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Submitted to Future Grant Support for Forestry
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Ministerial Foreword - Forestry in Scotland is a sector that we can be justly proud of.

1 - Introduction and Rationale for Providing Grant Support for Forestry

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

Yes

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Without the opportunity land owners, who maybe seen as asset rich but who are probably cash poor, would not be able to fund woodland creation projects and would be reluctant or unable to undertaken projects on a reasonable scale.
The use of grant incentives also provides the regulatory body Scottish Forestry the opportunity to ensure that appropriate forestry practices are being followed and to ensure that forests are future-proofed (carrot not stick approach).

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

Yes

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Remove the use of LPIDs from forestry schemes - these are complicated to comply with and cause confusion during both the application and subsequent claiming stages of the grant funding.
Timings of grant claims are aimed towards agriculture rather than forestry which creates issues with compliance of submission particularly during the planting season which can be significantly affected by weather.

2 - Forests Delivering for Scotland's Climate Change Plan

3. How can the support package for forestry evolve to help tackle the climate emergency, to achieve net zero, and to ensure that our woodlands and forests are resilient to the future climate?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

The support package for forestry is currently skewed towards native woodland creation rather than encouraging productive woodland cover which also has a significant place in achieving net zero. Home grown timber should be encouraged within the construction industry and forestry owners encouraged to grow high quality timber than can compete with foreign growers.

4. Private investment through natural capital and carbon schemes can make a valuable contribution to climate change. Do you agree that the grant support mechanism should have more flexibility to maximise the opportunities to blend private and public finance to support woodland creation,

Not sure

Please explain you answer in the text box.:

Landowners already undertake a significant level of private investment as the grant funding has not kept pace with inflation and establishment costs. Therefore grant funding should not be reduced on the presumption that natural capital and carbon schemes will plug the short fall between funding and costs as many investors will not consider small to medium scale projects where the most opportunities for good woodland creation projects are to be found.

5. How could the current funding package be improved to stimulate woodland expansion and better management across a wide range of woodland types, including native and productive woodlands?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

The funding package is still based on the same rates as when the FGS funding stream was introduced and costs have significantly increased so that grants no longer cover project costs.
High levels of upfront surveying and due diligence/stakeholder engagement costs before a project is put forward for FGS are also prohibitive.

6. Do you agree that it should be a requirement of grant support that woodlands are managed to ensure that they become more resilient to the impacts of climate change and pests and disease?

Yes

How can the grant scheme support this?:

FGS already undertakes this function through ensuring there is proportion of diversity within projects, however there should be a greater focus on 'right tree, right place for the right reasons' rather than just trying to fit into a grant model.

3 - Integrating Woodlands on Farms and Crofts

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

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

Are there others not listed above?:

Assistance or simpler paperwork to complete.

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

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Simpler paperwork.
Better understanding of what land is suitable for planting rather than this isn't useful for farming.

4 - Forests Delivering for People and Communities

9. How can forestry grants better support an increase in easily accessible, sustainably managed woodlands in urban and peri-urban areas?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

No comment

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

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

No comment

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

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Stakeholder engagement is already undertaken to engage with communities to develop forestry proposals. However, the Scottish Forestry public registers are not user friendly nor easily accessible.

12. How can the forestry regulatory and grant processes evolve to ensure that there is greater transparency about proposals and the decisions that have been made on them?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Stakeholder engagement by forest agents is often good, but responses are often not forthcoming or late.
Providing a list of stakeholders who have been contacted as part of the due diligence process and their response or non response should be taken into consideration that landowners and their representatives have taken steps to engage as repeated pursuance for comments is expensive and time-consuming.

13. Forestry grants have been used to stimulate rural forestry businesses by providing support with capital costs. Do you agree that this has been an effective measure to stimulate rural business?

Yes

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

Often local contractors are used to provide services such as fencing, ground preparation or harvesting. Spin off businesses are also encouraged and able to utilise forest areas such as tourism through the provision of access and paths.

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

Contractor cost margins are extremely tight and machinery is very expensive and has to be optimally worked in order to be efficient, additional funding to cover shortfalls in production through learning and teaching time should and could be funded to encourage both employers and employees to learn new skills.

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

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Scottish Forestry could provide better training opportunities to colleges and companies running graduate programmes on how to correctly complete grant funding paperwork correctly as this is often done badly and creates significant blockages within the system.

5 - Forests Delivering for Biodiversity and the Environment

15. The primary purpose of FGS is to encourage forestry expansion and sustainable forest management, of which a key benefit is the realisation of environmental benefits. How can future grant support better help to address biodiversity loss in Scotland including the regeneration and expansion of native woodlands?

Please explain your answer in the text box.:

Make the application process much simpler.
The Natural Regeneration grant does not seem to cover capital items - it is difficult to score sufficiently unless woodland is a designated site. Capital items such as fencing, bracken control etc. are often required in order to promote natural regeneration of native woodlands but are difficult to achieve. Better clarity or simplicity on this would be welcome and help to bring existing woodland into both better condition and promote expansion.

16. Herbivore browsing and damage can have a significant impact on biodiversity loss and restrict regeneration. How could forestry grant support mechanisms evolve to ensure effective management of deer populations at:

Landscape scale?:

Landowners planning on carrying out landscape scale projects are already aware that reductions are required, but this will take time to achieve as the increases have been going on for years.
Improved engagement regarding requirements from stakeholders such as NatureScot would help and a requirement for these agencies to respond in a timeous manner would help landowners and agents.

Small scale mixed land use?:

Support to engage with deer management groups would help

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

Please add your comments here.:

Stakeholder engagement and the due diligence process is often off-putting or done badly as statutory stakeholders do not respond to enquiries and then applications are bounced back to the applicant which further delays the process.
Scottish Forestry has concordant agreements with other regulatory bodies and therefore should the due diligence process require applicants to communicate with these bodies and generally receive only a generic response, or should the focus be on engaging with the more site specific stakeholders.

About you

What is your name?

Name:
[**redacted**]

What is your email address?

Email:

[**redacted**]

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Individual

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Scottish Forestry would like your permission to publish your response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response only (without name)

We may share your response internally with other Scottish Forestry policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Forestry to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

I consent