

# Ben Damph Estate

Allt a' Ghiuthais & Doire Damh Woodland  
Creation – Information for Stakeholders



# Introduction

Ben Damp Estate is in the process of exploring the potential for creating a new native woodland habitat at Allt a' Ghiuthais & Doire Damh.

TreeStory Ltd are working on behalf of Ben Damp Estate to undertake the planning process, following Scottish Forestry published guidance.

At this stage we are inviting all stakeholders to provide input on any issues or constraints which they believe should influence the forest planning process. This document summarises the aims and objectives of the project as well as work carried out so far.

All responses should be sent to the following email address by **Tuesday 27th June 2023** – **[admin@treestory.org.uk](mailto:admin@treestory.org.uk)**

# Ben Damph Estate – Objectives


Ben Damph Estate is located in Torridon in north western Scotland. The estate surrounds the impressive Torridonian sandstone and quartzite peak of Beinn Damh. The foothills in this landscape would once have supported more extensive pine and broadleaved woodlands; habitats which are now severely degraded and fragmented.

This project aims to ensure the recovery and expansion of native woodlands at a landscape scale. Existing woodland habitats within the project area would benefit significantly from the reduction of herbivore impact, as would other priority habitats such as wet heath and mire.

The following objectives are key guiding principles in the woodland design:

- Enable the current woodlands to recover, regenerate and expand
- Ecological restoration of degraded habitats and species
- Improve the aesthetic quality of the landscape



A wide landscape view of Loch Damh and Loch Torridon in Scotland. The foreground shows a valley with a mix of green pine trees and brown, rocky hillsides. A large, blue lake (Loch Damh) is visible in the middle ground, surrounded by more hills and a small settlement. In the background, large, rugged mountains rise under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is a mix of natural beauty and rugged terrain.

The project aims to create a substantial area of contiguous native woodland and greatly improve habitat connectivity by connecting the Doire Damh SSSI to the woodlands at the northern tip of Loch Damh, along to the Coille an t-Seana – Mhorair, the Allt a' Ghiuthais and the woodland along the shoreline of Upper Loch Torridon.

# Project Overview

## Planting & Establishment methods

- Ground cultivation will be through inverted turf mounding and screef planting to minimise visual impact and ground disturbance
- The projects will need to be protected by deer-fenced enclosures. These will be extensive enclosures and compensatory deer culls will be undertaken by the estate
- No planting will be undertaken on deep peat (greater than 50cm) and the vast majority of planting will be on soils where the peat depth is less than 30cm
- A proportion of the trees in each scheme will have vole guards installed (bio-degradable if they can be sourced)
- Planting will be designed to create a mosaic of native woodland habitats alongside other open habitats, such as mire and bog. A wide range of native species will be used to create varied habitat transitions across the site, creating a pattern which mimics natural woodland establishment

*pictured: hand planting on inverse turf mounds created by an excavator*



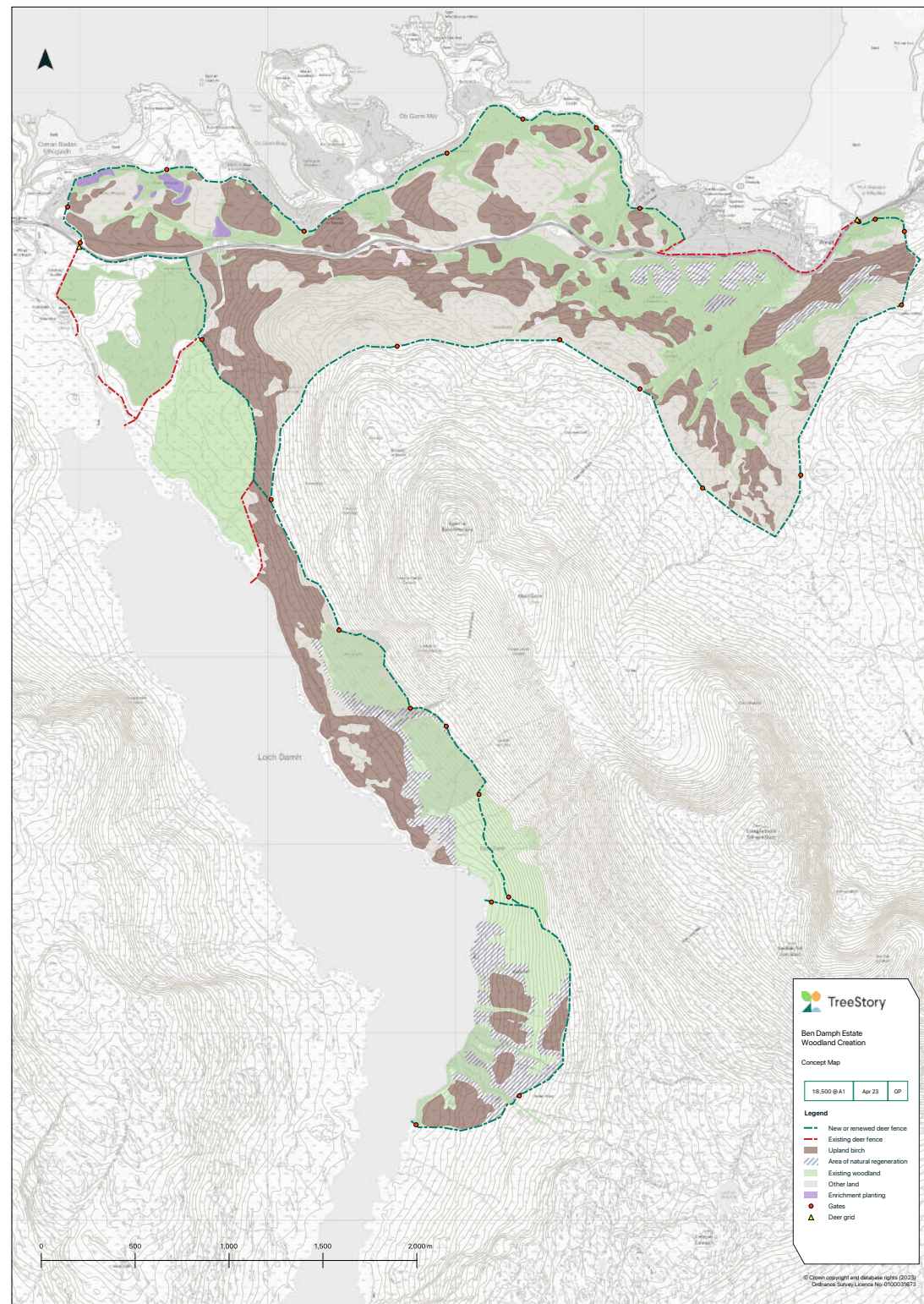
# Concept 1

Deer grids would be installed on the eastern and western project boundaries, enabling deer fencing all the way down to the coast. This would avoid installing new roadside fencing.

This fencing design would provide the greatest habitat restoration opportunities, as much of the coastal woodlands would be protected. These woodlands are part of Scotland's rainforest and support specialised lichens and plants.

Habitat connectivity would be maximised by creating contiguous native woodland from the shores of Loch Torridon through to the foothills of Beinn Damh.

Woodland Species	Native broadleaves and Scots pine
Project Area (enclosure)	620 hectares
Gross Planting Area	190 hectares
Planting Range	20 – 230 meters asl

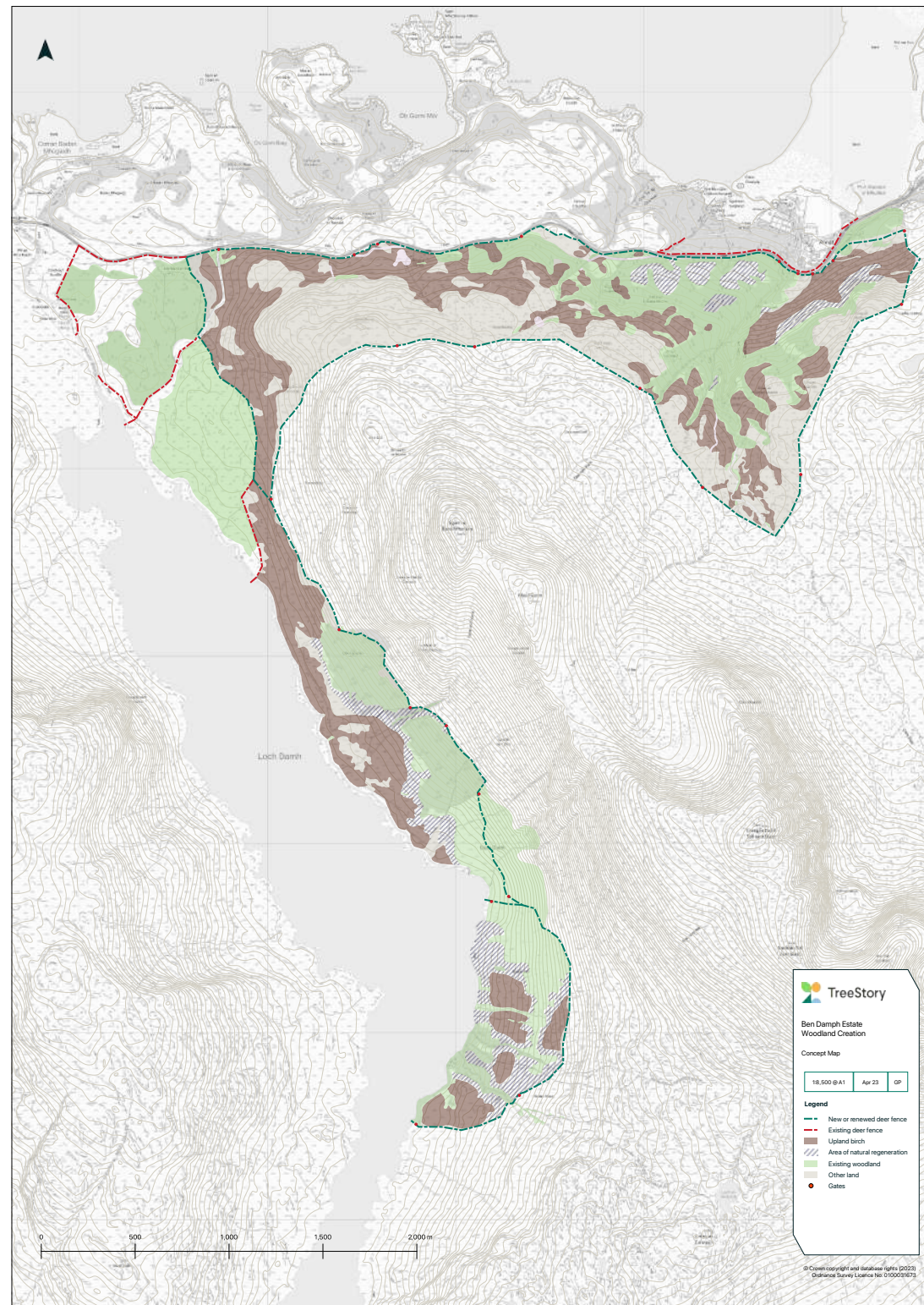


# Concept 2

No deer grids would be installed along the public road for this option. Instead, a stretch of deer fencing approximately 4km long would be erected along the southern roadside.

The core woodland restoration area, as previously described, would remain the same. New woodlands would interconnect existing woodlands across the estate; however the coastal woodlands would remain unprotected and isolated.

Woodland Species	Native broadleaves and Scots pine
Project Area (enclosure)	463 hectares
Gross Planting Area	140 hectares
Planting Range	50 – 230 meters asl



# Issues Log to Date





# Issues Log to Date (1 of 2)

Issue Raised	Response	Outcome / Mitigation
Breeding Birds – NatureScot and RSPB	Breeding Bird Surveys & Vantage Point Surveys undertaken by Taylor Wildlife Ltd, summer 2021	Nesting locations and species present have been identified and mitigation measures will be discussed with consultees.
Priority habitats – NatureScot	Surveys undertaken by Great Glen Ecology Ltd, summer 2022	Priority habitats have been surveyed and mapped and the most sensitive habitats have been excluded from the planting area. These include mires and base-rich flushes.
Doire Damh SSSI / Loch Maree Complex SAC – NatureScot	Previous consultation indicated support from NatureScot in principle for the proposal to protect and expand the designated woodlands	Further detailed discussion of the implications of herbivore exclusion within the proposed enclosure will be required.
European Protected Species	Red squirrels, badgers, otters, water voles and pine marten are known to be present in the wider area	Site checks for these species will be undertaken and mitigation measures proposed.
Archaeology and Heritage Features	Survey undertaken by West Coast Archaeology Service (summer 2022)	The survey identified features for preservation, which will be buffered in accordance with the archaeologist's recommendations. This has been approved by Highland Council Historic Environment.  During operational works, these will be protected in line with UKFS.
Landscape Impact – National Scenic Area	We will conduct a Landscape Assessment for the scheme	Our landscape analysis will review the significant features of the landscape designations and inform our planting design, ensuring the special landscape features are protected or enhanced where possible.
Landscape Impact – Wild Land Area	We will conduct a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	Our landscape analysis will review the potential impact of the project on the WLA. NatureScot guidance will be followed.

# Issues Log to Date (2 of 2)

Issue Raised	Response	Outcome / Mitigation
Private Water Supply	All known supplies will be investigated through consultation with neighbouring properties	All sources will be identified and will be buffered in accordance with UKFS Water Guidelines and Highland Council Environmental Health advice.
Deep Peat (>50cm)	Peat survey undertaken by TreeStory Ltd (summer 2022)	<p>All deep peat has been extensively surveyed and mapped. No planting will be undertaken on sensitive peatland habitats such as mires or bog, even where peat depth is less than 30cm.</p> <p>Peatland areas will be avoided during operational works to reduce any further damage.</p>
Deer Impact	Proposed schemes will displace local deer population	<p>Compensatory cull will be agreed with local DMGs and undertaken prior to planting. Both schemes will be deer-fenced and actively monitored to maintain the fence condition and deal with deer incursions. Fence lines have been sited to minimise exposed sections.</p> <p>A robust deer management plan will accompany the final proposals.</p>
Core Footpaths and Public Access	All public access will be maintained	<p>The estate has a well established path network. Self closing gates will be installed to facilitate access to all core paths and informal walking routes.</p> <p>Comments from the local access officer will be sought.</p>

# Stakeholders

The following stakeholders have been invited to contribute to the scoping process:

1. Scottish Forestry
2. NatureScot
3. Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)
4. Torridon & Kinlochewe Community Council
5. Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
6. Highland Council – Historic Environment
7. Highland Council – Woodland
8. Highland Council – Access
9. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
10. Scottish Mountaineering Council
11. South West Ross Deer Management Group
12. Gairloch Conservation Unit DMG
13. Wester Ross Biosphere
14. Loch Damph Fish Farm
15. Ramblers Association Scotland
16. Local Raptor Study Group
17. Neighbouring Residents
18. Neighbouring Landowners



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