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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.:

Due to the cost of managing the land it still remains too expensive to establish woodland with out support. The time frames involved means a large capital investment in the first 3 years and then up to 25 years before any potential income can be taken from harvesting.
If forestry was mixed in with the wider agricultural schemes it would not be given the same priority as food provision and as a result would be considerably worse off.

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.:

All land is connected and therefore must work together to optimise returns. At this time there is a great deal of angst between farmers and foresters due to the move to plant lower down the hill and remove areas of land from the agricultural sector and pace it in to forestry. This is on the back of the climate agenda. There are many areas of farmland that are less productive due to the vegetation, soils and water not all are ideal for forestry but are good for biodiversity. A better use would be to make such areas biodiversity hotspots with trees and wetlands. Farmers could drain
in to such areas and foresters can retain and manage the flow of water by using trees. But the bigger question is what is worth more a n agricultural or forestry or biodiversity subsidy?

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.:

We need to change our tree stock to be resilient and the downline industries play a major part in that as do the building and architectural sectors. But we must allow the private sector to be innovative without being punitive via the grant system. Instead of making it impossible to get WCC unless it meets the cashflow test would it not be better to introduce a control mechanism that allows more commercial elements so long as the carbon income generated is redistributed in to the generation of new woodland and maintaining the woodland that has been created. So any additional
income made a %age of which is reinvested and has to be demonstrated. Thereby increasing the Woodland cover, improving biodiversity and reducing the amount of subsidy from the SG.

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

Yes

Please explain you answer in the text box.:

By monetising the biodiversity aspects and allowing private investment in such areas where for every 1 unit of carbon bought 3 units of biodiversity are created. The financial gains for the land owner are not capped but are market driven. Landowners who create a good legacy and manage their land to the highest standards and maximise land use, are rewarded by being able to get larger credit values. Sponsorship is also a massively under uitilised aspect and would allow many marginal farms to make better use of unused land areas due to lack of grant with out being penalised either by tax or other grant initiatives.

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.:

Conifers are by far the best way of reducing Co2 and providing a timber crop we can utilise within a reasonable time frame. However, conifer is no longer able to achieve carbon as it would happen without carbon. this needs to be re-evaluated. See question 3 above. It is bonkers to set up an award system

and then penalise the private sector when they discover that they can make money.
But there needs to be better use of any WCC income to generate better woodlands away from less resilient monoculture woodlands.

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?:

A healthy woodland is a diverse woodland. The only way to become more resilient is to create woods that are truly diverse and cover all the basic biodiversity requirements. That does not mean pure broadleaf or pure conifer, it means diverse. Both in terms on conifer species but also in how they are planted. Currently it is not easy to plant an intimately mixed woodland without running in to issues over the grant structure. This needs to be rectified.

3 - Integrating Woodlands on Farms and Crofts

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

Better integration of support for woodland creation with farm support mechanisms, Flexibility within options, Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout

Are there others not listed above?:

A better understanding of what support is coming for farmers in relation to the replacement of the EU funding. A clear decision on what is more valuable based on land type. Trees, grazing, arable etc. If there is a decision tree with clear category parameters so the decision is then clear for everyone then it makes the decision as to what to plant where faster, unequivocal and reliable.

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.:

The cost of woodland establish is based on the scale of the operation. Grants need to reflect the true cost of getting contractors and equipment to sites and then the scale of the work onsite. Schemes that are over 10ha are relatively safe from any scale issues but those less that 10ha often run in to the issues around location, welfare, accommodation etc. Could there be a link made between the hospitality sector and the forestry sector? Where by accommodation fees are capped but paid directly to the provider? Fuel costs also play a major part in this and in some cases proximity to high crime areas pushing contractor rates well above the average due to expected losses from theft and vandalism.

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.:

We will only truly deal with the increase in woodland cover once the wider public understand the relationship that forestry and agriculture has with them. We have moved away from the link between the land & our everyday lives and have lost the understanding of woodlands. When seen in Europe how communities go foraging for mushrooms and berries as well as fire wood where here we have a very small sector who do this and even then are wary of laws being broken more than what might harm them. For the grants to help we need active pots that will get communities back in to woodlands to see them for what they are. So why not have %age of all grants be placed back into community ranger funds. Also cooperative contractor base for a community.

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.:

What is wealth and how is it measured? Wealth can mean different things to different people. Woodlands have a wide range of benefits not all fir with all people. Creating clean air, reducing flooding, providing raw materials and increasing biodiversity are key parts to this. But the wider community need to be taught what and how this can benefit them. Currently they don't and the community councils do nmo0t reflect the true community either. We are suffering from in, many cases, nimbyism! Where people with too much time on their hands and not enough understanding of the needs of the wider community are put/volunteer in places where their influence can impact others.

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.:

Communities are smothered in consultations for one project or another. The more deprived the area the less likely they are to be involved unless they can see a true benefit, mostly financial. If the health sector was linked in to prescribing woodland walks and activity in the forest it might see more

involvement. If fly tipping and vandalism was met with better apportioned punishment that benefitted the woodland that would also help. And if education of adults was targeted at the environment that would also help. Bottom line the Regulatory & grant process is unlikely to make any difference to a community until the community decides that the woodland can help them.

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.:

Every scheme should have a written report that explains why the scheme was passed or failed what were good examples and what were bad examples within the scheme. What comments made the difference and how it can realistically change the area in which it is proposed.

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?:

Without support with the capital costs there would be a select few schemes developed. There is simply not enough incentive to plant a crop that takes 40+ years to mature.

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

If local unemployed people could be utilised and paid to establish the woodland and manage it moving forward that would truly support the wider community and begin to see if people had the skills to get in to employment.

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.:

Any company that is willing to take on an individual n the forestry sector should be given an allowance that stimulates the proper training of the individual. This can be for anyone at any age up to say 55yrs old. this would allow some to change career and bring with them skills but learn new ones. it would stimulate local colleges to run courses on forestry as currently there are very few options available. Call it the forest apprentice scheme or branching out!

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.:

Creating a monocultures of forests is not going resolve the biodiversity and resilience targets. Token gestures of broadleaves doesn't meet the mark. Allowing the creation of ponds, wetland scrapes, wildflower meadows and the like to be part of a funded grant application would go along way to resolving the issue. Currently the emphasis of grant is on the trees but in many cases the biodiversity and resilience aspects are missing as they cant be funded and this needs to be addressed quickly so that foresters are not discriminated when they ask for a pond to be created due the water issues or create a wild flower meadow next to a public area and don't get grant funded or its part of the OG%age

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?:

Put venison on the food table properly. Currently it is priced out of the reach of most people making it a luxury item. Venison is an excellent meat product with low fat and low cholesterol and should be readily available to all. That would mean there is an incentive for stalkers to cull. Too many stalkers are sport stalkers and that means they want to be able to shoot a deer on every outing so keep the numbers up rather than thinking about the crop they are protecting. Professional stalkers consider the crop first and the deer second. Deer fencing allows natural regeneration to take place but puts increased pressure outside the fence. hence reduced the deer numbers by making it a staple food item not a luxury one.

Small scale mixed land use?:

As for above. Deer and rabbits/hares/voles are all threats to establishing a woodland. Until we get the balance back they will remain a threat. Small scale woodland creation should allow for fencing before tubes and have it removed within ten years once establishment has taken place. The wire can be reused on other areas as could the posts in some cases. We need to move things on from single use. We could develop a de-netting system that is easy to deploy and ensures old netting can be reused.

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

Please add your comments here.:

Truly diverse woodlands means a mixture of tree species, age, flora and fauna. Currently I feel the FGS is too focused on monoculture woodlands and needs to integrate the biodiversity aspects far better and allow grant aiding for such things. Creating wild swimming ponds and picnic areas in woodland meadow glades is going to have a far higher chance of including communities than dull coniferous monocultures or pure broadleaf woods with no wetlands. Also by looking at many rural farm areas there are lots of areas where wetlands could be created locking up water that can be used without having a detrimental affect to the farms but due to the lack of funding for such things stops it. Also because the water does sometimes dry up so a small amount of poor grazing is possible. We need to truly integrate land management across all sectors to achieve our long-term objectives.

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