

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.:

NFFN agrees that that grant support for forestry should continue as a discrete scheme IF we take a radically different approach.

Central to this will be achieving essential complementarity between grant support for forestry and our new agricultural payments framework to support and enable integrated land management (land sharing not land sparing) and the evolving role of farmers, crofters and land managers. This will be key to hitting our climate and biodiversity targets within the timeframes and ensure a Just Transition. Coherence and alignment will be integral if we are to achieve our vision for Scotland to become 'a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture.'

(see response to Question 2 below.)

### NFFN Policy on Afforestation

It is without doubt that the UK must significantly increase its tree cover in order to tackle the nature and climate crises. Tree planting can be an effective nature and climate friendly on-farm solution, but needs to be done well to ensure positive benefits. Ensuring the increase in tree cover meets both climate and nature aspirations, as well as working in harmony with farmers, crofters and food production, will require a radically different approach than has been taken in the past with inappropriate blanket afforestation.

NFFN encourages farmers and crofters to create woodier landscapes, alongside and within farmland, with native trees that do not damage other habitats or soils. Woodland grants for farmers and crofters should support both the management of existing woodland resources and new tree planting in appropriate locations which can even benefit farm/croft businesses.

Silvopasture, silvoarable and agroforestry systems are also positive options which can diversify and spread risk by providing an alternative tree crop in the form of fruit, nuts or timber, and provide shade, shelter and fodder for livestock. Such systems can deliver environmental goods: preventing soil erosion, improving water management and providing habitat for pollinators and beneficial insects. Such systems should be rewarded by future farming and forestry schemes and farmers/crofters should be supported to implement these.

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.:

We have to stop viewing forestry as non-agricultural land management and work towards integrating our forestry and agriculture sectors. Farmers and crofters are land stewards for 80% of Scotland's land mass. Designing effective land management/ knowledge exchange/ grant support schemes that allow farmers and crofters to develop the knowledge and skills of small woodland management, silvopasture, silvoarable and agroforestry systems and the resulting integration of trees, scrub and hedges onto farms and crofts is a huge opportunity for Scotland to meet its climate and nature goals alongside food and fibre production.

We agree with Soil Association Scotland 'that a significant increase in the integration of trees on farms and crofts should be a priority for Scottish Government, and this ambition should be communicated clearly, with an emphasis on productivity gains. The evidence base is building that the careful and deliberate integration of trees and woodlands into farming systems as a land sharing or agroecological approach can boost productivity, rather than reducing productivity through loss of productive area, which is a concern voiced by many farmers. This is in addition to the benefits for biodiversity, soil health/structure, carbon and flood mitigation. Modelling by Soil Association in the 'Trees and Woodland in the Farmed Landscape' report suggested that planting on as little as 1% of arable farmland and 5% on dairy and lowland and upland grazing land could deliver 342,000ha of new woodland and tree canopy cover outwith woodland by 2050.'

National targets for agroforestry and hedgerow creation should be set within the wider woodland creation target of 18,000 hectares of new woodland each year which would allow for support to be directed accordingly.

While we acknowledge and welcome the work being supported through the Scottish Government's Integrated Trees Network and the recent work by Forestry Scotland and Scottish Government to revise and improve the existing agroforestry options under the FGS, there is an opportunity now to build on this and make all Scottish Government grant/ payment support for farmers and crofters more effective.

We have received the following feedback from our NFFN Scotland members who have interacted with the current grant support for forestry and the challenges they currently face:

'It's complex, prescriptive and more support is required for replanting'

'Not fit for purpose- we need much lower density options for agroforestry.'

'Inadequate for crofters that want to continue to produce food, manage for wildlife or diversify their options. Far too much croft in-by given over to afforestation, where a sensitive shelterbelt/hedge/ silvopasture mix would work. A big limiting factor is deer- with such absurdly high densities over vast tracks of Scotland, the only 'value for money' is deer-fenced forestry blocks. Lower deer density in the wild could see a different approach. Current agroforestry options simply don't work for crofters- it is an easy win.'

'Agroforestry option is not fit for purpose. I've only put 40 trees per ha in some arable and it doesn't tick any box.'

The opportunity here for better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding options will be the design of the new four-tier framework for agricultural support recently consulted on by the Scottish Government and how existing grant support for forestry for farmers and crofters is then designed to complement/ support this.

Within our response to this consultation we argue that integrating trees/hedges within Whole Farm Plans should be supported under Tier 2 and 3, either as a direct requirement for payment or with additional grant support. We also agree with Soil Association Scotland that if tree planting is to be included as part of competitive complimentary support (Tier 4), then this should be focused on advice, farm-scale forestry and investment in innovation/supply chain development.

The new framework for agricultural support presents a huge opportunity to streamline advice, farmer to farmer and crofter to crofter knowledge exchange, grant support and access to regulated private investment for integrating trees onto farms and crofts and supporting silvopasture, silvoarable and agroforestry systems.

NFFN Scotland would encourage the Scottish Government and Scottish Forestry to continue to work with the Agriculture and Rural Development Stakeholder Group to continue to explore how to achieve better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding options as the new framework for agricultural support is developed.

We would also like to extend an invitation to Scottish Forestry to meet with our NFFN Steering Group members who are all currently working on integrating trees, hedges and scrub into their farms, crofts and grazing businesses in harmony with food and fibre production.

## 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.:

Forestry like agriculture will be one of the sectors most affected by climate change. Currently on our net zero journey in Scotland we are very focused on a pathway of freeing up land for large-scale woodland expansion driven by our woodland creation target of 18,000 ha p/a year and the current support package for forestry is designed for this. As stated earlier, NFFN acknowledges that we do need to significantly increase our tree cover in order to tackle the nature and climate crises. However, we argue for a more holistic, integrated approach to land use to tackle the climate emergency and net zero. Multifunctional landscapes also deliver more than simply net zero. An ambition to reach targets by being over reliant on technology and driving intensive areas of production without making systemic changes will not create the holistic benefits of addressing the climate and nature emergencies hand in hand.

Whole Farm Management is a key part of nature and climate friendly farming. We set out advice for farmers and crofters in our resource 'Farming for Climate Action: What Are We Waiting For?' - [https://www.nffn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NFFN-Farming-For-Climate-Action-Report\\_Digital.pdf](https://www.nffn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NFFN-Farming-For-Climate-Action-Report_Digital.pdf)

Here we encourage all farmers and crofters to undertake Whole Farm Management and guide them through a series of actions:

1. Create a Whole Farm/ Croft Plan. Look at existing opportunities and constraints of your land, and the surrounding land. Create a whole-farm/croft plan which looks at the future and factors in potential changes coming from climate change (e.g. drought, flooding, rising temperatures, pests and disease) and which seeks to work with other farmers, crofters, foresters and land managers in the surrounding landscape
2. Work towards your Maximum Sustainable Output and consider how profitability could be linked to your partnership with nature. ( For detail on Maximum Sustainable Output and Nature Means Business see here: <https://www.nffn.org.uk/resources/nmb/>)
3. Review your farming systems and find the best within your own system. You may want to consider whole system change, e.g. agroecology, pasture-led livestock, agroforestry, organic, etc

As set out above, we would like to see the support package for forestry evolve along with the new agriculture payment framework to support Whole Farm Management which includes silvopasture, silvoarable and agroforestry systems as well as small scale woodland projects. By design Whole Farm Management is holistic and has diversity and, in turn, risk management built in which is key to resilience to future climate.

Any mono-culture/ mono-cropping/ lack of crop and species diversity in agriculture or forestry will make farms, crofts, woodlands and forests less resilient to future climate. With that in mind, it would stand to reason that the support package for forestry as well as agriculture should be designed to encourage greater diversity of species, crops and habitats, better water management, better soil management for soil health, reduced reliance on

artificial inputs such as pesticides and fertilisers and acknowledgment of the benefits that sustainable livestock can bring to help recycle nutrients and build soil fertility for other crops.

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.:

We have selected the yes option as the potential of private investment through natural capital and carbon schemes to make a valuable contribution to climate change exists. As is the potential to blend this with public finance.

However, in agreement with the current work of the Scottish Land Commission, there are caveats to this and still much to work through to make private investment a valuable contribution to not just climate change, but to nature restoration, thriving rural communities and a fair and just transition for all.

The caveats NFFN Scotland would put to this are:

Ensure that private finance is delivering genuine environmental/carbon benefit without impacting other important public policy aims e.g. land reform, reversing rural depopulation, with clear regulation and assessment potentially on a case by case basis

Provide a clear regulatory framework and guidance regarding private markets with specific relevance to Scotland

Provide a clear reference point from where public funding steps in and where private finance does, so things can be effectively stacked on top of each other

Provide clear information, guidance and advice to farmers and crofters to ensure that they are making decisions that benefit their business e.g. best time to sell, how much etc.

Ensure that there is equality of access to private markets e.g. crofters, smallholders and tenant farmers, to ensure that they can get involved if they wish/aren't negatively impacted - perhaps through group schemes to enable join up at scale etc.

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.:

With the focus of the NFFN response on grant support for integrating trees into farms and crofts and expansion/ uptake within this - please see answers to Q1/2/3 and 7

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?:

With the focus on grant support for integrating trees into farms and crofts, NFFN Scotland agrees that this should be a requirement to support active management. Much of this will rest on farmers and crofters accessing the right advice, support and opportunities to upskill and gain the knowledge of resilient woodland, tree and hedge management at the point of accessing the grant. See answer to Question 7 below:

### 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?:

All of the above will serve to reduce barriers for farmers and crofters to create woodier landscapes. The measures 'better integration of support for woodland creation with farm support mechanisms' and 'Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout' are key to the growth of essential silvopasture, silvoarable and agroforestry practices in Scotland.

Access to guidance, advice and information are also all key but driven by the speed we need farmers and crofters to gain the knowledge and skills to create the woodier landscapes necessary to meet our climate and nature restoration targets (seven harvests) - scaling up investment in farmer and crofter-led knowledge exchange would be another effective way to support farmers and crofters to adapt and change.

Currently much of our agriculture and forestry advice services are designed on the 'one to many' or 'paid expert' model. NFFN Scotland with partners, Soil Association Scotland, Pasture for Life, Landworkers Alliance, Nourish Scotland and Propagate are currently running a farmer and crofter-led peer to peer practical knowledge exchange programme which supports the transition to regenerative and agroecological land management practices- <https://www.nourishscotland.org/agroecology-enabling-the-transition/>

There is potential now to invest and scale programmes like the above and the Soil Association's KTIF funded 'Agroforestry in Action' programme.

Based on this, NFFN Scotland is calling for a £200m ten-year co-designed, industry partner-led, programme of regenerative and agroecological learning, research and development and regional-based peer-to-peer farmer- and crofter-led knowledge exchange supported across Scotland (£20 million per annum.) These regional farmer and crofter-led cluster groups will be fundamental to the success of the more top-down larger-scale initiatives of Regional Land Use Partnerships, Nature Networks and Local Biodiversity Partnerships.

This investment has the potential to give more farmers and crofters the confidence, supported by their peers, to integrate trees into their farms and crofts.

As referenced above by members of the NFFN Scotland steering group, there is an opportunity now to further revise and improve the existing agroforestry options under the FGS to make them fit for purpose.

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.:

Please refer to responses from the Scottish Crofting Federation, Woodland Crofts and the Landworkers' Alliance.

#### 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.:

No specific suggestions

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.:

Please refer to response from the Scottish Land Commission

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.:

Please refer to response from the Scottish Land Commission

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.:

Please refer to response from the Scottish Land Commission

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?:

No specific suggestions

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

No specific suggestions

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.:

No specific suggestions

## 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.:

Current grant support from the FGS is focused on the primary purpose of 'forestry expansion and sustainable forest management' as stated in the question. Similar to intensive agriculture, we know an intensive commercial forestry sector with a focus on timber production at all costs will come at a high cost in terms of biodiversity loss and soil degradation.

The challenge, like agriculture, is balance. How do we balance forestry expansion in Scotland to sequester carbon and produce timber which is also nature-friendly and then how to incentivise that practice through grant support.

One solution as put forward in our response here is to create grant support which rewards farmers and crofters to create woodier landscapes with native trees, manage existing trees, hedges and woodlands and transition to silvopasture, silvoarable and agroforestry systems all of which protect, restore and expand valuable habitats and ecosystems while producing food and fibre. Production, nature and abundance can work together.

Another steer for designing future forestry grant support to address biodiversity loss can be taken from the recent lowland and upland scenarios presented within the recent Scottish Government Biodiversity Strategy Consultation.

Within the scenario 'Towards a nature-rich landscape in the lowlands' - the following aspirations were presented:

Mixed forestry sequesters carbon, produces timber, and is more resilient to the changing climate and more beneficial to wildlife than single species plantations

Natural open woodlands and scrub at higher elevations bring climate benefits, and a natural and scenic diversity that is currently missing

Hedges wide and tall support more biodiversity, prevent erosion, sequester carbon and connect habitats, enabling wildlife to move through the landscape

The integration of trees in grassland or in crops in an agroforestry system can deliver multiple benefits for the environment and for farm productivity

Within the scenario 'Towards a nature-rich landscape in the uplands' - the following aspirations were presented:

Creating natural open woodlands and scrub at higher elevations brings climate benefits, and a natural and scenic diversity that is currently missing

Expansion of deciduous and native trees and other woodland plants support more wildlife, reduce flooding risk and store carbon

Silvopasture such as wood pasture is good for biodiversity, provides shelter to livestock, improves animal welfare and farm productivity

Riparian woodlands shade and nourish the river helping fish and other aquatic wildlife be more protected from rising temperatures

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?:

NFFN supports the recommendation in the Woodland Trust and Soil Association Scotland report 'Integrating Trees and Farms on Crofts' to implement the recommendations of the Deer Working Group. Forestry grant mechanisms will not achieve on their own the deer management that is required to address overgrazing which is one of the main threats to woodland expansion targets, regeneration as well as woodland condition.

As one of our steering group members stated in our consultation response to the Agriculture Bill Proposal:

'This new framework must support collective action as well as individual farm level. Nature restoration cannot be achieved on a piecemeal basis. A landscape scale approach is necessary for deer management. For example, it is becoming a particular problem in Angus' marginal uplands due to large scale afforestation of upland estates driving red deer down to the margins. Deer management, of both reds and roe, needs to be addressed at landscape scale in order to permit natural regeneration and small scale woodland creation (if deer fencing is not funded) and farmers are not resourced as gamekeepers.'

Small scale mixed land use?:

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

Please add your comments here.:

No further comment

About you

What is your name?

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Nature Friendly Farming Network

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