ORKNEY
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Trees and Woodland Strategy 2026 - 2036

2nd Consultative Draft - January 2026

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Development &
Marine Planning

Overview

The purpose of the Orkney Tree and Woodland Strategy is to support and inform the spatial strategy of the new Local Development Plan by setting out the vision, policies and plans for the future of woodland and trees in Orkney. Forest and woodland strategies are a requirement under section A159 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 (the Act) section 53, and Policy 6, Forestry, woodland and trees, of Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). Forest and woodland strategies will contribute to the delivery of Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029.

The statutory and policy contexts means that the main audience are those involved in built development and the planning system. The Strategy is also relevant to anyone who wants to plant trees and will outline planning consideration, planting opportunities, constraints and potential funding opportunities.

As there are no large forests in Orkney, the Strategy has been named the Tree and Woodland Strategy, however it still meets the requirements of the Act. In this Strategy, the terms 'tree' and 'trees' are used as shorthand for 'trees and shrubs'. This is because shrubs are an important contributor to woodland type habitat in Orkney, often around built development and in urban and rural locations. Trees may also form 'hedges', due to their stunted growth, or small 'woodlands'.

The Trees and Woodland Strategy sets out a clear vision, providing high level encouragement for how planting around Orkney can contribute to mitigating the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, while bringing multiple benefits to people, such as landscape enhancement, amenity and recreational opportunities; small-scale planting is an important aspect of the Orkney context. The three themes in section 3 are based on the core principles of protecting, enhancing and creating resiliency, which are set within the Act.

Image: A private drive in Rousay, showing mature and new trees, looking out over Eynhallow Sound to West Mainland.

Vision

To protect, enhance and support new trees, woodlands and hedges in Orkney, that are resilient and contribute to tackling the effects of climate change, provide diverse and functional habitats that support wildlife, complement land uses and are valued and enjoyed by people.

Protect

Enhance

Resilient

The following contexts give an understanding as to how Orkney's small-scale planting is relevant within National and policy contexts and the various ways in which more trees can be realised through the development planning process from community and private planting schemes.

Image: Core path K14, route along Wideford Burn, showing mixed planting on the riparian corridor.

Contents

1: Context

Image: View from core path H2, to the Old Man of Hoy, the ancient native woodland at Berriedale and other planting can be viewed around Rackwick, in the north-west corner of Hoy, which boasts high hills and dramatic coastal cliffs.

1.1 Statutory Context

1.1.1 Section A159 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by section 53 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019), places a requirement on planning authorities to prepare a forestry and woodland strategy to:

- Identify woodlands of high conservation value in the planning authority's area and
- Set out the planning authority's policies and proposals in their area to develop woodlands and protect and enhance woodlands.
- Outline the resilience to climate change of woodlands and
- Expand woodlands to provide multiple benefits to people, the environment and the economy.

1.2 National Policy

1.2.2 National Planning Framework 4, Policy 6, Forestry, woodland and trees, lays out the policy intent, policy outcomes and guidance for local development plans and development proposals in relation to ancient woodlands, ancient and veteran trees, native woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees of high biodiversity value.

1.2.3 Policy 6 sits within a suite of policies within the sustainable places spatial principle; sustainable places are where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity. This group of policies is driven by the need to tackle the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss; trees and woodlands can contribute to the mitigation of the twin crises through carbon sequestration and biodiversity enhancement. Furthermore, trees can form part of solutions for heat and cooling, blue and green infrastructure, flood risk and water management and recreation.

1.2.4 The policy connections for policy 6 extend beyond natural environments into the built environment because trees contribute to the settings, design and quality of historic, existing and new places. Therefore, Policy 6 connects to policies within the Liveable Places policy family, in NPF4, and outlines the guidelines for supporting development in relation to trees and woodlands.

NPF4 Policy 6 on forestry, woodland and trees

a. Development proposals that enhance, expand and improve woodland and tree cover will be supported.

b. Development proposals will not be supported where they will result in:

i. Any loss of ancient woodlands, ancient and veteran trees, or adverse impact on their ecological condition;

ii. Adverse impacts on native woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees of high biodiversity value, or identified for protection in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy;

iii. Fragmenting or severing woodland habitats, unless appropriate mitigation measures are identified and implemented in line with the mitigation hierarchy;

iv. Conflict with Restocking Direction, Remedial Notice or Registered Notice to Comply issued by Scottish Forestry.

c. Development proposals involving woodland removal will only be supported where they will achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits in accordance with relevant Scottish Government policy on woodland removal. Where woodland is removed, compensatory planting will most likely be expected to be delivered.

d. Development proposals on sites which include an area of existing woodland or land identified in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy as being suitable for woodland creation will only be supported where the enhancement and improvement of woodlands and the planting of new trees on the site (in accordance with the Forestry and Woodland Strategy) are integrated into the design.

NPF4 Policy Connections

- Policy 2: Climate mitigation and adaptation – woodland creation contributes to carbon sequestration and climate adaptation options.
- Policy 3: Biodiversity – woodland habitats have high biodiversity value.
- Policy 4: Natural places – woodland habitats support Nature Networks.
- Policy 14: Design, quality and place – trees and woodlands can help address four of the six NPF4 qualities of successful places – Healthy, Pleasant, Distinctive and Sustainable.
- Policy 15: Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods – trees and woodlands in settlements can support a range of activities, for example, sports, leisure, arts, culture and education.
- Policy 20: Blue and green infrastructure – trees and woodlands are an important component of green infrastructure.
- Policy 21: Play, recreation and sport – trees and woodlands contribute to outdoor play and sports.
- Policy 22: Flood risk and water management – trees and woodlands can help manage flood risk and water quality.

1.3 National Strategy

1.3.1 **Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029** and **Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy 2021-2026**, have similar themes and objectives, particularly in relation to safeguarding existing resource, increasing the number of trees and recognition of the public health and well-being benefits of trees and woodlands.

1.3.2 The relevant strategic drivers in Scotland's Forestry Strategy include:

- Climate change mitigation – trees and woodlands are one natural solution that can contribute to CO2 being removed from the atmosphere;
- Adaptation and resilience – trees and woodlands can help us adapt to climate change by, for example, providing natural flood management and shelter for livestock;
- Integrated land use – woodlands do not exist in a vacuum, trees must fit in with other rural activities such as farming, nature conservation and recreation;
- Skills and workforce – address the skills development requirements for tree and woodland planting and management;
- Natural assets, environmental quality and biodiversity – trees and woodlands support the delivery of biodiversity;
- Landscape quality and the historic environment – trees and woodlands can be a positive addition in some areas;
- Health and well-being – trees and woodlands can contribute to people's wellbeing along with other types of green space.

1.3.3 Woodland creation is far from simple, with suitability dependant on a number of social, ecological and economic factors. The social benefits of woodlands, although hard to measure, can include improvements in physical and mental health. Diversity and local distinctiveness are important for maintaining and enhancing the rich range of woodland habitats and species that exist in Scotland and the Islands and recognising that different species will suit different areas.

1.3.4 By encouraging provision of additional habitat, featuring trees, which increases the amount of carbon sinks, the Orkney Tree and Woodland Strategy will also contribute to the delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045, and Scotland's Climate Change Plan 2018-2032.

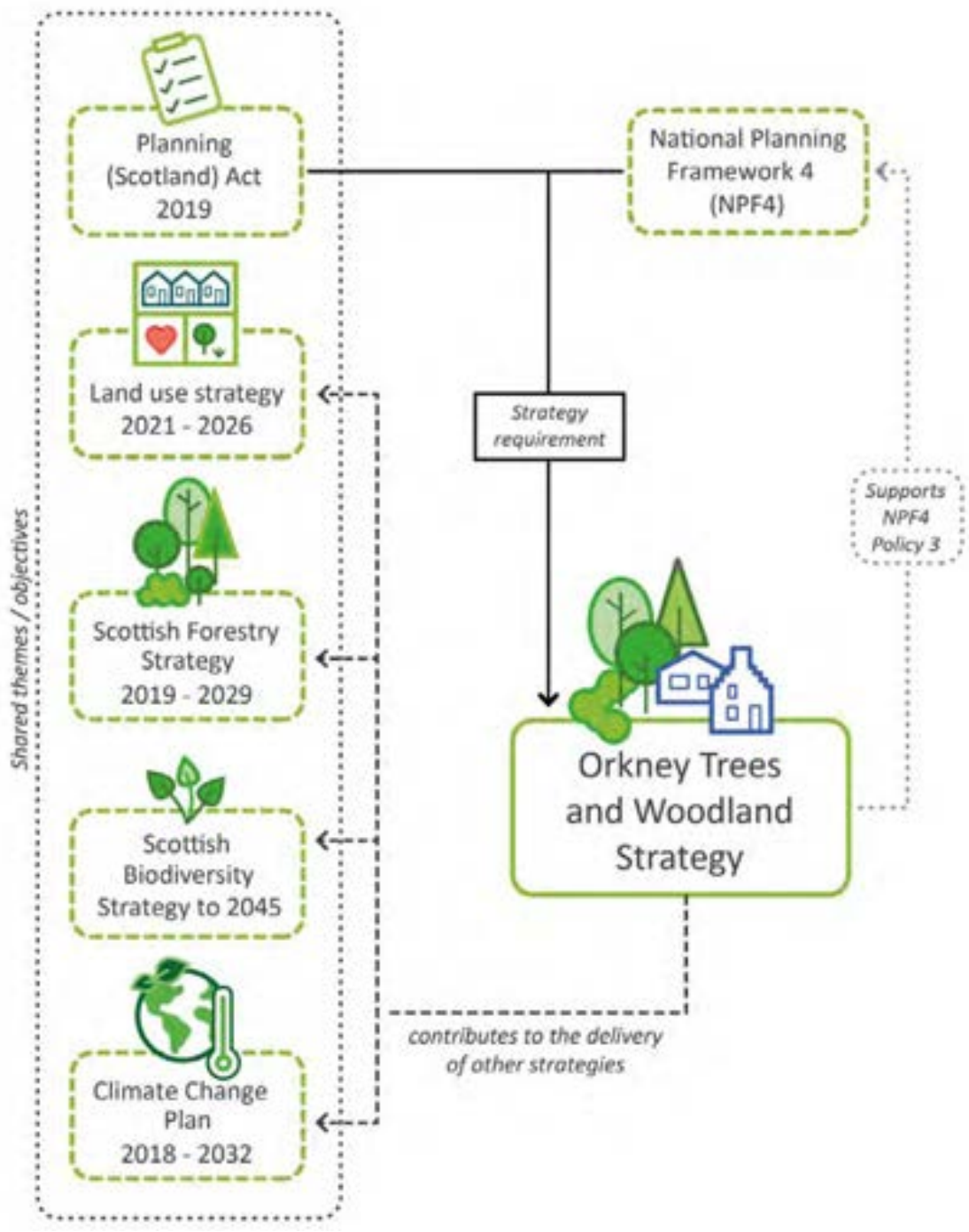


Figure 1: Diagram showing Policy and Strategy Documents.

1.4 Orkney's Climate and Land Use

1.4.1 Orkney's landscape has been shaped by the climatic conditions and the marine environment. The climate is hyper-oceanic, which results in a cool and moist equitable climate, exposed to the severity of the Atlantic weather systems and salt-laden winds. Gales occur, on average, 29 days a year; the windiest months occurring between October and March. Atlantic depressions bring strong winds, which are unimpeded as they cross the sea, so they can reach high velocities and carry salt spray.

1.4.2 Salt carried from the sea means that salt-resistant plants are more likely to survive in Orkney. The amount of salt concentrated in the air should deplete as you move further from the coastal regions where salt spray from wave-action is also present. The effects of the wind are most clearly displayed in the growth habits of many trees and woodlands in Orkney. While in leaf the salt winds often 'burn' the foliage, resulting in foliage turning brown and shrivelling before autumn. Funnelling winds can also bend trees into a characteristic wedge shape. Careful planning of tree planting can mitigate these challenges and have helped trees, shelter belts and smaller woodlands to establish.

1.4.3 Land use in Orkney is predominantly agricultural, with the agricultural land area amounting to 92,932 hectares, equivalent to 94% of land use. Farmland is mainly grassland, mostly enclosed pasture, with beef cattle being the largest livestock group. Farmland overlaps with Orkney's many national and internationally important areas for nature conservation (56 protected areas), locally important nature reserves (250 conservation sites) and the National Scenic Area of Hoy and West Mainland.

1.4.4 In Orkney designated areas for nature conservation include peat soils. Peat is a significant feature in some upland areas in Eday, Hoy and Rousay, and hills in Evie, Rendall and Orphir in the Mainland. There is also basin and valley peat, and when restored or in good condition, peatland can offer important potential as carbon sinks. Any site-specific assessments for tree planting will include consideration of designations and existing landscape and biodiversity value and national guidance regarding tree planting on peatland.

1.4.5 Orkney also has extensive designated cultural and heritage sites (1 World Heritage Site, 373 Scheduled Monuments). Also within the built environment are 6 Conservation Areas and 3 Gardens and Designed Landscapes, these sites house woodlands or specimen trees. Settlements, farm steadings, housing groups, single houses and infrastructure, such as roads and harbours, cover a lesser percentage of land in Orkney.

Image: Whitebeam growing in a characteristic shrub shape by Bay of Firth.

1.5 Orkney's Existing Trees and Woodland

1.5.1 Despite the factors noted, trees played a significant role in Orkney in the past and continue to do so today. Archaeological investigations indicate that Neolithic Orkney used to have a significant number of woodlands. Clearance of native woodlands, combined with the introduction of livestock grazing and changing climatic conditions, are likely to have caused the depletion of almost all of the native woodlands in Orkney. Therefore, woodland is not a primary example of habitat in Orkney, and some tree species take longer to grow and are often smaller in height and girth but where trees, hedges and woodlands are present, they can provide important environmental and cultural benefits to Orkney. Commercial forestry is not regarded as currently viable in Orkney due to Orkney's weather, soil types, existing biodiversity and historic features. This context could change in the future.

1.5.2 Orkney's weather, soil types, existing biodiversity and historic features, also mean that in order for trees to thrive it is important to get the right tree in the right location. While recognising the challenges of tree planting, there is a role for new tree planting in Orkney that this strategy seeks to support.

1.5.3 For some years the Council has been part of the Orkney Woodland Group (OWG), whose members include representatives from NatureScot, RSPB, Orkney Field Club and the Council. This Group works to promote appropriate tree planting schemes and gain funding; this joint working will continue.

Image: Tankerness House - Kirkwall Museum, Kirkwall. The gardens of Tankerness House provide a unique town centre space for locals and visitors to enjoy.

1.5.4 Orkney has a number of native woodlands identified in the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland; existing areas of native woodland should be retained and enhanced where appropriate. However, because the native woodlands in Orkney are very small and do not show up very well on an Orkney wide map, it is better to view the data directly via the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland mapping on SE Web https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/?layers=nativeWoodlandSurveyForScotland.

1.5.5 Much of the planting of native woodlands in Orkney, from 1998-2025, has been facilitated through the Orkney Woodland Project, and grant aided either by Woodland Trust for Scotland or Scottish Forestry (see Appendix 2). Around 300 new small-scale woodlands were planted on private land, amounting to approximately 200 hectares in total. These small woodlands are not all shown on the Native Woodland Survey for Scotland because they may be too small to be picked up.

1.5.6 There are no specific targets set out, the strategy seeks to encourage and promote the value of tree and woodland planting in appropriate locations, acknowledging that most of these opportunities are likely to be smaller scale planting proposals that will emerge over time, creating an incremental increase in the number of trees and woodlands.

1.5.7 Although not currently mapped; non-native trees are important for the services they provide to nature, climate change and people. Such trees and woodland should be retained and enhanced where appropriate. Many non-native trees and woodlands are found in other locations throughout Orkney, including in gardens, within open spaces in towns and villages, along path networks and scattered throughout rural areas. It is important to protect what Orkney already has because recreating their value is challenging and takes a long time in the Orkney climate.

1.5.8 Within settlements, trees thrive and contribute positively to the setting and amenity of urban locations. Sycamore, for example, thrives in the more sheltered areas in towns and villages, growing to a significant size. Enhancement of the existing tree and woodland resource can happen through the

Image: Tree planting providing shelter around private residence in Tankerness

development process. The Settlement Statements, that will form part of our next Local Development Plan, will map green infrastructure that will include the location of existing trees and woodland and will look to expand these areas to promote and increase green infrastructure that will include tree planting and contribute to Nature Networks.

1.5.9 Within Orkney there are notable trees and woodland that are culturally and socially important.

Examples of valued trees in Orkney include:

The large mature trees seen in views in and around settlements such as Kirkwall, Stromness and Finstown, where they contribute to the character of the settlement.

Veteran trees and woodlands of historic and cultural interest, for example, the Big Tree and Gorie's Oak in Kirkwall, Happy Valley near Stenness, Binscarth policy woodland by Finstown and Trumland policy woodland in Rousay.

The contribution trees make to the setting of villages such as Norseman and Evie, as well as, patches of woodlands/groups of trees and hedges scattered throughout Orkney that provide shelter to gardens and farmland.

Remnant native woodland of particular species lineage importance at Berriedale on Hoy, the most northerly native woodland in Britain.

Wooded areas and path networks used by the public for recreation, for example, Olav's Wood in South Ronaldsay, Arcadia Community Park, The Willows and Muddisdale, all in Kirkwall, and the playgrounds in St. Margaret's Hope and Stromness.

1.6 Orkney's Sensitive Designations

1.6.1 Orkney has significant designations for natural heritage, cultural heritage and landscape that could be considered as sensitive locations for significant tree planting. Sensitivities that require consideration include but are not limited to: archaeology, biodiversity (including protected species and areas protected for nature conservation or otherwise important for nature), soils (especially peatland), water environment, landscape character (in particular how proposals fit within the open landscape of Orkney and, if relevant, effects on the special qualities of the Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area), the World Heritage Area and its landscape setting and existing and neighbouring land uses. An understanding of exposure and local topographical effects on exposure is also essential. The location of these sensitivities can be viewed through the Local Development Plan.

Image: Berridale Native Woodland on Hoy, the most northerly native woodland in Britain, sits within the National and Scenic Area of Hoy and West Mainland. Photo by Jenny Taylor

Image: View of the Orphir and Stenness Hills SSSI from Orphir Bay, core path WM2.

2: Benefits

Image: View across Trumland House and policy woodland and newer planting, Rousay. Trumland House and Binscarth House, and their policy woodlands, were designed by David Bryce in the 1870's.

Trees and woodlands provide key landscape features that help connect people to places, in relation to both cultural and natural history. They also provide shelter from the elements for people and habitat for the natural environment; in the countryside, they can provide shelter for livestock and crops. With the changing climate, trees can assist in moderating flooding by slowing water flows and reducing soil erosion. They also remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as they grow and establish.

2.1 For People

2.1.1 Trees and green spaces provide opportunities for people to be in nature, which has health and well-being benefits. Trees and hedges added to existing development or incorporated into the layout and design of new development can also enhance the character, setting and amenity of the development, helping to create a sense of place. For example, hedges and trees can be used to define boundaries, and focal points and areas of visual interest can be created using specimen trees and areas of shrub planting. Clusters of trees and hedges can also offer shelter from the elements in exposed open areas used by people.

2.1.2 Trees and scrub woodland can be found around many farms and houses, either planted to form wind breaks or making use of buildings as shelter to aid growth. More significant areas of woodlands and clusters of trees can also be found in more sheltered locations and associated with larger historic estate houses, such as Binscarth, Firth and Balfour Castle, Shapinsay. Such Woodland trees and scrub woodland contribute to the landscape character of Orkney, providing features, variety and interest.

Image: Tree-lined route on the Gyre Circular Core Path. Photo by David Mager.

2.2 For Climate Change

2.2.1 Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the air, locking it into their wood. Carbon is stored in the trunk, branches, leaves and roots, and continues to be stored in leaf litter and deadwood, transferring carbon into the soil when they decompose. By removing carbon from the air, trees play an important role in helping tackle emissions that contribute to climate change. Therefore, small-scale planting in Orkney, can provide dispersed carbon sinks. However, it is important to have trees in the right place – planting trees on certain peatlands (especially deep peatland), for example, would not be appropriate, as it can cause carbon to be released from the peat.

2.2.2 Trees can build resilience to climate change by providing shelter from changing weather patterns. They can do this by providing shade for people, animals and buildings, and their evapotranspiration, which is like sweating, releases water vapour into the atmosphere and cools the air.

2.2.3 Trees also have the potential to moderate flood water and reduce soil erosion. They do this by intercepting rain and slowing its descent to the ground. Tree root systems improve soil, thereby increasing its capacity to absorb water, which reduces surface water runoff and the risk of flooding.

Image: new house retaining existing trees, St. Ola.

2.3 – For Agriculture

2.3.1 Trees and hedges can provide shelter for livestock and crops, acting as windbreaks, trees and hedges can reduce wind speeds by over 50%, therefore reducing the risk of damage. Using trees and hedges as part of farm management options can increase water filtration rates, which helps to reduce soil and water movement.

2.3.2 Trees and hedges can also enhance biodiversity on farms by providing food and protection for wildlife. In conjunction with their carbon capture ability, trees and hedges should contribute positively to farm carbon audits and Whole Farm Plans.

2.3.3 Small-scale tree and shrub planting is supported within the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS), the scheme promotes land management practices which protect and enhance natural heritage, improve water quality, manage flood risk and help to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Image: beef cattle have shelter and shade from a 1km of hawthorn and downy birch along the old Seatter Path track (core path K10).

2.4 – For Nature

2.4.1 Trees provide for a diverse range of species with food, shelter and places to live, therefore, making a positive contribution to tackling the nature crisis. It is not just the trees themselves that are important, but the associated species that rely on them both within the soil and above ground. For example, fungi and invertebrates such as earthworms that live under the ground, lichens and mosses that live on the surface of trees, and the shelter trees provide for wildlife, such as birds to breed, and protection from the weather.

2.4.2 Existing woodlands, trees and hedges contribute to Orkney's nature networks that can, where appropriate, incorporate water bodies and water courses. Nature networks provide links between areas important for biodiversity, to enable wildlife to move between areas for dispersal, migration and recolonisation, using habitat corridors and stepping stone patches of habitat.

2.4.3 It is important to note that some of Orkney's biodiversity and natural heritage features benefit from locations away from trees and woodland such as Orkney's wading birds in wetland and coastal locations. This is why this strategy advocates the right tree in the right place.

Image: Small woodland showing lichen and moss on the trees and different field layers below them, offering varying habitats for nature. Core path WM2, Gyre Circular, by Orphir House and Gyre Cottage, Orphir.

Image: Local Nature Reserve, Happy Valley near Stenness, offers recreational walks in all seasons; a place where people can enjoy nature in mature and newer mixed woodland.

3: Themes: Protecting, Enhancing and Resilient

Image: Vias Moss in Dounby is a tree group of mixed species, including downy birch, elm, aspen, white beam and ash.

3.1 Design led management

3.1.1 The Strategy's three themes are based on the core principles of protecting, enhancing and creating resiliency, which are set within the Act. For each theme there are actions that the Council will work towards alongside partners from interest groups and community groups.

3.1.2 One of the areas that the core principles of protecting, enhancing and creating resiliency can be achieved is through the statutory planning process. All planning applications are expected to take a design-led approach to development in line with NPF4 policy 6 (see introduction s1.2). The Mitigation Hierarchy must be used in a design-led approach (see below), so that removal and adverse effects on existing trees, woodlands, and hedges are avoided in the first instance.

3.1.3 The design led Mitigation Hierarchy, shown below, is an established environmental planning tool that gives a structured approach to minimise environmental harm during development, for example to trees. It works by avoiding impacts, minimising impacts and lastly restoring or offsetting biodiversity loss.

3.1.5 Through this hierarchy, adverse effects will be minimised, for example, through careful siting of infrastructure and built development and through construction methods that avoid root protection areas, which can very per species. The first two stages of the mitigation hierarchy should be followed before any residual effects are mitigated, for example, through comparable or better provision of trees or woodlands.

3.1.6 Where mitigation is required, it should be delivered on the proposed development site or, if it is not possible, off-site delivery maybe required. Ideally, these matters will be directly addressed through planning conditions for new development proposals. Mitigation measures should be the equivalent to the trees and woodland proposed to be lost. Replacement of lost trees and woodland does not satisfy biodiversity enhancement requirements on development sites, which is a requirement under policy

3, Biodiversity, in NPF4. Biodiversity enhancements require additional building and strengthening of nature networks and the integration of nature-based solutions.

3.1.7 All new tree and woodland planting and any work to existing trees and woodland should be completed in line with 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations' (BS 5837:2012). This is a good practice guide for tree retention or new planting in the design and construction phases of development.

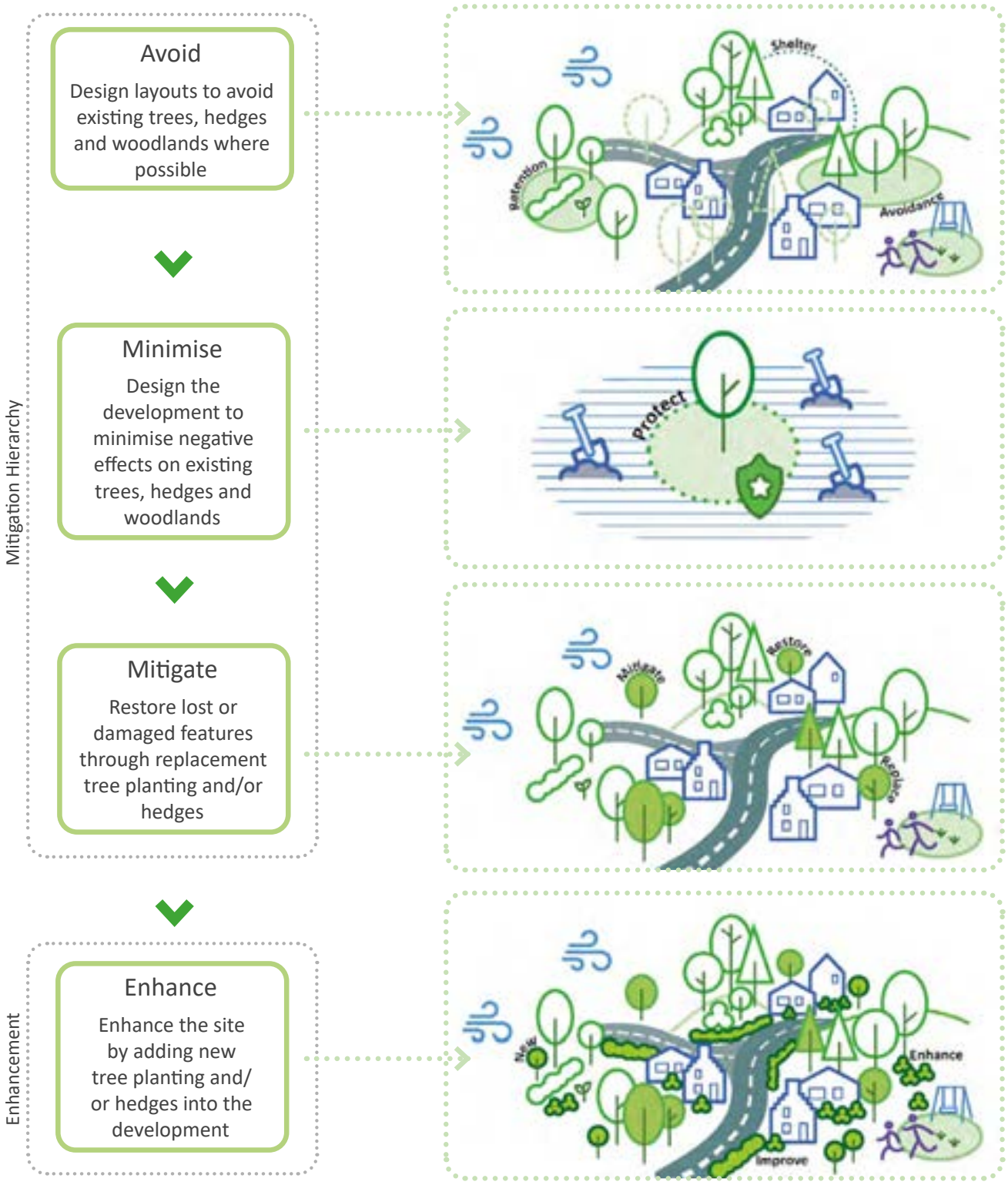


Figure 2: Design led mitigation hierarchy, also showing where enhancement fits in the process.

3.2 Protecting: existing trees and woodland

3.2.1 This strategy aims to protect existing trees and woodlands in Orkney. Some trees in Orkney have specific protection, through Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) that may have groups or individual trees mapped for that specific TPO. Trees are also protected under Scottish planning law if they are within a Conservation Area or by a condition of a previous planning permission. It is the landowner/manager's responsibility to check whether a tree or trees are protected and to gain the necessary permission before undertaking any works.

Conservation Areas

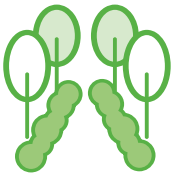
Trees within a Conservation Area are protected where they provide an important contribution to the character and amenity of the area. Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historical interest with a character or appearance that is desirable to preserve or enhance, which trees often contribute to. In Orkney there are six Conservation Areas, five on the mainland (in Kirkwall, Stromness, St Margaret's Hope, Brodgar and Eynhallow) plus one at Balfour village on Shapinsay. Information about Conservation Areas in Orkney can be found on council website. Six weeks prior notice must be given to the Planning Authority of the intention to carry out works affecting a tree or trees within a Conservation Area. The law relating to conservation areas and trees within them is Part II of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. Planning circular 1 (2011) provides information on what work requires permission from the Planning Authority

Tree Protection Orders

TPOs are a means of protecting individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands, where the removal of or damage to those trees could have an adverse effect on the public amenity of an area. TPOs are made by the Planning Authority and form a legal constraint permanently attached to the title of the land where the trees are located. Prior consent is required from the Planning Authority for any works affecting TPO trees. Information about the law for TPOs can be found in the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order and Trees in Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Regulations 2010[3]. Further information on TPOs on the Council website.

Previous Planning Conditions

Some trees may be protected by way of a planning condition of a previous planning permission, for example to safeguard existing trees as part of biodiversity measures to meet the requirements of NPF4 policy 3. Information on previous planning permissions can be found by searching planning applications by address or using the map function.



Gardens and Designed Landscapes

The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland does not confer specific statutory protection for trees, however, protection of these landscapes is a material consideration in the Scottish planning system. In line with NPF4, Policy 6 – Forestry, Woodland and Trees; trees and woodland have protection because of their value to climate resilience, natural environment, cultural heritage and for their amenity value that include shelter.

3.2.2 When trees or woodland form part of a planning application site, the planning application will require a survey of the trees and woodland and a statement on how they will be protected during the construction phase of the development and incorporated within the final development proposal (see Appendix 1 for more information).

3.2.3 Other trees and woodlands in Orkney are cared for by community groups or individuals, although they do not have a legal status, they are important to people because of the value they bring for health and wellbeing, biodiversity, amenity and shelter.

Action framework for protecting

Promote protection of existing trees and woodlands through the local development plan process by creation of positive and effective policies for design led solutions.

Protect existing trees and woodlands in appropriate urban and rural settings, through relevant statutory duties, including reviewing existing TPOs and conservation areas as resources allow.

Increase understanding of the extent of existing woodlands through digitisation of known tree groups and woodlands in partnership with WTS.

3.3 Enhancing: Increasing and expanding trees and woodland

3.3.1 Trees, woodlands and hedges provide many benefits to people and the environment therefore, increasing the amount of trees, woodlands and hedges is beneficial to Orkney.

3.3.2 Through the review of the Local Development Plan, Settlement Statements will map existing green infrastructure; that includes existing trees and woodland groups. This mapping will also indicate locations where new tree and woodland planting will thrive and be encouraged.

3.3.3 For all appropriate planning applications, as part of Biodiversity Enhancement requirements, applicants will be encouraged to incorporate tree and hedge planting to enhance new development as noted in this Strategy. For some developments trees and hedge planting will be dependant on locational and climatic conditions and the type of development proposed, such as the change of use of a building with little or no outside space provision. Trees can be planted as part of biodiversity enhancement requirements; these are found in NPF4 Policy 3. The main focus is to strengthen nature networks and integrate nature-based solutions.

3.3.4 Enhancement of woodlands can be achieved by individuals through community planting schemes, and private planting on their own land, working with relevant partners in the Orkney Woodland Group and Woodland Trust for Scotland.

3.3.5 For the majority of tree and woodland enhancement proposals a site-specific assessment will be required to identify the most suitable areas for planting and the species most appropriate. This will be required for planning permission and for funding applications. Sensitivities are noted in the earlier sections of this strategy and summarised in section 1. Optimum sites for planting have deep, rich soil as well as good shelter from strong salt winds. Useful sources of information to help with site specific assessment are provided at the end of the strategy. Detailed formal assessment through an Environmental Impact Assessment may also be required for proposals meeting the criteria set out in the Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

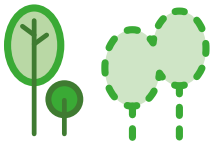
3.3.6 Some sites may be suitable for native species for new and replacement (compensatory) planting, as native species are considered to have evolved with and adapted alongside native wildlife, providing greater benefits compared with non-native tree species. However, it is recognised that in some locations and circumstances, non-native species may be better able to achieve the desired outcome. For example, within settlements that require a specimen tree as a landscaping feature, or evergreen shrubs for year-round privacy and screening purposes. In such situations, the non-native species must be known to survive Orkney conditions.

Image: Trees within the Finstown TPO, providing benefit to the settlement setting.

3.3.7 The Orkney Woodland Project A Woodland Design Guide contains information about native and other species known to survive Orkney conditions; as well as guidance on integrating woodland into the Orkney landscape. In all situations, invasive non-native species listed in Annex B of the NatureScot guidance on Developing with nature must not be planted.

Action framework for enhancing

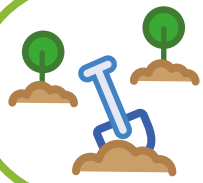
Continue to promote enhancement of trees and woodlands through the planning processes of the local development plan by way of positive and effective policy and the determination of planning applications.



Outline potential areas for tree planting by enhancing existing tree groups or new planting in settlement statements.

Continue to enhance trees and woodlands through the development planning process by ensuring the design-led mechanism is put into action for any development having the potential for planting more trees to enhance biodiversity and/or add to the setting of a building or building group.

Support individuals and community groups to plant trees and small-scale woodlands in appropriate places through the Orkney Woodland Group, contributing to outdoor and nature education.



Where appropriate through the planning system, establish requirements for tree and woodland planting through Biodiversity Enhancement statements.

3.4 Resilient: right tree, right place

3.4.1 Orkney's specific and distinct climatic conditions and topography mean that planting the right species of tree and in the right location are key to supporting and building resilience in trees to ensure effective establishment in the Orkney environment, and to mitigate the effects of climate change, pests and diseases.

3.4.2 While there is limited scope for natural regeneration in Orkney due to the limited extent of seed producing woodlands and suitability of adjoining habitat, allowing natural regeneration of existing trees or collecting and growing on seed from existing trees for use to expand an existing woodland should result in the strongest seedlings most able to withstand climate and other pressures. This should help build natural resilience to local conditions, as well as contributing to woodland expansion.

3.4.3 When planting new trees, there are different views on provenance. The provenance of tree seed refers to its geographical origins. Generally, choosing the appropriate tree species and provenance for site characteristics and local climate harbours greater resilience. Therefore, local provenance is a good first choice because trees will be best adapted to local conditions and weather patterns. However, greater genetic diversity can increase resilience to the future effects of climate change. It is recognised that it may not always be possible to source Orkney provenance trees due to limited stock. In such situations, the next choice would be trees with provenance within the same seed source region (Caithness and Sutherland seed zone 102), preferably also with similar exposed northern coastal conditions. Provenance for choosing non-native species usually looks to the north of Scotland area, again, for similar climatic conditions.

3.4.4 The Scottish Forestry Seed Sources for Planting Native Trees and Shrubs in Scotland guidance provides information on seed zones and the species native to them, which may be helpful in identifying alternative tree supplies.

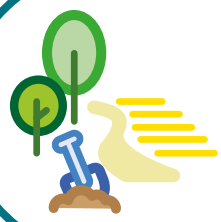
3.4.5 For all planting of more than one tree, species diversity is essential. Different species have different strengths and weaknesses, therefore a mix of species should ensure that the trees, or hedging, are better able to withstand adverse effects caused by climate change, pests and diseases and so remain functional. Shrub or hedge planting can be used to protect new trees until they are established in more exposed areas.

Image: Muddisdale, Kirkwall - woodland showing diversity of species which encourages greater resiliency.

Action framework for resiliency

Support tree planting on the public land and where appropriate across Orkney to bring benefits to people and nature such as landscape enhancement, biodiversity, amenity and recreational opportunities as well as benefits in tackling climate change and its impacts.

Identify, through the statutory planning and flood management provisions, potential opportunities where trees can provide natural solutions for flood and water management as well as other benefits.



Support tree planting that will deliver multiple benefits such as shelter for people, places, livestock and crops in conjunction with partners such as the Orkney Woodland Project, with development trusts and supporting the carbon neutral islands initiative.

Continue to work in partnership with UHI supporting arboreal culture schemes like the tree nursery at Orkney College, to ensure a bank of trees for planting schemes that can survive in Orkney's climate.

Identify opportunities where trees can contribute to water and biodiversity enhancement on riparian corridors, contributing to Nature Networks, in the spatial strategy in the local development plan.

Support tree planting alongside path networks in conjunction with partners such as the Orkney Woodland Project, Hitrans, Walk, Wheel and Cycle Trust, community groups and schools.

Appendix 1: Works on protected trees and protecting trees before and during development

Image: New house and mature trees by Bignold Park, Kirkwall.

A1.1 Permission for works on a protected tree

If you are applying to fell or carry out pruning works on a protected tree, the Planning Authority would expect you to include the following information with your application:

- Description of proposed works and reasons why these works are required
- Tree Survey – a tree survey should provide these details for each tree, using the reference numbers from the site plan:
    - Species
    - Stem Diameter (cm)
    - Branch spread
    - Crown height
    - Age class
    - Structural condition
    - Visible defects
    - Management recommendations
    - Tree constraints
- Site Plan - reference the trees by number.
- Annotated photos of the trees showing the proposed works.

A1.2 Protection of trees and woodland within or adjacent to a proposed development

If there are trees within or near your proposed development site, the Planning Authority require the following to accompany your application:

- Description of proposed works and reasons why these works are required.
- Tree Survey with Site Plan (as above).
- Tree Constraints Plan – show how retained trees will be maintained in the proposed site layout, including Root Protection Area Calculation.
- Proposed Site Layout Plan – should consider how works below and above ground may affect the trees. The document should show the development area, location of building/s, tree positions, proposed access routes and proposed service routes.
- Tree Protection Plan – show measures to protect retained trees, for example, barriers round the RPA.

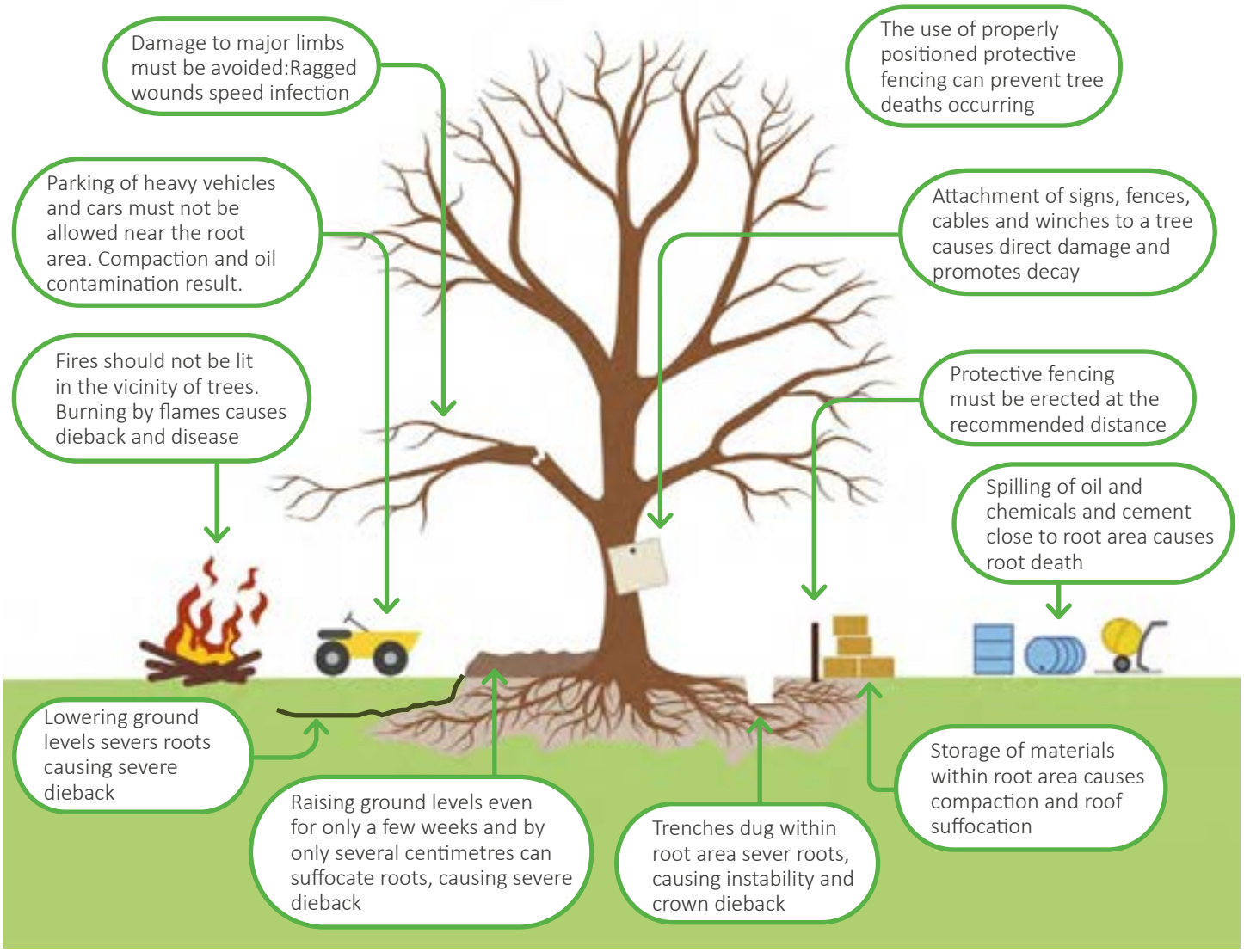


Figure 3: Common causes of Tree Death diagram

A1.3 Replacement Planting, Landscape Plans and Woodland Management Plans

Where trees have to be felled the Planning Authority may request that replacement trees are planted on or near the site. However, planting new trees or woodlands does not always compensate for the loss of valued, mature trees.

Where compensatory planting is made a condition of an approved planning application, it is important, to seek professional advice on the species and location of replacement trees. The opportunity to plant replacement trees should be viewed as a chance to improve the environment.

Where appropriate, the planting of native trees is encouraged. The Forestry Commission have produced guidance “The Right Tree the Right Place” that is a useful reference when considering replacement planting. Please see Further Information in Appendix 2.

You should provide the planning authority with a:

- Landscape Plan - shows how new trees will help integrate the new development into the existing green network and avoid any negative impact in its surroundings.
- Management Plan - to ensure that woodland areas are healthy and sustainable resources. Different management strategies would apply dependant on the desired long-term outcome for the woodland, for example for wildlife, landscaping, or shelter.

Image: new planting by new commercial building in St. Ola.

A1.4 Carrying out approved works

- When - Pruning should be undertaken in mid-summer or winter and protected species should not be disturbed, for example, bats.
- Who – tree surgery and felling should only be done by a qualified arborist, they should be able to show evidence of required certificates.
- What – in some cases a Felling License may be required if you intend to fell 5 cubic metres of timber outwith a garden, public park, orchard or graveyard in any calendar quarter, contact Scottish Forestry, see appendix 2.

Image: View of mature Sycamores within Kirkwall.

Appendix 2: Further information and funding opportunities

Image: View of Stromness from the Hamnavoe ferry showing the crowns of mature trees.

This section is divided up into topic areas to help navigate the various information and funding streams in relation to protecting and planting trees and woodlands; the topics include agriculture, funding, protecting trees, historic environment, natural environment and water environment.

It should be noted that funding streams can change annually, and this section is not inclusive of all funding opportunities. This section is there to assist.

A2.1 Agriculture advice & funding

Farmers can benefit from some of the same grant funding streams that are available for community planting, including MOREwoods and MOREhedges from the Woodland Trust.

The Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme offers financial support for the creation of new woodland and the sustainable management of existing woodland. The scheme includes options that cover planting, integrating farming with forestry, woodland protection and harvesting.

Creating woodland within a farm has recognised benefits and a specific, Sheep and Trees Forestry grant package is available from Scottish Forestry.

- https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/all-schemes/agri-environment-climate-scheme/management-options-and-capital-items/small-scale-tree-and-shrub-planting/guidance-for-small-scale-tree-and-shrub-planting/
- https://www.forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/forestry-grants
- https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/
- https://www.fas.scot/article/grants-for-small-scale-tree-planting-fwn37-autumn-2021/
- https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/trees-for-landowners-and-farmers/morehedges/
- https://www.gov.scot/publications/code-practice-sustainable-regenerative-agriculture/documents/
- https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/agroforestry-benefits/shelterbelt/
- Agri environment schemes- the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) promotes land management practices which protect and enhance Scotland's magnificent natural heritage, improve water quality, manage flood risk and mitigate and adapt to climate change.

  https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/agri-environment-climate-scheme/

Image: Woodland Trust Scotland offer grants and advice for new woodland planting

A2.2 General funding opportunities

Communities may be able to benefit from free trees and funding opportunities. Some charities such as the Woodland Trust run initiatives to give away free trees to community led projects on a range of scales, including small groups of trees or short hedges, as well as woodlands.

Where communities have ownership or access to land that they wish to create a community woodland within, there is potential for communities to fund tree or hedge planting by partnering with developers that need to deliver biodiversity measures through NPF4 policy 3, but are unable to do that within the development site.

The smallest area that can be grant funded under the Woodland Trust's MOREwoods grant is 0.1 hectare. The tree species are specified as downy birch, rowan, aspen and willow (grey and tea-leaved), all of Orkney native provenance and Scottish natives from the Highland region.

The Forestry Grant Scheme specifies up to 80% downy birch, rowan, aspen and willow (grey and tea-leaved), all of Orkney native provenance and 20% mixed broadleaves or conifers. Scottish Forestry grant funding, also, encourages smaller scale proposals of 0.25 to 1ha in Orkney in recognition of the climatic, nature conservation and land use sensitivities here because these conditions reduce opportunities for large scale planting.

Woodland Trust - advice, guidelines & funding

WTS provides an advisory service for native woodland design, project delivery and funding, including grants for small woodlands and hedges.

- The Highlands & Islands Woodland Handbook (pages 179- 181) available via the bottom of the The Croft Woodland Project webpage.
  https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/scotland/croft-woodlands/
- Funding for community and other woodland creation projects under the 'Plant trees' heading.
  https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/

Scottish Forestry & government – guidelines & funding

- Scottish Forestry Seed sources for planting of native trees and shrubs- Scottish Forestry policy and information about selecting suitable origins and provenances of native plants and seeds.
  https://www.forestry.gov.scot/forests-environment/biodiversity/native-woodlands/seed-sources
- UK Forest Standard Practice Guide: Adapting forest and woodland management to the changing climate- guidance on choosing and implementing appropriate adaptation measures to help forests and woodlands adapt to the changing climate.
  https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/publications/adapting-forest-and-woodland-management-to-the-changing-climate/
- Scottish Forestry grants and funding- information and support for tree planting.
  https://www.forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/woodland-creation
- UK Forest Standard- sets out the UK Government approach to sustainable forestry. Although written for commercial forestry, it contains information on topics including biodiversity, historic environment, soils and people that will be useful for non-commercial woodland creation and tree planting.
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard

Image: Grant funded native woodland showing enhanced biodiversity and setting in Holm. Photo by Anne Bignall

A2.3 Useful Websites

Protecting trees

Orkney Islands Council & Tree Protection

- Tree Preservation orders – Orkney Islands Council
  https://www.orkney.gov.uk/our-services/planning-and-building/development-and-marine-planning-policy/natural-and-built-environment/tree-conservation/
- Conservation areas in Orkney, trees are also protected if they fall within a conservation area:
  https://www.orkney.gov.uk/our-services/planning-and-building/development-and-marine-planning-policy/natural-and-built-environment/built-heritage/
- Orkney Islands Council & Tree Protection provides a range of information focused on trees in Orkney, including the Orkney A Woodland Design Guide for selecting and establishing trees for woodland projects, which contains a list of native and other tree species known to grow in Orkney.
  https://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/woodland/
- Tree root protection zone calculations- Woodland Trust information providing an explanation of root protection areas and their importance in safeguarding the health of existing trees.
  https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2021/04/root-protection-areas/

Historic environment

Historic Environment & designated sites

Archaeology and historic environment - Orkney is exceptionally rich in heritage assets and is internationally famous for its prehistoric archaeology. While some archaeological assets may be obvious and well known (and in some places, given legal protection through a designation), much may remain unknown, concealed underground. Tree planting could affect heritage assets by having a direct physical effect (such as damage caused by intruding tree roots), affecting the setting of a heritage asset (for example by changing the landscape context), or through indirect effects (for example by increasing erosion caused by increased visitor numbers). All known historic environment assets, designated or not, must be taken into consideration during a site assessment.

- Orkney Islands Council, Islands Archaeologist may be able to provide advice on the potential for unknown and undesignated archaeology.
  https://www.orkney.gov.uk/our-services/planning-and-building/development-and-marine-planning-policy/#
- Trove.Scot and Pastmap provide information about known archaeological sites, buildings and industrial heritage.
  https://www.trove.scot/search/map
- Historic Environment Scotland provide information about scheduled monuments and other known historic environment designations, for example, Gardens and Designed Landscapes.
  https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/scheduled-monuments/

Natural environment

Natural environment & designated sites

- National soil map- map showing the different soil types found across Scotland, with more detailed mapping available for Orkney by selecting the partial cover map. This can be used to identify areas of carbon rich and peaty soils, which are important stores of carbon unlikely to be suitable for tree planting.

  https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/soil-maps/national-soil-map-of-scotland/

- Native Woodland Survey of Scotland- information and a map for the Scotland wide surveys carried out from 2006-2013 to identify native woodlands.

  https://www.forestry.gov.scot/forests-environment/biodiversity/native-woodlands/native-woodland-survey-of-scotland-nwss

- Ecological site classification tool- a tool provided by Forest Research to suggest what tree species are suited to a particular site based on climate background data. However it should be noted that the tool does not take account of localised topographical exposure/shelter, so the results may not be accurate for Orkney conditions and do not replace the need for local advice and site specific assessment.

  https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/ecological-site-classification/

- Scotland's environment web- provides a range of environmental datasets that can be viewed on a map or downloaded, including on areas protected for nature conservation.

  https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/

- National Scenic Area and landscape character- information on the Hoy and West Mainland NSA and wider landscape character of Orkney.

  https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/9128 and https://www.nature.scot/doc/landscape-character-assessment-orkney-landscape-evolution-and-influences

- Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS)- information and maps about LNCS in Orkney, including what habitats and species they are important for. LNCS are identified by the Council as part of the Local Development Plan process.

  Supplementary Guidance: Natural Environment Annex 1: Local Nature Conservation Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Un-notified Conservation Review Sites

Water environment

Scottish Water & SEPA - guides for planting by water & public water infrastructure

- Scottish Forestry and Scottish Water have teamed up to offer guidance on tree works beside or near water supplies.

  https://www.forestry.gov.scot/private-and-public-water-supplies

- The Farm Advisory Service gives a comprehensive guide to planting in the region of water bodies.

  https://www.fas.scot/environment/water-management/water-margins-2/riparian-planting/

Spatial data sources

Scottish Forestry Open Data resource

- The Native Woodland Survey of Scotland undertook a baseline survey of all native woodlands, nearly native woodlands and PAWS (plantations on ancient woodland sites) to create a woodland map linked to a dataset showing type, extent and condition of those woodlands. The parameters for the survey are explained in the View Full Details section and you can also select woodlands on the map to show its status.

  https://open-data-scottishforestry.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/6d27b064fcba471da50c8772ad0162d7_0/explore

- Scottish Forestry has an open data portal which allows you to search for various information relating to the management of trees and woodlands. This portal includes the Scottish Forestry Map Viewer, which you will find by scrolling down the page on the link below. There is spatial data for Forestry Grant Scheme target and eligibility areas and current and legacy grant application schemes.

  https://open-data-scottishforestry.hub.arcgis.com

- The National Forest Inventory (NFI) woodland map covers all forest and woodland areas over 0.5 hectare with a minimum of 20% canopy cover, or the potential to achieve it, and a minimum width of 20 metres. Both this spatial data and the NWS will not include many of Orkney's small woodlands that are less than 0.5ha.

  https://data-forestry.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/dec82458381246f98bbcddc2eb76a80b_0/explore

Image: Papdale House in Kirkwall maintains many of the trees that were planted within the grounds, although these are now part of open space within the towns bounds giving access to the school halls of residence and general active travel to the primary and secondary schools and further on into the town centre. Sir Walter Scott visited his friend at Papdale House (built in 1807) and is rumoured to have influenced the planting schemes.

Image: Looking down Church Road in St. Margaret's Hope out to the Sound of Hoxa. St Margaret's Hope, in South Ronaldsay, is one of only two towns in Orkney covered by a Tree Preservation Order, consisting predominantly of individual trees. The trees enhance the setting of this attractive coastal settlement.

Back Cover Image: Olav's Wood on South Ronaldsay has been established over many years; the first plantings took place in the mid 1970s, with major planting beginning in the 1980s. The woodland is approx. 4.5 acres (1.8 hectares) in area and comprises trees and shrubs from around the world. The woodland now has areas of dense growth and open grassland and heath. (All photos by Erica Hume Niven, except where credited to another person)

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