

# FLS Corporate Plan Consultation - Questions

## Question 1: About FLS

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know
To what extent do you agree that the Corporate Plan provides a good overview of the organisation and structure of Forestry and Land Scotland?	1	2	3	4	5
<p>The Corporate Plan gives a reasonable overview of FLS structure for those within the sector but will be opaque for those unfamiliar with the jargon of Government agencies: who plants the trees and cuts them down, who fixes the paths or runs FLS's twitter account?</p> <p>It would be helpful to give a broad approximation of the number of staff engaged in each of the four functions.</p> <p>More broadly, it might be useful if the document gave some background information on the organisation and how it operates. How many people work for FLS? How much land / woodland do you manage? What proportion of planting, or felling work is done in-house, and what proportion by contractors? And do you expect any of these headline numbers to change over the period of the plan?</p> <p>In the absence of any practical information the draft plan often reads like management-speak disconnected from reality.</p>					

## Question 2: Outcome 1- Supporting a sustainable economy

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know
To what extent do you agree with Outcome 1 By 2025: FLS supports a sustainable economy by managing the national forests and land in a way that encourages sustainable business growth, development opportunities, jobs and investments?	1	2	3	4	5

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know
To what extent do you agree the actions for delivery will be sufficient to deliver Outcome 1?	1	2	3	4	5
<p>We agree with outcome 1.</p> <p>We do not agree that the actions for delivery will be sufficient to deliver Outcome 1.</p> <p>We note that the claim that “Forestry and timber processing ... provides more than 30,000 jobs across the wood production, forest management, haulage and processing Sectors” is blatantly untrue. The Economic Contribution of Forestry report estimated that 25,000 jobs could be attributed to forestry, but only 12,000 of these were through direct employment in the industry, with 6,000 in tourism and a further 7,000 in other industries derived from indirect multipliers.</p> <p>The plan states that “over one third of our production is sold on the open market”. The continuing prevalence of long term timber contracts may provide a helpful subsidy for timber processors but does not represent good value for public assets. It also ties FLS to supporting an increasingly automated and monopolistic processing sector, increasing emissions from timber transport but reducing employment.</p> <p>There should be a greater emphasis on support for smaller-scale, local timber businesses, which typically deliver greater economic benefit in relation the amounts of timber they use, particularly in rural communities, whilst local processing reduces timber miles.</p> <p>We note that one of the listed actions is “Looking to reduce restocking costs as we implement the Restocking Strategy”. Whilst cost-management is clearly important, the main priorities for a restocking strategy should be reducing the 5-year backlog of restocking work and creating a high-quality and diverse forest resource.</p>					

### Question 3: Outcome 2-Looking after Scotland’s national forests and land

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know
To what extent do you agree with Outcome 2 By 2025: Scotland’s national forests and land are looked after, resilient to climate change and their biodiversity is protected and enhanced?	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you agree the actions for delivery will be sufficient to deliver Outcome 2?	1	2	3	4	5

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know
<p>We agree with outcome 2.</p> <p>We do not agree that the actions for delivery will be sufficient to deliver Outcome 2.</p> <p>A key concern for the resilience and biodiversity value of Scotland's forests is the preponderance of Sitka spruce. FR Forest Statistics publications suggest Sitka comprise 56% of the stocked area, although these figures are very out of date, and given the plant health issues affecting larch and pines it seems likely that this will have increased in recent years, not least if cost-cutting is the major priority for restocking (as noted above).</p> <p>Whilst we understand the economic rationale for the focus on Sitka, diversification of the timber resource should be a key priority and focus for action.</p> <p>We note that "Woodland creation and restocking" is identified as a priority, "Helping the Scottish Government to meet forest and woodland creation targets" is listed as an action and that it is claimed that "we are... leading the way in creating new woodlands".</p> <p>FLS has indeed created some new woodland in recent years, but the areas involved are small compared to the ongoing loss of woodland cover on the National Forest Estate, which occurs both through forest redesign (e.g. to meet UKFS requirements) and deforestation: the permanent removal of woodland cover.</p> <p>Whilst in some cases there are overriding environmental reasons for deforestation these should be more thoroughly assessed, and balanced with compensatory planting. Any "new" woodland creation by FLS should be seen in this light, with the stated priority being to reduce the net loss of woodland cover on the public estate.</p>					

#### Question 4: Outcome 3- National forests and land for visitors and communities

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know
To what extent do you agree with Outcome 3 By 2025: Everyone can visit and enjoy Scotland's national forests and land to connect with nature, have fun, benefit their health and wellbeing and have the opportunity to engage in our community decision making?	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you agree the actions for delivery will be sufficient to deliver Outcome 3?	1	2	3	4	5

We agree with outcome 3.

We do not agree that the actions for delivery will be sufficient to deliver Outcome 3.

We welcome the commitment to develop and implement a new Communities Strategy, and to develop a strategic approach to wider participation in the management of the national forests and land. We trust that these developments will involve consultation with appropriate external stakeholders.

FLS (and FES) are to be commended for many aspects of the Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) (and its predecessor the National Forest Land Scheme), however the scheme is onerous and bureaucratic, and projects are often subject to unacceptable delays post-approval.

Whilst the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 established the Asset Transfer provisions which underpin CATS, the Act does not require public authorities to insist that communities follow the formal process in every case. Where proposed requests are small scale and uncontroversial it should be possible to proceed by negotiation to expedite more rapid transfers.

Scotland's Forestry Strategy identifies "Providing more opportunities for urban and rural communities to \*influence\* (our emphasis) the decisions affecting their local forests and woodlands, including through increased community ownership" as a key priority. We note the proposed action "Engaging with communities to identify benefits and in decision making relating to the management of the national forests and land", although it unclear what this actually means or how much influence communities will gain.

The choice presented to communities is often framed as "buy the land via CATS or comment on our Land Management Plan", without any intermediate options for involvement (and our experience of engaging with Land Management Plan Consultations is that they are largely a box-ticking exercise, with poor quality information provided and very little notice taken of the views of the public). FLS should be more open to e.g. developing management agreements with local communities, and be clearer as to the broad range of opportunities for influence are available.

Similarly, we note the action "Empower communities to make innovative use of the national forests and land including for social and economic recovery and to explore potential for climate change adaptation activities." Again, this appears a positive development but it is unclear how this empowerment will take place, as local groups report that engagement with FLS and use of forests for a range of activities has become increasingly problematic and restricted.

The Scottish Government has been supportive of the development of woodland crofts as a means to deliver a range of policy objectives, and FLS, as an existing crofting landlord, should develop proposals for the creation of woodland crofts on national forest estate land.

The internal reorganisation into 5 regions has increased the remoteness of staff from forests and users: the lack of contact information for local managers on the FLS website does not aid the perception of FLS as an organisation responsive to its visitors.

### Question 5: Outcome 4- A supportive, safe and inclusive organisation

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know
To what extent do you agree with Outcome 4 By 2025: FLS is a supportive, safe and inclusive organisation that provides exciting careers, professional development and strives to be an employer of choice?	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you agree the actions for delivery will be sufficient to deliver Outcome 4?	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not answered</i>					

### Question 6: Outcome 5- A high performing organisation

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know
To what extent do you agree with Outcome 5 By 2025: FLS is recognised as a high performing, efficient and effective, financially sustainable organisation that continues to transform and adapt?	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you agree the actions for delivery will be sufficient to deliver Outcome 5?	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not answered</i>					

### Question 7- Overview of the outcomes

	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know
To what extent do you agree the Corporate Plan provides a sufficient strategic overview of the types of work we will deliver over the next three years?	1	2	3	4	5
Please use this space to comment further on the coverage of the outcomes.					
The Corporate Plan give a clear impression of the management-speak likely to be employed over the next three years in the promotion of FLS but says very little about the actual work to be done.					

### Q8a: Diversity and inclusion

Are there any key issues or opportunities we should consider to make sure that the Corporate Plan works for different equality groups or for people from different socio-economic backgrounds?

*Not answered*

### Q8b: Diversity and inclusion

	Yes	No	Not sure
Do you think any of the outcomes or actions in the Corporate Plan will impact differently on people who share protected characteristics? (for example, in relation to their age, disability, gender, pregnancy/maternity, marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief).	1	2	3
If you answered 'yes', please use this space to comment further on how the outcomes or actions in the Corporate Plan will impact differently on people who share protected characteristics.			
<i>Not answered</i>			

## Q9: Final comments

Please use this space to provide any other comments you think are relevant to the Corporate Plan.

Section 3.3 “Our Contribution to the Delivery of other National Policies and Strategies” should include references to the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement and the Scottish Government’s Just Transition agenda.