

Submitted to Future Grant Support for Forestry  
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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.:

Yes, we agree that support for woodland and forestry remains as a discrete scheme at this stage. Effort will be required however to ensure it works in an integrated way with other components of the new rural support policy. In particular, greater effort is needed to ensure funding improves the integration of woodlands and forestry with the management of farmland, compared to now. This would be consistent with Scotland's Land Use Strategy and ensuring that regulations and grants are used to optimise outcomes for people, climate and nature.

Whilst forestry is very different to other forms of land management, there is a risk that maintaining a discrete scheme for woodlands and forestry creates or maintains conflict between land uses rather than fostering better integration. For example, farmers may be seeking public subsidy to continue managing land in ways that support food production, but foresters are trying to purchase land to meet tree cover expansion targets for timber production and climate mitigation, and others are trying to protect, restore and expand habitats (including native woodlands) for nature's recovery.

To deliver the vision in the Forestry Strategy for Scotland, where woodlands and forestry would be better integrated with other land uses, we believe there is a need for better integration with farming, crofting, peatland restoration and other land uses and land management schemes to avoid siloed management. It may be that it is necessary to retain discrete funding schemes for different purposes for now but ensure that how these are accessed and delivered at farm/croft/estate/business level is more integrated and joined-up.

To send the right signals about the purpose of the Scheme we think that the name 'Forestry Grant Scheme' should be reviewed. To many people, forestry still denotes near monoculture, commercial plantation approaches. Given that Scotland produces as much timber as it consumes, and high timber and carbon prices are driving commercial afforestation, public funding is less necessary. As the 'Introduction and Rationale for Providing Grant Support for Forestry' to this consultation states:

'The rationale for Scottish Government intervention in woodland creation is to provide a range of economic, social and environmental benefits for the people of Scotland which would not otherwise be delivered.'

A more inclusive name would imply this is not just a scheme for commercial timber producers, but one required to deliver a wider range of outcomes (i.e. improving public benefits for nature and people, including climate adaptation and the resilience necessary to minimise risks to future timber production and climate mitigation). For these reasons we are suggesting renaming as the Woodlands and Forestry Grant Scheme.

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.:

Yes, our recommendation is that a discrete Woodlands and Forestry Grant Scheme system is maintained for now, but the funding opportunities are mirrored within application systems more familiar to other land users (i.e. farmers).

We are very supportive of farmers being encouraged to diversify into tree planting, hedgerow creation, and small woodland creation, through payment options that can be tailored to the farm, and that farmers are used to using. We recommend that payments for the integration of well-planned agroforestry on farms sit within Tiers 2 and 3 so that these can sit with other nature restoration and climate mitigation measures as part of farm support. This governance of the schemes can ensure they are designed for the farming community. Some options should sit within Tier 4 and the future tree planting grants - these should be for woodland creation over a certain threshold (this threshold can be determined in discussions with Scottish Forestry) on marginal land/areas set aside for biodiversity and woodland planting for timber production.

To aid the integration of woodlands and forestry with agriculture, there are two elements that could help. The first is Whole Farm Plans (WFPs) which are being considered as part of Tier 1. Whilst these are likely to include some basic things that farmers have to do to receive funding (e.g. carbon and biodiversity audits), we also see them as a means to help identify opportunities on the farm that could be funded or supported through measures in Tiers 2, 3 and 4 e.g. woodland planting. WFPs should therefore help to drive improved integration between farming and woodlands/forestry. The other element that could help to ensure complementarity between agriculture and woodland/forestry funding options – at least in delivery terms – is provision of appropriate advice.

There needs to be complementarity between woodland and agricultural funding options regarding upland stock (especially sheep) grazing. It is often the case that there is extensive stock grazing within native woodland remnants that occur on crofting common grazing. Support through Woodland and Forestry Grant Scheme to control deer would not be effective in securing natural regeneration, in some situations, because of livestock impacts.

Woodland and Forestry Grant Scheme objectives would therefore be undermined by agricultural livestock subsidies. This anomaly/conflict needs to be addressed.

## 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 climate and nature emergencies are closely related and intertwined. The support package for forests and woodlands can therefore best contribute to tackling the climate emergency by prioritising woodland expansion and management which will benefit nature, improve climate adaptation in resilient landscapes, as well as promote carbon sequestration. Native woodlands and diverse productive woodlands provide the best blend of these benefits. While we acknowledge the potential of well managed commercial forestry to make an important contribution, there is less value for grant money spent in supporting what is already a profitable business model.

The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) establishes the minimum expectation for sustainable forest management. Accreditation to the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) goes a little further but is primarily designed to reflect 'The legal and good forestry practice requirements set out in the governmental UK Forestry Standard (UKFS).' Whilst these provide guidance that is important, and are improving with each new iteration, government grants should not merely support minimum levels of expectation. The support package for forestry should reward best practice, for example taking a precautionary principle regarding planting and restocking on deep peat by moving the definition of deep peat at which planting must not take place to 30 cm, and at which guidance regarding whether restoration or restocking should take place must be followed (as recent guidance in England has done). For resilience, the support package for forestry should be a reward for greater diversification than UKFS/UKWAS minimums (currently 75% maximum of a single species, this may move to 65% in the new version of UKFS, but does not provide sufficient resilience to pests, diseases and abiotic threats (such as drought, wind and fire) all of which are increasing with climate change.

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 grant support mechanism appears to already have sufficient flexibility to maximise the opportunities to blend private and public finance to support commercial afforestation. Land sale prices are already being driven by carbon prices.

We think that private investment through natural capital and carbon schemes should make a valuable contribution for nature, climate and people, not just climate change. And that when the contribution to climate change is judged, it must include climate adaptation/resilience as well as climate mitigation. This means that near monocultures of non-native tree species should not be supported as they do not provide resilience to future risks.

We believe that there is a significant opportunity for a new Woodland and Forestry Grant Scheme to combine private and governmental financing to promote more ecologically coherent woodlands, which we must not pass up. Currently, small-scale planting efforts do not have the size required for private finance to be practicable. To scale up projects, we need to use the already-established governmental frameworks provided by the Land Use Partnerships/Frameworks and opportunity mapping developed for Nature Networks that NPF4 mandates Planning Authorities to create. This would provide both the scale and the coordination required to meaningfully tackle the nature and climate emergencies.

Additionally, the Government should put The Interim Principles for Responsible Investment in Natural Capital on a statutory footing. This would assist in achieving a Just Transition by actively involving communities in the major change in land use required to meet our climate and environmental commitments.

From our experience in policy planning, we have learned that developers and investors rarely adhere to 'should', such as: 'Investment and management decisions 'should' demonstrate consideration of positive and negative impacts across all four capitals.' If new legislation is required, the Government must act quickly to enact it.

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.:

As Scotland produces as much wood as it consumes, we believe that public finance should focus on public goods, rather than subsidise businesses looking to maximise revenue through timber production. This should especially be the case given the already very favourable tax regime for commercial forestry.

Funding should be realigned (i.e. no additional cost) to focus on the best outcomes for nature, climate and people.

The Scottish Forestry website states:

'Ancient woodlands usually have a high value for natural and cultural heritage because of their long history of continuous woodland cover. Ancient and semi-natural woods (i.e. those where the current stands appear to be naturally regenerated rather than planted) are the woodland category that

generally has the highest biodiversity value.'

Consequently, the key method of stimulating woodland expansion should be by providing greater incentives for natural colonisation (especially in buffer zones around Ancient Woodlands). And the key method of stimulating woodland management should be to provide greater regulation and grants and advice to increase the rate of restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites to Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland status.

Any grant application for further woodland creation should be dependent on providing evidence that any currently owned woodland is under positive management in a management plan. This includes controlling the invasive seeding of non-native trees into adjacent land, especially Ancient Woodlands, peatlands and high conservation open habitat.

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?:

Yes, trees affected by pests, diseases, and abiotic factors such as drought, windthrow and wildfire (all of which are being exacerbated by climate change), provide reduced public benefits. To ensure long term climate mitigation, biodiversity habitat, domestic timber supply, flood alleviation and health and wellbeing, woodland creation and commercial afforestation must build in greater diversity (genetic variability, species, age, structure and silvicultural system) for better resilience. Existing woodlands should be managed to become more resilient over time.

We propose that a 'resilience supplement' is included within all options for woodland expansion and management. This should ensure that all grant-supported forestry has greater species diversity than the draft new UKFS suggestion of a maximum for any single species at 65%. For example, this 'resilience supplement' could be offered for schemes that propose less than 50% of any single species in the mix, a maximum size or proportion of a single species block and a minimum number of species included overall.

### 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?:

We support all of these measures to reduce barriers to agricultural options, particularly the provision of advice through a well-funded advisory service, with knowledge of the schemes and how to adapt these schemes to support trees on farms projects at all scales. As noted in our responses to other questions, this advice should include guidance on avoiding tree planting on open habitats of biodiversity value such as species-rich grasslands and peatlands to ensure that these important habitats are not lost.

In the case of agroforestry, resources should be developed to inform farmers on how such systems enable food production as opposed to "sacrificing" farmland to trees.

In general, there needs to be support for integrated approaches rather than just planting patches of trees on farms. That is why the schemes should sit where they are most likely to be accessed by farmers: we recommend that silvo-arable and silvo-pastoral options, hedgerows, copses and buffer strips, including riparian buffer strips are options available through Tier 2 and Tier 3 agricultural payments. Small farm-scale woodland creation should sit within Tier 4 and be managed by Scottish Forestry. The area threshold to qualify for this support should be decided in discussion with farming and environmental interests. We recommend that this discussion considers the pros and cons of setting the minimum area for this support at different levels between 0.25 and 2 hectares. The development of Whole Farm Plans in Tier 1 of the Agriculture Support Package – as noted earlier – would be an important measure that could help to identify the opportunities on farms/crofts for more trees and of what kind, as well as identifying where trees should not go. These would go hand-in-hand with the provision of advice. We note that there is nothing about skills and training in the above list of measures and think this should be added. We understand that Tier 4 will potentially include proposals for 'New Skills, Knowledge, Training and CPD' and think this is highly relevant to ensuring farmers learn about trees and woodlands and how to manage them.

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.:

The FGS application process is onerous for small schemes. Most individuals are unable to apply without the help of a professional forestry agent. Preparing a proposal for a small scheme can require almost as much input as for a larger scheme, thus agent costs for small schemes are disproportionately high. The introduction of a modest 'planning grant' for small schemes (say 0.25-5ha) would help to overcome this barrier. Alternatively, for small schemes, individuals could be empowered to make their own applications. This could include a one form, one guidance-document application, a reduced burden of supporting evidence, and access to low-cost mapping. The provision of free training would also be helpful to facilitate applications.

We also recommend that applying to the scheme is simplified, at least for farmers and crofters by ending the need to submit separate applications for woodland creation and woodland improvement options. In addition, planting mixed woodland involves more bureaucracy than planting monoculture. This needs to be addressed to promote biodiversity-rich woodland on farms.

## 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.:

The Woodland Improvement Grant – Woodlands In and Around Towns (WIG-WIAT) option should be publicised for greater uptake, this will lead to improvements in existing woodlands. The potential for a woodland creation Woodlands In and Around Towns supplement should also be considered, this could include incentives for public bodies with land (e.g. local authorities, schools and hospitals).

The Woodlands close to where people live are often important places for the communities to enjoy leisure and recreation activities as well as being used as settings for educational activities, such as forest schools. All land managers have a statutory duty to respect access rights under s.3 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, so we would expect a recognition of public access as an element of any plans for woodland creation or replanting projects. Access in woodlands in these areas should be referenced in a forestry grant application by the production of an accompanying access statement or map. This map could identify main routes and paths within the woodland, both formal and informal, as well as the location of other infrastructure, such as car parks, signage, gates, etc. If any routes will be affected during forestry operations, this should also be considered, through zoning of the work and potential creation of alternative routes, possibly on a temporary basis, to facilitate safe access as far as possible. This access statement/map would ensure that public access is considered strategically and even enhanced where possible, perhaps by the development of trails suitable for all abilities to ensure that access is as inclusive as possible. The use of self-closing gates rather than stiles on main paths should be a requirement of the grant process.

### 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.:

As mentioned in Q9 above, it would be beneficial if all forestry grant plans include a basic assessment of what public access already exists or will be affected, by production of an accompanying map of main tracks and routes, fences, gates, stiles. This would help forest managers to be aware of their legal obligations to respect public access.

Forests and woodlands which have multiple objectives (i.e. woodlands already used for recreation and community activities, or where there is potential for that to happen) an access management plan which includes the above but also car parking spaces, signage, etc, could be provided for a more strategic overview of how communities can access and enjoy the woodlands.

Even in forests and woodlands where there are unlikely to be high levels of use by the public, a consideration of public access would identify key routes for passage. In this case, self-closing gates could be installed alongside any gates on the main tracks. Too often, forestry gates are locked for other reasons (e.g. to prevent motorised vehicles entering the woodland, or to ensure deer do not get through gates which have been left open). However, this acts as a block on access for most people. Even if an adjacent stile is installed this will be a barrier for cyclists, horse-riders, dogs and many walkers and therefore putting in a self-closing gate should be seen as standard practice.

### 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.:

Recent research (e.g. Forest Policy Group (2022). Communities' experiences of new forest planting applications in Scotland) has shown that Community engagement in large commercial forestry schemes has been below standard in too many cases. This should be addressed in the FGS Review by:

- Requiring proposals to meet community engagement standards. The Scottish Environment LINK (2022) report 'UKFS: A call to enhance the 'people' theme' provides a strong starting point for developing these standards.
- Information on schemes, including all supporting data should be readily accessible online, as per the planning system, via a user-friendly website.

### 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.:

RSPB Scotland engage with applications for forestry grant schemes across Scotland, including responding to consultations on proposals. Such proposals can have significant detrimental impacts on protected sites and species of the highest conservation concern.

RSPB Scotland has several concerns regarding the forestry regulatory and grant process, and welcome the opportunity to engage through this consultation to ensure the process is transparent and decisions adequately justified going forward.

The decision-making process is opaque, whereby information relating to applications is poorly shared in the public domain. We would welcome an accessible online portal, similar to planning portals used by planning authorities and the Energy Consents Unit, which allows any member of the public to view documents submitted and follow the progress of proposals.

There seems to be limited opportunity for public engagement and community comment, with no statutory process for public comment.

Habitat Regulations Appraisals, required when projects are likely to affect European sites, are not made available online and can be difficult to obtain. It is

not appropriate that the public should have to resort to freedom of information requests to find information.

It is not clear what criteria are used to assess proposals. There is no equivalent of a planning application handling report shared online. Such documents could clearly set out consultation responses, what was taken into account and why the decision was reached. This should be a requirement of a decision-making process by a public body.

It is crucial that afforestation does not negate other ambitions, such as peatland restoration and nature recovery. The way in which these issues are weighed up need to be clearly set out and made available for public comment and scrutiny.

In our experience as a non-statutory consultee, we have found the approach to consulting stakeholders inconsistent and varies across conservancies. Whilst in some areas we have positive, constructive relations with SF, relations with other conservancies are not so positive, to the extent that we often do not find out in a timely manner about a consultation and thus are unable to fully engage; this is further exacerbated as per our comments above regarding lack of information made available for the public domain on EIAs and associated documents for forestry proposals. In our view, a standard, national approach is required to ensure transparency is actively sought and upheld by all conservancies in Scotland, not a select few. Given the prevalence of forestry development across Scotland, and also other public bodies operating within a consenting system uphold transparency and enable public scrutiny, we make these recommendations to ensure the forestry industry engages meaningfully with stakeholders and ensures access to environmental information going forward.

The Scottish Forestry and Statutory Consultees Joint Working Agreement does not seem conducive with an open and transparent decision-making process and needs to be reviewed. In particular, the agreement with NatureScot, also known as the concordat, limits where NatureScot can give advice to protected areas, but, according to the NatureScot website, they are responsible for all nature in Scotland:

'We are Scotland's nature agency. We work to improve our natural environment in Scotland and inspire everyone to care more about it. So that all nature in Scotland - our biodiversity, geodiversity and the natural elements of our landscapes and seascapes - is maintained, enhanced and brings us benefits.'

It is understood that the concordat is due for review in 2024 and consideration needs to be given to how best this serves the public and nature.

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?:

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.:

We recommend that a condition is added that requires higher level grants to include work experience opportunities to help address the skills gap. Some Common Agricultural Policy payments required outreach to be eligible for funding, we recommend that the government develops a similar process for the forest industry and woodland conservation sector. These could be in the form of open days, which would demonstrate the types of careers available and enable people to realise that there may be a career for them. We need to demonstrate the range of green jobs available and highlight transferable skills from other green industries. We encourage the government to collaborate with other organisations to make this happen.

## 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.:

Future woodland and forestry grant scheme support must address biodiversity loss in Scotland through the expansion of native woodlands using a right place first approach in which places with high carbon value, high conservation value and highly productive farmland are avoided (except for the integration of agroforestry in the latter). Then the right reasons for planting can be ascertained and the tree cover types to match the objectives can be determined. The choice of trees becomes relatively easy once place, reasons and tree cover type are known.

The woodland creation target of 18,000 hectares per year with 3,000 – 5,000 hectares intended to be native woodland creation means that 13,000 – 15,000 hectares is intended to be commercial afforestation, still predominantly with non-native species. This means the native woodland percentage is only 17 – 28%. Thus, the aim is to reduce the percentage of native woodland in Scotland (currently 32%) over time, yet this is already lower than in the rest of the UK (about 49%). To aid nature's recovery, we recommend aiming for at least 50% native woodland creation to improve the percentage native over time.

Improvement in condition of native woodlands, but especially Ancient Woodlands and particularly through the restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites must be a priority. This means focussing on deer and grey squirrel management and rhododendron control. It would be good to determine a minimum allocation percentage of the total funding pot to be used to fund biodiversity priorities, to show that forestry is helping to address

Scotland's internationally low biodiversity intactness ratio. A specific fund for landscape scale collaboration to facilitate landowners working together would also be helpful.

Commercial forestry must be more diverse to offer greater resilience, and this should have benefits by providing better habitat, albeit for woodland generalists.

Moving to a right place first approach for woodland expansion must be matched by an acknowledgement of where trees have been planted in places that we now consider wrong, for example on deep peat and on high conservation value open ground habitat. Grant support should support opportunities to move forest cover where appropriate.

The encroachment of forests, especially non-native tree species, into inappropriate places through invasive seeding must also be addressed through the future forestry grant scheme. The best way to achieve this is to withhold approval for further commercial afforestation if invasive seeding into adjacent sites, whether Ancient Woodland, deep peat or high conservation value open ground is a problem.

All of the above highlights that the skills gap exists for woodland conservation as well as the forest industry and each sector needs opportunities to learn from best practice in the other.

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?:

Better deer management across Scotland, would result in reduced impacts on existing woodlands and would enable natural colonisation on a greater scale. Deer management is a priority area for Scottish Environment LINK because it would deliver for a range of nature recovery objectives in Scotland as well as for the policies set in the Climate Change Plan. These key areas are peatland restoration, forestry, native woodland management and expansion, delivered at landscape-scale. Supporting the protection and restoration of woodlands identified by the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland are important priority aims for the FGS. Below we set out how we see the current funding package can evolve to stimulate woodland expansion and better outcomes across a wide range of woodland types, including native and productive woodlands.

All FGS applicants should submit a competent Herbivore Management Plan which outlines the known deer species, densities and issues across both the applicant's ground and neighbouring ground. Plans should consider the practicalities of implementing deer and livestock management to deliver and maintain herbivore impact levels over the long term that will achieve the nature restoration goals set for each grant-supported project. While deer and livestock densities can be useful data, herbivore impact levels are a key metric and should be assessed using methods approved by NatureScot, such as the Woodland Herbivore Impact Assessment method.

Competent Herbivore Management Plans should also include:

- Details of basic deer management infrastructure to support future culling operations such as access tracks to all corners, open deer glades or culling areas.
- A description of how applicants will work with relevant neighbours to reduce deer numbers at landscape scale.
- An awareness that deer densities of 0-5 deer/km<sup>2</sup> are likely to be necessary to allow woodland habitats to sustainably expand and support biodiversity.
- Consideration of how browsing pressure from livestock in the landscape will be addressed alongside deer pressure.
- A commitment to five yearly reviews in the light of Herbivore Impact Assessment and other data.
- Compliance with the Code of Sustainable Deer Management.

Grants for deer fencing should be used judiciously, in a supporting role to landscape-scale deer management. Payments for fencing to support woodland creation should remain available to play a supporting role as we transition to a landscape with significantly lower browsing pressure from deer. Fencing is not a sustainable solution to habitat restoration but can be an appropriate tool if applied judiciously. With this in mind, grant payments for deer fencing should only be available to support woodland creation or management in specific circumstances:

- Protecting small remnants of native woodland where priority for restoration is denoted by:
  - o designation as a SSSI or SAC.
  - o inclusion on the Caledonian Pinewood Inventory or the Ancient Woodland Inventory.
  - o native montane woodlands.
- Repairs to existing fences protecting any of the above categories of woodland should be funded where extending the lifespan of the fence has a realistic prospect of completing previous progress made towards woodland establishment.
- Fences to facilitate landscape-scale deer management, where the value of this is outlined to, and endorsed by, NatureScot.
- We recommend that consideration is given to assessing the role that offset electric wires in front of stock fences could play in some situations and that this is eligible for grant support where suitable.

In the more limited circumstances where deer fencing is used, the accompanying Deer Management Plan should include a section describing how the fence will be monitored and maintained over its lifespan and a clear plan for how the biodiversity value of the new woodland will be maintained after the end of that lifespan.

Small scale mixed land use?:

Lowland deer management:

- Important that there is real focus by Scottish Forestry and applicants in addressing deer management issues in the lowlands (not just the uplands) and all deer species.
- This will require support for smaller-scale collaboration between land managers so that deer populations can be managed in a coordinated manner.

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

Please add your comments here.:

The current Forestry Grant Scheme has been successful at increasing commercial afforestation, native woodland creation and getting some improved forest management. However, as identified in the introduction, it has increasingly been recognised that we are in nature and climate emergency. Gradual improvement in outcomes is not enough, this is an opportunity to reinvigorate the purpose of public funding in a new Woodlands and Forestry Grant Scheme. As well as funding to plant and manage the trees, greater investment is needed in appropriate advisory services and in skills training for new starters and continuous professional development opportunities for the current workforce. This training includes for farmers and landowners to understand the benefits and opportunities to be gained from planting trees and managing woodlands, and for the forest industry and woodland conservation sector to understand how to manage to achieve better outcomes for nature, climate and communities. This is an exciting time, a revised Woodlands and Forestry Grant Scheme can contribute to a nature positive, net zero future for Scotland.

## About you

What is your name?

Name:

Dr Andrew Weatherall MICFor

What is your email address?

Email:

andrew.weatherall@rspb.org.uk

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

RSPB Scotland

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