

Response ID ANON-VEPG-2GRK-8

Submitted to Future Grant Support for Forestry
Submitted on 2023-05-17 13:44:52

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.:

There must be greater opportunities for land managers, crofters and farmers to access forestry grant support, not necessarily from a discrete scheme, but rather grant funding supporting a number of aims, whether shooting and conservation, food production, habitat creation or pinewood restoration.

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.:

n/a

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 for forestry must be adaptable and evolve with emerging scientific research and data into the efficacy of afforestation, particularly around tree species carbon sequestration.

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.:

Private investment through natural capital and carbon schemes must not displace existing employment in remote and rural areas. For example, private investment should not actively seek redundancies in the gamekeeping sector, and a more blended model of supporting exiting employment whilst expanding new forestry jobs must be delicately sought.

Grant support should only be awarded where there is a clear recognition of how existing rural jobs and skills are retained.

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 funding package of grants has to be made available for the management of Sitka regeneration as it is often miles from the original forest.

This is because Sitka spruce can impact upon open moorland and peatland and can be costly to remove. It can also affect those wishing to establish native woodland, especially when Sitka regeneration outgrows new hardwood saplings.

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?:

There should be a requirement for grant support to tackle the impacts of climate change, pests and disease. There must be a greater recognition of the work of gamekeepers and rural workers in the control of predators, such as foxes in woodlands. There could be more support for predator control when it comes to ensuring that Scotland's iconic and endangered woodland species are protected, such as the Capercaillie.

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, Support with cashflow, Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout

Are there others not listed above?:

- Deer and herbivore management support
- Woodland and sapling protection in the form of infrastructure to prevent deer and herbivore damage

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 scale woodland ownership could be facilitated through either grants or subsidised through a future agricultural payment scheme.

Small woodlands have tremendous benefits for game shooting and stalking. They provide a small microcosm of habitat and biodiversity, often acting as a safe haven for wildlife amongst large-scale arable farms in lowland areas.

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.:

There should be greater support for woodlands in urban and peri-urban areas, due to the lack of vegetation cover in many of Scotland's towns, cities and suburbs. Many new housing or business park developments contain very little green space due to high land prices.

There should be greater support for deer management in the peri-urban situation, given the issues of an increasing lowland deer population in Scotland, particularly in peri-urban areas in the Central Belt.

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.:

Grant support must be offered to rural communities. BASC launched its Community Integrated Deer Management vision in 2021, which highlights the important need for deer management on publicly owned lands, such as land held by FLS, to become more localised, handing more power to rural communities.

There are 26,300 firearm certificate (FAC) holders in Scotland, a significant number of whom will already be involved in deer stalking. However, the number of recreational deer stalkers engaged in regular deer management at a local level is considerably lower, with many taking advantage of sporting tourism opportunities instead. If these recreational deer stalkers were given the opportunity to manage deer locally as well, a considerable culling impact could be made.

Community empowerment in this area is vital, allowing trained recreational deer stalkers, holding BASC approved DSC1 and DSC2 can manage deer and then reap the benefits at a local level, through a sustainable, high quality food product. Further to this, local larders and processors can profit from these opportunities. This would be a good example of minimal public funding sparking a substantial economic benefit for local and rural economies, on a sustainable footing. Grant funding by Scottish Forestry could help achieve this vision, by supporting recreational stalkers' schemes and the expansion of deer larders.

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.:

As above, it would be beneficial for recreational stalkers to have a greater input over the grant process and how these grants are developed. This would ensure greater transparency, community empowerment and utilisation of existing rural skills.

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.:

Criteria for grant processes must be robust and wholly transparent. This will create a 'level playing field' which will encourage grant applications. On a regulatory footing, BASC believe it necessary to ensure that any changes to the regulatory framework is subject to prior consultation, devoid of bias, to

ensure that all viewpoints on forestry management are sought.

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?:

There must be more of a localised approach and a focus on targeting smaller forestry businesses who contribute to projects which encourage the benefits of conservation. The distribution of public funds to larger companies is not just, nor does it translate to significant benefits for local gamekeepers or rural workers.

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

Skills development is crucial and part of the support for forestry businesses should include training and CPD of foresters and rural workers. We want recreational deer stalkers to be included in any consideration for forestry skills training funding.

For greater support for community deer management, we recognise that deer stalking is not a simple vocation to access. There are multiple barriers that must be overcome – from applying for a FAC and purchasing equipment, to completing deer management qualifications. These steps are predominantly driven by the individual, but there are steps that we can take to make the process more accessible. Going forward, BASC and The British Deer Society (BDS) will seek to provide targeted training to communities with a desire to manage local deer. Communities with these deer management aspirations will be able to apply for a deer stalking certificate (DSC) 1 course to be delivered at a discounted rate. The course will be delivered in the vicinity of the community where possible. We will also seek to actively promote the virtues of completing the DSC 2 course, and will connect candidates with qualified witnesses and assessors. The provision of targeted, discounted training will play a key role in upskilling communities with deer management aspirations. We recognise that simply obtaining a qualification does not make someone a highly proficient deer stalker. There is still a fundamental need to build up quality management experience. To assist with this, BASC and BDS will launch a dedicated deer stalking mentorship scheme that will seek to connect new stalkers with highly experienced and qualified individuals. A series of online and in-person seminars will be organised to share the insights of designated mentors, and we envisage that this will contribute towards the continuous professional development of new stalkers.

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.:

There should be better liaison with companies and organisations to identify where key challenges and opportunities lie.

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.:

BASC believe there is a need to increase species diversity by reducing the maximum allowed for a single species in a commercial plantation. This will ensure that biodiversity is enhanced, by reducing monoculturalism, both in trees, wild mammals, insects and birds.

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?:

It is vital that herbivore browsing, and damage is mitigated. To iterate the point made earlier, it is vital that community involvement in deer stalking is advanced.

There could be support to subsidise the cost of reducing the damage caused by herbivores in the form of management and control subsidies in order to tackle the issue of predation and thus biodiversity loss, due to over-predation.

Small scale mixed land use?:

There could be the support for better deer fencing infrastructure.

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

Please add your comments here.:

n/a

About you

What is your name?

Name:

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR SHOOTING AND CONSERVATION (BASC)

Scottish Forestry would like your permission to publish your response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

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