

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.:

System is not perfect by all means, but don't change it, as there are bigger issues to address at present

2. Are there any changes that would allow for better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding options?

No

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.:

1. Increase the grant support and standard costs by at least 20% in line with industry and indeed UK Inflation index (New review of costs has been made for at least 5 years). NB tree seedling costs alone have risen 10% every year for past 4 years, as have material costs of fencing, fuel etc.

There is currently a sharp drop in the uptake on the forestry grants as the support simply does not stack up and is not attractive enough.

2. Increase support for diversifying existing woodland to accommodate higher unit costs of smaller felling areas, small fenced off areas etc.

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,

No

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

The WCC should be altered to remove the latest bias against productive conifer woodlands.

Conifers tend to lock up carbon quicker than broadleaves and they are more likely to provide construction material, which replaces more carbon unfriendly materials such as steel and concrete, reduces the timber miles (i.e. UK imports 80% of its timber from abroad) and ultimately if well constructed and preserved timber can lock up carbon for centuries in wooden buildings.

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.:

Standard costs and maintenance costs need to increase !

The price for oak seedlings has increased by 80% over the past 5 years, native pine seedlings by 10% every year! This is not accommodated in the support 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?:

All FGS are subject to compliance with UKFS which is committed to resilience.
Nothing new for any good forester!

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.

Are there others not listed above?:

Standard costs are not attractive for any serious farming or crofting business.

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.:

Increased standard costs and establishment and maintenance rates/ha

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.:

Some of the woodland officers need to be trained to support local communities and private owners instead of putting hurdles in their way.

The essence of a civil servant should be to serve the civic not themselves.

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.:

See 9. Support rather than discouraging.

If a owner of a small woodland wants to thin his woodland for fuelwood and the woodland officer ask for prescriptions for a "halo" system and other irrelevant information nobody will manage their woodlands properly.

Scottish Forestry needs to get back to "can-do-approach" rather than "as little as possible" approach.

Strict adherence to the citizens charter and some stronger line management by conservators of their staff would enable applications to be processed in time.

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.:

Less lecturing by SF staff and more adherence to citizens charter timelines.

Support rather than lengthy emails and unnecessary requirements by SF staff.

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.:

Adhere to citizens charter and conservators to publish their "real" figures of handling of cases to minister every month.

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?

No

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

Capital costs have increase significantly.
They need to be brought in line with reality.

FLS can not find contractors to carry out their planting as their rates are not realistic.

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

Pay a chartered forester £300/day to visit 2 schools per day and talk about the benefits of woodlands and the career opportunities.

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.:

Pay a chartered forester £300/day to visit 2 schools per day and talk about the benefits of woodlands and the career opportunities.

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.:

Productive and native woodlands can work together and have worked together for a long time. They are not exclusive of each other. This is approach of separating them is an "old concept".

Increase the standard costs for both sets of woodlands, increase maintenance payments and planting rates and we will see more woodlands.

Fencing costs in particular are very out of date with reality.

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?:

Increase support for deer fencing.

Small scale mixed land use?:

Increase support for deer fencing

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

Please add your comments here.:

The Scottish Government has made great progress under Fergus Ewing to at long last get new woodlands created again!

We are well off the government target however and from what we hear, the figures for 2023 are not as good as good as for 2022!

There is less interest in new woodland creation as the support system is not sufficient.

Further we are probably losing new woodland area in Scotland, albeit the minister has not been informed about this.

The real loss of hectares of woodland (and carbon lock up) is due to three factors:

1. During restructuring private and FLS woodland cover is often reduced by 20-50% to increase landscape fit, more open spaces etc.
2. Large scale woodland removal by FLS for various reasons, windfarm developers and powerlines companies with not meaningful replacement in same area or other parts of the country.
3. Large scale of FLS left "fallow" for 5-10 years. FLS uses the excuse of weevil population to not replant, but more often they can not get the workforce/plants or the organisation to create new productive forests.

About you

What is your name?

Name:
[redacted]

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[redacted]

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:
Sylvestrus Ltd.

Scottish Forestry would like your permission to publish your response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

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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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