracken with the bracken not encroaching under the canopy. These open glades are part of the rich diversity of habitats in the woodland, and are particularly important for an array of lichen species (Lichen Report, April Windle 2024). Under the canopy, bluebell dominates large swathes, with Molinia occupying the areas with damper soils. Mature Scot's pine, oak, and wych elm are scattered throughout. European larch are present in small pockets along the edge of the steep ground on the South East face of the compartment. Rhododendron has been removed throughout, with regrowth still requiring some follow up control. This compartment is generally gently sloping, with damper soils steepening at the edges, where the more mature						

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
tree specimens are located. These steeper faces meet with the rear of a number of houses and gardens that are a mixture of West Highland Housing Association owned, Argyll Community Housing Association owned, and privately owned and rents properties and require proactive tree safety management. In the North Eastern area of this compartment, there is evidence on the ground of boundary walls, particularly where the path follows this feature. The Dunollie housing scheme sits to the South East of this compartment. Areas of this compartment are regularly used by members of the public, along with some irresponsible access such as lighting fires, dumping garden waste, and unauthorised removal of trees.						

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland
Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland
Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site
Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up
Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf
A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy
The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell
Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment
Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer
A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice
Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species
Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer
Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell
The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention
Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention
Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland
Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)
A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species
Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration
Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking
Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer
Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand
Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment
Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning
The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes
Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding
The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established.

Windblow/Windthrow
Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.