

## **Woodland Creation Summit - 12 December 2023**

Battleby Conference Centre

### **Overview of the summit**

Delegates from a wide range of companies and organisations directly involved in supporting the delivery of woodland creation projects were invited to the summit. The list of attendees is given at Appendix 1 and the day's agenda is at Appendix 2.

#### **1. Welcome and introduction to the summit (Paul Lowe, Interim CEO, Scottish Forestry)**

Delegates were welcomed to the summit, the aim of which was to explore how everyone can contribute to increasing the woodland creation rates in Scotland.

#### **2. Opening remarks (Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands)**

The Cabinet Secretary gave a short speech to the summit which emphasised:

- The importance of increasing the rate of woodland creation to tackle the climate change and biodiversity crises, and that this is a shared endeavour between Scottish Government, the public, private and third sectors.
- The Government's wish to see the area of new productive forests increasing because of its important role in generating benefits for the economy, providing jobs and sequestering carbon quickly to help meet Net Zero targets.
- That the Government is working through its annual budget position and faces financial challenges. There are no easy decisions in this space, but the Scottish Government knows how important forestry is to meet its priorities.
- Delivering an increased rate of woodland creation will require everyone to better work together to deliver what is needed for the future.

#### **3. Pre-summit survey and action on sector skills development (Helen McKay, Chief Forester for Scotland)**

The slides from this presentation are given at Appendix 3.

The document on capacity building in the Scottish forestry sector (also distributed to attendees with their joining instructions) is at Appendix 4.

#### **4. Reflections on the workshops**

Two workshops were held, each with four facilitated groups. The facilitators were:

- Andrew Barbour, former Deer Commissioner and Chair of the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group, and now agroforestry farmer.
- Shireen Chambers, former Director of the ICF and now CEO of Future Woodlands Scotland.
- Andy Leitch, Deputy Chief Executive of Confor.
- Andrew Sowerby, Vice-President of the ICF.

The question addressed in Workshop 1 was: What is limiting our ability to increase woodland creation levels in Scotland? The question for Workshop 2 was: Building on existing efforts, how can we work together to increase woodland creation levels?

The main points raised by these workshops, as presented by the facilitators at the subsequent plenary session, are given at Appendix 5.

## **5. Points of discussion in the plenary panel session**

Panel:

- Paul Lowe (Interim CEO, Scottish Forestry - Chair)
- Helen McKay (Chief Forester for Scotland)
- Stuart Goodall (CEO, Confor)
- Louise Simpson (Executive Director, ICF)
- Brendan Callaghan (Head of Operational Delivery, Scottish Forestry).

The panel offered these reflections on the workshops:

- The importance of training and professionalism, especially joint training to develop shared understanding and trust and a positive, constructive culture across the whole sector.
- The need to improve public perceptions of forestry, for example better communication about the forest cycle, such as more on-site signage for the public (British Columbia an example of good practice).
- The roles of an efficient, consistent and high-quality process, certainty and building confidence for all parties including the public.
- Need to focus on the reasons for slippage between a scheme being approved and not being planted.
- The need to look ahead to ensure the pipeline of woodland creation projects (3-4 years time) is maintained.
- The importance of promoting forestry's contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- The need to work collaboratively to address the issues raised today, to continue an inclusive conversation about improvements and clearly identify actions that will deliver them (e.g. reviewing application guidance in discussion with Customer Representatives Group and other stakeholders).

- The value of clear policy direction (and associated budgets) in terms of competing priorities, and working with Scottish Government colleagues to provide clarity on policy alignment and strategic planning.
- The action for Scottish Forestry to consider how forestry regulation and grants can support deer management

Three questions were asked from the floor and responded to by the panel:

- How to communicate better the benefits of woodland creation and productive forestry to the public – requires better communications, with more positive messages on forestry (case studies) and local voices supported by better resources, to reflect the range of interests involved.
- What outputs there will be from the summit – providing a summary of the events discussions and develop a route map setting out next steps.
- How to improve the integration of farming and forestry policies and delivery – opportunities under future funding for forestry, and better alignment between forestry and agricultural grants; farmers would follow the UKFS and grant eligibility criteria like forest owners/managers do.

## **6. Summing up and closing comments (Paul Lowe, Interim CEO, Scottish Forestry)**

The main points from the summit were highlighted and a commitment made for Scottish Forestry to send to delegates and publish on the Scottish Forestry website a summary note of the meeting. Early in 2024 Scottish Forestry will meet with the Cabinet Secretary, and then key stakeholders to discuss a proposed route map to deliver on key actions discussed at the summit.

**Close**

## Appendix 1: List of attendees

Name	Organisation
Alan Hampson, Head of Policy and Practice	Scottish Forestry
Alastair Seaman, Director for Scotland	Woodland Trust Scotland
Andrew Barbour, owner	Bonskeid Estate
Andrew MacQueen, Managing Director	AM Silviculture
Andrew Sowerby, Vice President	Institute of Chartered Foresters
Andrew Vaughan, Regional Manager	Tilhill
Andy Leitch, Deputy CEO	Confederation of Forest Industries
Andy Rockall, Director	Community Woodlands Association
April Armstrong, National Manager for Scotland	Confederation of Forest Industries
Ben Clinch, Forestry Manager	Moray Estates
Ben Dipper, Head of Peatland Policy	Scottish Government
Ben Law, Senior Forestry Consultant	SAC Consulting
Brendan Callaghan, Head of Operational Delivery	Scottish Forestry
Cameron Maxwell, Conservator - Perth and Argyll	Scottish Forestry
Chris Stark, Head of Forestry and Land Services	Green Action Trust
Christopher Nicholson, Chair	Scottish Tenant Farmers Association
Craig Dinwoodie, Director	Fountains Forestry
Craig Turner, CEO	Alba Trees
David Edwards, Forestry Director	Tilhill
David McKay, Head of Policy	Soil Association Scotland
David Robertson, Director of Investment and Business Development	Scottish Woodlands
Deborah Long, Chief Officer	Scottish Environment Link
Dinker Bhardwaj, Natural Resources Division	Scottish Government
Doug Howieson, Conservator - South Scotland	Scottish Forestry
Douglas Worrall, Director	Forth Climate Forest
Eleanor Kay, Senior Policy Advisor	Scottish Land & Estates
Emma Cooper, Head of Land Rights and Responsibilities	Scottish Land Commission
Gordon Reid, General Manager Zero Emissions	Scottish Water
Grant Moir, CEO	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Harry Frew, Managing Director	Cheviot Trees
Harry Wilson, Director	RTS Forestry Ltd
Helen McKay, Chief Forester for Scotland	Scottish Forestry
Ian Barrington, Managing Director	Pryor & Rickett
Ian Robinson, Managing Director	Scottish Woodlands
James Pendlebury, CEO	Forest Research
Jeremy Thompson, Director	Forest Direct Ltd
Jim Colchester, Head of Forestry	Buccleuch Estate
Jonathan Taylor, Head of Executive Office	Scottish Forestry

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Keith Wishart, Conservator - Central Scotland	Scottish Forestry
Laurent Bienfait, Owner/Managing Director	Laurent Bienfait Woodland Services
Leona Bailey	Loch Lomonds & Trossachs National Park Authority
Louise Simpson, Executive Director	Institute of Chartered Foresters
Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands	Scottish Government
Mark Hamilton, Owner/Director	MH Landscape Services
Matthew Giles, Investment Director, Forestry	Gresham House
Matthew Thompson	Munro Harvesting
Michael Ramage, Owner/Director	Michael Ramage Forestry Ltd
Morag Paterson, founding member	Communities for Diverse Forestry
Neil Murray, Conservator - Highlands & Islands	Scottish Forestry
Paul Lowe, Interim CEO	Scottish Forestry
Paul Schofield, Senior Project & Forestry Consultant	TreeStory
Phil De-Duca, Woodland Manager and Partner	Kelpie Woodlands
Ranald McConnachie, Owner/Managing Director	McConnachie Land Forestry Services
Renwick Drysdale, Director	Akre Trees
Richard Heawood	Historic Environment Scotland
Robert Guest, Managing Director and Co-Lead Foresight Sustainable Forestry	Foresight Group
Ross Lilley, Head of Natural Resource Management	NatureScot
Sarah Cowie, Environmental Policy Manager	NFUS
Sarah Robinson, Director of Conservation	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Shireen Chambers, CEO	Future Woodlands Scotland
Simon Hart, Head of Forestry	John Clegg & Co.
Simon Hodgson, CEO	Forestry and Land Scotland
Steve Connelly, Managing Director	Cawdor Forestry
Steven Hutcheon, Conservator - Grampian	Scottish Forestry
Steven Liddle, Owner	Greenbeard Forestry
Stuart Goodall, CEO	Confederation of Forest Industries
Ted Downes, Owner/ Managing Director	EJD Forestry
Tim Barratt, Head of Forestry	Bidwells
Tim Hall, Chair	Future Woodlands Scotland
Vicki Swales, Head of Land Use Policy	RSPB
Wallis Weir, Scotland Policy Committee	Forestry Contracting Association
Will Anderson, CEO	Seafield and Strathspey Estates
Zahid Deen, Director of Operational Services & Transformation	Scottish Forestry

## Appendix 2: Agenda for the Woodland Creation Summit

TIME	ITEM	PARTICIPANT/S
9:30	<i>Registration, refreshments and networking</i>	All
10:30	<b>1. Welcome and introduction to the summit</b>	Paul Lowe, Interim CEO, Scottish Forestry
10:40	<b>2. Opening remarks</b>	Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
10:50	<b>3. Pre-summit survey and action on sector skills development</b>	Helen McKay, Chief Forester for Scotland
11:05	<i>Move to workshop rooms</i>	All
11:10	<b>4. Workshops 1</b>  What is limiting our ability to increase woodland creation levels in Scotland?	All
11:55	<i>Comfort break</i>	All
12:05	<b>5. Workshops 2</b> Building on existing efforts, how can we work together to increase woodland creation levels?	All
13:00	<i>Lunch and networking</i>	All
14:00	<b>6. Panel and plenary discussion on next steps</b>  Panel: Paul Lowe (Interim CEO, Scottish Forestry - Chair) Helen McKay (Chief Forester for Scotland) Stuart Goodall (CEO, Confor) Louise Simpson (Executive Director, ICF) Brendan Callaghan (Head of Operational Delivery, Scottish Forestry)	All
14:50	<b>7. Summing up and Close</b>	Paul Lowe, Interim CEO, Scottish Forestry

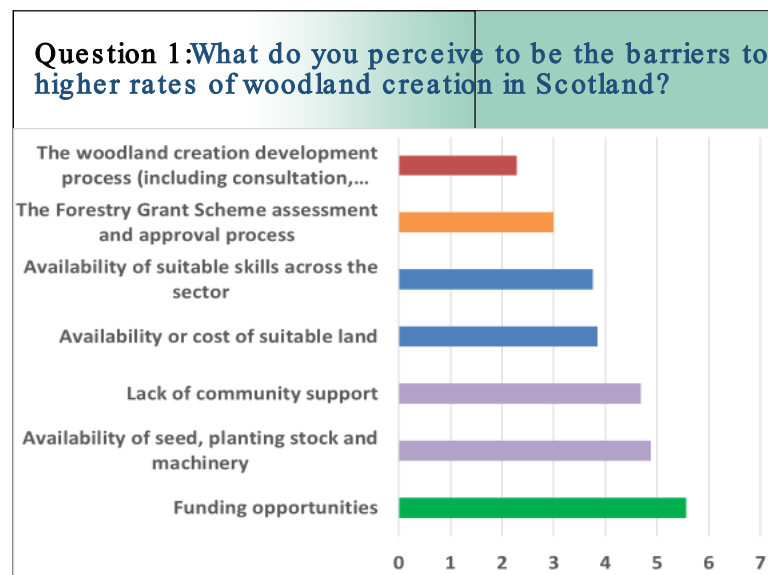
## Appendix 3: Presentation on survey results

### Slide 1 of 3

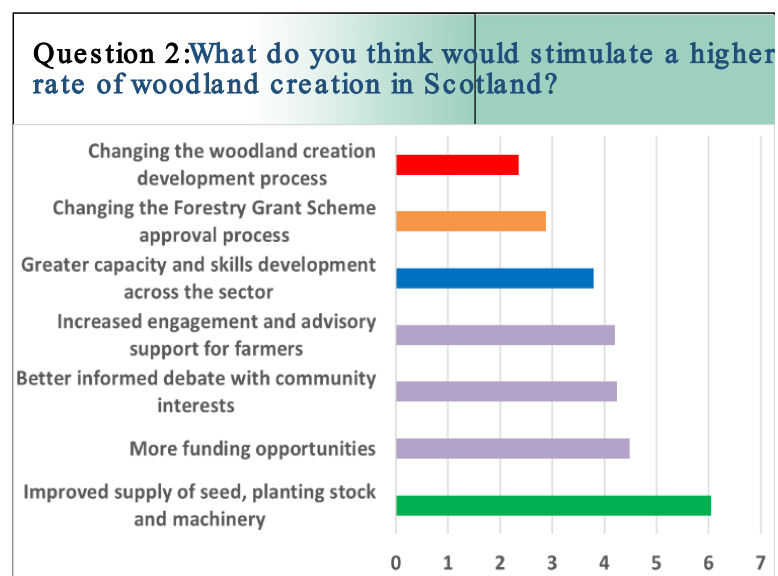
Pre-summit survey  
and  
action on sector skills development

Dr Helen McKay  
Chief Forester for Scotland  
12<sup>th</sup> December 2023

### Slide 2 of 3



### Slide 3 of 3



#### Appendix 4: Update on capacity building in Scotland related to woodland creation (already distributed to attendees)



### UPDATE ON CAPACITY BUILDING IN SCOTLAND RELATED TO WOODLAND CREATION

Helen McKay, Dec 2023

Skills capacity related to woodland creation should be seen in the context of the Industry Leadership Group's Skills Action Plan for the sector as a whole. Table 1 shows the achievements over the last three years within each of four priority themes, with progress most closely linked to woodland creation highlighted in green. Further detail on each initiative intended to increase woodland creation is given in Table 2.

Table 1 INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP GROUP SKILLS ACTION PLAN: Achievements and progress related to woodland creation

Priority Themes		Achievements
1. Talent Attraction	1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scottish Junior Forester Award.</li><li>• Updates to forestry specific job profiles in Skills Development Scotland's 'My World of Work'.</li><li>• Lantra updates to forestry careers webpages.</li><li>• Forestry STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Ambassador promotion.</li><li>• Commission for the Review of Land-Based Learning.</li><li>• Skills Development Scotland / Scottish Forestry's Bitesize careers videos on forestry (YouTube).</li><li>• Skills Development Scotland / Scottish Forestry's Scots women urged to branch into forestry careers article and case studies.</li><li>• Working with Trees and Timber industry toolkit.</li><li>• Scotland's Young Person's Forest advisory panel and youth panel visit to multi-purpose forest.</li><li>• Growing Rural Talent programme.</li><li>• Developed working relationship with veterans' career services.</li></ul>



Priority Themes		Achievements
2. New Entrants*	1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forestry representation on Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan review.</li> </ul>
	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forestry Training Services UK scoping and engagement of project manager.</li> </ul>
	2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Wood and the Trees, Forestry Induction Pack.</li> <li>• Ringlink pre-apprenticeship in forestry.</li> <li>• Graduate apprenticeship scoping with case submitted to Skills Development Scotland May 2022.</li> </ul>
	Woodland creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate training programmes.</li> <li>• Induction programme in Forestry and Land Scotland.</li> <li>• WOODS programme in Scottish Forestry.</li> <li>• Technical Training Hub.</li> <li>• Ringlink pre-apprenticeship in forestry.</li> </ul>
3. Workforce Development	3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Transition Training Fund Timber Haulage Academy.</li> <li>• National Transition Training Fund Forestry Machinery Taster Days.</li> </ul>
	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute of Chartered Forestry Emerging Leaders Programmes.</li> <li>• Institute of Chartered Forestry Early Career Professionals Conference.</li> <li>• Women in Forestry practical training fund (link to 1.1).</li> <li>• Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers Working Woods Scotland courses and Working Woods for Foresters course.</li> <li>• Skillseeder app.</li> <li>• Scottish Forestry WOODS programme to upskill front line staff for woodland creation schemes.</li> </ul>
	Woodland creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scottish Forestry WOODS programme to upskill front line staff for woodland creation schemes.</li> <li>• Royal Scottish Forestry Society Continuing Professional Development facilitation.</li> <li>• Confor training on community engagement.</li> </ul>
4. Developing the	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 2023 Sector skills capacity/Higher Education provision meeting with deliverable outcomes including: letter submitted to Scottish Qualifications Authority on behalf of public and private sector seeking review of forestry course material; major contributions</li> </ul>

Priority Themes		Achievements
Education Offer		<p>to review of foundation and modern apprenticeships; contribution to the Review of Land-based Learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided support through Scottish School of Forestry (SSF) Advisory Committee.</li> <li>• Maintained close communication with forestry course leads.</li> </ul>
	Woodland creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting of sector leaders and tertiary education providers.</li> <li>• Scotland's Rural College Technical Apprenticeship Level 8 (Forestry options within Rural Land Use Management) from Autumn 2024.</li> <li>• Redesigned rural skills apprenticeship (Level 5-7) to be available from Autumn 2023 (2023 TBC).</li> </ul>

Table 2 Further detail on recent initiatives to address the skills shortages constraining woodland creation.

Priority theme	Initiative	Key details
New entrants	Graduate training programmes	<p>Tilhill's three-year graduate programme: successful applicants are assigned to a district office or business stream where they learn every aspect of that area, including shadowing highly experienced colleagues. Graduate trainees are offered mentoring and are paired with an experienced manager during their training period.</p> <p>Scottish Woodland's programme offers graduates experience of life as forest manager and a strong foundation for a career in forestry. Recruits have the opportunity to work in a variety of locations and learn about forest planning, new woodland creation, timber harvesting, grant applications, working with contractors, forestry finance and much more.</p>
	Induction programme in Forestry and Land Scotland	Our induction programme ensures that our new colleagues receive a warm welcome, are provided with essential information on our organisational outcomes, systems, policies, and support available. In addition, new managers will be provided with information and support to set out the expectations, roles and responsibilities of a people manager.
	Foundation programme in Forestry and Land Scotland	A new Technical Training team was formed in January 2023 to support operational teams work on skills gaps and knowledge. The foundation training programme for new Foresters, Work Supervisors and Crafts People covers basic Health and Safety requirements of forestry alongside supporting early knowledge and understanding of how the industry operates.
	WOODS programme in Scottish Forestry	The WOODS programme makes sure our new Assistant Woodland Officers are competent and confident in their role. The backbone is the Competency Framework which covers core skills, knowledge

Priority theme	Initiative	Key details
		and behaviours from application of forestry standards and regulations to being an ambassador for Health, Safety and Wellbeing. This is aligned with interactive learning sessions, opportunities to consolidate learning and support by line managers to track success and identify areas for focus.
	Ringlink pre-apprenticeship in forestry	The Land-based Pre-apprenticeship in Forestry allows new entrants to earn and learn in the workplace whilst also gaining a vocational qualification (Scottish Qualification Framework SCQF4). The pilot is funded by Skills Development Scotland. This year 6 applicants have been trained and so far 4 are being hosted. There are 10 places for next financial year.
Workforce development	Technical Training Hub	A public/private sector hub and spoke initiative to create a not-for-profit company to address market failure in certain areas of technical training. Initial focus will be on machine operators/supervisors, advanced chainsaw operators/advisors and forest works managers. Further training topics will be advised by a skills board and FISA outputs.
	Scottish Forestry WOODS programme to upskill front line staff for woodland creation schemes	As for 'New entrants'
	Royal Scottish Forestry Society Continuing Professional Development (CPD) facilitation	CPD training by recognised experts in their field on a list of priority subjects identified by industry. Aimed at early career professionals (though open to all), with the intention of providing high level introduction to subjects and guidance on where to seek additional information. Importantly, also provides opportunities for networking and fostering relationships between organisations.
	Confor training on community engagement	Confor has been working with its members to identify best practice approaches to stakeholder engagement. The course has been designed and tested by industry representatives and aims to set the

Priority theme	Initiative	Key details
		policy context for why we engage and provide tools and techniques to help delegates plan and carry out effective engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.
Developing the education offer	Meeting of sector leaders and tertiary education providers	Addressed recommendation 8 of the <i>Commission for the Review of Land-based Learning</i> (Support the retention of critical Higher Education provision in areas such as forestry by developing innovative ways to extend the reach of their delivery). Sector preference for practical work to be blocked for ease of planning.
	Redesigned further education programme at Scottish School of Forestry (level 4-6) to embed more skills and practical applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased skills and technical experience.</li> <li>Holistic, project-based assessment to improve practical skills.</li> <li>Preparing for industry.</li> </ul> Packages of learning with option for infill for employed students to join for upskilling.
	Redesigned higher education programme at Scottish School of Forestry (level 7-10) to increase flexibility and provide work-based pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher National Certificate progressing onto 3 year degree pathway.</li> <li>Work-based option for those working in industry (to achieve full honours in 3-4 years).</li> <li>Full time option with work placement sequenced alongside delivery and credited towards qualification (flexibility to move into work-based).</li> <li>Modules to be packaged up to provide bridging into degree or CPD options for upskilling.</li> <li>Masters' degree development.</li> <li>Micro-credentials developed for upskilling.</li> </ul>
	Redesigned rural skills apprenticeship	Certificate in Trees and Timber - Forestry at SCQF level 5. Diploma in Trees and Timber - Forestry at SCQF level 7. Expected to begin September 2024.
	Technical Apprenticeship SCQF Level 8 (Forestry options within	The Technical Apprenticeship: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides planning, managing, leadership and enterprise skills.</li> </ul>

Priority theme	Initiative	Key details
	Rural Land Use Management) at Scotland's Rural College from Autumn 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows direct applied learning, that can respond quickly to sector changes.</li> <li>• Opens learning pathways.</li> <li>• Expands vocational opportunities and progression, currently unavailable.</li> <li>• Increases sector accessibility as a career choice.</li> <li>• Upskills current employees and career changers.</li> <li>• Supports sector attractiveness and workforce retention.</li> </ul>

## **Appendix 5: Main points raised by the workshops**

Common themes raised across the groups in both workshops were:

### **1. Process**

- A more streamlined process is needed, with better adherence to the Scottish Forestry Customer Charter. The peatland restoration process is seen as a good example.
- There need to be clearer boundaries and guidance on further information needed to support an application. More information on the acceptable quality for an application and the criteria for an application being returned for further information or work would help all concerned.
- Single issues and vocal groups can unbalance the process, as can inconsistent decision-making across Scotland. A clearer process for consultation and clarity on the criteria for decision making about consultation responses would help.
- The statutory consultation period should be brought forward within the process, and no response to a consultation taken as support for a scheme.
- Improved pre-application and public register processes (more detail and transparency) would allow for more relevant engagement and a smoother development stage.
- Clarity on timelines for all parties is needed.
- However, there is a perception that recent changes have disempowered Woodland Officers.
- Using the FLS engagement process at scale could be a good approach.
- Cash flow is a fundamental barrier for landowners to navigate, as well as lack of clarity about future SRDP funding.
- Tenant farmers suggest opportunities exist if leases were more favourable.

### **2. Leadership**

- Clear political leadership is needed, with fewer policy priorities, clearer strategic objectives and a better vision of future forests/ desirable outcomes.
- The sector is wary of change and still has to deal with public perceptions that forestry is done on an industrial scale and causes employment, demographic and housing changes in rural areas.
- Need a policy presumption in favour of woodland creation, and for this to carry through to local authorities.
- Using a wider range of woodland, management and silvicultural models could help deliver a greater number of sustainable, resilient, multi-purpose forests.
- Widespread public promotion of forestry by all parts of the sector would help.
- Farming and forestry can be seen as opposites, possibly because small scale tree planting isn't seen as forestry. Farmers may also see forestry as a threat, especially if it is considered a permanent land use change.

- Better policy integration between forestry and farming, with links to whole farm plans and grants moving away from basic area payments would help farmers to plant more trees.
- Actions that support decisions are needed – notably a return to in-person meetings and site visits, greater communication between all parties, and a national opportunity map or regional indicative forestry plans.
- Grant rates should be higher, including those that support public access.
- Carbon is not seen as a sufficient opportunity for driving change and reducing public expenditure.
- There is capacity in groupings such as the Industry Leadership Group to take forward decision-making, changes and initiatives.

### 3. Capacity and skills

- Need more training together across the sector (joint public-private training).
- Joint working and collaboration are vital if future targets are to be met, especially if future budgets are reduced.
- Tailored advice is needed.
- A genuine understanding of the benefits of community engagement is needed, brought about by listening and clear outcomes – facilitation skills are needed.
- The recommendations from the Commission for the Land-based Learning review should be adopted.
- Farmers often lack the capacity, the confidence and the capability to plant trees - better access to machinery, training, advice and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange would help.
- The nursery sector is particularly vulnerable to changes in FGS as they need to plant in advance and their timescales are longer than policy timescales.
- Contractors are finding it difficult to plan and often don't get informed about delays. This uncertainty means they are reluctant to expand their workforce since the workload can change significantly in a year.

### 4. Deer control

- A real issue - it would really help if deer numbers were lower and natural regeneration was possible over a bigger area.
- Targeted intervention is needed, with a more flexible deer control grant.
- Political leadership is needed to use powers that already exist, and to support landscape-scale control.