

# Science & Business News January 2005

## FR approved as BBSRC 'academic analogue'

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) has approved Forest Research as one of its "academic analogues". This status will allow us to work in collaboration with other BBSRC-approved institutions, to develop projects under responsive mode funding. Joint projects can be undertaken with any of BBSRC's own institutes, with Universities, or with other bodies with BBSRC 'academic analogue' status, such as The Scottish Agricultural College.

BBSRC is one of seven UK Research Councils sponsored through the Government's Office of Science and Technology. It invests over £260 million per annum in the bio-sciences and is the UK's principal sponsor of basic research on plants and microorganisms. The research encompasses fundamental, strategic and applied areas of study and covers a broad range of biological and related disciplines – for more information see [www.bbsrc.ac.uk](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk).

## FR wins contract to develop Forest Habitat Network for Scotland

FC Scotland, FC GB and Scottish Natural Heritage are jointly funding a new three-year project to support the strategic development of forest habitat networks, and their integration with open habitat networks, throughout Scotland. Work on the project is already underway, and is being undertaken by a project team in Ecology Division, led by Duncan Ray.

Key objectives are to:

- develop the theoretical basis for habitat networks in Scotland, based on focal species analyses at the landscape scale using the model BEETLE (Biological and Environmental Evaluation Tools for Landscape Ecology);
- produce a national map showing existing woodland and open habitat networks; produce a range of maps for regions of Scotland indicating woodland expansion and restoration opportunities and options, as well as identifying the ecological constraints.

## FR wins biomass contract for Sustainable Development Commission Scotland

FR and North Energy Associates have won a tender to report of the scope and potential of biomass as a renewable energy source for heating in Scotland. The work will be funded by Sustainable Development Commission Scotland.

## Overgrazing study completed

FR has completed the FC/EN/Defra project to assess a judgement based method to identify overgrazing in upland English native woods. Richard Thompson led the project, with assistance from Liz Poulson, Andy Peace, Helen Armstrong and Robin Gill. The method should allow Defra's Rural Development Service to survey farm woodlands and objectively assess whether overgrazing is an issue for cross compliance with Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition.

## Trees for Life

Professor Jim Lynch presented a Distinguished Professorial Lecture at the University of Surrey in November. The lecture focused on the wide benefits which society gains from trees in different contexts. It illustrated the health and recreation benefits of forests in a number of video clips. The event was attended by academic collaborators and by a number of FR staff. A CD of the lecture is now available from Alice Holt Library. Jim is shown here with the Vice Chancellor Professor Patrick Dowling.



### Innovation: progressing registration of butt rot bio-control

Timber decay caused by *Heterobasidion annosum* ('Fomes') costs Northern Europe €800 million per year. Although root and butt rot can be controlled using a chemical treatment (urea), UKWAS encourages the use of biological alternatives wherever possible.

*Phlebiopsis gigantea* is the active ingredient in two bio-control agents used to protect crops against root and butt rot. PG Suspension contains spores of *P. gigantea*, and is manufactured by staff in Tree Health Division, Alice Holt (see <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/pgsuspension>). It is used on pine in Thetford Forest. A Finnish bio-control manufacturing company, Verdera Oy, produce a similar product, Rotstop, which is used in Scandinavia on pine and spruce.

FR and Verdera Oy are collaborating closely to produce a joint dossier on *Phlebiopsis gigantea* to satisfy EU directives concerning the registration of plant protection products.

### Update on *Phytophthora ramorum* and *kernoviae*

Tree Health Division staff continue to be very active in discussions about both *P. ramorum* and *P. kernoviae*.

- Joan Webber contributed to the Plant Health and Seed Inspectorate annual conference, 10-12 January, discussing Forest Research's work on the two quarantine Phytophthoras.
- A number of leading scientific and horticultural advisers visited Alice Holt in December 2004 to discuss the pathogens and their implications for plant trade and horticulture.
- Joan Webber and Clive Brasier contributed to the Defra sponsored meeting on *P. ramorum* – 'Meeting of Interested Organisations - One Year On', which was held at the end of November.

### Focus on black poplar scab

David Rose and Joan Rose attended the UK Black Poplar Conservation Group Special Conference to discuss Black Poplar scab in November 2004. DDAS has recognised this as an increasing problem over the past three years (see issues 1 and 8 of Path News). Poplars in affected areas will be inspected by DDAS in Spring 2005 to confirm the role of poplar scab.

### Scottish Woodland History Discussion Group meeting

Jason Hubert and Richard Thompson attended this meeting at Battleby, which dealt with ancient and semi-natural woodland inventories, and the need to have a more 'fuzzy' classification of ancientness. As well as several Scottish presentations, Keith Kirby (English Nature) gave an interesting talk on updating the England Inventory and Sian Thomas spoke about the Ancient Woodland Inventory being carried out by the Woodland Trust in Northern Ireland.

### Climate change and soil function

FR is involved in a Defra-sponsored "Climate change and soil function" project with the National Soil Research Institute and the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research. Elena Vanguelova, Andy Moffat, Mark Broadmeadow, Tony Hutchings and Sam Evans attended the first meeting of consortium parties in November 2004. A four-month contract was undertaken to review published and unpublished research on the role of climatic variables on soil properties and the effects of climate change on soil functions including agriculture, forestry and the built environment. The scoping study will be used to inform the debate on the effects of climate change on soil functions in relation to goods and services expected of them in the UK. The study will clarify further research necessary in order to develop tools and guidelines to manage the risks to soils from climate change.

### ECOSLOPES

For the last three years, FR has been involved in a European project 'ECOSLOPES' (Eco-engineering and Conservation of Slopes for Long-term Protection from Erosion, Landslides and Storms) that was set up to improve the management of vegetation on slopes to reduce erosion and landslides, and Bruce Nicoll has recently completed work on the final report. Forest Research staff compared the stability and root architecture of trees growing on sloping and horizontal ground. Within FR, Ecoslopes research tasks were conducted by Bruce Nicoll, Alexis Achim, Barry Gardiner and Shawn Mochan from FMD, with considerable assistance from a number of staff from the TSU. The final part



of the project was the development of a 'Slopes Decision Support System' which is a tool to assist eco-engineers in managing vegetation on vulnerable slopes to minimise soil loss. The 'SDSS' will be released later this year. [www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-63KHE2](http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-63KHE2)

### **Irish draw on UK expertise to manage peatland catchments**

Coillte and the Irish Environmental Protection Agency have been drawing on FR's expertise in their review of the management of forested Irish peatlands. As part of an ongoing collaboration, Tom Nisbet (EHSD) participated in a series of meetings in Dublin at the end of 2004, to ensure that knowledge obtained about the management of phosphate runoff in Scottish peatland forests is, wherever appropriate, transferred to the Irish situation. The Scottish experiences are also informing new research being undertaken by a consortium of Irish Universities on behalf of the Irish Environmental Protection Agency

### **Chinese visit NRS**

Steve Lee and Sam Samuel organised a 3-day meeting on conifer tree breeding for a party of 5 Chinese visitors from the Chinese Academy of Science. This involved 1 day at NRS and 2 field visits.



## **Forthcoming Events**

Full details of FR's events are available on FR's internet site: [www.forestresearch.gov.uk/events](http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/events)

### **16 February, Silvan House – 'Using social research in planning and management'**

EHSD's Suzanne Martin, David Edwards and Liz O'Brien will be amongst the tutors at a free educational seminar being held on this topic in Silvan House's central boardroom.

Details: <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-68JD8G>

### **1 March, National History Museum, London**

Andy Moffat (EHSD) is to speak at SUBR:IM's 1st Annual Conference – 'Joined up regeneration of brownfields'.

The conference will comprise sessions on regeneration and remediation techniques. Ian Gibson MP, Chair of the House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology is the keynote speaker. Further details available from: [www.subrim.org.uk](http://www.subrim.org.uk)

### **10 March, NRS – Annual FTA/ICF Research Update sponsored by FC Scotland**

Topics include the following:

- Improving the timber quality of Sitka spruce through tree breeding - the Kershope study. Steve Lee and Barry Gardiner.
- Forest habitat networks - Duncan Ray
- Climate change and Scottish forests - Mark Broadmeadow.
- The gales of January 2005 - Bruce Nicoll.
- The dieback of birch in new native woodlands - Sarah Green.
- Reduced Hylobius damage with Continuous Cover Forestry? - Roger Moore.

### **17–18 March, Surrey – Non-pesticide weed control for tree establishment**

Two identical events which provide the opportunity to see and discuss alternative methods of weed control for woodland creation.

Detail: <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-68MJVK>

### **5-8 April, IUFRO Conference, 'Sustainable Forestry – Theory and Practice', University of Edinburgh.**

This conference aims to demonstrate how scientific knowledge has evolved to address challenges posed by sustainable forestry. FR's Duncan Ray is organising the conference.

Details: <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-64dh2h>

### **7-8 April, Making Brownfields Green: A fresh look at sustainable regeneration through urban greening. Warwick**

EHSD and British Land Reclamation Society are holding a conference on urban forestry and greening for those involved in planning and executing the creation of urban greenspace and its management. Further details from Danielle Sinnott or Tony Hutchings (EHSD).

### **31 May to 3 June, ForestSAT 2005, Sweden**

Conference about the operational tools in forestry using remote sensing techniques.

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/website/forestresearch.nsf/ByUnique/HCOU-4Z2KQ6>

### **14–15 June, Trees in Changing Climate, Surrey**

A conference to bring home the implications of climate change to all those who plant trees.

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-64GGZJ>

## **New Publications**

FR Annual Report and Accounts 2003-2004 was laid before Parliament on 27 January 2005 and will be distributed early February.

FCIN6 (Revised edition) *Phytophthora Disease of Alder*. J Webber, J Gibbs and S Hendry, Forest Research. December 2004.

FCIN63 *Managing light to enable natural regeneration in British conifer forests*. Sophie Hale December 2004.

*Managing Woodlands and their Mammals*. Proceedings of a symposium organised jointly by The Mammal Society and the Forestry Commission. Edited by Chris Quine, Richard Shore and Roger Trout.

*Social Science in Forestry*. Public participation and partnership: a review of Forestry Commission practice and governance in a changing political and economic context. Dr Sue Weldon in collaboration with Paul Tabbush.

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