

SCOTTISH FORESTRY FORUM: TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2002 REPORT BY STEERING GROUP

Introduction

1. This report on the Scottish Forestry Forum meeting (November 2002), has been prepared by the Scottish Forestry Forum Steering Group. It records the main points that were made at the Forum, although these are not necessarily endorsed by the organisations represented on the Steering Group.
2. This report will be forwarded to the Minister.

Details of Event

3. The Scottish Forestry Forum was attended by 134 people. Following a speech by the Minister on progress and implementing the Scottish Forestry Strategy, there were 8 workshop topics, covering the work of the Forest Industries Cluster; the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme; the work of the Forestry for People Panel; Treefest Scotland 2002; Timber Transport Forum; the Rural Biodiversity Action Plan; the Rural Indicative Forest Strategy; and the future role and work of the Scottish Forestry Forum.

4. In the afternoon, there were three presentations on some of the underlying principles of the Scottish Forestry Strategy:-

Sustainability: what are the challenges for Scottish forestry?

Integration: how can we increase forestry's contribution to rural development?

Positive Value: public benefits and private costs – do the books balance?

5. There was then a report back from the workshops and a discussion session. This was followed by a concluding summary on forestry in the wider rural context and closing remarks by the Forestry Commission's Director General.

6. All presentations and reports of the workshop sessions have been placed on the Forestry Commission's web site.

7. Participants were invited to complete an evaluation form. The response rate was 60% and details are attached as an appendix to this report. Following consideration of this feedback, the Steering Group has agreed to:-

- hold another Forum event in November 2003;
- focus the workshop sessions on fewer (perhaps 2 or 3) issues.

Issues raised and points made during the Forum

8. This list of issues raised and points made during the Forum are not ranked in any particular order of priority, although an attempt has been made to relate them either to Strategic Directions of the Scottish Forestry Strategy, or to recognise them as cross-

cutting issues. While all these issues and points came up at the Forum, they were not necessarily accepted by all (or even by a majority) of those present.

Maximising value of the timber resource

- more should be made of the sustainability credentials of timber;
- more should be done to encourage the specification of timber in construction;
- the market opportunity presented by bio-energy from wood is likely to become highly significant;
- the work being done to use e-business to improve competitiveness was welcomed;
- the Timber Transport Forum should take account of longer term objectives of improving timber transport infrastructure working in close partnership with other users of rural roads;
- planning based on agreed route maps should continue;
- further reference should be made to reduce haulage costs and public road miles;
- the potential of producing guidance for water bound roads should be investigated;
- there is timber oversupply in Europe and increasingly wide range of demands being made on forests;
- as well as general oversupply of wood, there are specific problems in the UK related to currency;
- there is a need to consider Scotland's wider global footprint, in terms of the source of wood products used in Scotland.

Creating a diverse forest resource for the future

- a major threat to providing a continuing stream of public benefits from forestry is the state of the forest economy/timber market;
- the challenge is not just to deliver benefits but to integrate these benefits;
- it is valid for government to continue to pay for public, non-market environmental and social outputs from forestry;
- further expansion of productive forestry should focus on areas of the good road infrastructure
- more should be done to encourage local authorities to prepare indicative forestry strategies;
- the new approach demonstrated by the Ayrshire Woodland Strategy should be shared more widely;
- there is an urgent need to update current government advice on preparing indicative forestry strategies;
- standard costs associated with the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme should be reviewed after one year;
- good forest management should be encouraged through grants and other methods such as certification
- there may be merit in integrating SFGS with other Scottish Executive landuse/habitat management schemes;
- forestry is already a market leader in integrated, sustainable landuse and rural development, but there is much still to learn;
- unprecedented economic pressures on forestry mean that efforts must continue to develop a new paradigm for sustainable forest management, to delivering a

- locally – appropriate mix of market and non-market goods, supported by adequate finance;
- for the grower, revenue from timber production (and other sources) is outweighed by costs and it is difficult to capture the value of the non-market benefits;
 - thought needs to be given to the value of forests which will never be “commercial”;
 - in the past the focus of forestry was largely production-orientated; this is now broadened out, recognising the wider contribution to the rural economy, community and environment;
 - the public no longer see forests as places of production – they are places for recreation or conservation;

Making a positive contribution to the environment

- landuse policies should be integrated so that woodland biodiversity is not considered in isolation;
- consideration should be given to catchment scale approach;
- planning guidance should explicitly prohibit (built) development in all woodlands on ancient woodland sites unless irredeemably degraded by previous action;
- priorities for native woodland policy should be prioritised;
- there is uncertainty about the status of BAP targets;
- there should be greater integration between funding available from different agencies of biodiversity;
- better advice is required at professional level for biodiversity;
- more should be done to provide general information about the value of woodland biodiversity;
- more research needs to be done to identify the impact of different silvicultural options on woodland biodiversity;
- more use should be made of remote sensing to monitor changes in biodiversity and achievement of BAP targets;

Creating opportunities for more people to enjoy trees, woods and forests

- the work of the Forest Education Initiative (FEI) should be encouraged;
- more should be done to promote public understanding of the benefits from forests;
- there should be joint agency working to ensure full advantage is taken of benefits in terms of recreation, access, tourism, education and health;
- there was broad support for the achievements of Treefest and a strong mandate to maintain the brand and a Treefest network (provided that the brand image did not become devalued through being associated with poor quality events);
- future promotional campaigns should focus on urban areas, building on the success of events such as the Edinburgh Treefest and Tree in the Park (held in Hamilton);
- there should be stronger promotion of the Forest Fitness initiative;
- there should be greater engagement with the tourism sector;

Helping communities benefit from woods and forests

- community groups will benefit from a better network of advice and extension services;
- sharing information and experience is a vital function for the community woodland sector – Reforesting Scotland has taken the initiative in this with its website for community woodland groups;
- there is a need to make rural businesses efficient and to promote economic efficiency in the primary sector;
- traditional skills will remain important;
- community action will be increasingly important in the 21st century;
- new skills are needed for forest owners to work with communities – and community involvement provides new interests and new opportunities for communities.

Cross-cutting

- Future guidance on indicative forestry strategies should identify key linkages in Community Planning legislation, as well as incorporating principles of Forest Habitat Networks;
- the Forum should continue to meet about once a year and be open to anyone who is interested;
- papers should be sent out before future Forum meetings;
- the Forum should not duplicate existing groups but identify gaps and make recommendations where more focus is required;
- there should be fewer discussion topics, considered in greater depth, at future Forum meetings;
- the web should be used to keep everyone in touch with the work of the Forum during the year and, if possible, to promote discussion through “chat rooms”;
- it was hoped that at future meetings of the Forum it would be possible for the Minister to stay for longer so that he or she could hear key messages;
- understanding integration, and institutional arrangements for support, will be key to progress; a united, solution-orientated forestry sector must fully contribute;
- there is a key role for the Scottish Forestry Forum Steering Group in considering how Scottish forestry can best contribute to the wider rural development policies in Scotland;
- there is hostility and indifference to private sector needs;
- since the Rio summit in 1992, the importance of sustainable forest management has been increasingly recognised by the world;
- the case for forestry is based on multi-functionality and this requires public investment, either in publicly owned or the private sector;
- future challenges lie in communicating better within and without the sector, of integrating activities with other policies, of forming funding activity based on partnerships at local, regional and national level;
- there should be a clearer process whereby the Forum presents views to the Executive, and the Executive responds.

Conclusions

9. This selection of points raised during the Forum shows that it covered a lot of ground. As a result of the discussions at the Forum, it reasonable to conclude that:-

- there is reasonable satisfaction with the direction of travel charted by the Scottish Forestry Strategy and in the progress that is being made;
- financial issues are of serious concern, because of the depressed state of the timber market and the fact that many of the benefits from forestry are non-market benefits;
- there is continuing value in the Forum process, bringing together people from different backgrounds and with varying interests in the economic, environmental and social benefits of forestry so that they can learn from each and understand each others problems;
- while this, first, Forum meeting was right to take a broad approach, future meetings should be more focussed so that it is easier to draw conclusions from the discussion. The Steering Group hopes very much that the Minister will be able to attend and take part in the discussion.

APPENDIX: POST EVENT EVALUATION: SCOTTISH FORESTRY FORUM

Date/Venue: Tuesday 26 November 2002, Battleby Centre, Redgorton

Number of Attendees: 134. Post Event Evaluation Forms Received: 80.

Why did you attend?

Reason	Number of Responses
To hear the presentations	67
To network with attendees	58
To have a question answered	7
Other....response specified	Above are all passive reasons – must have an active role for people to value and continue to participate; To see consultative process at first hand; To get an overview of role of Forum; Workshop Content / To present / make recommendations at workshops; Involvement in Strategy development and interpretation; Represent Recreation and landscape interest; As a Steering Group member to participate; To broaden knowledge as RAC member; To gain ideas for future role of Grampian Forest Forum; To keep up to date; To learn more about what participants think of SFS, SFF and FC; To learn about the industry and its concerns

Ratings:

% OF REPOSES RECEIVED

5=Very Satisfied 1 =

Very Dissatisfied

	5 Very Satisfied	4	3	2	1 Very Dissatisfied
<i>Programme</i>	12	47	29	12	0
Delegate Pack Information	27	56	12	4	1
Formal Presentations	17	47	28	8	0
Workshops	4	36	34	23	3
Venue	54	36	4	4	2
Refreshments	55	37	4	3	1
Audio-Visual Quality	41	39	17	3	0

Comments on Ratings:

Programme

Programme wide ranging;
Should focus on one priority area:
More input into the Agenda;
Too much packed in, not enough discussion;
Too much of long presentations in afternoon;
Should be time for questions after speakers; Q&A session with panel of speakers would be helpful;
Scene setter is required- greater focus in future meetings;

Delegate Pack Info

Helpful pack;
Advance material would be helpful, e.g. briefing paper for each workshop and indication of what was expected from them;

Formal Presentations

Presentations very solid but did not advance issues;
Good speakers;

Workshop Comments

Fewer Workshops;
Workshops too short to allow meaningful discussion;
More workshops and fewer presentations;
Post-its of Biodiversity Workshop good mechanism for discussion;
Workshops not focused enough and should be similarly structured;
There was no clear aim of what was expected from output/comes of workshops;
North Foyer not suitable for 2 workshops;
Workshops should be after presentations to develop themes

Other

Why are all speakers/workshop leaders male?
Rather than FC Chief Conservator solely representing Steering Group, would be good to have various members directly contributing;
Producer/processor interests are well represented but not recreational users;
Plenary session too much talk of Forum future- participating handsets with voting on back screen to encourage participation- too much preaching, not enough participation!;
Excellent venue- consider moving around Scotland;
Consider BLCC, Halbeath, Dunfermline;
Shared transport could have been arranged;
Facilitation and time keeping should be commended;
A good start to the First Forum – keep it going!