

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

## **REPORT**

PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT - **NEWTON ST. BOSWELLS**

VENUE/DATE: **TWEED HORIZONS: 23 JAN. 2004**

ORGANISER: **ALEX MORRIS**

MEETING CHAIR OR FACILITATOR: **JOHN GRAHAM**

WORKING GROUP REPRESENTATIVE: **PETER WESTON**

ATTENDANCE FIGURE: **37**

## **ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK SHEETS**

NUMBER OF COMPLETED FEEDBACK SHEETS: 27

Females 18%; males 82%

Age (Number):

a. under 25?	0
b. 25 – 35?	15%
c. 35 – 45?	30%
d. 45 – 55?	22%
e. over 55?	33%

Distance travelled (Number):

a. under 10 miles?	22%
b. between 10 and 25 miles?	19%
c. between 25 and 40 miles?	30%
d. between 40 and 55 miles?	22%
e. over 55 miles?	7%

Was the meeting worthwhile?

a. Definitely worthwhile	59%
b. Quite worthwhile	41%
c. Waste of time	-

## **COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED VISION**

- Too general: there is nothing in it that anyone could disagree with, and so it is pointless.
- Proposed vision – if realised – would have a profound impact on the estate. At present vast majority of area is conifer, contributing less to communities/environment. How radical are the changes that are going to be recommended?
- Conifers will play an important part in delivering vision. Recent research has highlighted their biodiversity value.

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

- Links between this review, and (eg) Indicative Forestry Strategies and Local Forestry Frameworks: this review is specifically looking at land managed by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). Indicative Forestry Strategies etc. relate to all forests (including privately owned) in an area.
- Phrase “national forests” misleading. Some might think it includes privately owned forests; others might confuse with National Forest in England. Phrase “Forest Enterprise estate” is clearer.
- Although technically owned by Ministers they are “our” forests: publicly owned and publicly enjoyed.
- Consultation has failed because so few people have attended this meeting in the heart of a forested region.
- Links between consultation exercise and economic analysis being carried out by CJC Consulting: latter is examining benefits associated with different “types” of forest (distinguished by timber production potential, recreation potential, conservation potential etc.) Recognised that yield class can be defined more easily than (eg) recreation or conservation potential: but consultant hopes to suggest ways in which this problem can be tackled.
- Insufficient breakdown of FE Estate’s character or its land use composition in the consultation paper.
- Funding. Is this review being driven by the “bottom line”? National forests cost under £100/ha/year. Important questions relate to priorities for funding new activities. Some options may require significant sums of money. Disposals one option (but only one option). This review has to be completed by April 2004 so that Scottish Executive Spending Review (which covers next three years) can take account of outcome. Need to recognise wide benefits that can come from public forests, including (eg) health benefits from active recreation.
- Links with private sector: why is review not taking account of privately owned forest, and highlighting the potential role of the private and voluntary sector in

delivering the benefits described in the Consultation Paper? Furthermore, changes on land managed by FCS lead to increased public expectations for similar benefits from private forests: who will pay for this? Grants only offer a contribution towards costs. Discomfort that private forests should have different role from state forests in delivering Scottish Forestry Strategy. Need a joined up policy and delivery through partnership across state and private sectors.

- Integration with other land uses: Consultation Paper provides a good illustration of the excellent work carried out in recent years; but there is a need for closer integration between forestry, farming, nature conservation, the water sector and other land uses such as deer. Creation of SEERAD a major opportunity, but Agriculture Strategy barely mentions forestry. CAP reforms will have profound impact on landscape and underline need for better integration, and holistic view of rural landscape. SNH currently consulting on Scotland's future landscapes. Implications of Haskins Review could be profound for FC, if it becomes integrated with other land use bodies in England and similar steps are taken in Scotland. Need for joined up thinking with agricultural and other strategies and consideration of the potential role of FCS in relation to conversion of marginal farm land to appropriate woodland habitat.
- Legal constraints etc. FCS should be freed from legal constraints that prevent some kinds of partnership. Should also be freer to diversify into new activities (eg building/franchising holiday cabins) and to retain financial surpluses.
- Timber: FC established to grow timber and, despite "frilly bits" this is still fundamental. Real driver behind this review is falling timber prices. Consequently, the danger of taking decisions at the wrong time for the wrong reasons. Need to consider long-term prospects for global wood supply and demand, and prospect of future supply shortages. But in Scotland, timber availability expected to fall after 2025. Should public sector continue to play dominant role in timber market, or should this be for the private sector? Important that state sector continues to be in a position to 'underpin' the continuity of supply to the processing industry. This importance may decline in the longer term but not in the foreseeable future. Also important to recognise that (generally speaking) private sector does not enjoy same economies of scale as FCS. Noted that legend on graph on page 17 of Consultation Paper is wrong way round: potential timber availability greater from private sector, though actual production currently greater from state forests.
- Wood for fuel: a major opportunity. Why can developments in (eg) Austria and Scandinavia not be replicated in Scotland? At present renewable obligations focus on electricity generation: should also take account of heat production.
- Marginal forestry: recognise technical challenge posed by areas that, with benefit of hindsight, should not have been planted. Need to avoid throwing good money after bad, and to make the best of the situation. Remember conservation and amenity value of land "above the tree line".
- Community forestry: a current fashion, but beware of jumping on the bandwagon. Some communities want ownership, and will do it well; but too easy to pass forests that are difficult to manage on to communities. The uncertainty of long

term continuity of interest and commitment within communities may be better addressed through management agreements rather than outright change of ownership. Recognise important role of “catalytic” bodies such as Borders Forest Trust. But bodies such as Woodland Trust can be “absentee landlords”. FCS could easily become overstretched on community work; in some projects FCS carries too much of the burden of liability/risk, but recognised that that FCS is better placed than most to carry public liability risks.

- Local responsiveness: need to be pragmatic about responding to local circumstances.
- Disposals: Why can land not be sold to communities and councils for social housing? Disposals should not be driven by financial pressures. If there are sales, the “cellulose factories” should be sold.
- Forest Expansion: The private sector should continue to be the primary mechanism, particularly in respect of ‘commercial’ new planting. The role of both the state and the private sector in peri-urban areas needs joined up thinking.
- Non-Market Benefits of FE Estate: In addition to tourism/recreation/landscape, the contribution to research, education, health etc is given insufficient recognition and is in need of quantification.
- Land Acquisition: Priorities could be the improvement of landscape or providing a community asset but funding required.

***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 Newtown St Boswells meeting; similar reports are being produced for the other six meetings.***