

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.:

Yes, forestry is a distinct industry from agriculture. Support and regulation from Scottish Forestry and previously Forestry Commission Scotland has always been more successful in practice than when funding and support was directed through an overall agricultural department such as SGRPID. Forestry isn't big enough and doesn't have enough of a culture in comparison to agriculture which dominates such arrangements.

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.:

More provision for small scale forestry management as there was under previous schemes such as FGS and SFGS. In the agriculture/forestry interface on smaller estates and farms, and woodlot licences there is less economies of scale from timber harvesting to fund the overall forestry enterprise. By re-balancing funding to pitch better for smaller scale forestry support this will directly improve the complementarity between agriculture and forestry.

## 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.:

Continued support of new planting is admirable and will help tackle climate change and also help to achieve net zero.

However we would argue that the funding for new planting and the chance of securing land for new planting should be available to the Scottish people more widely. Woodlot Licences could be used to allow for new planting by ordinary Scottish families who do not currently have access to land. Through discussions with members and with the public, the Scottish Woodlot Association has identified that there is interest out there for new planting Woodlot Licences, even given the long timescale before timber would be available to the Woodlot holders after planting. This is a potential great opportunity to increase the diversity of those managing woodland and also would create more diverse forestry directly through more diverse, and some smaller, forest tenure. Scotland has still got a long way to go to catch up with Europe and North America, where smaller scale forest tenure is the norm, and this could be pursued in conjunction with standard large scale new planting. For example, when a new planting scheme is approved, it would not be unreasonable to ask that several small new planting woodlot licences were made available for local families to plant up themselves, even if they were only say 15 ha in size - perhaps this could be offset against open ground or hardwood requirements for example? Existing woodlot licences in Scotland have typically been 15-30 hectares in size with mature conifer and hardwood woodland mixture, a similar mix of new planting species could be pursued with these new planting woodlot licences.

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 your answer in the text box.:

Not sure, as there are already significant - indeed insurmountable - barriers for ordinary Scottish people to access land for new planting as mentioned in the previous answer. Blending support with private and public capital may well further tilt the balance away from local residents to do planting themselves. An open and transparent public funding support should be available to everyone in Scotland.

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.:

As previous answers above have discussed, Woodlot Licences are an opportunity for a diverse small scale tenure using alternative forestry management and silviculture methods, such as chainsaw fellings and thinnings and extraction with small equipment and horses which is how the small number of existing Woodlot Licences are managed in Scotland.

As described these are often on mixed coniferous and hardwood woodlands.

Previous grant schemes, such as the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme and the Forestry Grant Scheme prior to approx 2008 had detailed funding menu's for things like thinnings, cleaning, fencing, weeding, spraying and lots of other activities to help fund management of existing woodlands. For an Estate forester in those days, especially as timber prices were far lower in those days, this funding was really crucial to getting this work done and effectively directed it. It is perhaps no surprise that there is much evidence that these management operations have stopped happening on many Estates and farms etc. as the targeted funding was phased out under new grant schemes. Although timber prices increased significantly over this period, this didn't always translate into replacement funding for forest management works that had previously been grant driven.

While the new planting achieved in recent years is admirable, it does seem that a rebalancing of the funding to support some of the smaller scale management activities would be sensible. Many of these activities directly improve the carbon capture and environmental benefits of forestry, particularly thinnings and so on.

This rebalancing to support management of current woodlands would greatly help Woodlot Licence holders in the management of their Woodlots. Woodlot holders in Scotland are few in number and while we generally have our own labour, and those of others in the co-operative, to work in the Woodlots we are often cash poor for funding other things to do with the Woodlot. More targeted funding would help us massively and make taking on a Woodlot Licence and getting unmanaged woodlands back into management far less of a daunting task for new and young woodlot holders and their families. It would be really helpful to be able to reduce the barriers with some targeted funding for forest management such as this. When the Association started there was for example, even under more modern schemes, funding for thinnings under forest management options (woodland improvement I think) - this was later withdrawn from the 2014 scheme which was a great shame as we had started to see Woodlot Licences set-up which would have greatly benefited from this funding even though it was fairly modest. As things stand, 10 Woodlot Licences were set-up, with none of the Woodlot holders to my knowledge being able to access any Scottish government grant funding at all, with all work, rents etc. being paid for by the woodlot holder out of the timber and firewood he or she could produce. A new grant scheme should be able to provide some sort of support however small.

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

Not sure

How can the grant scheme support this?:

It depends what these requirements are really and who is deciding this. There is a risk of ending with an inflexible set of guidelines that become hard rules, and we actually end up with less diverse forestry which is then less able to cope with climate change and pests and diseases. It is likely going to be better to embrace that there will be different approaches to forestry and try and work with these different approaches in a direct and more targeted professional collaboration type manner that too hard a set of requirements, which are often fallible.

### 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, Intervention level, Support with cashflow, Information on how current land use could continue with trees integrated throughout

Are there others not listed above?:

In other roles I have been working with a farmer looking at limited new forestry planting and new hedgerows and widened hedgerows. We have had good support from the local Scottish Forestry office, but it is not particularly straightforward to access a lot of this especially with a client who is small scale and with little experience or embedding in the agricultural scheme. There also seems, under current prices, to be a significant gap between grant funding and costs for new planting and hedges, this may be due to the age of the scheme and the new grant scheme will no doubt have revised rates.

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.:

As mentioned in previous answer there now seems to be a gap between actual costs and the grant funding which is significant for small scale farmers to be an effective barrier to the new planting happening. It might be possible to gear a new scheme with higher rates for smaller scale planting, and where costs of things like new fencing can become prohibitive, tapering off as the specific scheme increases in size and economies of scale bring down meterage rates.

Similarly could there be a higher support for management and consultation fees for the smaller scale schemes.

To return to Woodlot Licences, they have an advantage in that the tenure of the land is in the hands of the people doing the actual work. Creating more Woodlot Licences therefore bypasses a lot of the standard client / landowner relationship with its associated fees and costs, and instead the Woodlot holders do the work largely themselves. More Woodlot Licences, including new planting ones, will be a really efficient way of delivering small scale new woodlands

along side small woodland tenure.

#### 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.:

Woodlot Licences so far in Scotland have been on Estates. These are in very rural locations but not as remote as more forest blocks in the Southern Uplands.

In British Columbia, where Woodlot Licences originated, they are often found in these interface areas between settlements and larger commercial forestry and are a buffer between the two. Woodlot Licences in BC traditionally had an element of farmland associated with them and were a way of getting farmers involved in forestry, and so creating a small scale forestry element to the industry alongside large scale industrial timber concessions.

Similarly in Scotland Woodlot Licences could be established closer to urban and peri-urban areas where the benefits of small scale equipment, a local person working and managing the woodland, and potential to create local supplies of firewood and lumber which happens on Woodlot Licences already. As an example trial site, the Scottish Woodlot Association put forward the north western section of Heathhall Forest near Dumfries recently to Forestry and Land Scotland as an area that could be used as a trial Woodlot Licence. This is an urban/per-urban forest literally on the doorstep of Heathhall in Dumfries and is well used for recreation. The woodland is currently undermanaged with much work to do and a sensible Woodlot Licence approach here would bring great benefits both to the landowner and the local community. We previously had a member who was a horse logger who was keen to take this area on.

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.:

Grant support for forestry should empower local communities to achieve tenure of forestry themselves. This includes the community as a whole, but also to empower families within that community to take on forest tenure. This in turn then strengthens and empowers the community through the local families. This has been tried and tested in British Columbia through Woodlot Licences and was a driving factor behind their programme which now has over 800 Woodlot Licences and has been running for approximately 70 years.

By achieving tenure the decision making around the woodland is made by the community, and with a diverse tenure smaller scale forestry can be pursued, and in turn smaller scale working and processing of timber. Norway is a good example of what can be achieved with small scale local tenure and working, and our grant scheme should aim to develop and progress tenure towards a more normal European situation rather than just support the status quo.

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.:

The problem is not only creating the processes but also creating buy-in to these processes. People need to feel they have a stake in the industry. Often forestry does not necessarily employ local people, have any local timber processing, or any other stake in the local economy. This is in direct contrast to the agricultural industry which has these links and stakeholders in the bucket-load, usually due to the smaller scale of agricultural holdings compared to forestry.

The one local stakeholder forestry usually does have, which agriculture does not in the same way, is recreation. So it is no surprise that major input that communities have to forestry proposals is usually in terms of 'soft' aspects such as impact on recreation, visuals, etc.

If local people and communities had a direct economic involvement in their local forests similar to agriculture, then there would naturally be more buy-in and involvement of local people and communities into forestry proposals.

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.:

I think already there is some transparency, for example with the felling permission online register and so on, as well as consultations.

Forestry has done well with this overall, however as long as local people and communities are largely bystanders in terms of forest tenure and the forestry economy, then more consultation is likely just to lead to more of a them -and-us scenario which is often, but not always, how these consultations pan out.

Greater involvement in the forest economy as discussed in the previous answer, through local forest tenure through mechanisms such as Woodlot Licences, local forest employment by using directed employed local labour, local processing and marketing, will ensure not only transparency but local involvement and empowerment directly rather than local people just being consultees.

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?

No

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

The problem is that the capital cost of small scale equipment is incredibly high. For example, some Woodlot Licence holders have looked at purpose built small scale forwarders to buy them for their Woodlot Licences as an ideal means of extraction. Even with the grant support they were way too expensive, and the grant funding rules meant that you had to use them for a really significant period of time, beyond what the average woodlotter would use them for.

We did try to scope out doing this as a co-operative in a machinery ring style, but it was getting beyond what we could do as volunteers on top of running the Association and helping the setting up of new Woodlot Licences.

Perhaps a machinery ring is the only viable approach, could there be grant support to help with the setting up of this along with the legal implications, running of this etc.

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

Grants to reduce costs of chainsaw tickets and forest machinery NPTC units would be really helpful. As woodlotter currently have no grant funding at all for their woodlot licences, the costs of getting training are another cost hurdle to clear after rent, PPE, chainsaws, insurance, hiring in help and so on.

The Scottish Woodlot Association is currently trying to establish a Forest Works Manager training course and also an Environmental Constraints course to help existing Woodlot Licence holders, prospective Woodlot Licence Holders, other forestry professionals more generally and the public. We have been looking to do this through funding to the Scottish Woodlot Association by Scottish Forestry which is much appreciated. Finding running costs for the Association itself though is still very challenging.

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.:

There is a real problem in the industry with a lack of people coming into the industry. Although there are various financial incentives, such as apprentices, apprentice degree courses and so on, part of the problem is the lack of people and communities having a stake in the forestry industry more generally as illustrated in the questions above. It has in many cases become very remote from people and communities. Smaller scale forestry and diverse tenure, with commitment to local employment will greatly help this and naturally create aspiration for young people to enter the industry that their parents and communities are involved in.

## 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.:

Speaking in my own experience as an Estate forester, one of the major challenges with native woodland is the harvesting and marketing of it to get a sensible return for the landowner. I remember spending a lot of time and effort putting together what I thought was a nice load of Oak butts, each about 150 years old, and then from various merchants only being offered a bit more for them than I was getting for normal 40 year old Sitka logs which I was sending out by the lorryload every week.

These Oak logs would have been sold on for a premium into mills down in the South of England for specialist uses. Instead we decided to mill them ourselves on site and used the material to produce beautiful hand made gates for the houses on the Estate which seemed a better use.

It would have been really useful to have had a hardwood timber marketing board to assist with this and give some expert advice and economies of scale.

Until the marketing is sorted out, and a hardwood industry better established, it makes the planting and silviculture of hardwoods a bit of a strange business in that we are planting for a market that we don't know much about, in comparison with conifers. A lot of modern hardwood planting is only going to end up as firewood, if it is ever managed or felled at all, after planting.

If we could make hardwood planting more of an economic proposition, then we would see higher quality and importantly more hardwood planting, purposefully, rather than it filling in a requirement for certain percentages. This would be preferable to the current situation.

Might there also be better support for those landowners who are restocking or planting with native woodlands purely for the biodiversity value of such woodlands? This is usually very difficult to quantify and to find funds for. Could it be possible, similar to the various Carbon Credit schemes, for large companies and industries to directly support and fund the restocking and or woodland creation of native hardwoods simply on the basis of them being areas of native woodlands with biodiversity benefits, rather than looking at Carbon Credits and carbon volumes etc.? Such woodlands would then have some funding to assist with the ongoing management, thinning, fencing, managing glades for wildflowers, deer etc. There could be a set standard, or inspection standard, required for such woodlands to meet to demonstrate that they were meeting the requirements of the funding. Biodiversity is really

important alongside Carbon. Woodlot Licences often have these intangible Biodiversity benefits in native woodlands, through thinnings and getting woodlands back into management, currently this doesn't attract funding.

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?:

There are already various deer management boards in various locations which might be best placed to look at the landscape scale.

Small scale mixed land use?:

Small scale land use often majorly struggles with deer control. Could Scottish Government rangers be deployed under public funding where required to help bring deer populations under control where there is not any locally employed gamekeepers, or could locally employed gamekeepers have access to funding for their positions based on them controlling deer?

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

Please add your comments here.:

## About you

What is your name?

Name:  
Andrew Brown

What is your email address?

Email:  
[Redacted]

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:  
The Scottish Woodlot Association Limited

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