

# The Future of Forestry in Scotland

## Draft response to consultation by Scottish Government

<b>1.</b>	<b><u>New organisational arrangements in Scotland</u></b>
<b>Q 1.1</b>	<b>Our proposals are for a dedicated Forestry Division in the Scottish Government (SG) and Executive Agency to manage the NFE. Do you agree with this approach? Please explain your answer.</b>
	<p>Yes</p> <p>The proposed approach aligns with SG policy, and should improve accountability on forestry matters in Scotland. Retaining the split between the strategic and regulatory functions and the management functions, as in current governance, may ease implementation and avoid confusion. It is important to ensure that local agencies are able to input to national policy.</p>
<b>Q 1.2</b>	<b>In bringing the functions of FCS formally into the SG, how best can we ensure that the benefits of greater integration are delivered within the wider SG structure? What additional benefits should we be looking to achieve?</b>
	<p>There should be opportunities to improve the coordination and integration of forestry with other land uses, particularly agriculture, to obtain a more coherent balance of land use in line with SG Land Use Strategy. This may be reinforced through the review of the Scottish Forestry Strategy (A Land Use Strategy for Scotland 2016-2021, Policy 4)</p> <p>There is a risk of splitting responsibilities to different Directorates that may not always work closely together, with Agriculture, Food and Rural Communities being separate from Environment and Forestry.</p>
<b>Q 1.3</b>	<b>How should we ensure that professional skills and knowledge of forestry are maintained within the proposed new forestry structures?</b>
	<p>Forestry is a distinct profession and there may be some concerns that professional expertise might be diluted under the new arrangements. Since its inception almost 100 years ago, the Forestry Commission has led the establishment of forestry as a national industry and care needs to be taken to avoid losing the expertise that has built up.</p> <p>There should be continued joint working or job transfer / secondment opportunities within the forestry public agencies, and in and out of the private sector. This will sustain the broader professional ethic, with foresters continuing to move between the regulatory and managerial agencies from time to time as they do now. This will also help to retain broader perspectives amongst forestry professionals.</p>

<b>Q 1.4</b>	<b>What do you think a future land agency for Scotland could and should manage and how might that best be achieved?</b>
	<p>The land agency is to be charged with assuring the timber supply and therefore should retain most of the current productive national forest estate (NFE). There may also be opportunities to add further land areas into the national estate where there are clear economic, social and environmental reasons. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas in public ownership that are protected as national assets for recreation or conservation reasons and should be managed in the national interest.</li> <li>• The agency should have a remit which recognises the importance of community woodland in and around towns.</li> <li>• The land agency could be tasked with purchasing land parcels to split up into lease opportunities for start-up farmers.</li> </ul> <p>Forestry and Land Scotland should have a wide remit to support economic development and wider social and environmental outcomes. It should have strong links with other public bodies including VisitScotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Local Authorities and Community Planning Partnerships.</p> <p>The agency should have a role in supporting sustainable local development and local value added, including for example encouraging local timber processing facilities. As the felling rate increases over the next twenty years there is a significant risk of increasing adverse impacts of timber traffic on country roads as timber is transported to large, distant processing facilities.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<b><u>Effective cross-border arrangements</u></b>
<b>Q 2.1</b>	<b>Do you agree with the priorities for cross –border co-operation set out above, i.e. forestry research and science, plant health and common codes such as UK Forestry Standard? Y/N</b>
	Yes. It makes sense to retain a 'cross border' approach in these areas.
<b>Q 2.2</b>	<b>If no, what alternatives priorities would you prefer? Why?</b>
	Not applicable.
<b>Q 2.3</b>	<b>Do you have views on the means by which cross-border arrangements might be delivered effectively to reflect Scottish needs? E.g. memorandum of Understanding between countries? Scotland taking the lead on certain arrangements?</b>
	Cross-border working groups or Technical Advisory Groups should be set up, as appropriate, for different functions.

<b>3.</b>	<b><u>Legislation and Regulation</u></b>
<b>Q 3.1</b>	<b>Should the Scottish Ministers be placed under a duty to promote forestry? Y/N</b>
	Yes.
<b>Q 3.2</b>	<b>What specifically should be included in such a general duty?</b>
	<p>Forestry should be promoted as part of the wider Government commitment to sustainable land use. The general duty should encompass the need for sustainable management of the forest estate, but should not lose sight of the fact that forestry is one land use amongst many. In particular there are economic, social and environmental benefits to be gained from diverse uses of the land.</p> <p>When the Forestry Commission was set up in 1919, forest cover in the UK was a very small proportion of land area. A century later, forest cover is still recovering and remains a long way short of comparable European countries and is below the national target. The new body should continue to promote the interests of forestry as set out in the 1967 Act.</p> <p>In accordance with Scottish Planning Policy, Woodland Strategies will continue to guide woodland expansion and management at a regional level. These strategies remain part of Local Development Plans as adopted by Local Authorities. It is important that the role of the Local Authority as a statutory consultee should be recognised and protected.</p>
<b>Q 3.3</b>	<b>Recognising the need to balance economic, environmental and social benefits of forestry, what are your views of the principals set out in chapter 3?</b>
	<p>Forests can and should provide multiple benefits, and the existing obligation to achieve a reasonable balance between timber production and other benefits should be strengthened. A specific focus is required on creating and maintaining forests as set out in the UK Forestry Standard and as envisaged in the national and regional forestry strategies.</p> <p>Obligations in relation to felling and re-stocking must also be retained – again with more focus on the UK Forestry Standard to ensure that re-stocking sustains other forest related environmental benefits such as water quality, natural flood management, biodiversity.</p> <p>This approach is already reflected in the Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy update under the Technical Advice Note (2012) which incorporated many of the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group recommendations.</p>

	<p>It is crucial that a provision for flexibility to use NFE land for a variety of purposes should be incorporated within the legislation. The development and maintenance of outdoor recreation and commercial facilities on forestry land is an essential use of the forest estate, creating economic, environmental and social benefits for local communities in rural Scotland. Encouraging and developing public access for recreational activities should be a core activity of the Forestry and Land Scotland agency.</p> <p>The success of the 7stanes project in the South of Scotland demonstrates the benefits that can accrue to rural communities through attracting day visitors and holidaymakers. Open access for multiple uses is required, together with closed / controlled access for particular events. The new agency should work in partnership with other local stakeholders to develop events and activities, trails for walkers and cyclists, and a range of commercial opportunities within the NFE. Economic development opportunities within the forest are essential to creating and sustaining rural businesses, rural employment and rural communities.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<b><u>Assessing Impact</u></b>
<b>Q 4.1</b>	<b>Equality</b> <b>Are there any likely impacts the proposals contained in this consultation may have on particular groups of people, with reference to the 'protected characteristics' listed in chapter 4? Please be as specific as possible.</b>
	The proposed arrangements are unlikely to have any adverse effects on people with the 'protected characteristics' listed. As a general resource for public recreation, forests should have net beneficial effects on public health and wellbeing.
<b>Q 4.2</b>	<b>Business and Regulation</b> <b>Do you think the proposals contained in this consultation are likely to increase or reduce the costs and burdens placed on any sector? Please be as specific as possible.</b>
	There is no reason why the proposed changes should increase costs or burdens on other stakeholders.
<b>Q 4.3</b>	<b>Privacy</b> <b>Are there any likely impacts that the proposals contained in this consultation may have upon the privacy of individuals? Please be as specific as possible.</b>
	No impacts on privacy are envisaged.
<b>Q 4.4</b>	<b>Environmental</b> <b>Are there any likely impacts the proposals contained in this consultation may have upon the environment? Please be as specific as possible.</b>

	<p>The proposed changes are largely administrative. Although forestry can have significant environmental effects, the proposed new arrangements do not suggest any direct effects on the environment, assuming that all the existing environmental commitments contained in the current set up are effectively transferred over.</p>
<p><b>Q 4.5</b></p>	<p><b>Conclusion</b>  <b>Do you have any other comments that you would like to make, relevant to the subject of this consultation that you have not covered in your answers to other questions?</b></p>
	<p>In relation to future land acquisition by the new 'Forestry and Land Scotland' Agency, it will be important that a clear land acquisition policy is developed, with stakeholder input, to allow the new Agency to openly and transparently engage in future land purchases and transactions.</p>