

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.:

There needs to be further support for research and innovation in the forestry sector. England has the Tree Production Innovation Fund for this specific purpose but only for the benefit of English foresters. Where is Scotland's version of this?

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.:

Agriculture and forestry need their own distinct funding options that are independent from one another. Too often forestry is treated as an afterthought and something adjacent to agriculture. However, this is far from reality as the two sectors operate in distinct manners and therefore have distinct needs which cannot be met if they are treated as the same just because they grow plants.

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.:

Innovation and R&D needs more funding and support if the forestry sector is to rise to the challenges facing it. In addition, there needs to be additional incentives and funding for sustainably managed forests for climate resilience as current economic forces prevent this. The private sector cannot be relied upon to deliver a truly sustainable future in forestry due to the long timeframes of the forestry business misaligning with the short term mentality of investors. This is especially apparent in the carbon credit market where there is insufficient monitoring of projects actually delivering on their carbon sequestration promises. Instead, it's just a green washing scheme for fossil fuel giants and other dubious actors. Right, carbon credits can't be trusted and the only way to change that is to create an oversight system to monitor these projects.

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.:

Yes, but it shouldn't be a requirement to do a project. There should be public only finance options as well.

That said, there needs to be better oversight into private projects as if these offsetting projects are being treated as a way to continue polluting, then the goal of these carbon capture projects aren't being met.

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.:

Local communities should have a right to say what is done with massive tracts of land in their communities and should also benefit from the woodland expansion in a tangible manner. Woodland expansion is an overall good thing for us all, but it needs to work with local communities to make it work for them too.

Related, in order to expand woodlands, Scotland needs to increase its seed and seedling supply. England has public funding for this very purpose (Seed sourcing grant and Tree production innovation fund). Scotland needs an equivalent that supports Scottish foresters, nurseries and innovators to achieve these planting targets. This is especially needed given FLS's recent budget cuts.

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?:

Any grant support should be predicated on ensuring resilience. In Germany, this is already the norm, and they enforce this through audits and other actions. Scotland needs to do the same and can't expect that blind faith will solve the problem as the private sector has a short term focus and won't think about climate resilience.

Related, in order to adapt to climate change, pests and diseases, we need to have a proper, pragmatic conversation about what is and isn't native. There's too much focus on an idealised vision of what nature is and what is natural in the UK which ignores the long history of human action and manipulation of nature and the very idea of nature itself. Simply put, we have to accept that the world is changing rapidly and that all things must respond to that change...nature and our ideas of it included. Sadly, we must pay for the mistakes of our ancestors both in the climate change sense and the history of how British people interacted with nature and made the UK we see today. Simply put, "nature" doesn't exist in the UK. It died a long time ago, and we must decide what to do with its remains.

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?:

They need more information on the financial aspects as they need to know the impacts of forestry on their bottom line. Forestry and investing in trees is, by its nature, is a long term plan and commitment. Farmers think in seasons and will need assurance that tree planting is a good investment for them. Otherwise, they won't take the risk.

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.:

Involving local communities is the best way to support small scale woodlands. In particular, if communities have more opportunities to own land and receive basic training, they'd happily do it. There's a lot of appetite in communities to engage with woodlands and positively contribute towards climate change, so giving land back to these communities or even an option to purchase as a community would be a major step in the right direction.

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.:

Again, it's about land. It's very hard to get land in Scotland and developments are purchasing out land that could be woodland. Worse, these developers don't bother putting trees (or anything taller than a hedge row) on their developments. This doesn't even cover how they don't have schools, clinics or any veneer of community building!

Anyways, there needs to be provisions within these grant programmes for local communities to have a say or stewardship over these newly planted woodlands. They need to not only have access to the woodland but also be active participants in its care, maintenance and long term planning. Otherwise, the woodlands will not exist long term (aka sold out to developers later down the line).

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.:

Again, it's about land and empowering communities to become active participants in woodland creation.

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 best way to ensure community involve is to require it as part of the grant application and administrative process. Basically, require that any planting project must have the local community's support and show how the local community will benefit in a tangible manner.

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.:

The best way to do this is to publish all successful proposals and decisions, so that anyone can see that the process was fair.

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?

Yes

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

Innovation needs to be funded as well. Although it can be riskier than buying equipment, we need to increase the quality, quantity and diversity of planting stock available in Scotland if we are to have any chance to meet our tree planting and woodland expansion targets. Agriculture has been well supported in terms of R&D and innovation whereas forestry has been historically neglected and is still treated as an afterthought despite its central role in climate mitigation efforts. In particular, forestry is very important to Scotland already in terms of economic and sustainability benefits. Here, Scotland has the unique opportunity to become a world leader in forestry due to its vast potential to expand woodlands and productive forestry.

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

More grant support will naturally create jobs in forestry and drive further skill 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.:

Fully paid internships and apprenticeships will go a long way to attracting talent to forestry. There's huge appetite across age ranges for opportunities to join the forestry and nature services sector. However, a major problem is that there are few opportunities to get the experience required to participate in this sector. Thus, government funded internships, like the ones Graduate Career Advantage Scotland used to provide to graduates, would be very appreciated in forestry.

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.:

Include extra points/scoring and funding for projects that directly support biodiversity. Germany already does this and, importantly, audits grant recipients over a long period of time to ensure that their commitments are kept. Scotland needs to do this too.

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?:

Unfortunately, deer populations need to be actively managed by humans (via hunting) unless you want to reintroduce wolves and other natural predators. This means you need financially support deer removal and deer meat processing. This could be encouraged by both providing subsidies for deer meat processors and fixed payments per deer killed for hunters.

Small scale mixed land use?:

Fencing can work on a small scale but not on a large scale.

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

Please add your comments here.:

Please provide grant support and develop your schemes in line with your policies. We very much support the policies but worry that they will fall short if not enough support is given. This is especially true with the need to increase R&D support in forestry.

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.

I consent