

Caledonian Pinewood Partnership Prospectus

Caledonian pinewoods

About 6,000 years ago an estimated 1.5 million hectares of Scotland was covered in rich native Caledonian Pinewood. Now less than 2% of this life-supporting habitat is left, fragmented down into small and isolated fragments.

Scotland's Caledonian Pinewoods are made up of 'wild trees'. These are Scots pines and other native species whose ancestry stretches back to the last ice age. This globally unique habitat can only be found in the Scottish Highlands. The pinewoods provide refuge for an abundance of rare and specialised species, from tiny lichens to charismatic capercaillie. They are culturally and historically important, having been shaped and valued by people for centuries.

Caledonian pinewood issues

Carried out over four years and with the active support and involvement of land managers and owners, the Caledonian Pinewood Recovery Project (managed by Trees for Life with support and steering from Forestry and Land Scotland, NatureScot, Scottish Forestry, Scottish Land and Estates and Woodland Trust Scotland) recorded the health and resilience of Scotland's last remaining pinewoods and identified the barriers to their recovery.

The project found that most Caledonian pinewoods lack key characteristics of health and resilience, leaving them unable to support important wildlife and vulnerable to climate breakdown. 23% of remaining Caledonian pinewoods are now critically threatened and will be lost without urgent action. The project found that:

1. High impacts from artificially large deer populations are the main barrier to recovery. Reducing these impacts at landscape-scale is key to securing healthy and resilient Caledonian pinewoods. Extending the effective lifespan of deer fences is an important interim measure.
2. Planted and invasive trees and shrubs threaten health and resilience in some Caledonian pinewoods. Removing these and completing programs of Ancient Woodland restoration across multiple landholdings would help improve health and resilience.
3. As refuges for wild trees, Caledonian pinewoods are best recovered through natural regeneration and expansion. This will help maintain genetic diversity, distinctiveness, and structural variability that contribute to the health, resilience, and character of Caledonian pinewoods.
4. Stakeholders should be supported to prioritise Caledonian pinewoods if they are to be recovered successfully. Building stronger relationships between stakeholders and aligning policy with required management would help achieve this.
5. Caledonian pinewoods are most threatened in the southwestern Highlands. Focusing recovery efforts there is key to improving the state of Caledonian pinewoods as a whole.

Intentions of the Partnership

Building on the results of the Caledonian Pinewood Recovery Project, it is proposed to form a cross-sector voluntary partnership of organisations that are committed to collaborative action for the benefit of Scotland's Caledonian pinewoods.

The partnership will be a coalition of the willing, who share the vision below, working together to achieve Caledonian pinewood recovery.

The partnership will not engage in political lobbying or petitioning, but membership of the partnership does not preclude individual partners and/or their representative organisations from doing so.

Vision for Caledonian pinewoods

In 100 years, the core Caledonian pinewoods will be flourishing and thriving ecosystems. Once-fragmented patches will have merged into continuous, resilient forests, with a diverse range of tree species, shrubs, and plants forming the foundation of life and contributing to the reversal of biodiversity decline in Scotland.

The forests will host a wider range of tree ages and structures through natural regeneration recruitment, support flourishing wildlife populations, and contribute to global biodiversity efforts. Rare and exceptional species will thrive creating an ecosystem that is stronger, healthier, and more resilient to future environmental changes.

These forests will be cherished not only for their beauty and biodiversity but also as a vital part of Scotland's natural heritage for generations to come. They will also provide nature-based solutions, mitigating climate change and reversing biodiversity loss.

Socio-economic benefits of pinewoods will be significant with them acting as important areas for appropriate recreation and enjoyment by people with greater integration of pinewoods with forestry and wider land management.

Medium-term aims for Caledonian pinewoods

By 2055, Caledonian pinewoods will have been restored to a better functioning and more resilient ecosystem because:

1. All existing Caledonian pinewood is in good condition:
 - Herbivore impacts are at a level at which the pinewoods can be sustained and regenerate .
 - They are free of invasive non-native species and biosecure.
 - All PAWS (Plantations on Ancient Woodland) sites are under active restoration for the benefit of Caledonian pinewood.
2. The overall area of Caledonian pinewoods will have doubled, primarily through expansion and connection of existing sites through natural regeneration.
3. Buffer zones will exist around core Caledonian pinewoods. Here INNs will be proactively excluded to protect the pinewood resource.

Partners recognise that Caledonian pinewoods:

- Are globally unique and host wildlife of international importance.
- Are experiencing loss of ecological condition and socio-economic value due to habitat degradation, loss and fragmentation arising from inappropriate grazing/browsing levels, the presence of invasive non-native species, non-native conifer plantations and through threats from climate change and tree disease.
- Have an important role to play in the economic and social development of local communities, and as such, pinewood restoration projects should embed commercial opportunities, including timber production, and community benefits within them from the start.
- Require restoration activities to be coordinated at landscape scale, involving multiple owners and managers, and to be adequately supported over the long-term.

The Caledonian Pinewood Partnership works to collate and agree an evidence base of the threats and impacts on Caledonian pinewoods. The partnership would use the findings from the Caledonian Pinewood Recovery Project as the starting point for that collective agreement.

Together, the partners will:

- Contribute to identify the threats and agree activity required to restore their pinewoods.
- Contribute to the delivery of a collaborative strategy to restore and expand Caledonian pinewoods.
- Share knowledge, experience and expertise to address threats and opportunities facing Caledonian pinewoods.
- Pursue collaborative opportunities where possible to fund and deliver projects to deliver the Caledonian Pinewood Partnership's vision, aim and strategy.
- Aspire to implement and promote agreed standards for pinewood management.
- Recognise and celebrate the long cultural connection between society and Scotland's pinewoods.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The partnership is made up of organisations that have signed up to this prospectus. If at any future date, due to a change in circumstances, any partner is no longer able to abide by this document, they would be expected to leave the partnership either voluntarily or following a resolution and majority vote of members at a partnership meeting.

This prospectus will be reviewed and amended in consultation with partner organisations as needed.

Partners are able to:

- Contribute freely to discussions and the development of agreed statements and documents on behalf of the partnership.
- Differences of opinion are recognised, and no-one is forced into activity they are unable or unwilling to do.
- Undertake any reasonable tasks agreed to by partnership to support it and to further its vision, aim and strategy.
- Promote the partnership and its aims within their own organisations and programmes as well as externally.

- Decide themselves whether and how they will support any statements or documents issued on behalf of the partnership.

Organisational leads for the partners of the partnership are expected to:

- Represent their organisation as a whole (not just their work area).
- Make an active contribution – e.g. by attending partnership meetings and relevant discussions; acting on or responding to update or consultation emails sent by the partnership team, linking their wider work with the Caledonian Pinewood Partnership as appropriate etc.
- Act as a conduit to the rest of their organisation – e.g. by sharing or gaining information or involving other colleagues in relevant discussions or actions.
- Ensure that their organisation’s staff, volunteers, supporters, campaigners etc. are informed about the Caledonian Pinewoods Partnership and its work and activities wherever and whenever possible.

Caledonian Pinewood Partnership governance

The partnership will work to an agreed framework, ideally being co-ordinated by a Project Manager, hosted by one of the partner organisations.

Key partners will be identified and sign a joint MoU committing them to drive forward the work of the partnership and therefore be accountable for ensuring the development and delivery of a collaborative strategy.

Full partnership meetings will take place at least twice a year. All organisation leads will be consulted on the date and invited to attend. Colleagues of organisation leads and representatives of other organisations who have an active role in delivering the Caledonian Pinewood Partnership strategy may also be invited.

Delivery/working groups may develop and deliver strands of work as part of the overall strategy. Each delivery/working group will have its own terms of reference stating the purpose of the group, principles it will work by, and the role of its members. Individuals who do not represent partner organisations may be co-opted onto working groups if they have a particular contribution to make and partnership members of the group agree.

Where work strands have been identified, relevant organisations will lead them on behalf of the partnership. They can make decisions on behalf of the partnership within their remit, with wider, timely consultation where necessary.

Communications

A shared communications protocol will be developed and, where possible, the partners should adhere to this. It will support Caledonian Pinewood Partnership organisations to have consistent external messaging and make the best use of their collective resource.

Partnership membership

New partners can be added at any time, subject to the process outlined below.

The Caledonian Pinewood Partnership is open to organisations that fulfil the following criteria:

1. The protection, restoration and expansion of Caledonian pinewoods is an organisational priority

2. They have nationwide representation of a particular sector or interest group that contributes towards the recovery of Caledonian pinewoods.

OR

They have a regional remit and play a leading and significant role in delivering against one or more of the objectives of the Caledonian Pinewood Partnership.

3. They are prepared to publicly promote their support for the partnership.
4. They agree with this prospectus.

PROCESS FOR JOINING THE CALEDONIAN PINEWOOD PARTNERSHIP

1. The reasons for joining are made clear in writing.
2. An initial assessment that applicants fit the criteria (see above) is made and a recommendation forwarded to the Steering Group.
3. The Steering Group agrees the applicant should join.
4. The applicant agrees in writing to this prospectus.
5. An organisational lead who can make the expected contribution is identified.
6. There are no strong opinions from any partner organisations that the applicant shouldn't join, that can't be resolved.