

Kilfinan Community Council has been asked to comment on the Long Term Forest Plan for North Otter and Killail, near Largiemore, Cowal.

After reviewing the concept and location maps showing the draft proposed felling phases, areas of long-term retention, and identified constraints and designations, the Community Council Forestry Group, together with the Community Council, has prepared the following response. Please let us know if you have any comments on the proposal, or on our response, by Sunday 18th January. We will then submit a final response to the land manager.

There will be further opportunities to comment when Scottish Forestry undertakes its formal consultation on the forestry plan at a later date.

Context and strategic importance

- Restoration of natural habitats was identified as a priority by the local community during the engagement phase of the recent Local Place Planning Development.
- The North Otter / Killail holding lies within the West Cowal Rainforest Restoration Project area, which is recognised by the Scottish Government as a landscape-scale opportunity to restore and expand Scotland's rainforest.
- The site is strategically important for improving coastal rainforest connectivity between the core areas at Strathlachlan (to the north) and Glenan Community Woodland (to the south).
- Through the Killail and Kilfinan burn network, the site also represents a keystone location for east–west connectivity, linking Loch Fyne with the Glendaruel and Kyles of Bute rainforest core areas.

Opportunities for restoration and enhancement

- Restoration of the headwaters of the Kilfinan Burn would align with, and significantly enhance, the proposed rainforest restoration project at the Otter Hill shelterbelt, led by RTS Forestry and Argyll Countryside Trust.
- There is longer-term potential for a comprehensive restoration programme across the Kilfinan Burn and its tributaries, as further opportunities to engage forest managers and landowners arise through future LTFP renewals.
- The riparian corridors and coastal fringe in this area support globally important epiphyte diversity, for which there is an international responsibility to protect and restore.

Further information requested at the next stage of plan development

While the proposal presents many positive opportunities, at the next stage of the Long-Term Forest Plan we would welcome:

- More detailed proposals for riparian zones and the wider drinking-water catchment burn network identified for native woodland expansion.
- Details of the proposed otter survey, including methodology, timing, and measures to ensure that management activities minimise disturbance to otter habitat.
- Clarification on how and when areas of Class 5 peatland and carbon-rich soils will be assessed.
- A copy of the archaeological survey, or more details on when and how this will be carried out.
- Additional detail on proposed future species composition.
- Information of the approach to managing invasive species.
- Information of the proposed deer management plan,