

Response ID ANON-VEPG-2G9R-P

Submitted to Future Grant Support for Forestry
Submitted on 2023-02-23 08:29:06

Ministerial Foreword - Forestry in Scotland is a sector that we can be justly proud of.

1 - Introduction and Rationale for Providing Grant Support for Forestry

1. Do you agree that grant support for forestry should continue to be improved and developed as a discrete scheme within the overall package of land support?

Yes

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Forestry needs to be seen not just as providing timber, but also for its carbon sequestration and physical and mental wellness properties. As such it has an increasingly important role to play within the wider agriculture sector.

2. Are there any changes that would allow for better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding options?

Yes

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Exploration of the benefits offered by agroforestry and rewilding need to be promoted.

2 - Forests Delivering for Scotland's Climate Change Plan

3. How can the support package for forestry evolve to help tackle the climate emergency, to achieve net zero, and to ensure that our woodlands and forests are resilient to the future climate?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Support needs to be given both to woodland creation and management. Woodland creation should be promoted only on land not suitable for food crop production and safeguards need to be in place to ensure that appropriate trees are planted and ongoing maintenance is in place as a pre-requisite of any grant.

Current schemes offer little or no help for smaller forestry owners, leaving a large amount of established woodland unmanaged. Grants need to be targeted additionally to owners of smaller woodlands to ensure these are managed, particularly as established trees offer greater carbon sequestration than new woodlands.

4. Private investment through natural capital and carbon schemes can make a valuable contribution to climate change. Do you agree that the grant support mechanism should have more flexibility to maximise the opportunities to blend private and public finance to support woodland creation,

Not sure

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

There is a new industry grown up in carbon credit trading and these organisations are in the main solely focussed on returns for shareholders. Purchases of large areas of land just to create woodland for the benefit of providing carbon credits to major industry does not guarantee the planting and maintenance of high quality forests with long term viability. Focussing government grants in this sector risks funding those least in need of grant assistance.

5. How could the current funding package be improved to stimulate woodland expansion and better management across a wide range of woodland types, including native and productive woodlands?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Spread grant aid across the whole sector including smaller woodland owners. Overhaul the entire grant aid system. The current system is hard to navigate, requires a large amount of time expended even for small grant applications and is far too bureaucratic. Overhaul the Scottish forestry website to make it more user friendly and remove obstacles and unnecessary jargon. As an example it took me around ten minutes to find the link for this consultation which only seemed traceable via a Twitter post.

6. Do you agree that it should be a requirement of grant support that woodlands are managed to ensure that they become more resilient to the impacts of climate change and pests and disease?

Yes

How can the grant scheme support this?:

This requires expert input from forestry officers. Every situation will face different issues with regard to ongoing pest control and selection of appropriate species for planting. Proactive consultations with forestry owners offering assistance and grant aid will help to gradually convert tree stock to prepare for upcoming risks in the ongoing climate crisis. This is about clear and comprehensible advice as much as grant money.

3 - Integrating Woodlands on Farms and Crofts

7. Which of the following measures would help reduce the barriers for crofters and farmers wanting to include woodland as part of their farming business? Please select all that apply.

Knowing where to get reliable advice, Clearer guidance on grant options, Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout

Are there others not listed above?:

8. Establishing small woodlands can have higher costs. What specific mechanisms would better support small scale woodlands and woodland ownership?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

From the perspective of an owner with a small (11 acre) woodland plot, there appears to be no assistance available currently. Making grants available to improve existing woodlands and improving the overly bureaucratic system currently in place would be a good starting point.

4 - Forests Delivering for People and Communities

9. How can forestry grants better support an increase in easily accessible, sustainably managed woodlands in urban and peri-urban areas?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Work with and promote local community and mental health and well-being groups. Engage local people and ask them what they would like to see. Connect with schools and get them involved in woodland creation. Make it easier to understand what is on offer and make the application process simpler.

10. How can grant support for forestry better enable rural communities to realise greater benefits from woodland to support community wealth building?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Benefits from woodland cut across commercial, environmental and wellbeing sectors. There is an increasing desire to see natural spaces retained and improved. Funding community driven schemes would be a good starting point.

11. How can the forest regulatory and grant processes evolve to provide greater opportunities for communities to be involved in the development of forestry proposals?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Make them easier to understand. Completely overhaul the Scottish forestry website to make it more readable and attractive to non-professionals.

12. How can the forestry regulatory and grant processes evolve to ensure that there is greater transparency about proposals and the decisions that have been made on them?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Ensure that the parameters for grant allocation are clearly spelt out, that there is access to advice, that the application process is straightforward and that feedback is given to applicants, both successful and unsuccessful. Have in place an appeals system should an applicant feel a decision is incorrect. Ensure that no personal bias can influence decisions.

13. Forestry grants have been used to stimulate rural forestry businesses by providing support with capital costs. Do you agree that this has been an effective measure to stimulate rural business?

No

a. How could this approach be used to support further forestry businesses?:

See the report by James Mackinnon 'Analysis of current arrangements for the consideration and approval of forestry planting proposals'.

b. How could this approach be used to support further skills development?:

There is a shortage of skilled labour within the sector and more needs to be done to promote forestry as a career.

14. How could the FGS processes and rules be developed to encourage more companies and organisations to provide training positions within the forestry sector?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Not my area of expertise but an established career progression from apprentice onwards assisted by grant funding for companies enrolling in training schemes would seem to be the obvious way to go if not already in place.

5 - Forests Delivering for Biodiversity and the Environment

15. The primary purpose of FGS is to encourage forestry expansion and sustainable forest management, of which a key benefit is the realisation of environmental benefits. How can future grant support better help to address biodiversity loss in Scotland including the regeneration and expansion of native woodlands?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Fund management of existing woodlands, get your officers out in the field educating forestry owners on the need for changes and assisting them with plans to make changes to mitigate climate crisis risks. Work with other environmentally focussed groups.

16. Herbivore browsing and damage can have a significant impact on biodiversity loss and restrict regeneration. How could forestry grant support mechanisms evolve to ensure effective management of deer populations at:

Landscape scale?:

No experience here.

Small scale mixed land use?:

Advice to ensure that owners have access to details of accredited professionals and assistance with the ongoing costs.

If you wish to make any other relevant comments, please do so in the text box below.

Please add your comments here.:

As a small scale woodland owner I find access to information difficult to achieve, with the greater part of website based information aimed towards large commercial growers and land agents. With increasing interest by individuals and small organisations in acquiring and maintaining woodland it would make sense to provide a section within the website aimed at this sector.

About you

What is your name?

Name:

[Redacted]

What is your email address?

Email:

[Redacted]

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Individual

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Scottish Forestry would like your permission to publish your response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response with name

We may share your response internally with other Scottish Forestry policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Forestry to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

I consent