

REVIEW OF LAND MANAGED BY FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND – CONSULTATION EXERCISE

REPORT

PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT - **DINGWALL**

VENUE/DATE: **TULLOCH CASTLE HOTEL: 22 JAN. 2004**

ORGANISER: **BOB DUNSMORE**

MEETING CHAIR OR FACILITATOR: **ANDREW RAVEN**

WORKING GROUP REPRESENTATIVE: **DAVID HENDERSON-HOWAT**

ATTENDANCE FIGURE: **55**

ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK SHEETS:

NUMBER OF COMPLETED FEEDBACK SHEETS: 33

Females 27%; Males 73%

Age:

a. under 25?	4%
b. 25 – 35?	4%
c. 35 – 45?	42%
d. 45 – 55?	24%
e. over 55?	26%

Distance travelled:

a. under 10 miles?	10%
b. between 10 and 25 miles?	54%
c. between 25 and 40 miles?	12%
d. between 40 and 55 miles?	6%
e. over 55 miles?	18%

Was the meeting worthwhile?

a. Definitely worthwhile	64%
b. Quite worthwhile	36%
c. Waste of time	-

COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED VISION

- Should also recognise value of cultural environment
- Too restrictive: why only benefit “everyone *in Scotland*” – what about people in other countries; why “*natural* environments” as opposed to “environments”; why just “creating *opportunities* for economic development” instead of “creating economic development”
- Welcome implicit emphasis on communities – right that this should come first: economic benefits flow from effective community involvement.
- Are aims (ie social, environmental, economic) ranked? Recognition that priorities will vary with location and circumstances.
- Vision statement is too glib, and too far from reality on ground. A step change is required, eg to bring silviculture up to standard found in other European countries.
- Too little information about *how* vision will be realised; eg almost nothing about potential for extending continuous cover forestry. Also, financial constraints prevents the FC from doing what it wants to do and the financial realities of timber prices must not be ignored. Where is funding coming from to achieve this vision?
- Should not underestimate the fundamental nature of the review for the FCS. Real opportunity to achieve positive outputs. There is a lack of input from outside the forestry industry.
- FCS may not be the only organisation which can achieve the vision on the FCS estate

SUBJECTS THAT WERE RAISED DURING MEETING OR ON THE FEEDBACK SHEETS

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- Surprise that formal owners of national forest estate are Scottish Ministers (albeit by virtue of their office). Important to recognise that these are public assets held on behalf of the people of Scotland, who are the “true” owners.
- Links between health and proximity to woodlands/woodland recreation opportunities. What scientific evidence is there that such proximity brings health benefits? Need for more work to investigate this, drawing (eg) on experience in Central Scotland Forest and initiatives such as *Paths for All* and *Paths for Health*. Important to recognise two strands: potential enrichment of communities themselves, and fitness/health benefits of individuals. Forests and woodlands are not in the right place to offer such benefits to the bulk of Scotland’s population.

- Composition of Steering Group/Working Group: why no representatives from community woodlands? Need for close working with Forestry for People Panel.
- Community involvement: a major opportunity, offering scope for more intensive management than FC can afford. Important that there are strong communications between FC and local communities, with FC responding positively to good ideas that come forward. Evidence of a lot of very good practice at local level, but need for mechanisms to ensure effective community input to decisions. Involving rural communities, brings jobs and is therefore welcome. FC need to think about community involvement on a more strategic scale. Need a deeper level of involvement. FC can be good to deal with at a local level, but more difficult at senior staff levels – is this bureaucracy or thwarting! Dealings with communities inconsistent from district to district. An example was given of FC not acting on points raised during community presentations/consultations. Need more scope to make more rapid decisions at a local level – need to drop levels of accountability.
- Community ownership/control: need to widen scope for this, including options such as leases. Perhaps use Forest District Strategic Plans as vehicle for promoting local dialogue about identification of woodlands that might be suitable for community ownership/control. In some cases, community ownership bestows greater security than ownership by the government agencies. Communities can need 6 to 10 years to become fully involved in agreements or become organised to take advantage of FC disposals. FC need to review the mechanisms for community purchase to give the flexibility for a much longer lead in time where appropriate.
- Professional advice to Community Groups: issue highlighted where FC sells woodland to a community, then community seeks management advice from SNH, old FA etc, instead of getting this from FE who are best suited to this role.
- Disposals: Areas disposed of as part of management rationalisations by FC are often not the best for communities to take on, eg remote, poor quality, poor access etc. People don't like the term 'disposals'. Greater involvement across the board and in better quality areas can be of more value to communities than owning poorer forests. If land is to be disposed, it should be to a group who can demonstrate best public benefit. There should be no more disposals, except for affordable housing. Concern that forestry expansion in areas such as the central belt may be at the expense of more remote areas, such as in the north. Differences of opinion as to whether it was acceptable to use disposals as a way of raising income for expansion in other areas – need to consider adopting a regional approach to this.
- Desire for legal change to Forestry Act to amend rules for land sale and facilitate leases.
- Balancing local and national interests. In addition to local interests, there are "national" interest groups (eg mountain bikers, orienteers) who have also had a right to benefit from national forest estate. Important that this is recognised in

any transfer of ownership/control to communities – but this should not be a problem.

- Partnerships: a major opportunity, and important to remove any legal constraints.
- Scope and timing of review: important to recognise that this is a fundamental review offering major opportunities for change. Essential to be positive and bold, and to avoid becoming bogged down in silvicultural details. Important to think on a larger scale – being creative and thinking ahead. Difficult within short time-scale for review. Recognise that timing is constrained by need to feed bids into Scottish Executive's 2004 Spending Review, but hope that – where necessary – Review Report will recommend further work in difficult areas rather than dodge issues. Unclear how the review will be handled after this initial phase. FC need to build in further opportunities for public consultation (similar to Scottish Forestry Strategy process). Need to be clearer about how the outcomes will link with the Scottish Executive spending review.
- Alternatives to management by FC. Consultation Paper says little on this: it highlights success of FC management, but this comes at a price – and it fails to consider who else (eg private owners, community groups) could manage more cost-effectively.
- Structure of FC: this needs to be reviewed. Recognise post-devolution development and formation of FC Scotland, with National Committee, but what about fuller integration with other land uses?
- Why hold meetings during working day, better evening/weekend. FCS should have been more pro-active in attracting involvement in this debate, holding more meetings. The timescale is short and a stratified report requesting more time for some elements would be helpful.
- If additional funding is required to deliver the various benefits, the FCS should be asking for it.
- Employment: Importance of downstream as well as on site job creation. An extra job in a remote rural area is of greater value than in more populous areas, eg greater effect proportionally on school roll etc. Need to try and get more processing jobs closer to where the timber comes from.
- Local Markets: Need to think more about future local markets in silvicultural choice, eg western red cedar, hardwoods etc. What can be utilised on a more local scale?
- Recreation: access to forests limited for those without cars.
- Planning: Need to look at Forest Planning processes on a larger scale, eg watershed level, involve neighbours, forest habitat networks etc. Could use indicative forest strategies to help set priorities.
- Rural deprivation just as important as urban deprivation

- Consultation Paper seems targeted at urban audience and definitely not crofters. It is the most unapproachable document yet devised by man.

- Concerns that FC are flooding timber market
- If you have not got a thriving Forest Enterprise, it would be harder to have a contractor base
- Have less clearfells and more low impact silviculture
- There should be an open and accountable prioritisation process
- Non timber costs and benefits should appear in the accounts equation
- In some circumstances, there may be a conflict between the community perception and the wider amenity perceptions
- Agriculture and forestry subsidies/support should be on a level playing field
- Globalisation and local views are both important in the National Forest Resource
- Should be prepared to run industry at a loss to allow delivery of all additional benefits to the nation

As part of this Consultation exercise, public meetings were held in seven venues in different parts of Scotland during the second half of January 2004. Afternoon meetings were held in Oban, Dingwall, Newton St Boswells and Inverurie. Evening meetings were held in Dundee and Glasgow. A "drop-in" meeting, lasting from 3pm until 9 pm was held in Newton Stewart. This report summarise the points made and issues raised at the Dingwall meeting; similar reports are being produced for the other six meetings.