

Consultation on the Draft Scottish Strategy

Summary of key issues and comments from the 10 Public Meetings

(March-April 2006)

- Further work was requested to clarify the Vision. Some felt the draft Strategy attempted too much and that key targets would help to clarify where the priorities lay.
- There was strong support for economic sustainability in its broadest sense. However, there was concern from several private landowners that the economic spin-offs for tourism (for example) did not help pay for the costs of woodland management.
- While accepting the need for forestry to have immediate relevance to people there was some concern that the long term aspects of forestry had been underplayed.
- There were no strong objections to the 25% woodland cover aspiration provided it reflected “the right trees in the right locations”.
- Concern that resources would not match SFS aspirations.
- There was uncertainty about how the national strategy would be converted in to regional delivery.
- The importance of the Planning system (e.g. Indicative Forestry Strategies, Housing, Building standards) in helping to deliver the Strategy was emphasised.
- There was general and strong support for climate change to figure prominently in the Strategy but with the emphasis on adaptation and mitigation rather than carbon sequestration.
- There was general support for the social dimension, particularly woodlands near communities, education, the health agenda and placing people at the heart of the Strategy. There was some concern that the access targets might not be achievable and that more needed to be done to change existing negative attitudes about the impacts of greater access (e.g. litter, vandalism etc).
- There was strong support for the enhancement of the native woodland resource although a minority thought this aspect had been overplayed.
- There was a widespread perception that commercial forestry had been sidelined.
- There was broad support for a wide spectrum of timber production, including large-scale processing, the development of quality timber (including hardwoods) and the utilisation of timber from native woodland (with caveats).
- The impact of timber haulage on minor public roads was still an issue for local communities.
- There was uncertainty about how to deal with plantations/woodlands that were, currently, uneconomic.
- There was strong support for the maintenance of a sustainable level of timber production but uncertainty about the mechanisms that were being

proposed to deal with the potential peak-followed-by-trough of timber availability post-2025.

- The commercial sector, in particular, wanted to see the type of timber production quantified (e.g. quality timber or small diameter material?) rather than simply overall volume predictions.
- There was widespread and strong support for the development of wood fuel, with an emphasis on local heat production, with a desire to see quantified targets on this aspect.
- A strong level of support was apparent for increasing the use of timber in building construction (particularly if this included local, home grown timber).
- There was a cautious welcome of the proposed annual expansion targets but with a desire to see the components clarified (e.g. what proportion would be native woodland?).
- Some in the farming community expressed strong concern about the loss of good agricultural land to forestry although there was widespread support for the principles of land use integration.
- Major concerns were expressed about the recent closure of the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme (SFGS) and the impact this would have on investor confidence. There were also major concerns that the revised SFGS and its integration with Land Management Contracts would not help the delivery of the revised Scottish Forestry Strategy.
- There was a desire to see the role of forestry in National Parks clarified.
- There was a perceived lack of consistency in the application of forest industry Guidelines – particularly the Forests and Water Guidelines.
- There was a strong desire to see much better monitoring of progress against SFS 2006 than had been apparent with SFS 2000.
- A strong emphasis was noted for the need to work in partnerships to deliver forestry's full range of benefits. Community Planning Partnerships and the role of the Voluntary sector were regarded as key areas for attention.
- Several questions were aimed at the need to clarify the role of the national forest estate managed by Forestry Commission Scotland.
- There was frequent mention of an existing and potentially growing skills shortage in both "traditional" forestry as well as the social and environmental opportunities now emerging.