

Reforesting Scotland author guidelines

Thank you for contributing your time, expertise and passion to our publication. Your experience on the ground is the heart of what makes our journal special. Whether you are sharing a local restoration project, a community effort or a technical skill, these guidelines are designed to help you tell your story in a way that engages and inspires our readers.

Writing short-form articles is an art form in itself. Our natural instinct is to try to cram in as much as possible, but readability and impact are greatly enhanced by crafting a piece of any given length to fit the allotted space. We hope you will find these guidelines helpful.

General

- **Keep it accessible:** Please use plain language without dumbing down. The style of the Journal is ‘accessible academic’ so try to minimise the use of jargon, acronyms and technical language. Generally use common names, though Latin names in brackets are fine on first mention where appropriate.
- **Provide a takeaway message:** Readers love actionable takeaways they can learn from and apply in their own work.
- **Use breakouts:** Avoid breaking the narrative flow with statistics, step-by-steps or further reading suggestions. These are excellent as sidebars.
- **Choose great pictures to illustrate the article:** Please supply captions and photo credits for any submitted images. Photos need to be high-resolution (300 dpi, around 1MB file size is usually good). Usually there is space for 1 photo in a 1-page article, 3-4 in a 2-page article and up to 6 in a 3-page article.
- **Match content with article length:** Don’t try to cram too much in – narrow the focus to suit the word count (see below for details).

1-page features (~700 words)

Last Word commentary, project updates, history page

This length demands a single-concept focus: one vivid anecdote, a tight argument or a specific profile. The goal is not to cover a topic comprehensively but to illuminate one area of it.

- **Open in the middle of the action:** Readers love immediate, vivid snapshots, whether that is a morning on the hill or a moment in the workshop. Skip long administrative backstories and dive directly into what makes your topic exciting.
- **Break out technical details:** Use bulleted lists or a small summary box for specifications, facts and figures. This keeps your main story flowing smoothly while making key data easy to digest.
- **Keep a sharp focus:** With 700 words, choose one central highlight or story arc. Keeping your narrative focused on a single clear idea ensures your core message comes through with impact.
- **Leave them wanting more:** End with a ‘call to arms’, future prospects or a way to get involved.

2-page features (~1,200 words)

Project reports, standard theme articles, Artists in Wood, Community Woodland reports, Deer reports, Building of the Forest, Beasts from the Forest, Food from the Forest

There is space to explore two or three interconnected facets and incorporate quote-driven narrative or opposing viewpoints.

- **Share the real-world journey:** Write about what you are observing today, the practical trials you have run and the creative solutions you have discovered on the ground. Real experiences and honest lessons learned resonate far more than strategic plans.
- **Show your expertise in action:** Instead of listing academic references or theory, show how those ideas come alive on your project. Illustrating a concept through your own practical work makes complex ideas natural and accessible.
- **Pull out key data:** If you have interesting statistics, let them shine in a dedicated 'Project at a glance' box. This gives your data great visual impact while keeping your main narrative clear and readable.
- **Share practical innovation:** If you have developed a clever method or design, feature it under its own distinct subheading or in a summary step-by-step box.
- **Don't try to cram in too much:** Focus on two or three things that form part of your main topic rather than force in everything possible on the subject. You can add up to five references or web links as 'Further reading' to cover material that has to be left out.
- **Finish with a takeaway message or lessons learned:** This is most useful for readers already involved in or wanting to start similar projects.

3-page features (~1,500–1,600 words)

In-depth theme articles, longer Project reports, Forest science

The extra length allows for some setting of scene and more analysis.

- **Paint a vivid sense of place:** Take advantage of the extra space to set the scene. Transport readers to your landscape using seasonal cues, weather, local geography or history. Building a rich atmosphere draws readers deep into your world.
- **Keep focused on your core subject:** Centre your story on the habitat, craft or community effort involved. Background details like funding histories or committee structures can easily be tucked into a sidebar, keeping your main narrative clean, vibrant and engaging.
- **Break up the article:** Use a few short sub-headings to break your piece into chapters. This creates structure and aids focus.
- **Tell a human and ecological story:** The most memorable features celebrate the connection between people and nature. Share how your ecological work ties into local heritage, volunteer effort, skill-sharing or the local community.