

Communities for Diverse Forestry Woodland Creation Schemes Guidance For Community Councils

September 2021



INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Government has set tree planting targets for the next ten years which will mean large scale forest expansion and land use change in the coming decade. Communities have a say in how and where these forests are planted. This document sets out guidance on how to respond to a consultation.

Key Players

Scottish Government – make policy

Regional Councils – contribute to policy through Local Development Plans

Scottish Forestry – control grants and permissions, they are also the regulator. The regional office also reviews the design and survey responses from consultees and makes amendments and suggestions to the application as appropriate. [Link to Scottish Forestry regional Conservancy Offices*](#)

Consultees (see below) – respond to plans and surveys

Community Councils – elected local representatives

Woodland Agents – private sector businesses that design and manage forests, write forest grant applications, consult with communities and liaise with stakeholders and Scottish Forestry

Landowners – site owners

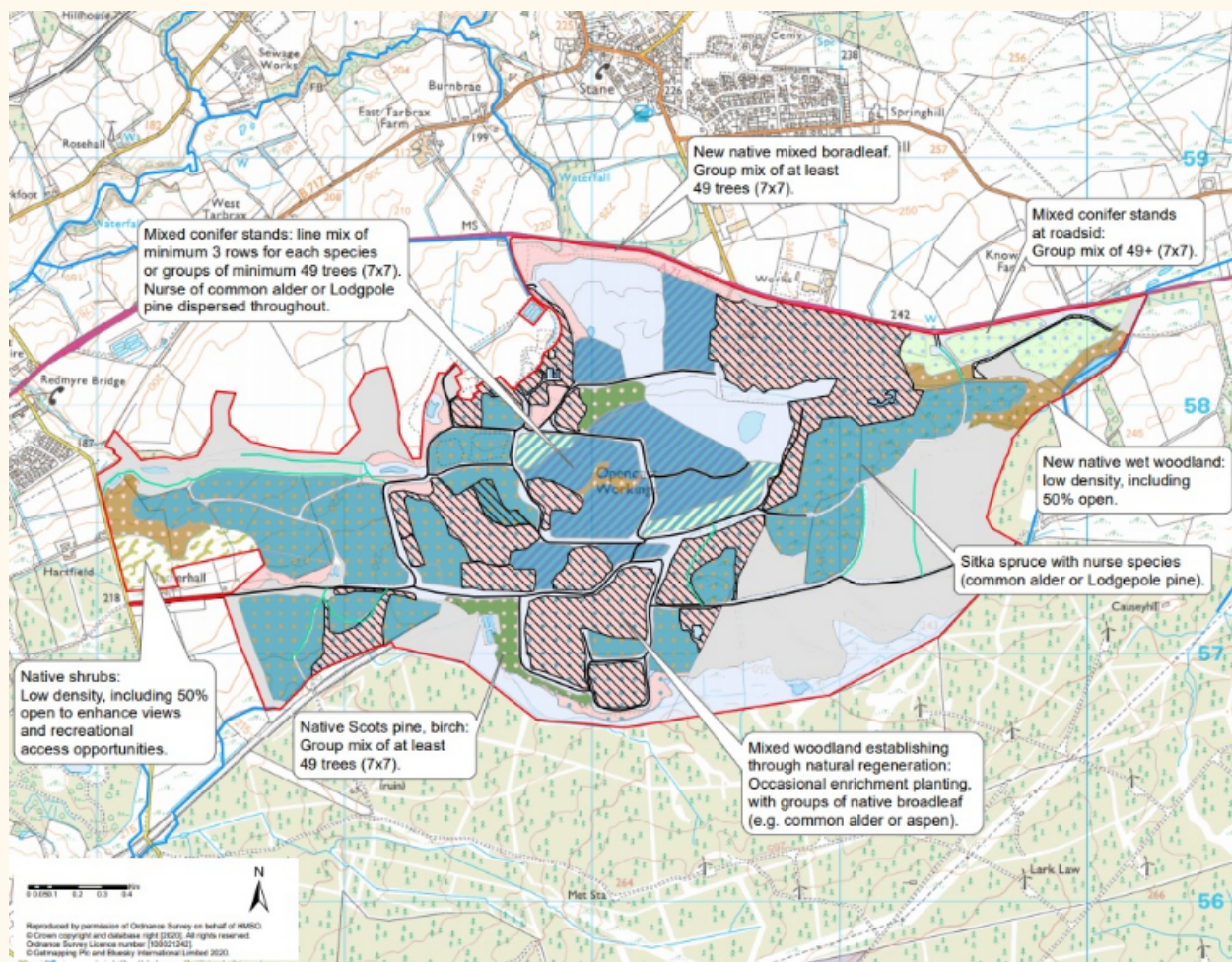
Who Are The Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultees and What Do They Do?

Nature Scot, SEPA, RSPB, Fisheries Trusts, Regional Councils, Archaeologists etc NB Forest and Land Scotland (FLS are a separate body from Scottish Forestry and not included in this process, except where they make an application themselves.)

The Application Process

1. Scoping
2. Wildlife, Soil, Archaeology, Water and Habitat Surveys
3. Detailed Design
4. Application on public register for comment
5. Scottish Forestry Decision
6. Planting Commences

Example Map:



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<https://forestryandland.gov.scot/news-releases/views-sought-on-woodland-creation-plan-for-old-opencast-site>

Key to Maps (to be expanded):

SS Sitka Spruce OL Open Land
 SP Scots Pine DF Douglas Fir
 NMB native mixed broadleaves

Grant types

- Conifer (predominantly Sitka spruce)
- Diverse conifer (mixed conifers)
- Broadleaves (productive species at high stocking density)
- Native Scots pine
- Native upland birch
- Native broadleaves
- Native low density
- Small or Farm woodland (mixed woodlands less than 10ha)
- Northern & Western Isles

Notification of a consultation

This should come from the landowner or woodland agent in the early stages of a proposal. It's possible that you may be notified later, by the aforementioned bodies or Scottish Forestry. It's worthwhile getting to know your regional Scottish Forestry officer (find them here) and let them know you would like to be notified of all proposals in your area. You can decide if you want to be notified for felling licenses and long term management plans too. Make sure you have a fixed line of contact, and have cover in place if the person dealing with it is away.

When and How can Communities Contribute?

At Scoping (preferred)

Conversations between woodland agents and communities. Gathering information, learning, site visits etc

During the Design Process

There are inevitably several iterations of the forest design in response to community input and survey results. These should be shared and circulated for comment where possible.

When the Application is on the Public Register

Individuals and communities can submit formal responses to the application. Along with earlier contributions these will be entered into an 'issues log' at Scottish Forestry and given due consideration. At this point, we recommend establishing a relationship with the Scottish Forestry officer responsible for the case.

What Can Communities Add

Sense of Place:

Rural landscapes are rich with historic and cultural associations as well as natural heritage. People often have intergenerational relationships with their local spaces. With this comes a sense of custodianship.

Design Input:

Locals often know their local landscape intimately. They can pinpoint the key landscape features and views, where the paths are and may also be able to offer input on year-round habitats and species siting. This can be invaluable in creating a sensitive forest design.

Amenity Ideas:

Woodlands can often improve amenity for both locals and tourists. They are accessible and have good infrastructure. In addition to recreation, they may open up wildlife watching opportunities. Communities can help advise on what the most useful additions to the forest are.

This should be regarded as expert knowledge.

Benefits to the Community

Forest schools, education opportunities including training the next generation of foresters (on the ground) as well as ecologists, scientists and conservationists. Forests can also be considered a larder and a resource of arts and artisan products.

Building the Conversations

Communities: Given the complexities around land use and forestry, it's a good idea to consider each site on its own merits. Having a good baseline policy may be helpful - one way of doing this is to draw up a simple draft 'policy' for your local Community, taking into account all the factors that are important in your area. There is a template available to help create these policy documents, it's advisable to make a draft first and then consult widely with your community to make sure it reflects a broad range of local ideas, suggestions and concerns. It's a good idea for community councils to appoint one or two 'neutral' people to be the point of communication between the stakeholders.

Establish relationships: designate a community representative and make a direct link with the Woodland Agent. Establish trust and mutual respect. If the relationship is not working, change it.

Ask the woodland agent for a joint site visit: a joint site visit can be an invaluable tool in making links with locals and for woodland agents to orientate themselves with key aspects of the landscape.

Exchange of Information: be clear and transparent in exchanging information. Ask for clear timelines and access to surveys.

How Can Community Representatives Consult Locally?

Communities can use a range of communication methods to make sure they consult as widely as possible – this should seek to take a fair representative sample of the residents. They should consider all views and make efforts to discover the sentiment of any silent majority/minorities. Methods to achieve this can be door-to-door, leaflet dropping, emails and phone calls, social media. This consultation should go further than the simple question of “do you like this forest plan or not?” and ask questions about what is important in the landscape, the natural history considerations, cultural associations and creative associations. What is it currently used for? These consultations should involve the project officer as far as possible with a two-way feed of information established. It would also be very useful to ask the applicant’s agent to talk about the sort of local jobs the forest creation will bring to the area and be honest about any climate/biodiversity/economic trade-offs.

Setting the Tone

Pay close attention to tone. Woodland agents, woodland officers and community councillors often end up on the receiving end of strong emotions. This can be de-fused if people feel heard and that they are being given due consideration. Written communication can be notoriously blunt, especially in the days of text and email. If dialogue takes a downward spiral, pick up the phone, arrange a video call, set up an outdoor walk or face to face meeting.

Support

If you aren’t happy with the level of engagement from either woodland agents or Scottish Forestry you can ask your local MSPs, MP and local councillors for support. It’s also possible to raise [Freedom of Information](#) requests for some aspects of woodland creation documentation if you can’t access them with a polite request (always the best start!).

*<https://forestry.gov.scot/about/local-offices>