



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

The Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland
57 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7HL

Tel: 0131 226 1959

Fax: 0131 226 1909

www.scotland.rtpi.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 262865

Scottish Charity Registration Number SC 037841

Ms Liz Rennie
Forestry Commission Scotland
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7AT

Email to: liz.rennie@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

3rd October 2008

Dear Liz

Discussion Paper on Woodland in Scotland

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation which discusses the benefits of woodland expansion and potential delivery mechanisms.

The RTPI is the UK body chartered to represent the planning profession and offers these comments from the point of view of a diverse and politically-neutral professional body committed to supporting devolved government in Scotland. The Institute has approximately 2100 members in Scotland, working across all sectors of central government, local government, government agencies, the voluntary sector, private consultancy, the development industry and academia.

Since devolution, the Institute has empowered its RTPI in Scotland Office, together with its Scottish Executive Committee, with the responsibility for working with government and public bodies generally for the improvement of the planning system in Scotland. This is in accordance with its charter obligation to work for the public interest.

The RTPI supports the woodland creation priorities for Scotland as set out in the Scottish Forestry Strategy and notes the important role that forests and deforestation play in the process of climate change. As a member of the Scottish Biodiversity Committee the RTPI also supports the core aim of the Scottish Biodiversity action planning processes to significantly increase the area of all native woodland types. We support the proposal to develop decision support tools to identify where the gains from strengthening forest habitat networks are likely to be greatest and would welcome the availability of such guidance for use in Strategic and Local Development Plans.

The discussion paper notes the increasing opportunities to develop integrated and collaborative approaches to the delivery of ecosystem services through the Scottish Rural Development Plan, and Rural Development Contracts. The Institute would also like to see closer working links between integrated approaches to natural resource management and the National Planning Framework, and Strategic and Local Development Plans. This should cover the role of woodland in relation to climate change, approaches to flood prevention, the encouragement of green networks, the improvement of urban environments and the maintenance and enhancement of the wider Scottish landscapes and the National Parks and National Scenic Areas in particular.

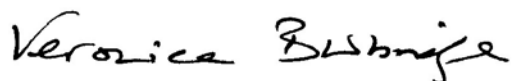
The Institute supports the aims set out in the consultation paper to deliver climate change mitigation, and to deliver economic, rural development, biodiversity, environmental, community and urban regeneration benefits. The Institute notes the good practice emerging in recent Indicative Forestry Strategies (IFSs) and notes that the opportunities in the current coverage of IFSs are more than sufficient to accommodate achievement of 25% woodland cover. We note the need to examine wider issues of land use balance along with associated carbon and energy balance and the implications of the development of the bioenergy sector in Scotland and the challenges these pose for the new Development Plan led system.

The Institute supports proposals to encourage developers to make provision for woodland creation and maintenance as integral parts of developments, and of the closer working between Forestry Commission Scotland and planners at all levels to provide a positive context for woodland creation and the enhancement of Scotland's landscapes.

The RTPi is contributing to current work on the revision of Planning Circular 9/1999 and views this as an important mechanism in guiding the incorporation of woodland and forestry issues in Strategic and Local Development Plans. The Institute considers that a direct link between the Forestry Strategy and the National Planning Framework should provide a clear policy steer for the expansion of woodland in Scotland. The development of Supplementary Planning Guidance at Strategic and Local Development Plan levels should be supported by a strong planning policy with associated guidance in the form of a Planning Advice Note or from the Forestry Commission. The Institute also considers that the discussion paper on woodland expansion might refer to the Forestry Commission's policy on the control of woodland removal published in June 2008 and notes the forthcoming regulations on Tree Preservation Orders under the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006.

The Institute trusts that these comments are of assistance and has no objection to its comments being made available to the public in the usual way. Should you wish any clarification or further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at our Edinburgh office: 57 Melville Street Edinburgh, EH3 7HL phone: 0131 226 1959, or email: veronica.burbridge@rtpi.org.uk

Yours sincerely



National Director

