Written submission from DWP Harvesting

DWP Harvesting Limited is Scotland’s independent timber harvesting and marketing co-operative and is based at Aboyne in Aberdeenshire. Our Members own anything from an individual small wood to extensive forests and manage these under a wide range of economic, ecological and social objectives that include timber production, deer management, provision of visitor facilities, habitat and species conservation and native pinewood management. Wood fibre is harvested from this forest resource – and by no means would this be appropriate for the whole of the land under trees – and the timber and wood fuel produced is supplied to the sawmilling, chipwood, pulp and paper and renewable energy sectors as a contribution to the daily needs of each and every one of us for wood fibre. In parallel with this we support our Members’ conservation objectives through clearance of non-native trees and removing redundant deer fences from forests under native woodland management.

Scottish Land Commission

We write in support of Confor’s comments not least the key message that it is vital that the Scottish Land Commission has a proper depth of understanding of and expertise in the forestry sector and the wood processing supply chain; and of the impressive range of benefits to our society that our forests provide. As a Norwegian who came on a visit to us a few years said, “Forestry is the answer! What is the question?”

Forests cover 18 per cent of all Scottish land and nearly 30 per cent of all actively managed land in Scotland. Forests enhance landscapes, encourage biodiversity, and play a significant part in delivering ecosystem services and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Forestry, including woodworking and timber, presents an opportunity to create more jobs, deliver investment and drive economic growth to enrich rural communities at the same time as providing very significant environmental and social benefits.

A 2006 study by the Centre for Economic and Business Research showed that the forestry and wood processing sector contributed around £1 billion annually to Scotland’s economy, employing 40,000 people directly and indirectly. Confor has calculated that around £50m of new investment is being put into Scottish forestry and wood-using businesses every year.

Forestry is a long-term activity whatever the objectives and has to survive the vagaries of many Parliamentary Elections. Stability is what is called for alongwith a clear grasp of the long-term nature of forestry as a land use and industry. Create uncertainty – even unintentionally – and management and investment decisions will be postponed or put off and that does not create jobs – in timber harvesting, haulage, wood processing, distribution, habitat improvement, conservation, wildlife management, recreational management and on.

Forestry is a vitally important sector for Scotland’s long-term environmental, economic and social health. We agree with Confor that it is essential to the success of the new Scottish Land Commission that its membership includes individuals with current experience of the forestry sector and wood supply chains.
Part 4 - Engaging communities in decisions relating to land

From the work that we do on behalf of our Members planning timber and supervising harvesting operations we can confirm that there exists a high level of public consultation in the forestry sector at present. In short we try to keep everyone happy and you do not need us to tell you how hard that can be! So please ensure there is no overlap or replacement of existing forestry regulation and practice in terms of community engagement with that proposed in the draft Bill.

Sustainable development

Forest management in Scotland is sustainable development – it is highly regulated and complies with the UK Forestry Standard. It is very long term in nature, both from the point of view of initial investment and through the lifetime of the management of the woodland and its harvest crop. Different owners’ legitimate management objectives during that time must be continue to be respected.

Sporting Rates

One of the most difficult aspects of forest management to achieve on the ground is effective deer control that prevents browsing of conifers and broadleaves. Anything that would hinder this essential work – often overlooked or taken for granted – will be counter-productive. We support Confor’s concerns that ending the non-domestic rates exemption for shootings and deer forests may have an adverse impact on the sustainable management of woodlands in Scotland.

We are grateful to you for this opportunity to comment. If anything is unclear or if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.