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16 August 2007

Dear Mr. Russell,

### Launch of the Woodland Creation Grant in August 2007

Scottish Environment LINK was surprised by the recent launch of the Woodland Creation Grants for 2007-2008 application year.

Having read through the *Support for Woodland Creation in the 2007/08 Planting Season* document there are a number of issues that give us some concern and where we seek clarification:

1. Although the scheme can award grants for broadleaved and native woodland, it seems that commercial conifers are likely to form the larger percentage of grants. In our view the climate change response should be to promote forest establishment that delivers biodiversity and landscape objectives as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helps native woodlands adapt to the changing climate through expanding this habitat.
2. What prioritisation of selection criteria will there be? What percentage of the grants will be allocated to what type of planting? I.e. for 'sequestration', habitat or biomass.
3. Climate change:
  - We want to see the adaptation aspects of the Scottish Forestry Strategy addressed in the public funding of woodland creation and management to help conserve biodiversity. We do not feel this grant scheme address this at all.
  - We also want to see support for forestry that continues to provide multiple benefits as well as tackling climate change. Carbon sequestration is only one component of the action we need to take on climate change. We would caution against simply managing woods to maximise carbon sequestration or production of biomass, as this would risk undermining biodiversity, landscape, habitat and social objectives.
4. We support biomass as a renewable energy source but to operate in a sustainable manner biomass production needs to be linked to proper environmental standards of land management. We welcome this latest announcement on funding for biomass being linked to UK Forestry Standard.

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However we would also like these schemes to be linked to UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS), as recommended by the FREDs Biomass subgroup. Increasing UKWAS uptake is a Scottish Executive commitment at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

5. Short Rotation Coppice – standards & regulation – we are pleased that UK Forestry Standard compliance will be required (and would wish for UKWAS certification, as stated above). It is important that the forestry Environmental Impact Assessment process continues to be applied.
6. The Scottish Biomass Action Plan recognises the benefits of small scale local wood heat systems as being better placed to take locally sourced material from sustainably managed, high biodiversity value woodlands. However, this scheme does not seem to provide extra impetus for such developments.
7. We would like to have been involved in setting the criteria for the awarding of this grant and had we being consulted at this earlier stage, we would have been delighted to sit on the judging panel for determining the success of individual applications. Given our concerns for the assessment criteria however, we must decline the invitation to sit on the judging panel.

Whilst we welcome Forestry Commission Scotland's willingness to involve environmental interests in policy and grant decision making, it is unfortunate that Scottish Environment LINK's role on the judging panel was announced in the press release and scheme launch leaflet, before we had confirmed our involvement.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these matters.

Yours sincerely



Angus Yarwood  
LINK Woodland Task Force Convenor



Clifton Bain  
LINK Climate Task Force Convenor

*Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment organisations - 36 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.*

The following LINK member organisations support this statement:

- Butterfly Conservation Society
- Council for Scottish Archaeology
- RSPB Scotland
- Scottish Native Woodlands
- Woodland Trust Scotland

Copied to: Dr. Bob McIntosh, Director FCS  
Mr. Simon Hodge, Head of Policy FCS  
Mr. Syd House, Conservator FCS  
Mr. Gordon Inglis, Grants and Licences FCS