

Review of the Scottish Forestry Strategy

A public meeting for the review of the Scottish Forestry Strategy was held on Wednesday 7th September 2005 in the Crutherland House Hotel, East Kilbride.

Workshops

The group present at the meeting was split into 3 different groups to discuss four different questions. The points raised under the different questions are noted below.

Workshop Group 1

What has gone well since 2002?

- Starting to engage with local authorities.
- Partnership working – joined up thinking.
- Forestry is multifunctional – access, conservation, biodiversity.
- Forest Education Initiative (FEI) – Education.

What has not gone well?

- Disconnection between people and forestry.
- Forestry should be more connected to other industries.
- Students don't take interest in forestry – start with primary school.
- Education is a vital link to develop.
- Health agenda – nothing done.
- Urban environment has been left out, not touched - too much emphasis on rural environment.
- Forests are remote to urban communities (89% of population lives in urban areas).
- Urban forests are considered dangerous.
- Forests are remote.
- Some sites are well managed with no people.
- Planting trees not to produce timber.
- Farm woodlands – missed opportunity.
- Public unawareness – lack of information, people don't enjoy woodland and don't use them.

What should now be the top priorities?

- Marketing wood and non-timber benefits.
- Develop local markets – reduce 'foot prints', more robust markets.
- Health agenda is really important.
- Woodlands must be in towns.
- Urban woodland management.
- Biofuel – utilise existing resource better.
- Woodland expansion – of the correct type, improved planning.
- Maximise environmental benefit – new duty.

What needs to be in place to achieve these priorities?

- More integration with others.
- More communication with others (public, farmers)

Workshop Group 2

What has gone well since 2002?

- The increase in emphasis on people.
- Starting to address the urban agenda – reflecting the people.
- More social and environmental awareness.
- Developments of Indicative Forestry Strategies (IFS) – grants being targeted.
- IFS Development.
- IFS, for example Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy.
- Forest Habitat Network (FHN) concept.
- Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS).
- Better financial incentives for the creation and management of woodlands.
- Locational Premiums (LP's) increasing land value.
- LP's targets priority area reduces potentially sensitive areas being afforested.
- LP's create greater opportunities for diversification.
- Woodlands in and around towns (WIAT) – manage exciting urban woodlands.
- Increased community involvement.
- Acceptance of diverse woodland structures.
- Communications between Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and The Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD).
- Public communication and consultation.

What has not gone well?

- Complex administration measures.
- Lack of shared information.
- Budget constraints.
- Resources – staff and finance.
- Lack of awareness of opportunities
- Greater understanding of grant types required.
- Promotion/Perception.
- Lack of understanding.
- Lack of agri-forestry type schemes.
- Woodland expansion could be quicker.
- Impact of clearfell as forests mature.
- Lack of support for policy woodlands.
- Question over planting good quality land, could be used for farming.

- Targeting grants skew farmland prices, forestry companies buying the land.
- Targeting grants to pathetic areas of country, plant trees where they are suited to.
- Recreation – are paths through the woodland what people wanting, e.g. Livingston. Woodland is cover for human and animal predators.
- Concerned at native woodland being planted is not productive. Plant conifers (tidier) and have productive forest, not unproductive forest.

What should now be the top priorities?

- Increased community involvement.
- Opportunities for biofuel/woodfuel.
- Encourage people to use woodlands for (responsible) recreation.
- Global issues – Biodiversity and climate change.
- Education – Environmental ('climate change') and Health.
- People – Recreation, Health agenda and Education.
- High Quality.
- Joined up working.
- Balance.
- Manage existing resource.
- Identification of the resource.
- Maintain the balance between social, economic and environment.
- Bring woodlands near towns into well-managed state.
- Match site to tree species, and species to market.
- Consider landscape scale for planting and landuse generally.
- De-forestation of inappropriate and uneconomic areas, i.e. 'Flow Country'.
- Budget.
- Forest Habitat Network (FHN).
- Develop FHN.
- Conservation and expansion of native woodlands.
- Indicative Forest Strategies.
- Local distinctiveness.
- Continued support and targeted grants.

What needs to be in place to achieve these priorities?

- Resources – to deliver on the ground.
- Promotion.
- Planning – IFS/FHN – landuse.
- Global Issues.

Workshop Group 3

What has gone well since 2000?

- Grants improve strategy delivery.
- Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) – improved management from grant.

- Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) move towards urban forestry.
- Woodlands In and Around Towns (WIAT) – improving social aspect.
- Education and Forest Education Initiative (FEI).
- Woodfuel.
- Tourism development within forestry.
- Bringing in world status on mountain biking.
- Forest Industries Cluster.
- Bench marking against other industry clusters.
- A good start but there is room for development.
- The industry has survived a difficult period.

What has not gone well?

- Not adequately capturing social outcomes from forestry.
- Woodfuel – there has not been an appropriate policy response.
- Economic benefits capture.
- Stronger timber transport strategy required.
- SFGS vision is too woolly, difficult to deliver against.
- National target for expansion has not been justified from facts; therefore difficult to deliver increased expansion.

What should now be the top priorities?

- Woodfuel – Develop markets for wood energy.
- Education – Involving people in forestry from schools upwards.
- Forestry expansion including productive forestry – the right forests in the right place (Quantify target for expansion).
- Integration into land management contracts.
- Private sector requires good returns on timber to provide other forest benefits.

What needs to be in place to achieve these priorities?

- Increased investment – capture economic/social/environmental benefits to justify increased support.
- Investment – so that the public have greater awareness of benefits.
- Woodfuel – we need a renewable heat target. Grant scheme required to deliver woodfuel targets.
- Woodfuel – support mechanisms, websites/strategies/information/case studies.

Review Questions

There was an opportunity for people to publicly respond to the questions set out in the Review of the Scottish Forestry Strategy. The following responses were received.

Question 1. What do you think have been the best things to have happened in forestry since 2000?

Answer. Continued to act as an industry and invest for the future.

Question 4. Are any changes now required to the Forestry Strategy's Vision, Guiding Principles and Strategic Directions?

Answer. More involvement/communication/liaison with planners, especially in urban areas. Relates to question 11 (How could forestry become more of an exemplar of sustainable development in Scotland?).

Question 7. Is an appropriate balance being achieved between the economic, environmental and social aspects of forestry? If not, please give specific examples.

Answer. Social aspects are economic.

Question 8. Do you agree that the Scottish Forestry Strategy should be focused primarily on increasing the benefits of forestry to the people of Scotland?

Answer. Yes, so that they will be aware of the investment needed for future development.

Answer. Yes, but include benefits to tourism industry – major part of economy.

Question 18. How should we determine the appropriate extent and distribution of woodland in Scotland?

Answer. Based on climate, soil and landscape attributes.