

Future Grant Support for Forestry: analysis of consultation responses

Why Research: August 2023

Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

Background

The package of measures to support forestry – the Forestry Grant System (FGS) – is delivered through the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). FGS is administered by Scottish Forestry, which is the government agency responsible for forest policy, regulation and support. FGS supports the creation of new woodlands as well as the sustainable management of existing woodlands. The forthcoming Scottish Agricultural Bill will provide the legal basis for future grant support for forestry. It is intended that a number of enhancements will be made to the current grant scheme by building upon the current approach and successes.

The consultation process

A public consultation to help shape future forestry grant support in Scotland opened in February 2023 and finished on 17 May 2023. Its aim was to seek views on how the current Forestry Grant Scheme can evolve and be better integrated with other sources of funding, strengthening net zero, biodiversity, economic and community wealth building priorities. The consultation focused on grant incentives and did not consider other fiscal measures that can be used to stimulate woodland creation, such as taxation, as this is a reserved matter.

Respondent profile

In total, there were 187 responses to the consultation, of which 88 were from organisations and 99 from individuals. A full list of organisations that submitted a response to the consultation is at Appendix 1. The consultation also received 526 responses from the formal campaign run by the Woodland Trust (see Appendix 2), a small number of which contained additional comments which have been considered, albeit these were not relevant to the core purpose of the consultation.

Key themes

- There was no stakeholder consensus on how to evolve future grant support for forestry.
- There was no stakeholder consensus on whether evolving the FGS and integrating it with other sources of funding would strengthen the Scottish Government's priorities of net zero, biodiversity, economic, and community wealth building.
- The analysis suggests that this lack of consensus might have arisen because, in general and throughout their responses, organisations within the conservation / environment sectors, community groups, the third sector and related representative bodies, and public bodies tended to focus more on environmental issues such as biodiversity and government targets, community benefits and support for existing native woodlands and natural regeneration. Forestry practitioners and their representative bodies focused

more on the benefits of commercial forestry and the importance of timber production.

Respondents outlined a number of changes they wanted to see to the FGS. Findings mentioned here reflect points made by significant numbers of respondents, often across several consultation questions, although it should be noted that there is by no means an overwhelming consensus about these changes among respondents.

Introduction and rationale for providing grant support for forestry

- **Changes to the application process**, which is currently seen as too complex and bureaucratic and primarily aimed at larger landowners and too onerous for smaller landowners.
- **Retaining FGS as a discrete scheme** within the overall grant support.
- **Aligning FGS with other policy areas** to maximise the potential of funding, particularly as some see the current funding for forestry as being ‘siloes’. Alignment of schemes would mean delivery of an integrated range of options.
- **Policy clarity** in relation to FGS. While there was support for the scheme to be improved and developed as a discrete scheme, there were also calls for further integration between forestry, agriculture, other land uses and land management schemes so as to deliver an integrated range of options.
- **Support existing and native woodlands**, have a **diversity of species** and different ages and structure of woodlands to increase their resilience to extreme weather events and help to reduce the spread of disease and pests, as well as benefitting biodiversity and climate change.
- **Grant funding not to be given to monoculture plantations or commercial conifer schemes** (across most sub-groups) as they are not perceived to deliver on government targets for biodiversity and climate change and are in receipt of tax-free returns.
- FGS funding available for smaller areas of land.

Forests delivering for Scotland’s climate change plan

- **Support existing and native woodlands**, have a **diversity of species** and different ages and structure of woodlands to increase their resilience to extreme weather events and help to reduce the spread of disease and pests, as well as benefitting biodiversity and climate change.
- Preference for natural regeneration in rather than creating new woodlands, and a focus on protecting and restoring native woodland.
- Additional support for owners and managers of woodlands; key is financial support although there were also requests for access to expertise and advice.

- **Accountability and transparency**, the need for a **clear regulatory framework** and **guidance and stringent guidelines that are monitored** by Scottish Forestry. This includes details on decisions made and the reasoning behind these.
- **Disagreement with private investment schemes** as these are seen to focus on profit and returns for shareholders, to push up land prices and focus on large blocks of commercial forestry monocultures.
- Increased grant support for small-scale woodland creation and management.
- The **application process needs to be simple, easy to access, easy to understand and geared towards all potential applicants.**

Integrating woodlands on farms and crofts

- **More flexibility in grant funding** to maximise its effectiveness; tailored grant schemes to better reflect the needs of farmers and crofters.
- Increased grant support for small-scale woodland creation and management.
- **Increases in grant funding levels** to match capital outlays and to match inflation and increasing prices.
- **Tapered funding** so that payments reduce as hectare size increases, to recognise that small schemes are proportionately more expensive to deliver due to economies of scale.
- The **application process needs to be simple, easy to access, easy to understand and geared towards all potential applicants.**

Forests delivering for people and communities

- **Higher levels of involvement of local communities and other stakeholders** in the development of forestry proposals and **more information available** to all interested parties.
- **Increases in grant funding levels** to match capital outlays and to match inflation and increasing prices.
- **Grant support** to provide training positions and apprenticeships. This would increase skills development and expertise in forestry as well as help to create employment opportunities for local communities.
- **Changes to the WIAT option of FGS** to expand the types of area that are eligible.

Forests delivering for biodiversity and the environment

- **FGS funding for existing and native woodland at a comparable level** with funding for creating new woodlands.

- **Support existing and native woodlands**, have a **diversity of species** and different ages and structure of woodlands to increase their resilience to extreme weather events as well as benefitting biodiversity and climate change.
- **Collaboration between landowners** at a landscape level and small-scale mixed land use. This would particularly help to manage herbivore damage.
- Scottish Forestry to provide more by way of support, advice and guidance and work **more closely with other stakeholders**.
- A **reduction in stocking densities** to better support resilient mixed woodlands and help to reduce the risk of disease and pests, meet biodiversity aims and benefit species habitats.
- **Deer management conditional on FGS grant funding**, with some calls to remove fencing as an item to encourage landowners to cull.

Introduction

Background

1. Scotland's woodlands and forests play a vital part in contributing to a zero-carbon society and play an important role in rural development and sustainable land use. As well as helping to reduce the impacts of climate change and providing timber to industry, forests enhance and protect the environment, contribute to the Scottish economy and provide opportunities for public enjoyment and thus help to bring about positive mental health and wellbeing.
2. The regulation of forestry is through the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 and The Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. As the technical standard for the practice of forestry, the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) provides the overarching framework and guidance within which woodland owners and managers must operate to balance economic, social and environmental benefit.
3. After the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Act 2020 was enacted to allow Scottish Ministers to ensure that the EU Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) payments and schemes would continue to provide a period of stability and simplicity after the EU exit. The current grant support scheme operates under this provision. Because forestry, agriculture and rural land management are linked, the package of measures to support forestry are delivered through the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). In order to provide continuity to applicants, farmers and land managers wanting to plant trees, the powers Scottish Ministers rely on to run the Forestry Grant Scheme will in future come from the Scottish Agricultural Bill, which will be considered and scrutinised by the Scottish Parliament during 2023. This will allow for the current Forestry Grant Scheme to remain open for applications and provide scope for further improvements and changes.
4. Scotland's Forestry Strategy (2019-2029) identified climate change as one of the key strategic drivers and set out six priority areas for action. The second Scotland's Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan (2022-2025) reaffirmed that the resilience of Scotland's forests remains a key strategic driver. Scotland currently has 19% woodland coverage, compared to 46% across Europe, and the Scottish Government is keen to increase woodland coverage by creating 18,000 hectares of new woodland each year to increase forest cover to 21% by 2024/25.
5. The Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) is one element of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) 2014-2020, which has effectively been extended until 2024 and is administered by Scottish Forestry. The Forestry Grant Scheme supports the creation of new woodlands as well as the sustainable management of existing woodlands.

6. The forthcoming Scottish Agricultural Bill will provide the basis for future grant support for forestry. It is intended that a number of enhancements will be made to the current grant scheme by building upon the current approach and successes.

The consultation

7. A public consultation to help shape future forestry grant support in Scotland opened in February 2023 and finished on 17 May 2023. Its aim was to seek views on how the current Forestry Grant Scheme can evolve and be better integrated with other sources of funding, strengthening net zero, biodiversity, economic and community wealth building priorities. Scottish Forestry was keen to hear the insights and experience of landowners, land managers and the people of Scotland. This consultation focused on grant incentives and did not consider other fiscal measures that can be used to stimulate woodland creation, such as taxation, as this is a reserved matter.
8. Findings from this independent analysis of the consultation will help inform the further evolution and enhancement of the scheme and help shape the implementation of the broad powers that will be provided through the Agricultural Bill which will replace the current legislative framework provided by the Scotland Rural Development Programme.

Respondent profile

9. In total, there were 187 responses to the consultation, of which 88 were from organisations and 99 from individuals. A list of all those organisations that submitted a response to the consultation is given at Appendix 1. Respondents were assigned to groupings to allow analysis of any differences or commonalities across or within the various different types of organisations and individuals that responded.
10. The following table provides the profile of those who responded to this consultation. As can be seen, a wide range of different types of organisations responded to the consultation. The highest number of organisations were in the conservation / environment sector (27), followed by forestry practitioner / forestry agent (10).

Table 1: Respondent profile

Respondent sub-group	Number
Community council / community group	3
Conservation / environment	27
Environment / water	5
Finance / investment	2
Forestry practitioner / forestry agent	10
Forestry timber processor	2
Landowner / manager	5
Local authority	6
Public body	6
Representative body	8
Representative body – Farming	4
Representative body – Forestry	3
Social Enterprise / Third sector	3
Third sector	2
Other	2
Total organisations	88
Individuals	99
Total respondents	187

11. Submissions were checked for any co-ordinated responses to ascertain whether any responses were part of a campaign. A total of 526 campaign responses, based on text from The Woodland Trust were identified. The majority of these responses (379) were submitted by individuals based in Scotland and 135 were submitted by individuals based in England. Across the campaign responses, 495 followed a standard text and 31 followed the standard text but also incorporated additional comments. Issues raised in campaign responses echoed those identified within consultation responses and have been incorporated into the report where relevant. The wording of the standard response is provided at Appendix 2.

Methodology

12. Responses to the consultation were submitted using the Scottish Forestry consultation platform Citizen Space or by email. A small number of

respondents submitted a response which did not answer the specific questions. These responses were analysed and incorporated into the report at the relevant sections. A full list of all consultation questions is in Appendix 3.

13. All responses were downloaded into an excel database which formed the basis for analysis of responses.
14. One organisation had conducted a survey among their membership and incorporated responses from this into their submission. Two respondents submitted a generalised response which did not answer the specific consultation questions; these responses have been analysed and incorporated into the report at the relevant sections.
15. It should be borne in mind that the number responding at each question is not always the same as the number presented in the respondent group table. This is because not all respondents addressed all questions. This report indicates the number of respondents who commented at each question. When referring to respondents who made particular comments, the terms 'a small number', 'a few' and so on have been used. While the analysis was primarily qualitative in nature, with the consultation containing only a limited number of quantifiable questions, as a very general rule of thumb it can be assumed that:
 - 'a small number' indicates up to 5 respondents
 - 'a few' indicates around 6-9 respondents
 - 'a small minority' indicates around more than 9 respondents but less than 10%
 - 'a significant minority' indicates between around 10%-24% of respondents
 - 'a large minority' indicates more than a quarter of respondents but less than half
 - 'a majority' indicates more than 50% of those who commented at any question.
16. Some of the consultation questions were composed of closed tick-boxes with specific options to choose from. Where respondents did not follow the questions but mentioned clearly within their text that they supported one of the options, these have been included in the relevant counts. It needs to be borne in mind that many respondents did not directly answer the question asked and some reiterated the same point across a number of different questions. Answers did not always relate to the specific aims of the consultation but the range of views submitted have been included. Quantitative tables providing a breakdown of responses by sub-group have been provided for each of the closed tick-box questions in Appendix 4.

17. The researchers examined all comments made by respondents and noted the range of issues mentioned in responses, including reasons for opinions, specific examples or explanations, alternative suggestions or other comments. Grouping these issues together into similar themes allowed the researchers to identify whether any particular theme was specific to any particular respondent group or groups. Where any specific sub-group(s) held a particular viewpoint, this is commented on at each relevant question.
18. When considering group differences however, it must also be recognised that where a specific opinion has been identified in relation to a particular group or groups, this does not indicate that other groups did not share this opinion, but rather that they simply did not comment on that particular point.
19. While the consultation gave all who wished to comment an opportunity to do so, given the self-selecting nature of this type of exercise, any figures quoted here cannot be extrapolated to a wider population outwith the respondent sample.

Rationale for providing grant support for forestry

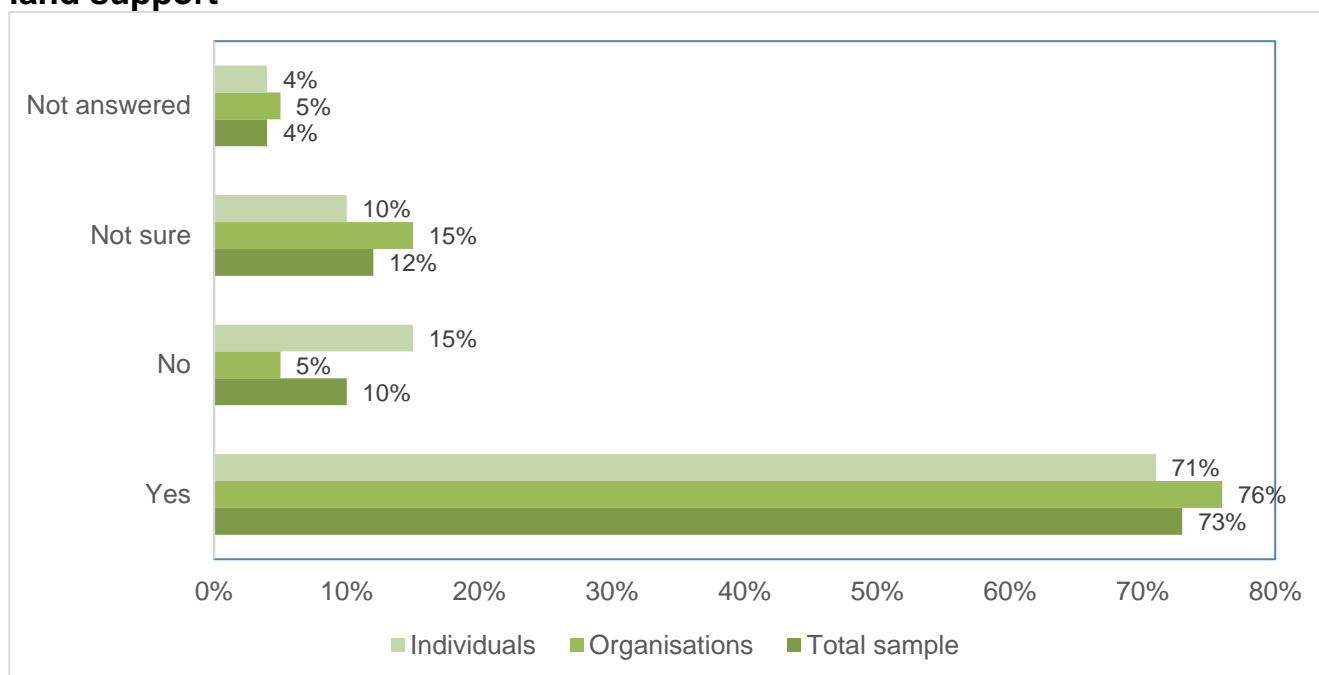
Q1: Do you agree that grant support for forestry should continue to be improved and developed as a discrete scheme within the overall package of land support?

In summary:

- A majority of respondents (73%) across all sub-groups agreed that grant support for forestry should continue to be improved and developed as a discrete scheme within the overall package of land support; (10% disagreed and 12% were unsure).
- A significant minority of these noted the importance of grant support for forestry to incentivise the creation of new woodland and regeneration of existing woodland to a high standard.
- A common theme was that there needs to be further integration between forestry, agriculture, other land uses and land management schemes, with all schemes aligned and delivering an integrated range of options as there is currently little synergy between different grant support packages for forestry and agriculture.
- There was also a perception that the overall package of land support needs to evolve and reflect the changing policy context and market conditions. This would ensure that forestry grant support delivers value for money, incentivises best practice and contributes to the wider government agenda.
- A significant minority of respondents suggested improvements to the management of grant support. These included a reduction in the bureaucracy and complexity currently associated with the application process and the need for increased rates so that grant funding keeps up with inflation and cost increases.

20. As the following chart shows, responses from organisations and individuals were very similar; around three in four respondents (73%) agreed that grant support for forestry should continue to be improved and developed as a discrete scheme within the overall package of land support. Only 10% of responses disagreed with this, and a similar proportion (12%) felt unable to provide a definitive answer to this question.

Chart 1: Agreement that grant support for forestry should continue to be improved and developed as a discrete scheme within the overall package of land support



21. A total of 150 respondents then provided further comment to expand upon their initial response to this question. A significant minority of respondents – mostly individuals – reiterated the importance of grant support for forestry to incentivise the creation of new woodland and regeneration of existing woodland to a high standard. A few noted there can be high levels of upfront capital investment, with little by way of returns on this investment for a significant number of years, so initial grant support plays a key role. This support also provides Scottish Forestry with the opportunity to ensure that appropriate forestry practices are followed.

The importance of further integration

22. The key theme emerging in response to this question and noted by a significant minority of respondents across all sub-groups, was that grant support for forestry should continue to be improved and developed as a discrete scheme within the overall package of land support but that there **needs to be further integration between forestry, agriculture, other land uses and land management schemes** within an overall package of land support.

23. A few respondents commented that **all schemes should be aligned and should deliver an integrated range of options** as there is currently little or no synergy between different grant support packages for forestry and agriculture. An organisation in the environment / conservation sector felt there needs to be more flexibility and adaptability to allow for better integration with other agricultural support mechanisms such as the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) or other land management schemes.

24. Other references made by respondents across all sub-groups in terms of areas where better integration is needed included farming, crofting, peatland restoration, renewables, natural flood management, water management, riparian woodland, wetlands and upland land management. A few of these respondents commented that at present there is a 'siloes' approach to forestry; and a number of respondents pointed to a range of benefits that further integration would help to bring about in terms of the environment, food production, society and the economy.
25. While there was a significant level of support for further integration between forestry, agriculture, other land uses and land management schemes, a few respondents (mostly individuals) referred to the need to **keep forestry separate** from other land uses or that it is **not an appropriate time for greater integration** (mostly organisations in the conservation / environment sector) with other channels for land support. For example, an individual commented that woodland and forestry management, planning, regulation and application processes are very different to agriculture and benefit from having separate application procedures and assessment by experts.
26. While not directly relevant to the aims of this consultation, and while there was generally support for woodland creation and management, there is also the potential for conflict over priorities for land management and there were some comments on the need to **focus on food production**, particularly in the light of the current cost of living crisis. These comments came from a range of different sub-groups. Some respondents also felt that woodland creation can remove productive farming land or can exclude local farmers from expanding their ownership of land that could be used for food production, particularly as the approval of woodland creation is a long-term commitment and restricts the use of land for food production for a considerable amount of time.

Alignment with other policy areas

27. Allied to suggestions for integration with other aspects of land use and land management schemes, a small minority of respondents – all organisations across most sub-groups – commented on the need for the **overall package of land support to evolve and reflect the changing policy context and market conditions**. This would ensure that forestry grant support delivers value for money, incentivises best practice and contributes to the wider government agendas on an ongoing basis. A public body suggested that grant support for forestry should be used as a lever to support projects that deliver multiple benefits across a range of policy areas.
28. A range of respondents referred to other elements of government policy that should be considered. These included:
- Scottish Land Use Strategy.
 - Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement.

- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.
- Community Wealth Building.
- Just Transition to Net Zero.
- Local Development Plans.
- National Developments and the National Planning Framework (NPF4).

The importance of native woodland

29. While not directly relevant to this question, another key issue cited by a significant minority of respondents – again across all sub-groups and particularly among organisations in the conservation / environment sector – was of a **need to create more native woodland**. Some of these respondents noted that the creation of more diverse native woodland including native broadleaves or riparian woodland is an effective way to capture CO₂, protect the environment and improve biodiversity. Campaign responses also focused on the need to scale up recovery of native woodlands.
30. There were also some more general comments on the **need to diversify species and the age and structure of woodlands** to increase their resilience, ensure a wide range of habitats are maintained and offer a greater diversity of flora and fauna. One of the issues noted by some respondents and campaign responses was the need to increase species diversity by reducing the maximum allowed for a single species in a commercial plantation.
31. Conversely, there were comments from a small minority across most sub-groups on the need to have **less focus on non-native “monoculture” or commercial species**, with a degree of criticism aimed at Sitka spruce in particular. Issues raised by respondents in reference to Sitka spruce were that it is seen as generating little or no public benefits. As such, there were some suggestions that grant support should not be offered to the production of commercial crops such as Sitka. Instead, grant support should focus on more diverse native woodland creation schemes which are seen to offer a wider range of benefits including contributing to biodiversity, improving water quality and river morphology, peatland restoration and increasing resistance to disease and pests.
32. Linked to criticism of “monoculture” plantations of Sitka spruce, there were some comments that **large commercial plantations lead to the conversion of good quality agricultural farmland to woodland, drive up land prices and threaten food security**. Grant support for this type of woodland was seen to benefit commercial, large landowners and forest agents at the expense of small farmers and landowners; and can serve to drive out small communities. As such, there were some suggestions that

grant support should not be offered to commercial conifer schemes that deliver tax free returns.

33. There were some requests for **grant support to be tapered**, so that payments reduce as hectare size increases. This would mean that smaller woodlands with high social and environmental returns would receive significant grant funding, but larger landholdings would have their grants restricted in amount. For example, an organisation in the environment / conservation sector felt that identifying priority areas for woodland planting could allow for differentiation of grant payments so that there could be higher rates linked to specific outcomes, for example, for peri-urban woodlands offering community access.

Management of grant support for forestry

34. A significant minority of respondents commented on various aspects of the management of grant support for forestry and made suggestions for improvements to this.
35. Some comments referred specifically to the **application process, which is perceived to be overly bureaucratic, too prescriptive and complex**. There were requests for this to be simplified and made more flexible so as to suit all land types, farm sizes and intended outcomes. One example provided by a forestry practitioner / forestry agent was that claim deadlines should be changed so they fit with annual forestry cycles rather than forcing claimants to align with agricultural timelines. A local authority commented that while the current grant support is beneficial for rural forestry, it does not cover the challenges of urban or peri-urban woodland creation.
36. There were also a few comments that the current **grant system has not kept up with inflation and does not cover the cost of establishing new schemes**. There were suggestions that the payment should increase from £1,000 to £2,500. There were also a small number of suggestions that all payments should be handled by Scottish Forestry – at present, the Single Application Form (SAF) has to be used for some payments which can cause issues as it is designed for agriculture rather than forestry. Allied to this, a few respondents noted that the complexities of the system mean that crofters, hill farmers and small-scale applicants can find it difficult to access funding or that the current administrative processes can be an insurmountable burden.
37. There were also a few comments on the need for applications to be considered by individuals with expertise and understanding of the complexities of the forestry sector and the delivery of woodland creation and management, particularly given its complex and long-term nature. One individual commented that in order to bring this about there is a need for Scottish Forestry to have adequate staffing and resources. A representative organisation felt that support from Scottish Forestry is more successful than

when funding and support was directed through the Scottish Government agricultural department (RPID).

38. There were a very small number of requests for the name Forestry Grant Scheme to be reviewed as it was felt this has connotations of links with monoculture and commercial plantations. It was felt a more inclusive name could be seen to include a wider range of outcomes.
39. There were a small number of suggestions for **changes to wider aspects of the grant support system**. These included a need to:
- Consider the cumulative impact of planting schemes and carry out cumulative impact assessments.
 - Introduce safeguards such as a cap on single species.
 - Ensure that the grant support scheme can achieve objectives relating to climate change, biodiversity, landscape, access, social and community benefits, the repair of damaged habitats, carbon sequestration etc.
 - Give direct support for deer management as in some areas woodland cannot be established without stock fencing or deer fencing.
40. In the light of these points, there were a few comments on the need for support to be targeted to where it is most needed, in the right locations, offering an appropriate species mix, offering enhanced biodiversity and so on.

Other comments

41. A small number of respondents in the conservation / environment sector suggested that forestry and water guidelines need to be prioritised.

Q2: Are there any changes that would allow for better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding option?

In summary:

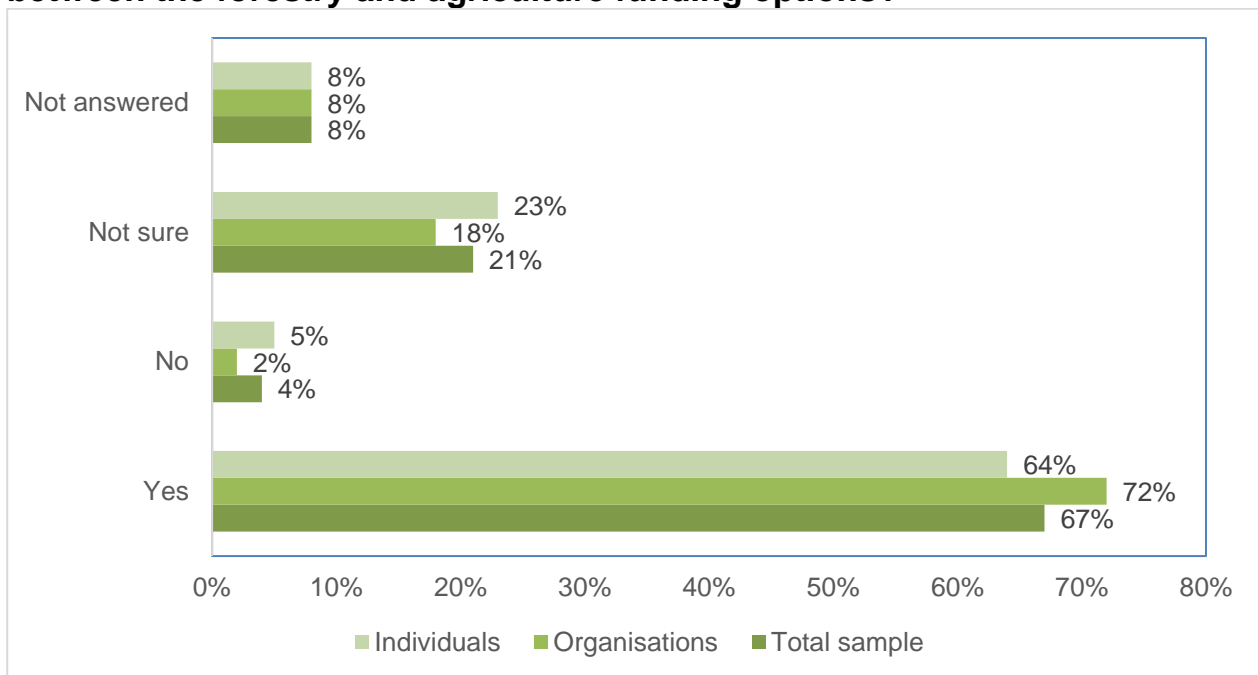
- A majority of respondents (67%) felt there were changes that would allow for better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding option (only 4% disagreed, although 21% were unsure). There were some suggestions for policy changes as well as other changes to technical delivery.
- A significant minority of respondents across all sub-groups wanted to see more FGS funding for smaller areas of land.
- A significant minority of respondents also mentioned a number of ways in which help for farmers and foresters could be provided, for example, access to appropriate advice and training. Again, there were comments on the need

to simplify the application process, with some comments on the need for agro-forestry grants and / or flexibility in grant funding.

- A large minority of respondents across all sub-groups focused on the need for integration between forestry and agriculture and greater levels of flexibility for all potential land users.

42. As chart 2 demonstrates, **two thirds (67%) of respondents overall felt there were changes that would allow for better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding option.** In examining sub-group data, slightly more organisations (72% compared to 64% of individuals) felt there were changes that would allow for better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding option and slightly greater numbers of individuals were unsure (23% of individuals compared to 18% of organisations).

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



43. A total of 147 respondents provided further comments to expand upon their initial response to this question. To an extent, many responses echoed points raised in the previous question.

44. Some respondents raised issues that echoed responses from the previous question. These included:

- The need for **changes to the application process**, such as wider eligibility under FGS, for example, to include stock watering and water gates as eligible capital items or for on-farm tree planting.
- The need for **increased funding levels under FGS**. A forestry practitioner / agent suggested that the current costs for landowners to apply for land use change from agriculture to forestry are a significant barrier given the costs of

surveys, obtaining professional advice, stakeholder engagement and so on. This respondent suggested the introduction of a scheme similar to the Woodland Grant Scheme offered in England; this would offer a simplified Basic Payment Scheme linked to specific conditions.

- There were a few suggestions that FGS should be available for **preparing a FGS application** such as species surveys, the removal of non-native planting, and restoration of native woodland and open habitats in farmed landscapes. A respondent in the representative forestry sub-group felt that the Farm Woodland Scheme that is currently available on Scottish islands should be extended to the Scottish mainland.
- The introduction of agro-forestry grants.
- The need for flexibility in grant funding.

Potential changes to the scheme

45. The key theme raised in this question by a significant minority of respondents across all sub-groups related to suggested changes to the scheme. Some of these changes related to policy delivery, others to the technical delivery of the scheme.
46. In terms of **potential policy changes**, there were some suggestions for the introduction of cross-compliance duties into FGS that are similar to the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) or for BPS to be claimed on areas of land under FGS or AECS schemes that are currently delivered outwith FGS and AECS funding.
47. A few respondents referred to the **use of Regional Land Use Partnerships / Frameworks (RLUP / RLUF) and opportunity mapping under Nature Networks**. They felt this would help inform priorities for funding for nature across a variety of funding sources, to signpost the best areas for afforestation, or to use RLUPs / RLUFs as an option for signposting to available funding for land managers.
48. In terms of technical delivery, some respondents referred to **integration between forestry and agriculture**, for example, in combining trees and food crops such as having food forests where crops and vegetables can be grown among the woodland, having trees planted in areas where livestock can also graze or supporting the creation and maintenance of orchards and projects that integrate fruit trees.
49. That said, this view was not universal and there were a few concerns over damage that can be caused by grazing. For example, a conservation / environment organisation noted that the grazing rule should be changed to disallow grazing which damages or kills trees so that grazing is only allowed where a specific habitat need is identified under AECS.

50. The integration of trees on farms and crofts and allowing for grazing within forested areas was suggested by a few respondents. A respondent in the conservation / environment sector noted that exclusion of browsing can lead to poor habitat conditions; while another noted that the integration of trees on farms and crofts bring about various benefits. There was also reference to research undertaken by The Woodland Trust and the Soil Association which outlined the benefits that were introduced.

51. Other comments in relation to potential changes to FGS and made by at least two respondents included:

- FGS does not support riverside planting or regeneration and should do more to support natural regeneration.
- Scottish access rights and responsibilities should be one of the essential standards to be met when applying for FGS.
- The use of Land Parcel Identifiers (LPIDs) should be removed from forestry schemes as they are complicated and cause confusion.
- FGS should include additional scope for support for Natural Flood Management (NFM), seasonal flooding and wet native woodlands; this would align with AECS for seasonal flooding and wetlands creation on agricultural land.
- For FGS and the Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme to be complementary to each other rather than be mutually exclusive.
- There should be a focus on allowing support for natural regeneration rather than planting.
- A capacity for FGS to be submitted at any time and assessed on a monthly basis to allow simpler and more continuous options for environmental improvements.
- To be maintained and adopted by payment options under other agricultural support tiers.
- Allow for appropriate levels of cutting, mowing or grazing where land management is unmanaged or invasive species take over, with one conservation / environmental organisation suggesting that landowners with forestry and agricultural land should be able to apply for support with invasive species in all key areas.
- It was felt that the current system is biased towards larger landowners and businesses and biased against small farmers, crofters and foresters and can lead to private sector investment. It was suggested that a system offering mandatory redistributive payments that works across all agricultural and forestry payment schemes would be more appropriate. Additionally, this would

help to provide more encouragement to existing land managers and farmers to incorporate forestry and woodland into their agricultural activity.

Funding for smaller areas of land

52. A significant minority of respondents across almost all sub-groups felt that better complementarity could be brought about by FGS funding for smaller blocks of land, with some referencing a size of less than two hectares. Respondents focused on the benefits that support for smaller areas of land would bring about and these included delivering more biodiverse farms with an emphasis on riparian, shelterbelts, hedgerow, native and low-density woodland pasture and higher levels of CO₂ sequestration. Support for riparian woodland specifically was seen to help with biodiversity, flood management and water quality. It was noted that smaller areas could be easily integrated into existing agricultural activities. A representative organisation noted that increased options for small scale tree planting or woodland as part of productive agricultural holdings would help to improve delivery of Principles 2 and 3 of the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement.

53. While there was support for development of small areas of land, a few respondents noted that further grant support would be required to help bring this about, particularly as there is currently a disparity between actual costs and grant rates, which is seen to be a barrier to changes to small areas of land. This issue is covered to a greater extent at Questions 4 and 5. Other references to funding at this specific question included a third sector organisation which commented that there would need to be a grant for riparian woodland creation with a yearly per hectare payment that fairly reflects losses in crop yield or grazing value. An organisation in the environment / water sub-group noted there is a need for the same provision for water margin protection in FGS to support riverside planting or regeneration as is currently offered by RPID AECS.

54. There were also comments from a few respondents about the way in which smaller blocks of land could be funded. A representative organisation in the forestry sector commented that smaller woodland creation applications should be included in the forestry model rather than having to apply to two different funding streams for a single agroforestry application. A local authority noted that current AECS grants do not allow for a landowner to undertake smaller scale work on an annual basis and identified a need for grants for hedges and marginal land areas.

Help for farmers

55. The provision of help for farmers and foresters, in a variety of different ways, was cited by a significant minority of respondents across all sub-groups, particularly as there has been a historical separation of forestry and farming. Key was access to appropriate advice and training as it was felt by some that there is a need for training opportunities in the management of woodland creation and maintenance. There were a small number of

suggestions that a well-informed advisory service such as that currently offered by the Scottish Woodland Trust and Soil Association would be beneficial. In this way, site specific advice could be offered so that landowners can consider their options for forestry and agricultural grant options and multi-objective land use, and thus deliver the maximum public benefit.

56. Research and data collection was highlighted by a few respondents as helping to bridge gaps between crofting or farming and forestry, particularly in relation to agro-forestry.
57. Support for a **different approach to grant structure** so that funding could be made available to multiple landowners to help with sustainable forestry management and help bring about cooperation between farmers was cited by a few respondents. A small number of organisations in the conservation / environment and third sector noted this would be particularly important in the management of non-native invasive species and deer.

The need for integration between forestry and agriculture

58. A large minority of respondents across all sub-groups focused on a need for **integration between forestry and agriculture and greater levels of flexibility for potential land uses**. In many instances, there were references once again, to the need for using small blocks of land for shelterbelts, riparian woodland, opportunities to enhance woodland habitats through improving complementarity between forestry and agriculture funding options or controlled grazing to help bring about the regeneration of woodland.
59. Some of these respondents – primarily within conservation / environment or local authority sub-groups – referred to the use of Whole Farm Plans to support the integration, development and management of all tree and woodland assets on farm holdings. There was little by way of consistency as to how these should be prepared, with references to the different tiers of support. There were also a small number of references to the need for integration between all funded land schemes. One respondent in the conservation / environment sub-group suggested that options for the integration of trees and hedgerows into farmland should sit in elective and enhanced payment tiers, tailored to farmers and agricultural production rather than land use change.
60. A few respondents suggested that FGS needs to consider the potential for livestock grazing supported by agricultural funding to undermine woodland funding objectives.
61. There were also a few concerns about grazing by deer or other species that can cause damage to woodland areas, with some comments that FGS-supported projects should be accompanied by a herbivore management plan.

Grant structure

62. There were a few comments – primarily from individuals, public bodies, conservation / environment organisations and forestry practitioners – on the need to **treat agriculture and forestry as one ‘land use’ sector**, and for a clear definition of land uses and how they sit in relation to forestry and agricultural support. A local authority suggested that FGS should link with other agricultural funding options; while a financial / investment organisation noted that it should be easier for FGS and AECS schemes to be interchangeable and allow for cross funding. An individual commented that there are many areas where current AECS and FGS support overlap but they have different rules and funding arrangements, so there is a need for linkage between these different funding sources. A representative body felt that forestry and agriculture policy need to be equal under Scotland’s Land Use Strategy.
63. While respondents in general wanted to see more flexibility in funding approaches, there were also some suggestions on the need to show how woodland managers or landowners would meet commitments to biodiversity, land access and other benefits. For example, a local authority suggested that funding tailored to agro-forestry should only be provided upon demonstrating a strategy for sustainable food growing and an approach that returns suitable yields and creates training opportunities. Allied to this issue, there were some calls to consider how payments could be viable for farm woodlands and other small-scale woodlands given that there can be considerable upfront costs for infrastructure such as fencing materials or tree protection materials. One way to overcome this was a front-loading grant payment to help to offset initial capital costs that may currently be a deterrent to woodland creation or a change in land use.

Other comments

64. Additional comments made by small numbers of respondents included:
- There is no need for complementarity between the two grant schemes as the needs of forestry and agriculture are very different (mentioned by forestry practitioners / agents and individuals).
 - Conversely, there is a mindset that separates farming from forestry and there is a need to overcome this by, for example, having effective land management grant support schemes that cover both.
 - There need to be more options for planting non-native broadleaves.
 - Land needed for food production should be identified before consideration is given to tree planting.
 - Sitka spruce should not be considered for grant funding.

Forests delivering for Scotland's Climate Change Plan

Q3: 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?

In summary:

- A key theme across all sub-groups was of a need to broaden out species diversity as diverse mixed woodlands are seen to offer greater resilience to extreme weather events and help to reduce the spread of pests and disease as well as being better for biodiversity, flood prevention, climate change and carbon capture.
- There was also recognition of the need to plant the right tree in the right place to suit site conditions.
- Some forestry practitioners noted the need to continue commercial forestry alongside creating new woodlands and maintaining existing woodlands.
- There were also calls for natural regeneration in preference to creating new woodlands, with a focus on protecting and restoring native woodland. There was a degree of opposition from a significant minority of respondents to the funding of non-native conifers and / or monoculture planting or restocking.
- A significant minority of respondents across all sub-groups referred in some way to the need for additional support for owners and managers of woodlands; key was financial support but there were also references to the need for Scottish Forestry woodland officers to be able to offer more expertise, support and advice. There were some requests to set specific criteria that have to be met in order to obtain grant funding.

65. A total of 163 respondents answered this question. A few of these noted that the climate and nature emergencies are intertwined and that FGS needs to make explicit the link between the climate emergency, net zero targets, ecosystem resilience and biodiversity. Furthermore, it was noted that support provided by FGS needs to consider these issues on an integrated basis and consider the overall impact on a landscape-scale basis. There were also a few cautions on the need to have a balance in terms of restoring biodiversity, food production, commercial forestry and other essential resources provided by the sector.

66. Issues raised at earlier questions and again noted here were:

- The need to increase species diversity and mixture and create mixed woodlands.

- Opposition to the funding of non-native conifers and / or for monoculture planting or restocking, particularly in relation to Sitka spruce.
- The need for increased financial support via FGS and for easier access to funding through simplifying the application process and providing more information on the scheme.

Right tree, right place

67. While diversity of species was reiterated as being important, a significant minority of respondents referred to the need to **ensure that ‘the right tree is planted in the right place’**. There were comments of a need to create new woodland that would suit site conditions and to consider a wide range of factors that can impact on species choice and suitability. For example, a public body noted the need for increased consideration on the balance between different habitats to maximise biodiversity and consider the impact of species choice on biodiversity, disease control, the hydrological system and soil erosion.
68. Allied to this, there were also some comments – primarily from forestry practitioners / agents and individuals on the need to ensure **continued commercial forestry alongside creating new woodlands and maintaining existing woodlands**. For example, a forestry practitioner / agent noted that commercial conifer forestry and the resultant timber production is one of the most effective ways of storing carbon and mitigating climate change. An organisation in the conservation / environment sector felt that the timber industry should be an exemplar of sustainable development and contribute positively to the biodiversity value of woodland. A landowner suggested that the commercial forestry sector should continue but on an integrated basis with the introduction of mixed woodland and a continuous cover forestry approach.
69. There were also a small number of calls for **flexibility in minimum stocking densities** and that the FGS should not be too prescriptive. In order to address the issue of species diversity, there were a few calls for appropriate planting targets to be set or to have targeted higher rates for high value conifers and productive broadleaves for wood creation and restocking.

Priorities for woodland creation

70. While diversity of species was seen to be important by a significant number of respondents, there were some calls for **natural regeneration** in preference to planting, and a few other respondents felt there should be a focus on **protecting and restoring native woodland** as this would generate greater carbon storage and biodiversity for the future. There were also a few suggestions for any woodland creation to focus on native species instead of invasive non-native species such as Sitka spruce. Campaign responses also commented on the need for increased support and the removal of barriers to enable natural regeneration of native trees at a landscape scale.

71. In terms of natural regeneration, this was seen to support climate adaptation as native species have high levels of intra-specific genetic diversity and can respond to changing environmental conditions as well as creating less soil disturbance – and therefore loss of carbon – than planting new woodlands. For natural regeneration to be successful, there were calls for funding for **herbivore control** to help protect existing native woodlands. Most references were on the need for deer management plans, (see question 15) although there were also a small number of references to voles and squirrels. While there was opposition to the use of plastic tree guards as a means of helping with natural regeneration approaches, it was noted that the use of biodegradable tree shelters is a more expensive option that would need to be funded.
72. There were also a few references to the need for support for **riparian woodland** as this is seen to deliver a wide range of benefits including contributing to water conservation and the wider water habitat. Allied to support for riparian woodland, there were also references to **other small-scale areas** such as on farms where there may be opportunities for small-scale tree planting, setting up seed orchards, montane woodland or in urban and peri-urban areas. However, while there are seen to be many opportunities for the establishment of small-scale woodlands, there were calls from a few organisations for more funding support as the establishment of riparian woodlands and other small-scale woodlands is disproportionately more expensive compared to larger scale woodlands.

Support for non-native conifers and monoculture planting

73. While a significant minority of respondents noted their opposition to non-native conifers and “monoculture” planting, a small number of forestry practitioners / agents and a representative body in the forestry sector noted their support for fast growing conifers on the basis that they sequester more carbon than slower growing species.

The importance of peatlands

74. A small minority of respondents – primarily within the conservation / environment sectors – commented on the **need to protect peatland** across Scotland. There were suggestions that there should be no planting on peatland, with a small number of these organisations suggesting a presumption against further forestry expansion on functioning peatland or degraded peatland deemed capable of being restored. Additionally, the disadvantage noted by one organisation was that planting on peatland will often release more carbon than is sequestered. There were also a small number of calls for the eligible minimum peat depth for new planting to be decreased from the current 50cm to 30 cm or even as low as 10cm.

Additional support

75. There were a small number of comments of a need for **Scottish Forestry staff to be experienced in relevant areas and to offer more expertise and advice**, for example, in terms of species choice or provenance.
76. Linked to the issue of increased financial support for woodland creation and maintenance, there was an acknowledgement that there should be restrictions on grant funding, and a significant minority of respondents referred in some way to setting criteria as a basis for financial support. These included projects that deliver on sustainable management for forestry, climate resilience, climate mitigation, biodiversity enhancement and so on. Other parameters also included limits on single species planting and the planting of mixed species at the stand level. It was also suggested that there is a need for long term management plans to be an integral part of any woodland creation application, and for Scottish Forestry to monitor this over time.
77. There were a very small number of comments that financial support should be offered on a hierarchical basis to those projects offering the highest benefits to biodiversity, protected habitats and so on; and for small-scale projects to receive the highest levels of support, with diminishing levels of support for schemes that manage forests on a commercial basis.

The use of science / research

78. There were references from most sub-groups for the support package to evolve alongside emerging scientific research and data. A few of these respondents also noted a need to promote research and any innovative approaches that meet the dual needs of the climate emergency and net zero.
79. Other comments made by small numbers of respondents included the need:
- To go beyond UKFS regulations for species diversity.
 - To allow longer timescales for grant maintenance payments, for example, to allow for 15 years from year 0 (currently set at 5 years).
 - For greater involvement of communities in forestry projects, with more that are community-based and driven by local communities. This helps with community resilience as well as well-being and health.
 - For EIAs to be completed as part of the application process to ensure there is no loss of priority species or habitats.
 - To support local processing; this would help to support local communities and reduce the climate impact of transporting goods over long distances.

Q4: 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?

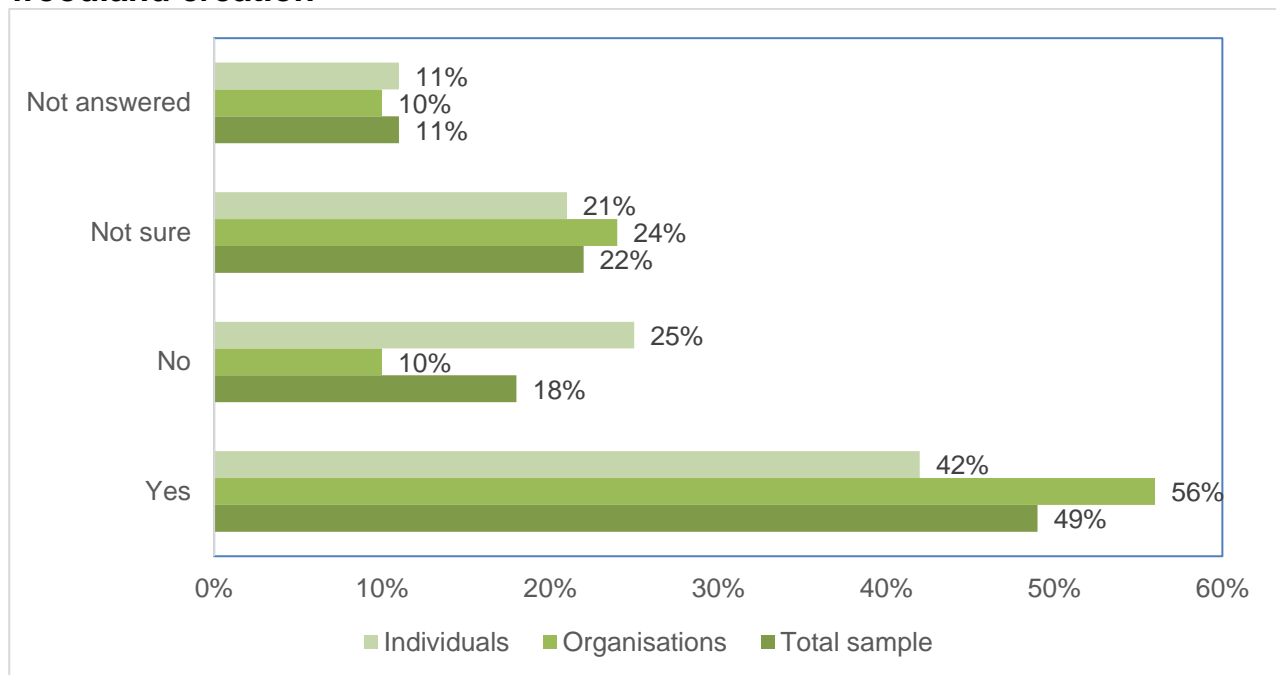
In summary:

- Almost half (49%) of respondents agreed that the grant support mechanism should have more flexibility to maximise the opportunities to blend private and public finance to support woodland creation.
- However, a number of respondents noted provisos, including concerns over accountability and transparency, the need for a clear regulatory framework and guidance and stringent guidelines to be followed that would be monitored by Scottish Forestry.
- A small minority of respondents felt the FGS system should be able to incorporate leverage of the Woodland Carbon Code (WCC) contributions and private finance.
- A large minority of respondents across all sub-groups disagreed with private investment schemes, which included concerns that private investment schemes focus on profit and returns for shareholders, push up land prices and have a focus on large blocks of commercial forestry monocultures. Additionally, there were some concerns over 'greenwashing' by large investors.
- A key focus for a small minority of respondents was to open up the grant support mechanism to smaller schemes, although some felt this would not be enticing to private finance because of its focus on profit. Again, there were some requests for criteria to be applied to funding for any private investment schemes.

80. As chart 3 demonstrates, almost half (49%) of respondents overall agreed that the grant support mechanism should have more flexibility to maximise the opportunities to blend private and public finance to support woodland creation. This compared to 18% who disagreed. However, almost a quarter (22%) overall were unsure and 11% did not answer this question.

81. A higher proportion of organisations agreed (56%) than individuals (42%). Conversely, a higher proportion of individuals disagreed (25%) compared to 10% of organisations.

Chart 3: Whether the grant support mechanism should have more flexibility to maximise the opportunities to blend private and public finance to support woodland creation



82. A total of 151 respondents then provided further comment to expand upon their initial response to this question. Issues raised at earlier questions included:

- The need to open up the grant support mechanism to smaller schemes (noted by a small minority of respondents, many of which were organisations in the conservation / environment sector).
- The need for increases in the level of grant funding and a review of grant rates available as well as regular reviews of these. This would help landowners to meet capital costs such as site investigation surveys or consultation, and encourage more schemes to go ahead, particularly small-scale projects.
- Concerns over removing agricultural land from food production and the need for an assessment of the overall impact or damage to other land use such as food production.
- A need for advice and guidance to help navigate funding mechanisms that are available, particularly for small farms and crofters.

Qualified support for blended finance

83. A significant minority of respondents across most sub-groups, **agreed with the need for blended finance, although a number of these respondents noted provisos** to this. A few respondents noted concerns over **accountability and transparency** and suggested a need for **proper oversight** of any funding. A similar number of respondents noted that while private finance can be a useful means of bolstering public funding, there will be a need for a **clear regulatory framework and guidance**. A governance framework would help to ensure that oversight and outcomes are recorded, measured and refined as well as ensuring there is no overlapping in payments for carrying out the same work. Linked to this, a small number of organisations in the conservation / environment sector noted that developers need **stringent guidelines** to ensure they adhere to any provisos linked to funding.
84. A representative in the farming sector felt there is a need for a clear reference point as to where public and private funding is utilised as well as needing to deliver real environmental and carbon benefits without impacting on other public policy aims such as land reform. A public body suggested a sliding scale of FGS payments with adjustable parameters to accommodate private finance contributions and suggested a scheme similar to the current Peatland Action Funding within Cairngorms National Park. A representative body suggested it might be better for the Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB) to provide a loan scheme alongside FGS grants to meet wood creation targets.

The Woodland Carbon Code (WCC)

85. A small minority of respondents – mainly organisations – commented on the Woodland Carbon Code and the role it could play in support of woodland creation. It was noted that **WCC can provide additional income for woodland creation projects** where they are eligible and as this is a certified process, it makes sense to utilise this more. Moreover, a forestry practitioner noted that WCC already handles additionality from the private finance side. However, two organisations in the conservation / environment sector suggested there needs to be a change to WCC to evaluate the total amount of carbon captured and then apply a retrospective approach to compensating existing schemes.
86. A small number of these organisations also felt that the FGS system should be able to **incorporate leverage of the Woodland Carbon Code (WCC) contributions and private finance**. That said, a public body commented that the design of woodland schemes funded by carbon finance is strongly influenced by measurable carbon which favours woodland planting rather than natural regeneration, and that WCC needs to include natural regeneration or restoring ancient woodland. It was also noted by a small number of respondents that the stringent additionality criteria under WCC are not helpful in incentivising all landowners to create new woodlands with the

help of carbon credit monetisation. It was also noted that there is a need to review WCC to remove disincentives to planting diverse conifers.

Disagreement with private investment schemes

87. A large minority of respondents across all sub-groups, and including respondents who had answered 'yes' and 'no' to the first part of this question, noted their **disagreement with private investment schemes**. There were various reasons cited for this which included that private investment schemes focus on profit and returns for their shareholders, they serve to push up land prices, and have a focus on large blocks of commercial forestry monocultures rather than forests containing a diversity of tree species. These respondents felt that public finance should not be offered to private investment schemes that do not give full consideration to the environmental impacts of their business. Furthermore, the carbon code payments for these businesses and the returns they receive that are generated by the timber market should negate the need for grant monies to be paid to them.
88. Of the respondents who answered 'no' to the initial part of this question, the key theme to emerge was **concerns over 'greenwashing'**. It was suggested that taxpayers should not support commercial initiatives that do not deliver benefits for biodiversity and communities and that greenwashing by financial institutions is not conducive to the required outcomes. A representative body in the forestry sector suggested that natural capital and carbon schemes should be an additionality to avoid perceptions of greenwashing.
89. A smaller number of respondents – mostly forestry practitioners – felt that grant schemes should not exclude large commercial investors, that the benefits of commercial conifer woodland need to be emphasised and that these adhere to the requirements of UKFS which ensures well managed sustainable woodlands that add to Natural Capital value as well as offering a supply of timber.

A need for parameters

90. While higher numbers of respondents had concerns about private investment schemes than did not, there were suggestions from a small minority of respondents – primarily individuals and organisations in the conservation / environment sector – for criteria to be applied to private investment schemes. For example, ensuring that the taxpayer has a stake in any future economic returns by having a mechanism to ensure that a proportion of capital gains are returned to the public purse. A few of these organisations suggested the Scottish Government should put the Interim Principles for Responsible Investment in Natural Capital on a statutory footing as this would help to achieve a Just Transition by actively involving communities in the major land use changes required to meet Scotland's environmental commitments. A public body noted the importance of public funding from FGS delivering on these Interim Principles and the Scottish

Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement to ensure there is transparency of ownership, community engagement, the creation of opportunities for diversification of ownership and making sure any finance generated results in community benefits.

91. There were also a few comments that private investment through natural capital and carbon schemes should also make a valuable contribution for nature, climate and people and not focus solely on climate change. It was felt that there are opportunities for FGS to combine private and public finance to create more ecologically coherent woods but that any contribution to climate change should be evaluated and should include climate adaptation and resilience as well as climate mitigation. It was also noted that at present, small-scale planting is not enough for private finance to be practical and that existing government frameworks, such as Land Use Partnerships and Frameworks or opportunity mapping developed for the Nature Networks that the National Planning Framework 4 mandates Planning Authorities to create, could scale up projects.

Other comments

92. Other comments raised by small numbers of respondents at this question included:
- A need for carbon credits to be available to crofters and farm tenants as at present they are only available to the landowner.
 - The need for research and development of nature-based markets, taking a more holistic approach to climate and nature recovery to ensure that biodiversity and climate benefits are achieved.
 - A need for better understanding of the proposed approach to blended schemes, for example, reasons as to why private finance is more suitable than public finance or how a blended approach would deliver Scotland's Forestry Strategy and achieve planting targets.

Q5: 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?

In summary:

- A key response (albeit by a relatively small number of respondents) was of the need to provide funding for small-scale woodland creation and management. Again, there were references to the need for the application process to be simplified and for FGS to provide increases in grant funding rates and for annual maintenance payments to be extended beyond five years.

- A significant minority of respondents referred specifically to funding for the preservation and expansion of native woodland and for natural regeneration; and a small minority of respondents noted the need to encourage and support Continuous Forestry Cover (CCF) to a greater extent than at present.
- A small minority also referred to the need to provide incentives for greater species diversity.
- There were also references to the issue of deer management and the provision of advice and guidance from Scottish Forestry.

93. A total of 156 respondents answered this question. To a large extent, the same themes emerged in response to this question as have been noted at earlier questions. These themes were the need:

- To provide funding for small-scale woodland creation and management, particularly in relation to capital costs.
- For a simpler application process.
- For funding for the preservation and expansion of native woodland specifically, and for natural regeneration.
- For changes to permissible stocking densities as the current requirement for the minimum average stocking density for native trees is too high, and also that funding precludes the use of natural regeneration for restocking.
- For funding to contribute to integrated land use.
- To stop funding for monoculture plantations, particularly in relation to Sitka spruce.

94. There were suggestions that **annual maintenance payments should be extended beyond the current five years**, with the final capital payments being made in later years. It was felt this would be more realistic in allowing for natural regeneration. There were also a small number of suggestions for more regular reviews of rates to take account of rising costs and inflation. There were a small number of suggestions for the upfront payment of capital costs to encourage small woodland creation.

95. In relation to woodland, a small minority of respondents – organisations mostly within community groups, the conservation / environment sector and forestry practitioners – noted a need for the current funding package to provide **incentives for greater species diversity, along with a focus on the types of woodlands that offer the greatest levels of public benefits**. A forestry practitioner suggested there could be different rates for different species types so that the approach of ‘**right tree in the right place**’ can be followed; another forestry practitioner commented that funding packages are skewed towards native woodlands without consideration of the economic, societal and environmental benefits of

commercial woods. A very small number of respondents commented that the current approach to funding woodland creation is too polarised between environmental and productive forestry and native or non-native species and funding should be designed to encourage all types of woodland including novel mixtures of native and non-native species.

96. Linked to this, a small minority of respondents – mostly individuals – noted the need to **encourage and support Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF)** to a greater extent than at present as this has benefits for woodland habitats and associated species.
97. There were also a small number of references to the need for planting more in urban and peri-urban areas, with a local authority suggesting that Enhancing Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT) could contribute funding for corridors, public access and so on.
98. The issue of **deer management** was noted by a small minority of respondents, with references to the need for deer management plans and suggestions for higher payments for effective deer management. This issue is covered in a later chapter of this report (see Q16).
99. A significant minority of respondents referred to **Scottish Forestry** specifically, mostly in relation to the provision of advice and guidance and / or ensuring that woodland creation plans are followed. A small number of comments related to the need for Scottish Forestry staff to have the necessary expertise, to provide training to deliver sector skills gaps or to help engage with and educate the general public.
100. There were a few references – mainly from individuals and organisations in the conservation / environment sector – on the need for **greater involvement of local communities** and public access to woodlands, although a forestry practitioner commented that the provision of community benefits can be a barrier to woodland creation. Further detail on this specific issue is provided in questions 10 and 11. The campaign responses noted the need for a set of objectives that have a much greater emphasis on biodiversity and community wealth building.
101. A small number of respondents – primarily representative bodies and individuals – felt that more **support for seed orchards and nurseries** is needed. This would help to create employment and offer locally sourced plants which help to reduce risk of diseases or pests. Additionally, campaign responses called for urgent investment in the Scottish and UK supply of local provenance trees.
102. Other areas cited by a few or less respondents included:
- A need for greater levels of collaboration and an integrated strategy for cross-cutting concerns such as the spread of invasive plants.

- Setting targets, intended outcomes and criteria for funding; and monitoring of this to ensure targets and outcomes are met.
- Offering funding for woodland creation feasibility assessments.
- No funding for estates that encourage deer breeding for sports; it was perceived that shooting estates offer little by way of benefits to local communities.
- There were also a small number of references to the importance of managing Scotland's rainforest, the Caledonian Pinewood Inventory (CPI), montane woodlands and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).

Q6: 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 diseases?

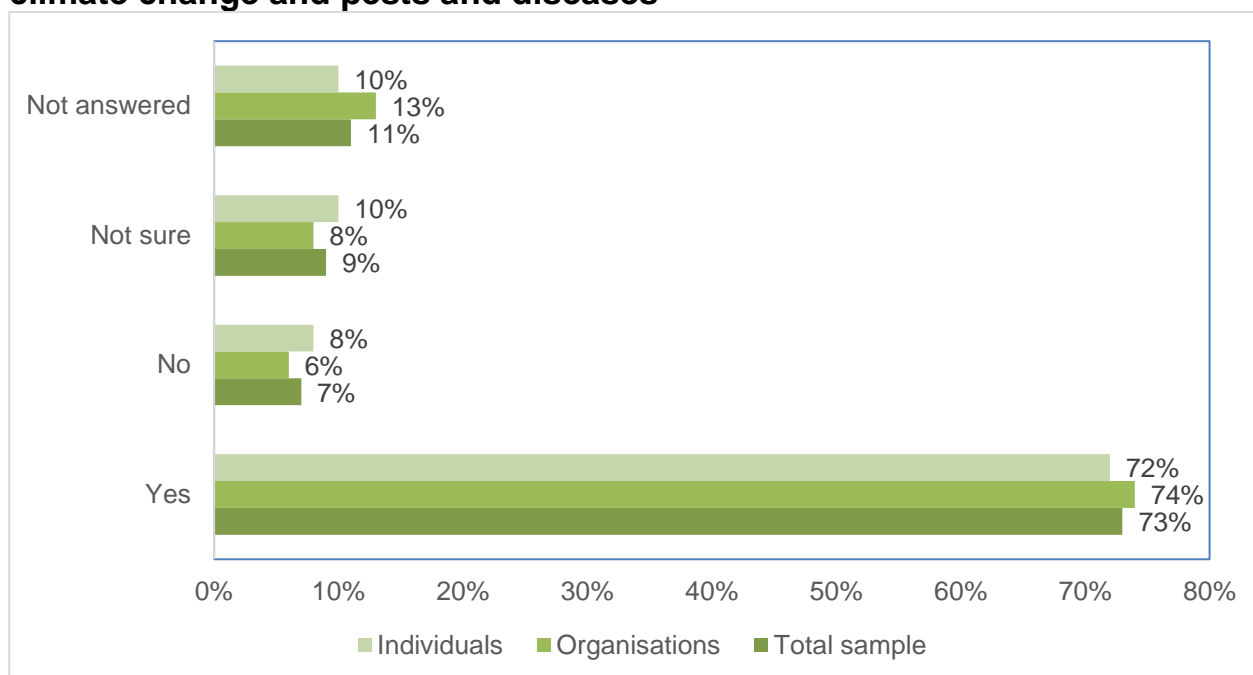
In summary:

- A majority of respondents (73%) across most sub-groups (excluding forestry timber processors and representative bodies in forestry) agreed 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 diseases. Respondents felt this could be achieved by diversity of species, the setting of parameters to any funding, by Scottish Forestry providing greater levels of support, specialist advice and guidance as well as ensuring that parameters to funding are met.

103. As chart 4 demonstrates, a majority of respondents (73%) overall agreed 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 diseases. This compares to only 7% who disagreed. A further 9% were unsure and 11% did not answer this question.

104. There was little difference between responses from organisations and individuals.

Chart 4: Whether 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 diseases



105. Respondents were then asked to outline how the grant scheme could support this and a total of 140 respondents provided their reasoning for this. As at some previous questions, there were some comments about:

- The interlinked nature of climate change, biodiversity and community; and that any form of woodland support needs to consider this wide range of issues, rather than just focusing on climate change, pests and diseases.
- The need for grant support to be based on diversity of species as mixed woodlands are perceived to have the advantages of offering high levels of biodiversity, resilience to pests and disease and offering a range of habitats.
- Support for a wider variety of silvicultural systems such as CCF.
- Ensuring an approach of 'right tree, right place'.
- FGS should not be offered for monoculture plantations.
- Scottish Forestry and the support it should provide to woodland managers and owners.

The need for parameters / criteria

106. A large minority of respondents outlined parameters they felt would need to be applied in order to ensure that grant support is effective. A number of these focused on a need for good management of woodlands, with funding being withheld if good management cannot be demonstrated. It

was suggested by a few respondents – mainly organisations – that management plans and objectives should be provided as part of the application process, and cover issues such as resilience and biosecurity, and with payments linked to key stages when outcomes are met.

107. A few organisations in the conservation /environment sector suggested inclusion of a 'resilience supplement' within all options for woodland expansion and management which would ensure all grant supported forestry has a greater species diversity than the new draft UKFS, which suggests a maximum for any single species of 65%.

108. There were also a few suggestions for caps on single species, although there was little by way of consistency in the suggestions made by respondents. Suggestions ranged from a cap of 30% on a single species to 65% or less. This was noted primarily by organisations in the conservation / environment sector and individuals. Conversely, a forestry practitioner noted that woodland management should be part of good forestry practice rather than focusing on narrow outcomes that may compromise other benefits.

109. A number of forestry practitioners / agents also felt that requirements for woodland management are covered by UKFS and no further parameters should be required.

110. Other suggestions for criteria on which to base grant support included:

- Funding to maintain areas of open ground in order to encourage fire breaks and offer access tracks. These would also allow for the passage of beneficial insects, birds, bats and so on.
- Target stocking densities.
- Using local nursery stock and locally sourced seedlings; a reduction in imports would help to reduce risk of diseases and pests.

The role of Scottish Forestry

111. While there was reference to Scottish Forestry providing support and specialist advice and guidance to woodland managers and owners, there was acknowledgement from a small number of respondents that Scottish Forestry is understaffed and under resourced to cope with offering an advisory and support role. There was also a call for **advice provided by Scottish Forestry to be consistent** across Woodland Officers and Conservancies.

112. A few respondents – primarily local authorities – also referred to the need for **Scottish Forestry to work closely alongside other public bodies, stakeholders and organisations** such as SEPA, NatureScot, Scottish Water and RPID to ensure that they have shared objectives and that national oversight is not siloed. There were also references to working with

CCF Group and other community-based interest groups, local wildlife groups and community councils.

Other comments

113. A few respondents noted that it is not possible to comment on challenges as there is no understanding as to what future problems are likely to exist. A few - mainly in the forestry sector - also commented that there is a need for further research on alternative species or new technology and the need to pay heed to scientific evidence.

Integrating woodlands on farms and crofts

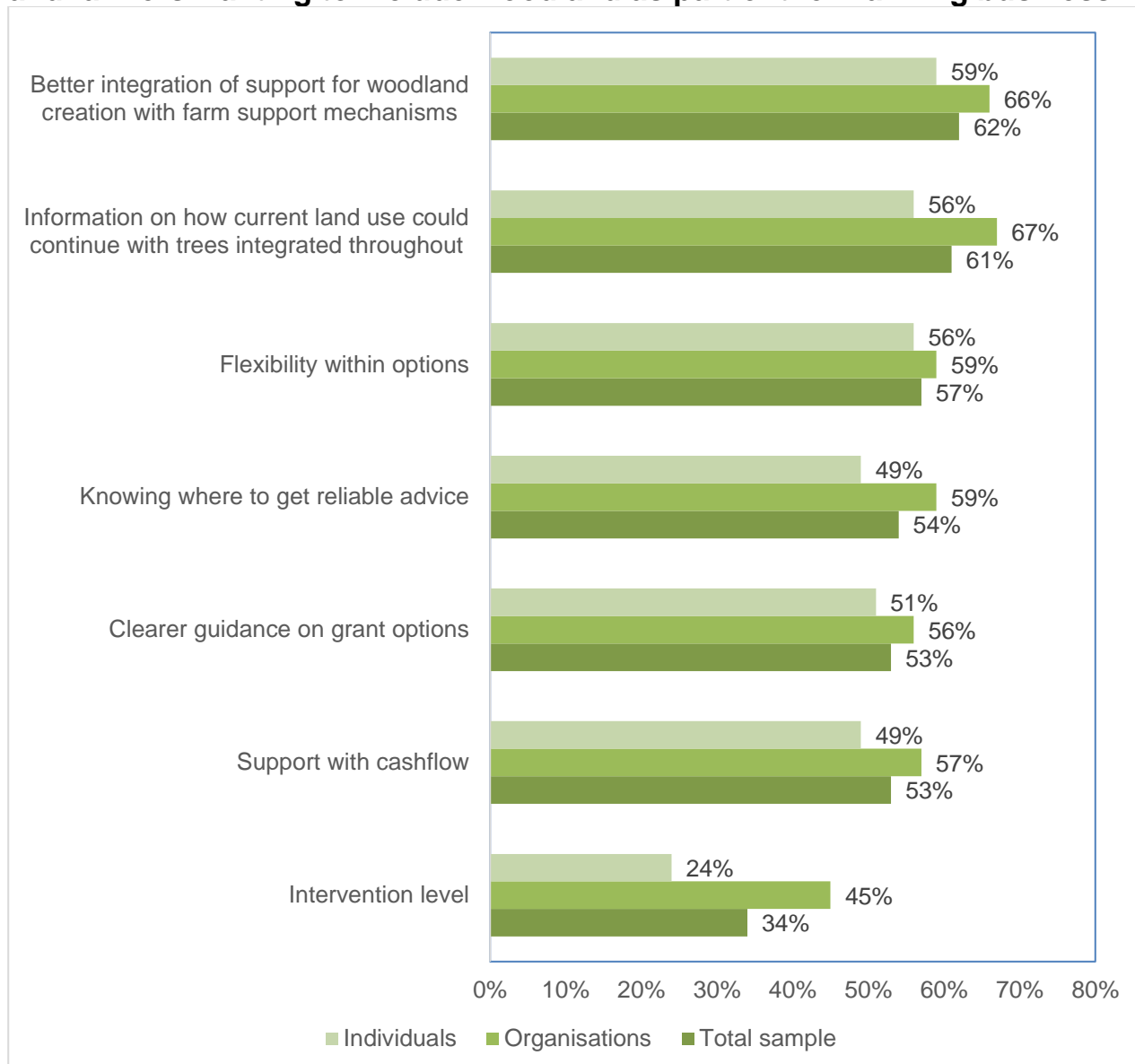
Q7: Which of the following measures would help reduce the barriers for crofters and farmers wanting to include woodland as part of their farming business? Please select all that apply.

In summary:

- 'Better integration of support for woodland creation with farm support mechanisms' and 'Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout' garnered the most support, though most measures were supported by over 50% of respondents.
- Other measures suggested by respondents included better tailoring of grant schemes to reflect the needs of farmers and crofters, better support for small scale woodland, and more holistic land planning to cover whole woodland and farming enterprises.
- Better advice, education and training provision for farmers and crofters about scheme design and the benefits of woodland was also recommended.

114. As chart 5 shows, the largest numbers of respondents supported 'Better integration of support for woodland creation with farm support mechanisms' (62%) and 'Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout' (61%) as measures to help reduce the barriers for crofters and farmers wanting to include woodland as part of their farming business. However, all the other suggested measures, with the exception of 'Intervention level' (34%) also elicited the support of over half of respondents. For all the measures, organisations showed higher levels of support than did individual respondents.

Chart 5: Views of measures that would help reduce the barriers for crofters and farmers wanting to include woodland as part of their farming business



115. Respondents were then asked whether there were other measures to help reduce barriers and 102 respondents chose to respond. Many answers in effect gave more detail about the measures already suggested but several other areas where measures could be taken were advocated as well. A small minority reiterated general support for all the suggested measures at the first part of the question. A number of themes echoed responses to previous questions. These included:

- Better targeting of grants or more flexibility in tailoring the grants system.
- Increases in grant funding levels.
- Simplification of FGS and other rural grants and subsidies.
- Better support for small schemes or small-scale woodland management and planting.

Financial Targeting of Support

116. A small minority of respondents requested better targeting in financial areas, such as with upfront costs of planting and woodland creation or with taxation advice and treatment. A small number wanted to see increases in grant amounts, with comments requesting the full funding of projects, amid complaints that the FGS rarely covers project costs. A few respondents wanted a review of the loan scheme and made suggestions for greater financing or a higher loan rate. There were also a few requests for speedier grant or loan approvals, and quicker payments once approval is gained.
117. A forestry practitioner / agent perceived the current requirement to make small farm woodland UKFS compliant as being unduly restrictive for planting on a small scale.

Simplification of Scheme Processes

118. A significant minority of conservation / environment organisations, representative bodies and individual respondents wanted **to simplify the schemes** (i.e. referring both to FGS and other rural grants and subsidies). Recommendations included reducing the administration and paperwork concerned in applying, obtaining help with the paperwork, clarifying wording (i.e. use of plain English), simplifying the forms and reducing the costs incurred in applying. In relation to the latter, there were complaints about the necessity of having to engage forestry agents to help with the process.

Coordinated Land Planning

119. Holistic land planning was encouraged by a significant minority, including a large number of conservation / environment organisations. It was thought that there should be joint planning between a farm's livestock, crops and woodland to cover the whole enterprise so that the woodland complements the farming business. Further recommendations included joined up planning between neighbouring landowners, better networking between the Scottish Government's Rural Payments and Inspections Division (RPID) and Scottish Forestry; and farmers and foresters working towards a more harmonious culture through each gaining increased knowledge of the other's activities.
120. Related to this a significant minority of mainly conservation / environmental bodies sought the availability of better advice and clearer guidance on scheme design (e.g. getting a balance between productive land use and environmentally sound management).

Education, Training and Information Provision

121. A significant minority from across the range of respondents cited a need for education and training of farmers, crofters and communities on the benefits of woodland. It was thought this would help discourage the view that planting woodland sacrifices farmland. Among suggestions for information

needs were how woodland can enhance land use, commercial benefits (e.g. uses for timber and non-timber products), when sheep may graze woodland, the environmental contributions that woodland can make (e.g. to soil fertility, pollination, biodiversity, wildlife corridors and water supply) and forestry education more generally. Respondents suggested ways of delivering information and these included case reviews and peer to peer knowledge sharing.

122. Clearer economic, finance and business advice for farmers was requested by a few respondents. Similar numbers simply wanted practical, straightforward and easy to access guidance generally.

Other areas for support

123. A few – mainly individual respondents – wanted to see better or more engagement from Scottish Forestry staff. There were suggestions that officers should be more informed about farming, that Scottish Forestry should attend events such as the Royal Highland Show, and that staff should show more flexibility in appraising schemes.

124. Similar numbers wanted to see more support for tenant farmers, with lease restrictions and limited timescale of tenure seen as major barriers to the creation of woodland. A public body perceived tensions around how payments for carbon credits should be split between the tenant farmer and the landlord, or which of them has the liability for the trees or credits.

125. Help, support or advice was also requested in relation to infrastructure requirements, with fencing, shelters, gates, sapling protection, machinery funding, contractor support, piping and troughs (for irrigation) all being mentioned.

126. Other areas mentioned by a very small number of respondents included the following:

- Support with planning (e.g. with planning advice, planning application support and land management plans). Local Authority planning constraints were a problem according to a farming-related representative body.
- Support with deer management.
- Support for restocking (e.g. where conifer sites are migrated to an increase in native woodland).
- Support for conducting surveys (e.g. environmental screening).
- Support for project budgeting.

Other Remarks

127. A few respondents across a range of organisation types foresaw the long-term nature of forestry as being off-putting. Regularly changing policies and grant processes were regarded as problems in this scenario. One suggestion was to have an option to convert forested land for other uses without penalty in certain circumstances; another was to offer farmers a greater degree of flexibility with limitations only set to one rotation.
128. A small number of respondents discussed issues to do with carbon credits and carbon sequestration. This included clearer legal guidance on the options for woodland creation projects that wish to register under the Woodland Carbon Code.
129. Very small numbers cited agricultural uses (e.g. food production) as being the priority rather than creating woodland. Similar numbers were unsure about the meaning of 'intervention level'.

Q8: Establishing small woodlands can have higher costs. What specific mechanisms would better support small scale woodlands and woodland ownership?

In summary:

- Respondents suggested higher grant rates or a reprioritisation of grant support away from large scale monoculture forests.
- Funding provision or help with professional costs (e.g. agent and contractor fees) as well as capital grants or funding to pay for infrastructure (in particular fencing) were also recommended.
- Calls were made for grant support to be loaded at the start of a scheme to help pay for upfront establishment costs; but increased maintenance rates were also advocated to support ongoing cashflow.
- The largest numbers of respondents desired easier application processes, with some perceiving that applications for small scale, native or riparian woodlands involved greater bureaucracy than those for large scale monoculture.

130. A total of 150 respondents gave answers to this question. Again, the bulk of respondents' replies were about:

- The targeting of grant support and offering higher grant rates for small woodlands, given a lack of economies of scale compared to large woodlands or forests. recognising their biodiversity, status as safe havens for wildlife, recreational and social benefits and ability to help create green networks.
- Simplification of application processes.

- Reprioritising grant support from large scale, monoculture forests towards small scale, native or riparian woodland.

Targeting of Grant Support

131. Grant funding provision or help with **professional costs** was advocated by a significant minority across the range of respondent types. Many examples were given included planning costs, harvesting contractors, management, consultation and agent fees, grant application costs and survey costs.
132. **Specific additional capital grants or funding to pay for fencing** was requested, again by a significant minority; this was seen as disproportionately higher for smaller woodlands. Again, there is a perceived need to keep up with actual costs in this area. A smaller minority wanted additional funding to pay for other infrastructure such as access points, harvesting infrastructure and crop protection infrastructure.
133. A significant minority (including almost all representative bodies for farming and forestry) wished to see **grant support loaded at the start of a scheme**, to help pay for upfront establishment and tree planting costs. It was pointed out that the initial capital requirements are high.
134. At the same time, calls were also made for **increased maintenance rates** (i.e. ongoing support) by a significant minority, notably including every representative body for farming and for forestry. This would be to help support ongoing cashflow. There were suggestions this could take the form of an annual management grant or be incentivised, with a landowner / manager advocating outcome-based payments based on annual delivery of biodiversity net gain, flood management and / or climate resilience. A public body recommended that “Enhanced payments for specific environmental benefits could be useful where habitat is being expanded or created for particular other species or to create continuous wildlife corridors.”
135. A very small number of respondents wanted to see better loans availability, with a review or extension of the existing loan scheme recommended.

Other Forms of Support

136. Linkage of FGS support to agricultural support or biodiversity schemes was advocated by a small minority of respondents. A small number urged that small woodland areas on farms should maintain eligibility for Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments, with one organisation claiming this would alleviate farming tenants from being at risk of facing claims for a loss of agricultural value. An individual suggested that reincorporating small woodlands within the Agri-Environmental Climate Scheme (AECS) would help encourage landowners to consider small scale planting.

137. Increased **support from woodland managers and Scottish Forestry** was requested by similar numbers of respondents; for example, by helping to draw up woodland plans and by giving management support as well as showing a greater understanding of farming. Allied to this, similar numbers of mainly individual respondents wanted more training and education for farmers, landowners and communities on long term, sustainable woodland management; for instance, about the benefits, planning requirements and to get a better understanding of what land is suitable for planting.
138. A small minority wanted **support for community ownership** of, or community input to, small woodlands. It was intimated the benefits would include a reduction in costs (e.g. through community volunteering). A few respondents wanted to see more diversity of ownership and stewardship with more opportunities made available for smaller holders of land or woodland crofts. Mentions were also made in favour of creating more Woodlot licences, thus bypassing the client / landowner relationship with its associated fees.
139. A few respondents, notably including several public bodies, urged **greater collaboration** between small woodland owners, farmers and crofters, with the objects of reducing costs through sharing, and co-ordinating projects (e.g. deer control work). Suggestions included the setting up of co-operatives, or membership of machinery rings, to help enable mutual access to harvesting machinery and mounding machines, and aggregating material purchases. Further perceived benefits included mutual access to professional advice and aggregation of grant applications. This issue is covered in more detail at Q15.
140. Other specific types of support were voiced by a few or small numbers of respondents each as follows:
- (Better ways of paying for) Measures to reduce herbivore impacts (e.g. deer management).
 - Help with restocking after felling (e.g. with costs), or allowing natural regeneration.
 - More support from, or learning from, local grant schemes and other models (e.g. for very small areas such as .25 Ha). Examples included the Woodland Trust's 'Croft Woodlands' project and local schemes currently used by a number of local authorities and Regional Forest Projects in England.
 - Support for crofters and woodland crofts.

Other comments

141. A small number of respondents discussed how to define 'small' woodlands, with suggestions ranging from less than 100 Ha to less than 0.25 Ha, with it being pointed out that 0.5 Ha would take up a large proportion of the land area of many crofts.

142. Very small numbers of respondents stated a preference for large scale woodland, perceiving larger environmental and climate benefits; others were against the foresting of food-producing land.

Forests delivering for people and communities

Q9: How can forestry grants better support an increase in easily accessible, sustainable managed woodlands in urban and peri-urban areas?

In summary:

- Promoting and supporting more use of forestry grants by the public, communities and schools was considered essential, with support for easing or encouraging public access (e.g. via maps, paths and routes) being key to this.
- Support for deeper engagement and involvement by communities was also desired (e.g. through involvement in long term planning) amid some concerns over anti-social behaviour.
- Alterations to the Woods in and Around Towns (WIAT) option of the FGS were requested; it was felt that urban and peri-urban areas often miss out on this funding. Calls were again made for higher grant rates given high establishment costs, with more of a focus on community support.

143. A total of 108 respondents made comments at this question. A large number of these focused on supporting usage of these areas; many others again made recommendations as to how grants and funding should be targeted. A large minority overtly stated that they were in favour of more support for woodlands in urban and peri-urban areas, citing the benefits of green space for communities to enjoy, health and wellbeing advantages and helping provide resilience to climate change. A small number of comments suggested that these woodlands offer more benefits than ones in rural areas. As at some previous questions, there were comments on the need to simplify the application process.

Support for Community Usage of Woodlands

144. According to a large minority of respondents across most sub-groups, **promoting and supporting more use of urban and peri-urban woodlands by the public, communities and schools** is an essential way of supporting an increase of, and improvements to, this type of woodland. Improvements in advertising and information provision to users were put forward as ways of facilitating improved engagement. Tied into this, slightly smaller numbers (but still a large minority of respondents) supported easing or encouraging public access for all abilities via the provision of maps, routes and green corridors, with the caveat that these should be in the right places.

145. **Deeper involvement by the public and communities** was advocated by a significant minority, who wanted to see support for helping with community contributions to looking after woodlands. Examples of this

included standardising legal documents to make it easier for community organisations to enter into management agreements with landowners or apply for grants on a landowner's behalf, involvement in long-term planning, helping with producing woodland management plans, and the provision of expertise and advice. A small number of comments indicated a need to have better community consultation processes in connection with woodland grant applications and the management of woodlands, such as site visits or drop-in sessions.

146. Concerns were however expressed by a significant minority of respondents over the misuse of urban and peri-urban woodland in terms of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. It was thought that better policing is needed and therefore funding would be required for rangers, linking police with community groups (e.g. for sharing information and watch systems) and community education.

Infrastructure Support

147. A significant minority of respondents across all sub-groups focused on **easier public access** in woodland with funding for paths and footpaths being advocated. Slightly greater numbers mentioned funding for other woodland access infrastructure including signage, gates, stiles, parking, visitor facilities, deer management infrastructure and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) tracks.

Woods in and Around Towns (WIAT) and other Specific Funding Options

148. The Woods in and Around Towns (WIAT) option of the FGS - which supports operations that will contribute to the sustainable management of urban and rural woodlands and provide a range of public benefits – was specifically picked out for comment by substantial numbers of respondents. A significant minority from across the range of sub-groups thought there needed to be **alterations to the WIAT option**, particularly in relation to expanding the types of area that are eligible. It was felt that urban and peri-urban areas often miss out on this funding. A few respondents criticised this scheme as being too simple a model for woodlands and having a complex application process. These respondents suggested this should be reintroduced with clearly defined criteria in terms of ecosystem services.
149. A variety of other issues with the current WIAT option were put forward. These included the provision of upfront funding and improvements to zoning, specifications for paths and steps being overengineered, that WIAT needs to be extended to smaller communities, and that it is outdated. Specific requests for expanding area eligibility for WIAT were to include informal woodland, retarget this option towards areas of high deprivation and having a less restrictive buffer. Two local authorities and two forestry bodies commented that WIAT provision is well below costs or requires increased funding rates.

150. A few respondents did however comment positively about WIAT, saying that it offered enhanced payments, that it provides what is needed in its current form and that it has been used successfully as a targeted grant.
151. There were also a couple of comments about the Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG). These were a desire to make the application process easier, and to publicise it more for greater uptake.

General Structure of Grants and Funding

152. A significant minority of respondents wanted to see **higher grant rates**, perceiving urban and peri-urban woodland as being costly to establish and maintain compared to rural woodland areas. Perceived causes of these extra costs included the presence of utilities, contaminated land, a lack of scale advantages, and onerous public access needs and management.
153. Relating back to supporting community involvement, a significant minority from across the full range of respondents wanted a **focus on community funding or grant support**. It was also thought that grant schemes should be promoted more to communities, for instance to support community ownership or stewardship.
154. A few respondents each wanted a focus on the following:
- A blended approach to funding (i.e. integrating woodland grants with other funding streams such as health and wellbeing, active travel, NatureScot funding and lottery funding). There were also a small number of requests to tie in woodland creation funding with that for other green spaces.
 - Larger capital grants to cover high upfront and planting costs.
 - Grants to reflect the management time incurred by, for instance, landowners (for managing trails, liaising or consulting with community groups or managing features of the historic environment).
155. Two local authorities noted that the SFGS for local authorities is very different in format to grants from other funders. They requested a simpler system based on a project plan and actual costs, including maintenance, would be easier.

Other Support

156. Support for better management of existing public spaces was advocated by a significant minority. Encouragement for diversity of habitats, more (non dense) planting of trees in grass areas, more native species, community orchards, and trees along roads and railway lines was requested.
157. A significant minority of respondents wanted to make it easier to secure land for planting woodland, with high land values in urban and peri-urban areas cited as a problem. Suggestions included compulsory purchase

orders by local authorities to transfer land to community groups, and joint working by, for instance, non-governmental organisations, the Scottish Land Commission and local authorities to identify vacant or derelict land which can be planted. Allied to this were a few suggestions for more local authority action to support or develop woodland, such as helping with woodland management and development plans, or requiring developers to provide areas of new woodland as part of their proposals.

Other Comments

158. A small number of mostly individual respondents thought support for urban woodland should not be a priority (e.g. that there should be a focus on rural woodlands).

Q10: How can grant support for forestry better enable rural communities to realise greater benefits from woodland to support community wealth building?

In summary:

- Respondents expressed a desire for enhanced economic and business use of woodland by rural communities as a way of realising woodland benefits to support community wealth building. Local employment in woodland-connected activities was advocated, in association with the provision of practical advice and education to local communities in woodcraft and related skills.
- There were also calls for improved consultation processes with communities, as well as support for community management of woodland.
- Better community access and support for recreational use (e.g. allotments and plant nurseries) was also requested.
- In terms of grant targeting, respondents called for large projects to have provisions for community benefits as well as more funding to be given to communities rather than wealthy investors or landowners.

159. A total of 122 respondents made comments at this question. A number of key themes emerged, many of which referred back to those mentioned at previous questions. These included:

- Calls for increased public and community access to woodland, with a perception from a small number of respondents that funding is not currently easy to access to facilitate this.
- Higher rates of grant support.
- An easier application process.
- Perceptions that any further forestry and woodland creation has only negative effects on rural populations and is negative for tourism.

160. A significant minority welcomed attempts to realise greater benefits from woodland to support community wealth building.

Support for Enhanced Business and Economic Activity

161. The largest numbers of respondents – a large minority from across the full spectrum – expressed support for **enhanced economic and business use of woodland, particularly by communities**. Many such uses were suggested, including using wood for fuel, sheep and cattle grazing in woodland pasture (i.e. open areas), harvesting, processing, sawmilling, timber supply and products, growing, silvicultural intervention and local deer management for food and processing. Connected to this, a significant minority also advocated support for local employment in woodland-associated activities, for instance by prioritising infrastructure work (e.g. building fencing and drainage, and planting) to local contractors. To help enable this, similar numbers wanted to see support for the provision of **practical expertise, advice, education and training for local people in woodcraft and other woodland-related skills**.
162. A few respondents (mainly representative bodies and forestry-related organisations) argued that forestry and woodland need a significant ongoing productive component, suggesting that commercial scale conifer woodland is needed to support sustainable income and employment. Concerns were voiced about the long-term nature of the growth phase resulting in no cashflow occurring until the first productive thinning; the provision of long-term loans - secured against future timber income - was suggested by an individual respondent in order for communities to see early and stable returns.
163. Support for more tourism and increased visitor numbers was also advocated as a benefit for local communities by a small minority (almost all of these being organisations).

Support for Community Engagement

164. Better support for community engagement in the form of **improved processes for consultation on woodland with communities** was recommended by a significant minority across all sub-groups. Many suggestions were made including formal rather than informal engagement, involvement in management planning, letting communities have a say in large projects (perhaps at the design stage), instigating email alerts for notifications of grant applications, giving communities information accessibility through the Forestry Map Viewer or provision of mapping tools, and supporting communities to engage advisors to help with plans or support with applications.
165. A significant minority wanted to see **encouragement for community management**, by way of communities maintaining and managing their own local woodland resources. To enable this, lease deals for woodland with agreement from the landowner were suggested. A couple of respondents

again mentioned offering Woodlot licences as used in British Columbia in Canada. A small minority wanted to see more support for community initiatives and community-led projects, perhaps in similar fashion to the former Community Challenge Fund. There were also a few calls for more community ownership of woodland, perhaps facilitated by support for community land purchases, asset transfers of publicly-owned forests and support for negotiated transfers of ownership. However, a small number of respondents felt that community owned woodlands had not been successful due to financial issues, a lack of community wealth building benefits, a lack of expertise within communities and the long-term aspects of tree growth.

Support for Better Woodland Access and Recreational Use

166. There were calls from a significant minority of respondents for support for landowners to maintain and enhance public access, and for the provision of access management plans. In tandem with this were requests for support for the **development of public access infrastructure** (e.g. car parks, paths, mountain biking routes, horse riding trails, map provision, signs and self-closing forestry gates). A small number wanted to see joined up access, for instance between rural communities, landscapes and habitats.
167. Slightly larger numbers wished to see **support for recreational use** with its associated physical and mental health benefits. Development of community orchards, allotments, plant nurseries and foraging activities were all suggested in this respect. A small number wished to see support for the development of recreational infrastructure such as picnic areas and buildings for community use.
168. Facilitation of **schools' involvement** was called for by a few respondents, for the purposes of forest education and outdoor learning along with suggestions for forest schools.

Recognition of Climate Change / Environmental Value

169. Support for, or more recognition of, environmental enhancements afforded by woodland was a theme noted by a significant minority, in terms of biodiversification, variety of tree species, polyculture being an alternative to mainstream commercial forestry, ecosystem benefits, flood risk alleviation, and nature conservation.
170. Similarly, a smaller minority called for support for the value of woodland to be recognised in combating climate change. There were suggestions that this could be realised by means of carbon benefits or communities benefitting from carbon schemes, perhaps in the same way that they do from renewable energy facilities.

Support for Other Areas

171. Other support to facilitate the accrual of benefits from woodland were specified by a few or small numbers of respondents in the following areas:

- Encouraging joint engagement or partnership engagement (e.g. between organisations and stakeholders, between ranger services and local land managers or agents, by the formation of landscape-scale farmers' clusters, and between Regional Land Use Partnerships and local Nature Networks).
- More direct intervention or management from Scottish Forestry or forestry staff (e.g. by funding or providing rangers, or bringing back local offices).
- Spreading good practices or successful case studies in woodland creation and management.

Targeting of Grants and Funding

172. There were a significant number of calls for large or private projects to have provision for community benefits, such as forestry plantations providing forest smallholdings for communities as part of their grant conditions, or basing grant provision on the positive impacts on community health and wellbeing. A couple of individual respondents called for commercial developers to pay costs towards improving community health and wellbeing, or to offer work experience or apprenticeships for local communities. Connected with this, there were similar numbers of calls for less funding and support to be given to wealthy investors or landowners and more to communities, citing poor community experiences with large forestry concerns and the estates system.

173. A few respondents suggested accessing funding from alternative (non FGS) sources, such as local authorities, lottery money and general community development organisations. An individual suggested annual, ongoing financial support through the Rural Payments Single Application Forms for the existence of woodland on farms.

Other Comments

174. There were a very small number of requests for a clear definition of 'community wealth building', with an individual wanting to know how this is measured. The same numbers advised using the Scottish Land Commission's guidance on community health and wellbeing, saying that this puts communities at the centre of defining what benefits them.

Q11: How can the forest regulatory and grant processes evolve to provide greater opportunities for communities to be involved in the development of forestry proposals?

In summary:

- A need for better information provision to communities (e.g. easier access to forestry and woodland plans) was urged as a way of getting communities involved in the development of forestry proposals, a task for which the public register was regarded as unfit for purpose by a significant number of respondents.
- Meaningful engagement with communities, in particular by taking community input on board within woodland grant plans and proposals, and by improving consultation processes, was advocated.
- There were also suggestions to instigate community benefit provisos in order to obtain grant approvals, particularly in the area of large applications.

175. A total of 129 respondents made comments at this question. A number of themes emerged, with the three attracting most comments being about provision of information about forestry plans to communities, making community engagement with forestry proposals meaningful, and reorienting grant provision towards community benefits. A number of answers referred back to points made at previous questions. These included calls for simpler regulatory and grant processes.

Information Provision

176. A need for **better information provision to communities** was pinpointed by a large minority of respondents across sub-groups. Easier access to forestry and woodland plans and proposals, and to associated grant proposals was urged. There were requests for online changes including improvements to the clarity of portals (a local authority cited the Scottish Government's ePlanning portal as a suitable model) and the full detail of proposals to be made available, perhaps using alternative sources in addition to the Scottish Forestry public register. Along with this, respondents wanted to see better awareness raising via promotion and publicity at an earlier stage, a greater public presence and use of digital platforms and social media. More local promotion of proposals by way of roadside signs and promotion in local newspapers was also suggested, along with proposal copies being sent to neighbouring landowners.

177. **The public register was criticised as unfit for purpose** by a significant minority of respondents across the sub-groups, most notably including several conservation / environment bodies and forestry practitioners / agents. Criticisms were made about a perceived lack of information (e.g. only having a poor boundary map for schemes), a lack of user friendliness especially for lay people, a lack of ease of access and a lack of publicity.

There were a small number of suggestions that the FGS should operate through the planning system rather than Scottish Forestry's own register.

178. More **community access to advisors or guidance** about how to respond to forestry proposals or complete forms for grant aid was advocated by a small minority. Further education of the public about the establishment and maintenance of woodlands, as well as training in woodland skills and improving their understanding of woodland benefits was recommended in order to help build community interest, and therefore engagement with processes, by a significant minority of respondents.

Community Engagement

179. **Meaningful engagement, and in particular taking community input on board** within woodland and grant plans and proposals, was a focus for a significant minority from across the sub-groups. A few respondents went further and suggested collaboration or joint working on woodland and forest plans with communities. Support was expressed for making community engagement a mandatory or statutory process (from a significant minority including a number of conservation / environment bodies); this would involve such factors as having a requirement to consider community feedback, and imposing standards for engagement which must be met for proposals to progress. A significant minority urged more support for engagement from Scottish Forestry staff, in the form of providing advisors, attending all community meetings and providing a governing voice in decision-making. It was also suggested by an individual that Scottish Forestry takes an arbitration role between landowners and developers and communities. However, several respondents noted that Scottish Forestry would need adequate staffing, funding and adequate staff training in community aspirations and public engagement in order to perform this role effectively. Better engagement both by and with community councils and community groups was also recommended.
180. Among a small minority suggesting mechanisms or formats to enable improved community engagement were single suggestions for local council involvement, a round table gathering for all stakeholders, and the use of explanatory visual tools. Regional land use partnerships were described as an excellent forum by a conservation / environment organisation, a representative body and a public body. Taking a lead from Scottish Land Commission guidance was also recommended by a conservation / environment organisation and a representative body; and the principles in Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement and Guidance in Engaging Communities in Decisions Relating to Land were mentioned in this context by a public body, a farming-related representative body and a conservation / environment organisation.
181. More generally, a few respondents each urged more open engagement with communities and a clear engagement process, such as agreed guidance for communities and agents.

182. A small number of specific problems were noted as needing to be overcome when improving community engagement. A small minority pointed to a lack of individuals engaging with woodland processes. In order to help with this issue, extra staff support was suggested to motivate engagement, and support was expressed for the recommendations in the Scottish Environment LINK (2022) report “UKFS: A Call to Enhance the ‘People’ Theme”. Similar numbers, a large proportion of whom were representative bodies, were concerned about ensuring representativeness of the entire community in engagement, given that small numbers of individuals get involved. A need to take the views of different demographics into account was noted, and a couple of respondents cited a need to define what is meant by ‘community’. Related to this, a few respondents had concerns around issues posed by vocal minorities, often seen as a focus for resistance to change and for espousing unsupported biases.

183. A small number of respondents were against further community engagement initiatives, citing concerns over extra burdens and delays caused to forestry proposals.

Consultation Processes

184. Calls for **improvements in consultation processes** were made by a significant minority of respondents across sub-groups. These respondents wanted to see clarity of processes with standardised requirements such as the application of set timescales and deadlines, along with transparency and openness. Drop-in events and on-site visits were suggested as ways to widen consultation involvement.

185. Smaller minorities wanted to see action in the following areas:

- Earlier consultation (e.g. longer consultation lead in times, for larger schemes), so communities feel truly involved in the process.
- Wider consultation (e.g. consultation with more non-statutory consultees such as wildlife groups, access groups, heritage groups, commercial stalkers, neighbouring land managers and communities of interest as well as place).
- Funding for community consultation processes such as meetings, engagement events, and developing plans with landowners.

186. However, a significant minority across sub-groups disagreed with the above viewpoint, perceiving that there are already sufficient community involvement opportunities and that these work well. It was pointed out that community engagement exists through pre-consultation, statutory consultation and the public register.

Grant Provision and Approval

187. A significant minority, including a number of conservation / environment bodies, called for either **less grant support, or more**

community benefit provisos in order for grants to be allowed, in cases of large applications, particularly where estates, corporate bodies and investment funds are the developer. There were observations that approvals for these types of applications tend to be driven by economics but should take cumulative environmental and social impacts into account, especially since they have permanent effects on landscapes and wildlife.

188. Very small numbers of respondents, including two public bodies, advocated for grants to be awarded, or extra points in the grant awarding process, where proposals fully meet community-requested benefits. Similar numbers thought that grants should not be awarded to any application excluding community access to woodland. Three individuals went further and wanted to make approval by communities mandatory for forest proposals (e.g. for afforestation or restocking plans). A few representative bodies, local authorities and individuals raised the idea of grant giving to communities (e.g. for community engagement or joint working activities).
189. A small minority of respondents expressed preferences for grant approval or grant contributions to be made for specific forest or woodland types, i.e. incentivising certain features. Among those mentioned were community woodlands, natural forest ecosystems, woodland in urban areas, diverse woodland, woodland connecting fractured habitats and restoring degraded landscapes and sites, those incorporating native and non-native species and those requiring management of heritage features. A few respondents more generally sought more recognition for woodlands' climate change and nature benefits.
190. More generally, a few representative bodies and conservation / environment organisations called for clarity and transparency about the decision-making process for grant assessments, with clear criteria and solid justifications seen as requirements for this.
191. Finally, a few mainly local authority and individual respondents expressed support for more local authority involvement in the approvals process. Parallels were seen between woodland creation applications and planning system applications.

Other Comments

192. A few mainly individual respondents wanted to see more encouragement for community ownership of woodland. However, a forestry timber processor and a forestry practitioner / agent foresaw a need for commercial woodland or forest, viewing this as the only way of producing income to support sustainable woodland.

Q12: 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?

In summary:

- There was a focus on making more information available to stakeholders. In particular, there were calls for the reasons behind decisions (e.g. criteria used, scoring process) to be published to help ensure a level playing field. Respondents saw a need to treat forestry and woodland proposals in similar fashion to planning applications, or to align these with the mainstream planning process for developments. In order to achieve this, the Public Register was potentially seen as a vehicle to perform the role of a planning portal.
- Suggestions were also made about achieving better publicity for proposals, ranging from full online availability to local advertising using shops and noticeboards. Further published detail with applications was also urged.
- Better community engagement and consultation was again requested.

193. A total of 125 respondents made comments at this question. Most of these focused on making more information available to stakeholders. Many responses reiterated points made earlier in the consultation. These included more or better community consultation and engagement.

Types of Information Made Publicly Available

194. The highest numbers of respondents – a significant minority of mainly organisations across all sub-groups – wanted to see the **reasons behind decisions to be published**. Specific areas included the criteria used, the scoring process, and transparency over whether cumulative impacts, including community health and wellbeing and biodiversity impacts, are taken into account in the decision-making process. It was envisaged this will help ensure there is a level playing field for consideration of applications and fairness of the process; there were a few comments about decision-making currently being opaque. A small minority of respondents added that they wanted all decisions to be published, with a very small number in favour of introducing a register for the post-application stage. Similar numbers across organisation groups wanted clear public reporting of who has received grants, for how much, or with a breakdown by size of application.

195. A few respondents wished to see all consultation responses made public, within the confines of data protection laws.

196. A desire for better access to full data, including supporting data for applications, was expressed by a small minority including several conservation / environment organisations. Other data mentioned in this context included FGS statistics and ecological data, as well as Habitat

Regulations Appraisals, Environmental Impact Assessments, and claims about carbon sequestration. In a related point, more planning information, including several requests for full planning details, was desired to be available in the public domain, with several complaints that freedom of information requests were the only way to obtain this data at present.

197. A public body was keen to uphold the principle of transparency in the Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (2017), which is *“intended to ensure that key information about land ownership, use and decision-making is made publicly available”*.

Alignment with Mainstream Planning Processes

198. There were a significant minority of calls across sub-groups, but notably including significant numbers of conservation / environment bodies, landowners / managers, public bodies and third sector organisations, to treat forestry and woodland proposals in similar fashion to planning applications, aligning these with the mainstream planning process for developments. The planning system was seen as superior as it requires widespread publicity and full information availability concerning applications (e.g through local press or social media), it would enable Scottish Forestry, landowners and agents to be held to account, and indicative land use changes would have to be discussed and published as part of regional land use strategies. Advantages were also foreseen from the consultation process being standardised with that used for the planning system.

The Public Register

199. In connection with the above, Scottish Forestry’s Public Register was seen by a small minority of respondents as potentially performing the same role for woodland and forestry applications that planning portals do for the mainstream planning system. Specific functionality and information provision roles that the public register could carry out included making all relevant scheme documentation available (e.g. the proposal specifications and visualisations, expressions of interest, timescales, public consultation opportunities and responses, application approval and the formal decision response including stages and scoring) and providing a search function.
200. Similar numbers of more general suggestions for additions to the public register were also made including having a pre-application section, a ‘frequently asked questions’ section and publishing steps taken to comply with UK Forestry Standard guidance. Amidst a few concerns that the public register is not fit for purpose, difficulties in navigation and a poor information interface were mentioned. Other improvements to the public register were recommended by a few or small numbers of respondents as follows:

- More promotion to increase awareness to the public.

- Improvements to the Issues Log (e.g. providing more information, making it more user friendly and readable for non-foresters, not repeating information presented elsewhere, and making it freely or publicly available).
- Improvements to the Map Viewer (e.g. using it to access scoring, to explain the reasoning behind decisions and to provide details on planting, access routes and deer fencing).

201. There were also a few comments recommending improvements to the Scottish Forestry website more generally, such as making it more user-friendly and providing more functionality tools. A significant minority were keen to **make all information about proposals available online**, with suggestions for email alerts to all stakeholders in the relevant geographical area and provision of QR codes to access information.

Information Access

202. Aside from online provision, a significant minority (mainly composed of individuals and local authorities) desired **better sharing or publicity of proposals and applications through other outlets**; shops, local noticeboards and information boards at access points were mentioned in this context, as well as direct sharing of this information with neighbours, community councils, Scottish Forestry personnel and local deer management groups. Similar numbers wanted to see **more detail with applications**, such as more evidence, who the project developer is, who owns the land, their motivations, and associated job creation prospects. An ability to follow the progress of applications (e.g. through the Scottish Forestry system) was also desired. Slightly smaller numbers, notably including several conservation / environment bodies, wanted a more accessible application process, in terms of being straightforward to use and with explanations and advice available.

203. Other comments about improving information access were more general in nature. These included a few comments about wanting to make information easier to understand for the public including the use of plain English, better promotion or advertising about where to find relevant information, providing regularly updated information, and easier access to proposal information generally. Again, there were a small number supporting the provision of education or advice to the public about woodlands.

Consultation and Engagement

204. Further recommendations were made by small numbers and included the following:

- Clear communication and contact between stakeholders such as neighbours and community councils.
- Longer lead times for consultation, or earlier engagement or consultation, with the public.

- Wider community engagement (i.e. not just a few individuals).
- Better publicity or promotion of consultations.

Other comments

205. Support for ensuring unbiased arbitration of decisions was expressed by a few respondents including several forestry-related bodies. It was proposed that all applications should be considered in equal measure, with professional standards upheld. A small number wanted to see better oversight and enforcement of regulatory processes in order to give confidence to the overall process.

206. While a small minority of respondents overtly agreed that there should be greater levels of transparency in general, a small number (mainly individuals) thought that there was sufficient transparency around proposals and decision-making already, pointing out that forestry gets more scrutiny than other rural land uses via the public register.

Q13: 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?

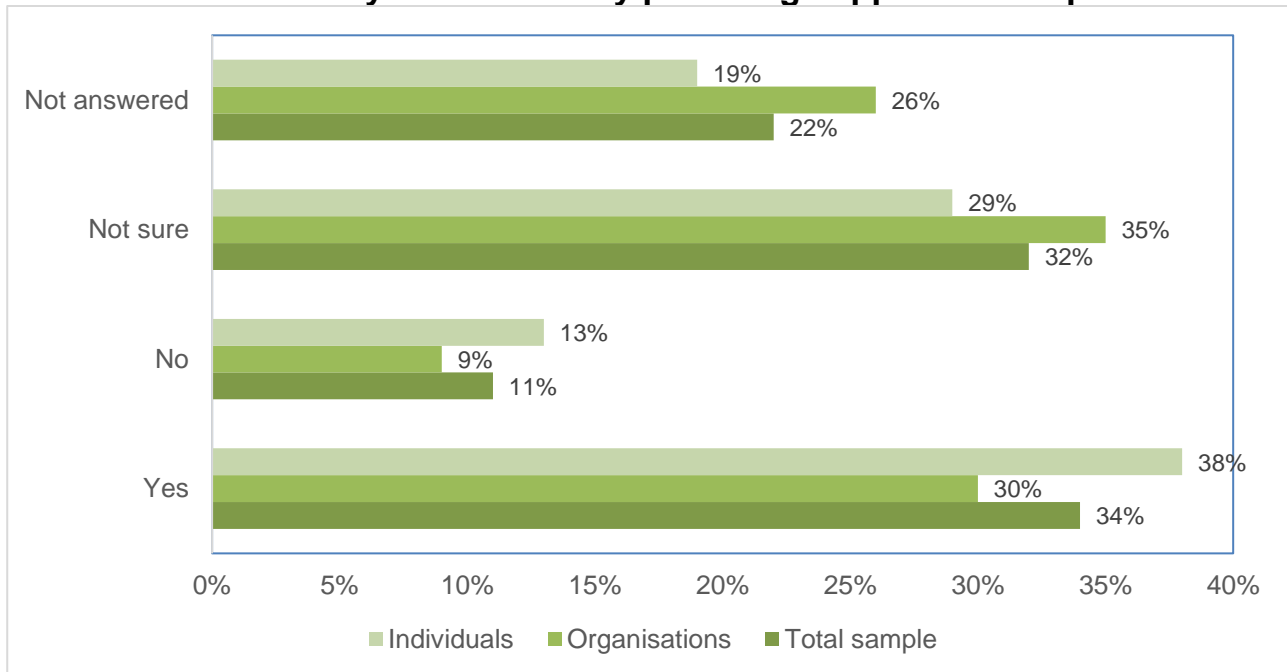
In summary:

- Only one in three respondents agreed that forestry grants to provide support with capital costs have been an effective measure to stimulate rural businesses, albeit more than half of these were unsure or did not answer. One in ten respondents disagreed.
- There were some references that financial support for skills development should be sourced from vehicles other than the FGS.
- On how the approach could be used to support further forestry businesses (Q13a), respondents again desired high levels of funding due to increasing capital costs as well as capital costs for small developments lacking economies of scale. There were also calls for more flexibility in the grant process to increase eligibility of capital items, and to support the development of local businesses' skills and training. Requests were made to focus support or funding on small or entrepreneurial start-up businesses.
- On supporting skills development (Q13b), the provision of grants or funding for training was urged. Regarding training formats, the most mentioned was encouragement for more forestry or arboriculture-related apprenticeships; linkage of training and work experience was also recommended, along with more localised training opportunities. Respondents also advocated a wide variety of skills areas and jobs that were perceived as needing to be included

in training. Mentions were also made about a need for more promotion of forestry as a career.

207. As the following chart shows, only one in three respondents agreed that forestry grants to provide support with capital costs have been an effective measure to stimulate rural businesses. However, only around one in ten respondents disagreed, with the majority either stating they were unsure or not answering the question. Slightly higher proportions of individuals both agreed and disagreed than did organisations.

Chart 6: Agreement that forestry grants have been an effective measure to stimulate rural forestry businesses by providing support with capital costs



208. Question 13 followed up by asking:

Q13a: How could this approach be used to support further forestry businesses?

209. A total of 95 respondents gave their opinions. Many responses focused on increasing funding and support for specific areas, with similar numbers discussing capital costs in particular. A significant minority reiterated their support for the continuation or expansion of forestry grants providing support with capital costs, saying this has successfully stimulated forestry businesses, led to new forests being created and woodland being expanded. Two individuals however opposed further investment in forestry, commenting that this takes land away from food production and that it was a questionable use of public funding.

Focuses for Forestry Grant Support of Capital Costs

210. A few respondents (mainly conservation / environment and forestry-related bodies) wanted further support for community tree nurseries to

enhance native tree growing or diversity of planting. Other areas which were suggested for inclusion in capital costs were:

- Small scale harvesting and processing.
- Natural regeneration (e.g. through ground disturbance or seed dispersal).
- Non-native broadleaves planting (e.g. beech, sycamore, eucalyptus).
- Road and path construction and infrastructure.
- The setting up of machinery ring-style coops.
- Forest food production.

Grant Support in Other Areas

211. Often tied into capital equipment purchasing, a significant minority across all sub-groups wanted **funds or support to develop local business or contractors' skills and training**, for example in health and safety, management, peatland, soil carbon, silvicultural techniques and GPS/GIS.
212. Similar numbers (including mostly conservation / environment organisations and representative bodies) wanted **more focus on support or funding for small or entrepreneurial start up businesses**, for example in creating high value products. A few mainly forestry-related organisations supported more incentives for driving innovation; this could include increasing the quality, quantity and diversity of planting stock available in Scotland, and devising new forestry management techniques. An individual respondent regarded forestry as being neglected in this respect compared with agriculture. Single respondents wanted help for woodland-associated tourism, prefab house fabrication, social housing and recreation.
213. Mentions of positive spin-offs from the addition of more forestry and woodland were made such as supply chain benefits, the creation of jobs, new sources of timber, and ecological and climate benefits as well as commercial forestry becoming self-sustaining.
214. Slightly smaller numbers of the same types of respondents were in favour of a focus on local and rural farming businesses and crofters (e.g. to help develop a local woodland-based economy).
215. There were also a small number of calls to focus on small scale forestry or woodland projects, and also for work to be given to local contractors.

Grant Processes

216. A significant number of concerns were expressed about grants prioritising capital items over cash flow. There was a perceived need for grants to be sustained in the forms of management grants or revenue funding

as well as support for existing woodlands, stemming from the long time that woodland takes to mature. A few requests were made to **streamline the application process** and to make it more user-friendly, with criticisms that the system is not intuitive, challenging to navigate and requires help from agents.

217. A few respondents wanted to see better links between the FGS and other schemes or sources of support, for instance with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Scottish Enterprise (SE) and with Tier 3 and 4 agricultural payments. A landowner and a forestry practitioner / agent however thought that support for forestry businesses should come through a non-FGS vehicle, viewing the FGS as being about trees.
218. A representative body for forestry and two individuals urged for there to be more than one submission or clearing round per year, so that equipment purchased can start being used as soon as possible and to avoid delays to investment; and two representative bodies (one of these farming-related) wanted a review of the threshold for usage per facility (currently at least 500 hours per year for primary machinery and 200 hours per year for secondary machinery) so as not to exclude microbusinesses.

Other Comments

219. A significant number of comments (mainly made by those who disagreed that forestry grants have been an effective measure to stimulate rural businesses) voiced criticisms. Most of these saw the system as being biased towards stimulating large companies or favouring wealthy landowners. Very small numbers complained that the process was targeted towards blanket conifers or large-scale woodlands, that it was bad for rural communities because it pushed up land prices and drove locals away, and that it failed to help rural businesses because contractors were not locally-based.
220. A small number of respondents who were unsure if forestry grants had been effective wanted to see data regarding the number of businesses that have been set up, or the number of local businesses that have benefitted from funding.

Q13b: How could this approach be used to support further skills development?

221. Ninety respondents answered this question. A significant number agreed that further skills development is important, referring to shortages and gaps in the forestry sector.

Grant Provision

222. The largest numbers (a significant minority) were in favour of the provision of grants or funding for training and skills development. It was envisaged this could cover facets like further education, facilities and

shortfalls in production. Regarding the latter, an individual thought it was unfair to burden employers with costs given there is no guarantee that trainees will last. A few respondents wanted to tie grant support to the provision of training and skills development, either by making the delivery of training a mandatory requirement for grant approval, by uplifting rates for those who take on apprentices, or by providing grant beneficiaries with easy access to training programmes. A small number recommended financial support for businesses which take on students, graduates or apprentices, for instance to manage training. Individuals responding to the campaign called for investment in training to address the sector skills gap.

223. There were also recommendations made by a few respondents (notably including several forestry-related bodies) to provide capital grant support for equipment for training purposes (such as chainsaws, forest machinery, PPE and personal tools) to enable the acquisition of skills to operate these.

Training Options

224. A large number of respondents expressed opinions about formats used for developing skills. The largest number of these (a significant minority in all) wanted to see encouragement for more forestry or arboriculture-related apprenticeships. To facilitate these, block release options were suggested along with companies working together to share and rotate apprentices. Smaller but still significant numbers advocated linkage of training and work experience more generally as a means of aiding employability. Placement or mentoring arrangements were mentioned as well as a simpler process for companies taking on students; linkage with local colleges and schools was recommended to help facilitate the latter. Support for small woodlands scale training was identified by a very small number of respondents as a priority, noting that a broad range of skills were needed in this context, and that this would help with reviving skills which have fallen into disuse.

225. Support was also expressed by a significant minority for more local or community training opportunities, as well as clearer routes for more practical skills acquisition and peer-to-peer training.

226. A small number wanted to see an increase in college-based training, with an individual noting there are only two places in Scotland where forestry can be studied. Similar numbers saw a need for more school education about forestry. A conservation / environment body and a forestry practitioner / agent wanted to see more recognised qualifications and accreditations, such as the Institute of Chartered Foresters Earned Recognition scheme.

Areas for Skills Development

227. There were a significant number of job areas where skills were perceived to be needed, as follows:

- Fencing contractors.

- Planters.
- Deer management and processing (e.g. deer stalkers).
- Harvesting contractors.
- Machinery operatives.
- Business management-related (e.g. bookkeeping, marketing, stocktaking)
- Ground preparation / surveying.
- Freshwater environment.

228. Additionally, respondents also detailed specific skill topics for training as follows:

- Health and Safety.
- Fire management.
- Pesticides.
- Environmental Surveys.
- Archaeological feature recognition.
- Managing / controlling invasive non-native species (e.g. grey squirrels).
- Skills necessary to weather climate change.
- Biodiversity.
- Soil carbon.
- Peatland.
- Chainsaw use.
- Timber / non-timber crafts.
- Coppicing.
- Continuous cover woodland.
- Tree nurseries.
- Use of understory grazing.

Other Comments

229. Taking a broad overview, a significant number of respondents saw a need for more promotion of forestry as an attractive career, by encouraging new entrants, providing greater career prospects, providing more land management roles, and providing ongoing career training or CPD.

230. Slightly fewer but still significant numbers thought that **financial support for skills development would be better suited from sources other than the FGS**, with suggestions that this could be linked with that from other arms of the Scottish Government or to broader rural skills development.

Q14: How could the FGS processes and rules be developed to encourage more companies and organisations to provide training positions within the forestry sector?

In summary:

- Respondents were in favour of grant support to be given to companies to help with putting together training, though there were also calls to make the provision of training a condition for the approval of forestry and woodland grants.
- Again, views were expressed about the FGS being the wrong vehicle for supporting training positions, with alternative sources of grant or other support put forward including various collaborations.
- It was suggested that support be focused at a local or community level, or on operators of smaller, rural, diverse or native woodlands as it was felt these would give trainees a broader range of experience.
- Calls were again made to provide support for apprenticeships and internships.

231. A total of 99 respondents answered this question. Many responses reflected the same themes mentioned at Q13b. A significant minority agreed with the need for more training positions due to a shortage of forestry workers, with particular mentions relating to deer management.

FGS System

232. A significant minority of respondents were in favour of **grant support to be given to companies** to help with putting together training, enrolment in training schemes, assisting with the extra costs of taking on trainees (e.g. wages, training costs), costs of machinery and costs of training officers. Again, there were a significant number of calls to make the provision of training a condition for approving grants. Several respondents cited that this should particularly apply to large projects or be related to the size of project on a sliding scale.

233. A few respondents – particularly forestry-related bodies – wanted a smoother FGS process, criticising increased red tape, complexity and the “*use of LPIDs¹, which are ever changing are complex and costly to work with and administer*”, according to a forestry practitioner / agent. It was maintained that an easier process would remove extra expense, uncertainty and delays to companies providing training opportunities.

234. However, a significant minority of respondents from across sub-groups thought that the **FGS is the wrong vehicle for supporting training positions**. There were remarks disagreeing that training positions should not be publicly financed, that most of the work funded through the grant scheme is contracted to third parties who are not themselves recipients of funding, and that the greatest need for training is in harvesting, which is not directly funded by the FGS. Instead, it was suggested that support should be done through modern apprenticeships, through a more flexible regional approach through the conservancies, or through enterprise grants. Smaller numbers thought the FGS should collaborate with other sources of support, with Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC) all mentioned in this respect.

Focusing of Training Support

235. A significant minority wanted to **focus support for training at a local or community level**. It was intimated that this would result in communities sharing in carbon payments benefits, local supplier or contractor use, and community wealth-building benefits. It was also pointed out that local communities are often best placed to recognise local skills gaps. Similar numbers wanted to **focus support on operators of smaller, rural, diverse or native woodlands, or to remove a perceived bias towards large corporate or absentee landlords and commercial forestry**. The reasoning behind this included the viewpoint that larger concerns have the capacity to take on and support their own trainees and provide continuity of work. It was also surmised that large, homogenous conifer blocks require less interventions and therefore fewer people on site compared with small woodland which has varied management requirements and therefore would be suitable for trainees, as well as having a perceived higher commitment to local employment. However, a forestry timber processor and an individual disagreed, wanting support to be focused on commercial timber and forestry, citing better opportunities of funding this later through future income without grant support.

236. A few respondents added that a wider or more holistic range of subject matter for training was needed, for instance including soils, botany, wildlife, and woodland integration with farming practices. A small number suggested that more collaboration was needed, for instance between the public and

¹ Land Parcel Identifiers

private sector and between smaller scale woodland owners, so that trainees can get this broader range of experience.

Modes of Training

237. **Providing support for apprenticeships and internships** in order that trainees gain key forestry skills was again advocated by a significant minority of respondents across a broad mix of organisation types and individuals. A few respondents desired support for placements or work experience opportunities, and there were similar numbers of calls for the expansion of training via college courses (e.g. support through college sponsorships).
238. Very small numbers of respondents were in favour of more national skills qualifications and requirements, the expansion of existing schemes (e.g. Forestry Roots), or Scottish Forestry helping to set up training packages directly (e.g. running modules). However, a very small number pointed out that training positions already exist and provide routes to progress: according to a conservation / environment body, larger forestry companies have already made available an increase in trainee positions with opportunities for advancement.

Other Comments

239. A significant number of respondents reiterated calls made at the previous question for **better promotion of forestry as a career**; advertising training opportunities and holding open days was suggested, amid general calls for providing market opportunities to create a workforce demand. There were also a very small number of requests for farmers or foresters, seen as having practical experience, to take the lead in training support rather than Scottish Forestry staff.

Forests delivering for biodiversity and the environment

Q15: 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?

In summary:

- The most frequently made comment was of a need for increased funding support for the management of existing woodlands, with a key focus on native woodlands and their natural regeneration; with some specific references to riparian woodlands and funding for small-scale areas of woodlands.
- Once again, there were references to a need for diversity in woodlands, an approach of 'right tree, right place', the need for funding to cover a longer period of time, criticism of the funding of monoculture or large-scale commercial conifer plantations, the need for changes to the application process and the role of Scottish Forestry.
- A significant minority of respondents referred to the need for funding to manage the spread of invasive species and funding for herbivore control.
- A small minority of respondents called for stocking densities to be reduced.
- A few respondents commented on the need for collaboration between landowners.

240. A total of 153 respondents across all sub-groups commented at this question. Many of the comments made at this question reiterated points from earlier questions. These included a need to focus on:

- Existing woodlands and natural regeneration (from a large minority of respondents across all sub-groups), particularly as current funding is perceived to be biased towards woodland creation.
- Prioritising species, diversity of species and structural diversity within native woodlands.
- Linking forest fragments and creating corridors.
- Funding to develop new and existing riparian woodlands.
- Funding for smaller areas of woodlands, including marginal native woods along treelines, open habitats adjacent to woodlands, the integration of small-scale diverse planting schemes integrated into farming systems and so on.

- An approach that ensures ‘right tree, right place’.
- Reductions in stocking densities.
- Funding to cover a longer period of time to allow longer for woodlands to establish.
- Reducing the funding of monoculture or large-scale commercial conifer plantations, albeit that a few respondents – mostly within the forestry sector – felt that commercial woodlands can be diverse and host a range of species as well as offering other benefits.
- Changes to the application process.
- The need for guidance, support and education to be provided by Scottish Forestry.
- For Scottish Forestry staff to have sufficient knowledge, training and resources to be able to provide advice and make decisions on FGS applications.

Dealing with invasive species and herbivores

241. In line with establishing woodland, a significant minority of respondents across most sub-groups referred to the need for **funding to manage the spread of invasive species** such as Sitka spruce, rhododendron, gorse or bracken. There were some references to the high costs associated with the spread of invasive species and that removal costs can be prohibitive. Barriers to funding cited by respondents included it is not possible to obtain FGS funding for land which has no designation or that the process of applying for funding is too onerous. Some respondents also identified a need for the creation of buffer zones to prevent Sitka spruce seeding into native woodlands and other habitats.

242. Alongside the need to deal with the issue of invasive species, a significant minority of respondents across all sub-groups commented on the need for **funding for herbivore control** as part of the standard FGS offering. Many of the comments made were in reference to the need for deer control, either by fencing or culling, although there was also some reference to the need for squirrel, rabbit and hare control. This issue is covered in greater detail in the following question which specifically asked respondents how forestry grant support mechanisms could evolve to ensure effective management of deer populations at landscape scale.

243. A few organisations – mainly those in the conservation / environment sub-group – outlined criteria that could be applied to applications. These included the need for:

- Developers to demonstrate engagement with biodiversity stakeholders.

- Monitoring to protect and enhance woodlands.
- Scoring applications based on their potential to support biodiversity.
- Payments linked to habitat quality or biodiversity value as well as the quantity of trees and habitats.
- Targeted support for amenity or biodiversity woodlands, not just commercial schemes.
- Minimum stands for species diversity and nature-friendly establishment and management in commercial plantations, including an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) and a requirement for net biodiversity gain.
- Preservation and restoration of deep peat habitats and the protection of peatlands with no replanting on deep peatlands.

244. A large minority of respondents made specific suggestions for **changes that could be made to the funding mechanism** and a number of key comments were made, albeit each was only cited by a small number of respondents. These included increased funding levels to match current costs and inflation rates. Additionally, respondents called for **payments based on outcomes** or for greater prominence placed on outcomes that have a greater emphasis on biodiversity, social and climate change benefits that are derived; and targeted options for biodiversity enhancement where there can be measurable gain. There were also some calls for FGS to be aligned to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy aims and objectives. Other suggestions made by respondents included:

- FGS funding should follow the ‘protect, restore, connect, create’ conservation hierarchy; and support the wider ecosystem.
- Reintroduce the Annual Management Grant with a five-year payment available in a lump sum upfront for agreed management activities and cross compliance conditions to ensure biodiversity benefits and woodland management.
- There needs to be a relationship between forestry grant support and River Basin Management Planning to ensure forestry development does not compromise water-related biodiversity.
- Offer agri-environment support options.
- FGS should be viewed in the context of government and policy objectives to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2030.
- Remove the WIG grant for delivering UKFS woodland as this only requires minimal compliance.

- Retain the WIG option to manage under-managed new native woodland; offer greater flexibility under WIG; use WIG option to remove Sitka spruce when it becomes invasive.
- Offer support for stock grazing at appropriate levels to help achieve biodiversity benefits.
- Stop clear fell operations and move towards a continuous cover forestry approach; Felling permissions should be conditional on other elements of the landscape being managed to certain standards.

Collaboration between landowners

245. The need for collaboration between landowners was raised by a few respondents – mostly conservation / environment organisations – who felt that this would help to make changes at a landscape scale. However, these comments pre-empted the following question, so more information is provided in the following section of this report.

Scottish Forestry roles and responsibilities

246. A significant minority of respondents across all sub-groups outlined **roles and responsibilities they felt Scottish Forestry needs to take on or further develop**. These included working with a wide range of stakeholders including NatureScot, other public bodies, local communities, Farming Advisory Service or Forest Research; and examining initiatives undertaken in other countries such as Germany or New Zealand, as well as considering EU guidance.

Other comments

- There is a need to consider the cumulative impact to ensure diversity across woodlands and that the required biodiversity benefits are being realised.
- Create a new category of woods; currently FGS recognises New Woodland and Existing Woodland – there should also be a category for ‘Declining / Native’.
- Prioritise funding for multipurpose forests that deliver multiple benefits to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.
- Extend the scope of FGS beyond registered defined forests and include more informal wood creation, especially in urban areas and peri-urban areas.
- FGS should offer greater flexibility as its current targeting of support in specific sites, species and habitats is too narrow.
- Plastic tree guards should be phased out and replaced with bio-degradable materials.

- Felling grant rates should be offered, for example, to cover uneconomical thinning or selective felling.
- There is a need for more sawmills which would help to create demand for products of CCF management and native woodlands; this would also help to develop skills and create more local employment.
- FGS should not support management of ground for sport shooting and sheep grazing as both cause damage to woodlands and biodiversity.
- There is a need to integrate land management, water and living resources via an ecosystem approach.

Q16a: 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?

Q16b: at small-scale mixed land use?

In summary:

- Ways in which herbivore browsing could be addressed at both landscape scale and small-scale mixed land use included deer fencing and increased grants to cover the capital costs of its installation, deer control through culling (although a need for more stalkers was also identified), deer management plans and collaboration between landowners.
- Some respondents suggested the need for more Deer Management Groups (DMGs) to help manage deer.
- There was a perception from some respondents that NatureScot should adopt the role of addressing deer impacts, given that it is the regulator in this area.

Landscape scale

247. A significant minority of respondents agreed that herbivore browsing and damage can have a significant impact on biodiversity loss and restrict regeneration and that there is a need to have effective deer management across Scotland to deliver on peatland restoration, forestry native woodlands management and expansion, and to enable natural colonisation at a greater scale. Most respondents answering this question referred to deer, although a few referred to other herbivores including rabbits, squirrels, voles, sheep and goats.

Fencing

248. A significant minority of respondents referred to the importance of fencing, although some of these also felt that fencing should not be a default

option and should only be targeted in specific areas and /or specific circumstances.

249. A number of those who supported the use of fencing felt that the **grant amount available should be increased so as to cover the capital costs of installation**. Furthermore, there were also some requests for flexibility to be built into the grant to allow for fluctuations in capital costs, for example, there were also some comments that the cost of fencing is disproportionately higher for small-scale woodland creation or in upland areas.

250. For the small minority who were opposed to the use of fencing, this was felt not to be an effective use of taxpayer money and there was a perception that **fencing can be damaging** in that it can prohibit the development of some habitats due to the restrictions it places on animal movement. Alternative options offered by respondents included a forestry practitioner who suggested that there needs to be more incentive for the effective management of deer populations at a landscape scale so that it can become economically viable to undertake deer control rather than installing fencing. Another suggestion from a public body was that fencing is not a long-term solution and that instead there needs to be a shift towards the monitoring and management of deer numbers. A small number of organisations in the conservation / environment sector suggested that grants for deer funding should only be available to support woodland management or creation in specific circumstances; and that deer management plans should include a section describing how fencing will be monitored and maintained over its lifespan and how the biodiversity value of the new woodland will be maintained after the end of that lifespan.

Deer control

251. A significant minority of respondents across all sub-groups, but primarily from organisations in the conservation / environment sector and individuals, referred to deer control specifically, with references to the need for **mandatory deer culling** as a condition of grant funding. It was felt that this would help to reduce deer densities to a more sensible level. Levels mentioned by respondents included 2 p/ha, 1-1.5 p/ha, 0.5 p/km² and 2p/km². It was also felt that higher levels of deer culling would lead to the benefit of a reduction in the amount of deer fencing erected.

252. Allied to this issue, a significant minority of respondents referred to the **need for higher numbers of professional stalkers** in order to achieve an increased level of deer culling. It was suggested that grant funding could be used to train more stalkers so that deer control can be undertaken by skilled professionals in conjunction with landowners, although one individual suggested these stalkers could be employed by Scottish Forestry or NatureScot.

253. Allied to the issues of deer control and the need for more professionally skilled stalkers, there were a significant number of calls for the

creation of **more deer larders** and the promotion of venison for consumption. This would have the dual benefit of encouraging local economies and creating employment and training opportunities to help meet the needs of setting up deer larders.

The role of Deer Management Groups

254. Deer Management Groups (DMG) were mentioned by a small minority of respondents, with some – mainly individuals – suggesting that there needs to be **more DMGs established to help manage deer control across Scotland**. A few respondents felt that DMGs would need financial support to undertake this role. However, it was felt that if funding were provided to DMGs to undertake deer control, there should be conditions applied so that they would be held to account and required to develop management plans that would evidence environmental restoration and better reflect local and national biodiversity plans.

Collaboration between landowners

255. Given that respondents were asked to consider how forestry grant support could evolve to ensure effective management of deer populations at a landscape scale, it is hardly surprising that a significant minority of respondents referred to the need for **collaboration and co-operation between neighbouring landowners**. It was suggested that grant funding should be made available so as to encourage collective action against herbivore damage.

Deer management plans

256. The provision of deer management plans was seen as necessary by a significant minority of respondents, with some suggestions that grant funding should not be given without a deer management plan in place. An organisation in the conservation / environment sector noted that deer management plans should be focused on co-ordinated action (again referencing the importance of collaboration between landowners) or that deer management schemes should be mandatory for all woodland expansion and management plans, particularly for larger schemes.

257. A few respondents, primarily in the conservation / environment sectors, referred specifically to the need for **Herbivore Management Plans** (as opposed to Deer Management Plans) to be funded by FGS.

258. There were a small number of references to the **need for flexibility within the grant funding scheme** so as to ensure that regeneration is undertaken in the right place. Furthermore, flexibility would allow grant monies to be spent to maximise their impact; for example, to be used towards the best method of tree protection depending on the landscape or site conditions; or to allow for deer control in forests that include some non-native species.

The role of NatureScot

259. A small minority of respondents – mainly organisations in the conservation / environment sector, representative bodies and individuals – suggested that **NatureScot should adopt the key role of addressing deer impacts** across Scotland, given that they are the regulator in this area. One individual suggested they could use their existing powers under Sections 7 and 8 of the Deer (Scotland) Act to control deer at a landscape level. A smaller number of respondents suggested that Scottish Forestry should be responsible for herbivore control across Scotland, although a forestry practitioner felt that there needs to be clarity on which organisation is responsible for herbivore control, either Scottish Forestry or NatureScot.

260. There were a small number of mentions of the need for policy, legislation and regulation to achieve changes in deer management and the associated biodiversity benefits.

Other comments

261. Small numbers of respondents referred to:

- The creation of a PR campaign on the necessity of deer control in the light of the impact of herbivores on biodiversity targets and woodland creation’.
- Funding for the assessment of deer numbers, using technology such as drone counting or remote sensing, which would help to obtain more objective data on deer populations and help to direct funding.
- The reintroduction of predators.
- Supporting the protection and restoration of woodlands identified by the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland are priority aims for FGS and vital for both Riverwoods and the Atlantic Rainforest project.

Small-scale mixed land use

262. A total of 110 respondents answered this question. To a large extent, responses to this question echoed those from the previous question, with many respondents citing the same ways in which forestry grant support mechanisms could evolve to ensure effective management of deer populations at small-scale mixed land use. A few respondents felt there is no difference between large-scale and small-scale land use, commenting that both have the same problems in terms of the effective management of deer populations, although a few respondents commented that small scale mixed land use suffers more from damage by deer than at a landscape scale.

263. A few respondents **queried whether forestry grant support is the correct mechanism for deer management**. There were suggestions for a broader deer control strategy covering all land uses. Suggestions for alternative approaches included complementarity between AECS and FGS to

support deer management and stock pressures on woods; or for a more flexible approach linked to the small woodland grant component of FGS but with regulatory support from the Scottish Government agricultural division.

Other comments

264. Other issues raised, each by small numbers of respondents included:

- The need for setting outcomes for funding and monitoring of schemes to measure their effectiveness, with penalties for not meeting targets or for mismanagement of grant funding.
- Predators such as lynx or wolves should be reintroduced to Scotland.
- There should be more research into non-tube deterrents so as to avoid the ongoing use of plastics.
- There needs to be more assistance for deer management in and around towns.
- There should be funding for drone surveys and thermal imaging to assess the size and location of deer populations.

Additional Comments and Campaign Responses

265. The final question in the consultation asked:

Q17: If you wish to make any other relevant comments, please do so in the box below.

Consultation responses

266. A total of 116 consultation respondents opted to provide additional comments, many of which reiterated points made at earlier questions. Some of these respondents welcomed the opportunity to respond to the consultation and some provided background information on their organisation to provide context for their response. Some also noted their keenness to be involved in further discussions with Scottish Forestry.

267. An additional issue raised by a small number of respondents – all forest practitioners – was in relation to felling permissions. These respondents commented that the application process for a felling permission is inflexible, bureaucratic and lengthy. One of these respondents suggested that a felling permission should be issued for a period of three years, rather than the current period of one year.

268. A respondent within the 'other' sub-group provided an outline for a grant design framework for Scottish agroforestry. They felt that agroforestry can deliver a wide range of multiple benefits, that neither agriculture nor forestry can deliver in isolation. Another organisation in the 'other' sub-group category submitted an informal response that documented interactions with the general public over a series of events that were held as part of the Galloway Glens Fantastic Forest Festival. This festival offered a number of events to encourage more engagement with people in terms of current and future forest design and management.

Campaign responses

269. A total of 526 individuals responded to a campaign organised by The Woodland Trust. These campaign responses focused on a number of specific issues. A copy of the Woodland Trust campaign template is provided in Appendix 2.

270. While not relevant to the purpose of the consultation, within the responses that incorporated additional text, the key theme was of the benefits to mental and physical wellbeing in adults and children who can access and use woodland. A small number of respondents referred to their love of Scotland as a holiday destination.

APPENDIX 1: RESPONDING ORGANISATIONS

Aberdeenshire Council
Airlie Estates
Association of Deer Management Groups
Baldernock Community Council
Bidwells
Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland Committee for Scotland (BSBI CfS)
British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)
British Bryological Society
British Lichen Society
Butterfly Conservation
Cairngorms Capercaillie Project (Partnership project led by the Cairngorms National Park Authority)
Cairngorms National Park Authority
CLEAR Buckhaven & Methil
Communities for Diverse Forestry
Community Land Scotland
Community Woodlands Association
Confederation of Forest Industries (Confor)
Connicks
Continuous Cover Forestry Group (CCFG)
Craggach Woods
Crofting Commission
Cromar Future Group
Crown Estate Scotland
Eadha Enterprises
Eamonn Wall & Co Woodland Design and Management
Eastern Lowlands Red Squirrel Group
EJD Forestry Ltd and Foresight Sustainable Forestry Company PLC
Farming with Nature Working Group
Finance Earth
Fisheries Management Scotland
Forest Direct LTD
Forest Policy Group
Forth Rivers Trust
Friends of the Ochils
Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere
Galloway Fisheries Trust
Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (Scotland)
Glasgow City Council
Green Action Trust
Groves Forestry
Highfield Forestry Limited
Historic Environment Scotland

Institute of Chartered Foresters
James Jones & Sons Ltd
John Muir Trust
Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust
Lamancha, Newlands and Kirkurd Community Council
Leeming + Paterson
Mountain Woodland Action Group
National Trust for Scotland
Nature Friendly Farming Network
Nourish Scotland
RESTORE, The Effective Lobby For Nature
Palladium
Paths for All
Perth & Kinross Council
Red Squirrel Forum for South Scotland (RSFSS)
RESTORE, The Effective Lobby For Nature
River Tweed Commission
Rothiemurchus
Rottal Estate
RSPB Scotland
ScotFWAG
Scottish Anglers National Association
Scottish Crofting Federation
Scottish Environment LINK Woodland Group
Scottish Land and Estates
Scottish Land Commission
Scottish Outdoor Recreation Alliance
Scottish Tenant Farmers Association (STFA)
Scottish Tree Officers Group (STOG) – Local Authority Planning Role
Scottish Tree Officers Group (STOG) – Operational Role
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Scottish Woodlands
SEPA
Soil Association Scotland
Spey Catchment Initiative
Sylvestrus Ltd.
The Landworkers' Alliance
The Metropolitan Glasgow Strategic Drainage Authority
The Scottish Woodlot Association Limited
Tilhill
Torr Organic Dairy
Trees for Life
TreeStory
Tweed Forum
West Lothian Council
Woodland Trust Scotland

APPENDIX 2: THE WOODLAND TRUST

CAMPAIGN RESPONSE TEMPLATE

Dear consultation team,

I'm writing to respond to the consultation on the Future Grant Support for Forestry. This refresh provides an opportunity for the scheme to evolve in a way that helps the forestry sector respond to the nature and climate emergency.

Restoring and expanding native woodland so that Scotland can boast thriving, rich and diverse woodland habitats, is essential to nature's recovery. The future grant schemes need to work to reverse the declines in our native woodland.

I believe the refreshed Forestry Grant Scheme should:

- Have a set of objectives that have a much greater emphasis on biodiversity and community wealth building
- Scale up the recovery of native woodlands
- Increase support and remove barriers to enable natural regeneration of native trees at landscape scales
- Increase species diversity by reducing the maximum allowed for a single species in a commercial plantation

Future schemes also need to be set up for success. This means that they need to be underpinned by:

- Investment in training to address the sector skills gap
- Reduced bureaucracy and increased flexibility, especially for small-scale schemes
- Increased resources, including an advisory function, for Scottish Forestry
- Urgent investment in Scottish and UK supply of local provenance trees.

I believe these recommendations would help to improve the outcomes delivered by the Forestry Grant Scheme, ensuring the scheme delivers more for nature, climate and people in Scotland.

APPENDIX 3: CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Rationale for providing grant support for forestry

Q1: 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?

Q2: Are there any changes that would allow for better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding option?

Forests delivering for Scotland's Climate Change Plan

Q3: 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?

Q4: 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?

Q5: 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?

Q6: 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 diseases?

Integrating woodlands on farms and crofts

Q7: Which of the following measures would help to reduce the barriers for crofters and farmers wanting to include woodlands as part of their farming business?

Please select all that apply

- Better integration of support for woodland creation with farm support mechanisms
- Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout
- Flexibility within options
- Knowing where to get reliable advice
- Clearer guidance on grant options
- Support with cashflow
- Intervention level

Q8: Establishing small woodlands can have higher costs. What specific mechanisms would better support small scale woodlands and woodland ownership?

Q9: How can forestry grants better support an increase in easily accessible, sustainable managed woodlands in urban and peri-urban areas?

Q10: How can grant support for forestry better enable rural communities to realise greater benefits from woodland to support community wealth building?

Q11: How can the forest regulatory and grant processes evolve to provide greater opportunities for communities to be involved in the development of forestry proposals?

Transparency for proposals and decisions about them

Q12: 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?

Q13: 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?

Q13a: How could this approach be used to support further forestry businesses?

Q13b: How could this approach be used to support further skills development?

Q14: How could the FGS processes and rules be developed to encourage more companies and organisations to provide training positions within the forestry sector?

Forests delivering for biodiversity and the environment

Q15: 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?

Q16a: 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:

Q16b: At small-scale mixed land use?

Q17: If you wish to make any other relevant comments, please do so in the box below.

APPENDIX 4: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Table 2: Agreement that grant support for forestry should continue to be improved and developed as a discrete scheme within the overall package of land support

	Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
Community council / community group (3)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	-	-
Conservation / environment (27)	17 (63%)	2 (7%)	6 (22%)	2 (7%)
Environment / water (5)	5 (100%)	-	-	-
Finance / investment (2)	1 (50%)	-	-	1 (50%)
Forestry practitioner / forestry agent (10)	9 (90%)	-	1 (10%)	-
Forestry timber processor (2)	2 (100%)	-	-	-
Landowner / manager (5)	5 (100%)	-	-	-
Local authority (6)	4 (67%)	-	2 (33%)	-
Public body (6)	5 (83%)	-	-	1 (17%)
Representative body (8)	7 (88%)	-	1 (13%)	-
Representative body – Farming (4)	3 (75%)	-	1 (25%)	-
Representative body – Forestry (3)	3 (100%)	-	-	-
Social Enterprise / Third sector (3)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	-
Third sector (2)	1 (50%)	-	1 (50%)	-
Other (2)	2 (100%)	-	-	-
Total organisations (88)	67 (76%)	4 (5%)	13 (15%)	4 (5%)
Individuals (99)	70 (71%)	15 (15%)	10 (10%)	4 (4%)
Total respondents (187)	137 (73%)	19 (10%)	23 (12%)	8 (4%)

(Percentages might not add to 100% because of rounding)

A majority of respondents within almost all categories agreed that grant support for forestry should continue to be improved and developed as a discrete scheme within the overall package of land support (the exception was respondents in the Social Enterprise / Third sector sub-group).

Table 3: Are there changes that would allow for better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding options?

	Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
Community council / community group (3)	3 (100%)	-	-	-
Conservation / environment (27)	20 (74%)	-	4 (15%)	3 (11%)
Environment / water (5)	3 (60%)	-	1 (20%)	1 (20%)
Finance / investment (2)	1 (50%)	-	-	1 (50%)
Forestry practitioner / forestry agent (10)	6 (60%)	1 (10%)	3 (30%)	-
Forestry timber processor (2)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	-	-
Landowner / manager (5)	3 (60%)	-	2 (40%)	-
Local authority (6)	5 (83%)	-	1 (17%)	-
Public body (6)	5 (83%)	-	-	1 (17%)
Representative body (8)	6 (75%)	-	2 (25%)	-
Representative body – Farming (4)	4 (100%)	-	-	-
Representative body – Forestry (3)	2 (67%)	-	1 (33%)	-
Social Enterprise / Third sector (3)	2 (67%)	-	1 (33%)	-
Third sector (2)	2 (100%)	-	-	-
Other (2)	-	-	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Total organisations (88)	63 (72%)	2 (2%)	16 (18%)	7 (8%)
Individuals (99)	63 (64%)	5 (5%)	23 (23%)	8 (8%)
Total respondents (187)	126 (67%)	7 (4%)	39 (21%)	15 (8%)

(Percentages might not add to 100% because of rounding)

Across almost all sub-groups, and of those giving a definite response, only a very small number of forestry practitioners / forestry agents, forestry timber processors or individuals disagreed that there are changes that would allow for better complementarity between the forestry and agriculture funding options. However, a significant proportion of respondents were unsure or did not provide a response to this question (29%).

Table 4: Whether the grant support mechanism should have more flexibility to maximise the opportunities to blend private and public finance to support woodland creation

	Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
Community council / community group (3)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	-	-
Conservation / environment (27)	14 (52%)	-	8 (30%)	5 (19%)
Environment / water (5)	5 (100%)	-	-	-
Finance / investment (2)	2 (100%)	-	-	-
Forestry practitioner / forestry agent (10)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	5 (50%)	-
Forestry timber processor (2)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	-	-
Landowner / manager (5)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	-
Local authority (6)	5 (83%)	-	1 (17%)	-
Public body (6)	3 (50%)	-	-	3 (50%)
Representative body (8)	4 (50%)	3 (38%)	1 (13%)	-
Representative body – Farming (4)	1 (25%)	-	3 (75%)	-
Representative body – Forestry (3)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	-
Social Enterprise / Third sector (3)	2 (67%)	-	1 (33%)	-
Third sector (2)	2 (100%)	-	-	-
Other (2)	1 (50%)	-	-	1 (50%)
Total organisations (88)	49 (56%)	9 (10%)	21 (24%)	9 (10%)
Individuals (99)	42 (42%)	25 (25%)	21 (21%)	11 (11%)
Total respondents (187)	91 (49%)	34 (18%)	42 (22%)	20 (11%)

(Percentages might not add to 100% because of rounding)

Across almost all sub-groups, of those giving a definite ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response, more respondents agreed than disagreed that the grant support mechanism should have more flexibility to maximise the opportunities to blend private and public finance to support woodland creation. However, significant proportions of respondents within conservation / environment, forestry practitioner / forestry agent or the representative body (farming) sectors were unsure.

Table 5: Whether 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 diseases

	Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
Community council / community group (3)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	-	-
Conservation / environment (27)	21 (78%)	-	1 (4%)	5 (19%)
Environment / water (5)	5 (100%)	-	-	-
Finance / investment (2)	1 (50%)	-	-	1 (50%)
Forestry practitioner / forestry agent (10)	7 (70%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	-
Forestry timber processor (2)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	-	-
Landowner / manager (5)	4 (80%)	-	-	1 (20%)
Local authority (6)	6 (100%)	-	-	-
Public body (6)	5 (83%)	-	-	1 (17%)
Representative body (8)	5 (63%)	-	2 (25%)	1 (13%)
Representative body – Farming (4)	4 (100%)	-	-	-
Representative body – Forestry (3)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	-
Social Enterprise / Third sector (3)	2 (67%)	-	1 (33%)	-
Third sector (2)	1 (50%)	-	-	1 (50%)
Other (2)	-	-	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Total organisations (88)	65 (74%)	5 (6%)	7 (8%)	11 (13%)
Individuals (99)	71 (72%)	8 (8%)	10 (10%)	10 (10%)
Total respondents (187)	136 (73%)	13 (7%)	17 (9%)	21 (11%)

(Percentages might not add to 100% because of rounding)

Across almost all sub-groups, of those giving a definite ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response, many more respondents agreed than disagreed 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 diseases. The proportions of organisations and individuals agreeing and disagreeing are very similar.

Table 6: Agreement that forestry grants have been an effective measure to stimulate rural forestry businesses by providing support with capital costs.

	Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
Community council / community group (3)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	-	-
Conservation / environment (27)	6 (22%)	-	12 (44%)	9 (33%)
Environment / water (5)	1 (20%)	-	2 (40%)	2 (40%)
Finance / investment (2)	1 (50%)	-	-	1 (50%)
Forestry practitioner / forestry agent (10)	6 (60%)	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	-
Forestry timber processor (2)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	-	-
Landowner / manager (5)	3 (60%)	-	1 (20%)	1 (20%)
Local authority (6)	1 (17%)	-	3 (50%)	2 (33%)
Public body (6)	1 (17%)	-	1 (17%)	4 (67%)
Representative body (8)	3 (38%)	1 (13%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)
Representative body – Farming (4)	-	-	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
Representative body – Forestry (3)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	-
Social Enterprise / Third sector (3)	-	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	-
Third sector (2)	1 (50%)	-	1 (50%)	-
Other (2)	-	-	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Total organisations (88)	26 (30%)	8 (9%)	31 (35%)	23 (26%)
Individuals (99)	38 (38%)	13 (13%)	29 (29%)	19 (19%)
Total respondents (187)	64 (34%)	21 (11%)	60 (32%)	42 (22%)

(Percentages might not add to 100% because of rounding)

As can be seen, most organisation types had a majority in agreement that forestry grants have been an effective measure, with the exceptions of community councils / groups, forestry timber processors, forestry-related representative bodies and social enterprise / third sector groups.