RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE
FORESTRY AND LAND MANAGEMENT (SCOTLAND) BILL
SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS 1

As forestry management and practice in the United Kingdom is common to all part of the nations I believe it is relevant to tax payers in England have an opportunity to respond to this call for information given its impact on the wider forestry sector in the United Kingdom. It is also relevant due to the funds provided by England tax payers via the Barnett Formula to Scotland.

Please see below the following:

1. There is a clear majority of those who responded in the consultation of the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill who do not support the new structures proposed in the Bill. As in 2010 in England, tax payers are happy with the Forestry Commission and in particular trust its brand and independence from government.

2. The supporting information does not made clear and reasonable argument why there is a need to break up Forestry Commission in Scotland (FCiS) formed from Forestry Commission Scotland and Forest Enterprise Scotland. The Scottish Government has not provided a reasonable explanation or evidence why the organisation has not been found unfit for propose. Rather FCiS, as part of the Forestry Commission Great Britain family, has been a critical part of developing and growing a £1B industry in Scotland since 1919. A further 100 years will only see further benefits to the UK and Scotland.

3. The political independence of FCS is a critical part of its success and ensuring a strong forestry voice to both Scottish and UK governments. Moving forestry further within government and in particular giving direct control to Scottish Ministers will more than likely lead to a dilution of the voice, expertise and potential of forestry.

Please note the negative outcomes experienced when the same approach was used in The Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand and most recently Wales. The failure of forestry's voice in Natural Resources Wales is a good case study why forestry needs a strong, independent and clear mission separate from other environmental sectors and direct rule by politicians. Only the Forestry Commission with its Forestry Act can deliver this.

I note ironically those organisations supporting the break up of FCiS are also leading criticism of the failures in NRW.

4. I am not aware that there has been a cost benefit analysis of the devolution and increasing devolution of forestry in Great Britain, especially relevant to the present financial downturn.

I am concerned FCSI, FC England and NRW (ex FC Wales) have had to set up duplicate services (Human Resources, Communications, Health and Safety, Training and other supporting services) because of devolution, causing unnecessary change
and uncertainty. I am concerned this has increased costs to the tax payer with no significant benefit. It would be useful as a tax payer to understand what the cost and benefits of this process will generate. I would be grateful if Scottish ministers would analysis this in partnership with UK Government and Welsh Administration.

I am concerned this also risks joint working on critical issues such as forestry development, forestry skills, forestry contractors, pest and diseases management whilst creating more barriers, boundaries and red tape. This concern extends to possible increased politicisation of forestry if placed within Scottish Government, and will limit forestry’s long term vision, which is critical for practice and management, aligning it to short term political needs.

I am concerned it will further increase barriers to forestry where nationally borders being largely irrelevant to forestry practice and management, growing future success and possible threats to the industry (Pest and Diseases, skills, jobs, forestry contractors, timber markets etc.).

5. I am concerned it would seem that by creating a separate forestry and land management organisation the Scottish Government is:

a. Preparing or creating an opportunities to privatise the National Forest Estate.

b. will damage the critical economic mass of forestry need to supports its excellent delivery of social, environmental, climate change and economic outputs saddling it with non-cost effective land use’s to forestry that could adversely affect the economic culture that underpins NFE success.

6. I am concerned that by separating Forest Enterprise Scotland and Forestry Commission Scotland it will fundamentally damage experience, skills, innovation and knowledge of forestry to both Scottish Government and UK Government. FCS, FCE, FC Wales and FCGB had developed a globally envied body of professionalism which I am concerned is threatened by this short term political ambition.