



Confor
Promoting forestry and wood

Summary Brief

Guidelines for Respectful and Constructive Engagement in Forestry Management

Scotland



The Forestry Sector's Commitment to Good Engagement

Good engagement helps forestry projects work better for everyone. It can lead to better ideas, highlight issues early, and support stronger, long-term relationships.

Forestry projects often involve a wide range of people with different views and interests. Those planning and managing work need to listen to these perspectives and find a balanced way forward. Good engagement helps make this possible.

Scottish Forestry sets out expectations for engagement in its guide, [Forestry Engagement and Consultation Processes](#). The sector has also developed its own good practice guidance, the [Confor Engagement with Local People and Communities Good Practice Guide](#), alongside training to support those working in forestry.

These guidelines have been developed to support people involved in forestry to engage well with others. They also aim to make clear what stakeholders, including communities, can expect from the sector and how the process of engagement can be undertaken in a respectful and constructive manner by all parties. They also set out what to do when things go wrong. They should be used alongside existing guidance and good practice.

You can find the full guidelines and more information on the forestry sector's approach to engagement here: <https://bit.ly/ConforRCE>

Who are these guidelines for?

These guidelines are specifically for use by the forestry sector. They will be a useful resource for everyone who is involved in forest management including: forest owners, forest managers and workers, forestry contractors, all stakeholders in forestry including communities, neighbours including farmers and crofters, special interest groups, regulators with an interest in forestry operations, statutory consultees and elected representatives.

What stakeholders can expect from the forestry businesses who have adopted these guidelines

Stakeholders can expect good engagement, which should:

- 1 **Be transparent** and provide appropriate contact details for the forestry manager responsible and links to relevant information. Note: This could be organisational contact details. (Refer: [SLC: Transparency Protocol](#))
- 2 **Take all reasonable endeavours to identify all stakeholders with a recognisable interest** and their specific areas of interest/expertise.
- 3 Take place as **early as practicably possible** in the process to enable stakeholder views to be taken on board effectively.
- 4 **Be proportionate** and reflect the nature of the activity based on the type of forest management activity, the location, scale and sensitivity of the proposal. (Refer: [Page 10: SLC: Engaging Communities Guidance](#))
- 5 **Provide reasonable time for feedback**, taking things like holiday periods into account.
- 6 **Provide all appropriate information and be honest** about the proposal. Present information in a way that can be easily understood and be clear about what is being asked of stakeholders.
- 7 **Be clear and specific about what is being asked of stakeholders** and why.
- 8 **Provide feedback** on what action, if any, has been taken to address issues raised or explain why changes have not been made.
- 9 **Record stakeholder comments** in a clear and unambiguous way.
- 10 **Communicate in a way that promotes a culture of respect and inclusivity**, with active listening and empathy for the positions of others. Communication should be ongoing.

What is expected from stakeholders

The forestry sector should expect stakeholders to:

- 1 Share contact details for their organisation or a community** in a way that is accessible to those who will be undertaking engagement on forestry projects.
- 2 Take reasonable steps to understand the engagement processes** for approving forest management planning and operational activities and how best to provide input; recognising resource and time constraints of stakeholders.
- 3 Acknowledge receipt of engagement requests** and indicate whether they can meet the timescales or if not request **reasonable adjustments**, explaining why these may be necessary (i.e. weeks not months to fit with scheduled meeting dates).
- 4 Request any additional information**, including clarification of language, **as soon as possible** so as not to incur unreasonable delays. Requests for additional information should be limited to that necessary to inform feedback related to the stakeholder's area of expertise.
- 5 Give responses that provide site specific information** / highlight relevant issues and/or potential mitigation measures and are based on the stakeholder's expertise.
- 6 Ensure** that if representing an organisation or a community, **the views expressed are the agreed views of that organisation or a community** (or its members), and not their own views or those of a small subset of members. Where there is a significant minority dissenting voice this should be disclosed.
- 7 Communicate in a way that promotes a culture of respect and inclusivity**, with active listening and empathy for the positions of others. Communication should be ongoing.

Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours

All of those involved in forestry management, including both the stakeholders and forest managers and other professionals who are required to engage with stakeholders as part of their job should not be made to feel uncomfortable or threatened by the behaviour of any individual.

Unacceptable behaviours may include: use of raised voice or aggressive tone, passive aggressive vocabulary, abuse including swearing, insults and use of degrading language, cherry picking or misinterpreting information, harassment including persistent contact or physical violence including threat of assault.

Physical violence, either used or threatened, should always be reported to the police.

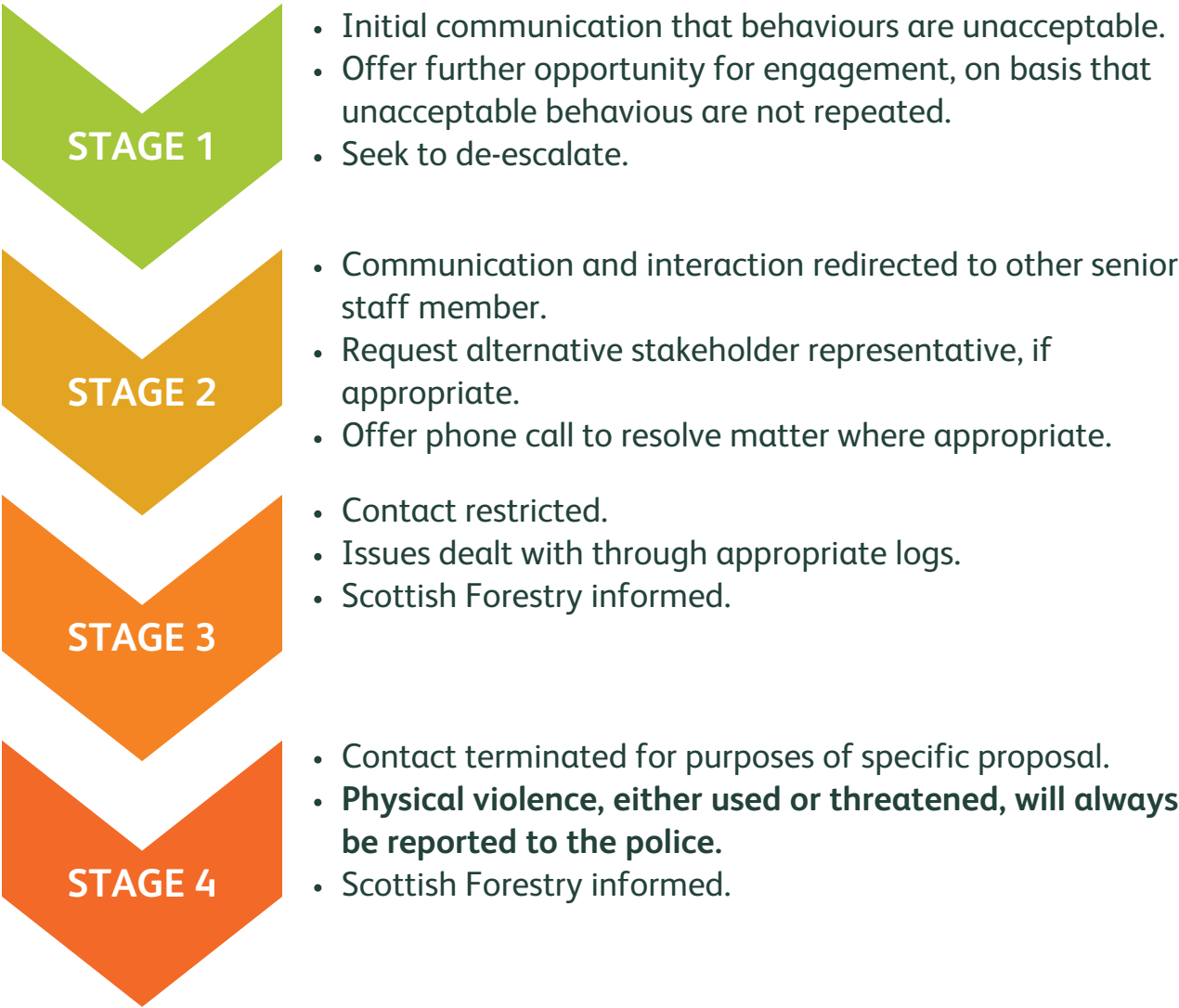
Managing Unacceptable Actions: Stakeholders

Should stakeholders have a complaint about the way in which they have been engaged then that should be raised directly with the company or organisation involved. Details of the complaints process for those companies and organisations who have signed up to these guidelines can be found here: <https://bit.ly/ConforRCE>

Managing Unacceptable Action: Forestry Sector

Those forestry businesses who have adopted this policy will aim to ensure that an individual or organisation is informed immediately if their actions are tending towards unacceptable, and what will follow if they persist. This will be done in a way intended to defuse the situation while ensuring key issues raised by the stakeholder are acknowledged, and the aim will be to bring the tone of communication back to a more reasonable level.

The proposed approach to responding to unacceptable behaviours is summarised below.



Useful Links

Confor

- Engagement with Local People and Communities Good Practice Guide:
<https://www.confor.org.uk/media/3777050/good-practice-guide.pdf>

Scottish Forestry

- Forestry Engagement and Consultation Processes:
<https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/forestry-engagement-and-consultation-processes>

Scottish Land Commission

- Community benefits from natural capital investment | Route Map:
https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/downloads/67f626a7a454d_Community-benefits-from-natural-capital-investment-Route-Map.pdf
- Developing an Engagement Plan for Decisions Relating to Land:
https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/downloads/5ddfed161d1de_Practice-Guide-Community-Engagement-Planning.-Nov-2019-Web.pdf
- Protocol on transparency of ownership and decision-making:
<https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/downloads/Protocol-on-transparency-of-ownership-and-decision-making.pdf>



View the full Guidelines online
at bit.ly/ConforRCE or
scan above.