

## Response ID ANON-VEPG-2G15-H

Submitted to Future Grant Support for Forestry  
Submitted on 2023-05-16 09:42:25

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?

Yes

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Farmers still consider forestry a specialist subject and expect and assume it is a different funding package with different rules and expectations from agricultural schemes.

In fact SF grants should absorb fully all tree planting from AECS.

Also SF should have a small scale scheme in all conservancies such as the South Scotland tree planting grant in all Conservancies, but the £1000 initially envisaged is not adequate any longer £2500 max is now suitable

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.:

If there is to be some forestry works in aeCs, then the capital grants for both sides and the rules should be similar.

Consider the buffer for curlew and ground nesting birds in aeCs is not the same and neither are the grants for fencing.

### 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 Answered

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Must be long term - 5 years is not enough - 10 minimum

Must be kept up to date - especially capital items on an annual basis to be constantly fresh.

Must be flexible and changeable, so updating guidelines, new ideas can be slipped in quickly with supporting notifications and updates.

Promotional opportunities must be taken and excelled at, COP 26 a complete Scottish fail

Must be communicated to all agents at least 3 times a year to maintain relationship

Agents must work with SF and the grant package must feel 'together'. Definitely not so now

Experienced foresters needed, SF must recruit from FLS, not random degree recruits of no forestry.

SF to push hard to universities to restore forestry on their curriculum including masters.

SF to promote Forestry as a career in high schools where the local landscape supports this - ie rural high schools with a lot of forestry in the area.

Grant system to be kept as simple as possible, and points noted by McKinnon review should all be reconsidered - no positive changes at all since then - only negative changes, more complex, more restrictions, more issues log, more surveys

SF to share in the project development and feel the £ pain of their requests for specialist surveys 50% paid on invoice for all surveys required. Then the applicant feels we are working together, and SF don't ask for unnecessary surveys as they are paying for 50% of it, and thus helps focus the mind on what is of public value or not.

Carbon credits have great potential but are so confused and misunderstood. SF should offer significant grant incentives BUT keep the carbon credits for the government. So the

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.:

Vastly improved basic grants.

Also every conservancy should have their own locations premium and the conservator have a strong input, with a crème de la crème fund – exceptional projects that excel in all quarters should receive a supplement.

Public access capital items should be included in the package along with secondary biodiversity subprojects – wet scraps, Ponds, bike tracks, benches, signs.

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 differing options approach should be scrapped especially for scoring. Score the whole package in one. This will encourage an honest proportion, but many sites only take ss so do not remove the 75% max.

The eligible criteria % should be reviewed as the constraints on NBL, MB proportions, diverse conifers % should be not % of option based but site suitability based.

The grants should not be on options but on what is to be planted – ie grant for what you do as the older sfgs was set up. By far the best grant scheme template there has ever been.

The diverse species should receive a lot more capital incentive. Native woodlands less so.

Planting oak must be incentivised better. Planting some oak in a MB blend, the WO ask for the oak at 3100 when the rest of the mb is at 2500. 3100 only when area designed as pure oak.

### 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, Intervention level, Support with cashflow

Are there others not listed above?:

AECS schemes often delay proposals for woodland creation on the same land. And yet the aecs works have no long term value beyond the 5 years of grant. If the applicant want to stop part of the aecs and plant trees instead, it must be simple and permitted fully with no penalty or hardship.

Many farmers are wealthy in terms of property but cash poor – the loan scheme is too restricted in time scale and amount. X 4 at least.

Approval can take a long time, and farmers change their minds based on world events and sheep prices etc. A scheme should be approved NOT on money but on item and the amount paid for that item is updated annually and so remains current even if the planting takes 5 years to happen.

Variations for more or less than approval is reality and should not be difficult.

Claims should be paid within one month and not involve SGRPID at all. SF pay once inspected – paying agency status restored

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.:

Currently large schemes over 300ha get a reduced rate on their initial planting grant. The computer does all the work. I call this banding.

This principle should be mimicked but it must be based on honesty. The capital items list must be kept up to date and cover the real costs including agent fees at 15% or more so that woodland creation is completely free to projects less than 75ha.

Once this becomes the spine to the grant package, then the banding should kick in so that schemes less than 75ha get full grant, 75-150ha 10% less 150-300ha 20% less.

This should encourage smaller and more localized woodland creation projects and encourage farmers to plant useful sizes of woodlands on their farm and not sell the land to large funding institutions.

#### 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.:

You already do this with wait.

But the capital grants are pathetic – serious review needed.

Also up front funding is critical – community projects are famous for being penniless – how can they visualize doing anything with out cash flow??  
Obvious

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.:

Don't know. Community specific question.

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.:

Communities engagement at the development of a woodland creation project is already a serious burden and should not be developed futher. The land is owned by someone so if the community want a strong input then they should be helped to buy the land in the first place.  
Usually the community are not against the project but against the idea of someone owning more than them.

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.:

There is no need for further transparency, as already too much is open to the public. SF should focus on the need to store carbon and have the authority to approve a project and override local negative opinion.

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?:

Yes it helps, but as usual SF do it half heartedly. Why only one submission a year? There needs to be at least 3 so that equipment purchased can start being used asap. Mounding being a prime example.

And why is the limiting factor the cheapest quote, and not the best for the forest industry development. Does quality not speak? Does new innovation not speak? Only money?

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.:

Less complex applications, less need for surveys, more based on forestry knowledge, more risk based on key site requirements. Protection, soil disturbance, seed trees.

There is an assumption that trees = ss = biodiversity loss, especially relating to RSPB.

And yet all woodlands have more birds than any farm does. SF staff should deal with biodiversity arguments, and not bow to any single purpose group. Forestry is blamed for curlew, etc, when it is birds killing birds, foxes, badgers, not forestry.

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?:

Do not discourage deer fencing, assume its needed and live with it. Pushing sitka in one area ( stock fenced) and diverse species in another area ( deer fenced) creates an unbalance design. Do not make deer fencing an issue.

Likewise march boundary fencing should be paid at normal rates and not have to be 'shared'. After all the fence is being put up or replaced to protect trees from sheep.

This country will always have the deer problem because of the negative relationship with guns, gun licences. Not enough people keen to shoot, and too many bambi people discouraging a realistic need to control vermin, at least till the trees are secure.

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.:

Carbon credit should be retained by the government, and justified by a significant funding incentive for planting in lieu of this.

SFs old grant should be reassessed as best template

McKinnon review was a thorough process that SF fought against. But it is all still true and nothing has been gained by it to the applicant or user.

SF are infamous for being the worst communicators with their key partners, agents and land owners. Every conservancy must have 3 public events a year to build a relationship.

Ministers need to have meetings with NGO's and council staff to reduce the interference with woodland creation projects .

SF need to behave and respond robustly to support carbon capture- have some balls.

Reduce the relationship with RSPB

Educate the community councils as to what and how to respond to woodland creation schemes.

Land owners should be given support to get planting done on their land and restrict the constraints of having tenant holding the 'strings' .

All capital grants need an annual review

Claim submission by the end of march should no longer be the case. Claim when done.

There should be NO relationship between sgrpid and SF. Annual payments should be done by SF reducing the need for SAF deadlines, end of year deadlines.

All rules that have a European origin should be reviewed. We are not with them so why listen to them.

About you

What is your name?

Name:

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Individual

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

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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?

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I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

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