

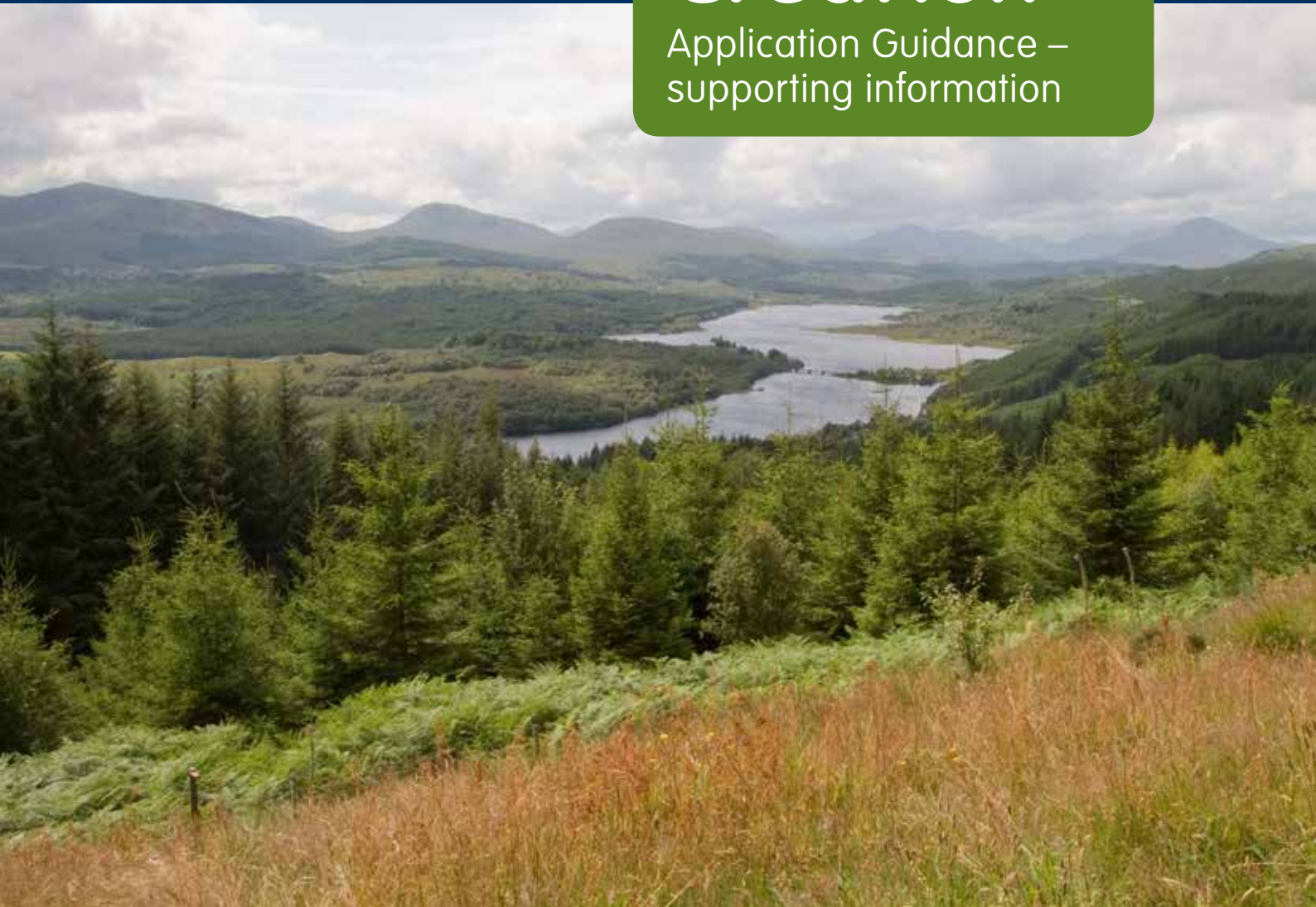


**Forestry Commission** Scotland  
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

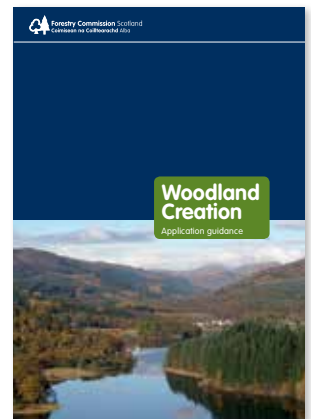
# Woodland Creation

FEB2018

Application Guidance –  
supporting information



This document should be used in conjunction with the Woodland Creation Applicant's guide. It provides guidance on the collection of relevant information for investigations of land on which new woodland is to be created.



It covers the area that is:

- The internal extent of the parcel of land to be planted.
- Any adjacent protected areas that may be affected by the planting scheme (SAC, SPA, or SSSI).

It identifies the type and level of information that should be considered for each site before a formal proposal submission is made. Each proposal must be considered on its own merits using the relevant factors of location, scale, and objectives.

Early engagement with Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) is recommended to help provide guidance on the primary type and level of information to consider for each site.

Stage 1, Step 1.2 – Woodland Creation Application Process.



Two main information and evidence collection processes should be utilised for the preliminary investigation:

1. **Desk based assessment** of existing data sources (specialist groups, online maps and reference sources. e.g. Historic Land Use Assessment map)
2. **Ground truthing**

### Purpose

- To identify and, if relevant, map the location, extent and distribution of features on-site. (When necessary more investigation will be required so that the proposal meets the requirements of the UKFS.)
- Ground truth the information obtained from the desk based assessment to ensure data is still current and constraints/opportunity areas are correctly mapped.
- To identify on site the presence of notable or protected habitats, position of historic features, the existence of key landscape characteristics, location of invasive species and ground water dependant features or the potential impact of herbivores likely to be affected by large scale changes in land management (planting).
- To assess the relative importance of notable habitats and species, how they may be affected by the proposals and to identify areas to avoid or appropriate methods of mitigation within the woodland design.

## What you need to do

- Determine if there are existing survey data or maps available for the site that can be used to identify areas of particular interest.
- Stratify the site to identify those areas where a feature of interest occurs, from areas where there are no such requirements: these areas may require further investigation depending on the scheme design.
- Map the location of features that will require mitigation or provide opportunities for supporting woodland creation.

## Preliminary discussions completed by the applicant

Experienced applicants will be able to identify the appropriate level of investigation based on a combination of;

- proposal size
- main objective (split between schemes that are predominately native woodland or predominately commercial plantation)
- likely impact based on considerations such as location and the previous land use type.

Less experienced applicants will benefit from early discussions with their local woodland officer.

Applicants should begin early discussion with statutory consultees in all cases which are within or are likely to impact on SSSIs or Natura sites and NSAs, or that may require screening or scoping for Environmental Impact Assessment under the Forestry (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

Early engagement can include discussion with;

- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) staff where woodland proposals contain areas of priority bird breeding habitat
- Statutory consultees, where appropriate
- Local Authorities
- Neighbours
- Appropriate bodies for advice on deer management

### 1. Desk based assessment

There are many existing sources of freely available information that could provide evidence and information on the land that is intended to be planted. This document provides links to some valuable sources of information but is not a comprehensive list of every data source available.

Using Sitelink's **interactive map** you can check whether the land is partly or wholly identified as protected under International or National designations. Schemes that may affect land designated as **Special Areas of Conservation** (SACs) or **Special Protection Areas** (SPAs) may require specialist surveys to be undertaken.

Using Forestry Commission Scotland's **Land Information Search (LIS)** you can search for land designations and other information.

### Directory of information sources

The following directory identifies the information type and some main sources of that information that should be investigated before undertaking on-site surveys.

Desk based assessment areas	Data or information type	Source of information	Additional guidance
<b>Soil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suitability of soils for planting</li> <li>If there is deep peat on site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Forests and Scotland's soils</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Deep peat</b> (This shows where peat is likely to be found, but not its depth: the applicant will need to undertake a survey to establish the extent of deep peat)</li> </ul>
<b>Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the site is next to a flood defence</li> <li>If the site is in an acidified catchment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Digital maps showing catchments vulnerable to acidification</b></li> <li><b>Flood maps</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Managing forests in acid sensitive water catchments</b></li> <li><b>Public water supply</b></li> </ul>
<b>Historic Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presence of known historic environment sites and features, and/or areas identified as having high potential for identifying and recording new sites and features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>FCS Historic Environment Resource Guide</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Environment Scotland should be consulted on Scheduled Monuments and Inventory Battlefield and Gardens &amp; Designed Landscapes</li> <li>The relevant Local Authority should be consulted on non-scheduled historic environment features</li> <li><b>The provision of archaeological information and advice in Scotland to meet the UKFS</b></li> </ul>
<b>Herbivores</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Herbivore impacts, deer culling targets, presence of sporting estates, deer displacement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ADMG and LDNS deer management plans, Local deer controller</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://www.deer-management.co.uk/dmgs/deer-management-groups">www.deer-management.co.uk/dmgs/deer-management-groups</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.ldns.org.uk">www.ldns.org.uk</a></li> </ul>
<b>Landscape and land use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Scenic Areas (NSA's)</li> <li>Local Landscape Areas</li> <li>Local agricultural context</li> <li>National Parks (NP)</li> <li>Wild Land Areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>SNH National Scenic Areas Special Qualities</b></li> <li>Local Authority landscape designations and associated planning policies</li> <li>SNH Wild Land Area descriptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advice from RPID</li> <li><b>Guidance</b> about woodland creation on agricultural land</li> <li>SNH Assessing impacts on Wild Land Areas - Technical Guidance</li> </ul>
<b>Habitats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location of <b>Priority Habitats</b> as identified by Article 1 of the Habitats Directive</li> <li>Location of plants named on Schedule 4 of Habitat Regulations 1994 (as amended in Scotland) (<b>Habitats Regulations 1994</b>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Atlas of Living Scotland (<b>NBN Scotland</b>)</li> <li><b>Local record centre</b></li> <li>Local Vice County recorders, specialist species groups (e.g. Plantlife floral guardians)</li> <li><b>Habitat Map of Scotland</b></li> <li><b>Native Woodland Survey of Scotland</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>European Protected Habitats and Plant Species</b></li> <li><b>Annex I habitats and Annex II species occurring in the UK</b></li> <li><b>Scottish Biodiversity List</b></li> </ul>
<b>Species</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presence of Protected Species: those named in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 on Schedule 1, 1A or A1 (Birds), Schedule 5 (Animals) or Schedule 8 (Plants)</li> <li><b>Badgers</b></li> <li><b>European Protected Species (Protected species in Scotland list)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Atlas of Living Scotland (<b>NBN Scotland</b>)</li> <li><b>Local record centre</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Planning guidance on protected species</b></li> <li><b>Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme</b></li> <li><b>Scottish Biodiversity List</b></li> <li><b>BTO</b></li> <li><b>RSPB data requests</b></li> <li><b>SNH</b></li> </ul>
<b>Invasives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presence of invasive species or the potential for introduction and spread</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>SEWeb</b></li> <li>Atlas of Living Scotland (<b>NBN Scotland</b>)</li> <li><b>Native Woodland Survey of Scotland</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>An approach to prioritising control of rhododendron in Scotland</b></li> <li><b>Guidance for delivering invasive non-native plant control projects</b></li> </ul>
<b>Geology/geomorphology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location of nationally and internationally important geological and geomorphological features outside SSSIs</li> <li>Local Geodiversity Sites (LGS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>GCR sites not designated as SSSI</b></li> <li><b>Geological Conservation Review Sites data layer</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lists of registered LGS are held by the relevant local authority</li> </ul>

## 2. Ground truthing

Once the initial online evidence, maps and survey information have been collated and interrogated the ground truthing should be completed by someone who is experienced and competent in carrying out the type of ground truthing that is required. This should be used to verify the desk based assessment, locate missing data or evidence or supplement the proposal e.g. provide evidence of species growing in the vicinity of the proposal to supplement the Ecological Site Classification (ESC) assessment. This may not be the final detailed survey required for the site, but is the minimal level of on-site investigation that should be used to identify the presence of:

- notable or protected habitats
- protected species or identification of habitat that may contain such species
- historic features

The appropriate level of investigation will depend on the proposal size, type of woodland and sensitivity of the site. The diagram below provides an indicative guide to the intensity of investigation that may be required in different circumstances, but each site will need to be considered on its own merits.

When the level of investigations requires plant and species surveys, these should be completed during the breeding season (April–September), but investigations **outwith these dates** are feasible if additional or supplementary evidence exists to support the investigation (e.g. data from Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme or wader survey, or winter roosts).

For the collection of missing evidence for Water, Soils, Habitats, and Species we recommend using an extended **Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase 1 survey** using the ten broad high level categories and detailed specific habitat types, particularly on large commercial proposals. The Phase 1 Habitat Classification and associated field survey technique provide a standardised system to record semi-natural vegetation and other wildlife habitats. The approach is designed to cover large areas of countryside relatively rapidly. It presents the user with a basic assessment of habitat type and potential importance for nature conservation.

This will help to identify noteworthy habitats (e.g. **Annex 1 habitats**, Ground Water Dependant Habitats), the potential presence of protected species, or identification of habitat that may contain protected species. For birds the initial survey should focus on recording protected species, and those identified by **Birds of Conservation Concern** as **Red** Listed or **Amber** listed and present on site.

In all cases ground truthing should consider a Prospective Survey (**FCS Historic Environment Resource Guide**), to locate and define upstanding historic environment sites. This survey can be the targeted inspection and definition of known sites; the prospective survey of ground of high potential to locate previously unidentified sites; or the comprehensive inspection of all ground covered by a proposal.



### How to use your information

Your investigation can be used to provide information on the opportunities or constraints and level of mitigation that should be planned for the site;

- to inform the requirement for further targeted survey
- to ensure those areas or interests are appropriately protected (e.g. by use of appropriate non-planted buffers)
- to indicate whether consultation with statutory consultee or specialists groups is advisable.

If further detail is necessary, e.g. where protected habitats or species are consistent with those on the Scottish Biodiversity List, then they should be mapped to NVC standard unless it is clear there will be no likely significant effect (e.g. by avoidance).

Evidence, collected from investigations, should be added to the issues log of the woodland creation operational plan together with your response before submitting your woodland creation application. It also permits recording of any engagement with stakeholders or statutory consultees, or to provide evidence that no issues have been found on-site and no additional mitigation is necessary.

The information gathered should be presented in map format to show;

- the extended Phase 1 assessment habitats using the NCC/RSNC habitat classification (See Appendix 7 of the **JNCC Handbook for phase 1 habitat survey**)
- the location of any protected species, protected birds, known raptors or breeding red listed birds
- the location of surface or ground-water features
- Historic environment features.

A single map can be used to combine all this desk and survey information into an assimilated Red/Amber/Green map of Habitat Sensitivity: with Red being sites that must be protected or surveyed in detail, Amber where new information will be required, and Green being sites with no issues, features or constraints.

The following principles could be used to separate the site into one or more of the following:

#### Specialist Survey Required

These may only be necessary when the initial assessment has identified the presence of issues e.g. landscape habitats or protected species. Otherwise, if sufficient information is available these areas will not be planted but will be afforded appropriate protection.

#### Gathering New Information

Geographic areas where new information will need to be gathered, or where further evidence is required on known areas of interest (e.g. the assessments have shown potential areas of peat on site then a peat depth survey should be conducted on these areas). Discussion and early engagement with the local woodland officer and stakeholders will identify those specific areas where further evidence will be necessary to allow mitigation to be adequately planned.

This provides an opportunity for more surveys to be requested for a specific area of interest where there is insufficient information from the desk based assessment and ground truthing, and the collection is essential for processing the proposal. The level of survey is proportionate to the risk or impact caused by not having that evidence available.

#### Sufficient Information Available

Where the available evidence from the desk based assessment and ground truthing is sufficient and has enabled appropriate mitigation to be fully planned into the planting scheme, or where the evidence collected demonstrates there are no areas that require additional or specialist survey, and no further survey or evidence gathering will be required. General Mapping Guidance is also available [here](#).





Forestry Commission Scotland serves as the forestry directorate of the Scottish Government and is responsible to Scottish Ministers

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