

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.:

Certain categories of landowner/occupier need financial help to help cover the costs of establishment of forests. These include farmers, community groups and conservation charities. Without grant support these groups would not plant trees.

I would also add a caveat - I do not think that large scale planting of conifers by wealthy absentee investors should be eligible for planting grant. Investment in these plantations can yield very high returns in the market and providing public funds is not necessary nor justified in terms of taxpayers money. It should also be noted that the public good argument for public grants does not apply to these woodlands as Sitka spruce generates little or even negative public benefits, apart from carbon. As markets now exist for carbon sequestration hence there is no need for government to pay for this service

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.:

More financial support for woodland creation on farms/ small estates that are part of the long term plans for the rural business - for example to supply local sawmills.

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 sector is way too dependent on one species - Sitka spruce. The species grows well on poor ground and generates a significant profit for large landowners and the large corporations that own the processing sector. It is also known that due to deer browsing and inadequate management existing forests are becoming even less diverse than when planted, with many forests now denuded of broadleaf species due to deer and encroaching sheep.

If Scottish Forestry is to become more sustainable Government funding and policy must to more to encourage less dependence on this one species for productive woodland.

I suggest funding should favour slower growing species, that with the appropriate silviculture and management can generate timber for local processing. I would also argue that grant applications with longer time scales (15 years from Year 0) are introduced to encourage structural diversity in new forests.

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.:

There is a very high risk that public funds to 'pay' for carbon will generate no additional benefits as owners can already receive benefits from the high carbon value in the market. At the moment grant payments to investor forestry are simply inflating land prices and financial returns to very wealthy investors who own them

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.:

I would really encourage the government to develop a new funding stream for productive native woodlands. That is woodlands can generate significant non-market benefits (biodiversity, recreation, etc) but can one day also support employment in local rural communities through appropriate

silviculture and management. There must be some way to tie establishment grants to long term management of a woodland that generates value locally.

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?:

As mentioned previously, species mix is absolutely crucial but so is timescale - longer establishment periods should be encouraged (15 years) for larger forest blocks to allow structural diversity to emerge.

More management / silviculture is required - more boots on the ground. Much investor forestry is simply planted and then the gate is closed and nothing happens for 30 years. This is highly risky for climate and environment. Annual payments need to be awarded to cover specific management actions.

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, Support with cashflow, Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout

Are there others not listed above?:

You also need to consider how farmers and crofters might one day benefit from the timber --- hence the need to encourage local markets to develop - local sawmills, energy plants etc.

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.:

There is a real problem here. Land values are very high and as a result land is often out of reach to local communities.

I suggest this problem could be overcome if some of the national forest estate (managed by FLS) were broken up into smaller woodland areas which could be purchased by local communities and enterprises to support their development aspirations. This would also support diversification of species and structure of the nation's forests (see above).

For too long forestry has been large scale and industrial in outlook and this has meant that local people are excluded from benefiting from trees. This has to change!

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.:

Grant support should be targeted at those areas but with grant aid sufficient so that the forests can be managed by professional foresters to maximise public benefits.

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.:

I have touched on this earlier but you need to support

Diversification of species and structure
Development of local processing sector
Support professional silviculture and management expertise

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.:

More openness is essential but it would be a good idea to employ more staff to specifically motivate and support community involvement. The online system could be more user friendly too. It is all far too difficult at the moment.

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.:

On line system needs to be overhauled. At the moment the system favours the privacy and secrecy of landowners over the interested general public. This should be rectified.

Communities need to know who actually owns the forest -- as opposed to who is the acting factor or manager.

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 sure

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

I think significantly more funds are required to developing forest business skills and to support capital asset acquisition.

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

College courses tied to positions in the industry - placements and/or apprenticeships

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.:

Much more focus has to be paid to deer control. In a recent paper published in Scottish Forestry I have argued that new legislation requiring landowners to meet mandatory culling targets is the best way forward. Grant support for natural regeneration needs to be much higher to reflect all the costs this way of creating woodlands generates (including opportunity costs) but also the much higher biodiversity value of these woodlands. (I have written many papers on this subject!)

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?:

Landscape scale benefits can only be delivered through agreed culling across all landowners. Fencing is not a solution and should be disqualified from funding. Culling deer should be a mandatory requirement of all landowners.

Small scale mixed land use?:

There may be a place for fencing here.

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

Please add your comments here.:

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Individual

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

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