

PAINTING SCOTLAND YELLOW



**Painting Scotland Yellow (Phase 2) – Final Report
April 2024 to October 2025
Funder: Future Woodland Scotland**

Overview

Aspen is an important yet under-valued and under-recognised native Scottish tree, supporting a wide range of flora and fauna. However, its palatability to grazing animals and infrequent seed-setting in Scotland means it has disappeared from much of our landscape. Lack of knowledge of aspen and challenges in its propagation are both barriers to its recovery. This limits the role aspen can play in the recovery of Scotland's woodland ecosystems.

Through the Painting Scotland Yellow project, SCOTLAND: The Big Picture (SBP) began in 2023 to raise awareness of aspen with communications and social media activity. A one-day grower training event in March 2024 concluded this first phase of project activity.

Project summary

Thanks to funding from Future Woodlands Scotland, Painting Scotland Yellow was able to move into a second phase. This drove momentum on earlier comms work as well as bringing growers and aspen experts together to identify and solve challenges around production, to increase aspen planting in Scotland's landscapes.

We revisited our plan to deliver a large-scale in person event as part of the phase, due to a shortfall in funding, and conversations with stakeholders that suggested a series of smaller, more focused activities would better reach the different audiences we needed to inform, inspire and mobilise to restore aspen in Scotland's woodlands.

During Phase 2, we shared our creative work across a wide mix of platforms – our updated website, social channels, newsletter, events and a range of external media. We also offered learning opportunities through a dedicated webinar, an aspen propagation training day and a session for land managers at our Northwoods Partner Gathering.

This report expands on these activities and shares how they made a difference to those involved and the future of aspen across Scotland's landscapes.



Communications

Film

Our filmmaking team produced a new **short film** that was launched online in July. The film shares the ecological story of aspen and calls for greater inclusion of this pioneer species in woodland restoration efforts.

The film has been widely shared through our digital channels and partner networks, and is featured prominently on the [Painting Scotland Yellow](#) webpage.

Engagement remains strong, with encouraging levels of viewing and sharing across social media, with **2,600 views** and **156 likes** on YouTube to date. Watch: [Painting Scotland Yellow](#)



'What a fantastic and educational film, well done guys your doing great work.'

– James Ferguson, YouTube viewer



'The aspen is a beautiful tree and this is a delightful film.'

– Stephen Preston, YouTube viewer



Social media

Throughout this time frame we have continued a steady drumbeat on social media. Our posts have shone a spotlight on growers and rewilding projects using aspen. We collaborated with Sophie Pavelle as our Painting Scotland Yellow campaign features in her new book. This included a book giveaway and Sophie featuring in a short reel and Q&A.

The aim has been to raise awareness of aspen's value, with positive audience engagement and growing recognition of its role in healthy woodland ecosystems.

We capitalised on National Tree Week (22-30 November) with our Wildlife Comeback Lead, Kirsten Brewster, being interviewed about aspen by Dougie, for BBC Landward ([Episode 23](#)).



Webinar

In September we ran an evening **webinar** *How can we bring back aspen?* with 85 in attendance to watch it live. Online, it has attracted 522 views and 32 likes.

The session brought together practitioners, growers and enthusiasts from across Scotland and further afield, reinforcing the collaborative network that has begun to form around aspen restoration. Feedback gathered demonstrates a clear appetite for continued knowledge exchange and practical support:

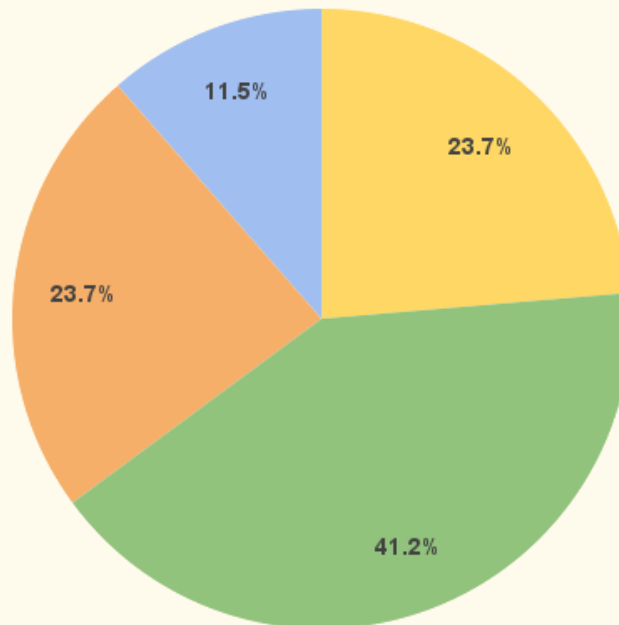
Website

We updated our Painting Scotland Yellow webpage on the SBP website and created and collated assets to help educate visitors about the importance of aspen.

These include three stories, an audio clip to highlight the sound of aspen leaves in the breeze, a series of five educational graphics and licensed images.

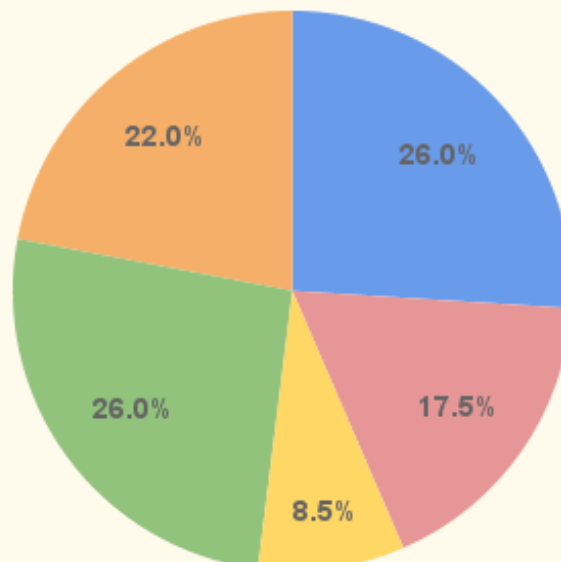
Did the information inspire you to take any action? If so, what?

- I'm going to plant aspen
- I'm going to survey my local patch for aspen
- I'm going to survey for important species hosted by aspen
- No, it didn't inspire me to take action



What else could SCOTLAND: The Big Picture do to encourage aspen restoration?

- More information on dependant species and how to survey
- In-person learning on propagation
- In-person learning about woodland restoration and herbivore management
- Networking opportunities with other aspen growers
- Highlight volunteering opportunities



Northwoods gathering

At the **Northwoods Partner Gathering** in October, ecologist and author **Andrew Painting** delivered a session on native woodland regeneration, highlighting the ecological significance of aspen.

Approximately **50 land managers** attended, many of whom expressed interest in incorporating aspen into future planting and regeneration plans.



Aspen propagation practical training

A dedicated training day was held in March 2025, aimed at nursery staff, aspen growers and woodland managers.

The day brought together professionals working in conservation, small tree nursery managers, crofters, one of our Northwoods Rewilding Network land partners and a large tree nursery manager.

In all **14 participants** gained practical skills in aspen propagation techniques and the

confidence to integrate aspen into their growing programmes. Participants had various reasons for attending and all of them either gained more knowledge or expanded their network.

We are planning another aspen propagation practical training day for March 2026.

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‘Really appreciated the demo on grafting aspen.’

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‘[I would like] to try and increase aspen propagation of the native trees in Lewis and Harris.’

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‘I learned so much, met fantastically interesting people, and had an inspiring day.’



The difference Future Woodlands Scotland made

Inspiring action through storytelling

SBP's film and communications have reached thousands, sparking interest in aspen among land managers, conservation practitioners and the wider public. Through your support of the project, you have highlighted aspen's ecological importance and helped build a stronger case for its inclusion in woodland creation and restoration schemes.

Upskilling and confidence-building

Through practical training, you have directly upskilled 14 individuals – equipping them with the technical knowledge and confidence to propagate aspen successfully. Many of these participants represent nurseries or organisations capable of influencing wider practice, meaning the impact extends well beyond those directly trained.

Strengthening networks

Via SBP hosting webinars and integrating aspen into wider events, such as the Northwoods Gathering, you have continued to connect growers, managers and experts – building a sense of shared purpose and ongoing collaboration.



Influencing practice

While policy change remains a longer-term ambition, Painting Scotland Yellow has already begun to shape on-the-ground practice. Through our Northwoods Rewilding Network and Loch Abar Mòr partnership, we have encouraged and supported several partners to include aspen in their planting plans.

Directly influencing policy proved beyond the reach of this phase however, SBP's communications have contributed to a growing awareness that can underpin future advocacy efforts.

Key stats

The Painting Scotland Yellow short film received **2,600** views and **156** likes on YouTube.

A further **940** people liked our **23 social media posts**.

14 participants gained practical skills in propagation techniques and the confidence to integrate aspen into their growing programmes.

What's next

SCOTLAND: The Big Picture plans to continue offering aspen training opportunities into early 2026. After this, we will focus our attention on these areas of our Wildlife Comeback work.

Lynx

As part of the Lynx to Scotland (LtS) partnership, we are working to drive public and political support for the return of this enigmatic, forest-dwelling animal, through a social media campaign, webinars and our Learning Day – *Living with lynx*.

Our preparations are underway for a public consultation in the Highlands on lynx reintroduction in early 2026.

This will feed into the first reintroduction application to NatureScot for the return of an apex predator to Scotland.

Beaver

Working in partnership with our land partners, we will continue our work to expand the Scottish beaver population through translocation applications to NatureScot and creation of more riparian habitat suitable for beavers.

We are supporting our Northwoods Rewilding Network and Loch Abar Mòr land partners with all aspects of this work, including community engagement.

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'I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the SCOTLAND: The Big Picture team for over two years of unwavering support in our efforts to reintroduce beavers.'



Boar

Raising awareness of the unique ecological role wild boar play in our woodlands has been a longstanding item on our agenda.

We are in the early stages of planning a campaign to educate people about this keystone species and how existing populations are not yet recognised in law as a wild native species.



Legacy

Building momentum

As a result of Phase 2, aspen is now more visible in Scotland's rewilding conversation. The combination of hands-on training, film storytelling and collaborative dialogue has laid the groundwork for the next phase of work – scaling up production, planting and protection of this keystone species.

Learning and reflections

Delivering smaller, targeted training sessions proved highly effective in sharing practical skills and enabling discussion among those directly involved in aspen propagation.

Digital engagement, through webinars and online storytelling, offered accessible ways to reach wide and varied audiences, particularly when we were unable to deliver an in-person large event.



The whole team here at SCOTLAND: The Big Picture would like to pass on our thanks to Future Woodlands Scotland for supporting our work and helping to make rewilding happen across Scotland.

