

2023-24 Statement on Sustainable Economic Growth

Introduction

Our role today involves helping Scottish Ministers develop forestry policy, supporting the sector and the regulation of forestry activities and builds on a century of excellence and professionalism under the auspices of the Forestry Commission.

Statement

There is increasing interest in the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) with over 14,000 hectares of woodland creation schemes approved during the year, for current and future years.

Around 50% (7,045ha) of FGS supported woodland creation in 2023-24 was planted as productive woodland specifically aimed at growing sustainable timber, and 50% (7,078ha) of FGS supported woodland was planted with native trees.  This activity makes a significant contribution to the rural economy, with the forestry sector as a whole supporting over 25,000 jobs and producing over £1 billion of Gross Value Added.

The total area of new woodland planted across Scotland in 2023-24 was 14,123 hectares, this is more that the rest of the UK combined. Each year Scotland’s tree planting efforts make a critical contribution to responding to the global climate emergency, removing c7.6 million tonnes of CO2 from theatmosphere annually *(*[*Quantifying the Sustainable Forestry Carbon Cycle*](https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/publications/quantifying-the-sustainable-forestry-carbon-cycle-report-download-page/)*:* 2022).

Scottish Forestry continues to manage the threats and spread of existing pests and diseases through surveillance, monitoring and control actions with in excess of 1m Ha of trees surveyed this year.  Work has been ongoing with local authorities and transport operators to share best practice on how best to monitor and manage Ash dieback.

We are  continuing to improve the understanding of current and potential threats to Scotland’s forests and woodlands.   This includes ways to reduce or manage the threats through contingency planning, research and development of new technologies.

We continued to allocate The Strategic Timber Transport Fund to projects that minimise the impacts of timber transport on communities and the environment by reducing road miles and improving rural road infrastructure. In 2023-24 £4m was allocated to public road improvement projects, and to the Timberlink shipping service that has avoided 432,000 lorry miles over the year.

Scottish Forestry continues to support various wellbeing events these sessions combine nature connection (plant identification, foraging, fire lighting, eco arts and crafts) with wellbeing (forest bathing, meditation, mindful movement