



Scottish
Forestry
Coilltearachd
na h-Alba

Scottish Forestry's Corporate Strategy and Plan

2025 – 2030

Scottish Forestry is the Scottish Government agency responsible for forestry policy, support and regulation.

S e Coilltearachd na h-Alba a bhuidheann-ghnìomha aig Riaghaltasna h-Alba a tha an urra poileasaidh, taic agus riaghladh do choilltearachd.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

I am delighted, as the Cabinet Secretary responsible for Scottish Forestry, to introduce their latest Corporate Strategy and Plan.

Scotland's forests are a vital resource for the people of Scotland, delivering significant social, health, environmental and economic benefits. As a Government, we are the stewards of our woodland and forests. I work closely with our forest agencies, partners and stakeholders to ensure we support, maintain, diversify and expand our forests, fundamentally ensuring the right tree is in the right place.

Why is this important? 2024 was the warmest year on record globally – climate change and biodiversity loss, the twin crises are some of the most significant challenges we face in 21st century Scotland. There has been a 15% decline in species abundance since the mid 1990s*. Forests play a significant role in addressing climate change: they are the lungs of our planet, they provide enduring carbon sinks and regulate the temperature of the landscape. Woodland creation of all types, managed sustainably, adds to biodiversity, including the provision of habitats and conditions for all types of life.

Our forests and woodlands are integral to communities, creating jobs and skilled workers and enhancing infrastructure, particularly in our rural communities. The timber industry supports activities and provides products which are part of our everyday lives – from building construction; to the transport palettes and packaging which deliver products to our homes and businesses daily. Research tells us how fundamental our forests are to our wellbeing. Spending time in our woodlands benefits our physical and mental health. They provide that essential immediate connection with nature.

Scottish Forestry plays a pivotal role in the creation and regulation of our forests, ensuring that our timber industry adheres to the principles of sustainable forest management. This means the future of our woodlands is assured, and Scotland can achieve a balance between the benefits of forests for our people, the environment and our economy.



Mairi Gougeon BPA, Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Chùisean Dùthchail, Ath-leasachadh Fearainn agus nan Eilean

Tha mi air mo dhòigh, mar Rùnaire a' Chaibineit air a bheil uallach airson Coilltearachd na h-Alba, facal-toisich a thoirt seachad airson na Ro-innleachd is Plana Chorporra aca.

Tha coilltean na h-Alba mar stòr fìor-chudromach airson muinntir na h-Alba, oir bidh iad a' lìbhrigeadh bhuannachdan sòisealta a tha cudromach, a bharrachd air buannachdan a thaobh slàinte, na h-àrainneachd agus an eaconamaidh. Mar Riaghaltas, tha sinn nar stiùbhardan airson choilltean agus fearann coillteach, agus bidh mi ag obair gu dlùth leis na buidhnean, com-pàirtichean agus luchd-ùidhe coilltearachd againn gus dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil sinn a' toirt taic do na coilltean againn, gan glèidheadh, gan eugsamhlachadh agus gam meudachadh, a' dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil, aig deireadh an latha, a' chraobh cheart ga cur san àite cheart.

Carson a tha seo cudromach? A rèir nan clàran, b' e 2024 a' bhliadhna as blàithe airson na cruinne-cè. Tha atharrachadh na gnàth-shìde agus call bith-iomadachd mar dhà èiginn a tha am measg nan dùbhlannan as cudromaiche ris a bheil sinn a' cur aghaidh san 21mh linn ann an Alba. Chunnacas crìonadh 15% ann an stòras ghnèithean bho mheadhan nan 1990s*. Tha dreuchd chudromach aig coilltean ann a bhith a' dèiligeadh ri atharrachadh na gnàth-shìde: tha iad mar sgamhan na planaide againn, a' toirt seachad sincean càrboin a mhaireas, agus tha iad a' riaghladh ìre-teothachd a' chrutha-tìre. Le bhith a' cruthachadh fearann coillteach den h-uile seòrsa, agus stèidhichte timcheall air prionnsapalan stiùireadh coilltearachd a tha seasmhach, bithear a' cur ri bith-iomadachd, a' gabhail a-steach tro bhith a' solarachadh àrainnean agus cumhaichean airson a h-uile seòrsa de bheatha.

Tha na coilltean is fearann coillteach againn bunaiteach do choimhearsnachdan, a' cruthachadh obraichean agus luchd-obrach sgileil agus a' cur ri bun-structar, gu h-àraid sna coimhearsnachdan dùthchail againn. Bidh gnìomhachas an fhiodha a' toirt taic do ghnìomhachdan agus a' solarachadh nithean a tha nam pàirt de ar beatha làitheil – bho thogail togalaichean gu na pallettes is pacaideadh a thathar a' cleachdadh gus nithean a lìbhrigeadh gu ar dachaighean is gnothachasan gach latha. Tha rannsachadh ag innse dhuinn cho bunaiteach's a tha coilltean do ar sunnd. Tha an ùine a tha sinn a' caitheamh sna coilltean againn a' toirt bhuannachdan do ar slàinte corporra agus do ar slàinte-intinn. Bidh iad a' toirt seachad an grad-cheangal le nàdar a dh'fheumas sinn.

Tha Coilltearachd na h-Alba a' cluiche pàirt chudromach ann an cruthachadh is riaghladh nan coilltean againn, a' dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil an gnìomhachas fiodha againn a' dlùth-leantainn ri prionnsapalan stiùireadh seasmhach airson coilltearachd. Tha seo a' ciallachadh gu bheil an t-àm ri teachd airson nan coilltean againn barantaichte, agus gun tèid aig Alba cothromachadh a choileanadh a thaobh nam buannachdan a bheir ar coilltean seachad do mhuinntir na dùthcha, don àrainneachd agus don eaconamaidh againn.





Paul Lowe, CEO Scottish Forestry

I am proud to introduce our new Corporate Strategy and Plan for 2025-2030. This document sets out our vision, mission, purpose and strategic objectives. These are the guiding principles that will inform and shape our work for the next five years.

As the Scottish Government Agency responsible for supporting Ministers in forestry policy, strategy, grants and regulations, our activities play a critical role in mitigating the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and supporting the delivery of diverse vibrant forests and woodlands. Sustainable forest management is central to what we do, alongside our essential role as the regulator of woodland creation and forest management in Scotland.

We are a significant grant funder of new woodland creation, supporting around 75% of this activity in the UK each year. We also work in collaboration with other UK forestry bodies, to support the Woodland Carbon Code, one of the most mature Natural Capital Markets in the UK.

The outcomes we support are not only delivered by colleagues within Scottish Forestry (SF), but through Government, partners, communities, the forestry sector, small and large landowners and stakeholders. We will continue to work together to achieve the best outcomes. Over the next five years we will continue to champion a diverse workforce within SF and to support our team with the skills and development they need to perform their important roles and work in partnership to deliver our aims.

The rapidly changing technological landscape, and focus on public sector reform, provide opportunities to harness new ways of delivering our services. Our strategic objectives reflect our intention to develop technologies and systems which support our staff, customers, partners and contractors to work more efficiently, whilst achieving the levels of transparency and inclusion our communities seek.

The Corporate Strategy and Plan sets our path to achieve this. I am excited for the future of our agency and the forests and woodlands which we are here to help create, support and protect.





Paul Lowe, Ceannard Coilltearachd na h-Alba

Tha moit agam a bhith a' toirt seachad facal-toisich don Ro-innleachd is Plana Corporra againn airson 2025-2030. Tha an sgrìobhainn seo a' cur an cèill ar Lèirsinn, Misean, Adhbhar agus Amasan Ro-innleachdach. Tha iad seo mar phrionnsapalan stiùiridh a bhios a' fiosrachadh agus a' toirt cumadh don obair againn airson an ath chòig bliadhna.

Mar bhuidheann Riaghaltas na h-Alba air a bheil an t-uallach airson taic a thoirt do Mhinistearan air poileasaidh, ro-innleachd, tabhartasan agus riaghailtean a thaobh coilltearachd, tha na gnìomhachdan againn a' cluiche pàirt dheatamach ann a bhith a' maothachadh na h-èiginne dà-fhillte an lùib atharrachadh gnàth-shìde agus call bith-iomadachd, agus a' toirt taic do lìbhrigeadh choilltean is fearann coillteach a tha eadar-mheasgte agus beòthachail. Tha stiùireadh seasmhach airson coilltearachd aig teis-meadhan ar n-oidhirpean, a bharrachd air an dreuchd dheatamaich a th' againn mar riaghladair airson cruthachadh choilltean agus stiùireadh coilltearachd ann an Alba.

Tha sinn nar maoiniche thabhartasan cudromach airson cruthachadh fearann coillteach, a' toirt taic do mu thuaiream 75% den ghnìomhachd seo san Rìoghachd Aonaichte gach bliadhna. Tha sinn cuideachd ag obair ann an co-obrachadh le buidhnean coilltearachd eile san RA, agus tha sinn a' toirt taic do Chòd Càrbon nan Coilltean, aon de na margaidhean calpa nàdarra as motha san RA.

Tha na builean dom bi sinn a' toirt taic gan lìbhrigeadh chan ann a-mhàin tro cho-obrachaidhean taobh a-staigh Coilltearachd na h-Alba (SF) ach tron Riaghaltas, tro chom-pàirtichean, tro choimhearsnachdan, tro raon na coilltearachd, tro uachdarain-fearainn bheaga agus mhòra agus tro luchd-ùidhe. Bidh sinn a' leantainn oirnn ag obair còmhla gus na builean as fheàrr a choileanadh. Thairis air an ath chòig bliadhna, bidh sinn a' cumail oirnn a' brosnachadh feachd-obrach eadar-mheasgte taobh a-staigh SF agus a' toirt taic don sgioba againn leis na sgilean is leasachadh a tha a dhìth orra gus na dreuchdan cudromach aca a choileanadh agus obair ann an com-pàirteachas gus ar n-amasan a lìbhrigeadh.

Tha an cruth-tìre teicneòlach, a tha ag atharrachadh cho luath, agus am fòcas air ath-leasachadh na roinne poblaich a' toirt dhuinn cothroman gus dòighean ùra a chleachdadh gus na seirbheisean againn a lìbhrigeadh. Tha na h-amasan ro-innleachdach againn a' nochdadh ar rùin a bhith a' leasachadh teicneòlasan is siostaman a bhios a' toirt taic don luchd-obrach, custamairean, luchd-pàirt agus cunnradairean againn a bhith ag obair ann an dòigh nas èifeachdaiche fhad's a tha sinn a' coileanadh nan inbhean trìd-shoilleireachd is in-ghabhailtais air am bi na coimhearsnachdan againn an dùil.

Tha an Ro-innleachd is Plana Corporra a' cur an cèill an t-slighe air adhart againn airson seo, agus tha mi air bhioran a thaobh an ama ri teachd airson na buidhne againn agus airson nan coilltean is fearann coillteach a bhios sinn a' cruthachadh is a' dìon agus dom bi sinn a' toirt taic.



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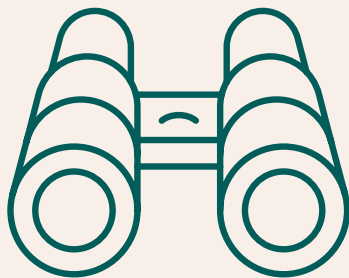


Our vision, mission and purpose

Our vision, mission and purpose serve as the foundation pillars that steer our strategic direction and inform our decision making. Collectively they express what we want to achieve, what we are going to do to achieve this, and the fundamental reason for our existence.

Vision

Scotland's forests flourish and are sustainably managed to deliver more for people, the environment and the economy



Mission

We increase our positive impact on Scotland's forests by developing our people, processes and systems and are recognised as a trusted, collaborative, innovative and ambitious organisation



Purpose

Our purpose at Scottish Forestry is to deliver high quality policy advice to Scottish Ministers, effective regulation and funding support for forestry



Our four strategic objectives

1

Carry out our core regulatory and grant activities and cross-border responsibilities in a balanced and proportionate way to deliver our vision on behalf of Scottish Ministers

2

Ensure Scotland's Forestry Strategy and sustainable forest management is central to environment, land use, and economic policy and enables positive outcomes for stakeholders, the climate and communities

3

Build a diverse workforce of professional, skilled and passionate people, creating an environment to enjoy work and feel respected in line with our values

4

Work collaboratively and innovatively, supported by fit-for-purpose and effective business systems and organisational infrastructure



What we do

We're the Scottish Government agency responsible for forestry policy, support and regulations. We're a progressive agency, passionate about the crucial role trees have to play. It is our role to:

- Develop and lead delivery of Scotland's Forestry Strategy on behalf of Scottish Ministers
- Regulate the management and protection of forests through a range of regulatory and policy levers
- Act as the Government's principle policy advisors on forestry to Scottish Ministers
- Provide research and evidence on the social, environmental and economic pillars of sustainable forest management/aspects of forestry
- Lead on the statutory duty to promote sustainable forest management of existing and new woodlands
- Administer grants for: the creation of new woodlands; sustainable management of existing woodlands; support for land managers and timber transport
- Support the Chief Forester for Scotland
- Deliver cross-border forestry functions including Woodland Carbon Code, economics advice and UK Forestry Standards
- Lead on tree health on behalf of Scottish Ministers and support Scotland's Chief Plant Health Officer
- Support the financial viability of the forest sector through targeted grant support and blended finance that brings in new revenue streams including the woodland carbon market



What drives our work

Forestry is important for a whole range of reasons, with a positive impact for our environment, our economy and our communities. Scottish Forestry works and contributes to changes the Scottish Government is working towards. These drivers are the key factors which influence our work:

Scottish Forestry contributes to a range of Scottish Government national outcomes, but with a particular impact on –

Environment: We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment

Economy: We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

Health: We are healthy and active



The Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 states that we have a duty to promote sustainable forest management as underpinned by Scotland's Forestry Strategy and the UK Forestry Standard



**Scottish Biodiversity
Strategy 2022 to 2045**

Scottish Forestry acts on behalf of Scottish Ministers as forestry regulator and on the tree health functions set out in legislation, e.g. Environmental Impact Assessment regulations (Forestry) (Scotland) 2017, The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994



**Scotland's Forestry
Strategy and
Implementation Plan**



What drives our work



The Climate Change Plan 2025-2032

Scottish Government National Performance Framework

The Agricultural and Rural Communities (Scotland) Act 2024, which comes into force this year, will replace the EU Common Agricultural Policy grant framework and will shape our work in future. Over half of applications to the Forestry Grant Scheme are for smaller scale woodlands under 20 hectares, which are typically part of existing agricultural businesses



The Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement 2022 sets out a vision for the way land is owned, used and managed, and the rights and responsibilities associated with this. We have a duty to promote the Statement and the principles within it, including that there should be meaningful community engagement in decisions about land



Roots for Further Growth – double economic contribution of forest and timber technologies to Scotland's economy by 2030



The Scottish Government's Programme for Government



Forestry milestones and facts

We take pride in the progress we've made and the key milestones we've achieved as an agency. These accomplishments underscore the vital contribution of forests and trees to climate, economy, and societal wellbeing. They also reflect the dedication of our people and the strength of our partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including the forestry sector, landowners and communities across Scotland.

19.4%

of Scotland is woodland
– 1.5 million hectares*



49% of new woodland created in 2022, 2023, and 2024 was made up of native tree species



Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029, a 50-year vision and 10-year framework to expand, protect and enhance Scotland's forests and woodlands



Devolution of forestry completed in 2019



Woodland creation targets set in Scottish Government Climate Change Plan – we need all types of woodland for climate and biodiversity outcomes

Scottish Forestry marked 5th anniversary in April 2024



*Forest Research 2024 Forestry facts and figures



Forestry milestones and facts



Generates £1.1 billion
to the Scottish
economy annually¹



Absorbs
7.5 million
tonnes of CO₂ each year –
14% of Scotland's gross
GHG emissions

October 2024 – 5th
Edition of the UK Forestry
Standard comes into
effect, maximum single
species threshold
reduced to 65% for new
schemes and restocking



Home to
**172 priority
species**

Employs more than
34,000
people²

Projects validated to
the Woodland Carbon
Code in Scotland have
created 32,235 hectares
of woodland and are
predicted to sequester
over 10.4 million tonnes of
carbon dioxide equivalent
over their lifetime³



Visited by the public
238 million
times each year⁴

¹Figure released in July 2024, figures relate to 2019

²Economic Impact of Forest Based Activities in Scotland, 2024

³Woodland Carbon Code website, March 2025

⁴Scotland's People and Nature Survey 2024, survey was completed over 12 months, March 2023-April 2024



Forestry milestones and facts

75%

new woodland
created across UK
is in Scotland⁵



Significant improvement made
to Forestry Grant Scheme
to support the creation of
all types of woodlands⁶



90,700 hectares

new woodland created across
Scotland over the past 10 years,
with over 40,000 hectares
being native woodland⁷



Approximately 50% of grants
allocated to smaller schemes,
mainly farmers and crofters



30m trees

15,000 hectares of
new woodland planted
in 23/24 – the highest
in 34 years



In 2023/34 Scotland created
the highest level of native
woodland creation since 2001
standing at 7,700 hectares

⁵ Figure correct as of June 2024

⁶ Package of new measures to stimulate tree planting was announced by the Cabinet Secretary in June 2023 and rolled out over the following months

⁷ Figure correct as of May 2025, includes woodland supported by the Forestry Grant Scheme and woodland created by Forestry and Land Scotland



Supporting Scottish Government priorities

The left hand side of the diagram below explains the context which shapes our work, the decisions we make and our allocation of resources. The right hand side describes the ways in which we articulate what we plan to do on an annual basis, and how we deliver on our different activities.



Public sector reform

With cross party support, a Scottish Government 10 year reform programme is under way to deliver stronger public services. Two important elements are to increase the efficiency with which organisations deliver their functions, and to offer services in different ways.

The Environment and Economy Leaders Group, with membership comprising the CEOs of Environmental Public Bodies and Scottish Government Directors, supports collaboration across the main public bodies contributing to Scotland's environment and land use policy.

As part of this group, we are working collaboratively with partners to establish new ways of working and look for opportunities for how collective resources can best support efficient and effective delivery of environmental outcomes.

We are working with colleagues in areas such as:



Data – development of shared geospatial data



Environment futures – developing a place-based approach, where agencies agree on pooling resources to address environmental problems in an area such as flooding or biodiversity loss



Digital – development of shared digital services



Estates – where possible, looking at opportunities to share facilities to reduce building costs



Understanding forestry regulation

A regulator, such as Scottish Forestry, is an authority or agency which administers the consenting processes necessary to allow industries to operate and ensures they adhere to certain standards.

Our role is to administer forestry regulations whilst protecting the environment and supporting local communities. Acting on behalf of Scottish Ministers, Scottish Forestry regulates the creation of new woodland, the management of existing woodland, and other operational activities. This includes tree planting, tree felling, road construction, and monitoring and protecting tree health across Scotland. We work closely with other regulators, including the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and NatureScot.

This work is underpinned by sustainable forest management. As outlined in the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018: "Scottish Ministers must promote sustainable forest management." Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 – 2029 defines sustainable forest management as:

"the stewardship and use of forest lands that maintains biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and potential to fulfill now and in the future relevant ecological, economic and social functions at local, national and global levels and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems."

We promote sustainable forest management to secure economic development, while balancing social land use needs and conserving biodiversity. We also have an important role in setting forestry standards and advocating for action to deliver sustainable forest management principles.

"We have a public duty to promote biodiversity and support sustainable forest management."



How we regulate

We carefully consider and assess around 2,000 projects to ensure they meet the requirements of sustainable forest management, as set out in the UK Forestry Standard.

We take action to ensure forestry activities meet the requirements of sustainable forest management, as set out in the UK Forestry Standard, including taking enforcement action and pursuing prosecutions.

We seek input into our decision-making process from a wide range of stakeholders, including local communities, and run around 1,000 formal public consultation exercises on forestry projects each year.

We lead on tree health protection and regulate plant and wood products. This involves import inspections, surveillance, and maintaining traps.



Regulatory tools

Environmental Impact Assessment	Proactive tree health surveillance and response	Approving felling permissions and the condition to restock	Habitats Regulations Appraisal	Investigation of Unauthorised Felling	Authority to submit report directly to Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)	Port Border Control Notices	Enforcement action
<p>We assess woodland creation, deforestation, roads and quarries against EIA regulations. We ensure that appropriate measures to avoid, prevent or mitigate effects on the environment are applied as part of Environmental Impact Assessment processes.</p>	<p>Proactive regulation (including Plant Passports and Statutory Plant Health Notices) and felling of diseased trees protect healthy populations of trees. This allows infections to be controlled and limits the spread.</p>	<p>Consent to felling which is in line with requirements for sustainable forest management and follows good practice.</p>	<p>Highly protected sites and species must not be negatively impacted by forest proposals. We assess against this test.</p>	<p>We investigate allegations of unauthorised felling. We find out if an offence has been committed and take a range of enforcement actions such as serving restocking directions.</p>	<p>If offences are of a significant scale and intent, we may decide to submit a report directly to COPFS, to allow them to consider the evidence and decide if it is in the public interest to prosecute.</p>	<p>Prevent the entry of a pest or disease which would threaten our trees or woodlands through a Destruction, Re-Export or Treatment Notice.</p>	<p>If our investigations conclude statutory actions have not been complied with or forestry activities have been carried out without required permissions or consents, we can take compliance action – for example, require landowner to cease work, or restore land to a prescribed standard.</p>
<p>Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017</p>	<p>Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 of the European Parliament of the Council</p>	<p>Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 The Felling (Scotland) Regulations 2019 (legislation.gov.uk)</p>	<p>The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994</p>	<p>Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 (legislation.gov.uk) The Felling (Scotland) Regulations 2019 (legislation.gov.uk)</p>	<p>Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 (legislation.gov.uk)</p>	<p>The Plant Health (Official Controls and Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Regulation 2019</p>	<p>The Plant Health (Official Controls and Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Regulation 2019 Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 (legislation.gov.uk) Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017</p>



Public Registers and their benefits

A Public Register is how we share information on proposed forestry projects with our key stakeholders and the public. We host three different Public Registers and share details of cases, key documents, plans and maps, and correspondence. For certain projects, stakeholders and the public can provide comments and feedback.




There are three types of Public Registers:

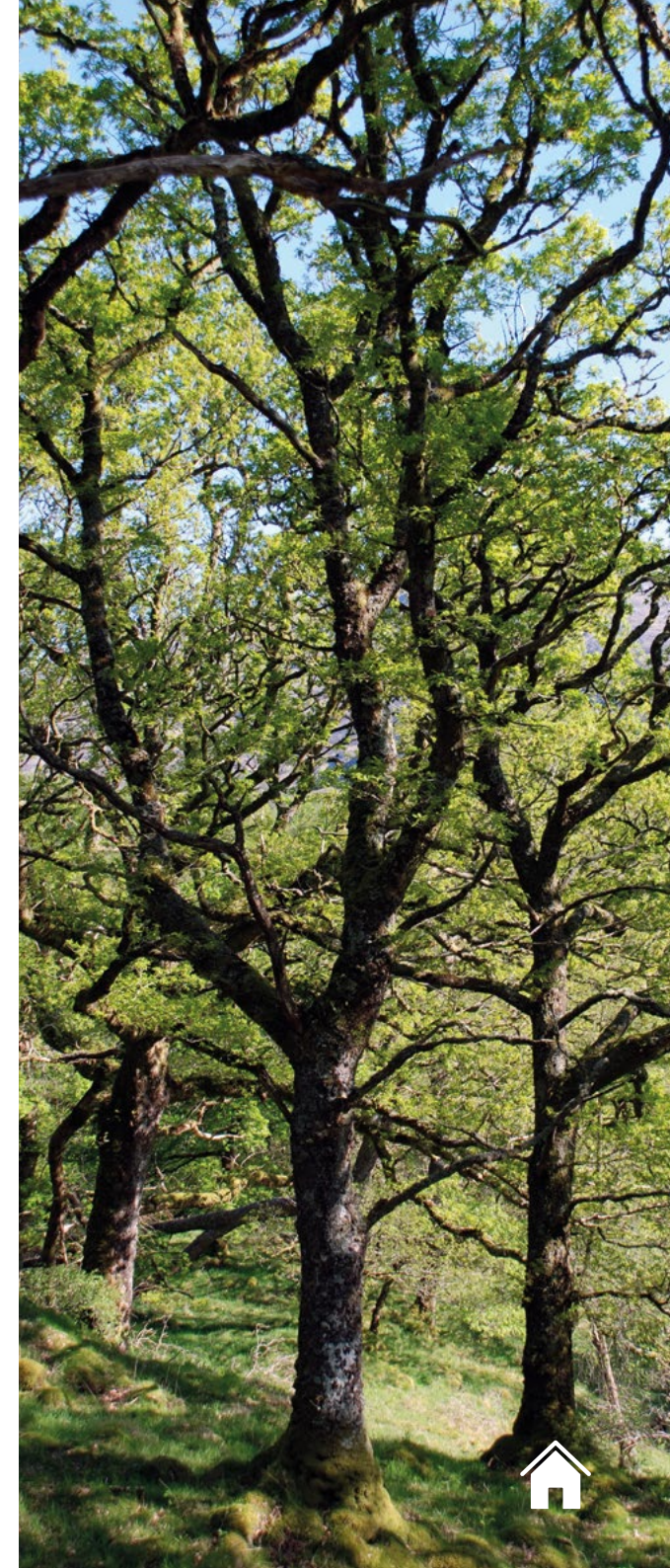
-  Woodland Creation Forestry Grant Scheme applications and Felling Permission applications
-  Felling permission proposals contained within Forest Plan applications
-  Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) – forestry projects which have been screened under EIA forestry regulations

We are working towards the vision of operating a single, self-service digital consultation portal which provides transparent and up-to-date information on proposed forestry projects.

We plan to increase transparency around proposed forestry projects by publishing on a dedicated consultation portal detailing proposed forestry projects, including key documents, maps and correspondence.

Our EIA screening opinions will also be published on this portal. People with an interest in forestry projects will be able to:

-  Undertake spatial searches on a map or by using information such as a postcode or place name on live or historic projects
-  Register for notifications of newly-published forestry projects and EIA screening opinions, by area of interest
-  Submit comments on proposed forestry projects (excluding EIA screening opinions), including the ability to upload related documents, e.g. maps, during the four-week consultation period



Supporting community engagement

We believe our work should have a positive impact on people and communities across Scotland. Over the next five years, we will ensure that our work and practices support meaningful engagement with communities and that our decision-making is clear and transparent, and supports a Just Transition. We will also continue to strive to increase the number of communities that benefit from forests and woodlands, including through the management and ownership of woodlands by communities themselves.

? Why this matters

We want to champion Scottish Ministers' aspirations for forestry, and ensure that forests and woodlands deliver more, with and for the people of Scotland. Our aim is that communities, local people and businesses, land owners and wider stakeholders are invested in the positive benefits that trees and woodlands can provide, and that our decision-making processes are accountable.

We want to ensure that community aspirations and concerns are taken into account when decisions are being made. We also want to make sure that new woodland creation is part of a just transition to net zero, delivering a range of public, private and community benefits, contributing to mental health and wellbeing improvements, enhancing community cohesion and inclusion, and helping to deliver the Scottish Government's community wealth-building ambitions.

? How we will do this

Building on our ongoing work with the forestry sector and communities to improve community engagement in forestry, we intend to strengthen engagement requirements for woodland creation. We also plan to increase transparency around decision making processes by enhancing our consultation systems. To complement these changes, we will work with partners to develop further resources for communities and community councils to help them meaningfully engage.

We will also work with other public bodies and stakeholders to strengthen information sharing and best practices. In addition, we will continue to collaborate with partners to stimulate the delivery of more benefits to local communities from Scotland's woods and forests, including by supporting community groups to create, manage and own their own woodlands.



Supporting meaningful community engagement – case study



Over the last couple of years, we have been working with the forestry sector and local communities to promote more meaningful community engagement in forestry proposals and plans.

Head of Forests for People, Bob Frost, said:

“Expanding woodland across Scotland is essential to achieving net zero ambitions and reversing the decline in biodiversity. But to ensure the land use change required benefits everyone, landowners and managers should engage local communities. Meaningful engagement also facilitates knowledge sharing, leading to higher quality schemes and improved understanding between all stakeholders.”

In 2023, we published refreshed guidance on forestry engagement and consultation processes to improve clarity and transparency. This guidance outlines the expectations and requirements for engagement and includes a section specifically tailored to help communities meaningfully engage in decisions about forestry proposals in their area.

To complement this work, we supported the Confederation of Forest Industries to deliver sector-wide training on stakeholder engagement and work with communities in South Scotland to produce good practice guidance on engagement.

Looking ahead, we are committed to further improving understanding of forestry processes and the opportunities for community input to forestry projects. To achieve this, we plan to create new resources for communities and community councils, and to introduce changes to our own processes and systems to better support and promote community engagement.



Taking an innovative approach

We are committed to using new approaches, methods and technologies to explore, identify and deliver new solutions to challenges. We will take an educated, exploratory and balanced approach to investing in innovation while working within our budget and priorities. We will do this by scoping and monitoring new technologies that have uses in forestry and related industries.

Options we are currently working on or considering include:



Exploring how Artificial Intelligence can support efficiencies for routine, day-to-day business tasks

Collaborating as part of the Scottish Government LiDAR (light detection and ranging) programme

Trialling the use of drones to support Conservancies to monitor forests and other tasks



And through the CivTech Programme:

Developing a satellite-based tree stress identification system to help protect tree health

Generating better strategic management information by improving how we store and combine data from different sources, to give us quicker and clearer insights to inform our work

Support joint work with the Scottish Government on using new technology to gather information on our forest inventory, enabling ourselves and partners to get a more detailed picture of Scotland's forests and trees



Improving the functionality of our case management systems and increasing digitisation

Improving how we use technologies to administer and monitor Woodland Carbon Code projects



How drones are revolutionising forest management – innovation case study



We have expanded use of drones over the last year to explore the additional benefits that flight technology can bring to forestry practices. From improved data accuracy and efficiency to enhanced mapping and forest management, they are a practical tool for small and large scale monitoring of forests. The small aircraft, which are remotely operated, have the advantage of surveying high and difficult-to-access areas that otherwise would require specialist and expensive equipment, such as helicopters, as well as reducing the need for extensive ground surveys on foot.

Initially, members of the Tree Health team became licensed to fly drones professionally to help them understand and share a comprehensive picture of the state of Scotland's trees. More recently, we've embarked on a new trial to explore how drone technology can be used to aid the woodland creation and felling permission application process. Members from our Grampian and Central Conservancy teams are conducting flights to determine if this

technology adds value, saves time and money, and reduces the health and safety risks for staff visiting sites.

Grampian Woodland Officer and drone pilot, Neil Blair, said:

"This is a six-month trial where we're looking to see if we can bring drones into the day-to-day work of Conservancies. We're focusing on how drones can help us assess felling permission applications, forest plans, and woodland creation more efficiently – whether that's carrying out stocking density assessments, looking at felling areas, or windblow. We're excited to see how it goes and how it all works out in practice."

If the trial is successful, the technology will be rolled out to our Perth and Argyll, Highlands and Islands, and South Conservancies to ensure they have the opportunity to use drones in their geographical areas and regular activities.



Our people and values

A skilled, resilient and diverse workforce is vital to achieving our objectives. We are already an agency with a strong foundation and values, and we want to build on our successes by:



Empowering staff to share their ideas and suggestions and collaborate on innovative projects

Building our culture and identity so our people are seen as enabling Scotland's forests to flourish

Ensuring the agency structure supports the delivery of our objectives and priorities

Investing in systems, technology and the best use of skills which align with business needs

Developing our workforce so that our teams are empowered and resilient

Investing in our staff so we retain our highly talented people and their diverse skills and experience



A supportive and inclusive approach to build a skilled and diverse workforce



Supporting career progression – people case study



Over the past three years, we have introduced promotion boards to help staff develop their skills and advance their careers. This addressed a challenge around the lack of clear progression routes for technical forestry roles in Scottish Forestry. Providing this structured pathway was a significant step and investment in our staff, growing our skill base and retaining experience within the agency.

Promotion boards also contribute to our commitment to creating opportunities for women to develop their careers. In 2024, we held the first Woodland Officer to Technical Officer promotion board. Out of the seven successful candidates, three were women – helping us work towards a gender balance in a traditionally male-dominated sector.

Ellie Lawton, who progressed to Technical Officer through the promotion board, said:

“I think it’s very important to work towards a gender balance in more senior positions. I think the organisation and the industry is taking good steps forward to support women’s career progression by offering more promotion and development opportunities. I am happy there are proactive platforms in Scottish Forestry that allow women to come together and share experiences.”

We are proud of this progress and will continue to run promotion boards in the future.



Our priorities, key actions and KPIs*

Scotland's forests and woodlands are sustainably managed, resilient and adaptable.

Key actions	Targets/KPIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Lead promotion and implementation of Scotland's Forestry Strategy, supporting key initiatives and projects through the Forestry Grant Scheme, the Community Fund, and the Forestry Strategy Implementation Fund→ Realise the environmental benefits and mitigate the potential impacts of forestry→ Increase the resilience and mitigate risks to our forest resources through implementation of the Routemap to Resilience→ Grow the contribution of forestry to the rural economy→ Realise the wider societal benefits of forestry, including health, wellbeing and life-long learning→ Increase the area of Scotland's forests covered by approved Forest Plans→ Improve compliance with the UK Forestry Standard and improve assurance on tree cover linked to grant funding→ Improve surveillance and contingency management on tree health through innovative approaches→ Increase research and knowledge exchange→ Promote value added opportunities for timber and wood fibre through working with the Scottish Forest & Timber Technologies Industry Leadership Group→ Enhance monitoring, reporting and transparency, including through making National Statistics more Scotland focused→ Increase biodiversity across woodlands alongside other natural capital benefits, including delivering timber and carbon outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Delivery of Scottish Ministers' agreed new native woodland creation targets→ Maintain increase in Long Term Forest Plans over time→ 80% of our significant actions in Scotland's Forest Strategy Implementation Plan are delivered, with an update on progress provided to the Scottish Parliament in 2025 and 2028

*KPI – Key Performance Indicators



Our priorities, key actions and KPIs*

Ministers' commitments to woodland creation are delivered through maximising the impact of public funding in innovative ways to draw in more private investment to create all types of woodlands in balance with other land uses in achieving net zero.

Key actions	Targets/KPIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Fit-for-purpose woodland creation funding support is available through Future Forestry Grant Scheme project and Woodland Creation Routemap→ Introduce arrangements to allow greater access to carbon funding→ Improve monitoring of the impact of changed grant offer (reduced rate) for larger conifer schemes→ Increase opportunities for farmers to benefit from woodland creation→ Engage and promote forestry with Regional Land Use Partnerships→ Promote the principles of the Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement, including meaningful community engagement in land use decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Delivery of Scottish Ministers' agreed targets for woodland creation→ Predicted carbon sequestration of projects validated to the UK Woodland Carbon Code increasing 20% each year→ Increase in number and proportion of woodland creation applications from farmers and crofters

*KPI – Key Performance Indicators

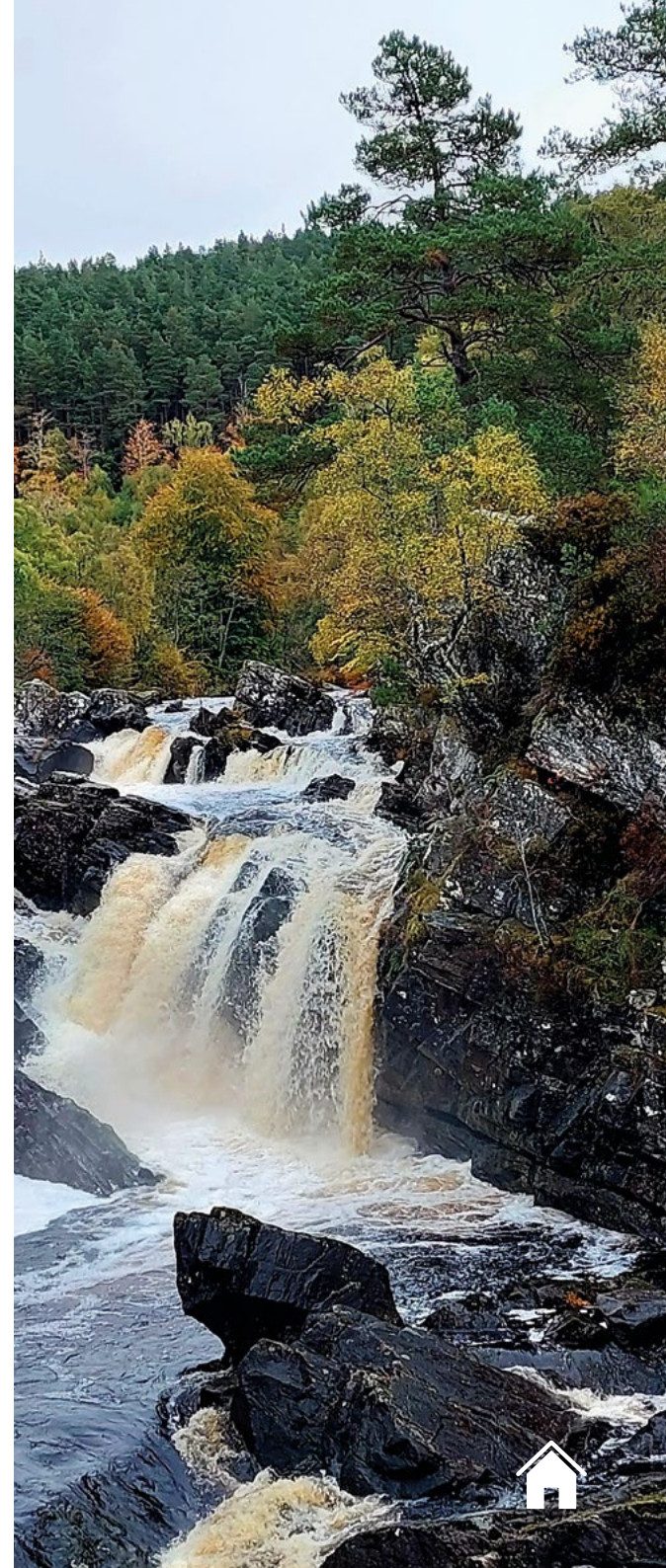


Our priorities, key actions and KPIs*

We are committed to investing in our people, to attract and retain a professional and diverse workforce.

Key actions	Targets/KPIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Investment in the development of our people and our learning culture→ Review our Scottish Forestry Equality Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for 2026 onwards, and set our targets accordingly→ Improve and invest in our leadership, increasing the visibility of our leaders→ Review our values, and build our brand and identity→ Develop a People and Workforce Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ 10% increase in People Survey Learning and Development Score (45% to 55%)→ Reduce gender pay gap to the Scottish average by 2026→ Employee percentage of in age range 16-29 to be 18% by 2026→ 90% of line managers set personal objectives, including development objectives, for our staff members

*KPI – Key Performance Indicators



Our priorities, key actions and KPIs*

Scottish Forestry is an enabling organisation that operates in a transparent and efficient way in carrying out its functions in response to public sector reform.

Key actions	Targets/KPIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Deliver various improvement and innovative projects that make us more efficient and transparent and support the forest sector→ Introduce new public consultation portal and associated underpinning internal systems→ Work through the Environment & Economy Leaders Group to collaborate on a range of public sector reform issues, including increased collaboration with partners on landscape scale projects, and sharing data, digital and estates→ Continue to comply with the Framework Document and statutory requirements. Ensure robust, accountable corporate governance and assurance processes that support effective business planning, risk, financial, resource, and information security management frameworks→ Implement various measures that reduce SF emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ 90% decrease in emissions from helicopter use→ Replace 50% of petrol/diesel fleet miles with electric→ Replace 25% of grey fleet miles with sustainably travelled miles→ 30% decrease in estate related emissions

*KPI – Key Performance Indicators



Our priorities, key actions and KPIs*

Scottish Forestry operates a fit-for-purpose regulatory regime.

Key actions	Targets/KPIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Develop innovative and risk-based approaches to deliver regulatory mechanisms to improve transparency and consistency→ Deliver additional training for staff engaged in regulation→ Work more closely with Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to facilitate the prosecution of cases→ Launch an updated Public Register and associated underpinning internal systems, guidance and staff training, to ensure communities and appropriate stakeholders can easily input their views. We will also improve transparency in our decision making and regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Monitor and publish Environmental Impact Assessment Screenings→ Monitor number of restocking notices→ Monitor level of engagement with our Public Registers

*KPI – Key Performance Indicators



Monitoring and reporting

We are an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government. Our Framework Document sets out how we operate and our relationship with Scottish Ministers.

An overview of our performance against our delivery priorities will be included in our Annual Report and Accounts, which is laid before the Scottish Parliament every year. In addition, we will publish other corporate and performance information on our website.

