

Background

The [UK Forestry Standard](#) (UKFS) acknowledges that consideration should be given to the preservation and enhancement of cultural and historic landscapes when designing new woodlands.¹ It is important that all significant heritage features and not just designated ones are protected during forestry operations.

A summary of what forest and woodland managers should consider in relation to the historic environment is to be found in [Forests and historic environment: information and advice](#). Specifically, reference should be made to the [Historic Environment Resource Guide for Forest and Woodland Managers in Scotland](#) which provides a route map to available information and advice, primarily in support of the UKFS Requirements and Guidelines for Forests and Historic Environment. This note builds on Section 4; Gathering New Information of that resource guide.

Rig and furrow are a series of ridges (rigs), separated by furrows, formed by ploughing or in some instances by spade. Descriptions of both prehistoric field systems and medieval and later field systems can be found on pages 18-19 of the Practice Guide [Identifying the historic environment in Scotland's woodlands and forests](#).

Due diligence

Consideration of the historic environment must precede any new planting on an area of ground previously unplanted with trees. However, there are levels of response appropriate to different conditions:

- In unimproved upland areas (and areas with a high density of archaeological features previously recorded), a professional archaeological survey may be required. It is likely that a *comprehensive prospective archaeological survey* will be required in open moorland or previously unimproved areas.
- In lowland areas previously under an improved agricultural regime (i.e. intensively ploughed) a desk based assessment and a walk over survey by the applicant may suffice.

Evidence of rig and furrow would indicate that the area should be considered as being unimproved and therefore may require a comprehensive prospective archaeological survey.

Assessment – Identify known or potential sites through examining existing records. [Canmore](#) is a public archive and online database, compiled and held by Historic Environment Scotland (HES). It forms a record of the historic environment in Scotland and provides an online searchable tool, which provides access to the information held in the National Record of the Historic Environment.

Areas of rig and furrow are identified in the HES Historic Land-use Assessment <https://hlamap.org.uk/> most easily identified as relict landscapes (areas where there remains visual evidence of a previous land-use) using the **By Land Use, Past** layers.

Local groups, such as historical societies or museums can also be particularly valuable sources of information and advice.

¹ UKFS Requirements for Forestry and Historic Environment - Good forestry practice requirement 12

[Managing the historic environment case study – Archaeological survey and woodland establishment on Ulva](#) describes best practice archaeological evaluation to inform a woodland creation scheme. It demonstrates how the predictive and protective archaeological survey and record of the historic environment (including rig and furrow) enabled significant archaeology to be protected and features of lesser importance to be incorporated within the planting scheme.

In the event an archaeological survey is required, it is essential this is undertaken by an accredited historic environment professional, using a recognised survey methodology, for example, the relevant standard and guidance provided by the [Chartered Institute for Archaeologists](#). A desk-based assessment will determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent and significance of the rig and furrow within a specified area, and will enable reasoned proposals and decisions to be made whether to mitigate, offset or accept without further intervention that impact, or will identify the need for further evaluation to do so.

Stakeholder engagement – where a woodland creation proposal is likely to affect rig and furrow, applicants are advised to consider the significance of this at an early stage and seek expert advice. Engaging in pre-application discussion with the relevant [local authority archaeology service](#) will be helpful in identifying the level of information needed to support an application and in developing an understanding of the significance of the asset.

Understanding the nature of the significance by reference to National and Local Development Plan policies; the results of any desk-based assessment, walk over survey and field evaluation supplied by the applicant; and the curatorial advice supplied by the archaeology service is important to understanding the need for and best means of conservation.

Identify and protect important sites – you will need to gather and provide sufficient information to demonstrate that the woodland creation proposal will not have a significant impact. This should be included in your issues log along with evidence of stakeholder engagement and where appropriate any proposed mitigation.

Decision process

Scottish Forestry will expect any woodland creation application for consent to have followed the approach set out in this note and can provide feedback on the acceptability of any proposed design as the proposal is being developed.

References and further sources of information

<https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/forests-and-the-environment/historic-environment>

Guidelines for the Preservation of Areas of Rig and Furrow in Scotland Compiled by John Barber
Scottish Trust for Archaeological Research 2001 <http://www.startrust.org.uk/RIG%20AND%20FURROW-AF.PDF>