The Royal Society of Edinburgh
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Consultation closing date
Monday 5 December 2022, 23:59

RSE inquiry into public support for tree planting and forestry

Respondent form

Respondents wishing to submit evidence should use this respondent form. It is essential that submissions are properly evidenced and concise, highlighting the key issues as they pertain to the consultation questions. Peer reviewed science is important, but other forms of evidence will be considered, including (but not limited to) internal reports, grey literature or photos (georeferenced and dated). Respondents should refrain from submitting full-scale reports in their entirety but include relevant conclusions in their written response with references to the full report.

We do not expect that all respondents will submit answers to all questions, and you may wish to confine your response to a single section. Each answer should be no longer than **500 words,** and some may be very short. Please send any additional evidence as an email attachment.

Please return your completed respondent form to tree@therse.org.uk by 23:59 on Monday, 5 December 2022.

Definitions

There are several different terms used for tree planting. Thus, within the context of this Inquiry and subsequent report, we will use ***Commercial Forestry*** to cover tree planting that is wholly or in part intended for harvesting (some refer to this as productive forestry), and ***Woodland*** to cover tree planting that is intended to remain as such for the long term. For consistency, we should be grateful if you would retain this same terminology in your submission.

Personal details:

Are you responding on behalf of:

☒ An individual

☒ An organisation

Full name or organisation's name:

Sarah Reece for Sustainable West Linton and District (SWLD)

Email address:

Phone number:

Address:

I consent to my or my organisation's response being published or referenced:

☒ Yes

☐ Yes, with no direct attribution (i.e. anonymously)

☐ No

Please note the RSE will handle and store your personal information in accordance with our organisational Privacy Policy:
https://rse.org.uk/about-us/our-policies-and-corporate-information/privacy-policy/

Evidence request

We consider that the desired public benefits from tree planting comprise timber production, carbon sequestration, biodiversity enhancement, recreation, water management and reduction in air pollution, together with economic and social community benefits.

1. If you consider there to be other benefits, please provide evidence for them. [500 words]

Response: health & wellbeing, education

We seek to establish the extent to which current practices are delivering these benefits, how far they represent good public value in the short and long term, and what more, if anything, could be done to improve public benefits in tackling the climate-nature crisis and the economic and social well-being of resident communities by tree planting, woodland and commercial forest management.

Carbon sequestration

2. Scottish Government has set targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of 75% by 2030 and 100% by 2045 and placed commitments for woodland and commercial forestry expansion in this context. What evidence is there that current practices will ensure that all newly planted woodland will be a net sink over this period, taking account of both above- and below-ground carbon? What impact will the time lag for carbon capture of new plantings and the harvesting of previously planted commercial forestry have on meeting the targets? [500 words]

Response: not my area of expertise

3. Are the current carbon sequestration requirements specified by the Woodland Carbon Code and UK Forestry Standard delivering their objectives?[1] [500 words]

Response: not my area of expertise

4. Are these requirements consistently applied? [500 words]

Response: not my area of expertise

5. Is independent inspection to verify initial and continuing fulfilment of the Code and Standard satisfactory? [500 words]

Response: not my area of expertise

6. Do you have evidence that offsetting payments are delivering carbon capture and other benefits in practice? [500 words]

Response: not my area of expertise

Biodiversity and environmental benefits

7. Do you have evidence on the role tree species choice and composition have in influencing biodiversity, timber production, flood management, and other outcomes? Do the species of trees and the mix of species help, hinder or change the balance of the benefits being sought? [500 words]

Response: not as yet but I am coordinating a long term soil microbe diversity project that will monitor microbial community changes as a long term sheep grazing area transitions to a native community woodland

8. Do you have evidence that planted woodland and commercial forestry impedes the balance between itself and the biodiversity value of other landscapes, habitats or other biodiversity interests? [500 words]

Response: not yet – see above

9. Do you have evidence that woodland and commercial forest design and creation practices support or hinder biodiversity benefits? [500 words]

Response: not yet – see above

[1] We recognise that the Woodland Forestry Standard is currently under revision, with an updated version due to be introduced by the end of 2022/2023. Practice indicates the existing Standard (published in 2017) should be followed until that time.

10. To what extent are Environmental Impact Assessments[2] carried out prior to design and planting? [500 words]

Response: not my area of expertise

11. Do you have evidence that woodland and commercial forestry management practices support or hinder biodiversity? [500 words]

Response: not my area of expertise

12. Are the sources of seed and new trees sufficient to meet national tree planting targets? [500 words]

Response: not my area of expertise but for our community woodland (5k trees) we are collecting local tree seed as a community and raising saplings in community tree nurseries prior to planning out

13. Do you have evidence that large-scale planting on a regional level leads to negative impacts on biodiversity? [500 words]

Response: no

14. Do you have evidence of any practices, good or bad, that you wish to highlight? [500 words]

Response: no but there is a lot of debate on planting practices and deer control and it would be good to have resolution on these

Community benefits:

15. Are there potential improvements that could be made to regulations and/or practice that could improve the recreational, employment or other community benefits of tree planting or commercial forestry schemes? [500 words]

Response: get communities more involved – and so invested in – developing their woodlands to prevent vandalism issues

16. Are local communities sufficiently involved in the development of tree planting or commercial forestry schemes? [500 words]

Response: community involvement in woodlands is crucial (above) and yet takes great imagination, initiative, and effort, and there are no clear mechanism to support it, so it is rarely done

17. If not, what are the barriers and how might they be overcome; if they are, what works well? [500 words]

Response: support packages and funding. Eg resources to work with schools and community groups get involved for health and well being benefits and also use as an educational resource

18. Do you have evidence of tree planting leading to quantifiable economic and social benefits, short and long term, for communities local to the planting? [500 words]

Response: not yet. Resources such as surveys that communities can deploy and feed data into national analyses would be helpful

[2] An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIAs) is intended to identify and mitigate the potential impacts of a proposed development and is required for planning consent. Within the context of forestry, EIAs can apply to afforestation, deforestation, forest roads and forestry quarries. More information on forestry EIAs can be found here: https://forestry.govscot/support-regulations/environmental-impact-assessment

19. Do woodland and commercial forestry planting result in any disadvantages to communities local to the planting? [500 words]

Response: no

20. To what extent does current financial support for tree planting enable planting in urban areas, including in streets/roadsides and other urban settings? [500 words]

Response: supports purchase of saplings but other funds need to be found for equipment and organising events (eg public liability insurance) for communities. Person power and expertise not provided by current support

21. Does Scotland have sufficiently skilled people to deliver/continue to deliver the desired benefits from woodland and commercial forestry? If not, what changes are needed? [500 words]

Response: probably but they are not accessible

22. Do you have evidence of any conflicts between public financial support for tree planting and other land uses? [500 words]

Response: no

23. Are there evidenced wider societal community benefits that arise from woodland and commercial forestry creation? If there are, should these benefits be formally required or financially supported? [500 words]

Response: financially supported – yes. Support for educational resources and health and recreation / well being activities should be supported. Woodland funding should cover broader aspects than just provision of saplings

Finance

24. Do you have evidence that the following forms of public financial support for tree planting provide good value for money:

    I. Grants for tree planting? [500 words]
    II. Carbon offset and investment payments by government, charities or the private sector? [500 words]
    III. Tax allowances for land used for tree planting and commercial forests? [500 words]
    IV. Farm payments applicable to land planted with woodland or commercial forest, e.g. Basic Payment Scheme? [500 words]

Response: In the last 6 months I have led some of the subprojects involved in SWLD's development of a community woodland. Evidence for (i): with <5k in grant funding I/we have developed an engagement program with the community local to the woodland (seed collection) and the local primary school for outdoor education, tree nurseries at the school and local residential centre for adults with learning difficulties, and collaborations with the UoE to use the site for training undergraduates in biodiversity surveys and a long term soil microbe monitoring project.

25. Do you have evidence that any of these payments have unintended results? [500 words]

Response: no

26. Do you have evidence that the interaction of these payments has any public benefits or disbenefits? [500 words]

Response: knowledge and enthusiasm of primary school children for trees , and feelings of ownership and investment in the woodland

27. Do you have evidence that the structure of payments or allowances supports or hinders the public benefits? [500 words]

Response: more flexibility to use funding in a responsive manner would help

28. Do you have evidence of any impact on land values as a result of payments/allowances? [500 words]

Response: no

29. Are the anticipated changes in farming support likely to have any impact upon woodland or commercial forestry creation?[3] [500 words]

Response: not my area of expertise

This is a complex field and the questions above are not prescriptive. We should be pleased to learn of any other benefits, or disbenefits, you consider are brought about by public financial support for tree planting and commercial forestry in Scotland and if you consider that public financial support could be redesigned to provide greater benefits.

Thank you for taking the time to work through these questions.

[3] It is relevant to mention that Scottish Government is currently consulting on proposals for a new Agriculture Bill which will have implications for farm payments in practice. More information on the Agriculture Bill can be found here: https://www.gov.scot/publications/delivering-vision-scottish-agriculture-proposals-new-agriculture-bill/