









### Scotland's Young People's Forest

Scotland's Young People's Forest is an innovative project that showcases young people's passion, activism and commitment to nature, biodiversity, and the natural environment. Through their leadership on the project, and the development of this Blueprint for future activity, the young people involved aim 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, Scotland's Young People's Forest has been led by a core group of young people - Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel. The group of young people from a range of backgrounds and communities have led on the co-design of the programme throughout. The Panel, supported by Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland, has been building their knowledge of forestry management, land-use in Scotland, ownership models, accessibility, and outreach, as well as inputting into the development of resources, training and partnerships as the programme has moved forward with the vision and conception of Scotland's Young People's Forest.

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 modern future for green spaces 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 young people created a mission statement to guide Scotland's Young People's Forest in any activity going forward:

"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."

## Scotland's Young People's Forest Blueprint for Future Sites and Activity Across Scotland

The following guidelines, ambitions and decision-making tools were co-designed by young people on the Panel. They set out the ethos and vision that they hope organisations will work in line with to create their own spaces and activities for Scotland's Young People's Forest across Scotland.

## What is Meaningful Youth Participation?

Co-creating, co-designing, co-producing and co-delivering with young people is at the heart of Scotland's Young People's Forest.

Meaningful youth participation, engagement and co-design is about involving young people throughout the decision-making processes through a participative approach, developing informed insights, ideas, recommendation and solutions for policy and practice. Co-design is about much more than basic consultation, it seeks to engage young people with shared power and resources.

To ensure young people are treated as equal partners in the planning and organisation of activity for Scotland's Young People's Forest, this approach will continue to guide the Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel and partner

#### Minor decisions

These are decisions that don't really have a significant impact on the partners and/or ecosystems of the programme so no significant engagement is required. These must however meet at least one of the programme objectives (see page 4).

#### Intermediate decisions

These decisions have a varying impact on the partners and/or ecosystem of the programme and would not necessarily require wide engagement or agreement but should be dependent on who this might have an impact on – young people, partners or the local community. The young people involved should however always be informed of the decisions.

### Decision-making as Part of Scotland's Young People's Forest

Any decisions made throughout the Scotland's Young People Forest Project should consider young people at the heart. The Panel have developed definitions and guidance on how young people should be involved at every level of the decision-making process to guide future sites or activity.

#### **Major decisions**

These are decisions that have significant impact on the partners and/or ecosystem of the programme so requires engagement and agreement from young people and should be in line with the programme objectives.

### **Scotland's Young People's Forest Ambitions**

The Scotland's Young People's Forest Panel have developed ambitions to guide the programme and any future activity to ensure this continues to meet the needs of young people and align to their vision.

#### **AMBITION 1**

Scotland's Young People's Forest will manage and regenerate various areas of land as forest sanctuaries.

Rural or urban work should be done 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.

#### **AMBITION 2**

Outdoor spaces will be created for people to reconnect with nature: places to enjoy for their own health and wellbeing and to share with others.

Scotland's Young People's Forest will create places 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.

#### **AMBITION 3**

Native wildlife will be managed and restored and help educate and reconnect people with native species.

The Panel understand that forests are dynamic ecosystems and will endeavour to impact native species by creating new or managing older habitats. Teaching and educating people on local wildlife is imperative and therefore activity should restore native biodiversity.

#### **AMBITION 4**

Welcoming forested places will be created 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 forest should be a place for everyone, 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.

#### **AMBITION 5**

Inspiring natural spaces will be created for people to explore the connectedness of natural and cultural heritage through arts and technology both ancient and modern.

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

#### **AMBITION 6**

Scotland's Young People's Forest will enable and empower other young people to take action on issues of climate change and environmental concern. This project is built to empower young people enabling them to make a physical difference on climate change.

The Panel 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.

# Themes and Criteria for Scotland's Young People's Forest

From the mission statement and ambitions, the young people identified focus areas to guide any future work on the programme. The young people also delivered a <u>National Consultation</u> survey in 2021 to give young people across Scotland, who are not directly involved in the project, the opportunity to have their say on how they engage with forests and what they would like to see as priorities for Scotland's Young People's Forest.

#### Six focus areas were identified. These are:

Land Use

Health and Wellbeing

Biodiversity and Nature

Equality and Accessibility

Culture and Innovation

/ Young People

Alongside the themes, a set of criteria were developed for any future activity or Scotland's Young People's Forests to meet.

**Location Accessibility:** Sites and activity should be accessible to a wide range of young people, with car parks, bike and foot paths, trains and bus links that support young people to feel safe.

**Size:** It is important that there is enough space for young people to roam and feel immersed in the forest to support their mental health and wellbeing.

**Community:** Sites and activities should have a strong community link, to enjoy and feel connection to nature in their local areas, taking ownership of Scotland's Young People's Forest.

**State of the Land:** For any site based activity there should be wildlife to work with, an opportunity to plant trees, and the space to get people involved. Longevity of the Site: Sites and site based activity should be in spaces that are constant and protected by the community, and have an impact on climate change in Scotland.

Ultimately, any sites or activities should provide a place for young people to feel welcome and connect with their environment.



# 'Acid Test' for Youth Leadership in Scotland's Young People's Forest

To ensure that young people are at the forefront of any future Scotland's Young People's Forest site and activity, the Panel developed an 'Acid Test' to sense check that any activity being delivered meets this vision.

1.

Any activity as part of the programme has to meet at least one of the project objectives and be in line with the vision and themes created by young people.

2.

Any idea or activity must be sustainable and have lasting impact for young people, the local community or the environment.

3.

Any idea or activity should environmentally or socially benefit the local community, young people and Scotland as a whole.



There must be a plan to involve young people in the decision-making process, through co-design and participation.



# Scotland's Young People's Forest Vision Prototypes

The Young People's Panel developed a series of forest prototypes based on a national consultation with young people and their own aspirations for the forest. Illustrators were commissioned to create the final prototypes shown below.

These should be used as a visual guide when exploring site opportunities and activities.



### **Get In Touch**

To find out more about Scotland's Young People's Forest, visit our website at: <a href="youngscot.net/scotland-young-people-forest">youngscot.net/scotland-young-people-forest</a>.

We would love to discuss how you can use this Blueprint to deliver Scotland's Young People's Forest activity in your area!

If you would like to hear more about how you can support or get involved in Scotland's Young People's Forest, please get in touch at YSHive@young.scot.

Young Scot's Scotland's Young People's Forest activity is delivered as part of our YSHive Service which supports



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