

Submitted to Future Grant Support for Forestry
Submitted on 2023-05-17 17:24:43

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.

The complexity and long term nature that is the nature of forestry needs to be supported and regulated by those that understand this. Experience of forestry mixed into agricultural schemes has not been great. When you look at what is being expected to be delivered from our existing woodlands and the new woodlands that are planned in terms of the climate change and biodiversity targets absolute clarity will be required.

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.:

There are many areas where the current Ag Environment scheme and FGS overlap but have different rules and funding arrangements. Complementarity in funding will avoid some strange choices being made. Fencing for hedging and new native woodland are currently different. Why? Surely the government targets would welcome an area of native woodland creation as being an improvement on a hedge? Both provide biodiversity benefits but why increase the payment for a fence for a hedge over a native woodland. The reality is that the native woodland is unlikely to be an economic resource. Better linkage between the various schemes would be beneficial. Some complex sites would suit a mix of agri-environment and forestry scheme. To be able to pick the right outcome for the right bit of the site rather than constrain the activity on the ground to the scheme that was picked would surely give rise to a better outcome for Scotland.

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.:

FGS has been successful in getting record levels of tree planting. This has been done whilst also meeting the UKFS. The UKFS has recently been reviewed and the FGS should continue to require compliance with this. The process of the UKFS review took account of the research on climate change and as such drives forward compliance in not only woodland creation but also in the management of existing woodlands. The current FGS is very limited in its support for the management of existing woodlands due to budget constraints. This is especially so where the drive for species diversity is concerned. Restocking with spp other than SS is considerably more expensive due to predator control, establishment costs and opportunity costs. The grants do not incentivise a change in behaviour.

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 devil is in the detail here.

There is a lack of clarity on many of these funding mechanisms so the government may not know what has been paid or will be paid to an applicant.

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 capital costs for many of the options are now woefully out of date. They are especially punitive where smaller (but potentially higher value in terms of biodiversity gain) schemes are concerned. Native riparian woodland being an example. The funding for management in existing or native woodland is practically zero. The biggest risk they face in most of Scotland is grazing (mainly from deer).

The new English scheme pays £90/ha for effective deer control. Scotland with as big if not bigger problem pays nothing.

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 Answered

How can the grant scheme support this?:

See earlier. If the scheme or woodland is UKFS compliant then it ticks this box.

We need to avoid the thought that all forests are mixed diverse species. Many of the afforested sites in Scotland have limited species options. Do not force species where they don't want to be. This is more, not less, likely to lead to disease outbreaks due to stress.

Where alternative forms of management are possible the grant scheme could incentivise these. e.g. CCF. This is a more expensive form of working and support will be needed to provide demonstration sites and help it become better understood. This is a long project and not a quick fix. Otherwise we will end up with large amounts of unmanaged woodland which is what happened in England.

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, Flexibility within options, Intervention level

Are there others not listed above?:

They are all relevant to some degree but I have ticked the top 3.

Clearer economic information for them is the bit missing. Farmers are businesses and some advice they receive is pretty airy fairy.

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.:

Use a risk based application system.

If it's small and native why not remove a lot of the hurdles.

Cashflow is also key as are the rates at what it is paid out on.

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.:

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.:

A better understanding on what is possible. The work that Confor is doing with SF to improve the consultation process is key. Hopefully from that there will be case studies that applicants can use to help communities and applicants understand what is a reasonable request and prevent the current misunderstandings.

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.:

As above. Clarity for both parties is required. At the moment it can feel a bit like a never ending story. It doesn't encourage anyone to do more than 1.

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.:

The public register is not fit for purpose.

Interestingly there is no need for farmers to consult or their grant applications to go through a public register.

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?:

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

I don't think skills development fits under FGS.

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.:

As above. Not convinced this is the right vehicle for this. How would you tie that into an application?

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.:

Herbivore management - current system far too clunky and almost impossible in the lowland setting.
See earlier comment on the English grant scheme which offers £90/ha

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?:

Help fund professional stalkers rather than just deer fences. Manager should be able to choose

Small scale mixed land use?:

Equally allow both options.

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.

I consent