

## **MAY 2009 DIRECTOR FC WALES' REPORT FOR NATIONAL COMMITTEE**

### **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 08/09 & 09/10**

1. Key Performance Indicators 08/09 - we have met 18 (82%) out of 22 KPIs. 4 were not met: KPI 2 (cases of non-compliance with approved Forest Design Plans on the Assembly Estate), KPI 4 (area of woodland entered into BWV), KPI 16 (responding to Freedom of Information requests within 20 working days) and KPI 22 Greenerways.
2. Performance and Business Measures 09/10 - my Policy and Programming team will develop a framework for reporting during 09/10 and the first formal report for 09/10 will be available for our next National Committee meeting in July.

### **POLICY**

#### **Woodlands for Wales Launch**

3. Woodlands for Wales, WAG's revised woodland strategy, was successfully launched on 27th March 2009 at Carreg Cennen Farm near Llandeilo by Elin Jones AM. 85 guests attended and the Minister introduced the strategy. Speakers from the industry, social and environmental sectors spoke about how the revised Strategy will influence their work.

#### **FC Wales' Corporate Plan**

4. Our Minister has now approved the 2009-2012 Corporate Plan. A summary document has been distributed to FCW staff, while the full Corporate Plan will be available in electronic format only. The Plan will be updated every year with work underway to look at the development of the 2010/11 version. All-staff meetings are being held in north and south Wales in May to discuss further details of both Woodlands for Wales and the Corporate Plan.

### **ESTATE MANAGEMENT**

#### **Harvesting & Marketing**

5. During the final quarter we saw an improvement in marketing conditions and demand for timber from Assembly Woodlands. Demand for all products was strong across both our standing sale and direct production operations. The increased demand is attributed to less private sector volume availability, increased

competitiveness of the panelboard sector due to the weak pound, and the usual stock building at retail outlets. At this stage we see no indication that increased demand can be attributed to increasing activity in the construction sector.

6. As a result of better trading conditions we were able to outturn a total final year volume of 715k m3 against a business plan volume of 790k m3. The planned thinning volume of 180k m3 was exceeded by 7k m3 and therefore the shortfall in overall volume achievement of 80k m3 was exclusively against our clearfelling operations.
7. We recently completed our final stage of Long Term Contract (LTC) open market opportunities and the final round was successful. As a result, we will achieve the target published in the marketing strategy of 50% of volume. The LTCs will form a stable base for delivery of the more difficult elements of our programme and will facilitate investment in machinery and resources.
8. The Port Talbot and Shotton biomass plants remain buoyant for woody biomass material and the supply chain for these developments is becoming increasingly established. We have entered a 3-year contract with UPM/Tilhill to recover biomass from roadside management programmes using brash baling technology.
9. We have experienced increased public interest in local firewood sales and in response we will formulate a clear policy by August 2009.

### **Tintern Landslip**

10. Current progress is still on target for completion by the summer holiday period. Local meetings have been held with councillors and local AMs to allay their concerns. The contract engineers ensured the public highway was open over the Easter period to allow improved parking for visitors to Tintern.

### **National Forest Estate Wind Farm Programme**

11. The Strategic Search Area (SSA) F developer (Nuon) is finalising its layout ahead of submitting its planning application in early July. My team is reviewing the final layout for compliance with their contract. The developer in SSA D (Airtricity) has submitted its first iteration of the development layout, which involved access to turbines on adjacent private land and new turbines in an adjacent forest block. A report will be put to the Project Board for consideration of the issues and both developers have now started community consultations on their proposals.

### **Business Sustainability**

12. The Executive Board has agreed to seek ISO 14001 accreditation for the whole FC estate, recording the sustainability of its 'back office functions' to complement the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) on the operational estate. This will cover energy, transport and waste management initially, followed by water.

## **GRANTS AND REGULATIONS**

### **Better Woodlands for Wales**

13. Demand for Better Woodland for Wales (BWW) remains strong with new areas being added into the scheme. To date more than 1000 BWW cases have entered into the scheme and 454 cases have been approved totalling over 16,000 hectares. A total of £3.2m of grants was paid in 2008/09, which was slightly below grants committed due to the impact of the economic downturn and poor weather, meaning that approximately £550k of approved work did not go ahead.
14. My team is looking to introduce a grant during 2009/10 for rhododendron clearance where *Phytophthora* has been identified. £100k has been ring-fenced towards this and will be delivered through BWW.
15. The BWW grants budget for 2009/10 is now fully committed, which is a good indication of the popularity of BWW. We are now working to ensure that committed funds are spent by liaising with the sector to identify approved work that is unlikely to go ahead, in order to release committed funds for schemes where work will be carried out.

### **Woodlands for Learning**

16. The Woodlands for Learning Team has been supporting the launch of the DCELLS Outdoor Learning Module for the Foundation Phase (all children aged 3 to 7). The main workshop at the events featured the Forest Education Initiative funded "Words in the Woods" project. 70 teachers and advisors attended each of the seven events, which presented excellent networking opportunities for my Education team. The First Minister and Ministers from other departments were also in attendance.

### **Plant!**

17. Three Ministerial visits have now taken place. The initial Plant! site at Cefn Ila celebrated its first birthday in April with Jane Davidson AM. Rhodri Morgan, First Minister, launched the newest Plant! site near Tredegar. Elin Jones AM launched the site near Tywyn and all visits involved local primary schools and community groups. Negotiations for the purchase of the fourth Plant! site at Llandegla are underway.

## **PROJECTS & INITIATIVES**

### **FUTUREforest – Interreg IVC Project**

18. FUTUREforest is a new Interreg IVC project in which FC Wales is a partner together with several European countries. This is a three-year project to help "future proof" our policy decisions in relation to the impact of climate change on forestry. The project was launched by the signing of the co-operation agreement by all partners at Brandenburg last January. The first phase "Seeing is believing" is under way and the first visit, to Catalonia, took place last February and had natural risks (pests, disease

and fire) as its theme. This March the Wales study visit took place at Abergavenny and had water management and soil sustainability as its themes.

### **Wales Forest Business Partnership**

19. The directors of the new Company have held their first board meeting at which they refreshed the terms of reference and objectives in line with those required of a Company Ltd by guarantee. They have appointed a manager and their expectation is that FC Wales, whilst continuing to provide support, will not be involved in the management of the Company's activities.

### **Relocation**

20. Work on the new WAG building in Aberystwyth is progressing well and the expectation is that FC Wales' National Office will relocate in November 2009. Project plans are in place for the relocation of staff and IT systems. We have had a positive meeting with senior WAG IT staff with regard to our aim to integrate WAG and FCW hardware and systems. WAG has commissioned their main service provider, Siemens, to provide an outline design and a further meeting has been arranged for mid June to consider this and agree the project approach. FC Wales' staff closely linked to the project have formally visited the site and were impressed even by the partially complete building.

### **Information Commissioner's Office**

21. We recently met with the ICO Complaints Team regarding the complaint on Cefn Croes wind farm development and were advised to share two supplementary documents under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. We have shared this information with the complainant and the ICO Complaints Team has now closed this complaint. The ICO Good Practice and Enforcement Team is currently investigating our handling of this case in terms of meeting Codes of Practice, but this has no bearing on the complaint which is now closed.

### **Institute of Chartered Foresters**

22. Forestry and Arboricultural professionals from across the UK gathered in Cardiff in April for the Institute of Chartered Foresters' national conference entitled "Timber, Mutton or Fuel?". The conference was opened by our Minister for Rural Affairs Elin Jones, who gave the keynote speech outlining the harsh reality that climate change will increasingly influence priorities for land use.

## **PEOPLE ISSUES**

23. The FC Wales' Learning and Development Plan has been launched for the next three years, with the purpose of ensuring learning and development activity is aligned to our strategic and business priorities. The plan also ensures that learning and development is delivered in a way that meets the requirements of staff e.g.

convenient location of events. New entrants courses and many other events are already being designed and delivered in Wales.

24. As part of the Amnawdd scheme, there are five undergraduate students taking up work experience placements this summer across various districts.

25. The Management Development Programme for middle managers is progressing well. 10 of FC Wales' staff are already participating, with an additional 17 managers taking part this year.

**Trefor Owen**  
**Director FCW**  
**1 May 2009**