

## **OPERATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

**For:**

**Mr A Grant  
Drumuillie  
Boat of Garten  
Inverness-Shire  
PH24 3BX**

**Prepared by:**

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**JANUARY 2010**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report has been requested by Alexander Grant and relates to the operation of lot 5 Drumuillie. This 4.24 ha holding is a registered croft and was purchased from their landlord. There is no housing associated with this land.

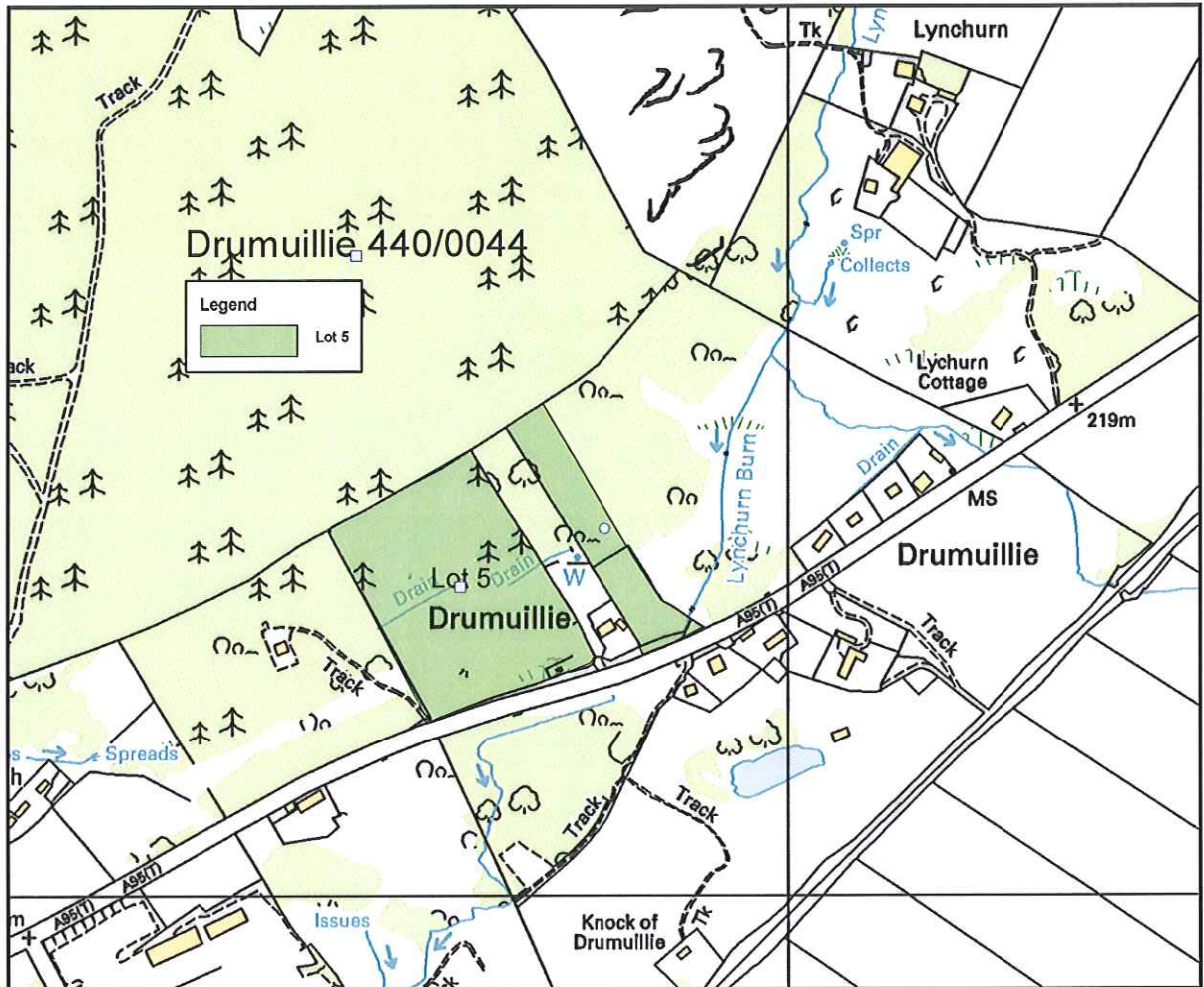
The croft is located North of Boat of Garten off the A95. The area is made up of two adjacent plots with most of the cover being mixed woodland with open areas of improved grassland used for grazing two horses, three breeding sheep and for growing vegetables

Mr Grant relocated from Boat of Garten around two years ago with his wife, to live on the croft. This allows them to have a permanent base on the holding for overseeing its day to day running and to further develop the enterprise. Currently Mr and Mrs Grant are living in a caravan on the land as there is no other accommodation on the farm. The only buildings present are stables and a storage shed. The caravan is being occupied only as a short term solution and having been in it for two years Mr Grant is keen to construct a dwelling house to move into on the land which is necessary for the running of the daily operations.

Mr Grant works as a self employed forester and currently utilises the croft for self sufficiency and has the intention to develop his enterprise as a small commercial business.

## 1.1 MAP

The following map indicates the farm location and boundary:



## **2.0 AREA AND SOIL TYPE**

The land comprises of 4.24 hectares and is classified as being in a Less Favoured Area (LFA). The fields are identifiable through IACS registration 440/0044.

The holding is capable of some cultivation and cropping but is limited by size and lack of infrastructure.

The soil is classified as Soil Association No. 20: Morainic drifts derived from Old Red Sandstone strata and Moine Schists. The component soils are Humus-iron podzols; some brown forest soils , noncalcareous gleys and peaty gleys. The landforms found here are undulating lowlands and valley sides with gentle and strong slopes; non rocky which support vegetation such as arable and permanent pastures.

### **3.0 PROPOSED USE**

Mr Grant is a self employed forester who covers a wide area including Strathspey, Ballindalloch and Speyside. He has identified a market for young trees and hedge plants acclimatised to local conditions. An area of approximately 0.4 ha will be laid out to a rotational tree nursery growing approximately 3700 plants per ha.

Mr and Mrs Grant have also established vegetable plots for their self sufficiency. In doing this they have recognised the potential for expansion and sale of excess produce through established local markets and farm shops. About 0.2 ha will be developed with the addition of polytunnels to grow on young plants and extend the growing season. Stock of 2 horses, 3 sheep and a small brood of hens will also be maintained.

Mr Grant will also plant Christmas trees within the existing woodland as a cash crop.

#### 4.0 LABOUR REQUIREMENTS OF THE BUSINESS

Standard Labour requirements are taken from the SAC Farm Management Handbook 2009/10. Based on the crop figures and stocking densities detailed the labour requirement is as follows:

<b>Crop</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Total Hours Required</b>
Rough grazing	0.41 hectares	1.5	0.6
Grassland	0.81 hectares	4	3.24
Woodland	2.02 hectares		
Vegetables under glass	0.2 hectares	5000	1000
Tree nursery	0.4 hectares	1500	600
Grassland	0.4 hectares	4	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.24 hectares</b>		
<b>Livestock</b>			
Horses	2	150	300
Ewes & rams	3	4.2	12.6
Laying hens	6	0.3	1.8

**Total = 1918**

*NB: Not all the vegetables will be under glass but tending plots with a variety of crops will still assume some labour especially at peak times.*

A labour unit is recognised as 1900 hours per annum; therefore the total requirement of this unit will be 1 Labour unit. Mr Grant will be providing this labour himself while also working as a self employed forester. There will be peak times when it will be essential for Mr Grant to be on site permanently particularly during lambing and when the vegetables are in season. It is therefore necessary that there is a permanent dwelling house constructed for Mr Grant and his wife to reside in.

## 5.0 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Livestock keepers and land managers must fulfil certain duties and responsibilities. In particular, they must ensure the welfare of their livestock and security of their assets.

Farms are vulnerable to theft and vandalism, due to the relatively remote locations in which they operate. Thus for overall security it is becoming essential that someone is resident beside the livestock both to prevent any theft from the site and reduce the risk of vandalism to buildings fences, machinery and equipment.

Normal animal welfare requirements are for the daily inspection of stock to ensure that they are in good health. During the winter months there is the added requirement that daily feeding must be carried out if needed. At lambing time regular inspections will be required throughout the day to monitor the sheep and provide any necessary assistance should any difficulties arise. This level of care is best provided by someone who is staying on the unit so that immediate action can be taken should there be any problems.

Furthermore farm bio-security is becoming increasingly important both to protect stock on the farm and to prevent spread of disease. It is essential to be near the stock to monitor movements on or off the unit and to ensure that stray stock do not come onto the unit. It is also essential to be able to monitor the movement of people through the farm to ensure they do not disturb the ewes especially during lambing time. Although the stock on the farm is limited these points are still important and relevant.

Although Mr Grant is currently living on the unit, he is staying in a caravan which is not a long term option for him and his wife. It is vital to the day to day running of the farm that he is on site so the clear option is construction of a dwelling house.



## 6.0 SUMMARY

The land at Drumuillie has much potential to be developed as an agricultural business but it will depend on increasing hours worked by Mr Grant on the farm. Mr Grant already works as a forester and is self employed with his job covering a large proportion of the Highlands.

Mr Grant has identified realistic production opportunities from this small holding. The growing of vegetables and nursery tree stock builds on areas of expertise and readily identifiable markets.

To develop these enterprises Mr and Mrs Grant will have to invest more time on the croft while maintaining their full time employment. In order for them to continue this work and put in further hours on his croft it is crucial that they live there on a permanent basis in accommodation more suitable than a caravan. This will enable them to really be able to develop the croft and take it forward as a small commercial agricultural business.