

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.:

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.:

Woodland creation is only "agriculture" in the broadest sense and although there needs to be complementarity the desired outcomes laid out in Section 5 may militate against more traditional agricultural approaches.

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 packages must encourage the establishment of the right trees in the right place rather than directed at achieving an arbitrary number of hectares planted.

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.:

It is not clear to us that "green-washing" by financial institutions is conducive to the outcomes outlined in section 5 below. It should be possible to have a support system that encourages the expansion of native woodland and curbs the inflation of land prices.

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.:

Our Society is principally interested in the effect of the grant system on the restoration and expansion of native woodland and its internationally important bryophyte community. The funding system should encourage a strategic approach, one that encourages collaboration. Our native woodlands are very fragmented which is bad news in itself, but it also means that our important woodland plants and lichens exist on "islands" in a sea of unsuitable habitat. The grant system should encourage planting intended to link existing patches of native woodland where possible and to incorporate watercourses, particularly where these have some residual tree cover. The best woodlands for bryophytes are steep and rocky and, if we wish to expand our important bryophyte populations, the grant system should consider encouraging planting, or perhaps more realistically, natural regeneration, on such sites, despite the practical problems associated with such ground. Some funding for specialist advice from bryologists or lichenologists at the planning stage would seem sensible.

This is particularly true of Rhododendron eradication. The grant system should also reflect the fact that Rhododendron eradication is a long-term and expensive process with different stages: too many sites from which Rhododendron had been cleared have had no subsequent work and the infestation is now as bad or worse than before. There are also large Rhododendron seed-sources outside of the woodland on open hillsides and such sites should be eligible for grant aid within the system.

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?:

By supporting diversity of planting and the use of locally sourced seedlings and providing an incentive for schemes of natural regeneration. It is difficult to see how the current monocultures of Sitka could fit into such a scheme.

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.

Knowing where to get reliable advice, Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout

Are there others not listed above?:

In terms of habitat creation and increasing the opportunities for a more diverse flora and fauna, woodland creation should be seen as distinct from "agriculture" and grants should try to move landowners away from their default position of fencing and ground preparation.

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.:

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.:

Most local communities know little of any forestry proposals even those which may involve wholesale changes to the local environment. There should be a requirement within the grant process to render the whole system less opaque

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.:

Would it be possible to treat these proposals in the same way as planning applications, ie with a notice in the local press.

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 Answered

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

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

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.:

Our native woodlands are very fragmented which is bad news in itself, but it also means that our important woodland plants and lichens exist on “islands” in a sea of unsuitable habitat. The grant system should encourage planting intended to link existing patches of native woodland where possible and to incorporate watercourses, particularly where these have some residual tree cover. The best woodlands for bryophytes are steep and rocky and if we wish to expand our important bryophyte populations the grant system should consider encouraging planting, or perhaps more realistically natural regeneration, on such sites, despite the practical problems associated with such ground. Some funding for specialist advice from bryologists or lichenologists at the planning stage would seem sensible.

Our temperate rain forests contain communities of oceanic bryophytes and lichens that are so important internationally that it seems reasonable to propose that there should be a grant aimed specifically at the management and expansion of such woodlands.

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?:

The BBS realises that this is a fraught topic but our concern for important bryophyte habitats on tree and crag bases and on boulders means that we are certain that the best approach is a significant reduction in herbivore numbers rather than the erection of yet more fencing. Again a collaborative approach is necessary between neighbours and a credible deer management plan should be part of the application process.

A woodland without any grazing is not a natural woodland. As has been demonstrated on many sites, complete enclosures encourage the rampant growth of coarse vegetation, which can smother even large rocks. Some rare species depend at least to some extent on the disturbance by grazing animals and a number of populations have been lost in woodlands from which grazing has been excluded. Fencing should be a last resort rather than the default option and the grant system should reflect this. If fencing has to be used then a date must be set for its removal.

From a wider viewpoint, in some areas the use of deer fencing at scale is severely reducing access.

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.:

We have to get serious about reducing deer numbers!

About you

What is your name?

Name:

Gordon Rothero

What is your email address?

Email:

[Redacted]

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

British Bryological Society

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