



This information note is one of a series produced by the Community Woodlands Association (CWA). It outlines the process of developing a Long Term Forest Plan, describes the content of the plan and signposts to sources of more detailed information, including other CWA information notes and external bodies and resources. Long Term Forest Plans as described here are found only in Scotland: other nations have different processes and requirements, although the general principles of woodland management planning are applicable everywhere.

Introduction

A Long Term Forest Plan (LTFP) is a 20-year strategic management plan that brings management objectives, economic, social and environmental functions and the silvicultural prescriptions for a woodland into a comprehensive plan. The plan must meet the requirements of and follow the guidance set out in the [UK Forestry Standard](#) (UKFS), which sets out the criteria and standards for the sustainable management of forests and woodlands in the UK.

An approved LTFP is a requirement for woods of over 100ha for access to the [Forestry Grant Scheme](#) (FGS), although having a plan does not guarantee FGS funding. An approved plan incorporates felling permissions, however it does not include any planning consents that might be required for roads, etc.

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: there is a grant available to help.

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.

CWA info note 5 covers the process of compiling a Woodland Management Plan, describes the format and contents, and signposts to sources of more detailed information.

A LTFP shows the planned areas of felling and thinning for a 10 year period, with outline proposals for a further 10 years, as well as restocking proposals and other proposed management operations. Note that the focus of the LTFP is the physical operations that the land manager intends to carry out: community woodland groups typically use their forests for a wide range of activities but it's not necessary for all of these to be detailed in the LTFP.

Scottish Forestry (SF) has a webpage containing a range of [Forest Plan resources](#), including applicant's guidance, a LTFP template and a sample completed plan. There are also various online resources which can help with the compilation of background information.

It is strongly recommended that you engage a professional forester to help draw up the plan. Although the guidance is thorough, the template looks straightforward and Scottish Forestry staff will be helpful, the process of writing a LTFP is quite technical. In particular, the preparation of maps to the necessary standard can be challenging and time-consuming for non-specialists.

Plan Preparation Grant

[Grant aid is available through the FGS](#) to support the LTFP preparation process. The grant rate is £25/ha for the first 200ha, and £5/ha thereafter.

The main eligibility criteria are that you must:

- own, lease or have a contractual licence over the woodland;
- be registered with the Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (RPID) and the woodland must be registered to you;

- be intending to carry out operations that are eligible for grant support.

The application must be supported by a draft concept map (see below) showing the key issues to be addressed and proposed activities to be undertaken in the Plan.

If you are already registered with RPID the application and approval process for the preparation grant should take two or three months.

Plan Preparation Process

The main steps are:

- Outline drafting
- Scoping
- Draft plan
- Public register
- Approval

It is likely to take 6 - 9 months to prepare a LTFFP: for larger and more complex sites it can take considerably longer.

Outline drafting

The first stage is to clarify the short and long term objectives for the forest: this is particularly important for community woodland groups which typically have multiple objectives for woodland management. You should collect and collate any relevant information about the site: this includes the physical conditions (soils, climate, topography), growing stock, biodiversity, historic environment, landscape and public access.

You should also identify any designated sites or features that might have a significant impact on the plan: this will include e.g. SSSI and NSA designations as well as Ancient Semi-natural Woodland and Plantation on Ancient Woodland site status. High sensitivity issues around e.g. archaeology, species, landscape may require specialised survey.

There are several online resources which will be helpful when compiling this information:

- [Scottish Forestry Map Viewer](#) - past grants, current eligibility, climatic site suitability, native woodland survey:

- [Land Information Search](#) - boundaries of designated areas;
- [Sitelink](#) - detailed information on designated sites;
- [Canmore](#) - mapping of archaeological and other historic environment features.

Developing an LTFFP requires accurate information on species composition and timber volumes, so you may need to carry out (or commission) a mapping exercise and/or a timber inventory.

Other important issues to consider are preferred access route(s) for timber extraction and harvesting, and the sequence of felling, both in terms of the cumulative impact on the landscape, and to avoid adjacency issues: general forestry practice is that adjacent coupes should not be felled until restocking in the neighbouring coupe has established.

Scoping

Scoping is an opportunity to explain your objectives and plans to other relevant parties and stakeholders, and for them to raise issues so that they can be addressed in the plan preparation process. Scoping can be carried out in a range of ways, depending on the size, complexity and sensitivity of the site. For larger, more complex and high sensitivity sites a scoping meeting may be required, but usually it can be carried out by email / letter.

You will need to agree with the Scottish Forestry Woodland Officer the key issues, level of detail, and the list of consultees. This will include statutory bodies such as Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Historic Environment Scotland, Local Authority (Forestry, Roads, Archaeology) and the Community Council as well as NGOs such as the RSPB, neighbouring land owners and local organisations which use or have an interest in the woodland. Interested parties have 28 days to comment.

It is good practice for a community woodland group to make the scoping documents available to their members and the local community (e.g. by putting them on their

website) but there is no requirement to carry out a specific community consultation.

Scoping documents must give sufficient information for stakeholders to consider the issues. They will include a short summary of key proposals for felling, thinning and replanting, timber transport and public access, as well as an assessment of the impact of any forestry proposals (including timber transport) on the local community and local interests and the steps to be taken to mitigate such impacts.

You must draw up a **concept map**: this shows the main factors that will impact the management of the woodland and highlight any constraints and opportunities. The concept map will show the key information about the site identified in the initial drafting, as well as practical constraints, such as overhead power lines, areas of high public access, etc.

When all comments have been collected and collated, you must produce a short Scoping Report summarising the results of the process, noting all the issues raised, their relevance and how they will be addressed within the Forest Plan; this must be accompanied by an updated concept map. Once the report is accepted by Scottish Forestry it should be made available to stakeholders and you can draft the LTFP.

Draft Plan

Scottish Forestry provide a template for LTFPs: it is not mandatory to use it but we recommend you do as this will help ensure that you cover all the required elements and demonstrate that you have taken on board comments received during scoping.

When drafting the plan it may be useful to refer to the Forestry Commission Practice Guide [Design techniques for forest management planning](#). Note that the “community woodland” example refers to woodland creation on an urban brownfield site rather than a community-owned woodland.

Consultation

Once Scottish Forestry are content that the LTFP meets the UK Forestry Standard they will consult with local authorities and other

statutory consultees, who have 4 weeks to consider the plan and make their comments.

During this period details of the plan are placed on a Public Register and anyone may comment. You should notify anyone involved at the scoping stage that the plan has been placed on the Register; again, it is good practice to put the draft plan and accompanying maps on your website. At the end of the period you and the Woodland Officer will consider comments received and agree any changes required to the draft plan before approval.

LTFP layout and content

As noted previously, most Long Term Forest Plans use the Scottish Forestry template which has a series of numbered sections:

Sections A1 – A8 collectively provide a description of the woodland, covering property details, location, existing permissions, stakeholder engagement, long term vision and objectives; as well as site descriptions: topography, geology & soils, climate, hydrology, windthrow, access, adjacent land use, historic environment, biodiversity, invasives, plant health and woodland type.

Section B analyses the information and outlines how the constraints and opportunities will be incorporated into the management objectives.

Section C contains the various management proposals: felling, thinning, LISS (low impact silvicultural systems) and restocking, as well as crop protection, fencing, roads and public access, and management strategies for the issues raised in section A.

The LTFP template includes tables, covering:

- Area by species now and at 10 & 20 years;
- Area by age now and at year 20;
- Felling areas in each 5 year phase;
- Thinning area over the first 10 years;
- Restocking proposals for the first 10 years.

LTFPs must be accompanied by a suite of maps, including:

- Location map;

- Concept map;
- Current species;
- Felling and thinning proposals;
- Restocking / woodland creation;
- Timber extraction and transport.

LTFPs use standardised colour schemes for species (e.g. Sitka spruce is light blue, Norway spruce dark blue) and felling phase mapping (i.e. felling in the first 5 years is mapped red, the second 5 years orange). Additional maps may be required depending on the nature and complexity of the Plan. Maps must be based on up-to-date Ordnance Survey (or equivalent) mapping; their production usually requires specialist mapping software.

Where harvesting works are proposed the LTFP must also include a production forecast: this is a spreadsheet providing basic crop data covering felling and thinning for the first ten years; the information obtained is used for the Private Sector production forecasting exercise.

After approval

An approved LTFP:

- Provides felling permissions for 10 years. All clear felling and selective felling areas will be subject to restocking conditions that form part of the LTFP approval;

- Does not guarantee grant aid for the forest operations contained within the plan - this must be applied for once the plan is approved;
- Does not include planning permission for e.g. roading and access works – these must be applied for by the usual process.

Over 10 years it's almost inevitable that the plan will need some amendment. The process to action these changes depends on the scale and impact of the proposed changes, and is outlined in the tolerance table included in all plans.

This sets out the standard limits for key work activities within the plan, and details the scale and type of changes for which:

- SF approval is not normally required;
- Approval of changes can be done by exchange of email and map;
- Approval of changes requires formal plan amendment.

Scottish Forestry will require a progress report at year 5. The plan should be renewed at year 10, to provide detailed proposals for the subsequent ten years: there may be a need for further scoping and surveys if woodland information needs updating.

Resources

Community Woodlands Association (advice and support for community woodlands)

<http://www.communitywoods.org>

Scottish Forestry Forest Plan resources

<https://forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/forestry-grants/forest-plan-resources>

Scottish Forestry Conservancy Office details

<https://forestry.gov.scot/about/structures/local-offices>

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