**CIfA response to the Future of Forestry in Scotland Consultation**

**Response submitted by online form**

**1. Our proposals are for a dedicated Forestry Division in the Scottish Government (SG) and an Executive Agency to manage the NFE. Do you agree with this approach?**

Yes.

**Explain:**

CIfA broadly welcomes the aim to complete the devolution of Forestry in Scotland. To this end, the creation of a new Division within Scottish Government and a new Executive Agency to manage the National Forest Estate is a sensible one.

Our main interest in supporting this move, however, is to help encourage a culture change in forestry in Scotland, such that best practice in terms of integrated land management of Scottish forests can be effectively pursued. This will enable the wide spectrum of ways in which forests are important to the nation (as assets of cultural and natural, as well as economic significance) to be recognised, and the impact of forestry management on biodiversity, climate change, the historic environment, leisure, tourism, and community well-being can be placed at the centre of approaches to regulation.

With this aim in mind, we stress that any new bodies should be built upon principle the of joined-up working across Scottish Government and with other Agencies (for example, Historic Environment Scotland), local government, and the wider sectors of interest, in order to enable benefits to be delivered across the whole spectrum of areas upon which forestry can impact.

Practical benefits of the proposed changes also include more efficient regulatory processes and better integrated management of grants – delivered at the same level as grants in other complementary sectors.

**2. 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?**

**Answer:**

The proposals are potentially beneficial in that they present an opportunity to instil a clearer role for Scottish Ministers to drive forward the Land Use Strategy and enable the principles of forest management following the Scottish Government Ecosystem Approach to land management. This should be undertaken towards the ultimate aim of achieving sustainable social, environmental, and economic benefits for the people of Scotland, not driven solely by the demands of forestry and timber industries. In addition, collaboration with other relevant sectors, including the historic environment sector should be a priority, with potential to deliver joint strategies under these sectors’ parallel strategies – for example, Scotland’s Historic Environment Strategy ‘Our Place in Time’, Scotland’s Archaeology Strategy, and the 2020 Biodiversity strategy.

**What additional benefits should we be looking to achieve?**

It is extremely promising that the National Forest Estate is so clearly defined as an asset for the nation. We would welcome this being clearly articulated as the central principle of the new Directorate, potentially with a revised target to reflect this within Scotland’s National Performance Framework. In this regard, as stated above, the key additional benefit that these proposals should be seeking to achieve should be related to maximising the routes to the creation of public benefits from this national resource. This will include projects to reveal the historic, cultural and natural significance of assets and promote the benefits of health, wellbeing, and environmental responsibility.

**3. How should we ensure that professional skills and knowledge of forestry are maintained within the proposed new forestry structures?**

In order to facilitate positive joined-up approaches to this work we would encourage the use of developmental secondments between Scottish Government environment agencies and the proposed new agency to enhance understanding and provide formal CPD opportunities for professionals involved with relevant contributing industries. Opportunities for local government officers would also be extremely useful to ensure that systems of land management undertaken at different levels are mutually understood.

We fully support the current provision of specialist historic environment advice within FCS and the important role of the Cultural Heritage Advisor, Archaeologist, and Environment Support Manager and would stress that any new structure should protect this expertise in-house as it provides a vital link between sectors and organisations and is far more effective than out-sourcing in terms of both internal and external influence.

An example of the reverse can be seen in the somewhat parallel case of National Resources Wales where there is virtually no in-house historic environment expertise, despite such expertise being previously in place with the Countryside Council for Wales and Forestry Commission Wales (both organisations which were merged into the new NRW). Current systems have categorically failed to produce benefits. The use of Memorandums of Understanding between organisations is positive, however, without in-house experts to drive collaboration these have proved completely ineffective and led to a breakdown in effective relations between different sectors, Government bodies and agencies, and therefore a lack of joined-up benefit.

**4. What do you think a future land agency for Scotland could and should manage and how might that best be achieved?**

As stated above, any future agency should have a central remit to enable and lead integrated land management with responsibilities for economic forestry activities, conservation, and environmental regulation, and acting as a lead partner in areas of cross-over – for example, the historic environment.

This approach would imply an emphasis on diversifying incomes from the National Forest Estate to decrease the dependence upon timber sales – as fluctuations in this market currently have the potential to have serious knock-on effects on wider cultural and environmental programmes.

In terms of what this agency could manage, in addition to timber production on the NFE, the agency should have responsibilities for deer management, climate change mitigation (e.g. carbon sequestration) and conservation programmes, potentially in collaboration with a range of partners, and with a range of benefits to natural and cultural heritage – both on a small scale (e.g. AOC Archaeology and Forestry Commission Scotland’s Dun Deardail hill fort excavations – part of the Nevis Landscape Partnership) and large scale (e.g. work to restore Caledonian pine forest in Glen Affric). These activities should be undertaken with the aim of ensuring the agency seeks to maximise the natural capital held within our native woodlands. There are many examples which demonstrate the success of this type of integrated approach to land management, for example, the Cunnigar Loop initiative, and Peatland Action Fund.

**Section 2: Effective Cross-border relationships**

**5. 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?**

Yes.

**6. If no to question 5, what alternative priorities would you prefer? Why?**

N/A

**7. Do you have views on the means by which cross-border arrangements might be delivered effectively to reflect Scottish needs?**

**For example: Memorandum of Understanding between countries? Scotland taking the lead on certain arrangements?**

No comment.

**Section 3: Legislation and regulation**

**8. Should the Scottish Ministers be placed under a duty to promote forestry?**

Yes. This will enable a direct democratic responsibility to ensure that the Scotland’s forests are treated, foremost, as a public asset with the potential to create public benefits in terms of enjoyment, education, heritage, community involvement, and well-being.

**9. What specifically should be included in such a general duty?**

The duty should require Ministers to;

* Recognise and seek approaches to forestry which respect the wide importance of forest assets to the people of Scotland and seek benefits in terms of environmental, cultural, and economic outcomes
* Uphold principles of integrated land management, as set out in the Scottish Government Ecosystem Approach, which maximises benefits from natural and historic assets
* Ensure effective communication with and between Government agencies (e.g. Historic Environment Scotland), businesses, and landowners (e.g. the National Trust for Scotland) to ensure that best practice is observed across the sector.
* Implement the Land Use Strategy
* Promote the sustainable management of Scotland’s forests
* Promote practices which offset or mitigate the effects of climate change
* Promote an approach to timber production which balances economic benefits with social, cultural, and environmental benefits.

**10. Recognising the need to balance economic, environmental and social benefits of forestry, what are your views of the principles set out in chapter 3?**

The principles which govern the appropriateness of forestry activities, including processes associated with timber production and afforestation for the purposes of climate change mitigation, have changed markedly since the 1967 Forestry Act. Current research and guidance reflects this (e.g. The Right Tree in the Right Place) and accounts for such environmental factors as protection for sensitive habitats and landscape features (e.g. heathland) and for buried archaeology and other historic assets. Clearly these environmental principles are key to achieving a positive strategy for the economic exploitation of assets. Other considerations include public access and use of land, including under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act, should be taken into account when identifying areas for afforestation or which may be appropriate for economic activities.

We particularly commend the evidence of the importance of specialist advice and the benefits of programmes of archaeological recording and historic environment conservation management as set out in the ‘Action for the Environment on Scotland’s National Forest Estate’.

**Section 4: Assessing impact**

**11. 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.**

We do not identify any such issues.

**12. Do you think that 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.**

These proposals should not impact the costs or burdens on any business or sector beyond those which are necessary to ensure sustainability.

**13. 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.**

We do not identify any such issues.

**14. Are there any likely impacts that the proposals contained in this consultation may have upon the environment? Please be as specific as possible**

As stated, it is important that a true culture change is sought which genuinely puts environmental factors, such as impact on natural and historic landscapes, including buried archaeology and wildlife, at the centre of an approach to forestry. For these reasons there are potentials for harm if a correct balance is not struck by Scottish Ministers or any Executive Agency. However, we are encouraged by the emphasis placed on these protections in the consultation.

**Section 5: Any other comments**

**15. 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?**

We understand that the historic environment is not a core concern in this consultation – indeed, it is not directly mentioned within the text of the consultation. However, forestry is an industry which has potential to impact historic assets and therefore has obligations to understand and manage that impact. The sector is similarly impacted by agriculture, and other types of land management. We therefore have a direct interest in the operation of integrated land management policy. Furthermore, the archaeological and wider cultural value of forests is of immense value in the production of public benefits with many opportunities for benefit drawing on both natural and cultural resources. It is vital that joined-up approaches to formulating policies and seeking benefits are in place and that synergies are observed. We see these proposals as a positive way forward in this regard.

About CIfA:

CIfA is the leading professional body representing archaeologists working in the UK and overseas. CIfA promotes high professional standards and strong ethics in archaeological practice, to maximise the benefits that archaeologists bring to society, and provides a self-regulatory quality assurance framework for the sector and those it serves.

CIfA has over 3,200 members and nearly 80 registered practices across the United Kingdom. Its members work in all branches of the discipline: heritage management, planning advice, excavation, finds and environmental study, buildings recording, underwater and aerial archaeology, museums, conservation, survey, research and development, teaching and liaison with the community, industry and the commercial and financial sectors.

CIfA’s Scottish Group has over 250 members practising in the public, private and voluntary sectors in Scotland. Furthermore, CIfA is a member of the Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS), a network organisation that brings together non-governmental organisations and professional bodies that work with Scotland's built environment.