

Response ID ANON-VEPG-2GEG-Q

Submitted to Future Grant Support for Forestry
Submitted on 2023-04-27 17:55:55

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.:

A specialist area it needs specialists to administer schemes.
Having said that, there are merits in better integration with farm/environment incentives.

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

Not sure

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Encouraging farmers to plant trees is difficult. So it needs to be simple to administer or they will not do it.

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.:

We need to plant more trees.
They should ideally grow quickly and produce timber that can be utilised to decarbonise the build environment.
We also need to protect and enhance biodiversity.
This all means we need a lot more trees of all types.
However, the State should not be too prescriptive in telling land owners how they should run their businesses, so be careful what you think "resilience" looks like.

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.:

Where possible private capital should be used rather than tax payer funds.

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.:

At present we are struggling to reach Scot Gov targets across a range of woodland types. This suggests the funding mechanism needs to be enhanced; that probably means increase in £. It may also suggest that the approval process is too much of a barrier (duration, costs and uncertainty of outcome). Some woodland types seem underfunded eg preservation and expansion of existing native woodland and montane scrub woodland. Both are important ecologically.

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 is codified in UKFS. Don't add bells and whistles.

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, Knowing where to get reliable advice, Clearer guidance on grant options, Flexibility within options, Intervention level, Support with cashflow, Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout

Are there others not listed above?:

Persuading farmers, particularly small scale and not very profitable farmers, to plant trees is very difficult. Basically it needs to be made cashflow positive. ie it takes a lot more funding/hectare than "investor" forestry.

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.:

Specific funding for the extra costs eg fencing, access points, planning grants, etc that are more expensive to deliver in £/ha for small schemes.

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.:

With focused subsidy eg paths, gates, rangers, etc.

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.:

Forestry delivers wealth building to local communities; primarily for jobs. The more productive it is, the more jobs are generated. Woods can be good for tourism which is key to rural economies.

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.:

i think it is pretty inclusive. Technology can help eg ease of access to plans, support tools for the understanding what the impact of a scheme will be, etc.

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.:

I think there is a fair degree of transparency. It feels forest land use gets more scrutiny than other rural land uses, while delivering a lot of benefits such as access and biodiversity.

Clear time tables for responses would help.

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?

Not sure

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

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

Training.

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.:

Financial support. But why cant the private sector train its own people if there are the jobs?

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.:

There is little in the way of market drivers to encourage native woodland, although carbon is becoming more important. Therefore it will only get expanded with competitive subsidy.

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?:

Scot Gov needs to be more prescriptive on maximum deer numbers. Land owners need to be compelled to achieve sustainable deer numbers with well thought out local strategies. Stick or carrot? Why should the tax payer foot the bill?

If the Gov doesn't want to upset the land owners, they need to provide financial assistance.

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.:

Inflation has risen substantially since initial FGS grants, with some forestry inputs rising faster than RPI. All other things being equal, grants need to rise. The forestry expansion targets are fairly significant. They will only happen if afforestation is significantly more (financially) attractive than alternative land uses. If the gap is not substantial, behaviour will not change, and we will miss our targets. This will take £ and/or clear presumptions in favour of forestry to de-risk the approvals process for commercial schemes.

About you

What is your name?

Name:

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What is your email address?

Email:

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Individual

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

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Yes

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