

MINUTES OF THE SCOTTISH FORESTRY FORUM

WEDNESDAY 31 August 2004
CENTRAL BOARD ROOM, SILVAN HOUSE

Present:

Andrew Raven (Forestry Commissioner) - Chair
Simon Hodge (Forestry Commission)
Ian Forshaw (Forestry Commission)
James Hepburn-Scott (FTA)
Michael Osbourne (Management Companies)
Philip Higginbotham (UKFPA)
Craig Campbell (NFU)
Ann Alexander (Forestry Commission)
Penny Edwards (Forestry for People Panel)
Hugh Insley (Forestry Commission)
Adam Harrison (WWF Scotland)
James Ogilvie (Forestry Commission)
Tim Hall (Woodland Manager Scotland)
Phil Baardar (Highland Birchwood)
Richard Broadhurst (Forestry Commission)
Cedric Wilkins (Scottish Enterprise)
Frank Strang (Seerad)
Alan Hampson (SNH)
Steve Robertson (Reforestation Scotland)
Gordon Patterson (Forestry Commission)
James Pendlebury (Forestry Commission)
Roger Coppock (FIDC)
Sharon Robinson (Forestry Commission) - Secretary

1 Introduction

Andrew Raven welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2 Apologies

Apologies were given for Bob McIntosh who had a ministerial commitment. Apologies were also received from Graeme Morison, Colin Parsons, Mike Wood, Peter Wilson, Alisdair Speedie, Paul Snaith, Ian Ross, Hazel Allen and Cameron Maxwell.

3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting 17 March 2004 were accepted as a true record.

4 FCS Update

Simon Hodge presented a paper to the forum members detailing Forestry Commission Scotland activities since the last meeting. An update will be provided prior to future meetings.

Although members welcomed this, there was concern that there may be a need for greater co-ordination between the FCS update and the SFS Checklist to enable the forum members to absorb the information easier and avoid duplication.

(Action: Ian Forshaw would circulate copies of FCS quarterly report to members.)

The timber-forecast study in Southwest Scotland and the data that was produced was discussed in detail. It was expressed that this level of data would prove valuable if extended to the rest of Scotland. Although it was agreed in principle, this could prove difficult, as the situation in Southwest Scotland was exceptional, therefore the methodology may not transfer to the rest of Scotland. **(Action: It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next meeting in the New Year .)**

On the matter of CAP reform short term input on forestry, members of the Forum were reassured that FCS were in active dialogue with SEERAD and that issues were being actively considered as part of the CAP reform process.

5 SFS Checklist

The SFS Checklist was discussed. The group asked for more attention to be paid to detail and if possible provide easy to understand measures of change, and to focus on outcomes rather than inputs and to avoid the term “ongoing”. The fact that this paper was a working draft was emphasised to the forum members, and input from other bodies is required for it to be accurate. Ian Forshaw confirmed that FCS shared the industry’s concern about the need to sharpen up forecast production statistics. It was agreed that the SFS priorities need to be the main focus.

(Action: Richard Broadhurst)

In response to a query related to assessment of sites for suitable wood processing on page 2, it was explained to the members that this referred to a specific assessment carried out on behalf of the Cluster on sites with a minimum scale of 30ha. The difficulties in securing suitable sites for wood processing in general was acknowledged. Members agreed that this relies on local authorities to green-light suitable development sites. It was agreed the UKFPA provide updated processing investment figures for the SFS Checklist.

(Action: Phil Higginbottom)

6 Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme

James Ogilvie presented his paper to the group including a summary picture of grant activity over the last 5 years. He explained the results of the SFGS review resulting in recommendations for changes to standard costs and specifications along with other increases to standard costs. These proposals are currently awaiting EU approval. He also informed members of the forum about 3 new stewardship grants, which FCS hope to pilot in 05/06. This was shared with the members in confidence.

There was some discussion about the shortfall in grant spend in recent years. James confirmed that FCS are working to ensure that the full grant budget is taken up this financial year. He also pointed out that the claim period has been reduced from a 5-year claim 'window' under WGS, to a specific year of claim under SFGS, which will help the accuracy of grant spend forecasting.

Planting statistics were discussed. Although new planting activity is depressed due to CAP reform uncertainties, it is hoped that once this uncertainty disappears, uptake will increase towards the historic 10000ha level necessary to achieve the 25% Strategy woodland cover. James Ogilvie was asked to confirm that the restocking figures presented included restocking under forest plans.

It was pointed out that there is a particular need for more information from planting data about the future timber resource for small processing businesses. The Forum agreed that these would be important issues for the members to consider during its Forestry and Rural Development discussions.

(Action: James Ogilvie)

7 Regional Forestry Forums

Simon Hodge informed the National Forum of progress on the establishment of the five Regional Forestry Forums. Simon specifically thanked members of SFF for their hard work raising awareness of this and as a result FCS had received over 200 applications. The standard of the applications received was extremely high with a good balance covering economic, social and environmental areas. All members of the regional forums had now been appointed and the first meetings would take place mainly in October.

The SFF agreed that the Chair and two members from each regional forum would be co-opted onto the membership of the national forum. The 10 remaining places were discussed and it was agreed that national organisations that were not represented at a local level should be invited to nominate a representative on to national forum whilst endeavouring to retain the balance between the economic, social and environmental pillars.

It was agreed that a note on Regional Forum membership be circulated, including a brief synopsis of each member.

(Action: Cameron Maxwell)

It was agreed that this would be the last meeting of the existing membership and the next National Forum would be with the new membership in early 2005. The Chair thanked the members for their contribution.

(Action: FCS)

8 Proposals for the 2004 Scottish Forestry Forum Public Meeting

Simon Hodge explained to the group the arrangements for the Public Meeting which will take place on 15 November at the Lodge Hotel, Loch Lomond. There was concern raised over the location chosen, however the overall view was still that a balance must be struck between moving the meeting around the regions and using an accessible central location.

Simon informed the Forum members that the Minister will attend and give an opening address. He will also launch a public consultation on the Community Purchase Scheme. This will be followed by a presentation by Director Scotland. It was expressed that if the Minister could stay to take part in a question and answer session this would help send out positive messages. Simon then went on to inform the group that he intends to have 2 sets of workshops in the afternoon, one of which would focus on the main topic of rural development and another to address any issues which are raised in the morning session. This is designed to increase attendance, as not everyone may be interested in the rural development topic.

In response to suggestions from the members, it was agreed that in order to enliven the event, a thought provoking and controversial presenter should be invited to spark debate. Members were invited to send their nominations to Simon Hodge. It was also suggested that regional forum members issue invitations to increase public awareness.

(Action: Forum Members)

9 Consultation draft of the new Rural Development Regulations and EU Forestry Strategy.

Simon Hodge circulated a paper to allow members to get a feel for these important EU developments. Aspects discussed in more detail were: the introductions to Land Management Contracts, flat rate payments for forestry and potential opportunity to use modulated funding for forestry. The RDR will define the scope of what FCS can support and what measures are eligible for co-financing. Overall members welcomed the paper. A copy of the FC response on the Scottish Forestry Strategy would be copied to Forum members. It was also

commented that Forestry would now be recognised as mainstream land use along side agriculture.

(Action: Sharon Robinson)

10 A.O.B.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The Forum confirmed that this would be its final meeting under its current membership. The next meeting would be in the new year and a date would be decided once the new membership is agreed. Sharon Robinson would canvas for a date nearer the time.

The Chair once again thanked all members for their effort and time and recognising the valuable work that the forum does and emphasised that everyone's contribution is appreciated.

(Action: Sharon Robinson)

12 Rural Development

The group were split into two workshops, in the first workshop session 2 groups were asked to discuss the following topic - "identify strengths and weaknesses of forestry in relation to rural development, identify the future balance between providing services and providing raw material and identify ways to improve."

Group 1 Key Action Points:

- Increase wood processing within Scotland and local adding value
- Better ways to incentivise and help small forestry related businesses – e.g. local cluster groups.
- Marketing smaller parcels and developing e-marketing.
- Enhance the profile of local and Scottish wood and other products in procurement policies of public bodies, linked to sustainability message about wood as a material.
- Aim to create a diversity of forests to be able to supply diverse products and uses in future; more stress on high timber quality for a range of species.
- Develop forestry machinery 'rings'.

Group 2 Key Actions:

- Develop or evaluate new or innovative methods of securing benefits to providers e.g. trading certificates of environmental benefit; carbon credits, planning credits.
- Undertake some scenario planning of different/balanced options for securing benefits in a region.

- Get more involved at a local and local authority level in promoting/incorporating forestry's relevance & delivery capacity.

The second workshop aims were to identify potential issues to discuss at the SFF public meeting. Group 1 highlighted 4 key points:

- Heat Energy – Update on progress and an opportunity to endorse the agenda already being developed.
- Community Activity
- IT
- Sustainability

Group 2 summarised the points below as the priorities they would like to be discussed:

- Address the need for integrating greater capital grant aid for wood processing SMEs
- Define what we mean by a cultural assets & undertake an audit of what FE and the private sector have.
- Address need to influence planning authorities about key issues such as:
- Planning restrictions on public/private sector provision of affordable housing sites
- Planning approval of schemes which do not incorporate use of sustainable energy sources or sustainable building practices.
- Encourage bio-energy schemes through the provision of appropriate grant incentives, exemplar projects and information (e.g. pricing and cost models).