



This information note is one of a series produced by the Community Woodlands Association. It gives a brief introduction to the process of compiling a Woodland Management Plan and signposts to sources of more detailed information: other CWA information notes or external bodies. The principles of woodland management planning are relevant everywhere, but reference to grants and regulations are applicable to Scotland only.

Introduction

A Woodland Management Plan (WMP) is, as the name suggests, a plan for the management of a woodland. It can be very simple or quite complex depending on the woodland and the objectives of the owner or land manager, but as a minimum it is likely to contain the following sections:

- a description of the woodland,
- maps and images,
- the vision, aims and objectives of management,
- a costed workplan,
- monitoring, evaluation and review

Woodland management is a long term activity and WMPs usually operate over two time frames: a 25-year (or longer) vision for the woodland and a shorter term workplan detailing planned activities in the first five years.

WMPs serve a number of purposes, notably to organise the management in a logical way and to demonstrate that planned activities are feasible and contribute towards achieving the owner and/or manager's vision. They:

- gather together all the important information about the wood (making it available for successors, consultees, regulators etc),
- provide a structure to assess and accommodate unforeseen opportunities that might arise,
- are essential for the woodland certification process,
- are often a requirement for funders.

Developing and agreeing a Management Plan is particularly important for a community woodland group where by definition there are a group of people involved in management:

inevitably they will not all have identical visions and aims for the woodland.

The planning process offers an opportunity to tease out the various aims and aspirations for the woodland, work out compromises if necessary and agree and formalise a way forward.

Where woodland is managed under lease or partnership it is common for the lease to be phrased in terms of delivering a mutually agreed management plan – this keeps the terms of the lease relatively simple with the operational detail contained in the plan.

Forestry Grant Scheme

If you want to access the funding available through the Forestry Grant Scheme then your woodland management plan must meet Forestry Commission Scotland's requirements – these vary according to the size and location of the woodland.

If your woodland is 100ha or larger you will need to produce a [Long-Term Forest Plan](#). This is a complicated process involving scoping and formal consultation, a grant is available to help with the preparation.

If your woodland is adjacent to an urban area (population >2000) and you want to apply to the Woods In and Around Towns fund then you will need to produce an [Urban Woodland Management Plan](#) using the prescribed template. Again, there is a grant available.

If your woodland is less than 100ha and you won't be seeking WIAT funding you can produce a simple [Woodland Management Plan](#). A template and guidance is available (but not grant support).

Description of the Woodland

This section of the plan is intended to compile all pertinent information about the woodland which might influence or constrain future management. Much of this information will be available already from various sources (old plans, maps and the internet - see list of useful websites in the reference section), some may require survey.

There is no definitive list of categories for this section, but it would generally be expected to cover the themes listed below, although the emphasis may vary according to the nature of the woodland and objectives of management.

Some categories only require a few words, for others a few sentences will do. It's important not to get too carried away with details – if you happen to have a very in-depth survey of one aspect of flora and fauna (e.g. butterflies), or archaeology or local history you should pull out the most important aspects (i.e. how this impacts on future management) and provide links to the full documents for reference if needed.

General and legal: ownership, tenure arrangements, wayleaves, boundaries, neighbours, access points (give Grid References), statutory designations.

Physical: location, altitude, aspect & topography, geology, soils and climate.

Historical: the age and history of the woodland, past management practices, archaeology, old buildings, field boundaries etc.

Silvicultural: area of various tree species, planting date/age if known. Where felling is intended a more detailed inventory should be carried out to give an estimate of standing volume, Yield Class, etc.

CWA info note 6 provides a more detailed guide to the inventory process.

Ecological: fauna and ground flora (incl. shrubs and herbs), non-wooded areas (water bodies, unplanted areas).

Current usage: public access, volume and mode(s) of recreation use. If you're writing a plan for a community woodland you should also include an overview of community engagement and involvement.

Compartments and subcompartments

Unless your woodland is very small or homogenous you will need to organise it into compartments and sub-compartments. Compartments are discrete blocks defined by physical features such as roads, watercourses and roads. Sub-compartments are subdivisions of these, and represent the basic units of management. They typically comprise relatively homogenous stands of trees, defined by species (or mix of species), age, etc. They can incorporate small glades and rides, but significant areas of non-woodland habitat should be classified as separate sub-compartments.

Conventionally, compartments are identified by numbers e.g. 1, 2, 3, and sub-compartments as a letter following the compartment number e.g. 1a, 1b, 1c, etc. Aerial photos such as those available from Google maps, can be invaluable when defining and measuring subcompartments.

Maps and images

Illustrating your plan with maps and well-chosen images will make it more accessible and informative. Long term forest plans have specific requirements for a "concept map" but there isn't a definitive list of required maps for simpler plans. As a minimum they should include:

- a small scale map to show the location of the woodland and its context in surrounding topography, land use and other features,
- a larger scale plan showing the whole of the woodland in sufficient detail to complement the site description, and showing the boundaries of compartments and subcompartments,
- aerial photos,
- detailed plans showing areas of proposed works,
- photographs of key features – but don't get carried away!

Vision, aim and objectives

The vision, aims and objectives provide a progressively more detailed explanation of what you want to achieve through woodland management and how you intend to go about delivering your aspirations.

The **vision** is a high-level, long-term statement of intent typically placed on the front page of the plan, such as:

- “25 years from now Town Wood will be a cherished community asset with rich and varied wildlife: a place in which to learn about, respect and enjoy the natural environment.”

The **aims** express your aspirations and intentions thematically, but are still couched in general terms, e.g.:

- to provide better access for users of all abilities,
- to increase the wildlife value and general species diversity,
- to manage the woodlands under a continuous cover system,
- to add value to timber by developing a sustainable firewood business.

The **objectives** state the specific steps you will take to achieve your aims, e.g. during the 5 year plan period we will:

- create 400m of new paths to all-abilities standard,
- create a new wildlife pond,
- thin 22ha of Scots Pine,
- produce 200m³ of firewood.

Objectives should be SMART, i.e.:

- Specific – target a specific area for improvement,
- Measurable – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress,
- Assignable – say who will do it,
- Relevant – will deliver your aims,
- Time-related – say when the results will be achieved.

NB: there are multiple versions of the SMART mnemonic with slightly different meanings for the letters “A” and “R”: whichever version you adopt the objectives need to be focussed on achieving your aims and expressed clearly.

As a community woodland your vision and aims should be agreed following consultation with your membership and the wider community, whether as part of a specific consultation on the management plan or a broader community planning exercise.

CWA info note 9 has more information on community consultation processes.

A costed workplan

This should be a list of all the activities that will be undertaken to achieve your objectives. Tree-related operations are usually listed by compartment, although where a single operation covers all or several compartments (e.g. deer management, replacing the boundary fence) it will be easier to list it separately.

For each item the plan should say:

- in which year(s) the work will take place,
- the units of delivery (e.g. ha thinned, m of path created),
- specification (e.g. paths 1.8m wide, semi-bound surface),
- who will do the work (contractors, community forester, volunteers),
- the anticipated net cost or income (or the time resource required),
- any specific grants for the operation.

The workplan must be realistic and achievable, rather than aspirational, and should be based on the resources you anticipate you can access over the management plan period. If grants are yet to be applied for then make this clear and say who will do the applications and claims.

Don't forget to include management activities such as monthly safety inspections of boardwalks and bridges, preparation of risk assessments, etc. If some of the work is to be done by volunteers or employees you must make sure that they are properly trained and supervised and that you have taken the appropriate steps to ensure their Health and Safety. If the workplan is extensive or complex then it may be easier to put the financial information in separate tables which can be copied across from a spreadsheet programme like Excel.

myForest

[myForest](#) is a free online mapping and management service developed by the Sylva Foundation. You can create woodland management plans which follow Forestry Commission Scotland templates and apply for standalone Felling Licences. Plans include individual compartment inventory information, are downloaded as PDF files for printing, emailing and back up and can be updated at any point.

Monitoring and review

Realistically, it is unlikely that all your original workplan will be delivered to the letter. Over five years circumstances change and new opportunities may arise for new projects to deliver your objectives. Nonetheless it is

important to track your progress and understand why you haven't delivered as anticipated (e.g. grant wasn't available for operation x, windblow in subcpt 2b etc forced a change of felling plans).

Finally, your plan should set a review period. Most woodland management plans have a 5 year review cycle (10 years for Long Term Forest Plans although typically with a 5 year mid-term review).

Much of the site description information in the plan will remain valid, but the review provides an opportunity to check that the vision and aims of management are still appropriate, and to create a new 5 year workplan.

Resources

Community Woodlands Association (advice and support for community woodlands)

<http://www.communitywoods.org>

Making Local Woods Work (advice, tools and resources for woodland social enterprises)

<https://makinglocalwoodswork.org>

FCS Map Viewer (a range of FCS datasets)

<http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/supporting/communication-consultation/map-viewer-guidance>

Scotland's Environment Web Land Information Search tool

http://map.environment.scotland.gov.uk/landinformationsearch/lis_map.html

CANMORE (online catalogue of Scotland's archaeology, buildings, industrial and maritime heritage)

<https://canmore.org.uk/>

Forestry Grant Scheme (funds long term forest plans and urban woodland management plans)

<https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/>

National Biodiversity Atlas (UK's largest biodiversity database for records on local species, habitats etc) <https://nbnatlas.org/>

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