

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.:

Yes, as it is important that Scottish Forestry have the ability to represent forestry separately from SGRPID which favours agriculture over Forestry as a land use.

Without specific forestry grants there will be no competitive incentive for landowners to choose to pursue new woodland creation schemes versus the existing heavily subsidised agricultural farming uses.

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.:

It should be made easier for FGS and AECS schemes to be interchangeable and allow for cross funding. Both schemes have the stated aim of addressing climate change. If the environmental benefits of an AECS scheme will be maintained or enhanced, then it should be possible to switch from an AECS contract mid term without being penalised.

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.:

Updating of grant options to reflect expenditure associated with some capital items. Expenditure of afforestation works has risen significantly since the grant values were introduced however the value of capital items has remained the same. Expenditure for diverse conifer schemes have risen greater than conifer with this difference not matched by the grant increase of the diverse conifer option. Incentive for afforestation has therefore reduced, this will prevent some afforestation schemes being delivered. As a minimum keep alignment with UKFS when changes are announced, particularly around species diversity in all FGS options. Promote more resilient forests through the creation of diverse woodland types, this encouraged though the ability to plant more fertile ground.

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.:

The WCC additionality rules have proved that there needs to be flexibility in grant claims. The grant mechanism needs to be more flexible and allow for more funding options targeted at specific outcomes such as riparian planting, species choice/management for protected species.

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.:

The process needs streamlining. Required application content needs defining more robustly. This may mean more detailed analysis by applicants as part of the EIA determination process. Once clarity on this is established, applications meeting agreed standard should not be subject to delay by opposition from competing land use bodies or people opposed to woodland creation.

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?:

There needs to be agreement on what the definition of more resilient forests is. Alignment with UKFS seems a sensible starting point. The creation of more resilient forests can be achieved through increased species composition, this however requires the ability to plant agricultural grade 3.2 and 4 land.

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, Support with cashflow

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.:

A small woodland grant option (<20 hectares?) might be feasible. Non sensitive sites less than 20 hectares don't require EIA screening so all grant support would go towards meeting establishment costs giving value for money for SF.

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.:

Per question 8, target funding by having urban woodland option or capital items targeting urban areas (footpath creation etc)

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.:

Adapt grant packages so that applicants can receive funding for developing community relationships and agreeing community involvement/benefit from schemes.

Work with Scottish Government and other bodies to publish a list of case studies which have already worked well in practice on previous woodland creation schemes.

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.:

By providing assistance to applicants in identifying community interests who may be unknown to the applicant. As in Q10, provide incentives for applicants to develop relationships with communities.

Work with Scottish Government and other bodies to publish identified lists of organised community groups (e.g. not-for-profits, charities, educational institutions, etc) who will work constructively with applicants to identify positive ideas and solutions.

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.:

By making all documents that form part of the application, including formal correspondence available for public viewing. Just like any planning application in the UK. The public registers only show scheme name, size, name and a map.

Greater transparency could be achieved with further consultation, the Scottish Government/Scottish Forestry could produce non-mandatory best practice guidelines for community engagement.

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?:

Target start up businesses, particularly new, young entrants to the sector.

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

Training grants.

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.:

With enhanced FGS processes the sector could see greater levels of afforestation. Market forces would see greater demand for workforce (across all of sector) which would naturally lead to greater training. This would ideally be placed on a local level.

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.:

As above, keeping alignment with UKFS a starting point. Targeted options and increased funding for biodiversity enhancement where there can be specific measurable gain might be feasible. Gather data (e.g. via Forest Research and working with industry participants such as FSF) that demonstrates that well designed schemes with a commercial focus protect/enhance biodiversity versus the agricultural baseline of the sites that are developed. A measurement tool fit for forestry is needed and the current presumption that commercial schemes decrease biodiversity is not correct.

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?:

If there is stated aim of reducing Scotland's deer population, We are not sure there needs to be a different approach to landscape scale and small-scale mixed land use. If incentives are given to cull deer, then the population will be reduced.

Low/controlled levels of grazing and browsing (once trees have successfully established) can actually significantly improve biodiversity levels and ecosystem resilience. Once deer numbers reach balanced levels (acknowledging we are some way from that at this time) we recommend the positive role of deer within woodland ecosystems is not forgotten.

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.:

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:
EJD Forestry Ltd and Foresight Sustainable Forestry Company PLC

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