

Information for Forestry Project Consultees

What is scoping?

Scoping, sometimes referred to as public engagement, is an early part of the consultation process designed to identify any issues that should be considered when preparing a Forest Plan, woodland creation proposal, or other forestry project. Individuals and organisations may hold important information about the forest, for example the location of archaeological features, water supplies, protected species or habitats, or other potential impacts on neighbours or local communities. Scoping will assist the Forest Manager in the preparation of the forestry project by identifying these issues early so that they can be discussed and, where possible, mitigation measures agreed.

Why have I been asked to comment?

The Forest Manager will seek to involve a wide range of people and organisations who have an interest in the forest. There is no obligation to respond, however if you do not, we will understand this to mean you have no objections or comments to make.

How will my comments be treated?

Comments received will commonly be recorded in an 'Issues Log' and summarised in a 'Scoping Report' which will be sent to the regulator, Scottish Forestry regulates LTFP approvals in Scotland. Equivalent statutory processes apply elsewhere, led by the Forestry Commission in England, Natural Resources Wales in Wales, and the Forest Service in Northern Ireland. For any public facing documentation, and to comply with GDPR and protect sensitive information, personal details and sensitive locations will be redacted and comments will be attributed only by stakeholder type (e.g. "Neighbour 1"). Confidential information will only be shared with relevant statutory authorities where required.

How do I access the scoping information and what does it contain?

Scoping information is either sent directly or accessed via the link provided in the scoping letter to the Scottish Woodlands website, where maps and supporting documents can be downloaded. The scoping material usually includes a summary of the proposed project—such as a Long-Term Forest Plan, or New Woodland Creation Application—along with a brief description, the consultation period, and a Concept Map showing initial proposals, constraints, and opportunities. This reflects early due-diligence work; further detail will follow once scoping is complete and feedback has been gathered. Early stage concept maps and project details are indicative and subject to change as the project develops and more information become known to the Forest Manager.

How do I comment?

Comments can be submitted in any format, including email or post, using the contact details provided. If there is a particular issue which is better to discuss on site, then the Forest Manager will try to meet you there in person.

When do I need to respond by?

The scoping period usually lasts 30 days unless otherwise notified in the scoping information. This period is defined to ensure that forestry projects can continue to make progress within a reasonable timescale. Consultation dates are provided in the scoping letter. Some issues may need further investigation but raising them early helps identify matters requiring later discussion.

What happens once the scoping period has concluded?

After the scoping period is over, we will review all the comments we have received and consider potential measures to resolve or mitigate as far as reasonably possible any issues that have been raised. We cannot promise to fully satisfy all concerns, but we will work with respondents to try and find the most satisfactory and amicable solution for both sides. The forest regulator will also assess how issues raised at scoping have been addressed within forestry projects. Ultimately it is the Regulatory body that will decide if the project has met all UKFS requirements and followed guidelines.

What about Forest Certification?

Where scoping is undertaken for a forestry project, it may also inform forest certification requirements. Forest Plans for certified forests are prepared to align with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard

(UKWAS). Following approval, the forest may be considered for inclusion in the Scottish Woodlands Forest Certification Group Scheme, which is subject to independent audits, providing assurance of responsible and sustainable management.

Why do we need to cut down trees?

The UK is less than 20% self-sufficient in timber and imports around 32 million tonnes of timber and timber products each year. As one of the world's largest timber importers, the UK has a significant international timber footprint. Increasing the supply of domestically grown timber helps reduce reliance on imports, supports national infrastructure needs, and strengthens local timber and construction industries, providing long-term employment. Often, the trees were planted as a managed timber crop and have now reached maturity. They will be harvested and processed at modern sawmills into a wide range of timber products. Almost all material is used, with smaller timber and sawdust forming products such as MDF and chipboard. These long-life products store the carbon absorbed by the trees, helping to reduce climate impacts. If plantations are left unharvested, the trees are increasingly vulnerable to windblow and often fail to develop into functional ecosystems without forest management intervention. Harvesting operations are often part of carefully planned felling, phased over a 20-year periods to minimise landscape change and local impacts. Forestry in the UK is rotational with a long term of aim of management to ensure new trees are planted, grown and felled in a continuing sustainable cycle repeated for generations to come.

Will the forest be replanted and will pesticides be used?

The Forest Plan and restocking design will set out how the forest will be replanted and/or regenerated, usually with increased species and structural diversity. To ensure successful establishment of the new trees, ground preparation will usually be carried out to ensure that each tree is provided with a suitable planting position, and protection from browsing animals, weeds and pests. New trees are typically well established within five years.

Pesticides are used only where necessary as part of an Integrated Pest Management approach. Pesticide use for Scottish Woodlands managed sites aims to avoid or minimise pesticide use where viable chemical free alternatives exist. We also carry out Social and Environmental Risk Assessments (ESRA) for the pesticides we use and we choose less hazardous products where these deliver the same effect. You are encouraged to share any comments regarding pesticide use during the scoping process, you can also request to view a sample of our ESRAs during scoping for forests which are certified or being considered for certification.

What about wildlife and important habitats?

Forestry projects can vary and include those which are focused primarily on biodiversity as well as projects which produce timber resources and a variety of mixed projects tailored to the landowner objectives.

Productive forests support a wide range of wildlife, including a variety of bird species suited to mixed conifer and broadleaf habitats, birds of prey, otters, red squirrels, bats, badgers, pine marten, water voles, and wildcats etc. The forestry proposals will identify important species and habitats and describe how they will be protected and, where possible, enhanced.

Native woodlands can contribute towards expanding nature networks and areas of ancient woodlands, or restore degraded woodland sites. Sensitive habitats such as riparian areas around watercourses, wetlands, individual veteran trees or other small scale semi-natural areas are identified and incorporated into restructuring plans or woodland creation to ensure they are maintained or enhanced.

Prior to any major operations, wildlife surveys will be carried out. As far as practicable, we will aim to minimise any negative effects from intensive operations such as timber harvesting or large scale afforestation which inevitably involves a level of change to the local landscape. Where required, environmental impact assessments, species protection plans or other wildlife licenses will be obtained. You are encouraged to share any relevant wildlife information during the scoping process. Sensitive information will not be made public.

Sources of further information on public consultation and forestry projects

Scottish Forestry – Forestry Engagement and Consultation Processes

<https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/forestry-engagement-and-consultation-processes>

CONFOR - Engagement with Local People and Communities

<https://www.confor.org.uk/news/latest-news/new-good-practice-guide-for-engaging-communities-in-new-woodland-creation-launched/>

CONFOR - Guidelines for Respectful and Constructive Engagement

<https://www.confor.org.uk/resources/publications/confor-publications/guidelines-for-respectful-and-constructive-engagement/>