



Agenda Item 7

24th September 2010

WNC 26.10

FOREST RESEARCH IN WALES UPDATE

Purpose

1. This paper is to provide an update to the National Committee on current developments for Forest Research in Wales.

Management

2. The mid-year Forest Research Executive Board (FREB) meeting was held in Talybont in July, reflecting the aim of FREB to have one full meeting per year in Wales. The meeting was preceded by a visit to see *Phytophthora ramorum* infected larch sites in South Wales (Hugh Evans, Peter Freer-Smith and Andy Moffat).
3. James Pendlebury visited Talybont on 16 and 17 August to talk to FR staff about the current spending review and to see *Phytophthora ramorum* infected sites in South Wales.

Staffing

4. The number of staff in FR in Wales has increased since the last report:
 - Finlay McAllister has joined the team working on the Interreg IVA project IMPACT. He is based in Aberystwyth.
 - Helen John has joined FR on a one year secondment to work on an Innovations & New Markets project to evaluate the business case for future management of restocking, principally assessing the role of nematodes as biological control.
 - An excellent PhD student, Twilight Barnardo, has been appointed to a KESS studentship with Prof Richard Lucas of IGES, Aberystwyth; Hugh Evans and Juan Suarez are FR supervisors. The topic is *Computer based abstraction of forest structural attributes and volume/biomass from terrestrial laser scanning data*.

Finance and research opportunities

5. The EU Framework Programme 7 project on risks from pine wood nematode, coordinated by Hugh Evans, has been successful and is in full contract negotiation. The project is likely to start in January 2011 and will be supported by a new PB5 modeller working with Hugh Evans in Aberystwyth.
6. A EU COST Action on pathways for movement of pests and pathogens (PERMIT), led by Hugh Evans has been approved and will commence in November 2010. The Action will involve scientists and regulators in 23 COST and 6 non-COST countries.

National Committee

7. Progress in scoping a Research Forest/Natural Laboratory research platform at a catchment scale in the Dyfi has been very good and is accelerating. Hugh Evans is working closely with Profs Mark Macklin and Chris Thomas of Aberystwyth University to develop the concepts and to plan delivery. Excellent meetings have been held with Andy Rowland and Allan Wynne Jones of Dyfi Biosphere and EcoDyfi. Hugh presented the proposal for a research platform at a meeting of the Biosphere organised by CCW on 15 September. The aim is to develop a research platform, building on the already extensive data gathered in the Dyfi catchment and to develop joint bids for funding to carry out research to underpin evidence gathering, particularly on Ecosystem Services. There was enthusiastic support for the proposal at the meeting. Regarding FC Wales woodland holdings in the Dyfi catchment, constructive discussions with Ruth Jenkins and David Farmery indicate that research to support adherence to the Water Framework Directive and the social agenda for woodlands will be key elements of the new research platform.

Risks

8. Good progress has been made in development of FR in Wales. However, the funding situation remains difficult, particularly relating to the comprehensive spending review. Success in winning new external contracts also requires recruitment of new staff and the current freeze on new appointments could affect delivery.

Communications

9. The Climate Change Workshop held in Llandrindod Wells on 18 May was very well attended and has received many favourable comments. The presentations from the event are available on the FC website (<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-83UKD6>).

10. Forest Research held a 'meet the FR team' event at the Royal Welsh Show on Tuesday 20 July. This was well attended and there have been a number of follow-up contacts and discussions.

Recommendation

11. The National Committee is asked to note the contents of this paper.

Hugh Evans
Head of Forest Research in Wales
16 September 2010