

**Summary of the Stakeholder Consultation Meeting for the  
Scottish Forest Strategy Review  
Perth & Argyll Regional Forestry Forum, 24<sup>th</sup> August 2005.**

**Key points:**

- There is broad support for the existing SFS – the balance of objectives is broadly acceptable with no major changes needed.
- Sustainable management is crucial to secure the future of Scottish forestry and to realize national sustainability obligations. A predictable supply of forest products and clarity about the objectives of forestry expansion are important contributions to this.
  
- Climate change is a key forest policy driver: it could determine the size, composition and management of long-term forest cover.
- The meaning of ‘economic potential’ within the forest industry might be revisited, along with recognizing new/ alternative primary and secondary benefits. Scottish forests need to be clearly recognized as commodities. Non-marketable goods should be aided by grant funding, with UKWAS as a key element of this.
- Social forestry is increasingly important. Elements of this include community involvement, better provision of information, job creation and security, and the viability of communities in forest areas.
- Long-term perspectives are needed to address climate change, fluctuating timber prices, infrastructure requirements etc, and the forest industry is well placed to articulate this long-term perspective. A longer timescale than that advocated by the Strategy may be beneficial, for example 50 years rather than 15 years.
- A cross-sectoral, multi-level approach would let forestry integrate with issues like population, transport, housing, employment, government funding. Fruitful links could be made between FCS and other agencies, and between the SFS and other Executive strategies.
- There is a dynamic relationship between the local appropriateness of initiatives like WIAT, and the commonalities identified at Conservancy or national level. There are arguments for more local decision-making and for more national decision-making: each has its relative merits and drawbacks.
- It is increasingly viable for forestry to be part of land use change; the Strategy needs to develop options for farmers and others to be involved in silviculture, perhaps via a ‘rural land use’ strategy.
- Four crucial issues emerge in the Perth & Argyll region:
  - Transport and road infrastructure for public and forest roads

- Tourism and the potential for forest expansion
- Woodfuel as a sustainable alternative energy source
- Certification/ branding and the investment needed.

**Responses from the Stakeholder Consultation Meeting for the  
Scottish Forest Strategy Review  
Convened by the Perth & Argyll Regional Forestry Forum,  
24<sup>th</sup> August 2005.**

**Q1. What do you think have been the best things to happen in forestry since 2000?**

- SFGS has worked in parts, and this has meant more money to manage existing woodlands – an example of good prioritisation and use of limited resources. A particular success is the higher funding ratio under SFGS for native woodlands work, also PAWS restorations and management of riparian woodlands.
- Increased emphasis on the social agenda of forestry and the participatory approach needed for that.
- The explicit recognition that forestry is about multi-level delivery, leading to improved ‘P and P’ partnerships for developing clusters.
- Forestry has become far more interesting.
- Advances in certification.
- WIAT grant scheme.
- Creation of Woodschool, Scottish Woodfair and ASHS.

**Q2. Has the Forestry Strategy failed to deliver anything important?**

- Failed to deliver the 25% woodland cover target.
- Failed to maximise the economic resource of woodlands.
- Failed to develop woodfuel.
- Failed to improve road infrastructure.
- Failed to integrate customer demand and availability.
- FCS does not provide a lead on what woodland resource we are trying to create.
- Regulation and/ or policies are needed to integrate forest priorities with housing development, design and planning.
- A 50-year timescale is needed – to account for climate change, changes in cheap oil dependency and third world industrialisation.

**Q3. Is the broad content of the current Forestry Strategy still relevant and appropriate?**

*No specific answers given.*

**Q4. Are any changes now required to the Forestry Strategy's Vision, Guiding Principles and Strategic Directions? If so, what are they?**

- Rather than referring to all forests as woodland and all management as forestry, the strategy should distinguish between exotic and native species.

**Q5. Should any of the existing Priorities for Action be dropped? If so, which ones?**

*No specific answers given.*

**Q6. Should there be any new Priorities for Action? If so what should they be?**

- A more focused approach to the Strategy, and measurable targets.
- Forest Habitat Networks to consolidate the forest resource
- Provide for a sustainable and predictable supply of wood products
- Woodfuel should have its own section
- Community involvement should have a higher priority
- The Strategy must cover the whole industry
- Improvements to the public road network
- Integration with sustainable development
- More explicit links and 'joined-up thinking' between FCS and other agencies - increasing the use of local timber can be stifled by bureaucracy, e.g. Health & Safety obligations.

**Q7. Is an appropriate balance being achieved between the economic, environmental and social aspects of forestry? If not, please give specific examples.**

*No specific answers given.*

**Q8. Do you agree that the Scottish Forestry Strategy should be focused primarily on increasing the benefits of forestry to the people of Scotland?**

*No specific answers given.*

**Q9. Should woodlands play a greater role in helping Scotland deal with climate change? If so, how?**

- The Strategy should optimise forestry's contribution to mitigating climate change - this is a useful argument for more forestry if it is on the right soil types (i.e. mineral, not peaty).

- These issues need articulating on a political level: the forestry community are well aware of forestry's contributions
- Woodfuel needs promoting as an alternative energy source.
- Lock up timber via carbon sequestration and longer rotations
- Establish a base of forests but with the emphasis away from Sitka spruce. Climate change suggests that greater diversity in forest resources is needed.
- Encourage land-use change, e.g. riparian basins.
- Use WIAT and other initiatives to keep a local perspective.

**Q10. What should be the role of forestry in sustainable rural development?**

- Forests need to be seen as a backdrop as much as a direct market-providing industry (i.e. a source of secondary as well as primary benefits).
- Aligning community interests and those of the industry is important - need to consider population, funding sources, experience.
- Scottish Executive financial support for jobs might not be sustainable - transporting industries into areas doesn't work. There is perceived to be a crisis of labour in the forestry industry - people working in it need a sustainable future. There also needs to be higher quality outcomes, e.g. less staff turnover, shorter commutes to work.

**Q11. How could forestry become more of an exemplar of sustainable development in Scotland?**

- By reflecting clear priorities at regional and national levels.
- By moving away from the present industrial model towards a model that matches the Scottish Executive's Sustainable Development strategy, e.g. must reduce its usage of aggregate.
- By providing training, infrastructure and job creation opportunities, notably building on the Woodschool model.
- By encouraging woodfuel as an important part of sustainable development in Scotland.
- By promoting hardwoods for craft and local small-scale use.

**Q12. How should Scotland respond to the opportunities presented by the increasing supply of timber from Scotland's woodlands?**

- By adopting a diverse range of locally appropriate approaches (in the Perth & Argyll Conservancy this might be Argyll Islands, Rural Forest Areas, Perthshire, etc).
- Increased timber supply will mostly be of red saw logs or small diameter material so caution is needed because the private sector may not harvest if the economics aren't right.

**Q13. How could the overall economic potential of Scotland's woodlands be increased?**

- The forestry industry needs to move away from being supported by Scottish Executive money and thus being kept within the 'Scottish' context. Greater emphasis on local, small-scale production would better deliver sustainability, rather than the continued subsidy of the large-scale loss-making industrial model of forestry.
- Scottish forests need to be treated as a commodity in order to get market share. Initiatives to encourage this might include more dialogue with timber-building professionals on the quality of Scottish wood, clarity about the extent to which the price of timber should determine the final product, and evaluation of whether broadleaf plantations create more jobs than conifers.
- A clearer way of deriving economic benefit needs to be developed, e.g. creating car parks, so long as it's worth it as regards visitor numbers. However, caution is needed to avoid destroying the tourist and recreation potential of forests in order to realize economic potential.
- Further debate is needed about tourism as a rationale for forest expansion, including business opportunities for in forest tourism, e.g. concessions. Woodland Parks might be linked with current designations of National and Regional Forest Parks.
- Scottish Executive needs to invest in schemes of certification and branding.

**Q14. Should the private and public forestry sectors engage further in social issues such as deprivation, health, equality, and disability? If so, how? Where is this a high priority in Scotland?**

- Yes, but as a partner to mainstream delivery agents. There is an issue as to whether the FCS is the best agency to be delivering on this - does it have the skills?
- Creating employment in deprived social areas is an important goal - the forestry sector can provide direct employment for those not traditionally employed in forestry via training.

However, little information appears within local communities not traditionally involved with forestry.

- Social forestry needs to emphasize non-timber products and income streams (including biomass).
- Grants should be there for the 'public good' - social health, natural heritage and cultural heritage. These non-marketable goods should be covered by the revised grant scheme. Equally, the strategy might recognize the link between UKWAS and the UK Forests Standard as a way of delivering non-marketable goods.

**Q15. Has there been sufficient focus on the contribution of woodlands to the enhancement of our natural heritage? If not, what more needs to be done?**

- The Strategy should optimise forestry's contribution to the natural heritage of Scotland.
- The benefits that native woodlands can bring have been overlooked, especially in non-designated sites. Local communities in Central Scotland still see too many areas of monoculture with conifer and have concerns about this, but this has improved in recent years.
- Local managers feel they've done a good job already, but mustn't be complacent.
- Clear incentives are needed.

**Q16. Has there been sufficient focus on the contribution of woodlands to the enhancement of our cultural heritage? If not, what more needs to be done?**

*No specific answers given.*

**Q17. How can the forestry sector be better integrated with other land uses?**

- Clearer links are needed between forestry and other sectors, and better strategic directions and policy groups. Barriers between farming and forestry need to be lifted, with options for farmers to be involved with management of trees further developed. Better information needs to be given to non-traditional sectors, e.g. building societies, planners etc.
- A new strategy should link more clearly to other relevant Scottish Executive strategies, e.g. on biodiversity, health, education, outdoor access/ physical activity, climate change, etc.

- More funding is needed, but with either FCS or SEERAD administering grants, not both (as at present).
- Transport in and out of forests needs to be improved - for timber, amenity and access. The quality of local rural roads also needs improvement, and transport policy must take account of the needs of the timber industry.
- Changes in land use are due to CAP reforms, but the case has to be made for an appropriate balance between diverse native woodlands and red deer, as this isn't covered by the CAP reforms.

**Q18. How should we determine the appropriate extent and distribution of woodland in Scotland? How much woodland do we need? What type of woodland do we need? Where do we need it?**

- The current strategy encourages expansion of “well designed productive forestry” but offers less encouragement for expansion other woodland types. However since the challenge is how to create a forest that satisfies future needs, a diverse range of woodland types might be better for this. Hence there is a lack of clarity about the objectives of forestry expansion.
- How to articulate targets? ‘Quality’ criteria are very subjective and may be better suited to regionally based decisions. Forest cover needs to be translated into local level relevance and targets.
- The 25% target for woodland cover is OK but it has serious landscape implications and new money is required to achieve it. In general, the public want more woodland.
- Markets must always be considered - international prices and increasing costs impact on forest management. The forestry industry might take a longer-term perspective than the Scottish Executive.
- The Scottish Executive must give more money to the forest industry, perhaps with outcomes-based incentives. It may be that the industry should demonstrate sustainable management of current stocks.

**Q19. Should regional priorities be reflected in the revised Strategy? If so, how?**

- A clear definition of ‘regional’ is needed, plus a debate on whether to consider regional priorities or urban/peri-urban/remote priorities. The strategy should try to define

commonalities, but this raises the question of who defines 'local appropriateness'?

- Regional priorities should involve inter-agency collaboration, also including private parks and woods, and with better reference to the National Parks.
- IThe Perth & Argyll region is characterised by strongly urban and strongly rural areas, so provision needs to account for this range. Interactions between people and forests could be strengthened - in this region tourism is a significant priority and there is an opportunity to draw urban visitors out into the country and forests.
- Local priorities should precede conservancy- driven priorities.
- Better options are needed to add value to timber within the region.

**Q20. Is the balance of support mechanisms for forestry about right? If not, how should it change?**

- The new SFGS is good and bad in parts: bad because is complicated and potentially short lived, but good because it offers funding for a good range of operations within specific priorities. The constant change of grant support is not encouraging though.
- Grant systems need to be driven by outcomes rather than activity. However, the outcomes-based approach is potentially complex and whilst some people argued in favour of simplification, other pointed out that undue simplification would lead to loss of options.
- UKWAS should be utilised as underpinning sustainable forestry within the grant scheme.
- Forest Enterprise absorbs a disproportionate percentage of the state support for forestry – the argument is that it is for public benefit, but other types of forestry are 100% for public benefit, such as community woodlands and local authority woodlands.
- FCS should look to embrace the voluntary sector/ social enterprises as deliverers of services.
- If public support for forestry is to change, changes must be phased in over a sensible time scale.
- Need to support woodfuel heating systems.
- Timber prices don't support the costs of infrastructure – e.g. costs of road building – this needs a strategic view.

**Q21. Could forestry incentives be better focused on key priorities?**

**If so, how?**

- It's hard to determine "success" in the current support system.
- If the priorities are too narrow then diversity may be discouraged.

**Q22. Do you have any additional comments that would help us with the review of the Scottish Forestry Strategy?**

- Need a "rural land use strategy" not just a forestry strategy, clearly integrated with other strategies and dovetailing bottom-up and top-down aspirations.
- The strategy should have more milestones for monitoring its implementation.
- From a European perspective, perhaps we are producing enough softwood sustainably already, given that 42% of woodland is FCS certified through 54 certificates.