I am writing to submit views on the above proposed legislation in a personal capacity. I am a professional forester, forestry researcher and author with some twenty years’ experience. Much of my work has been undertaken within Scotland, but I also have conducted work throughout Great Britain and a smaller amount in Ireland and Europe.

I recommend that your Committee should reject the current proposed legislation in favour of retention and reinforcement of the role of the GB Forestry Commission, which has served the forestry sector in Scotland well since its inception in 1919. Only such changes to Westminster forestry legislation as are essential to accommodate the (hopefully temporary) withdrawal of Wales from the Forestry Commission should be made. I believe such a course would have the following benefits over that proposed:

- protection of the internationally-recognised status of the Forestry Commission as the body responsible for substantial recovery in GB forest area since 1919.

- a more flexible, robust and nationally cohesive basis from which to meet the key challenges for the British-wide forestry sector likely to arise from Brexit.

- proper recognition of the wider British national interests in the forest resources created within Scotland since 1919, in large measure with GB taxpayer funds.

- retention of independent, technically-focussed stewardship of the longer-term forestry interest, counter-balancing shorter-term ministerial/ political factors, with the capacity to provide a public critique of policy where this is needed.

- retention of technical staff “critical mass” in forestry at the wider British level, especially in terms of areas such as research, inventory and silviculture, with secure forestry “esprit de corps” and opportunities for GB-wide secondment.

- continued integration of promotion and regulation of private-sector forestry and management of public-sector forestry within a single administrative body with opportunities for cross-fertilisation of expertise dealing with shared issues.

- protection against possible dilution of forestry focus by excessive emphases on non-forestry aspects of policy, including renewable energy and land reform.
I hope that the arguments that I have set out will prove valuable in your deliberations.

Dr. Scott McG. Wilson MICFor
July 2017