

WOODLAND EXPANSION IN SCOTLAND

Report on the responses to the
public consultation
(June-September 2008)

Forestry Commission Scotland
October 2008

Woodland Expansion in Scotland

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Summary

A discussion paper on woodland expansion in Scotland was published for public consultation on 30 June 2008 to 30 September 2008. Forty-one responses were received, of which eight were from individuals and 33 from organisations and groups.

The discussion paper was generally welcomed. The need for a strategic dialogue on woodland expansion was widely felt, particularly if it forms part of a process to develop a joined-up approach to land use.

Key points emerging from the consultation are summarised under the main headings in the paper.

Why do we need more woodland?

- A broad level of support for the benefits of woodland and well targeted woodland expansion with a variety of distinct emphases on the economic, social and environmental aspects of woodland expansion.
- Strong recognition of the role of woodlands in tackling climate change, as long as it is based on good science and best practice to ensure a positive contribution.
- Concern that woodland expansion should not be at the expense of good management of existing woodlands.

What sort of woodlands and what sort of land?

- A variety of views on which land types are suitable for woodland expansion, but qualified support for the indicative land type balance proposed.
- Concern to ensure native woodlands and natural regeneration play a full part in woodland expansion.
- Emphasising the importance of quality as well as quantity – both in terms of timber and other aspects of delivery.

Wider land use issues

- Strong view that an integrated landscape-scale approach across land uses is needed to secure maximum benefits.
- Highlighting the challenge and opportunities around land use change, particularly in relation to both agriculture and the urban fringe.
- The economic, social and environmental benefits of bringing production, processing and consumption closer together need to be recognised, along with the costs of timber transport.
- Concern that important habitats, species, landscapes and historic environments are safeguarded.

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- Emphasising the important role of habitat networks for both ecological and social benefits.
- Recognising the importance of deer management as part of a successful strategy.

Is the Scottish Forestry Strategy aspiration feasible?

- A general view that the 25% aspiration is achievable, although a range of views on whether this should be a target.
- Any target setting should be based on an objective analysis of what is being delivered by the current forest resource, and what is sought of other land uses.
- Need better aligned planning and consultation processes to make it easier to create woodlands where it makes most sense to do so.

Delivery mechanisms

- There should be a level playing field with agricultural support, and incentives should be more generous.
- A wider range of delivery mechanisms should be explored.
- Concerns over the recently introduced Rural Development Contract scheme.

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Introduction

The [Scottish Forestry Strategy](#) (2006) reaffirmed the Scottish Government's expectation that an increase in woodland cover in Scotland would be needed to deliver the vision, from the current 17% to around 25% by the second half of the century. The discussion paper on woodland expansion in Scotland¹ explored why Scotland might want more woodland, what outcomes woodland expansion could achieve, what sort of woodland is needed and how woodland expansion might be focused to maximise benefits. The intention is that this paper will provide a basis for the Scottish Government's support for woodland expansion, and form an important input towards a 2009 Land Use Summit.

Sixty invitations to comment were sent out and the consultation was placed on the FCS website.

The paper has not been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). An SEA has been undertaken for the Scottish Forestry Strategy, and this paper explores the delivery of the Strategy aspiration. It is likely that the next generation of Indicative Forestry Strategies, which spatially indicate opportunities for woodland creation, will be subject to SEA. The final draft Woodland Expansion Paper will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment screening.

Level of response and respondent profile

Forty-one responses were received. Of these eight were from individuals and 33 from organisations and groups.

Respondent category		No of responses
Individuals		8
Organisations and groups	Forestry NGOs	3
	Environmental NGOs	5
	Other land management NGOs	6
	Local authorities	5
	Community bodies	2
	Forestry Forums	2
	Businesses	5
	Scottish Government bodies	5
Total		41

In addition to the above, Scottish Wildlife Trust and SEPA asked that previously published statements be taken into account.

¹ <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7FWEQ5>

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A full list of respondents can be seen at Annex 1.

Methodology

Respondents were invited to comment on any aspect of the discussion paper. No specific set of questions was posed. The relatively small number of respondents has meant the emphasis in the analysis is on qualitative synthesis of comments. No 'weighting' of opinion has been attempted.

Each response was examined in detail and summarised on an Excel spreadsheet. For clarity the report has attempted to condense the details received in the responses. Therefore, individual, detailed opinions may not appear but will, nevertheless, be considered fully in the finalising of the discussion paper.

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Why do we need more woodland?

Twenty-three respondents raised points related to this section. Comments made are summarised as follows:

- More needs to be done to present the benefits woodlands offer:
 - Specific benefits raised in responses include, jobs, production of timber and non-timber products, climate change benefits; shelter for stock, crops and people, urban and rural community benefits.
 - Could use scenario planning to explore how to maximise benefits.
 - Forest products industry benefits should be expressed at a Scotland not UK level.
- Need to take account of the current woodland resource and what it is delivering in considering woodland expansion priorities.
- Should retain the strength of a multi-purpose approach to forest policy based on the UK Forestry Standard.
- Resources for woodland expansion should not be at the expense of promoting management of existing woodlands, through which increased benefits can be delivered for example by making neglected urban woodlands accessible and bringing them into active management and through appropriate restoration and management of native woodlands.
- Woodland removal is an important part of the context as it is reducing net woodland expansion and resulting in permanent woodland loss.

Climate change mitigation

Twenty-eight respondents raised points related to climate change mitigation of sufficient breadth to separate this out as a specific topic. Comments made are summarised as follows:

- Emissions reduction should be the first priority in national climate change mitigation policy.
- Carbon sequestration should not be the primary driver in woodland expansion. Concern that carbon sequestration assumptions are being made to justify woodland expansion without scientific rigour and that not all the land indicated in the paper would be suitable for carbon sequestration objectives.
- Carbon benefits of timber producing woodlands and forest products needs better recognition.
- Some welcomed the intention not to encourage woodland planting on peats, whilst others felt there were opportunities for woodland creation by natural regeneration or that planting should not be ruled out if the net carbon balance is positive.

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- Release of carbon:
 - as a result of establishment operations;
 - from woodland creation on high carbon soils;
 - from the practice of stump harvesting for wood fuel;
 - from woodland removal (even with compensatory planting as this takes time and can result in emissions from soil disturbance);
 - natural regeneration identified as a low disturbance hence low emission practice.
- Need for good practice standards for forestry and carbon and inclusion of carbon sequestration within the EIA process, informed by research to better understand the carbon dynamics of land use change to woodland on different soil types, and how to manage soil carbon stores.
- Need tools to understand carbon life cycle analysis of woodland creation, management, transport and use of wood products (same approach should be applied to renewable energy developments that involve woodland removal).
- Reduce timber transport:
 - increase local processing and use (should feature more in the FCS Timber Development Programme);
 - take a regional cluster approach to sector development;
 - promote a co-operative approach to transport logistics;
 - increase use of rail and sea.
- Interest in the role that carbon-offsetting markets might play in woodland creation, but view that current practice is too ad hoc and a 'carbon assurance scheme' needed. View that forestry should be formally incorporated into carbon trading mechanisms. Concern that additionality requirements are satisfied.
- Wood fuel production from sustainably managed woodlands strongly supported but:
 - requires further research to ensure sustainability;
 - needs supply chain development of supply chain including for material otherwise regarded as waste;
 - need incentives to encourage thinning for wood fuel.
- The potential role of short rotation forestry should be highlighted and researched. An important opportunity for lower quality land.
- Concern that short rotation coppice:
 - will compete with food production on better soils;
 - should be focused close to centres of demand;
 - should not be classified as woodland.

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What sort of woodland and what sort of land?

Twenty-one respondents raised points related to the sections on 'what sort of woodlands do we need?' and 'land use types for woodland creation'. They are taken together as some comments linked land and woodland types. Comments made are summarised as follows:

- Woodland types should be prioritised to increase diversity of the local forest resource and spatial diversity through woodland/open space mosaics and systems like wood pasture.
- A number of respondents expressed views about native woodlands:
 - should be a central component of expansion strategy;
 - should be a doubling of native woodland area by 2050;
 - most would prefer native woodlands to mixed woodlands;
 - can mitigate diffuse pollution and acidification;
 - can produce a whole range of economic, social and environmental benefits on a range of land types.
- Several respondents had specific views on species choice:
 - large areas of mono-culture or should be avoided;
 - should be more emphasis on species diversity;
 - expansion of spruce plantations acceptable where it adds to diversity;
 - non-native species should be avoided;
 - should be a more tolerant attitude towards traditional non-native species;
 - species and provenance should be closely matched to site conditions and mindful of climate change;
 - there should be more emphasis on species for local use.
- Should encourage and emphasise woodland expansion by natural regeneration through reduction of grazing pressure and direct seeding of disturbed ground, although need to recognise where it is not feasible.
- Emphasis should be on productive forests producing quality timber, including in relation to hardwoods.
- Several respondents had views on woodlands appropriate for different land types:
 - great potential for native woodland expansion on upland heaths;
 - upland heaths are an artificial, highly managed land use type and hence should not be ruled out for woodland creation;
 - bracken grassland offers the greatest potential to expand productive woodlands;
 - role and value of riparian woodlands;
 - need more montane scrub and natural tree-lines;
 - supporting the balance of land types proposed;
 - scepticism about availability of levels of built up and arable land indicated;
 - good potential to use of woodland to restore derelict and industrial land;
 - use trees to moderate urban micro-climates.

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Wider land use issues

Twenty-seven respondents raised points related to this section. Comments made are summarised as follows:

- Need an integrated landscape-scale approach across land uses and parts of government (e.g. through SEARS), recognising the impacts of woodland expansion on other sectors, to deliver:
 - synergies between farming/crofting and forestry;
 - landscape restoration;
 - rural community benefits;
 - a comprehensive response to climate change;
 - natural flood and water quality management;
 - a joined-up approach to wildfire management;
 - woodland as mitigation for developments like renewable energy schemes and mineral workings.
- Land availability. Need to understand the impact of:
 - current agricultural product prices;
 - uncertainty over future commodity prices and CAP subsidies;
 - the opportunity offered by reduction in hill livestock numbers;
 - hope value and development pressures on the urban fringe;
 - habitat protection requirements.
- Food security:
 - needs to be taken into account;
 - hence should avoid best quality land;
 - can be over-stated;
 - an issue used to defend current agricultural subsidy levels.
- Value of a regional cluster' approach, for example focus expansion of softwood forests around major processing facilities.
- Need to be mindful of, and plan to minimise, future impacts of timber transport on communities, National Parks and fragile minor roads. Focus major production forests around good transport links.
- Deer:
 - need to recognise the impact of deer on woodland expansion by natural regeneration;
 - need to recognise the impact of more woodland on deer management;
 - need to promote collaborative approaches to deer management;
 - need to minimise use of deer fences for reasons of deer welfare, bird strikes and public access;
 - more urban woodland will increase the challenges of urban deer management and deer-related road traffic accidents.

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- Sporting:

- estates are well placed to make a major contribution to woodland expansion;
- needs to be taken into account when considering land availability;
- impact of woodland expansion on foxes, corvids and tick burden, and hence on ground-nesting birds;
- the Scottish Government Land Use Study is an important opportunity to take a joined-up approach.

Landscape and cultural heritage

Seven respondents raised points related to wider culture and landscape of sufficient breadth to separate out as a specific topic. Comments made are summarised as follows:

- More emphasis should be given to the importance of historic environment, and this should be better taken into account in any analysis of land availability for forestry. Site archaeological survey is needed before woodland creation is approved.
- Need to say how negative impacts on valued landscapes will be avoided or mitigated.
- Should recognise that the largely treeless landscape that typifies the Scottish uplands has sporting, tourism and cultural value.
- Need to recognise the role of individual trees and groups in both urban and rural settings.

Biodiversity

Fourteen respondents raised points related to biodiversity of sufficient breadth to separate out as a specific topic. Comments made are summarised as follows:

- Need to ensure potential impacts and obligations around priority habitats, species, designated sites and HAP targets taken into account, including cumulative impact. Planting should be ruled out on more limited priority habitats.
- Need to recognise the importance of regional and local habitat networks and landscape-scale approaches, including incorporation and, where appropriate restoration, of open ground habitats and need to limit spread of invasive species like grey squirrel. Habitat networks are a key climate change adaptation.
- Need to understand biodiversity responses to woodland expansion scenarios, including in the light of climate change, through targeted research, long-term monitoring, use of biodiversity modelling tools. This needs to be incorporated into best practice guidance and should help define 'High Nature Value Forestry'.

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Is the Scottish Forestry Strategy aspiration feasible?

Twenty-one respondents raised points related to this section. Comments made are summarised as follows:

- Too simplistic to talk just about quantity, without considering quality in relative to delivery of benefits.
- Comments on the 25% woodland aspiration:
 - has it become a target?
 - this aspiration is achievable;
 - the figure has not been sufficiently justified in the paper;
 - that Scotland is in favour of this extent of woodland expansion is a 'myth';
 - urgent steps should be taken to address current low levels of planting;
 - should be a 30% target using 90% native species.
- Comments on indicative levels of annual woodland creation needed:
 - the overall annual woodland creation target is too low;
 - is the rate net of woodland loss?
 - no analysis behind the figure for 4k ha/yr figure for native and mixed woodland;
 - the vision for around 35% native species in Scotland's woodlands is too high and without scientific basis;
 - 6k ha/yr creation of productive woodland is insufficient to meet timber processing and renewable energy needs;
 - no need to set an annual target.
- Details of the analysis:
 - previous study did not consider all biological constraints or opportunities;
 - hard to reconcile the figures in different tables/figures;
 - should indicate parts of Scotland with greatest potential for woodland creation.

Planning processes

Twelve respondents raised points related to planning processes of sufficient breadth to separate out as a specific topic. Comments made are summarised as follows:

- Highlighting the important role of Indicative Forestry Strategies. Updated guidance on IFS preparation is needed.
- Need to establish better links with the National Planning Framework, Structure/Local Plans and development control with associated guidance, monitoring and enforcement processes. Should include spatially defined integrated habitat networks.
- Would be helpful to have an industry template for EIA preparation. Funding for EIA preparation would encourage woodland creation applications. Only 'exceptional' environmental issues should trigger EIA. EIA thresholds should be increased.

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- Consultation processes should be streamlined. Statutory consultees should be advised and take more account of government woodland expansion policy.

Delivery mechanisms

Twenty-one respondents raised points related to delivery mechanisms. Comments made are summarised as follows:

- Need to better understand landowner motivations and design delivery mechanisms accordingly, and recognise that land use change often comes when the land changes hands.
- Need to achieve a level playing field for agricultural and forestry support. Non-competitive agricultural incentives like Single Farm Payment and Less Favoured Area payments act as a disincentive for woodland creation. These need to be reviewed and better targeted.
- Need a more enabling approach with less regulation.
- Should consider ways to increase attractiveness of incentives like the use of challenge funds or tender schemes. Should move to non-competitive incentives. Need continuity of incentives.
- Several respondents made comments about the National Forest Estate:
 - will need to add to the if the 25% woodland cover target is to be met;
 - such a woodland creation service could be extended to all public land;
 - the National Forest Estate should be sold to fund woodland creation and improvement to rural infrastructure.
- Should consider other delivery mechanisms to encourage land use change including targeted initiatives, 'special purpose vehicles', use of compulsory purchase powers, specific tax incentives, reinstating of sporting rates and exemptions for woodland creation and creation of woodland crofts where these would be appropriate for achieving specific outcomes. Need better information on how much woodland is being created without grant aid.
- Special measures are needed in urban areas that link with spatial planning and development controls systems, and to recognise the exceptional costs of urban woodland creation. Existing tools like section 75 agreements could be used more.
- Must be accompanied by review and monitoring against policy objectives.

Issues around current grant schemes

Six respondents raised specific points around the recently introduced Rural Development Contract system of sufficient breadth to separate out as a specific topic. Comments made are summarised as follows:

- Rural Development Contracts (RDCs):
 - complexity is reducing uptake;

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- need to simplify (RDC) application and approvals processes, including scrapping or simplifying the statement of intent process;
 - should improve grant rates, e.g. by increasing standard costs and/or moving to a higher intervention rate;
 - mechanism for collaborative applications needs to be improved;
 - needs to be more flexibility around claims dates;
 - current rates can produce positive cash flow where Farmland Premium is paid;
 - Farmland Premium is not sufficiently attractive.
- Land Managers Options for woodland is unworkable. Should allow applicants to bring five-year allocation into one planting season.
 - Withdrawal of the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme (SFGS) and associated Locational Premiums has led to a crash in woodland creation. Should scrap RDCs and return to SFGS.

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FCS response

Respondents to this consultation have provided many very useful insights into issues around woodland expansion, as well as perspectives on wider forestry practice. Many of the specific points will be incorporated into the revised woodland expansion paper; which will be published and sent to respondents of this consultation in due course.

As might be expected, specific types of respondent had particular emphases. Environmental organisations emphasised issues around biodiversity, habitats and native woodlands. Respondents involved with the commercial forestry sector emphasised the linkage between woodland creation, timber production and the processing sector. Respondents involved with spatial planning and the urban fringe drew out a set of particular challenges and opportunities, along with some useful local examples. A wide cross section of respondents highlighted the potential role of appropriately located, planned and managed woodland on delivering 'ecosystem services', particularly in relation to climate change.

Some respondents raised very strategic issues that relate more to forestry in general than to woodland expansion in particular. Others had very specific concerns, for example about the operation of existing grant schemes. Whilst not the focus of FCS's response to this consultation, these points are valued and will be used as feedback into the relevant work areas.

Whilst FCS is happy to feed back on specific points of detail on request, this document focuses on the main themes emerging from the consultation as shown in the summary of this document.

Why do we need more woodland?

A broad level of support for the benefits of woodland and well targeted woodland expansion with a variety of distinct emphases on the economic, social and environmental aspects of woodland expansion.

FCS response: The variety of views reinforces the 'right tree in the right place' approach - recognising the role of different woodland types and their ability to deliver distinct mixes of benefits. The outcome-based focus provided by the Scottish Forestry Strategy and inherent in the main support mechanisms will help focus this approach. We agree that this would be aided in the Woodland Expansion Paper by an explicit consideration of what the current woodland resource is delivering.

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Strong recognition of the role of woodlands in tackling climate change, as long as it is based on good science and best practice to ensure a positive contribution.

FCS response: We agree that use of woodlands to help tackle climate change needs to be based on good science and best practice guidance. We also agree that it is unlikely that carbon sequestration would become the only objective for woodland creation given the inherent ability of well designed and managed woodlands to deliver a range of benefits. A number of actions are in progress to take forward the role of forestry and climate change including the following:

- Forest Research is currently finalising a knowledge review of the carbon and greenhouse gas balance of UK forests, which will be peer reviewed and published.
- The Forestry Commission has established an independent Assessment of UK Forestry and Climate Change chaired by David Read, Vice President of the Royal Society.
- Forestry and Climate Change Guidelines are in preparation as part of the UK Forestry Standard revision process.
- A Forestry and Carbon Advisory Group has been established to support the development of a code of good practice for UK based forest carbon management projects.
- Forestry Commission Scotland has consulted on a Climate Change Action Plan, which will be published shortly.
- Forestry Commission Scotland is establishing a network of energy forestry research and demonstration sites.

Concern that woodland expansion should not be at the expense of good management of existing woodlands.

FCS response: We agree. Forestry Commission Scotland is committed to encouraging appropriate management of existing woodlands and believes these woodlands have the potential to deliver more as a result. This is reflected in spending allocations within the Scottish Rural Development Plan. We encourage the use of long-term forest plans as a basis for determining design and management appropriate to delivery objectives.

What sort of woodlands and what sort of land?

A variety of views on which land types are suitable for woodland expansion, but qualified support for the indicative land type balance proposed.

FCS response: Overall, responses tended to suggest the possibility of woodland creation on all land types, even through natural regeneration on deep peats. However identification of improved and upland grasslands as a key focal point was broadly supported. We will consider how best to co-ordinate the range of delivery mechanisms to appropriately target the woodland expansion effort.

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Concern to ensure native woodlands and natural regeneration play a full part in woodland expansion.

FCS response: We agree on the important roles of native woodlands in delivering a variety of benefits including ecosystem services and economic opportunities. We remain comfortable with the vision that around 35% of Scotland's woodlands should be composed of native species by the second half of the century, and remain committed to achieving the native woodland expansion targets set through the biodiversity action planning process.

We also recognise the advantages of woodland creation by natural regeneration in situations where it is forthcoming, and this is recognised in forestry grant schemes. However, we also recognise the limitations of natural regeneration where seed sources are lacking, ground conditions unsuitable or where a specific woodland design or composition is sought. We will, through the Scottish Government Land Use Project, be emphasising that the potential to increase woodland creation by natural regeneration can be a beneficial consequence of reduced livestock numbers in the uplands.

Emphasising the importance of quality as well as quantity – both in terms of timber and other aspects of delivery.

FCS response: We agree. The key is to be clear about the objectives of woodland creation and management, and to tailor design, silviculture and management accordingly. We think this is best done through the long-term forest plan process. We support the view that growing quality timber can be a valid objective for all types of woodland.

Wider land use issues

Strong view that an integrated landscape-scale approach across land uses is needed to secure maximum benefits.

FCS response: We agree and are working closely with colleagues in government and at a regional level to promote this. We are closely involved in several processes that are promoting a joined-up approach including:

- the SEARS (Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services) initiative;
- the Scottish Rural Development Plan;
- the recently launched Scottish Government Land Use Project;
- the Scottish Government's Climate Change Strategic Overview Project;
- the Scottish Government's Natural Flood Management Working Group;
- the Scottish Government's Model Ecosystem Framework Project; and
- the Scottish Biodiversity strategy and component ecosystem groups.

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Increasing connectivity across land use policy and delivery is a complex and evolving process with balances needing to be struck between creating interdependencies across policy areas and maintaining forward momentum. However, we are pleased with the direction of travel in Scotland and are enthusiastic participants in the process.

Highlighting the challenge and opportunities around land use change, particularly in relation to both agriculture and the urban fringe.

FCS response: We recognise these challenges and opportunities and the complex web of drivers and issues surrounding them. It is our intention that the Woodland Expansion Paper helps to inform the dialogue on land use and land use change, particularly in the context of the Scottish Government's Land Use Project. We recognise the benefits of aligning forestry and other land use incentives to provide a consistent focus on situations where land use change is appropriate. The challenges and opportunities around the urban fringe are distinct and unique. For this reason we have developed the Woods In and Around Towns Programme to bring together delivery mechanisms tailored for this challenge.

The economic, social and environmental benefits of bringing production, processing and consumption closer together need to be recognised, along with the costs of timber transport.

FCS response: Increasing emphasis is being placed on policies and preferences that point to localisation of land use and use of primary production, including increasing transport costs, rising interest in purchasing local produce, and growing concerns about food/waste/timber miles. Whilst competitive pressures within timber processing sector has inevitably led to increased concentration of processing capacity, the growing importance of wood fuel for local heat production does have the potential to move the balance back towards greater local use of wood products. We are also interested in the parallel process of developing the supply chain around major timber processing nodes to sustain balanced development of value-adding sectors and their raw material supply.

Much has been done to address the legacy of timber transport problems arising as existing forests come to maturity. An important part of the long-term strategy is to endeavour to ensure new forests are located to avoid future problems.

Concern that important habitats, species, landscapes and historic environments are safeguarded.

FCS response: All government supported woodland creation is subject to the appropriate environmental impact assessment and consultation processes, which help to identify and safeguard features of biodiversity or cultural importance. We are encouraging the forestry sector to increasingly recognise these values at a landscape as well as site level and are developing expertise, tools and guidance to support this. With partner bodies we are exploring how woodland can contribute to the development of Scotland's

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landscapes and the reconnection of Scottish people to their land, landscapes and woodland culture.

Emphasising the important role of habitat networks for both ecological and social benefits.

FCS response: We agree that the concept of networks is very helpful in planning woodland creation. In a rural context this is helping us understand and develop functional forest habitat networks at a range of scales, whilst also better understanding how to safeguard functional open habitat networks. In an urban and peri-urban context the development of thinking on greenspace networks brings together ecological principles with the opportunity to plan and use open space to deliver increased sustainability and quality of life in our towns and cities. We would like to see these principles increasingly adopted in indicative forestry strategies and structure plans.

Recognising the importance of deer management as part of a successful strategy.

FCS response: We agree and will ensure the Woodland Creation Paper reflects the points made.

Is the Scottish Forestry Strategy aspiration feasible?

A general view that the 25% aspiration is achievable, although a range of views on whether this should be a target.

FCS response: We note the variety of points made. The 25% figure remains a long-term aspiration rather than a target.

Any target setting should be based on an objective analysis of what is being delivered by the current forest resource, and what is sought of other land uses.

FCS response: We agree with the need for objective analysis as far as possible. We have published a body of research that explored feasibility of the 25% aspiration, and the Woodland Expansion Paper summarises what woodland expansion towards this level could deliver. Other analyses have been undertaken in relation to specific delivery outcomes like forestry for people and carbon sequestration.

However, like many aspects of land use, analysis will not bring us to a definitive answer, but serves to inform policy decisions. This is particularly the case as many woodland benefits are open-ended, have spatial and qualitative dimensions, or have policy-level uncertainties around the woodland needed to deliver specific outcomes. As an example, there is no simple answer to the question of how much woodland is needed to protect the red squirrel. Some woodland benefits such as carbon sequestration and water management could also be delivered in other ways, adding a further layer of complexity to the question of targets. Finally, screening what might be desirable against what might be possible given the resources and policy levers available offers yet another layer of complexity.

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We will continue to seek to improve our ability to bring this complex of factors together in an analytical approach. However, we are currently comfortable that around 10k ha/year is a realistic aspiration for rate of woodland creation for current circumstances and that around 4k ha/yr of this should be native woodland.

Need better aligned planning and consultation processes to make it easier to create woodlands where it makes most sense to do so.

FCS response: We see Indicative Forestry Strategies as an important regional tool for focusing the right types of woodlands towards the most appropriate places. However, we recognise that not all existing strategies do this effectively. We are working with planning colleagues in the Scottish Government to revise guidance to local authorities on preparation of Indicative forestry Strategies, and with local authorities themselves in situations where revision and integration into structure planning processes will greatly increase their value.

We have undertaken an internal review of EIA guidance, and are working with statutory consultees to ensure that planning and consultation processes for woodland creation are as focused, efficient and as 'enabling' as possible.

Delivery mechanisms

There should be a level playing field with agricultural support and incentives should be more generous.

FCS response: This is a complex area and we are working strategically with colleagues in the Scottish Government on how to best focus CAP and other rural development resources on achieving public benefits. Stakeholders are closely involved in the process through a number of stakeholder groups.

A wider range of delivery mechanisms should be explored.

FCS response: We agree. We are actively exploring some of the other delivery mechanisms raised, but welcome the new and innovative ideas that have been raised, which we will give full consideration. We agree that stimulating woodland expansion will require use of the full range of delivery mechanisms based on a targeted approach where the right mix of measures is provided to specific land owner groups based on an understanding of their motivations and priorities.

Concerns over the recently introduced Rural Development Contract scheme.

FCS response: We are working with the sector and SEARS partners to make the Rural Development Contract mechanism effective as a tool for supporting woodland expansion.

List of respondents

Aberdeenshire Council
Archaeology Scotland
British Trust for Ornithology
Central Scotland Forest Trust
Community Woodlands Association
Confederation of Forest Industries
Deer Commission for Scotland
Donald McPhilimy Associates Ltd
Eamonn Wall and Co
East-Ayrshire Council
Enterprise, Energy & Tourism Directorate, Scottish Government
The Forestry Policy Group
Grampian Regional Forestry Forum
Highlands & Islands Forestry Forum
Inverclyde Council
Kippendavie Development Co
M N Landscape Services
National Trust for Scotland
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland
Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland
Rural and Environment Research and Analytical Services Directorate, Scottish Government
Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate, Scottish Government
Scotland's Moorland Forum
Scottish Borders Council
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Scottish Forest Industries Advisory Board
Scottish Native Woodlands
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Rural Property & Business Association
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Scottish Woodlands
Stirling Council
Woodland Trust
Eight individuals