Scottish Forestry
Coilltearachd na h-Alba

Forestry Strategy Event

Wednesday, 28th October 2026
Forest Research, Northern Research Station, Roslin

The purpose of the event was to explore key themes and actions to inform the next Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan. The Plan will set out actions Scottish Government and its partners will deliver for the final three years (2026 – 2029) of Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 – 2029.

The event programme (Annex A: Agenda) included both panel and group discussions to encourage participants with a range of forestry interests (Annex B: List of external participants) to contribute their perspectives.

1. Welcome to Northern Research Station

James Pendlebury, Chief Executive, Forest Research

James welcomed participants and outlined the work of Forest Research as Great Britain's principal organisation for forestry and tree-related research. He described Forest Research's role in providing research and evidence for policy makers and foresters, to underpin the sustainable forest management that delivers Scotland's Forestry Strategy. For example, in partnership with Scottish Forestry, Forest Research led the development of the list of Future Productive Species for Scotland, delivering a key action in the Routemap to Resilience for Scotland's Forests and Woodlands.

2. Opening address

Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands

The Minister emphasised the central role partnership working will continue to play in delivering the final three years of the existing Strategy. He described successes made to date while recognising that challenges remain, requiring continued collaboration, innovation and a shared commitment to sustainable, multi-purpose forestry. The Minister highlighted the importance of the third Implementation Plan to close this decade, and with it, Scotland's first Forest Strategy. He invited participants to reflect on achievements made to date, consider how to build on what is working, and focus on actions that will deliver the greatest impact.

3. **Stock take: delivery since 2019**
   Sam Malpass, Director of Policy and Practice, Scottish Forestry

Sam summarised a range of sustainable forest management actions collectively delivered since 2019, demonstrating leadership by the sector and a lasting legacy for the environment, economy and society. Actions taken range across all types of forestry and reach across Government priorities and Cabinet portfolios. To develop the third Implementation Plan, participants were invited to contribute views about where action is missing, needs to be consolidated or capitalised on to round off the current Scotland's Forestry Strategy, or lay strong foundations for the next Strategy. Scottish Forestry will assess suggested actions using four criteria: impact, achievability, policy alignment and affordability.

4. **Woodland Creation Delivery Plan: strengthening delivery**
   Peter Phillips, Head of Woodland Creation and Land Use Policy, Scottish Forestry

Peter outlined that Scotland has ambitious woodland creation targets to achieve 21% woodland cover by 2032 (currently at 19.5%). Scottish Forestry is developing a Woodland Creation Delivery Plan aiming to put in place the reasonable, enabling and supporting actions needed to build woodland creation capacity in Scotland towards creating 18,000 hectares of new woodland per year in 2029/30. Engagement with key stakeholders is ongoing and the Plan is on track for publication in early 2027. Early actions, such as better engagement and interaction between forestry and agriculture, are already being progressed.

5. **Panel discussion**
   Chaired by Mr Fairlie, Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands

Panel:

- Andrew Rockall — Community Woodlands Association
- Andrew Leitch — Confederation of Forest Industries
- James Pendlebury — Forest Research
- Andrew Weatherall — Scottish Environment Link
- Helen McKay — Chief Forester for Scotland

Panel members were asked: "Building on current delivery, are there other strategic themes that should be considered when developing actions for the next Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan?".

Key themes discussed included:

- **Building workforce capacity and skills** across all parts of the forestry sector is needed to meet increasingly complex challenges. Progress is already being made through the Scottish Forest and Timber Technologies skills action plan and initiatives such as the Future Woodlands Scotland forestry skills programme. However, encouraging young people into forestry remains a priority. Reduced teaching of practical skills was linked to declining tertiary education funding with no alternative apprenticeship offer available in Scotland.

- **Community benefits** from forestry must be tangible and specific. Woodland creation offers an opportunity to build relationships and trust within communities through early, meaningful engagement and co-design. Lessons can be learned from other sectors, such as renewable energy, about delivery and communication of benefits such as local jobs and wealth retention.

- **Timber security and resilience** should be an explicit policy focus. Future productive capacity needs to be balanced with environmental objectives in the context of global insecurity and increasing demand for wood products. Long term investment decisions need policy certainty, such as targets for restocking and timber production in addition to woodland creation. Resilience to climate and biosecurity threats requires continued action on tree species breeding and diversification.

- **Integrated land use planning** should be enhanced to ensure forestry recognises, and positively contributes to, other land use objectives. Integration would be supported through: i) cross-sector, landscape-scale planning underpinned by geospatial mapping and monitoring derived from satellite imagery and LiDAR; and ii) improved dialogue and understanding about local scale impacts and views about land use change.

It was also suggested that Scottish Forestry prioritises work to address four strategic indicators showing decline in Scotland's Forestry Strategy progress report 2022 - 2025 and revisit two strategic actions listed as 'postponed'.

6. Workshops

Participants split into two facilitated groups, asked to discuss:

1. What are the key strategic themes that should be addressed in the next Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan?

2. What actions can your organisation take to support the delivery of these themes?

Strategic themes and actions reported back to the plenary session were:

- **Community and public perception** to address existing tensions, reach a shared understanding of issues, tease out the diversity of community views and use / develop existing guidance from other sectors to improve engagement around woodland creation.

- **Community wealth building** (including support for local jobs and businesses) as an explicit focus, improving the understanding of current benefits through building shared knowledge about the number and location of existing forestry sector jobs, and the potential to develop further local forestry related businesses.

- **Timber security** from developing timber forecasting and a target annual yield, and managing under-managed woodlands for wood products.

- **Future-proofing forest management** including species and habitat diversification, venison harvesting and regeneration.

- **Skills and capacity building** improving pathways for new entrants (such as apprenticeships) and career changers, and the transferability of skills across land-based and nature restoration sectors and job roles.

Participants were invited to share any further reflections or actions arising from the discussion to Sam Malpass by Friday 6th November.

7. Closing remarks and next steps
Sam Malpass, Director of Policy and Practice, Scottish Forestry

Sam drew the meeting to a close, referencing key themes discussed throughout the day and the collective willingness displayed to find common ground and actively contribute towards delivering Scotland's 50 year vision for forests and woodlands.

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Forestry Strategy Event

Annex A: Agenda

Key themes and actions to inform the next Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan

Date / time : 28th October 2026 / 9 - 13
Venue: Forest Research, Northern Research Station, Roslin, Midlothian, EH25 9SY

Programme (in-person meeting)

Time	Item
09:00	**Arrival, registration and refreshments**
09:30	**Welcome to Northern Research Station** James Pendlebury, Chief Executive, Forest Research
09:35	**Opening address** Mr Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Islands
09:45	**Taking stock: progress and next steps** Sam Malpass, Director of Policy and Practice, Scottish Forestry
10:00	**Woodland Creation Delivery Plan: strengthening delivery** Peter Phillips, Head of Woodland Creation and Land Use Policy, Scottish Forestry
10:15	**Panel Discussion and Q&A** Chaired by Mr Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Islands Panel to discuss: Building on current delivery, are there other strategic themes that should be considered when developing actions for the next Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan?
10:45	**Break**
11:10	**Workshop discussion** Facilitated by: Helen Sellars, Head of Sustainable Forest Management, Scottish Forestry and Peter Phillips, Head of Woodland Creation and Land Use Policy, Scottish Forestry 1. What are the key strategic themes that should be addressed in the next Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan? **2.** What actions can your organisation take to support the delivery of these themes?
12:00	**Plenary feedback on group discussions** Bob Frost, Head of Forests for People, Scottish Forestry
12:20	**Closing remarks and next steps** Sam Malpass, Director of Policy and Practice, Scottish Forestry
12:30	**Lunch and depart Forest Research**

Annex B: List of external participants

Organisation	Representative
Chief Forester for Scotland	Helen McKay
Community Land Scotland	Ross Wilson
Community Woodlands Association	Andrew Rockall
Confederation of Forest Industries	Andrew Leitch
Forest Policy Group	Morag Patterson
Forest Research	James Pendlebury and Bianca Ambrose-Oji
Forestry and Land Scotland	Michael Hymers
Green Action Trust	Chris Stark
Historic Environment Scotland	Richard Heawood
Institute of Chartered Foresters	Louise Simpson and Andrew Vaughan
James Hutton Institute	Ruth Mitchell
Lantra	Megan Donald
National Access Forum	Richard Barron
NatureScot	Ian Bray
Royal Society of Edinburgh	Pat Monaghan
Scottish Environment Link	Andrew Weatherall
Scottish Forest and Wood-Based Industries Leadership Group	Harry Stevens
Scottish Land and Estates	Nathan Bryceland
Scottish Land Commission	Katherine Pollard
University of the Highlands and Islands	Amanda Bryan
Woodland Trust Scotland	Daniel Aiken

Support staff from Scottish Forestry were also in attendance.