**Implementation Plan Actions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Background**

1. [Scotland’s Forestry Strategy 2019-2029](https://forestry.gov.scot/forestry-strategy) provides a 50-year vision and a 10-year framework for action. The Scottish Government is required to report to Parliament on progress towards delivering the Strategy every 3 years.
2. The first Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan therefore detailed the actions Scottish Government and partners agreed to undertake to support the implementation of the Forestry Strategy during its first three years, up until the end of March 2022.
3. There is now a need to develop a new Implementation Plan to cover the next reporting period up until 2025.

**Implementation Plan development**

1. In July 2021, at the inaugural meeting of the National Forestry Stakeholder Group, Mairi McAllan, the Minister for Environment and Land Reform initiated discussions on the new Implementation Plan, highlighting that delivery of the Forestry Strategy and its associated Implementations Plans is a shared endeavour.
2. This work was augmented by the publication of the Programme for Government and the Bute House Agreement, which set out key Government forestry commitments (Annex A).
3. Reflecting those initial discussions and the published forestry commitments, we carried out scoping work to identify the key strategic drivers that need to be considered in the new Implementation Plan. Based on further discussions with delivery partners, including at a workshop in February 2022, we refined this list of drivers and these are set out in Annex B.
4. These drivers do not represent a wholesale departure from the strategic drivers set out in the Forestry Strategy, indeed many of them are similar to, or build upon those drivers. Where they differ, this mainly indicates a shift in emphasis and, while remaining closely aligned to the strategic drivers identified in the Strategy, they help to better reflect current circumstances and Government priorities.
5. A summary of feedback and discussions with delivery partners around the development of the new Implementation Plan can be found in Annex C.

**Draft actions**

1. The new Implementation Plan provides an opportunity to strengthen the contribution that forestry makes to the delivery of Scottish Government objectives, to take stock of what actions we should continue with from the current Plan, and to think about what other key steps we should take, including evidence gathering and piloting work to test ideas.
2. We have used the strategic drivers set out in Annex B, alongside discussions with colleagues across Government and delivery partners, to help shape the development of draft actions which could be included in the next Implementation Plan, to be delivered over the next 3 years.
3. Scotland’s Forestry Strategy 2019-2029 identified six priority areas for action and the draft actions have been grouped under these six priorities. These actions include those already underway, as well as new initiatives. The potential lead organisation and the main delivery partners for each action have also been suggested where possible. The draft actions can be found in Annex D.
4. Selection of actions to include in the final Plan will be informed by the application of assessment criteria as identified during the development of the last Implementation Plan and as set out in Annex E.

**Preparation ahead of the National Forestry Stakeholder Group Meeting on 11 May**

1. It would be greatly appreciated if ahead of the meeting, you could help us by reviewing the list of draft actions set out in Annex D and considering:
2. Do the draft actions cover the activities that you think we collectively need to carry out over the next 3 years to continue to progress delivery of the Forestry Strategy?
3. Who is willing to lead or be a partner in delivering each action?

**Scottish Forestry**

**April 2022**

**Annex A: Recent Government commitments**

* Increase woodland creation to 18,000 hectares a year by 2024/25, and increase the annual native woodland creation target to at least 4,000 hectares.
* Undertake an evidence-based review of the native woodland target as part of the 2022 biodiversity strategy review.
* Increase Forestry Land Scotland’s capacity to grow the public forest through the acquisition of land, particularly in National and Regional Parks, by increasing capital funding.
* Support public sector bodies, as part of their statutory duty under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018), to identify and implement opportunities to increase tree cover on land they own and manage, with an emphasis on native woodland and natural regeneration. We will explore if further legislative changes are required to strengthen the duty on public bodies.
* Consult on ways to increase easily accessible, sustainably managed woodlands, including native woodlands, in urban or peri-urban areas, as part of a just transition.
* Ensure that Scotland’s people are able to live and work sustainably on our land and that communities benefit from the land use changes necessary to address the twin environmental and climate crises, and support a just transition.
* Ensure that the replacement for the Common Agricultural Policy ring-fences funds for tree planting, orchard creation, and woodland regeneration, as well as support for the development of rural businesses linked with forestry.
* Modernise deer management, implementing the recommendations of the Deer Management Working Group.
* Establish a National Register of Ancient Woodlands, working with owners and agencies to maintain and protect them.
* Support the restoration and expansion of Scotland’s rainforests.
* Explore the opportunities to pilot landscape-scale projects involving natural regeneration of woodlands, possibly within the existing National and Regional Parks.
* Support crofters and their communities to play a bigger role in peatland restoration and woodland creation.
* Ensure that trees, woodlands and natural resources play a key role in flood prevention schemes, in riparian repair activity and to address air pollution.

**Annex B: Strategic Drivers**

* ***Resilience*** – safeguarding the benefits of forests for current and future generations.

Focus includes resilience of forests to climate change and pests and diseases.

* ***Reversing biodiversity loss*** – protecting and enhancing Scotland’s rich biodiversity.

Focus includes nature restoration, deer, native woodlands, natural regeneration and rainforests.

* ***Net-zero*** – increasing forestry’s contribution to achieving net-zero emissions.

Focus includes woodland creation, timber production and use, decarbonisation of the forestry sector and integrated land-use.

* ***Just transition*** – supporting a fairer, greener future for all.

Focus includes people and communities benefitting more from forestry – including through community wealth-building and through helping them adapt to climate change.

* ***Green recovery*** – helping Scotland to recover from the pandemic.

Focus includes green finance, Forestry Grant Scheme, skills, and health and well-being.

**Annex C: Summary of feedback and discussions with delivery partners on the new Implementation Plan**

| **Driver** | **Comments** |
| --- | --- |
| **Resilience** | * Recent storms have demonstrated vulnerability of stands and needing to increase resilience. * Addressing deer management will have an impact not only on forestry biodiversity but that of the wider countryside. There is a need to engage with local authorities with a focus in the urban/ peri urban areas. * A range of options to improve deer management needed, including deer management plans and strengthening FGS support for managing deer - not just fencing. * Identify priority areas where strategic deer fencing could have an impact e.g. islands and pilot a landscape approach to deer management. * Natural regeneration / colonisation has a role to play in supporting a number of drivers – deer management key. * Climate adaptation must be considered as important as climate mitigation because dead trees do not sequester carbon. |
| **Reversing biodiversity loss** | * Delivering an Ancient Woodland Register would feed into a wide range of policy commitments. * Improve the state of protected areas, in particular ancient woodlands. Conserve and restore current sites. * Support the enhancement and expansion of the Atlantic Rainforest. * Delivery of forest and woodlands at a landscape scale supporting habitat networks can showcase good practice. * There is an opportunity to improve guidance and demonstrate how the biodiversity of productive woodlands can be increased from where it currently is. * Greater emphasis on ease of access through grant scheme to enable e.g. riparian planting |
| **Net Zero** | * Woodland creation complex – be realistic about evidence and explicit about trade-offs between levels of different benefits relating to different woodland types. * Carbon – need to continue to build evidence base, e.g. through Science & Innovation Strategy. Also measuring carbon use (e.g. fossil fuels) within industry to inform decarbonisation agenda. Opportunity to pilot/test some tools emerging in this space (e.g. launch of carbon mgmt. app at CivTech yesterday) * Support for landowners to measure the carbon in their woodlands. Advice to landowners. New tool identified in South Scotland for managers to assess carbon - opportunities to pilot / link up. * With the increase in planting targets does there need to be an action around tree supply to ensure delivery? * There was discussion around planting technique and location of planting and the impact that this can have on soil carbons, including natural colonisation. Greater impact on better quality agricultural land, by removing land from agricultural use. * There was discussion about productive planting on better quality land to get a better short term return. * Need to be honest about the potential contribution forestry can make to achieving net zero by 2045, the potential for carbon sequestration in this time will be relatively small. * Option to promote natural colonisation on poorer land as this will reduce impact on soil carbons. * Co-ordinate a public information campaign on the benefits of woodland creation alongside the uses of wood and timber as a low carbon product. * Explore how the wood supply chain can be decarbonised – Confor and others already looking at this. * Promotion of SFM where we have a real interest to improve knowledge. * Update Control of Woodland Removal policy, tying into National Planning Framework. * Develop guidance for planning authorities to develop forest and woodland strategies. |
| **Just transition** | * Timber price; action ensuring fair distribution – a framework for improving community benefits/wealth-building. * Spatial element – where expansion will go and how you involve communities. * Just transition / green recovery - ensure there is more emphasis on engagement and communication (transmit and receive), health and well-being through access. Engagement needed with LAs, access forums, groups etc. * Community ownership and management should be more proactive - unlock opportunities to own and manage. Link with LAs, FLS, RLUPs * Guidance on community benefit around woodland expansion - can the FGS contribute to this? * UKFS could be stronger on guidance / requirements around community engagement - reflect what minister has said about natural capital and local communities. * Who gives advice and advocacy about the changes we are looking for? Confused advice world - who is talking to whom and can this be done better. Need to develop capacity at community level. * Ensure a just transition for the distribution of benefits from woodland creation. * We should develop a framework to increase the community benefits from forestry and contribute to community wealth building. * Support community engagement with woodland creation * Woodlands and Forests have a very important role in helping society prepare for the locked-in impacts of climate change - particularly flood reduction, but also river temperatures (as shown by Marine Scotland's recent analysis). |
| **Green recovery** | * Continue, and increase, support for smaller scale elements of the sector in terms of Hardwood utilisation, Non-Timber Forest Products etc. * Increase efforts to involve Young People to better engage them, increase awareness and bring more of them into the sector. * Continue to support the skills action plan. * ICF happy to lead on sector skills work * Need to explore ways to bring new people into the forest industry, starting at school level. * Industry and public sector to partner with further education to support and provide opportunities and part of learning and on job experience. * Review of Land Based Skills in Dec 2022 could provide useful recommendations. * Important role of community volunteering in getting people into employment and introducing them to forest and woodland work. TCV and others are doing great work but we could do much more and link to forestry sector. * The pandemic has highlighted the importance of woods and greenspace for health and well-being. |

**Annex D: Draft Actions**

**Forestry Strategy Priority: Ensuring forests and woodlands are sustainably managed**

**Support and promote the implementation of sustainable forest management**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Deliver the Forestry Grant Scheme (SF), ensuring compliance with the UK Forestry Standard for approved forest plans and woodland creation proposals (SF, HES, NS, SEPA), and using proportionate regulation to support these activities and prevent woodland loss (SF, SG, SEPA, SNH, LAs).

›› Coordinate work on the UKFS between UK administrations and manage the interface with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (SF, NIE, UKG, WG), supporting it’s promotion (UKWAS, Confor, ICF, SF), and managing Scotland’s national forests and lands in accordance with its principles (FLS).

›› Support continued professional development (ICF, SF).

The actions we will give a particular focus to this period are:

›› Develop further enhancements to the Forestry Grant Scheme to deliver greater public value (SF, SG).

**›› Publish the fifth edition of the UKFS and support user training (SF, WG, NIFS, FC, ICF).**

**Develop a shared understanding of sustainable forest management in a Scottish context and improve understanding of its practice and value**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Engage in international forums and work with other UK administrations to inform and apply international good practice (SF, SG).

›› Publish information and provide resources and evidence on sustainable forest management as it applies to Scotland, and the benefits it provides (SF, FR).

The actions we will give a particular focus to this period are:

›› Promote better understanding of the benefits that sustainable forestry delivers to the people of Scotland (SF, Confor, FLS, SG).

›› Deliver state-of-the-art evidence on the benefits (economic, environmental and social) delivered by the forestry sector, including its contribution to the circular economy (SF, SG, FR, FPG).

**Forestry Strategy Priority: Expanding the area of forests and woodlands, recognising wider land-use objectives**

**Support the creation of a range of types and scales of new forests and woodlands**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Encourage and promote creation of a wide range of woodland types drawing on a variety of funding sources, and demonstrating the interim principles for responsible investment in natural capital (SF).

›› Identify and address constraints to plant and seed supply (Confor Nursery Producer’s Group, SF).

›› Support the development of Scotland’s Young People’s Forest (Young Scot, Youthlink Scotland, Corra Foundation, NatureScot, Pears Foundation, Scottish Enterprise, Wood Foundation).

The actions we will give a particular focus to this period are:

›› Work with stakeholders to increase responsible private investment in new woodlands and grow the woodland carbon market by 50% (SF, FLS).

›› Explore the opportunities to pilot landscape-scale projects involving natural regeneration of woodlands, possibly within the existing National and Regional Parks (CNP, LL&TNP Nature Scot, SF, WTS, ADMG, SG).

**Identify opportunities for woodland creation as part of an integrated approach to land-use**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Support opportunity mapping for woodland creation at a landscape scale (COSLA, HOPS, SF).

›› Build on the success of existing partnerships and initiatives (such as the Integrating Trees Network) to promote the benefits of forestry and woodland creation to farmers, crofters and urban and rural land managers, support the identification of opportunities for them to realise these benefits, and reduce the barriers to them doing so (SF, SG, WTS, FAS, SA).

›› Support the Regional Land Use Partnerships with the ongoing development of Regional Land Use Frameworks, including the identification of regional opportunities and priorities (SG, SLC).

The actions we will give a particular focus to this period are:

›› Review guidance to support planning authorities to produce Forestry and Woodland Strategies (SF, SG, COSLA, HOPS).

›› Support public sector bodies to identify and implement opportunities to increase tree cover on land they own and manage (COSLA, Nature Scot, SF, SG).

**Encourage an increase in urban tree canopy cover**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Support the development and delivery of green networks (SF, GAT, ELGT, GCVGNP, Clyde Climate Forest and local authorities).

›› Deliver the Wee Forests programme as part of the global family of Miyawaki/Tiny Forests (NatureScot, Earthwatch, SG, SF, local delivery partners).

The action we will give a particular focus to this period is:

›› Develop **and implement a framework to increase easily accessible and sustainably managed urban and peri-urban woodlands.** (SF, WTS, COSLA, NS, SG).

**Forestry Strategy Priority: Improving efficiency and productivity, and developing markets**

**Support businesses of different types to develop and grow markets**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Deliver the “Roots for Further Growth” strategy, including identifying and pursuing opportunities to increase the use of wood products in construction (SFTTILG, HIE, SE, SF, SoSE, SG, CSIC), and to develop the small-scale timber and hardwood processing sector (ASHS, HIE, SE, SF, SoSE).

›› Update and develop the National Forest Inventory, including wood fibre availability forecasts, and use the new 25-year softwood production forecast to explore the futre wood supply/demand balance (FR, Confor, SF, SFTTILG).

›› Support and grow sustainable forestry and tourism businesses on Scotland’s national forests and land through delivering Timber Marketing Strategy and Visitor Strategy (FLS)

The actions we will give a particular focus to this period are:

›› Promote better use of data in the wood supply chain (FR, SF, Confor, SFTT ILG Digitisation group).

›› Identify and pursue opportunities to increase fibre recovery from harvesting operations and promote the use of new wood-based products that can support the decarbonisation of other industries. (Confor, SFTTILG, FLS, SF).

**Attract new and more diverse talent to the forestry sector and improve the capacity, capabilities and safety of the existing workforce**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Implement the sector skills action plan (SFTTILG Skills group, SF, Confor, ICF, SG, SDS, Lantra).

›› Promote the Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA, Confor, FLS, SF, SFTTILG).

The actions we will give a particular focus to this period are:

›› Establish a technical training hub (Confor, ICF, Lantra, SF).

›› Launch the Scottish Junior Forester Award to encourage wider participation in forest- and woodland-related employment (RSFS, JMT, SF, FLS).

**Support efforts to improve the sustainability of operational activities**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Deliver the Scottish Timber Transport Fund and support Regional Timber Transport Groups and the Timber Transport Forum (SF, Confor, LA, TS)

The action we will give a particular focus to this period is:

›› Identify and pursue opportunities to decarbonise Scotland’s wood supply chain. (Confor, SF, FLS, SFTTILG).

**Forestry Strategy Priority: Increasing the adaptability and resilience of forests and woodlands**

**Improve understanding of the threats to Scotland’s forests and resilience to these threats**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Invest in research, surveillance and monitoring and deliver the Tree Health Service as part of wider Scottish and UK plant health activity (SF, SASA, STHAG).

The actions we will give a particular focus to this period are:

›› Develop Scottish Forestry’s Tree Health Service in response to emerging threats and improved understanding of specific pests and diseases, including exploring the feasibility of new technology to enhance monitoring (SF, SASA, STHAG).

›› Develop and promote a forest resilience resource to provide the latest evidence on risks and approaches to improving forest resilience (FR, ICF, SF).

**Manage for, and mitigate against threats to Scotland’s forests**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Develop and promote practical resources to encourage greater consideration to be given to adaptation and resilience in management planning for new and existing woodlands. (SF, FR, ICF).

›› Implement a programme of actions to improve the resilience of Scotland’s national forests and land to the impact of climate change and tree health threats (FLS), and also deliver the FLS Deer Management Strategy (FLS).

The actions we will give a particular focus to this period are:

›› Publish and promote UK Forestry Standard practice guidance on adapting forest and woodland management for the changing climate (FR, ICF, SF).

›› Develop and implement the forestry-related recommendations of the Deer Working Group, including collaboration to deliver deer management at a landscape-scale, and through delivering improvements to woodland deer management planning in forest plans (SF, NatureScot FLS, SG).

**Forestry Strategy Priority: Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands**

**Enhance the climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits delivered by forests.**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Develop evidence and understanding of carbon management within the forest and across the forestry supply chain, and pilot new decision-making tools (SF, FR, ICF).

The actions we will give a particular focus to in this period are:

›› Develop and implement an integrated approach to riparian management to improve the climate resilience of rivers, water quality, river morphology, and the availability of habitat networks. (SF, SG, Marine Scotland, SEPA, NS).

›› Publish and promote UK Forestry Standard practice guidance on designing and managing woodlands and forests to reduce flood risk (FR**,** ICF, SF, SEPA) and deliver opportunity mapping for woodland creation as a means to mitigate flood risk in designated catchments (SF,SEPA).

**Improve the ecological condition of native woodlands and enhance forest and woodland habitats**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Protect and improve native woodland condition by: monitoring woodland ecological condition and using this data to underpin the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SF, FR, SNH); increasing ancient woodland restoration on Scotland’s national forests and land (FLS); and through the use of incentives, regulation and partnership working (SF, CNP, LLTNP, RSPB, TfL, WTS).

›› Support landscape scale habitat connectivity and management to protect and expand the range of key protected and priority woodland species (SF, FLS, BC, RSPB, NatureScot, SRMG, SSRS, SWT) and undertake targeted action for vulnerable priority species on Scotland’s national forests and lands (FLS).

›› Identify internationally important breeding habitats for birds and appropriate protection measures (SF, BTO, CNP, RSPB, SNH).

The actions we will give a particular focus to in this period are

›› Establish a National Register of Ancient Woodlands in Scotland, based on existing data sources such as Native Woodland Survey of Scotland and Ancient Woodland Inventory, and encourage owners and managers to maintain them and improve their condition. (SG, Nature Scot, SF).

›› Produce and deliver the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, including setting evidence-based targets for both native woodlands and natural regeneration (SG, NS, SF).

›› Develop and implement a costed partnership programme to protect and expand Scotland’s rainforest (AWA, WTS, NatureScot, SG, FLS, SF).

**Forestry Strategy Priority: Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands**

**Increase the accessibility and use of forests and woodlands, and the diversity of users**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Promote and support access provision in forests and woodlands (SF, NAF, Nature Scot, FLS) and use incentives, regulation and partnership working to maintain and improve accessible urban woodland and green networks (SF, CSGNT, ELGT, GCVGNP).

›› Deliver the forest kindergarten ‘training the trainers’ programme (SF, SG) and support outdoor learning networks to deliver continuous professional development for learning practitioners and increase engagement of schools with Outdoor Woodland Learning Scotland (SF, CNP, LLTNP, NTS, SG, FLS).

›› Support the delivery of health and well-being benefits through initiatives such as Branching Out and Forest Bathing (SF, FLS, CWA, NHS Scotland, John Muir Trust, SG).

›› Deliver a range of engagement activities to encourage greater use of forests and woodlands by a more diverse range of people, in particular, members of protected characteristics groups (SF, CEMVO, Nature Scot, JMT, BB, RSPB, FLS).

The actions we will give a particular focus to in this period are:

›› Increase the co-ordinated promotion of the opportunities for adults and children to engage in woodland-based activities that improve mental health and physical well-being as part of the nation’s covid recovery efforts (SF, CWA, NHS Scotland, JMT, WTS, FLS, SG).

›› Deliver a national community champions network to empower people with protected characteristics to lead activity within woodlands and forests (WESREC, RSPB, Backbone, FLS, SF).

**Provide more opportunities for communities to influence decisions affecting their local forests and woodlands and benefit from them**

The Scottish Government and its partners will continue to:

›› Provide opportunities for local communities to comment on forest and woodland creation and management plans and proposals (SF).

›› Promote opportunities for community groups and organisations to be involved in using, managing or owning woodland, and support the provision of independent advice for community woodland groups (SF, CWA, FLS, SG).

The actions we will give a particular focus to in this period are:

›› Work with the forestry sector to improve the opportunities for local communities to comment on forestry proposals and plans and promote the principles set out in the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (SF, SLC, Confor, FLS, SG).

›› Develop and implement a framework for increasing local community benefits from forestry and increasing forestry’s contribution to community wealth building (CWA, SLC, SF, SG, FLS).

**Annex E: Assessment criteria used to identify actions during the development of the first plan**

1. **Impact:** will make a significant contribution to delivering the relevant ‘priority for action’ – evidence of the scale of potential impact.
2. **Achievability:** is feasible in terms of the capability (i.e. skills) and capacity of the lead organisation and partners.
3. **Affordability:** can be funded from within existing sources of finance *[not exclusive to SG sources of finance]*.
4. **Policy alignment:** supports Scottish Ministers’ commitments (i.e. CCP, Land Use Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, rural land use funding – ‘simplicity and stability’ phase).

1. *Actions that the Scottish Government and its delivery partners intend to carry out over the next three years to help deliver Scotland’s Forestry Strategy* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)