

Our position on woodland management



This document outlines our approach to managing, maintaining and restoring woodland on Trust land.

Our aims for woodland

1. Our aims for woodland follow from our aim for wild land management, which is to encourage and facilitate natural ecological processes with minimum intervention.

Natural regeneration

2. For woodland management this means woodlands reaching their natural potential based on soil conditions, altitude and exposure, through natural regeneration without fencing. Where grazing pressure is high, and all options to reduce this pressure have been exhausted, sensitively designed and sited fencing to enable natural regeneration may be used as appropriate.

Planting

3. Where conditions are suitable for native woodland regeneration, but seed sources are no longer present, planting on suitable soils and tree protection may be needed to 'kick-start' the natural process. To avoid damaging active bogs the Trust does not plant on deep peat.¹

Transformation

4. Where the Trust has acquired plantations of non-native species on land naturally suited for woodland, the aim will be to convert to native species. Where possible this will be achieved through re-structuring (whilst maintaining continuous cover) and natural regeneration of the appropriate range of native species without fencing. However, it is recognised that in order to secure a felling license for the removal of stands of conifers it will likely be necessary to commit to a programme of restocking, and this in turn may require fencing in order to secure the required statutory support, licences and funding.

Outwith wild land

5. Outwith wild land, woodland on Trust land may also be managed for other objectives such as amenity, firewood or timber production. In these situations, forestry practices with the least impact and using native species will be preferred where possible. These practices are described below. Trust and local volunteers will be involved wherever possible in establishing, maintaining and monitoring woodland.

¹ The UK Forestry Standard has a presumption against planting on deep peat. It states 'avoid establishing new forests on soils with peat exceeding 50 cm in depth and on sites that would compromise the hydrology of adjacent bog or wetland habitats.' Scottish Forestry defines deep peat as peat with a depth over 50cm (see 'Supplementary guidance to support the FC Forests and Peatland Habitats Guideline Note (2000)')

Approaches to woodland management

Tree establishment

6. To create as natural a situation as possible the following establishment techniques will be considered in order of preference:
 - a) Natural regeneration (without fencing as preference but where grazing pressures are high and all options to reduce these pressures have been exhausted sensitively designed and sited fencing may be appropriate)
 - b) Re-establishment techniques including re-seeding or direct planting - using indigenous stock sourced as locally as possible, and planting based on local site assessment in as natural a manner as possible
 - c) Cultivation – ripping / scarification (there are aspirations to look at the selective use of livestock such as cattle to aid this process)
 - d) 'Random' hand mounding
 - e) Hand weeding
 - f) Mechanical mounding (where this does not make the land inaccessible)
 - g) Application of fertilisers, herbicides

7. It is unlikely that ditching or ploughing would be considered. There is an acceptance that bracken control may be necessary where planting has taken place in bracken as without control, the young trees will be over-whelmed and conservation efforts thwarted. Bracken control by chemicals, whilst never ideal, may sometimes be necessary as the most effective and efficient method of controlling it.

Tree protection

8. To create as natural a situation as possible the following protection techniques will be considered in order of preference:
 - a) Management of deer through culling and management of the disturbance caused by culling
 - b) Strategic / deflection stock fencing where livestock are a threat (as opposed to protection of small blocks of woodland enclosed by fencing)
 - c) Strategic / deflection deer fencing where deer numbers are preventing natural regeneration (as opposed to protection of small blocks of woodland enclosed by fencing)
 - d) Brush fencing
 - e) Tree protection such as short tubes (which are useful for protecting trees from small mammals such as rabbits and voles)

9. Some Trust properties may require a combination of the above to achieve natural regeneration.

10. The design and siting of any fencing on Trust land will:
 - a) mitigate harm to landscape, ecology and access

- b) be informed by consultation with key stakeholders
- c) be screened for whether an Environment Impact Assessment is needed, and any advice provided as part of a Screening Opinion will be followed
- d) follow best practice guidance^{2 3} on fencing available at the time.

Harvesting and extraction

11. Where woodlands are to be felled for re-structuring to native woodland or for harvesting of firewood or for timber production the following techniques will be considered in order of preference:

- a) Silvicultural
 - Selective felling, continuous cover
 - Continuous cover with small scale coupe fellings
 - Clearfell
- b) Harvesting
 - Motor manual harvesting
 - Mechanical Harvesting, with the size of machine used dependent on the location, terrain and commercial viability / size of the crop being harvested
- c) Extraction
 - Horse, cable crane, pulp chute
 - Iron-horse, and trailer
 - Forwarder, tractor

12. The above ordering is an ideal order of preference. Scale, value for money and efficiency of operations are all key considerations for determining the best approach to take too.

Woodland maintenance

13. Non-native invasive species will be controlled or eradicated. Methods of control may vary depending on the species. Examples include:

- a) Sitka spruce – felling and extraction, mechanical
- b) Rhododendron – lever and mulch.
- c) Japanese knotweed – standard method is chemical treatment.
- d) Himalayan balsam – hand pulling.

14. Where high density restocking is required after felling an existing plantation, thinning will be required after a period of time.

²<https://www.nature.scot/joint-agency-statement-and-guidance-deer-fencing>

³<http://blackmountdmg.deer-management.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Appendix-13-Detailed-Joint-Agency-Fencing-Guidance-May-2010.pdf>

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15. Ring barking for the creation of deadwood may be used.
16. Some woodland may be managed sustainably for example as woodlots or through the production of green woodworking products.

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