

Draft Climate Change Plan consultation (Scotland)

January 2026

About the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF)

The Institute of Chartered Foresters is the Royal Chartered body for foresters and arboriculturists in the UK. We represent over 2,300 members working across forestry, arboriculture, and related disciplines in the private and public sectors, academia, and research institutions. Our mission is to uphold professional standards, provide guidance, and support sustainable management of trees and forests.

Acknowledgement of Consultation

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to this consultation and recognise its importance in shaping policy. While this topic falls outside the Institute's core area of expertise, we support the overarching objectives of evidence-based policymaking and integrated approaches to land and resource management.

The ICF has not submitted a response via the Citizen Space portal but requests that the team in Scottish Government accepts this statement as our response. This statement has been produced in consultation with our membership.

Position Statement

- The Institute does not intend to provide detailed technical input on this matter.
- Where relevant, we advocate collaboration across sectors to ensure holistic outcomes that benefit society and the environment.

Response

The Plan makes repeated and substantive reference to forestry and tree-based measures, including:

- **Woodland creation as a core climate mitigation measure**, with a commitment to increase woodland cover and maintain high annual planting rates across the plan period.
- Recognition of **forests and woodland as long-term carbon sinks**, particularly within the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector.
- Emphasis on **multi-benefit woodland creation**, contributing not only to emissions reduction but also biodiversity enhancement, flood mitigation, soil protection, and landscape resilience.
- Repeated acknowledgement that **trees and woodland are central to nature restoration**, helping address the dual climate and biodiversity crises.

- References to **forestry and land-based jobs** as part of a **just transition**, particularly in rural areas.
- Implicit reliance on a **sustainable timber sector** to support low carbon construction, replace more carbon intensive materials, and underpin a circular bioeconomy.
- Recognition that afforestation and forest management must be **well planned, well located, and professionally delivered** to avoid negative impacts on peatland, biodiversity, and communities.

The Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) welcomes the strong recognition within the Climate Change Plan 2026–2040 of the vital role that forests, woodland, trees and the sustainable timber sector play in addressing Scotland’s climate and biodiversity crises.

We support the Plan’s continued commitment to ambitious woodland creation targets and its acknowledgement of forestry as a central component of the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector. Well-designed and well-managed forests provide long-term carbon sequestration while also delivering essential co-benefits, including biodiversity recovery, flood mitigation, improved soil health, and enhanced landscape resilience.

The ICF particularly welcomes the framing of forestry and woodland creation within the context of a **just transition**, recognising the importance of land-based skills, rural employment, and sustained professional capacity to deliver outcomes at scale. Achieving the Plan’s objectives will depend not only on planting more trees, but on managing the existing resource **to high professional standards over the long term**.

We encourage the Scottish Government to:

- Explicitly recognise the role of **professionally qualified foresters** in ensuring woodland creation and management deliver lasting climate, nature and community benefits;
- Support the development of a resilient **domestic timber supply chain**, enabling wood to substitute for higher carbon materials and contribute to Scotland’s net zero economy; and
- Ensure long-term policy certainty and investment in forestry skills, advice, and management capacity.

Closing Remarks

We remain committed to engaging on issues directly related to forestry, arboriculture, and land use. We will support the Scottish Government in delivering the forestry and woodland elements of the Climate Change Plan, and we would welcome continued engagement as the Plan moves toward implementation.