

CENTRAL SCOTLAND REGIONAL FORESTRY FORUM

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Introduction

This paper sets out Regional Priorities for the Central Scotland Region (CSR) arising from the review of the Scottish Forestry Strategy and the deliberations of the Regional Forum around this. The source material for this paper is the Forum's two earlier submissions to Forestry Commission Scotland and statistical data from the Scottish Executive. It should be noted that the Forum has previously been unable to reach consensus on a number of issues, most notably around the role of non native species in Scottish forestry. This is not entirely unsurprising given the complexity of agendas and stakeholder interests in this area and the land use and population pressures present in Central Scotland. In this context diversity of views should be expected and respected.

Before considering Regional Priorities in detail, and in so doing subdividing the whole, it is worth remembering that forestry was, arguably, the first 'industry' to embrace the notion of sustainability. This came about through foresters' appreciation of the nature of its assets and an understanding of how these might be managed in perpetuity for the benefit not only of business but also social and environmental interests. In all that follows, whilst placing emphases on certain aspects, Forum members, I am sure, would not wish the reader to lose sight of this central thought.

Context

There are, approximately, 3 million people living within the CSR, some 60% of Scotland's total population. 88.7% of all Scots live in towns and villages of more than a 1000 people (a percentage figure that will be higher in the CSR), suggesting that of these 3 million people the vast majority will live in an urban environment and have a highly 'urbanized' view of their world. Traditional forestry may have little relevance, certainly in perceptual terms, to many of these people.

Individuals' social circumstances will vary enormously across the CSR from people living in areas of extreme affluence to areas of extreme deprivation and poverty. Whilst Edinburgh has suburbs with numbers of millionaires (in share holding terms) equal to the more affluent parts of London, there are 353,000 people of working age on some form of state benefit within the CSR. The lot of the disadvantaged is often made worse by the concentration of disadvantage in specific areas. 86% of Scotland's most deprived 5% of neighbourhoods are located within the West of Scotland. Not only does the region have by far the biggest population of all the Regions, it also has the greatest, and disproportionately so, number of excluded and disadvantaged individuals within it.

The environment too has enormous variations across the Region. There are very attractive areas with high environmental value within the Region but there are also areas of significant environmental blight and degradation especially in the centre/west of the Region. Mineral extraction continues across the Region whilst the after effects of large scale heavy industry are felt in many places. There are existing woodlands (& open ground habitats) of very high ecological value and potential in the CSR, in particular Ancient Woodlands. These are under significant threat from development pressure which has in the past, and may in future, result in direct loss & general habitat fragmentation. Urban areas within the CSR can be very important for biodiversity (contrary to the general perception), including gardens, parks, transport corridors & 'brownfield' sites. This biodiversity value is important due to its proximity to people which presents opportunities as well as threats.

The economy of the Region similarly varies tremendously. There is, in broad terms, an increasing level of economic inactivity amongst working age people as you move from east to west across

the Region, from 12% in Edinburgh to 27% in Glasgow. Within this trend, however, there are local variations, e.g. in East Dunbartonshire this figure is lowest of all at 10%. The Gross Value Added figure per head of population in the West of Scotland, a measure of overall economic activity, was £14,100 in 2005 well below the Scottish figure of £14,700 and the UK figure of £15,300.

Regional Priorities - an introduction

Against this background the Forum has identified four priorities each for action in terms of social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainability and one overarching priority, 'communications', as detailed below-

Regional Priorities - Social

Using woodlands and forestry to tackle environmental degradation.

Within the CSR there are significant areas of brownfield, vacant and derelict land. Often these are in proximity to communities that experience disadvantage. The remediation of this land would improve the quality of residents' lives and enhance the setting of these communities. At the same time we have to recognize the value of land we sometimes regard as 'derelict'. It is usually more ecologically functional than so called 'greenbelt' and sometimes contains important features and icons of a community's history.

Creating a setting for people to live, work and play.

Woodlands can provide an attractive backdrop to settlements, be used to 'screen' unsightly landuses and 'absorb' people taking recreation. Given the pre-existing appearance of too much of the CSR, and the population density within the CSR, their introduction would improve the physical environment for a variety of uses.

Creating opportunities to enhance the health of people living in CSR.

Scotland's health record is appalling. Woodlands can provide a valuable tool to help overcome this by providing places for physical exercise, for mental relaxation and as a 'passive' backdrop that people can enjoy.

Creating opportunities for employment, training and education, especially in areas of social exclusion.

The management and creation of woodlands could provide significant opportunities to engage those at most disadvantage in our society. By engaging local people we can provide tangible, immediate benefits for them; to maximise this we need to see woodlands as much as a process as a product. In addition forestry should have an expanding role in the field of education.

Regional Priorities - Environmental

Linking land use issues, the planning system and environmental agendas together.

There are significant pressures on land-use within the CSR. The planning system will continue to play a central role in resolving these conflicts and in so doing will take into full and proper account a wide range of environmental considerations including development pressures, environmental safeguarding and improvement and community aspirations. The importance of the planning system as a delivery vehicle for forestry must be recognised.

Climate change; responding to this and working to reduce its impacts.

This is the major threat of our times. Within the region we need to adopt practices that mitigate the effects of climate change and we need to explore the relationship between forestry and the capacity of the upland environment for a range of renewable energy projects and not just on-shore wind. Trees and woodlands can play an important role in adaptation strategies and, particularly in our towns and cities, to a reduction in energy use

The protection of valued woodlands and the creation of native woodland habitat networks.

Within the CSR there are areas of outstanding beauty and ecological importance; this valuable asset will diminish if not adequately protected and/or managed. In addition there will be opportunities to develop habitat networks through the 'joining up' (not just physically but also functionally) of existing habitats; this will need positive action to make it happen.

The protection and management of non woodland habitats as a part of wider habitat management.

The relationship between woodlands and other valued habitats is an important one. In nurturing one we should not overlook the needs, and value of, the other.

Regional Priorities - Economic

The development of a woodheat industry working at scale in the Region.

Some 50% of all energy used in Scotland is in the form of space heating. A successful woodheat industry in the CSR would provide a valuable market for biomass, would help reduce fossil fuel CO2 emissions and could provide affordable heat for disadvantaged communities.

The continued development of forest industry networks, clusters and joint initiatives.

For forestry to develop its full potential the industrial and commercial elements must prosper. To help make this happen earlier work in this area must continue and be enhanced.

Increased R&D focus on timber characteristics from the whole tree.

Within the CSR we have significant markets for timber products and academic centers of excellence. By successfully combining the two we can create real value from our woodland resource.

A quantification of the full economic benefits of woodlands and forests beyond their timber value.

Trees and woodlands make economic contributions significantly beyond their timber value, especially in areas like the CSR. This is not adequately recognised or quantified; this must be done if we are to enjoy the levels of support, both in policy and monetary terms that forestry properly ought to enjoy.

Regional Priorities - Overarching

Engaging the public and wider stakeholders through a Communications Strategy

For the strategic vision for forestry in Scotland to be fully realised all stakeholders and beneficiaries must be aware of what is envisaged and their roles in delivering that strategic vision. Given the complexity of the stakeholder environment in Central Scotland a coherent communications strategy will be required for this to happen.

Conclusions

Prioritisation, by its very nature, places actions in a 'pecking order' which in part goes against the grain of an integrated, sustainable view of forestry that sees, and understands, the linkages between actions and their outcomes. Priorities within the CSR are heavily influenced by the size of our population, their circumstances and their needs. In addition they are, at least to some extent, shaped by the political realities of the world in which we operate; if we cannot be seen to be meeting the needs of 60% of Scotland's electorate one suspects forestry will have little place at the top table when decisions about resources are being reached.

Forestry, when practiced properly, is the ultimate sustainable activity. We should take pride in this and work to ensure that this, along with the huge contribution that trees and woodlands make to society, gets the recognition it so richly deserves.

Central Scotland Regional Forestry Forum Regional Priorities – Scottish Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan 2007-2008

Central Scotland Regional Forestry Forum Regional Priorities	Regional Actions 2007 - 2008	Scottish Forestry Strategy: theme
Social		
<p>Using woodlands and forestry to tackle environmental degradation</p> <p>Creating a setting for people to live, work and play</p> <p>Creating opportunities to enhance the health of people living in CSR</p> <p>Creating opportunities for employment, training and education, especially in areas of social exclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a strategic partnership in Edinburgh and the Lothians, to identify and develop opportunities for woodlands to enhance the environmental quality of the area (FCS) • Publish a Community Woodland Feasibility Study identifying opportunities for greater community involvement in the Fife Regeneration Areas (FCS) • Publish a report on the opportunities for greening Vacant & Derelict Land in North and South Lanarkshire (FCS) • Hold a briefing seminar on the Best Practice Guidance for Land Regeneration (FCS) • Produce a Tool-Kit for greenspace quality standards for the GCV City Region (GCVGNP) • Implement a Natural Play demonstration site in a WIAT woodland (FCS) • Pilot woodland conservation activity for patients suffering from mental health issues (FCS) • Establish a mountain bike case study in Cumbernauld glen (FCS) • Publish a map pack walking study on WIAT woodland (FCS) • Establish a rolling program of First-Time school visits (FCS) • Launch 2 new Woodland health walk sites in partnership with the Live Active Referral Scheme (FCS) • Launch the Glasgow Forest Education Initiative Cluster Group (FCS) • Launch Glasgow Forest School Programme (FCS) • Deliver 5 information sessions on Forest School in Central Scotland (FCS) 	<p>Climate change</p> <p>Business Development</p> <p>Community Development</p> <p>Access and Health</p> <p>Environmental Quality</p>

Central Scotland Regional Forestry Forum Regional Priorities	Regional Actions 2007 - 2008	Scottish Forestry Strategy: theme
Environmental		
<p>Linking land use issues, the planning system and environmental agendas together</p> <p>Climate change; responding to this and working to reduce its impacts</p> <p>The protection of valued woodlands and the creation of native woodland habitat networks</p> <p>The protection and management of non-woodland habitats as a part of wider habitat management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a “forestry for planners” promotional programme to strengthen linkage with the planning system (FCS) • Publish and launch the Edinburgh and Lothians Forest Habitat Network (FCS) • Hold a briefing seminar on the Edinburgh and Lothians Forest Habitat Network targeting land owners, planners and developers (FCS) • Publish an Integrated Habitat Network for Falkirk (FCS) • Publish an Integrated Habitat Network for Glasgow and the Clyde Valley (GCVGNP) • Launch the new Woodlands In and Around Towns Challenge Fund 	<p>Business Development</p> <p>Community Development</p> <p>Environmental Quality</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>
Economic		
<p>The development of a woodheat industry working at scale in the Region</p> <p>The continued development of forest industry networks, clusters and joint initiatives</p> <p>Increased R&D focus on timber characteristics from the whole tree</p> <p>A quantification of the full economic benefits of woodlands and forests beyond their timber value</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the membership of the Lanarkshire Biomass Group to include representation from a wider range of stakeholders in the Central Belt (FCS) • Publish a feasibility study examining the opportunities for developing a woodfuel cluster in Glasgow (FCS) • Publish a feasibility study examining the opportunities for developing a woodfuel supply chain to supply the existing Lanarkshire Biomass sites (FCS) • Hold a briefing seminar on best practice silviculture to enhance timber quality (FCS) • Hold a seminar promoting the use of timber as a renewable construction material targeting housing associations in Central Scotland (FCS) 	<p>Climate Change</p> <p>Timber</p> <p>Business Development</p>
Overarching		
Engaging the public and wider stakeholders through a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a Communication Strategy to engage stakeholders across the Region (FCS) 	All

Central Scotland Regional Forestry Forum Regional Priorities	Regional Actions 2007 - 2008	Scottish Forestry Strategy: theme
Communications Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch the Central Scotland Conservancy website with information on Integrated Habitat Networks, the WIAT Stakeholder Network and “forestry for planners” Tool-Kit (FCS) • Deliver Central Scotland Treefest programme promoting woodland benefits including health outcomes and environmental art activities (FCS) • Hold 1 community based Treefest event in a priority WIAT area in Glasgow (FCS) 	