

AUCHENSOUL WOODLAND CREATION PROPOSALS

Scottish Woodlands Ltd. have produced draft proposals for a woodland creation scheme at Auchensoul on behalf of the landowner.

The views of the local community are being sought via through information sent to Community Councils and neighbours.

Context

The **Scottish Government** supports woodland creation as part of future land use in Scotland. This will contribute to:

- Fulfil targets on **Climate Change** (carbon sequestration – 18,000 ha of new woodland per annum by 2024/25)
- Fulfil targets on **Biodiversity**
- Help underpin a **sustainable supply of wood products** to the Scottish forestry industry

Ayrshire and Arran Forestry & Woodland Strategy

- The entirety of Auchensoul lies within the “Potential” area for new woodlands
- Strategy highlights opportunities for well-designed softwood forests and new native woodland corridors

The Scheme will be progressed through the **Forestry Grant Scheme** and submitted to Scottish Forestry for their approval

Objectives

- Carbon Sequestration
- Productive Woodland Establishment
- Protect Existing Biodiversity Values
 - Native woodland expansion
 - Retention of open ground in important locations
- Protect Cultural Heritage Features of Value
- Deliver Wider Benefits
 - Access provision
 - Improving management of existing native woodlands
 - Safeguard water quality

Design & Application Process

The design process has included specialist survey and assessment of:

- **Soils and Peat**

- All identified areas of deep peat over 50cm have been excluded from the planting area
- No ploughing is proposed as part of this application
- Further micro site surveying on plantable areas over peaty gley soils will be carried out prior to planting, and should further deep peat be identified at any stage, the proposals will be amended to safeguard these areas

- **Habitats, Birds and Animals**

- An independent specialist Habitats, Birds and Protected species survey has been carried out as part of this application
- Whilst there is a possible loss or displacement of 1 pair of curlew, the rest of the wader territories (curlew, snipe and oystercatcher) have been left outside of the woodland perimeter boundary
- Other bird species within the site will see a positive effect, such as cuckoo, linnet, mistle thrush, flycatcher, tree pipit, whinchat and willow warbler; and also mammals such as red squirrel
- Rigorous predator control will be carried out on site and surrounding area left in agriculture in order to alleviate any potential pressure on ground nesting species
- Mitigation proposals may be carried out within the areas left in agriculture in order to improve suitable wader habitat
- Any habitats of identified regional and local interest will be protected and retained in open ground
- New habitats will be created, notably through establishment of new native and riparian woodlands and the removal of grazing on open areas within the woodland

Design & Application Process

The design process has included specialist survey and assessment of:

- **Archaeology**

- All identified features of interest will be protected as recommended by independent specialist report

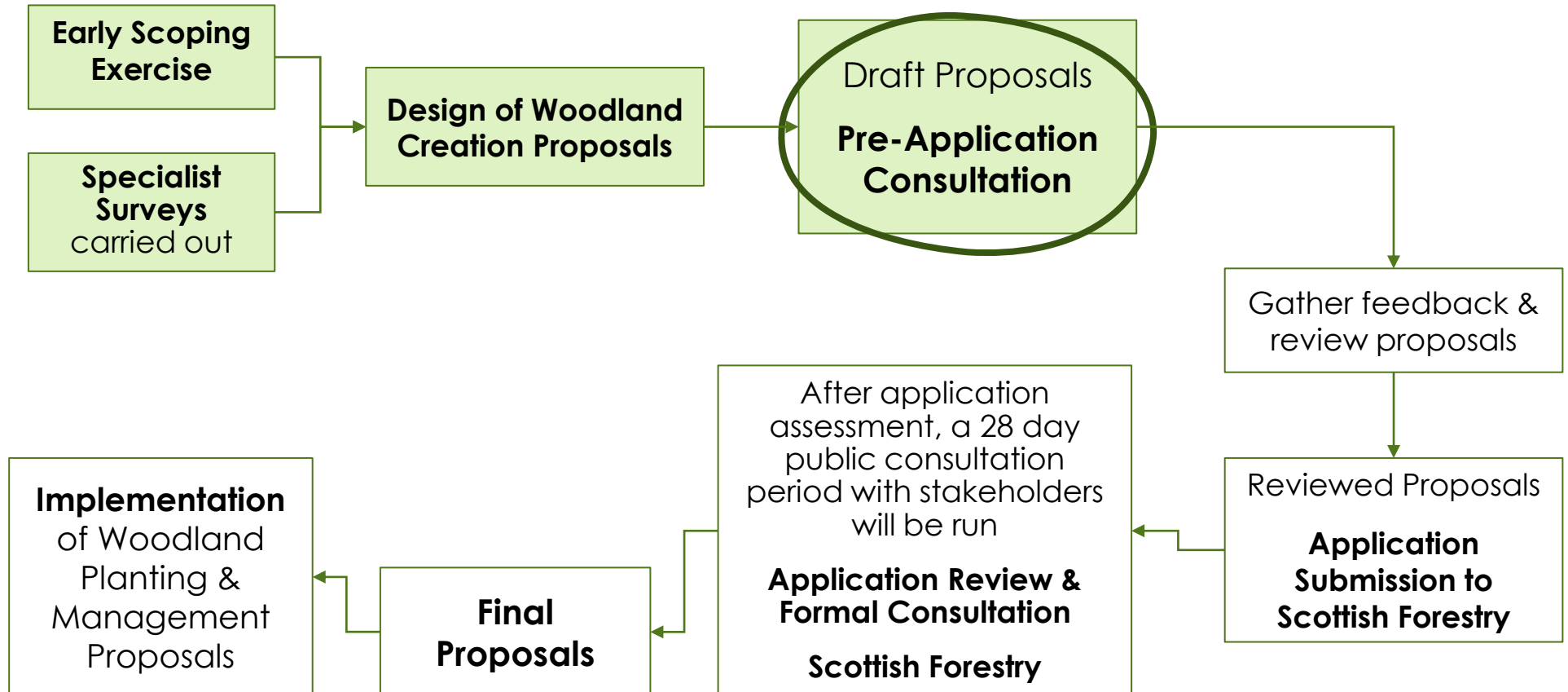
- **Landscape**

- Some key areas of the woodland, particularly along the east of The Screws Road, have been kept open in order to maintain open views
- The woodland has been designed to fit with the local topography and to include a wide range of woodland types and open ground

- **Early Scoping**

- An early scoping exercise was undertaken at the early stages, the following parties were contacted:
 - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
 - South Ayrshire Council
 - Barr Community Council
 - Nature Scot
 - Ayrshire Rivers Trust
 - River Stinchar Fishery Board
 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)

Design & Application Process



Proposal Summary

Total Site Area	348 ha	100 %
Left in agriculture	76 ha	22 %

Within Woodland Perimeter Boundary

Planted	184 ha	53 %
Existing woodland	20 ha	6 %
Open	68 ha	19 %

Total Planting Area	184 ha	100 %
Coniferous	140 ha	76 %
Broadleaved	44 ha	24 %

Proposal Summary

- Roughly **36%** of the proposal consists of **native broadleaved woodland and open ground**, significantly exceeding the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard.
- At **least 70% of broadleaves will be of native species**, and these will be focused on land near watercourses, ancient semi-natural woodland and public roads.
- Most of the coniferous element will be **Sitka spruce**, however **other species** such as Douglas fir, Western red cedar, Noble fir, Norway spruce and Scots pine will be used as the diverse conifer element in the more fertile lower slopes and more visible parts of the site.
- The planting has been kept a **minimum of 20 metres** back from the west side of the B734 road ("The Screws"), and a **minimum of 85 metres** back from the east side of the road, maintaining **open views** across the Stinchar Valley.
- Views from **Auchensoul Hill** have been kept open and will not be obstructed by the planting.
- **Native broadleaved woodland** has been used on the upper (west side) of The Screws road, to avoid overshadowing by coniferous trees or risk trees falling on road.
- Most of the planting will be protected with a **deer fence**, the alternative is to use a high amount of plastic tree shelters.
- The **Right of Responsible Access** will be exercised through the woodland, and self-closing gates for recreation access will be provided throughout the woodland.
- Gates will be provided to maintain access through the **Core Path**, which won't be obstructed, and new way markers will be installed to highlight the path route.
- **Accessibility** to the site will be enhanced once the forest tracks are completed, providing walking loops through the scheme.
- All heavy plant and future timber haulage will be undertaken **from the north via the windfarm road**, and **not** via The Screws road.

Other Information

- **Timing**

- If approval is granted by Scottish Forestry, woodland establishment works would be likely to commence in 2022 and be substantially complete by 2024

- **Employment**

- An Agricultural Impact Assessment is being carried out
- There will be no net impact on agricultural employment, and there will be an increase in forestry employment

- **Access**

- Access tracks will be installed to support establishment and management of the woodland
- This track network will be upgraded to facilitate harvesting, likely 30-40 years after initial planting
- Any harvesting traffic and extraction will take place via the Hadyard Hill Wind Farm road from the north of the site

- **Landscape**

- Visual representations of the future woodland have been attached to this consultation document
- Views over the Stinchar Valley from The Screws road and from Auchensoul Hill have been kept open and will not be obstructed by the planting

How to Comment

Your questions, comments and feedback on the proposals are welcome. Please also get in touch should you wish further information.

Andrew Maclachlan, Scottish Woodlands, Suite 2 Gardrum House, Fenwick, Kilmarnock KA3 6AS

Email: fenwickenquiries@scottishwoodlands.co.uk

A note of all comments received will be passed on to Scottish Forestry, along with a note of any design amendments proposed.

If you wish to copy Scottish Forestry into your correspondence, their contact details are:

Scottish Forestry, 55/57 Moffat Road, Dumfries DG1 1NP
(southscotland.cons@forestry.gov.scot)

All documents and maps can be found in:

<https://www.scottishwoodlands.co.uk/public-consultations>