

## CENTRAL SCOTLAND REGIONAL FORESTRY FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE HUB, EDINBURGH ON  
TUESDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2007

Present	Mr Simon Rennie (Chair) Mr Tim Hall Mr Guy Wedderburn Mr Steve Luker Mr Nigel Hooper Dr Grahame Buchan Mr Chris Norman Mrs Linda McKay, FC Scotland (Secretary)
Also present	Mr Calum MacDonald, Chair of National Committee & Scottish Forestry Forum Mr Keith Wishart, FC Scotland
Apologies	Councillor James Coyle Ms Penny Cousins Ms Meriel Young Dr Patricia Bradley Mr Michael Wall, FE Scotland

### **INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME**

1. Simon Rennie welcomed everyone to the meeting. He introduced Grahame Buchan, who was attending his first Forum meeting, and asked Grahame to provide members with a summary of his biography.

2. Simon Rennie also welcomed Calum MacDonald, Chairman of both the FCS National Committee and the Scottish Forestry Forum. Simon explained that Calum would be providing members with an update on current Scottish issues under agenda item 2.0 and would also be pleased to answer any questions that the forum may have.

### **APOLOGIES**

3. Apologies were received from Councillor James Coyle, Penny Cousins, Patricia Bradley and Meriel Young.

4. Simon Rennie informed the group that Michael Wall, FDM Scottish Lowlands FD, had recently moved position and would be providing support to the Estates team in Dumfries on acquisitions and disposals. Simon said that he wished to record his thanks for all Michael's hard work and significant achievements while FDM, and said that the Forum would write formally to

thank him for his contribution. Simon confirmed that Brent Meakin would be taking over the role as Forest District Manager in the District.

## **SCOTTISH FORESTRY ISSUES**

5. Calum MacDonald gave a résumé of his role on both the National Committee and the Scottish Forestry Forum. He provided some background into the variety of work in which he was currently involved. He reviewed some positive features within the sector, such as the steady improvements in timber prices, significant levels of investment activity in the wood processing sector and the development of new programmes and skills associated with the Urban Forestry or WIAT programme.

6. He discussed Climate Change and commented that globally, woodland and forestry was considered 3<sup>rd</sup> in the list of priorities for tackling this problem.

7. He informed the group that a Highland Housing Fayre would be held in 2009 and the main emphasis would be on exhibiting new building techniques and promoting the use of timber.

8. Calum discussed the change over to a new grant scheme and Simon Rennie asked the Forum what their perception was of where we are going with the new scheme.

9. Tim Hall said that there was a huge amount of uncertainty and concern over the length of time which has elapsed since the closure of the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme. He added that there were also worries over restocking issues and the IACS registration requirement.

10. The Forum discussed this issue at length and Calum MacDonald explained that support for Woodland Creation in 2007/08 had been offered by FCS to help address some of these industry concerns.

11. Chris Norman said there was a major opportunity for forestry to feature in land use via the new Planning Act. He suggested that Local Authorities and Forestry Commission Scotland review the opportunity for woodland creation through the compulsory purchase of vacant and derelict land

12. Keith Wishart suggested that Michael Wall would be interested in following this up further in his new role as Acquisitions and Disposals Officer.

**ACTION: KW**

13. Calum MacDonald said he was extremely interested to hear the views being voiced and said he would discuss this matter with Hugh Insley, Chief Executive of Forest Enterprise Scotland.

14. Calum discussed the National Planning Framework 2 and explained that the Forestry Commission was working closely with Jim McKinnon, Chief Planner for the Scottish Government.

15. The Forum discussed Climate Change and Steve Luker asked what would happen to the current Woodfuel Officers and expressed his concern that there is currently no policy in Scotland for Wood Energy.

16. Keith Wishart explained that Rebecca Carr, Renewables & Sustainability Development Adviser is currently on secondment to the Scottish Government to support the development of the Renewable Heat Strategy. A significant component of this will be wood energy. The strategy is expected to be ready before the end of December.

17. He added that Rebecca was also optimistic that the Scottish Biomass Support Scheme would continue beyond 2008, although could not be finalised until after the Spending Review was completed.

18. Chris Norman informed the Forum that the Planning Advice note made reference to Woodheat and that there was an opportunity for feeding into and influencing the new SPP6 document.

19. Calum McDonald asked Chris to e-mail him a copy of this document for information.

**ACTION: CN**

## **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

20. The minutes of the previous meeting on 1 February 2007 were accepted as an accurate record with no amendments made.

## **MATTERS ARISING**

21. Paragraph 21 – Simon Rennie said that he would be considering ways to best spend the allocated £4K and that further discussion would take place later in the meeting.

22. Paragraph 25 – Keith Wishart said the list of priorities had been finalised and referred members to page 20 of the SFS Implementation Plan 2007-2008 document. He said that he would shortly be involved in discussions to consider how Forestry Commission Scotland will develop the implementation plan within the next 3 years and he suggested that he provide feedback at the next Forum meeting.

23. Simon Rennie asked Keith to advise Forum members on the timescales for the development of the SFS Implementation Plan 2008-11 and the process through which the Forum would engage. Keith Wishart to advise Forum members via e-mail.

**ACTION: KW**

24. Paragraph 36 – Keith Wishart confirmed that the Planning toolkit had now been rolled out throughout Scotland. He said that the forestry and planners pages were now available on the Conservancy website

[www.forestry.gov.uk/centralscotland](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/centralscotland) and would be promoted via workshops and seminars being held over the coming months.

## **SCOTTISH LOWLANDS FOREST DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN**

25. Keith Wishart informed the group that Forest District Strategic plans had been reviewed by a wordsmith and a draft final version would be issued to the Forum for information and comment by or before December 2007. He explained that there would be a formal consultation process on this between December 2007 and February 2008. He added that the Strategic Environmental Assessment draft would be available at the same time and that both documents would be looking for final endorsement from the Forum by June 2008.

**ACTION: ALL**

26. Simon Rennie reminded members that the function of the Forum is to endorse the content of the draft but reminded everyone that they were able to feed any comments as individuals also.

27. Keith Wishart said that he would ask Brent Meakin to provide feedback and an update at the next meeting under this agenda item.

**ACTION: KW/BM**

## **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN UPDATE**

28. Simon Rennie introduced the draft outline communications strategy and explained that CSFT and FCS staff had pulled the document together. Tim Hall and Tricia Bradley had fed into the document also

29. Simon outlined the reasoning behind the draft and suggested he 'walk through' the pages and that he would then invite feedback and re-draft the document as necessary.

30. Tim Hall expressed his concerns about the draft and said he didn't think the aims and objectives were appropriate. He agreed that this strategy was required but felt that a gap analysis was a priority and that this document had been issued too soon.

31. A discussion ensued and the general consensus was that this strategy required further consideration. Members suggested that there was a need to know exactly who is doing what in the region.

32. Nigel Hooper said he was uneasy with the current format as it didn't give an indication as to exactly what resource we were promoting and said it was essential to have knowledge of the gaps to be able to see the potential for the bigger picture and identify opportunities.

33. Grahame Buchan suggested the need to look at established priorities and find out if the stakeholders are actually delivering these in the first instance.

34. Simon Rennie said there was a strong steer for a gap analysis to be carried out, including stakeholder mapping, prior to developing the communications strategy any further.

35. Simon Rennie said both himself and Keith Wishart would now revisit this, identify a process and suggest outcomes. They would then seek feedback from Forum members electronically and Simon said he expected this to be sent out within the next 3 weeks.

**ACTION: SR/KW**

## **SRDP (SCOTTISH RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME) UPDATE**

36. Keith Wishart gave a presentation to the Forum to provide them with an update on SRDP.

37. Keith explained that although this presentation covered all measures within the SRDP, it was predominantly to provide an update on the current position with regards to Rural Development Contracts (RDC).

38. He explained the set up and role of Regional Project Assessment Committee's (RPAC's), the model for RPAC membership, the proposal to have one National Proposal Assessment Committee and the development of Regional Priority Statements.

39. Keith explained that Forth, Clyde and Ayrshire RPAC's fell within the Forum area and asked members if they wanted to participate in the Regional Priority Statement workshops due to be held in each region during November 2007.

40. Keith confirmed that the priorities would probably be reviewed annually and that anyone could apply for grant provided they have a Business Reference Number and their land is IACS registered. He added that CSRFF priorities had already been incorporated into the development of the Contextual Information Packs for each Region.

41. Keith said that the inspection regime will be administered by SERPID. As a result, the nature of these inspections may change. Calum MacDonald commented that SERPID inspections associated with agricultural support measures are often perceived as uncompromising, whereas FCS inspections provided support and advice to the land manager in order to help secure the public investment

42. Simon Rennie said that he would be happy to attend all workshops and suggested that the programme of events be disseminated to all members by e-mail.

**ACTION: KW**

43. Keith informed the Forum that an SRDP workstream was dedicated to communications and to establish a programme of information events for stakeholders.

44. Keith agreed to circulate his SRDP presentation to Forum members.

**ACTION: KW**

## **MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

45. Simon Rennie said he had now received details from members who wished to be considered for re-appointment and also their planned duration in post. He was happy to endorse the requests.

46. Simon confirmed that Councillor Coyle did not wish to be re-appointed and recorded his thanks for the work and support that Jim had given over the last 3 years.

47. Simon said that the Forum should consider co-opting additional members and he asked everyone to let him have suggestions or details of anyone who might have an interest in joining the Forum.

**ACTION: ALL**

48. Guy Wedderburn said he felt that the business element had been left with a gap following the resignation of Alan Bloomfield and Simon agreed with this observation.

49. Simon explained that he would be meeting with Bob MacIntosh, Director Scotland shortly to discuss the current format and existing role of the forum. He said he would find it useful to get views from the Forum on areas, where members felt the Forum had been successful, and also areas that have caused some frustration or had not been completed.

**ACTION: ALL**

50. Simon asked that this information be sent to him as soon as possible. He explained that both he and Keith Wishart would review tangible pieces of work and feedback the outcomes at the next meeting.

**ACTION: SR/KW**

## **FEEDBACK ON THE EUROPEAN FORUM ON URBAN FORESTRY**

51. Nigel Hooper provided a summary of the visit by himself and Guy Wedderburn to the European Forum in Finland last year. Nigel said that this had been a very interesting and stimulating visit and that a huge range of people had attended with forestry and greenspace backgrounds but added that it seemed predominantly to be academics.

52. Nigel said he had papers from many countries and gave the group an idea of the many issues, which other countries experienced, and also details of the types of studies that had been carried out together with the findings within these reports.

53. Guy Wedderburn agreed that it had been a very worthwhile trip and that he had brought back some ideas, which he had adopted in his current working practices.

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

54. Keith Wishart referred to the Forestry Commission's Annual Report 2006 and said that members would receive their own copies shortly.

**ACTION; LMCK**

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

55. Simon Rennie explained that another meeting in 2007 would be required due to the number of tasks which required input e.g. priorities within the SLFD strategic plan, RPAC's, SFS implementation plan update, further discussion on the communications plan and a Woodfuel update. Keith and Simon will arrange to meet to discuss these issues

**ACTION; SR/KW**

56. The next meeting will therefore be held in early December. Linda McKay will issue suggested dates during the first week in December for consideration.

**ACTION: LMK**

57. Simon thanked everyone for attending today and the meeting was formally brought to a close.