

Response ID ANON-VEPG-2GR4-H

Submitted to Future Grant Support for Forestry
Submitted on 2023-05-17 15:01:25

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?

Not sure

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Probably yes as LAs do not get consulted on agricultural schemes unless this required Planning Permission for a Change of Use.

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.:

In an ideal world. LAs would like to see whole landholding plans developed but it is unlikely that they would have the resources to deal with any large increase in consultation on such schemes if they are promoted.

The role of hedges and individual trees in the farmed landscape are key landscape features, especially along roadsides, and have large biodiversity benefits providing links between woods and other semi-natural areas. This can be increased by leaving a natural buffer of several metres. Many of these hedges and trees were first established around 1800AD and are now in decline.

The current AECS grants have a fairly high threshold of activity across the farm and do not allow for a landowner to undertake smaller scale work on an annual basis which they are more likely to be able to undertake on top of their normal farming activities. Also, if a wide buffer is fenced off as part of the protection strip for the hedge this currently gets excluded from the Basic Payment and Greening Schemes which seems anomalous.

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.:

Increasing the knowledge of woodland owners as well as their managers by increasing the sharing of work being undertaken by SF and Forest Research. Match the grants and regulation to the advice being developed.

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.:

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.:

The current funding package is reasonably generous for planting new areas.

Additional funding is required to enable the planting of smaller and more complex woods including access infra-structure, as is usually required for those adjacent to towns.

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?:

More adaptive forest management systems, which tend to be more resilient, are difficult to accommodate within the current grant and felling permission application systems.

To inform improvement in the grant and felling application forms a detailed discussion with the Continuous Cover Forestry Group and those who have long-term experience of using these systems would be beneficial. (Most often the projects which have worked on the ground are not textbook shelterwood / selection felling silvicultural systems but adapt to local conditions, tree species and growth).

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.

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.:

Small woodlands can be of key importance in creating green networks. In these circumstances, additional top up grants, especially to cover fencing costs would be required.

Much smaller scale planting areas (<0.25ha, hedges and individual trees) perhaps could be better delivered through local schemes as was previously done through Durham County Council's very successful Tree Cover Scheme and as being currently used by a number of LAs, Regional Forest Projects in England.

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 current WIAT grant rates are well below actual costs, especially for sites with very difficult access and logistics. Very often standard rural forest specifications are not adequate or appropriate for the locations in question.

It would be good to see grants for access provided on a landholding basis where establishment of woodland with paths could be a means of providing local access network links across the landholding but separated from livestock.

Community woodland grants used to help fund education, engagement and communication associated with WIAT projects. This aspect of working in urban and peri-urban areas is often very onerous and some funding towards this would enable it to be done better and more extensively. There is also an opportunity to educate the more urban populace about the benefits of woods and their products in the fight against climate change.

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.:

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.:

For woods well used by the public, ensure that the consultees include those using the site. This is very often a longer and more complex process of discussions and publicity, than a one-off presentation to a Community Council. It requires staff, both SF and those implementing the project, to be trained in public engagement processes.

This was included in the training course covering various aspects of urban forestry management piloted by Scottish Forestry and others over a decade ago. See Nicolas Shepherd Landscape Architect, Tim Hall Woodland Trust Scotland.

There used to be Community Involvement grants run in tandem with WIAT projects. These now seem to be purely for Community Groups to undertake work. In the case of woods managed by LAs there is a need for education and informal awareness raising, particularly in the case of Country and Urban Parks which are visited by very large numbers of a mainly urban populace.

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.:

Few of the general public are aware of the Public Register.

Community councils are often the means of consultation with local communities. Some are better than others at extending the invitation to view proposals to their wider community. Posters on local notice boards or on site may at least alert a larger number of people.

We have noted that some new private projects have had attractive information boards erected while work is being carried out. Something similar could

be put up at the proposals stage depending on scale and sensitivity.

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?:

Encourage day / block release options for forestry/arb apprenticeships within Local Authorities with good link between training and work experience so that each reinforces the other. LAs and Scottish Government organisations might be one way of providing supported starting off points in the industry. In the past many people had their apprenticeships with such organisations and then went on to set up their own businesses. Where this not of direct long-term benefit to the organisation, government or wider industry support may be required.

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.:

EIAs are required for larger sites and particularly sensitive ones. Introducing the requirement for a light touch EIA to be carried out on all new planting schemes would pick up small areas of diverse habitat or new habitat creation, such as small flushes and ponds. These combined across numerous sites could result in a significant retention / creation of other habitats.

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?:

Collaboration between different landowners required.

Small scale mixed land use?:

The current requirements for applying for deer management are not cost effective unless dealing with large areas. Some assistance for the particularly skilled deer management in and around towns would encourage this to be undertaken in more situations.

Lack of grey squirrel control is crucial to getting broadleaved species fully established in lowland Scotland and grant support towards this might enable this to be undertaken. Without this the palette of species, suitable to soil conditions, is very limited.

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

Please add your comments here.:

Members of STOG would be happy to be part of a brainstorming workshop regarding future funding and regulation mechanisms to be able to provide better consultation responses in line with local priorities.

About you

What is your name?

Name:

Scottish Tree Officers Group (STOG) – Local Authority Planning Role

What is your email address?

Email:

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Scottish Tree Officers Group (STOG) – Local Authority Planning Role

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