WOODLAND EXPANSION ADVISORY GROUP
IMPLEMENTING THE RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS
FINAL REPORT

1. Woodland Expansion Advisory Group (WEAG) – a ‘new direction for woodland creation’

The first Scottish Government’s Land Use Strategy had a vision of ‘A Scotland where we fully recognise, understand and value the importance of our land resources and where our plans and decisions about land use deliver improved and enduring benefits, enhancing the wellbeing of our nation’.

The vision of the Land Use Strategy and other Government’s policies for the land using sector guided the work of the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group (WEAG) that was set up in 2011. The remit of the group was to provide advice to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Environment on:

- Which types of land are best for tree planting in Scotland, in the context of other land-based objectives;
- Promoting good practice and local processes in relation to tree planting so as to secure multiple benefits.

The group consisted of representatives from Confederation of Forest Industries, National Farmers Union Scotland, National Sheep Association, Scottish Government, Non-Governmental Organisations and Scottish Land & Estates (the full membership list is presented in Annex 1).

The WEAG report, submitted to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Environment in 2012, consisted of both a ‘new direction for woodland creation’ and 24 individual recommendations. The Scottish Government’s response accepted these and outlined how these would be implemented.

The key advice from the group was that the recommendations need to be fully integrated with the long-term view of the future direction for Scotland’s land use and not seen in isolation.

The group summarised their ambition as:

‘We see a future where creating woodlands is seen as an integral part of sustainable land use and management. We want a more inclusive and diverse approach to creating these woodlands, and for them to be more productive and resilient. We need a more positive attitude to woodland creation, and to take account of the woodlands we already have’.
2. Implementing the recommendations

Since 2012 Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Government, Non-Governmental Organisations and the forestry industry have taken steps to move towards a more integrated approach to land use and management.

The sustainability principles highlighted in the Land Use Strategy and put in a forestry context by the WEAG report and the Scottish Government’s response, are now fully integrated into both woodland expansion policy development and implementation. The partners have worked hard to promote a more positive attitude to woodland creation based on the core principle of “the right woodland in the right place and for the right reason”.

Twenty of the recommendations have been addressed and incorporated into current practices. Three recommendations are still in progress:

- Promoting the integration of land activities on farms through a collaborative approach between agriculture and forestry teaching at higher education level (Recommendation 15);
- inclusion of the SG ‘Control of Woodland Removal’ policy into local authorities’ supplementary planning guidance (Recommendation 19); and
- promoting woodland creation through the Tenant Farming Forum (Recommendation 20).

The one recommendation that has not been delivered to date is Recommendation 1: Woodland creation target (10,000ha/year).

A more comprehensive report on progress made across the 24 recommendations is included (Annex 2).
Annex 1: Woodland Expansion Advisory Group Membership

- **Dr Andrew Barbour**, Chair (farms in Perthshire and woodland adviser to Atholl Estates)
- **Mark Aitken**: Scottish Environmental Protection Agency.
- **David Barnes**: Scottish Government Rural and Environment Directorate.
- **Susan Davies**: Scottish Natural Heritage.
- **Stuart Goodall**: CONFOR.
- **Jonnie Hall**: National Farmers Union of Scotland.
- **Hamish Macleod**: Director BSW and Chair of FC Scotland’s National Committee.
- **Professor Jeff Maxwell**: Former Director of Macaulay Land Use Research Institute and recent Chair of Tenant Farming Forum.
- **Angus Mccall**: Scottish Tenant Farmers’ Association.
- **Bob McIntosh**: Director, Scottish Government, Environment and Forestry Directorate
- **George McRobbie**: UPM Tilhill.
- **Dr Andrew Midgley**: Scottish Land and Estates.
- **Nigel Miller**: National Farmers Union of Scotland.
- **George Milne**: National Sheep Association.
- **Jo O’Hara**: Scottish Government Rural and Environment Directorate.
- **Simon Pepper**: SNH Board member and former director WWF.
- **Bill Ritchie**: Scottish Crofting Federation.
- **Ian Ross**: Highland Council and Chair of Planning, Environment and Development Committee.
- **Vicki Swales**: RSPB Scotland.
### Annex 2: WEAG recommendations: summary of progress

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<th>Recommendation</th>
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| **Recommendation 1: Woodland creation target**  
(Creating 100,000 hectares of new woodland over the period 2012-2022) | • | • The average annual rate of new planting since 2011 is 7,300ha. |
| **Recommendation 2: Productive woodlands**  
(Encouraging woodland owners and managers to consider opportunities for producing timber and/or wood fuel when creating new woodlands of all types) | • | • Analysis of the most recent grant applications shows that interest in the productive conifer model has increased.  
• Under the Timber Development Programme, FCS support work on the timber properties of secondary conifers to enable the industry to develop suitable products and markets. |
| **Recommendation 3: Types of land for tree planting**  
(Considerations to be taken into account about the location of new woodlands to help reduce conflicts between woodland creation and other land uses) | • | • Guidance has been published on creating woodland on agricultural land.  
• The Central Scotland Green Network contribution supports woodland creation in the most populated areas of Scotland. |
| **Recommendation 4: Sub-regional analysis**  
(Sub-regional analysis of woodland creation constraints and opportunities to be piloted across Scotland) | • | • Five regional land use frameworks (Scottish Borders, Aberdeenshire, Cowal, Dumfries and Galloway and Flow Country) have been piloted across Scotland to promote greater integration of different land uses. |
| **Recommendation 5: Regional Forestry Fora**  
(Providing advice on implementation of Forestry and Woodland Strategies and the implications of woodland creation for other land-based objectives) | • | • Representation of agricultural interests has been secured on the Fora. |
| **Recommendation 6: CAP reform**  
(In its negotiations on CAP reform, the Scottish Government should seek to include measures that encourage tree planting) | • | • Forestry support measures are now part of the SRDP 2014-20 under the stand-alone Forestry Grant Scheme, administered by FCS. The scheme has been well received by stakeholders. |
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<td><strong>Recommendation 7: Grant rates</strong></td>
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<td>• Under the new Forestry Grant Scheme, applicants must submit a Woodland Creation Operational Plan. The aim of the plan is to demonstrate that the application is based on a good knowledge of the key local sensitivities and integration with other land use objectives.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 8: SRDP administration</strong></td>
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<td>• The Forestry Grant Scheme is in operation with an online application process, a streamlined claim process, and underpinned by a Customer Charter.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 9: Consultation process</strong></td>
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<td>• The Scottish Environmental Web (SEWeb) allows applicants to explore constraints and opportunities relating to potential areas for woodland creation. • The consultation procedure has been reviewed with input from the Customer Representatives Group.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 10: Integration</strong></td>
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<td>• SRDP Agroforestry option supports the creation of small scale woodlands on agricultural pasture or forage land. Farmers can also apply for the Small Farm Woodland option. • FCS, National Sheep Association and others are raising awareness about the opportunities sheep farmers have to integrate trees into their businesses.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 11: Whole farm planting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The guidance discussed under recommendation 3 meets the requirements of this recommendation.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation 12: Advice</strong></td>
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<td>• Current examples include the Scottish Government funded ‘Scottish Farm Advisory Service’</td>
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| **Recommendation 14: Co-ordination and collaboration**<br>(Land managers should be encouraged to work together across ownership boundaries to achieve integrated land management objectives) | • | • SRDP supports the facilitation of co-operative projects to deliver environmental benefits, over multiple holdings, at a landscape scale.  
• The Forestry Grant Scheme supports applications that demonstrate co-operation amongst landowners. |
| **Recommendation 15: Higher education**<br>(Developing a more integrated and collaborative approach to the provision of forest-related education) | • | • Discussions are underway concerning the incorporation of forestry modules into SRUC agricultural and land management courses. |
| **Recommendation 16: Carbon calculator**<br>(Development of a ‘carbon ready-reckoner’ for land managers to identify whether – and by how much – woodland creation could help to reduce their land management carbon footprint) | • | • The latest woodland carbon models have been incorporated into CALM (Carbon Accounting for Land Managers). |
| **Recommendation 17: Woodland Carbon Code**<br>(Promoting the Woodland Carbon Code, to improve awareness amongst land managers and enhance its attractiveness by facilitating involvement in group schemes) | • | • A total of 94 Scottish projects were registered under the Woodland Carbon Code by 31 March 2016. These projects cover an area of 13,356ha of woodland, and are projected to sequester 4.4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. |
| **Recommendation 18: Existing woodland**<br>(Encouraging the integration of proposals for woodland creation with existing woodland to help to improve their condition) | • | • Worked with the Tweed Forum and partners in the Central Scotland Green Network to promote these opportunities, for example, by funding farm woodland assessments and management plans. |
| **Recommendation 19: Woodland removal**<br>(Inclusion of the Scottish Government’s Policy on the Control of Woodland Removal in | • | • Revised guidance for the implementation of the Control of Woodland Removal policy was published in March 2015.  
• FCS continues to improve the implementation of the policy through |
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<td>supplementary planning guidance and securing advice on the implementation of this policy is available)</td>
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<td>liaison with Scottish Government Energy Control and Deployment Unit, SNH and local planning authorities.</td>
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| **Recommendation 20: Tenant farmers** | | • The Scottish Tenant Farming Forum was contacted – no further progress.  
• Forest Enterprise Scotland, as a landlord, worked with Starter Farms tenants in the design of woodland shelterbelts (as shelter for livestock) and in development of new native woodlands. |
| (Landlord and tenant representatives should work together in the context of the Tenant Farming Forum to promote woodland creation) | | |
| **Recommendation 21: Crofter forestry** | | • A partnership project between FCS, Woodland Trust Scotland and Scottish Crofting federation has been established to offer advice and support for crofters. |
| (Crofting and forestry stakeholders should work together to promote crofter forestry proactively) | | |
| **Recommendation 22: Community involvement** | | • The National Forest Land Scheme continues to facilitate increased community ownership and management of areas of the National Forest Estate.  
• The Community Woodland Association has developed a model for community-led woodland creation projects. |
| (The Scottish Government should help communities become involved in woodland creation) | | |
| **Recommendation 23: Public involvement** | | • ConFor has published a practical guide for forestry managers and owners on good practice stakeholder engagement. |
| (Promote the Public Engagement in Forestry Toolbox to private forest owners) | | |
| **Recommendation 24: Monitoring progress** | | • Progress reports produced. |