

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.:

There's no doubt that grant support should continue if Scottish Government wants to meet its afforestation targets and all the associated benefits that come with it.

I do however have a few frustrations about having to use the wider land use administrative infrastructure such as SAF for some payments which is clearly designed for agriculture and not fit for purpose when it comes to forestry. It would be far better if all payments could be handled by Scottish forestry like the capital payments in FGS currently are.

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.:

I only really deal with forestry funding so don't feel qualified to comment on agri funding options, but if it's relevant, I would like to see improvements to the agroforestry scheme within FGS as the last time I looked into it, it seemed that tree protection spec currently required wasn't sufficiently funded to encourage uptake (although this may have changed in the interim). Likewise I'd like to see the sheep and trees scheme opened up to productive broadleaves not just conifers.

I do get asked about planting hedges alongside more conventional tree planting so if there were some way to cater for hedge creation within FGS that would make things more straightforward without having to use a separate scheme when working at a small scale.

## 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 land quality becoming available for forestry is a major factor in determining how diverse forests can be. Upland sites are becoming increasingly difficult to plant due to sensitivities around carbon and biodiversity which is forcing forestry down hill onto better land. The industry's hunger for spruce remains, which is leading to better sites which could accommodate higher species diversity being given over to large proportions of spruce, and opportunities for more diverse forests lost. In my opinion, the conifer model is currently over funded relative to the other options. There should be greater incentives (beyond covering the difference in establishment costs) to plant more diverse woodlands to reflect their less certain rates of return and encourage investors to break from orthodoxy. We have seen decades of spruce dominated afforestation followed by decades of native dominated planting and now back again. But we have yet to actually achieve any scale of genuinely multi purpose planting which seems to be so desired by policy and society. Even the introduction to this consultation purposefully separated.

In summary, I would like to see greater levels of support given to mixed schemes rather than just conifer / native.

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.:

Maybe.

I'm deeply concerned that natural capital and carbon funding are essentially snake oil. Natural capital still seems to still be an evolving concept whereas the woodland carbon code has had a significant impact in increasing the price of land, which despite subsequent changes to the scheme to address this, cannot be undone.

Any funding that alleviates the public purse ought to be a good thing in principle but the accusations of greenwashing are difficult to ignore given the voluntary nature of the market and lack of regulation of the purchasers of units. As such, I'm concerned that with hindsight, the forest industry may be seen as having colluded with polluters to avoid reducing emissions at source in exchange for cash which would be hugely problematic.

Personally, I'm much more comfortable with funding being granted for more tangible outputs.

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.:

#### FGS woodland creation models

I have found the aggregation of different woodland types into "models" to be needlessly restrictive, leading to stifling of creativity with inclination to design to easily "fit the model" rather than freely designing the best woodland for the site. Diverse woodlands end up having to straddle multiple model types which increases the administrative burden unnecessarily and species mixtures (which are desired by policy) become problematic where the conflict with the bounds of the model especially where conifers and broadleaves are being mixed intimately. I would favour an approach which simply assigned a value per hectare by species group i.e. diverse conifer, broadleaf etc without the overarching framework of a model thus giving the applicant flexibility to design whatever combination of species they and the woodland officer deemed appropriate with no minimum or maximum limit on any one type (provided it meets UKFS). Species mixtures could be evaluated based on their proportions for a given area. This would also allow for easier capture of the data of species types planted rather than the fine detail being lost in the models as it is currently. In short, scrap the model approach for more flexibility.

#### Improve the productive broadleaf scheme

The guidance for this model (assuming the model system is to persist) needs a complete overhaul as it is lifted entirely from one book "growing broadleaves for timber" which is clearly written with southern England in mind and increasingly outdated having been published over 30 years ago. The species list is currently needlessly restrictive and should be left open provided the applicant can make a sensible case for it. Alder is notably missing from that list, yet sweet chestnut is present which highlights how inappropriate it is for Scotland. Just across the Irish sea, Teagsac have an alder improvement programme with improved planting stock available for growers. Without status in a productive model, Scotland has little impetus to follow suit. Likewise the stocking densities need reviewed and the current insistence that species with different stocking densities cannot be grown together in intimate mixture is limiting the potential for diversity and resilience.

The native woodland model requires seed certificates to be submitted to prove appropriate provenance has been chosen and yet the productive model has no such quality control in place despite quality timber being the aim. This is all the more disappointing when groups such as the Future Trees Trust have been working hard to make improved broadleaf planting stock available. There should be some mechanism for additional support to applicants for using improved material over source identified as is the case with VP sitka in the conifer model.

Improving the productive broadleaf model would be a huge step in creating biodiverse (and potentially native) productive multipurpose woodlands.

#### FGS restocking

The current grant support for restocking is in my view achieving very little additional benefit relative to the spend. Supporting restocking of sitka spruce following significant timber income is not logical or a good use of public money. I appreciate this is done under the guise of achieving UKFS but in reality it is funding a large amount of like for like restocking. The higher grant rate is insufficient to really influence growers to opt for diversity. I would suggest that the first eligibility hurdle from Forest Plan species percentages be scrapped and instead an area payment be made for any diverse species i.e. diverse conifer and broadleaf and no payment for Sitka spruce. I would assume that dropping payments for Sitka spruce would allow a significant and thus meaningful payment per hectare to be made for diverse species within the same budget, providing much greater diversity and public benefit for the same amount of public money.

#### Deer management

Capital payments towards temporary deer fencing in restocking would encourage greater use of soft conifer and productive broadleaf and help reduce the use of plastic in native restocking.

The reducing deer impact grant could do with being greatly simplified to just evidencing costs of deer management and providing the damage assessments without all the counts etc which are of questionable accuracy. Supporting professional deer management is a huge step in promoting more diverse woodlands.

Thinning is one of our most important silvicultural tools to improve woodland structure leading to a huge host of benefits but is currently being under applied (at least where I am in south Scotland) due to lack of purpose built thinning machinery (and skilled operators) and concerns over windblown (often as a result of intervening too late in order to achieve a certain tree size and thus return or because machinery is too large and roots anchorage is undermined by mechanised intervention). I would support continued use of the machinery and equipment grants to support contractors in procuring purpose built thinning machinery. Perhaps additional support for thinning with low impact methods such as horse / mini forwarders would help develop this area. I would very much like to see support for carrying out early respacing / thin to waste in order to begin to encourage timely intervention where cost is a barrier and foster stability from early on. This would have benefit where encouraging greater use of CCF/LISS is desirable.

It is hugely unfortunate that the question itself separates native and productive woodlands which reinforces the polarity between the two, whereas we should aspire to having productive woodlands using native species as well.

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?

Not sure

How can the grant scheme support this?:

I absolutely agree with and support the idea that woodlands should be managed and not simply planted and left however given the diverse range of threats referenced, I'm not sure that we actually know with confidence what steps need to be taken to ensure climate resilience / pests and diseases in all circumstances and I wouldn't support a scenario which resulted in penalties being applied to applicants. Instead, there is clearly an opportunity to support more research into what practices at a forest level can actually improve resilience.

### 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?:

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.:

With new woodland creation, the planning stages i.e. consultation and application tend to be what carries the disproportionate cost in smaller schemes (as the level of basic input can be the same as much larger schemes) so perhaps there is scope to separate out the proportion of the support which is assigned to this step and have a sliding scale depending on size and complexity of the proposed woodland.

### 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.:

I don't feel I have sufficient experience of urban or peri urban woodlands to comment.

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.:

One of the criticisms of forestry expansion is that much of the economic value and jobs are largely exported. Perhaps developers of a certain size should be compelled to offer some kind of work experience / apprenticeships for members of the local communities (starting at school level) perhaps working via an industry body such as ICF. If more communities contain people working in forestry (either directly or indirectly) then perhaps more value / expertise would be retained closer to the activity.

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.:

I'm really not sure. I feel the current public consultation system is rarely actually representative of the entire local community with all the focus given to those vocally opposed rather than focusing on what could be gained by the majority. Likewise, communities of geography seem to be massively prioritised over communities of interest like walkers who may actually interact with the land far more frequently.

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.:

I'm not sure

I've certainly had direct feedback that the public register is a pretty poor interface for informing people in a meaningful way but is frequently something people are signposted to. Perhaps improving this platform as some kind of informative hub would be of benefit.

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?:

These grants have actively supported contractors and services which I use so I fully support their continued development. Particularly small scale and low impact harvesting / sawmilling.

It may be that it is easier to access the funding a existing business and perhaps we are missing opportunities to develop potential entrants into the sector with "start up" funds and this could be further developed.

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

England appear to have recently launched funding for short courses such as chainsaw, pesticides etc. This could be a great way to enable more people to enter the workforce where compulsory training costs (which have become significant) are a barrier, without unfairly burdening the contractor resource who usually bear such costs without guarantee than trainee employees will last.

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.:

I'm not sure this is a responsibility of FGS but of bodies like the ICF and Confor but as mentioned previously, perhaps funding for certain sized woodland creation projects / forest plans could come with the requirement to provide work experience apprenticeships.

## 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.:

For me, this comes back to better supporting applicants to deliver and manage more diverse woodlands with a range of species and structures. So favourable support for new woodlands with a high level of species diversity and support for the management of existing woodlands where species and structural diversity is being prioritised is a good starting point.

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?:

Continue to support professional deer control through the sustainable deer management grants but try to simplify the process to encourage greater participation. Islands of control achieve very little in reality and just create a vacuum whereas landscape level control can provide both crop protection but also improvements in quality of native woodland and open habitats.

Small scale mixed land use?:

Temporary deer fencing for both restock and woodland creation - The current FGS fencing specifications are significantly over engineered for just roe deer so there should be greater flexibility on spec. Again supporting professional deer management by helping with costs.

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

Please add your comments here.:

## 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.

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