

Perth and Argyll Regional Forestry Forum
7 February 2008
FC, MES, Unit 4, Lomond Court, Castle Business Park, Stirling

Present:

George McRobbie (GMcR) Chair
Russell Bruce (RB)
Shelia Clark (S)
Grant Moir (GM)
Charlotte Flower (CF)
Tony Waterhouse (TW)
Ian Thomas (IT)
Ian Stewart (IS)
Andrew Thompson (AT)
Syd House (SH) Conservator, Perth and Argyll Conservancy
Moira MacPherson (MM) Secretary

Also Present:

Gordon Donaldson, Forest District Manager, Cowal and Trossachs FD
Margaret Watson, Forest Industries Manager, Key Industries Team
Andy Leitch (pm only) Timber Development Adviser, FCS

Apologies:

Rick Worrell (RW)
Lucy Sumsion (LS)
Jon Watson (JW)

Welcome and Introductions

1. GMcR welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular, the guests and the new members to the forum. By way of introduction, everyone in attendance gave a brief summary of themselves and their background.
2. By way of providing further information to new members on the remit and workings of the RFF, GMcR requested that the guidance issued to RFF's when they were set-up be re-issued.

Action: MM to re-distribute earlier guidance from FCS NO

Action Points and Notes of the Previous Meeting

3. The notes were agreed and the following action points were carried forward:
 - (3) Proposed survey of woodlands on traditional estates. It was agreed to contact Rick Worrell (who in turn would liase with Phil Higginbotham) to see of he wants to continue with this

Action MM to contact RW

- (6) Details on proposals for work on PAWS sites

Action MM to remind RW

(11) Forestry and Climate Change Mitigation, Hugh Clayden was unable to attend this meeting due to other commitments.

Action MM to invite Hugh Clayden to the next meeting

SH offered members a copy of the pack 'A Convenient Truth', together with a copy of FC research Note FCRN101

Action MM to send a pack, FC Research Note to each member together with the web link to the FC Climate Change Action Plan

(12) Briefing note on the new woodfuel plant outside Perth. SH explained that planning permission has not been finalised, therefore the plant is not yet active. IS provided other examples of Woodfuel Plants. SH would continue to monitor and feedback

Action SH

(15) Non Timber Products proposal by Donald McPhillimy, RB thanked Donald for preparing the paper. SH referred to the Implementation plan where a workshop on the subject is proposed in 08/09. Mike Strachan of P&A Conservancy will organise this

Action MM to send RFF members details of the date, venue and programme once agreed

Chairman's Report

4. The Chairman fed back on recent involvement he had had on forestry aspects. In particular he highlighted the heightened level of interest in forestry which the new Scottish Government was showing, especially Mike Russell, the Minister with the forestry portfolio, who last week attended FCS's National Committee for Scotland. The contribution of forestry to Climate Change mitigation seems to be of particular interest.
5. RFF members agreed to a suggestion to invite Mr Russell to the next RFF meeting in Argyll in May in order for him to see the work of the Forum in action.

Action: MM to contact FCS Secretariat to issue invite MR

Perth and Argyll Conservancy Report

6. SH spoke in detail on a number of aspects of his report including:
 - (a) monitoring of FCS G&L expenditure
 - (b) ongoing cases of windfarm proposals and associated deforestation
 - (c) *Phytophthora ramrod* – proposed FCS action and dissemination of guidance and information as well as related Rhododendron survey of Argyll & Bute and LLTNP

- (d) Ongoing developments on woodfuel and outlined proposals for continuing to support woodfuel in the Conservancy

SRDP Update

7. SH gave RFF members an overview of progress. The subject was vital both to FCS Conservancy staff and to other forestry stakeholders who were keenly anticipating the details of the new incentives for forestry to revealed under Rural Development Contracts.
8. It was acknowledged that the work of the RFF in helping identify regional forestry priorities as part of the SFS had helped significantly towards the identification of regional priorities under RDC's. This exercise had helped underline the key work and contribution of the RFF. Accordingly it was agreed to formally review the RFF's input into SFS Implementation Plan and RDC regional priorities at the September meeting and to also monitor any aspects of RDC and forestry support, which they felt, needed addressing.

Action: MM to ensure that these topics are included in the RFF's September agenda

Perth and Argyll Implementation Plan

9. This had now been submitted and agreed by FCS NO though the final version had edited out many of the agreed actions. IS in particular felt that there were insufficient timber development actions in the final version. SH however reassured members that he would proceed on the basis of the original version agreed at the RFF meeting on 27 September.
10. In relation to the action the above and other consultation which this and other For a would be expected to provide the regional perspective, GMcR agreed that he would seek guidance at the meeting of the RFF Chairs planned for 10th March with a view to FCS NO setting out a programme of key tasks and responses which would be sought from the Fora so that their meetings and agenda can be scheduled accordingly.

Action: GMcR to raise and feedback

Update on Mid Scotland Forest Industries Cluster

11. Margaret Watson thanked the RFF for the invite and chance to participate in the meeting. She updated members on the Scottish Forestry Industry Cluster and its future direction. In particular she outlined the proposals to resurrect the Mid Scotland Regional FIC which were now well underway (an earlier meeting had been held last September) and it was intended to appoint a co-ordinator to the

regional Cluster very soon. It was agreed to invite the prospective co-ordinator to RFF business meetings as required.

Action: MM to liaise with MW on the appointment of the Mid Scotland FIC co-ordinator and to invite to future RFF business meetings

12. There will be 3 regional clusters covering Scotland and 3 –year funding to support these has been applied for.

13. The role of the Clusters in informing the Scottish parliamentary cross-party Forestry Group was emphasised though there was uncertainty as to whether the Cross-Party Group was still in existence.

Action: GMcR agreed to contact Stuart Goodall of ConFor to try to ensure that the Cross-party Group was resurrected.

FES update

Gordon Donaldson spoke to the topics

14. FD Strategic Plans

Final draft plans now prepared and ready for public consultation.

Action: MM to get the time-table from Nicol Sinclair of FES on the timetable for the public consultation exercise.

15. GD asked if RFF members wished to endorse the final approved plan. It was agreed to repeat the approach undertaken previously whereby the RFF split into 4 sub-groups to liaise with each of the 4 principal Forest Districts with Strategic Plans (NB – this requires allocating new members to replace those now left.) It is suggested that the following RFF members collaborate in continuing to scrutinise relevant FD Strategic Plans:

Forest District	RFF Member
Tay (Charlie Taylor)	George McRobbie Charlotte Flower Ian Stewart Julia Garritt
Cowal and Trossachs (Gordon Donaldson)	Tony Waterhouse Russell Bruce Grant Moir Rick Worrell
West Argyll (Nick Purdy)	Sheila Clark Andrew Thompson Ian Thomas
Lorne (Donald McNeill)	Lucy Sumsion Jon Watson

FES update – Repositioning Programme

16. GD reminded the RFF of how this exercise had originally been conducted ie identifying potential woodland areas which FES could sell and then re-invest the proceeds in acquiring bare land for new woodland creation principally, but not exclusively, in areas closer to the bulk of the Scottish population. RFF members were now being asked for comment on the proposed initial programme which had identified only one candidate area in the Conservancy (Acharossan, Glendaruel 1592 ha).

17. RFF members were particularly interested in the support available to communities who had or proposed to purchase ex-FES woodlands.

Action: Details of FES repositioning programme to be sent to RFF members and any views submitted to GMcR by 15 March.

18. GD highlighted prospective and actual FES acquisitions at Westfield (Alyth), Balkello (Dundee), and Glenorchy. He also described the current internal review of Forest District boundaries, which was ongoing.

Timber Development and STTF budget update

19. Andy Leitch described the Timber Development Programme.

Action: MM to circulate AL's powerpoint presentation

20. He also explained progress on the STTF. The budget had been reviewed to extend the span of the STTF over a further 3 years after the end of this FY. There was however less scope for manipulating funds across the 3 years so projects had to utilise the money available within any given year's allocation.

Any Other Business

21. SC outlined a new cup and ring discovery under a fallen tree in Argyll. This is a significant archaeological find but, ironically, Historic Scotland, cannot propose it for scheduling. Given the forestry link SC asked members of the RFF to be aware of this find and if they wished to nominate it as an SAM then she would be happy to provide further information.

Action: All plus MM to circulate picture from SC

22. There was also a short discussion on progress on Scottish Woodland Crofts initiative. FCS is in the process of appointing a Woodland Crofts Project Officer to support this type of initiative.

Progress in Dornoch was leading the way though there was also interest in Mull and other parts of Argyll. It was suggested that this was a topic for a future meeting.

Action: MM to note for next meeting's agenda. Jake Willis of CWA to be invited to attend and brief RFF on progress in Argyll.

Future Meetings:

22 to 23 May Site visit to North Argyll on 22 May (topics to include Argyll IFS, woodfuel, Rhododendron, community and crofting forestry in Argyll, and forestry and the historic cultural environment of North Argyll with ½ day business meeting in the Connell area

19 September 2008 LLTNP Headquarters at Balloch