



Review of forestry planting approval procedures: Implementation Summary

1. Pre application and consultation process

Recommendations: 7, 8, 9 and 10; and parts of 1, 11 and 14

Aim: We want to speed up the application process and reduce costs in producing woodland creation applications.

How: FCS woodland officers and relevant bodies will provide advice and information about constraints and opportunities early in the woodland application process before a detailed design is produced. The application should take this information into account and should not require much redrafting.

First steps:

- revised concordats with statutory consultees;
- new stakeholder engagement / consultation process published; and
- training to private sector, statutory bodies and FCS.

2. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processing improvements

Recommendations: 5, 6 and 21; and parts of 1, 3, 11, 12 and 14

Aim: We want to ensure the EIA process works efficiently. When required environmental statement should reflect relevant issues reducing the scale and cost of production.

How: Timely screening decisions based on applications including the consultation report from the pre application and consultation process. An experienced and dedicated team will ensure consistent and proportionate requests for information for environmental statements or complex cases.

First steps:

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- EIA thresholds / criteria reviewed and updated if required;
- experienced FCS team set up;
- 'woodland creation processing agreements' set up;
- environmental statements targeted on issues;
- update guidance and procedures for EIA screening; and
- training to private sector, statutory bodies and FCS.

3. Approval processes

Recommendations: 2, 3 and 4; and parts of 1 and 14

Aim: We want to speed up the grant approval process.

How: Conservancies and applicants will have more responsibility and we will remove the requirement for consultation from this part of the process.

First steps:

- establish agent certification criteria;
- revised UKFS approval process published;
- revise guidance for approvals by National Office and Conservancy; and
- experienced FCS team set up.

4. Management information and targets

Recommendations: 13, 16, 18; and part of 12

Aim: We want to provide quality management information to identify areas of good practice and differences in operating practice within FCS, between different agents and statutory / non statutory body responses.

How: Using quality targeted reports to target improvements in process, training and marketing to identified areas.

First steps:

- determine management information needs (not wants);
- review current data availability to produce reports;
- produce reports using currently available data; and
- produce customer charter and associated reports.

5. Promotion training and public information

Recommendations: 15, 17; and part of 14

Aim: We want to improve the appearance and content of promotion material and its availability. Provide training to the private sector and technical training to staff.

How: We will provide role specific technical training to FCS staff and general training across the sector. We will also engage with the sector and work towards common aims.

First steps:

- produce paper marketing material;
- review online information;
- produce material for woodland creation marketing at summer shows;
- produce training requirements both FCS and external; and
- work with delivery partners to establish delivery of training.

6. Potential large regional forest creation project

Recommendation: 19

Aim: We want to establish a very large woodland creation scheme in conjunction with a local authority with shared aspirations for rural land use and development.

First steps:

- identify willing local authority; and
- work with local authority to determine available options.

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Annex 1

Summary table showing relationship between recommendations and workstreams

Ref	Recommendation	Workstream
1	The design of the planting scheme should be separate from the grant application	1, 2, 3
2	Accredited agents should be appointed to certify all woodland creation schemes which are below the threshold for EIA screening and the majority of schemes where it is determined that an EIA is not required	3
3	Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) should set up a central team to deal with particularly sensitive/complex proposals and all projects where an EIA is required	3,
4	With the exception of grant applications above a certain value, or where there are concerns over a potential overspend, grant applications up to £250,000 should be determined by conservancies on an ongoing basis	3
5	Conservancies should make EIA Screening determinations without the need for consultation	2
6	A more rigorous and focused approach is required on scoping with the EIA focused solely on issues which raise potentially significant environmental effects	2
7	Informing and engaging communities should happen much earlier and should be proportionate to the scale and impact of a planting scheme	1
8	Pre-application discussions are vital and the issues/actions should be recorded by agents and subsequently agreed by attendees	1
9	FCS and consultees, where they are involved, must have the confidence to give a clear and consistent advice on issues to be addressed	1
10	Revised protocols setting out the involvement and approach of SNH, SEPA and HES should be agreed and implemented within 3 months of the SG decision on this review	1
11	Requests for information must be clearly justified and there should be an understanding by FCS and consultees of the cost/time implications of additional studies	1, 2
12	Performance targets should be introduced for EIA screening determinations and grant applications	2, 4
13	Planting targets for conservancies should be considered	4
14	Focused and post related programmes of training and development should be introduced	1, 2, 3, 5

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15	Better publicity for the scheme – both online and in hard copy - should be introduced	5
16	Better management information should be available	4
17	Conservancies should hold stakeholder seminars	5
18	An annual report should be produced looking at performance and prospects	4
19	A pilot scheme with a willing local authority to identify areas for large scale planting schemes should be considered	6
20	SG should discuss with FE the current approach to restocking on the National Forest Estate	*
21	There is a strong case for increasing the thresholds or reviewing the criteria where an EIA determination is required	2

* Recommendation 20 has no work-stream, it will be managed directly between Scottish Government and Forest Enterprise Scotland.