

# **REVIEW OF LAND MANAGED BY FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND – CONSULTATION EXERCISE**

## **REPORT**

PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT **DUNDEE**

VENUE/DATE: **SWALLOW HOTEL: 20 JAN. 2004**

ORGANISER: **SYD HOUSE**

MEETING CHAIR OR FACILITATOR: **SIMON PEPPER**

WORKING GROUP REPRESENTATIVE: **SIMON HODGE**

FOREST DISTRICT MANAGER PRESENTER: **CHARLIE TAYLOR**

ATTENDANCE FIGURE: 50

### **ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK SHEETS:**

NUMBER OF COMPLETED FEEDBACK SHEETS: 33

Female 42%; male 58%.

Age (%):

a. under 25?	0
b. 25 – 35?	9
c. 35 – 45?	18
d. 45 – 55?	24
e. over 55?	49

Distance travelled (%):

a. under 10 miles?	30
b. between 10 and 25 miles?	52
c. between 25 and 40 miles?	15
d. between 40 and 55 miles?	3
e. over 55 miles?	0

Was the meeting worthwhile (%)?

a. Definitely worthwhile	58
b. Quite worthwhile	42
c. Waste of time	-

## **COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED VISION**

- Is it new: does it really signal a change?

## **SUBJECTS THAT WERE RAISED DURING MEETING OR ON THE FEEDBACK SHEETS**

- Remit of FC: how has this changed since 1919? Initial focus on creating a strategic reserve of timber still valid. Also, much was done to support “social” programmes through, eg, employment creation in 1930s. What’s wrong with present approach?
- Funding: where is the money coming from for all the “do-gooding” proposed in the Consultation Paper? Why do forests managed by the Forestry Commission (FC) get more public financial support per hectare than other forests? Public money should be spent on forests where it brings greatest public benefit, regardless of ownership. How much money has been wasted on name changes (Forestry Commission – Forest Enterprise – Forestry Commission Scotland) and consequent changes to signs, van liveries, stationery etc? Private sector grants completely inadequate.
- Urban forestry: important, and broad support for more woods in and around Dundee. Scope for more woodland recreation opportunities in Dundee (eg making use of previous landfill sites). But do not forget needs of rural areas. Is the FC the right organisation to develop woodlands in and around towns – what about others, such as Woodland Trust?
- Disposals: concern about possible disposals, especially if loss of public benefit; more relaxed where timber production is predominant objective. Any land sold should be subject to management agreement so that (eg) current high standards of deer management are maintained. While private owners may be obliged to offer access, this is not the same as a welcoming approach, with provision of facilities. Concern about loss of woodland for development. Cash targets should not drive any disposal programme. Not just about buying and selling land: leasing and partnership options also important.
- Recreation and access: try to provide better public transport links to forests; improve facilities for people of all abilities; provide more toilets, including composting toilets where appropriate. Recognise value for tourism, and for wide range of activities (including family cycling, mountain biking and husky dog rallies). Need to manage potential conflicts of interest. More could be done to make walks more interesting, especially in dense Spruce forests. Camping and caravan sites need more investment: what about partnership with Caravan Club?
- Cultural heritage: important to look after cultural artefacts (including old wartime fortifications and encampments) – but “not Disneyfy them”.

- Management: consider alternatives to clear-felling, where feasible. Plea to retain productive capacity of forests into the future. Could FC hire its services, managing other areas of woodland? Could FC involve private entrepreneurs more in (eg) management of recreation and guided walks etc. FCS should remain focussed on local delivery, avoiding “central control” and leaving maximum discretion to local managers.
- Links with private sector: will outcome from this review trigger re-examination of levels of support for private forestry? Does the current distribution of grant support best reflects the benefits offered, for example when woods managed by FCS are compared with private woods?
- Economic analysis of benefits of forests: interest shown in consultancy being carried out as part of this review. Important to value public benefits properly, and then (eg) compare benefits from/support for forestry with other sectors (eg agriculture).
- Renewable energy: potential of wood for fuel is in danger of being overlooked.
- Review process: how can views of wider audience be obtained? What about market research survey?

*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 Dundee meeting; similar reports are being produced for the other six meetings.*