

REVIEW OF LAND MANAGED BY FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND – CONSULTATION EXERCISE

REPORT

Public Meeting held at: **Glasgow**

Venue/Date: **Buchanan Suite, Royal Concert Hall: 28 Jan 2004**

Organiser: **Keith Wishart**

Meeting Chair Or Facilitator: **David Henderson-Howat**

Working Group Representative: **Frank Strang**

FDM Presenter: **Hugh Clayden**

Attendance Figure: **40**

Analysis Of Feedback Sheets

Female: 27%. Male: 73%

Age:

a. under 25?	0%
b. 25 – 35?	9%
c. 35 – 45?	37%
d. 45 – 55?	27%
e. over 55?	27%

Distance travelled:

a. under 10 miles?	41%
b. between 10 and 25 miles?	23%
c. between 25 and 40 miles?	27%
d. between 40 and 55 miles?	0%
e. over 55 miles?	9%

Was the meeting worthwhile?

a. Definitely worthwhile	86%
b. Quite worthwhile	14%
c. Waste of time	-

COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED VISION

- Does not reflect reality on the ground, eg at Glen Orchy where dense spruce plantations have destroyed natural pasture and open woodland. Trees are too close together; unthinned, with no vegetation growing under them; and are not contributing to the economy because they are being heavily subsidised. After felling, these mistakes are being repeated in replanting. What has been the total cost to the tax payer of creating today's forests? What can be done to

rehabilitate this land – converting it back to pasture or natural woodland – the problem is worse than decommissioning oil wells or nuclear power stations.

- If forests are to benefit “everyone in Scotland” more of them are needed closer to where people live. Access from Glasgow is very difficult for those without cars.
- Vision should reflect forestry’s potential contribution to the cultural heritage. The forests around Aberfoyle, for example, are full of remnants of Scotland’s past.
- Is the order of themes in the vision significant? _

SUBJECTS THAT WERE RAISED DURING MEETING OR ON THE FEEDBACK SHEETS

General

- Is forestry economic, given current low timber prices? Wood processing industry a significant part of Scotland’s economy, but financial returns to grower are poor. In some places (eg Arran) Forestry Commission (FC) is actively engaged in programmes to convert spruce forests in more open amenity woodland, continuing with timber production as a main aim only on the most productive ground. Job of FC is to use land it manages to deliver public benefits, remembering that most people in Scotland live in central belt. Essential to translate value of non-market benefits (amenity/conservation etc) into cash terms.
- Woods in and around towns: significant opportunities for further development. For example, Carron Valley Forest offers great potential in Campsie/Touch hills, especially now that Scottish Water is more relaxed about recreational use of reservoirs. Central Scotland Forest Trust (CSFT) also doing much to create new opportunities for woodland recreation, and to improve landscapes, in central belt. However, scale of work still inadequate: more funding is needed. Costs of urban forestry are high. There is very considerable potential in parts of Glasgow (eg Easterhouse, Drumchapel), and the surrounding area, making use of brownfield sites. Much could be done by creating woodland corridors, or networks. This would also bring considerable health benefits, and funding required for woodland development is tiny in comparison with health service budgets. There is however constant pressure on open land for development – and strong arguments are needed to resist this. Fact that this meeting was held in Glasgow welcomed.

- Disposals: economic benefit of forests not lost if sold by FC and bought by private sector. If forests are sold, there must be guarantees of no loss of access. As well as communities, individuals might welcome the opportunity to buy small parcels of land.
- Links with private sector: review should not just be looking at land managed by FC, but at how all forests in Scotland can contribute to implementation of Scottish Forestry Strategy. Support of private/voluntary sector through grant mechanisms might be more effective.
- Can the FC get “green credits” following CO₂ reduction, to provide a source of funding?

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What Changes are needed in the National Forest Estate?

- Needs to be brought into the 21st century i.e. more environmentally friendly.
- Needs to build more and better links to the existing urban population.
- Should provide opportunities to create more rural settlements, and potentially training for people to help develop woodland skills. This could create the opportunity to provide more cultural links with woodland and make better use of the under-utilised woodland resource.
- More biological reserves should be created.
- As a responsible landowner the FCS should be able to fully utilise and develop all its assets not just woodland or timber derived products but to also maximise on others such as minerals and developmental type projects.
- Important that management resources are adequate to ensure resource is appropriately managed. Neglected management is not acceptable.
- Not essential that woodlands remain in FCS ownership. Some private landowners are better able to deliver the public benefits and manage the woodlands and still achieve public benefits, eg some large estates. It may be appropriate to consider each on a case by case basis.
- Competing land values in urban area will make it difficult to achieve the urban benefits.
- FCS need to be adequately financed and staffed to enable the development of woodland benefits in the urban area.
- Grants to the private sector should be focussed in priority areas, be flexible, be imaginative and creative to develop and enable a wide range of different initiatives especially in the urban area.
- It is important to have an agreed long term vision. Timescales need to reflect the long term nature of woodlands. Fifty years is the Challenge!
- Diversity of the estate’s composition is vital – history suggests caution about radical change as pendulum swings.

- Woodfuel – wood often transported out of regions in which it is grown. Opportunity to use local wood for local benefit – heating etc. Role of government is harness local views and local opportunities.
- Key issue is lack of information on opportunities to visit forests. Build information into schools.
- More big Conifers needed.
- Welcome the beginning of the change process and request this is the start of regular reviews rather than being a “knee jerk reaction” to the current timber value. The nature of forestry requires long term thought.
- Reconnect people to the forest, especially in urban areas.
- The perception of FCS is growing timber, mainly SS and not about involving people in woodland
- Woodlands should be purchased that facilitate public access, are managed for the benefit of people and are welcoming for members of the public.
- There has been a loss of the cultural understanding of the forest. FCS should do more to reverse this loss.
- Design is important, especially in urban areas. Woodlands should have an “open” feel for security.
- Woodlands should be purchased in locations “off the hills” and into urban areas.
- Restructuring of the existing woodland resource should “open up” the landscape to reveal former hidden archaeological patterns.
- There is limited benefit of selling large woodland areas in isolated parts of the country to buy “postage stamps” in urban or peri-urban areas.
- FCS should exploit opportunities for windfarms and re-cycle the funds to “worthy causes.”
- FC policy has changed since its inception from timber to biodiversity to leisure. Is timber still an objective?
- There should be greater use of alternatives to clear felling.
- Motorcycle users should be accommodated via bespoke routes within standing crops – a lot of money is being spent on mountain bike routes. Why not on controlled enduro routes?
- Does the ‘Arran’ scenario apply to other parts of Scotland and if so, will the ‘Arran’ strategy be extended to these areas, as it seems an attractive option.
- Effort should be concentrated where maximum public benefit will accrue.
- FC should promote the economic benefits that forest related tourism can bring to an area.
- There should be an increase in the development of cabins/campsites – subsidised by exiting operations. These will bring tourist to areas.
- Urban woodlands should be taken on by the FC.
- For what period will the actions resulting from the review apply – there must be along term outlook.

Does the consultation Paper miss any important and relevant issues?

- The “Cultural” reference should be incorporated into the vision statement in question 1.
- If output from economic review suggests no role for state in essentially productive forests offering few wider public benefits then the consultation paper should have mentioned this. Surely the economic review should have been completed before this consultation exercise.
- CAP reform – connect desire for more urban woods with reform of CAP – much of the agricultural land in the urban fringes of our cities offer no access. Role for state intervention and closer relationship with Agricultural Departments.

If change is required how can it be achieved?

- Make use of contaminated land especially through planning gain.
- Lobby and better influence the planning process.
- Cross government departments co-operation and co-ordination needs to be better.
- Make use of “Crofter Forestry” eg West Lothian example.
- Better influence the outputs from the woodlands. Structures need to be put in place to have a better and more productive hardwood resource and market place to help the long term economic and sustainability of these type of woodlands.
- Help, assist and develop, sustainable local markets eg the Arran woodfuel example highlighted.
- Sell those woods that only deliver economic benefit - productive woods don't have to be in public ownership.
- Need woodland to provide access / recreation facilities much closer to where people live – social inclusion drivers. Remember that many people in Glasgow / Scotland don't have a car. Poorer people in Glasgow can't afford day trips to visit state-owned woodland.
- Some areas of Scotland where harvesting makes a loss. Transfer money from the uplands by selling forests to create more woodland around Glasgow.
- Concern was raised regarding the “fragmentation of interests” and questioned the possibility of integrating all planning and organisational elements to form a single land use agency to look at “landscape” units rather than single landuse types.
- The accounting system of the National Forest estate should be simplified to provide greater clarity, more vision and flexible funding rather than based on a purely commercial footing.
- There should be more “joined up action” eg in Glasgow, with SNH, Greenspace and FCS to develop partnerships and “funding pots” to deliver local initiatives.

- FCS should act as a National Organisation to deliver access, health, flood prevention and biodiversity.
- Local strategies should be developed (AAWS was quoted) to deliver landscape wide benefits. This could include the purchase or management of the National Forest Estate.
- The expense of regenerating urban areas will require a fundamental change in thinking compared to existing forestry thought processes. The cost of £38,000 per hectare was quoted.
- The Scottish Executive should introduce a land tax as a mechanism to generate funds for additional expenditure on the purchase and or management of woodlands in the urban areas.
- Has the FC considered charging for access – it may not be popular but it does seem the public currently get very good value based on the figures quoted by Hugh Clayden.

What are the main priorities?

- Move away from commercial forests.
- Increase the value and extent of native timber.
- Bring more woodlands closer to where people live.
- Private sector led by grants – but grant system needs to reflect public's aspirations.
- Raise public's appreciation of its forests – at present forestry is marginalised since not a major vote winner.

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 summarises the points made and issues raised at the Glasgow meeting; similar reports are being produced for the other six meetings.