Response ID ANON-ECNN-E5TY-B

Submitted to Scottish Forestry Corporate Plan Consultation
Submitted on 2020-02-05 16:51:17

Questions

1. To what extent do you agree that the Corporate Plan provides a good introduction to the organisation, its role and the structure of Scottish Forestry?
   Agree slightly
   
   Comments:
   The Corporate Plan gives a reasonable overview of the organisational structure of SF however, some aspects will be opaque to all but a small cadre of insiders: e.g. the respective roles of the five functional teams is probably not apparent to the layperson (it's not obvious which covers grants, which regulation, etc). We would suggest a brief paragraph (in plain English) outlining the main responsibilities of each functional team, e.g. as Forestry and Land Scotland has done on p13 of their Corporate Plan.
   
   More generally, it's important that this information is available on the Scottish Forestry website. A range of other information about the SF structure could/should be available online, including brief biogs etc of non-executive advisors.
   
   It would be good practice for such a public-facing organisation as Scottish Forestry to have listings and contact details for all central office and conservancy staff: e.g. as Forest Research does at https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/staff/

2. To what extent do you agree with the Purpose contained in the Corporate Plan?
   Strongly agree
   
   Comments:
   We support the decision to define a "purpose" rather than a vision and mission, this gives a clearer view of Scottish Forestry’s job – as do the three strategic objectives which boil down to delivering the Forestry Strategy, looking after your staff and operating more efficiently.
   
   We agree with the purpose, with one proposed amendment, that it would be preferable to say “The sustainable management and expansion of forests and woodlands to deliver more for the people of Scotland.” This would align better with the language of the National Performance Framework and the Land Use Strategy.
   
   We have a few additional comments:
   
   The third paragraph of section 2 outlines SF’s role as regulator, funder and policy advisor, however we think there is a further important promotional and co-ordinating role for Scotland’s forestry sector: facilitating networking and engagement of the diverse economic, social and environmental stakeholder interests that make up the sector; and leading and co-ordinating long term and strategic thinking to tackle some of the broader sector wide issues (such as recruitment and deer).
   
   In section 2.1 “What we do” the draft corporate plan refers to “land owners” - these references should be replaced with “land manager”, because:
   • it would be more accurate, as land ownership is not a prerequisite for receipt of grant aid through the Forestry Grant Scheme or other schemes;
   • it would emphasise that grant aid is a contribution to the costs of management, rather than an entitlement of ownership;
   • it would help to clarify that SF’s regulatory role covers the public sector, and in particular Forestry and Land Scotland, who will be subject to the same level of regulatory oversight as the private sector.
   
   For the third bullet point in section 2.1 it would be helpful to clarify that SF’s remit vis-à-vis other public authorities is both reactive and proactive in helping them to meet their duty under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act to promote sustainable forest management where consistent with the exercise of their functions.

3. To what extent do you agree with Strategic Objective 1 as a priority for our work over the next three years?
   Agree strongly
   
   Comments:
   We agree that delivery of Scotland’s Forestry Strategy 2019-2019 is a key strategic objective and major priority of Scottish Forestry, however, we suggest that this strategic objective could be better phrased as “Lead and co-ordinate the delivery of Scotland’s Forestry Strategy” as the current formulation is unnecessarily cumbersome and lacks clarity as to what the objective actually is.
   
   We recognise that the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act places a duty on Scottish Ministers to prepare the strategy, however, it is clear that effective delivery will require a much broader sense of “ownership” of the SFS; this will be helped by the simpler phrasing.
   
   As noted in the consultation document this plan is being prepared simultaneously with the first SFS Implementation Plan. Whilst we understand the reasoning behind this, the absence of detail as to how strategic objective 1 will be delivered limits the ability to comment somewhat. However, listing the SFS priorities for action does demonstrate the very broad range of activities that constitute forestry: it’s good to see this recognised in the draft corporate plan and we trust that this breadth of scope will be maintained.
To what extent do you agree with Strategic Objective 2 as a priority for our work over the next three years?

Agree strongly

Comments:
We agree that this is an important priority for Scottish Forestry.

There are broader issues of recruitment and retention in the forest sector that need to be addressed, and suggest that Scottish Forestry is best placed to lead, or at least coordinate these.

It is also important that forestry curricula and professional skills keep pace with developments in sustainable forest management, again SF is best placed to coordinate efforts to ensure the next generation of foresters are equipped to manage the forests of the future.

To what extent do you agree with priorities associated with this Strategic Objective?

Agree strongly

Comments:
Again, we agree and believe that there is a broader leadership / co-ordination role for SF in this area.

To what extent do you agree with the activities associated with this Strategic Objective?

Agree strongly

Comments:
We agree with the proposed activities but suggest that there should be an additional activity to lead / co-ordinate broader sector-wide stakeholder engagement.

To what extent do you agree with Strategic Objective 3 as a priority for our work over the next three years?

Agree strongly

Comments:

To what extent do you agree with priorities associated with this Strategic Objective?

Agree strongly

Comments:
We agree with the priorities, but suggest that the third one “Ensuring that SF is compliant with relevant laws and regulations” should be a given.

To what extent do you agree with the activities associated with this Strategic Objective?

Agree slightly

Comments:
We agree with the activities listed (although question whether it’s necessary to include “Ensure budgetary and financial management systems and processes facilitate financial sustainability and value for money” as surely this should be a given?)

There is one very significant omission: there should be activity related to reducing SF’s carbon footprint (or broader environmental footprint).

Performance

What do you think are the important areas we should include as we develop KPIs to measure performance against this Corporate Plan?:

As noted previously the three proposed strategic objectives boil down to delivering the Forestry Strategy, looking after your staff and operating more efficiently, so it would be logical to develop KPIs focussing on these points, incorporating both empirical measures (e.g. % invoices paid on time) and more qualitative measures derived from staff and customer satisfaction surveys.

We would also suggest that SF seek to develop a more general KPI (or KPIs) focussed on the public opinion of forestry – we recognise that this could be methodologically challenging but it would help emphasise (and measure progress against) the organisation’s purpose “to deliver more (for the people) of Scotland”.

Equality and Diversity

Do you think any of the outcomes and activities 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)?

Are there any actions we should consider in relation to our outcomes and activities to ensure we are inclusive and advancing opportunities for people from different equality groups or for people from different socio-economic backgrounds?
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13 Please use this space to provide any other comments you think are relevant to the Corporate Plan.

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About you

What is your name?

Name: Jon Hollingdale

What is your email address?

Email: jon@communitywoods.org

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation: Community Woodlands Association

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response with name

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

I consent

Evaluation

Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:

Very satisfied

Please enter comments here.: 

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:

Very satisfied

Please enter comments here.: