



Scotland's  
Young  
People's  
Forest



# Scotland's Young People's Forest:

Phase One Progress Report



# Summary and Background to Scotland's Young People's Forest

Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland are delighted to deliver this progress report on Scotland's Young People's Forest programme which covers the activity delivered in the Forest Conception Phase (February 2021 – April 2022).

Inspired by the #IWill4Nature project in Derbyshire, that saw the creation of the first young person's forest in the UK, Youthlink Scotland, Young Scot, the Pears Foundation, and Woodland Trust discussed the possibility of a similar project in Scotland, with enhanced opportunities to invest in nature. Our vision was for Scotland to have a young people's forest co-designed, created, curated and governed by young Scots. Scotland's Young People's Forest showcases young people's passion, activism and commitment to nature, biodiversity, and the natural environment. Through their leadership young people have and will continue to significantly contribute to Scotland's response to the climate emergency and demonstrate Scotland's collaborative approach for tackling climate change and biodiversity.

Launched in February 2021, and supported by founding partners Accenture, Corra Foundation, NatureScot, Pears Foundation, Scottish Enterprise and Wood, Scotland's Young People's Forest has been led by a core group of young people - Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel. This group of young people from a range of backgrounds and communities were selected to lead on the co-design of the first phase of the project. The panel, supported by Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland, has been leading on the activity including exploring forestry management, land-use in Scotland, ownership models, accessibility, and outreach. They have also engaged with a National Expert Advisory panel to ensure their work supports and benefits the extensive work already taking place to restore and conserve Scotland's natural environment.

A National Advisory Group (NAG) was also established to support this work made up of experts from across the forestry and environmental sectors including Forestry and Land Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful, John Muir Trust, The Tree Council, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Institute of Chartered Foresters, Cairngorms National Park, Scottish Land Commission, Scottish Forestry and The Woodland Trust. The founding partners, Accenture, Corra Foundation, NatureScot, Pears Foundation, Scottish Enterprise, and Wood PLC, also sit on this group.

The NAG plays a crucial role in assisting the young people to consider important factors in relation to forestry, biodiversity, land management, site identification and selection and the forest models they will employ. Their role is to provide advice on options and opportunities – ranging from the type of suitable planting to practical use and stewardship. The organisations interaction with the young people has also provided opportunities to benefit from shared learning and insights from strategically engaging young people as decision makers in the sector.

Across this first phase of activity, we have seen young people embrace the challenge set before them with great positivity, creativity and tenacity. Scotland's Young People's Forest is already supporting young people to be activists and leaders and will help contribute to Scotland's response to the climate emergency. The creation and long-term management of the forest will showcase Scotland's collaborative approach for tackling climate change and biodiversity. The forest itself will become a legacy for young people and adults to reflect the ambitions of a nation and provide a focus for education and empowerment. The outcomes and impacts of this first phase have set a strong foundation on which to set this ambition.

## Scotland's Young People's Forest: Phases of activity

From the beginning, we recognised the scale of our ambition to co-design Scotland's Young People's Forest and the complexity of forestry.

Key areas for consideration include identifying suitable locations for woodlands and forests and the considerations in developing a site, balancing the benefits for wildlife, biodiversity, people and income generation, and the ongoing requirements for successful management and sustainability of a forest or woodland.

Strong partnerships are required to ensure that the process is well informed and includes the relevant expertise, whilst still enabling young people to lead on co-designing and making decisions around the Forest.

To deliver this programme we anticipated three phases of activity: Forest Conception, Forest Creation and Forest Curation. Given the flexible nature of the co-design approach, we acknowledge some activity will straddle different phases and be adapted as the process is established with young people. Young people's engagement in each phase is fundamental and we understand flexibility would be required to facilitate this.

This first phase of the project focuses on the Forest Conception.



### Forest Conception

Setting the conditions for young people to take a lead role in developing the concept of Scotland's Young People's Forest alongside partners.

Young people's role at the heart of this process is a defining feature of the project. To lead on this project, we formed Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel. Engaging partners to support, share knowledge, skills and expertise was vital to support the young people to build their capacity and understanding. To support this, we formed a National Expert Advisory Panel. This partnership approach has enabled the young people's ideas and planning to be grounded in the extensive knowledge and expertise of the forestry sector.

### Across this phase young people and partners have collaborated to begin to:

- Build understanding of forestry, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, forest management and ownership models.
- Develop the concept of Scotland's Young People's Forest - articulation of aims, values, and objectives, including exploration of mini-forests and urban/rural considerations in terms of accessibility.
- Identify needs, barriers, equalities, and accessibility considerations.
- Explore links to supporting initiatives such as local food system infrastructure, recreation and outdoor play opportunities, and health/wellbeing approaches to ensure sustainability of the programme and maximum impact.
- Map the support, skills, and expertise that different partners and stakeholders can offer
- Develop a project plan, timeline, and resource requirements.
- Identify and secure a location(s) for Forest/Mini forests.
- Identify and support accredited learning and development opportunities for young people participating in the development of the Forest.
- Consult and engage with young people to capture their vision of the Forest.



## Forming Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel

Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland hosted a co-design session with young people to scope and set out their vision for a young people's forest.

### Young people said the project should be:

- ✓ Led by young people who are involved in decision making at every stage.
- ✓ Co-designed with young people and supported by experts and stakeholders.
- ✓ Future-proofed, sustainable, and have succession planning so that it is always led by young people.

To ensure this was possible, Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel was formed.

Recruitment launched in February 2021 running until 14th March 2021. Over 80 applications were received.

### Demographic Information of Applicants

- ✓ Young people applying ranged in age from 11 to 25 years old.
- ✓ 65% identified as female and 33% identified as male. 2% preferred not to say.
- ✓ 12% of applicants disclosed a condition, illness, or disability.
- ✓ 4% disclosed they had additional support needs.
- ✓ Over 90% of applicants identified as White Scottish or White British. Other applicants identified as:
  - Caribbean/Caribbean Scottish/Caribbean British
  - Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups (please specify):
  - Black/Black Scottish/Black British
  - African/African Scottish/African British
  - Egyptian/ Scottish
  - Italian
  - European

- ✓ 2% of applicants were care experienced.
- ✓ Almost 58% of applicants were in school. 3.5% in college and 14% in university. 3.5% were currently volunteering or in internships. 10.5% were in full time education. 3.5% were in part-time education. 1.8% were not in employment, education, or training.
- ✓ 47% identified as heterosexual/straight, 14% bisexual and 5% lesbian. 4% stated 'something else'. 18% preferred not to say.
- ✓ 2% identified as transgender.
- ✓ 60% stated they had no religious beliefs. 18% were Christian. 2% were Sikh. 15% identified as agnostic. 4% preferred not to say.
- ✓ 22.5% of applicants lived in areas identified as SIMD quintiles 1 and 2.

Applicants were invited to take part in a selection session held online on 20 March 2021 in which 40 applicants took part.

Following this session, 15 young people were appointed to the Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel and inducted onto the project in April 2021. Due to some drop-off in engagement from members of the panel, a period of re-recruitment was carried out in August 2021. We reached out to a small number of young people who applied during the recruitment in March 2021 and 5 joined the existing group members.

## Meet Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel:



### “ Aidan

I think it's immensely valuable to have young people co-designing projects for not only young people now but the young people of the future; I think the project demonstrates this exactly. The project brings together a number of important areas including environment, skills and employment, all very important for our futures.



### “ Ben

I want to be involved so that people could be in our forest that we are going to make and relax and embrace nature, I think it is important for young people to go outside and get some fresh air.





# Elsie

“

This project is so important to me because I have always loved being in nature and had such a wonderful experience, I hope that other young people can enjoy it too!

”



# Nelly

“

I am interested in creating safe spaces that are centred around care. In the queer community, people tend to move to cities, especially big cities. So, I am excited to see what spaces we can create with the young people's forest and how we can create spaces where we can nurture and rebuild relationships between people and land.

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✓ **Aidan**, 17, Stirling

✓ **Amy**, 18, Glasgow

✓ **Ben**, 13, Dumfries

✓ **Corey**, 18, Aberdeen

✓ **Dee**, 21, Falkirk

✓ **Elsie**, 13, North Berwick

✓ **Emily**, 23, Edinburgh

✓ **Emma**, 24, Edinburgh

✓ **Erin**, 17, Falkirk

✓ **Finlay**, 23, Edinburgh

✓ **Francess**, 21, Paisley

✓ **Heather**, 22, Edinburgh

✓ **Hong Lin**, 21, Glasgow

✓ **Josh**, 17, Inverness

✓ **Josie**, 26, Lochinver

✓ **Katherine**, 16, Aberdeen

✓ **Nelly**, 26, Edinburgh

✓ **Nina**, 12, Ayr

✓ **Rosanna**, 26, Glasgow

✓ **Tasha**, 13, Dumfries

## Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland Delivery Team

Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland recruited a team of six staff to support the young people.

A Co-design Manager to manage the delivery of work for Young Scot, Project Manager for YouthLink Scotland, a Co-design Assistant to ensure effective communication among young people, staff, partners and advisors, a Partnership Officer to create, grow and build relationships with a range of partners and sector-wide advisors, a Co-design Officer to work directly with and support the young people in the creation and development of the forest project and a Development Officer to create opportunities for training and accredited learning, to communicate the project to the youthwork sector and identify connections to wider education initiatives and policy areas in Scotland.

- /// **Euan Platt**, Co-design Manager, Young Scot
- /// **Jenni Snell**, Senior Development Officer, YouthLink Scotland
- /// **Sarah O'Hare**, Partnership Officer, Young Scot
- /// **Roxie Davies**, Co-design Officer, Young Scot
- /// **Alyn Jones**, Participation Officer, YouthLink Scotland
- /// **Amy Drummond**, Co-design Assistant, Young Scot





## National Expert Advisory Panel

Recognising the complexity of a project as innovative and ambitious as Scotland's Young People's Forest a National Expert Advisory panel, consisting of experts from a wide range of organisations specialising in forestry, the natural environment and business, was formed.

The role of this group is to inform and advise Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel, offer insight, expertise and share knowledge to inform the co-design of the forest.

The Expert Advisory Group meet every two months - three sessions have been held so far.



### Organisations represented on the Expert Advisory Group are:

- Accenture
- Cairngorms National Park
- Corra Foundation
- Forestry and Land Scotland
- Institute of Chartered Foresters
- John Muir Trust
- Keep Scotland Beautiful
- Scottish Land Commission
- NatureScot
- Pears Foundation
- RSPB
- Scottish Enterprise
- The Tree Council
- Wood PLC
- Scottish Forestry
- The Woodland Trust

### National Expert Advisory Panel Meetings

Between August – December three Expert Advisory Meetings were delivered. At each of these meetings the panel of experts were given an update on the project as well as asked key questions about the process.

The August meeting discussed expectations of the Advisory Group, how each organisation can support the young people and what the Young People's Forest could do for them.

The group offered a range of support including assisting with land and forestry skills, accredited training and webinars, site visits, information on land rights and responsibilities, promotion of the project and potential employment opportunities for young people and sites for the forest. The organisations involved were also keen to embed young people's views in their strategies with a clear understanding of the mutual benefit of being part of the project. This meeting led to two expert-led sessions in September and October, one in-person site visit with Scottish Forestry at Nethercroy Forest and another with Scottish Land Commission that explored land ownership models in Scotland.

The October meeting updated the Advisory group on objectives the young people had come up with and asked for their feedback and any opportunities their organisation could provide.

### Objective 1:

**We will manage and regenerate various areas of land as forest sanctuaries for Native Scottish Wildlife.**

For this objective, there was advice to start with an existing area of woodland that had been neglected, to make it better for nature and people and expand over time, rather than starting with a large area of woodland. There was also an emphasis on the need to do a survey of the current wildlife and habitats before deciding what management to undertake, for example if we were to plant new species, some native wildlife may be impacted. There was an understanding that we need to embed a management plan which collected a baseline data collection, targets, actions to achieve targets and then a monitoring and evaluation. This will be supported by the Advisory Panel organisations and has started in May 2022 now sites have been selected.



## Objective 2:

**We will create outdoor spaces for young people to reconnect with nature and build places to enjoy for their own health and wellbeing**

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The key feedback for this objective was the recognition that it won't just be young people who benefit from the forest, and when exploring the future of the Young People's Forest we need to outline what it is that benefits young people specifically. There were opportunities around developing young people's environmental skills and having spaces that supported young people and their mental health. The panel advised that it was important to connect young people to nature near them and not just the core forest. This led to discussions about how the core forest can be an example for young people and they can take learning back to their own communities of young people. This idea was later developed into the option of having multiple sites, including partnership sites, emphasising Scotland's Young People's Forest as a movement.

## Objective 3:

**We will create welcoming forested places that are inviting and accessible.**

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The Advisory Group advised that we would need a health and safety role, who was responsible for the maintenance of the structures we installed. Equally, the importance of an engagement role was highlighted, who could reach underrepresented communities. The tree species themselves are important to consider as thick conifer species can be uninviting and scary for some young people.

The importance of integrating into existing 'Rights of Way' was highlighted, selecting a site that easy to reach by public transport and has established links and communities. This was also a key finding in the consultation and has been a focus of the site search.



## Objective 4:

**We will create inspiring spaces for young people to explore the connectedness of natural and cultural heritage through arts and technology both ancient and modern.**

As this objective is quite broad, there were lots of opportunities from a range of partners - linking with historical re-enactment and teaching groups, as well as Tree Council Beacon schools and Scottish Environment Link. Ideas such as an app to use as a learning link for those visiting the forest and exploring the use of technology in forests was highlighted.

## Objective 5:

**We will enable and empower other young people to take action on the climate and nature emergency.**

For this objective, the key advice was about clarity and defining exactly our expectations of young people, partners, and the forest itself.

There was emphasis on being as clear as possible about how to account for carbon and being clear about our adaptation and resilience needs of the forest. Prioritising budget for green skills with clear outcomes is necessary if we are wanting young people to adequately meet this objective, and sourcing opportunities for them to achieve it such as providing them a directory of woodland engagement opportunities in Scotland.

The Advisory Group were also updated on COP26 plans, as well as the launch of the public consultation. The December meeting reflected on COP26 and shared the results of the consultation.

The Advisory Group praised the achievements made at COP26 and spoke of the value of having images of SYPF at COP26. The goal was to continue this momentum and consider how to continue to inform and encourage young people to get involved with the project.

Taking into consideration risks and responsibilities we agreed to proceed with a Partnership Ownership model.

It was agreed that land ownership is not necessarily the best route for Scotland's Young People's Forest and that a robust partnership with an organisation is a more favourable option. From this advice, two potential partnership sites were identified with RSPB and Cashel Forest Trust, as well as the four Scottish Enterprise sites.

In further discussions with the Advisory Group about plans for the second phase we asked for advice on budgeting.

One of the most significant budget considerations for this phase was the commissioning of an agent with responsibility for working with young people to create a 10 year woodland management plan including monitoring and evaluation.



# Project Delivery




Throughout 2021 and into early 2022 Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel, supported by Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland, have been exploring what it means to create a forest

The group are being led through Young Scot's YSHive process which harnesses our fantastic blend of skills and expertise in youth engagement, citizen involvement, service design and systems theory in our four-stage process to co-design solutions to key issues for young people.



**Timeline of Activity:**

**Explore Phase:  
June – August 2021**

-  4 x Digital SYPF Explore Sessions
-  Recruitment Selection Day
-  Digital Session with Impact Arts

Within the explore phase the panel created their objectives and the co-designed project plan with key priorities and a timeline. The young people prepared for their first meeting with our partnership organisation Impact Arts and developed the national public consultation.





**Create Phase:  
September – November 2021**

-  3 x Digital SYPF Create Sessions
-  Digital Session with Scottish Land Commission
-  2 x In-Person Sessions (Forestry Scotland Site Visit, COP26 Meet Up)
-  5 x External COP26 Opportunities (Blue Zone, Green Zone, NYT Climate Hub, Milan Youth Summit, Force for Nature Climate Festival)

Within the create phase the panel launched their public consultation after first assessing it for accessibility. They also established ways to promote the survey, discussed the use of running focus groups, visited Nethercroy Forest with Forestry Scotland to learn about site management techniques, created and developed a logo for the project, met digitally with Scottish Land Commission to learn about various land ownership models, had co-design planning sessions for the event at the COP26 Broomielaw site and created prototypes for the forest (shown on page 15).




**Disrupt Phase:  
December 2021 – March 2022**

-  5 x Digital SYPF Disrupt Sessions
-  2 Day Residential Weekend

Within the disrupt phase the panel used their prototypes and objectives to assess the 6 site options from Scottish Enterprise, RSPB and Cashel Forest Trust.



**Act Phase:  
March – April 2022**

-  2 x Digital SYPF Act Sessions

Within the act phase the panel met to plan a meeting with Cashel Trust and RSPB to find out more about the sites on offer - they then hosted a session with these two organisations.

## Key Activity

### Digital Sessions

#### SYPF Panel Meetings

From June 2021 to April 2022, the panel participated in 17 online sessions, a forest visit, a full day workshop, several external COP26 opportunities and a two-day residential. Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, most panel sessions in 2021 were held online.

#### Advisory Group Sessions

**Our Expert Explore sessions are an opportunity for the young people to hear one or multiple perspectives on Forestry from an organisation. Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel are now taking these perspectives, and using the YSHive Model, digging deeper into the issues to discover what they want Scotland's Young People's Forest to be.**

Scottish Land Commission, September 2021

**SLC delivered an Expert Explore Session discussing various ownership models and case studies for the panel to consider in relation to their own forest and the most appropriate model to choose.**

RSBP Barons Haugh and Cashel  
Forest Trust, April 2022

These organisations came in to deliver an hour session each with the young people to answer any questions they had and to establish what a partnership would look like between our project and these organisations.



### In Person Sessions

#### Nethercroy Forest Visit, September 2021

As a result of the lifting of certain COVID-19 restrictions, the panel were able to hold their first in-person meeting on Saturday 4th September 2021, at Nethercroy woodlands in Croy.

At this gathering, the Panel were able to explore nature on a walking tour of the forest led by two members from Forestry Scotland. The Panel were able to discuss different topics surrounding management of the land including multipurpose forestry, forest management, the history of the land and how this has impacted its species. This time spent engaging directly in and with nature helped the Panel to visualise different uses of land which they might want to consider in the development of the forest whilst receiving expert advice to inform them.

### **SYPF at COP26, November 2021**

The panel took part in five COP26 events and spent a full weekend in Glasgow across the weekend experiencing the buzz of the conference and attending the People's Summit in Glasgow Green. The panel members promoted the project with the aim of inspiring further youth-led conservation projects across the weekend of November 6th/7th. They planned and developed an event at the Broomielaw Sustainable Landing Site with Glasgow City Council. At this event they were due to interview young people from YMCA, as well as visitors to the space, and make Seed Bombs to draw people in and share the story of the project. Due to weather conditions the event was cancelled, but the young people were able to take their planning and knowledge to the People's Summit in Glasgow Green.

On the Sunday 9th November members of the panel attended the New York Times Climate Hub where Three members of the panel got the opportunity to speak at the hub with the Children's Parliament and YMCA, discussing the Young People's Forest and the importance of youth-led climate initiatives. This panel was broadcasted on the NYT website with people dialling from all over COP26 to engage with the young people on this panel. Other members of the panel attended the day and were able to participate in a full day of events that tackled the climate crisis. Two young people also attended the COP26 Green Zone, where they attended two events. They saw a short animation film inspired by COP26 and spoke to the illustrator afterwards. They also attended an inspiring Question Time event with leaders in the climate movement.

One young person was also given the opportunity to speak in the COP26 Blue Zone with NatureScot. Emma discussed the project to official COP26 delegates from around the world and was able to gain a global incite to the project receiving questions from delegates from Malawi and France. Emma then participated in an NatureScot podcast about the event, and a blog that can be found on the [Young Scot Website](#).

Three young people were invited take part in the COP26 All4Climate Milan Youth Summit, the young people designed and delivered an hour-long workshop that delivered information on how to create tangible change in your local communities.

One young person delivered a speech at the Force for Nature Climate Festival discussing the SYPF project and how it is empowering young people to be a force for nature with a Q&A at the end.





### **Broomlee two-day Residential, March 2022**

Over the weekend of the 12th and 13th March 2022, the panel met up for their first residential at Broomlee Outdoor Centre. They conducted in-depth research on the potential sites and discussed them with representatives from the National Advisory Group. On the Saturday the young people met at the centre to consider each of the possible sites and ensure they knew everything they could about these sites, including drafting questions to ask the advisory group. The young people also took part in a forest bathing session that encouraged them to take in their surroundings through all their senses. The young people said that it left them feeling 'peaceful', 'relaxed' and 'in touch with their environment'. That evening they also had the opportunity to plant some native Scottish trees - a taster of what is to come in future stages of the project.

On Sunday the young people presented a session on the potential sites and forest prototypes to Advisory Group members. They received valuable advice and information from the group. The young people were joined by Scottish Land Commission, Scottish Forestry, Forestry and Land Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful and Corra Foundation. Here is a [link](#) to a video of some interviews with the young people and the advisory group.

### **Consultation Survey**

To engage with a wider cohort, and to inform the work of the Panel, the panel designed and delivered a National Consultation Survey. The consultation aimed to understand how other young people in Scotland felt about the Scotland's Young People's Forest project and to gather their opinions on some of the major decisions the project needs to make.

The consultation was launched on the 20th of September 2021 and ran for 5 weeks, closing on the 24th of October 2021.



It consisted of 13 questions which aimed to collect a mixture of quantitative and qualitative answers. Most quantitative questions were multiple choice to encourage as many thoughts and opinions as possible.

A total of 147 young people responded to the survey. The results were analysed in November 2021. A full report can be read here: [SYPF National Consultation Report 2022](#). From the responses, the Panel were able to identify key priorities for the forest's location, size, make up and use.

### **Developing Forest Prototypes**

To summarise the work the Panel have done so far for this project, they developed several detailed forest prototypes to steer the next phase of the project and to help the young people to envision exactly what they are hoping the forest will look like. These prototypes were then designed by professional illustrators for future use as shown below.





## Outcomes

Across the first year of Scotland's Young People's Forest Activity, a lot has been achieved.

Across the first year of Scotland's Young People's Forest Activity, a lot has been achieved.

Bringing together the Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel was a key moment, ensuring that from the beginning young people were leading, informing, challenging, and shaping the very foundations of this work. The impact the young people have already made on the project, the partners, and organisations they have engaged with, and wider audiences connected with has been a powerful demonstration of what happens when young people are decision makers.

The Panel's relationship with the National Advisory Group has gone from strength to strength. This group performs a vital role in providing expert insight, supportive critical challenge, and important connections for the young people, whilst recognising the young people's role leading this work. The National Advisory Group will remain crucial to future phases of activity, as the young people refine their ideas and make significant decisions about sites, land and ownership/management approaches. The young people begin to draw more on specific expertise around the table to support their next steps.

The Panel is now beginning to have a more focused idea of what they would like Scotland's Young People's Forest to be and how they hope the people of Scotland will engage with it. Their work in prototyping ideas is informing the next steps proposed by the project.

The identification of potential sites, and the exercise of critiquing these and testing their suitability has been a key step in the project. The young people have embraced the technical challenges in understanding the viability of potential sites and remain focused on ensuring the correct site is identified to meet their vision for the forest. This process will continue into the next phase.



## Partnership Work

Key connections have been made with a range of organisations in Scotland and partnerships have been strengthened.

### Quotes from partners:

**"As a conservation charity dedicated to the experience, protection and repair of wild places, the John Muir Trust is committed to inspiring people and communities to enjoy the benefits of getting involved in managing and caring for natural systems. We love the fact that Scotland's Young People's Forest matches this commitment to empower young people to take social action for the environment"**

- John Muir Trust

**"We're excited that young people are really at the heart of this forest; not only is the project bringing people closer to nature, it is sending a message that the natural world is important to young people, that there is a want to protect it and enjoy it for generations to come. It gives hope."**

- RSPB

**"As the professional body for people who have made trees and forestry their career, the Institute of Chartered Foresters is excited to support this great initiative to inspire and engage the younger generation. We're sure that many participants will discover that they have the passion and interest to join our planet-saving, life-enhancing profession – and we'll be support them when they do."**

- Institute of Chartered Foresters

**"An innovative, exciting, inspirational project led and developed by the young people of Scotland for the betterment of their local and wider environment, all while developing knowledge, skills, and experience for life – Woodland Trust Scotland feel privileged to play a role in this."**

- Woodland Trust

**"I have seen first-hand the ideas, energy and commitment of young people transform a disused open cast mine into a forest for the whole community. To have the chance to be involved in a similar project in Scotland, alongside such strong partners, is very exciting and a real pleasure. We look forward to seeing what the panel achieve in the coming years."**

- Sir Trevor Pears CMG, Executive Chair, Pears Foundation

New organisations connected with include Scottish Canals, YMCA, Community Woodland's Association, Cashel Forest Trust, Scottish Forestry, Nourish, Wood for Good and National Nature Service. The young people have helped to generate wide ranging interest in Scotland's Young People's Forest that has provided a number of opportunities and possible route for exploring new partnerships.

## Impact

The project has had a significant impact on the young people involved.

Young people identified at the beginning of the process that they would like to improve their public speaking and presenting skills, research, confidence, influencing and teamwork. Throughout the project the young people gave feedback on what they had learnt in each session including how to “research”, “more about teamwork and working together” having the confidence to “give my opinion more” and that they get to “express ideas independently” of staff and adults. The young people shared their experiences of the project in this video.



The project has provided the Panel members with several opportunities to try new things, meet new people and engage in high-level events. This blog, from one of the Panel gives insight into the role she played as part of the Milan Youth Summit.



### Blog: SYPF Panel Member Emma on Attending the Milan Youth Summit

Scotland's Young Person's Forest panel member Emma shares her experience of being at the Milan Youth Summit alongside three other panel volunteers. Emma and the team shared individual, local and national ways that young people can make a difference in the climate crisis. In this blog, Emma reflects on how the workshop went and key takeaways.

Solving the climate crisis requires us to strive to be better, not only as individuals but as communities, nations and most importantly citizens of planet earth. At the Milan Youth Summit, the Young People's Forest came together to deliver this message to a group of individuals from around the globe. We looked at individual action in the form of sustainable investing and consumer choices; local action, where we spoke about seed swaps and community food growing and lastly, national action with the example of the Young People's Forest, what it is and how we can encourage similar initiatives.

It was important to us (as facilitators of this workshop) that we created an environment for individuals to share new ideas and we wanted each person attending to come away with a new positive action they would be able to implement in their own life.

From sustainable travel (flying less, using public transport), to eco consumption (book swaps, reusable containers, and plastic-free packaging) the discussion and ideas seemed limitless. Our word cloud at the end looked to measure these new thoughts, demonstrating the impact and strength of new people coming together to share ideas, expertise, and experience.

We even came together to discuss our legacy as young people, so I want to touch briefly on the key themes that came out of this and articulate our mission statement for the future as young people:

**"As young people we strive to make a difference to the climate crisis in an inclusive and positive way. We want marginalised voices to be at the heart of the conversation and want to hold governments, corporates, and individuals accountable for lack of action. This goes beyond COP 26 and requires climate consciousness to be embedded in society at a grassroots level"**

We look forward to expanding on and fulfilling this legacy going forward – starting with our Young People's Forest!

**Impact Report 2022 – One-to-one interviews**

To understand the impact of participating on the Scotland's Young Peoples Forest project and the views of the young people involved on the project, Young Scot conducted one-to-one qualitative interviews with seven members of the current panel. There were seven questions in total covering topics such as how participation in this project has impacted the

young people and gathering their views on how this project could influence the current climate emergency. Understanding the impact that Young Scot projects have on our young people is crucial to current and future panels, and helps to inform how Young Scot, as an organisation, can have the biggest positive impact.

**Quotes from the young people:**

**"I think I've gained confidence in terms of I've actually thought about the decision that I want to make, and I present it, before the project I might just splurt out any decision that I think would be best, but I've actually listened to everyone, and it may be the case that is the same decision as you think."**

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**"I'm certainly learning to trust my opinions a bit more and going with my gut, and I feel that's kind of helped because I would find it quite difficult otherwise, I feel this is quite a safe environment, I'm allowed to voice my own opinions and actually, I'm allowed to stand up for myself as well, which I have learned to do a bit more."**

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**"I think it's made me more confident, speaking out in front of a decently sized crowd of people, because I used to not be able to speak in front of crowds because, that many people are watching you and it's quite tense. I speak up a bit more in class now, at school and say more answers, than when I first started."**

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## Case Study: Impact Arts - Creative Pathways

Keen to explore innovative ways of connecting young people to nature and engage with and learn from young people who don't normally spend time in forests, the project supported Impact Arts to deliver their Creative Pathways programme with unemployed young people around the theme of Scotland's Young People's Forest.

Impact Arts is a forward-thinking arts organisation which tackles inequalities in Scotland through creative engagement. They consider the arts as a positive tool for change –helping people to build confidence, attain new skills, get back into work or education, source work in the creative arts, enjoy better health or improve quality of life.

The project helped to facilitate co-learning with Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel to demonstrate how the arts and creativity can educate, engage and excite young people about the forest.

Aileen Lynn, the Programme Manager, joined Scotland's Young People's Panel at a digital explore session in September to talk about Impact Arts and support the panel to identify accessibility and engagement issues that might come up during the creation of their own forest.

Creative Pathways brought artists, (for engagement and therapeutic activities) and Youth Workers, (for pastoral support, guidance & signposting), together in a circle of support and activities to achieve multiple strong outcomes for young people.

Over the course of 12 weeks, 6 unemployed young people engaged in a full-time creative project based around the theme of the Young People's Forest. They spent one day a week in Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock, creating

artworks with natural resources, volunteering with helping to plant trees, tackling vandalism by clearing areas that had been destroyed or damaged, discussing how the park is used and by who, and going on walks to learn more about the forest's history and wildlife from the Park Rangers. The young people on the Creative Pathways course were supported to create new artworks and installations inspired by and within a local forest. Hong Lin, a panel member from the Young People's Forest Panel was able to attend the celebration event in December and speak with the Creative Pathways members directly about their experiences on the course.

The aim of this activity was to demonstrate to Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel the capacity for the planned forest to be a place for developing employability skills, for education, for therapeutic creative activities, for sharing learning and for engaging with others in performances.

The timing of Creative Pathways was aligned to allow for work to link to COP26.

As well as informing the Panel of ways art and creativity can be embedded with a forest as a tool to engage young people, this activity enabled the participants to gain SQA Steps to Work qualification and provide them with a positive progression through creative workshops. As part of the course the participants also took part in other sessions around team building, improving confidence & motivation, gaining effective & appropriate communication skills. Participants were also given the opportunity to update CV's, learn about employer expectations, gain interview skills & look for progression opportunities individually with tutor help. The report for the project can be found [here](#).





**Planning for next phase/years**

Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland are currently developing plans for the next phase of Scotland's Young People's Forest activity.

Phase two of the project would cover the period April 2022 – March 2024, with four key strands of work identified:

- /// Youth leadership
- /// Partnerships
- /// Upskilling and engaging the youth work sector
- /// Site preparation

**1. Youth leadership**

Young Scot, with support from YouthLink Scotland, will continue to work alongside the national leadership panel of young people. Using their proven #YSHive co-design process, the programme will be created in partnership with the young people, but is envisioned to include the activities detailed below.

**Year one activity:**

- /// Deepen their learning of forestry sector in Scotland, with site visits to forests, nature reserves and community projects to explore the full range of forestry in Scotland (RSPB Reserves, Woodland Trust, Borders Forest Trust)
- /// Increase their understanding of biodiversity and tree species native to Scotland
- /// Learn about sustainable management techniques
- /// Explore land rights and responsibilities in Scotland
- /// Consider active travel and accessibility in relation to forest location and design
- /// Write and publish blogs and social media posts to capture the project as it progresses
- /// Record regular updates to highlight personal development and learning
- /// Design a range of resources for young people to learn about forestry and conservation

**Year two activity:**

- /// Connect with and learn from other community forestry and conservation initiatives across Scotland through site visits and guest presentations at online sessions
- /// Evaluate existing community forestry initiatives from a young person's lens
- /// Review and reflect on Scotland's Forestry Strategy and identify opportunities for greater youth participation
- /// Continue to raise the profile of the project by speaking at relevant events and meetings
- /// Take part in and promote tree planting and other conservation opportunities for young people

**As the site is secured, the panel will be involved in:**

- /// Working closely with project partners to co-design a community consultation and impact assessment, woodland management plan, and biodiversity strategy and monitoring plan for the forest
- /// Researching the history of the area and creating accessible resources for young people
- /// Designing opportunities for young people to learn about the biodiversity of the forest in engaging and innovative ways

An external evaluator will also be contracted to gather quantitative and qualitative evidence over the two years, to demonstrate the impact of the project on panel members, local community groups and organisations, and national conservation partners over the two years of phase two.

## 2. Partnerships

YouthLink Scotland and Young Scot will jointly deliver the activities of strand two. The SYPF National Advisory Group will continue to play an important role, but as the site is identified, the project will also look towards developing strong local partnerships to ensure wider community buy-in. This will involve developing and supporting small scale youth projects in the area to engage young people locally and foster genuine community ownership of the forest.

### Year one activity:

- ✓ Quarterly National Advisory Group meetings to ensure all stakeholders are updated and the young people's panel have regular access to advice and guidance
- ✓ Ongoing meetings with existing and potential national partners to build awareness of the project and to increase support

### Year two activity:

- ✓ As the site is secured, hold a range of local partnership meetings (local authority, health board, community planning partnerships) with the aim of establishing a project specific community forum
- ✓ Targeted youth and community work in the local area to connect young people and organisations to the project and forest
- ✓ Continued work with the National Advisory Group, developing subgroups to focus on specific topics, such as biodiversity, community engagement, forest management.

## 3. Upskilling and engaging the youth work sector

YouthLink Scotland, with support from Young Scot, will explore how SYPF can be utilised as a national resource and learning opportunity for young people and youth groups.

### Year one activity:

- ✓ Work with five youth organisations across Scotland to explore current youth work practice around conservation, habitat and biodiversity loss and identify any gaps in resources / capacity.
- ✓ Develop a 'Young People's Forest' youth work toolkit with the national leadership panel and the five youth organisations as a capacity building resource for the wider youth work sector, connected to the Youth Work Skills Framework.
- ✓ Build youth workers capacity & awareness around green skills and employability for young people through training, resources and guidance connected to the creation and development of the Young People's Forest.

### Year two activity:

- ✓ Work with the youth work sector to develop pre-visit, visit and post visit resources to the Young People's Forest site.
- ✓ Create volunteering and youth engagement opportunities for youth work organisations to access as part of the forest creation e.g. tree planting, biodiversity blitz etc.
- ✓ Create new opportunities and continue to connect youth organisations to green employability pathways through the Young People's Forest.

Engagement with National Youth Work organisations, Local Authority Youth Work partners and local voluntary youth groups will be core to Strand Two: Partnerships as the site is identified and developed.

#### 4. Site Preparation

Young Scot and Youthlink Scotland will identify and secure a third project partner or external consultant within the first few months of phase two. Their role will include:

- Approaching public bodies, organisations and other landowners to identify possible sites which meet the needs of the SYPF (continued from phase 1)
- Research different ownership models based on the sites identified and shortlisted (continued from phase 1)
- Investigate planning permission considerations for shortlisted sites (starting in phase 2)
- Meeting with the national leadership panel every 6-8 weeks (starting in phase 2)

#### Once the site has been identified:

- Work with the national panel to develop community consultation and impact assessment
- Develop a woodland management plan for the site
- Research available grants and funding (such as Scottish Forestry Grant Schemes) to support the planting/development costs
- Research transport partnerships and active travel options to the site
- Prepare paperwork for planning permission for on-site building
- Investigate income generation options



# Annex 1

## Mission Statement

The original Vision for the Scotland's Young People's Forest, as set out in the Prospectus was:

**"...for Scotland to have a young people's forest which is co-designed, created, curated, and governed by young Scots."**

The young people on the Panel came together and discussed what, from their perspective, the forest ought to be.

They wanted to "commit spaces in Scotland to be green multi-species habitats, where young people and nature alike can spend time", that it could become "a young and/or modern future for greenspaces throughout Scotland", "a safe place where people can go for relaxation and a place for rethinking" and that around this forest could grow "a supportive, accessible and understanding community where we can teach, learn and grow from the environment around us".

The group created a Mission Statement to explain who they are and what they aim to do. They said: "We will work to create and regenerate native Scottish forest to combat the current climate emergency: promoting, connecting, and celebrating access for all, education, wildlife, wilderness, and wellbeing. " From this mission statement, they've identified six focus areas for their work:

- Land use
- Health and wellbeing
- Biodiversity and nature
- Equality and accessibility
- Culture and innovation
- Young people

The group then set about discussing how each of these key areas would be impacted by the creation or regeneration of forest in Scotland and how they would



## Objectives

The Panel also developed objectives, which will be revisited and adapted as the project evolves:

### Objective 1:

**We will manage and regenerate various areas of land as forest sanctuaries for native Scottish wildlife.**

Rural or urban the group want to restore, regenerate, and rewild areas of land and create new plantations for carbon sequestration, but it must also be to the benefit of the wider native biodiversity. .

### Objective 2:

**We will create outdoor spaces for people to reconnect with nature: places to enjoy for their own health and wellbeing or to share with others**

Scotland's Young People's Forest will be a place where people and nature share the space. A variety of activities will be available to support mental health and well-being. It will be a place to feel safe with others. A place to be, to share and to enjoy.

### Objective 3:

**We will manage and restore native wildlife and reconnect people with their natural heritage.**

The group understand that forests are dynamic ecosystems and will endeavour to impact native species by creating new or managing older habitat. They also agree that teaching and educating people on local wildlife is imperative and therefore they will restore native biodiversity and reconnect people with their native natural heritage.

### Objective 4:

**We will create welcoming forested places that are inviting and accessible for everyone.**

Scotland's Young People's Forest will be a space that is welcoming and accessible to all. It may be that technology would be helpful and a variety of languages inc. Gaelic used throughout. The group are committed to the forest as a place for everyone and aim to encourage people, from all walks of life, who might not normally engage with nature to come and experience the benefits of being in the wild outdoors.

### **Objective 5:**

**We will create inspiring natural spaces for people to explore the connectedness of natural and cultural heritage through arts and technology both ancient and modern.**

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One of the aims of the forest is that it would not only revive the land but the culture that is attached to it. The forest can be an inspiring space for the arts and explore heritage, culture and arts, perhaps even mythology and folklore. It should be a space for people in the arts to find inspiration and space to work.

### **Objective 5:**

**We will enable and empower other young people to take action on issues of climate change and environmental concern.**

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This project is built to empower young people enabling them to make a physical difference on climate change. The group believe young people are underrepresented in decision making in society and this project puts young people at the heart of that process. It will create experiences for those involved and enable members in the future, building a project that has a long-term environmental benefit but also developing confidence, skill and knowledge in the participants.





**For more information about any aspect of the work detailed in this update, or Scotland's Young People's Forest please contact:**

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