This information note draws from an online 'Historic Environment' workshop hosted by CWA in 2022, with presentations from Matt Ritchie (Forestry & Land Scotland) and Megan MacInnes (Applecross Community Company). It also draws on Scottish Forestry's guidance for managing historic environment in woodlands.

The Historic Environment associated with your community woodland is best considered as an asset, something that tells a story about the woodland and lives past, something that engages the minds of lives present and something that informs how we go forward in working with the land.

Introduction

Historic Environment is defined in Our Place in Time: the historic environment strategy for Scotland, as "… the physical evidence for human activity that connects people with place, linked with the associations we can see, feel and understand. The historic environment could be said to be 'the cultural heritage of places', and is a combination of physical things (tangible) and those aspects we cannot see – stories, traditions and concepts (intangible). It comprises a variety of objects, structures, landscapes and features.

Historic environment in woodlands is more practically described in the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) chapter 6.3; where past human activity might be reflected in stone structures, earthworks, deposits in soil (e.g. pig-iron) and in the tree-scape itself (e.g. a hedge that has grown into mature trees and ancient pollard trees)

Why is archaeology important to us?

It helps tell the story of how people have lived in the landscape over the centuries and make a connection to today's land use and culture.

It helps us learn how to live sustainability in the landscape, although climatic conditions may have changed, but they may indicate where the soils are better and where there might be limestone outcrops.

Management of the historic environment provides opportunities to work in partnership with agencies and archaeology groups.

The value of the Historic Environment is recognised in government strategies:

A key outcome of the Scottish Forestry Strategy is to contribute to the development of a high quality, robust and adaptable environment, helping to make the most of our historic environment. A key objective is: to protect and promote the historic environment & cultural heritage.

A key outcome for Scotland's historic environment strategy is "to ensure that the cultural, social, environmental and economic value of Scotland's heritage makes a strong contribution to the wellbeing of the nation and its people."

Showcasing historic environment features within a community woodland can help widen the range of community members and organisations who are interested in getting involved in a project.

Involving community members and stakeholders in planning.
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Historic Environment legislation & requirements

Government policy is in part implemented by legislation aimed at protecting features of our historic environment and in part by voluntary requirements linked to government grants; such as compliance with the UKFS when receiving Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) funding.

The UK has also ratified a European convention, the Valetta Convention, that commits us to preparing policies and creating legislation to protect the

historic environment. UK designations designed to protect the historic environment include:

Scheduled Ancient Monument
Statutory consent is required for anything that might impact on a scheduled ancient monument (SAM). This is administered by Historic Environment Scotland (HES). HES provides a range of advice for appropriate management of SAMs.

Listed Buildings
This designation puts the responsibility on owners to maintain listed buildings in good and fair condition. Listed buildings may include bridges and sheep fanks.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes
HES also keeps a register of designed landscapes, which are usually garden and policy woodland and fields laid out as part of a designed environment around a stately home. Woodland operations within designed landscapes need to be approved by HES and sometimes this can be done within the context of a long-term forest plan and through the stakeholder consultation process.

Inventory of Battlefields
HES maintains a list of nationally significant historic battle sites and these again are a material consideration in the determination of forest plans and grant applications.

The role of Local Authorities
Local Authorities maintain an Historic Environment Record that may reveal sites and information not accessible elsewhere. Local authorities, when determining planning applications, will consider impacts on the above, and also on their 'settings', i.e. the landscape around them.

The UK Forestry Standard, Woodland Certification and Forestry Guidelines
UKFS includes protecting or at least recording the historic environment, however insignificant the features may seem.

"*It is important that all significant heritage features, and not just designated ones, are protected and that consideration is given to the preservation and enhancement of cultural and historic landscapes.*"

Significant sites may require provision for public access and interpretation.

If your woodland is also managed under certification schemes, then the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS). This requires historic environment assessment and consultation appropriate to the scale of operations and sensitivity of the site.
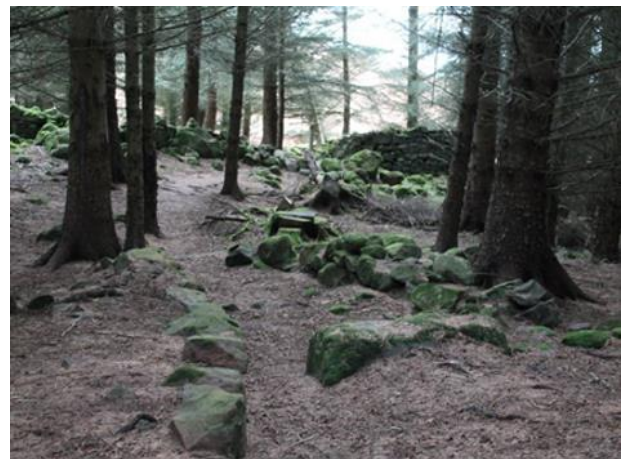
Other than legal protections, there is an element of subjectivity, a requirement for advice and reference to guidelines. The key word might be 'significance', bearing in mind that not all significant sites are designated.

Depending on the situation there may be an overlap with landscape design guidelines in how new woodlands are laid out or re-stocking plans implemented if felling operations reveal previously unrecorded or unacknowledged heritage.

How do I find out what is there?
Alongside looking for features in the woodland, clues to the historic environment can be drawn from what is already recorded, or what was recorded in the past. If you are buying an established woodland then the previous owners might already have a comprehensive map and list of historic environment sites within the woodland.

Map and record sites and features, conifer crops hide features from aerial survey but the lack of ground vegetation can help reveal them in ground surveys. Trees uprooting in a gale will damage features.
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Some sites will be marked on current Ordnance Survey maps, at 1:10,000 scale if not on 1:25000. Historic maps will show what was mapped in the past, but reasonable detail can only be drawn from the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps (approx. 1860). The Roy military maps produced in the 1700's show more approximate locations for settlements and woodlands.

Most historic environment records are catalogued online under the Canmore & Pastmap websites

https://www.pastmap.org.uk/

https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/

If you suspect there is more to your site than appears on internet searches, talk with your local government archaeology service and talk with your local historians and local history groups. They may know of myths, legends and folklore associated with your site as much as they may know of physical remains.

You then may want to commission a desk-based audit and perhaps a field survey. Some surveyors have more knowledge of woodland archaeology and are skilled at reading imprints of human history from the trees and vegetation.

The need for archaeological survey comes from your desire to know more about the history of your site or as a requirement of planning permission or to approve a forest plan or grant application.

Management of archaeological sites
Ensure all sites and features are mapped on at least 1:10,000 scale maps.

Ensure these sites are shown on any scoping maps that are made available for consultation purposes.

For operations on or close to scheduled archaeology, apply for consent for these operations and agree a management plan with HES. It may also be helpful to ask the advice of local archaeological and heritage groups, in case there are sites within the area of concern that are not designated. Similarly for listed buildings and designed landscapes.

Include generic and specific archaeology management statements within woodland plans.

Before the start of operations that might impact on archaeology, ensure sites are marked on the ground and, if necessary, with exclusion/buffer zones.

Clear marking of exclusion zones around features with barrier tape, aware that this can be damaged by strong winds and will need refreshing after felling and before extraction.
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Ensure all staff and contractors can see and use maps of the sites relevant to their work. If possible ensure that machine operators have sites and exclusions zones loaded into their GPS programmes on phones or machine-based devices. Walking around the specific sites with machine operators can also help to identify access routes and discuss how work should be done within particularly complex areas.

Walk site over with machine operators, agree access routes, exclusion areas, pulling trees clear before processing and stacking produce and brash well clear of site.
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Consider what works can be done to improve the protection or interpretation of the sites; e.g. removal of tree and scrub regeneration. Grant funding may be available to help pay for these costs. In some cases, clear-fells and other forestry activities can uncover previously unknown potential historic environment features, so it may be useful to consider a follow up archaeological survey.

The aim is for heritage to be passed on with pride to future generations.

Addendum: If you are feeling stuck for ideas and how to go forward with surveys, protection and interpretation you might like to call out to other community woodland groups who have gone through a similar experience; they will be pleased to help.

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

UK Forestry Standard: https://forestry.gov.scot/sustainable-forestry/ukfs-scotland

Our place in time: The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland:
https://www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/who-we-are/our-place-in-time/

https://archaeologyscotland.org.uk/projects/rural-land-use/identifying-and-managing-archaeology/

Scottish Forestry Publications (https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/forests-and-the-environment/historic-environment) include the following practice guides:
https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/39-conserving-and-managing-trees-and-woodlands-in-scotland-s-designed-landscapes/viewdocument/39
https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/68-forests-and-historic-environment-information-and-advice/viewdocument/68
https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/72-historic-environment-resource-guide-for-forest-and-woodland-managers-in-scotland/viewdocument/72
https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/71-identifying-the-historic-environment-in-scotland-s-forests-and-woodlands/viewdocument/71
https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/73-managing-the-historic-environment-case-study/viewdocument/73
https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/69-scotland-s-woodlands-and-the-historic-environment/viewdocument/69

https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/biodiversity-and-conservation/historic-environment-conservation