

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.:

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.:

## 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.:

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.:

Woodland creation is great and should be encouraged. However, carbon finance has pushed land prices far too high, so it wouldn't be good to exacerbate that by making certain woodland creation even more profitable than it already is. It would also result in public money being poured into schemes that are enriching already wealthy businesses/landowners - and carbon may be locked up, but there might not be many other benefits. Additionality is probably a good mechanism to avoid this. I feel grant support should be more geared towards projects that deliver a wide range of benefits and face challenges - such as woodland creation that is small and/or diverse, and innovative.

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.:

A simpler, quicker, and more streamlined process for applying for grants. I've applied for several and done a LTFP and still get confused as to what forms are where, whether they're filled in online or submitted by email, and all the hoops to jump through. RP&S is also often down for maintenance which can be inconvenient.

Better promotion of the existing grants. Very few farmers I speak to know the grants available for creating or managing their woodland. Even many foresters don't know of all the grants available.

Higher grant rate and easier forms for smaller schemes (creation or management). It seems that large-scale forestry is doing very well at the moment and there are many big schemes going ahead, and they have the finances to employ professional foresters and all the capital costs. However smaller schemes may face more challenges and have a higher cost per tree. But they should be encouraged because they often also create more benefits per tree and will quickly add up to a sizeable area.

In terms of better management, grants could be introduced to encourage pruning and thinning (of conifers and broadleaves). This would support more jobs, and ensure quality timber is being produced in the future, and reduce the problems of unmanaged woodland. Formative pruning grants were available in Ireland.

Better grant support for LISS/CCF management would also improve the quality and resilience of our forests.

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?:

The grant criteria would need to ensure that tree species are well suited to the sites and there is a diverse range of species planted in a mixture that is fine-grained enough to allow for disease/climate change taking out one or two species and there still being a reasonably intact forest remaining. The system needs to be flexible enough that on exceptionally exposed/poor sites it would be permissible to only plant 1-2 species, but whenever the land allows a greater range of species should be necessary. Ensuring ESC is used is good, but perhaps soil survey results should be necessary on bigger schemes, of both woodland creation and restocking - as unsuitable and stressed trees harbour diseases that can then multiply and infect healthy trees. If the grant scheme supported thinning that may help as well, as thinned woodland with better airflow may discourage fungal pathogens.

### 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

Are there others not listed above?:

Peer-to-peer knowledge sharing - easier to see the benefits when your neighbours are doing it, rather than being told by an 'outsider'.  
Lectures/modules about forestry and visits to woodlands in the curriculum of agricultural courses at college and university. Likewise more agroforestry and basic knowledge about agriculture on forestry courses. Foresters and farmers are completely divided in knowledge and culture, which must contribute to the land-use being so divided and contested as well.

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.:

Support in forestry advice and expertise (like Borders Forest Trust provides - but only for native schemes).  
Higher fencing grant - as the costs per tree of fencing is so much higher on a smaller area.  
Simpler forms - again the time/cost of filling in forms is so much higher if divided per tree on a small scheme compared to a large-scale scheme. Also a user-friendly website where it's easier to find the information and forms that you need. I still get lost on the Rural Payments and Services website, it's a bit of a maze, and could easily put someone off, especially a busy farmer with other priorities.

### 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.:

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.:

These are really good aims but I have no experience in this area.

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.:

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?:

We've been recipients of the Harvesting and Processing grant several times, and it has made a huge difference to our forestry and sawmilling business, allowing us to upgrade and make things safer, more efficient, higher quality outputs, and keep everyone employed. It's fantastic and I really hope it continues long into the future. There are many challenges to rural forestry businesses but also so many benefits, and the grant has helped us overcome the problems and increase the rewards for everyone - the employees, the customers, us, and the landscape we're managing.  
The main improvement that could be made would be for there to be more than one clearing round in the year - if you miss it then waiting 12 months until the next clearing is a long time to put off an investment.

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

Any help with NPTC/LANTRA training would be welcome and make the industry safer and work done be to a better standard. Training is a big outlay for self-employed/small businesses.

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.:

This would be really great, though I'm not sure what help is already there. But help paying their wages, covering training costs, and helping with coordinating between different businesses so people can get a range of experience. For our business it would also be hard to find enough work for a new entrant full-time as so much of the work is skilled, so sharing them with another business could work well. Forestry Roots scheme seems to work well, so maybe that could be expanded as well?

## 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.:

Rejig the system so that there is less support for 'business-as-usual' spruce plantations (which are important but can support themselves and have a more limited range of benefits) and give more support to diverse and native schemes.

Mixed species productive woodlands (native or non-native) have so many benefits but there is no requirement and very little encouragement to grow them. It's a shame that there is such a low bar for species diversity in woodland creation and the restructuring regen grant, and perhaps a higher grant for a more diverse woodland would help increase the variety of species planted and thus resilience and biodiversity.

I have just cleared 10 ha of windblow from Storm Arwen (another 60 ha to go), and have kept the few stable mature trees remaining on site (which are providing good refuges for biodiversity) and planted 15 different species in various mixes using the Forest Development Types, all micro-sited according to soil, exposure, aspect etc. I've received the £550/ha grant for delivery diversity. However I could have felled all remaining trees (and thus reduced operational costs and risk of damaging the fence) and planted 60% Sitka spruce and 40% Norway spruce and still got the same level of grant. There is no requirement, incentive or even expectation for planting truly resilient and biodiverse forests. In fact, having been recommended (but not required) by the woodland officer to keep the scattered standing trees, that complicated and reduced the restocking grant because in some areas I would plant less than 2,500 sph to leave space for these mature trees.

It can also be difficult in woodland creation to mix conifers and broadleaves, which is a shame as they work so well as nurses for each other, and it gives more options if one species get's a disease or becomes unsuitable due to climate change in future.

Better funding for LISS/CCF. A small grant is available, but perhaps not generous enough as there is so little uptake of this form of management.

Also more support for businesses that support LISS/CCF systems such as small-scale forestry machinery and small-medium scale sawmills. The 'local' sawmills are the missing link for diverse and productive woodland (including native) - they require a slow, steady stream of timber and generally like a wide range of species and sizes - including hardwood and oversized. So having more local sawmills would create demand for the products of CCF management and native woodland. A stand of mixed age Douglas fir, larch, and sycamore for example has great biodiversity value compared to pure Sitka spruce, but no market for the timber in industrial sawmills - however would be welcome at many smaller sawmills and there's plenty of demand for the products.

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?:

Easier to form Deer Management Groups and better incentives to do so.

Small scale mixed land use?:

Perhaps a grant linked to Herbivore Impact Assessment results?

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

Please add your comments here.:

Perhaps not relevant to biodiversity, but to the restocking grants in general - there should be a higher restocking rate for after windblow events, and this has been highlighted by storm Arwen. The low rate of the restructuring regeneration grant is due to the assumption that there will be a sizeable profit after harvesting that should cover restocking costs. However after windblow there may be very little profit, and in many cases not even enough to cover the restocking costs. Which seems unfair when neighbours will be harvesting trees that are still standing and getting exactly the same support for restocking. And farmers facing similar natural disasters frequently get help/compensation.

If there is no surplus after harvesting it also puts on pressure to make the restocking as cheap as possible - and thus restock with Sitka that will require the least maintenance, even if a range of other species could have grown on the site. It also further disenchant farmers with forestry if their shelterbelt/farm woodland blows over, destroys the fences, makes very little money when harvested, and then they're required to replant but get almost no help to do so - it helps cement the view that woodland is just a liability and discourages them from planting more woodland. In Northumberland a new grant to help with restocking after storm Arwen has just been developed, and it would be brilliant if Scottish Forestry could look at doing the same.

Also help for getting windblown timber out of the area of storm damage - there is a massive surplus of timber in the area and the sawmills were refusing to take it, leading to timber getting stained and losing much value at roadside (and on the stump). Supporting with haulage costs or logistics of getting timber to areas unaffected by the storm where there was still a demand for the timber would have helped save timber (many sawlogs are now reduced to chip wood) and stopped there being a slump in timber prices in the region.

## 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