

EXPERT GROUP ON TIMBER AND TRADE STATISTICS

Minutes of the meeting held in Silvan House, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, on Thursday 14 April 2016

Present: Neil Cowan, Penelope Donohue (Secretary), Michael Fairgrieve, Andrew Heald, Andy Leitch, David Sulman, Sheila Ward, , Peter Weston (Chair), David Leslie, Richard Palmer, John Paterson, Nick Boulton

Apologies: George Webb, Alan Corson, Alan Christison, Nigel Manley, David Symons

Ben Ditchburn and Vera Correia were also present for agenda item 4 to update the group on the NFI Canopy Change Report.

1. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES (19 November 2015)

The minutes were agreed.

2. MATTERS ARISING

A. Actions completed since the last meeting

Action: Ben Ditchburn to add the Northern Ireland figures and introduce a supplement with a scenario using 20% loss of productive conifer on restock [in addition to the 10% scenario] and circulate a draft report for comment.

Action: Group to provide feedback and comments *via* email to Ben Ditchburn and Vera Correia by 3 December 2015.

Action: Ben Ditchburn will incorporate feedback/ comments into a second draft after 3 December 2015. The new draft will be circulated and an extra ordinary meeting will be scheduled for January 2016 (tbc) to discuss the new draft.

Action: Penelope Donohue to schedule a meeting for January 2016 to discuss the draft.

Action: Ben Ditchburn to breakdown Table 9. into conifer and broadleaf.

Action: Penelope Donohue to send an electronic copy of the Timber Resources and Forest Products Consumption paper presented by Roger Coppock to the group.

Action: Group to provide statistics team with any further feedback on Forestry Statistics or Forestry Facts & Figures by 30 November 2015.

Action: Statistics team to develop the user engagement survey questionnaire and run the survey.

Action: Statistics team to issue draft quality review report and seek input from the group.

Action: Group to provide feedback on the draft quality review report for the removals survey.

Action: Statistics team to issue current distribution lists.

Action: Group to review distributions lists and send any amendments to Penelope Donohue by the end of December 2015.

Action: Statistics team to add a question to the small sawmill and pellet survey questionnaires about the specific country [i.e. England, Scotland, Wales, NI].

Action: Statistics team to speak to Alistair Kerr on whether panel figures can be broken down by country

Action: Group to comment on the draft Timber Utilisation Report with comments to Sheila Ward by 30 November 2015

Action: David Sulman to send draft Timber Utilisation Report to Guy Watt.

Action: Penelope Donohue to send out a note to clarify who each group member is representing

Action: Penelope Donohue to include terms of reference and membership as an agenda item in the next meeting.

Action: to contact Ian Tubby regarding the impact on woodfuel from work to bring woodlands in England into management / contact DECC regarding the availability of RHI data.

Action: The statistics team to circulate the international statistics presentation slides.

Action: The statistics team to circulate information about the SEMAFOR work.

B. Actions outstanding

Action: Ben Ditchburn (and NFI) to publish the Woodland Canopy Change Report in early 2016 and no later than March 2016 → agenda item 4.

PD: Statistics team to include an item on the agenda in April 2015 to discuss where the 'gaps' may be in terms of country breakdown of information.→ carry over

SW: Statistics team to further investigate the use of Wood Recyclers Association data to estimate exports figures.→ carry over

3. STATISTICS (Sheila Ward / Penelope Donohue)

i. 2015 surveys update

Sheila Ward gave an update on the current status of the industry surveys, presented the initial estimates and sought feedback from the group. Survey response rates were similar to last year, with the exception of the pellet and removals survey, where the response rates were slightly lower. *UK Wood Production and Trade: 2015 provisional figures* will be published on 19 May 2016.

ii. Quality assurance of UK Wood Production and Trade first release

Sheila Ward/ Penelope Donohue presented an initial draft of the first release on UK Wood Production and Trade, noting that the version to be released on 19 May would be revised to take account of late returns and corrections following further data checks. She sought comments from the group on the validity of the results.

The group noted low activity in the last quarter of 2015 due to the increasing strength of the £GBP.

The group noted that they would have expected to see a larger decrease in consumption and production of round wood by sawmills, at least a 5% reduction from 2014 figures.

The group also noted that they were surprised to see a decrease in imported wood-based panels and suggested further checks should be done on the import/export data.

Action: The statistics team to circulate a list of large non-respondents.

Action: Group to help with encouraging more responses from non-respondents, and to provide estimates if possible.

Action: Statistics team to undertake further checks, particularly on estimate of imports and exports.

Action: Statistics team to review the methodology used to estimate for large non-respondents.

iii. Quality assurance of Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire data

Sheila Ward noted that the draft JFSQ uses the same figures as the draft UK Wood Production and Trade release (with some differences in units reported), and that any comments should be provided to her.

Action: Group to provide any further comments on the draft UK Wood Production and Trade release no later than the end of April 2016.

iv. Wood Fuel Update (Paper 2)

Sheila Ward presented a paper on the availability of woodfuel statistics and outlined plans for further work.

The paper provided a list of FC data sources and also provided links to DECC and OFGEM data.

The paper identified 2 main areas of work to take forward:

- Analysis of OFGEM sustainability reporting datasets; and
- Conversion factors to apply to RHI data to estimate wood use.

The group agreed on the two main areas of work and that the level of effort being put into understanding woodfuel consumption was about right.

Action: The statistics team will keep the list of woodfuel statistics publications up to date.

Action: Sheila Ward to circulate a link to the paper on *UK and EU Trade of Wood Pellets* and add it to the list of woodfuel statistics publications.

Action: The statistics team to give progress updates in future meetings.

4. NFI Canopy Change Report (Ben Ditchburn and Vera Correia)

A third draft copy of the NFI Canopy Change Report was sent to the group in advance of the meeting.

Ben Ditchburn and Vera Correia updated the group on the latest progress of the NFI Canopy Change Report. In particular, they highlighted the addition of new data and gave details of the rationale behind its inclusion and discussed the results.

The NFI team asked for feedback on the new data, is it adding value? Is it clarifying or confusing? Are the qualifications correct? PW said this was a high profile and potentially contentious report and asked that group members comment specifically on the executive summary in order to ensure that it is concise, accurate and clear; and to minimise the chances of misunderstanding or misrepresentation

Action: Group to provide feedback and comments via email to Ben Ditchburn and Vera Correia by 24 April 2016.

Action: NFI team to incorporate feedback into a fourth and final draft and circulate to the group for sign off.

Action: Once signed off the NFI team should aim to publish the report as soon as possible.

5. Terms of Reference and Membership (Peter Weston)

Peter Weston presented a paper on the terms of reference and membership. He noted that the group comprised invited members with specific expertise. Peter asked the group to comment on any areas they felt may be duplicated or under represented.

Group members felt that the current 'terms of reference' were fit for purpose.

Peter suggested adding a specific reference to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics in the terms of reference, this was agreed.

The table detailing current membership, expertise and roles was discussed.

The group suggested the columns on role and expertise should be combined.

The group suggested the areas where there may be gaps;

- Hardwood trade
- Individual country policies and statistics
- Pulp and paper
- Biomass energy sector

It was suggested that the group could set up virtual subgroups, co-opting members with specific expertise when required.

Action: Sheila Ward to add a point to the terms of reference relating to the Code of Practice for official statistics.

Action: Peter Weston to update the paper and table for review at the next meeting.

Action: Penelope Donohue to include an agenda item for the next meeting.

6. AOB

- Guy Watts report

David Sulman updated the group on the progress of the report. There was some difficulty getting responses however the report is now almost completed.

- Pre-release access to Official Statistics

Peter Weston reminded the group of their responsibilities under the code of practice for official statistics.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING (AND REMAINING FOR 2016)

Thursday 11 August 2016

Thursday 17 November 2016