

Submitted to Future Grant Support for Forestry
Submitted on 2023-03-01 13:35:23

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?

No

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Scotland's landscape is ravaged by land management which has left behind all notion of integration. In southern Scotland, hard-bordered Sitka forests are everywhere, and have and continue to wreak havoc on Scotland's precious wildlife and habitats, as well as utterly ruining the scenery. Support for forestry should be integrated into an overall AECS package that will allow land-owners, farmers etc to apply for funding to improve all aspects of their land, and allow each strand of these improvements e.g. rush cutting, grazing for Black Grouse, woodland creation to be designed around each other, creating a truly integrated land management system in Scotland.

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.:

As above, combine them.

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.:

The support package should tackle the myth that tree planting is good for the climate emergency, as in so many cases it just simply isn't true.

- 1) The scheme should not fund any new non-native conifer plantations on soils containing peat. Only native broadleaved schemes should be supported on these soils, and should be targeted at improving biodiversity.
- 2) The Scottish government should look into ways of ensuring that timber planted under the guise of tackling climate change is used for long-life wood products, as this is the key driver that determines how useful planting commercial crop is for achieving net zero. Funding could be withdrawn or claimed back if long-life wood products aren't produced.

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,

Yes

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

The Scottish Government should urgently cease funding all new commercial non-native plantation schemes which are backed by extremely rich investment companies and private individuals. The tree planting industry has become nothing more than a vehicle for already very wealthy people to make even more money, whilst avoiding paying any meaningful tax on their investment. It has also resulted in an extraordinary rise in land prices, ensuring that only the very wealthy can afford to buy land in Scotland.

Where private investment is concerned, the Scottish Government should only fund native schemes which are designed to maximise the benefit to biodiversity and climate change, and not to make vast profits at the expense of local people.

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.:

Productive non-native conifer woodlands are currently a scourge on the landscape across Scotland, and by funding these schemes the Scottish Government is complicit in funding the ecological destruction of Scotland's spectacular wildlife and scenery. Expansion of this type of forestry should be severely restricted, whilst acknowledging that it does have some role to play.

The grant scheme in its current form simply allows wealthy individuals and investors to buy large tracts of land and plant them with high density non-native species which destroy landscapes for humans and wildlife.

There should be a huge focus on native tree planting, small-scale coppicing and felling and agro-forestry on farmland where livestock can graze around woodlands as well as in open fields. The funding for the commercial, highly destructive and profit-driven non-native conifer industry should be completely scaled back, as at the current rate the Scottish Government will be left cleaning up a mess for decades, of its own making.

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?:

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.

Better integration of support for woodland creation with farm support mechanisms, Flexibility within options, Support with cashflow

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.:

Abolishing the current grant scheme which is driving up land prices and ensuring that it is only economical to plant entire areas with non-native conifers to the detriment of any other type of land use.

There should be financial disincentive to plant vast tracts of conifers and this can be supported by the huge reduction in funding available for this type of forestry. The Scottish Government should do whatever it takes to ensure that retaining/buying land and planting small woodlands is significantly more financially worthwhile than plantations.

The Scottish Government, by running the grant scheme in the way that it does at present, has created this mess single-handedly, and all that has happened is that locals have been driven out and wealthy investors have sole ownership of the land and forestry and can do what they want with it.

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.:

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.:

Stop giving funding to wealthy investors.... Stop giving money to these ludicrously wealthy people just so they can make more money. Tax them properly to provide a disincentive to them buying up land and driving up the cost of said land. Severely limit grant support to anyone who doesn't live or work in the areas where funding is being applied for, and make the creation of woodlands for community use profitable by giving excess amount of funding in these areas.

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.:

The regulatory process appears to be non-existent at present.

Morale in Scottish Forestry appears to be rock-bottom, and despite woodland officers wanting to do right by the environment and local communities, I am aware of numerous cases where their decisions have been overthrown by those above them in the name of getting trees in the ground.

An entirely transparent process, akin to the process of getting planning permission for developments, should be urgently developed to ensure proper scrutiny of proposals. There should be transparency around ownership, how land is bought and sold, and communities should be consulted on the purchase of land that is obviously made with the plan of planting trees.

A transparent process would also allow proper scrutiny of environmental impacts, which at the moment is completely lacking. There is no formal

mechanism for properly resolving ecological issues, and almost without fail the economic interests of the 'clients' of forestry applications are given overwhelming priority. This is what has gotten us into this mess in the first place.

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.:

A process modelling on the planning process for developments is urgently needed, so agents, landowners and Scottish Forestry can be held to account.

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?:

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

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.:

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.:

Immediate recognition of the catastrophic impact that commercial non-native conifer schemes have on biodiversity. For too long, the Scottish Government has turned a blind eye to this, and allowed the industry to peddle false narratives about these plantations. They are barren for all but a very limited amount of species, and this needs to be recognised. Indeed, this sort of commercial forestry has played a large role in the decline of some of Scotland's most treasured species (Black Grouse, Curlew, Hen Harrier etc). If, as is stated above, a key benefit of the FGS is the realisation of environmental benefit, then the scheme can long support applications which are overwhelmingly composed of destructive non-native species. This must be urgently addressed.

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?:

Small scale mixed land use?:

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

Please add your comments here.:

Please, please, please get this right. The future of Scotland's rural communities will hinge on the future of this scheme. Although biodiversity has already been catastrophically impacted, and many rural communities decimated, and landscapes destroyed by the ugliness of hard-bordered, dense conifer plantations, it is not too late to change the tide. Do not listen to the wealthy voices which are making vast sums of money at the expense of local Scottish people; protect their interests first instead of putting profit-making and meeting arbitrary targets at the top of the list. Now is the time for change.

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 only (without 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.

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