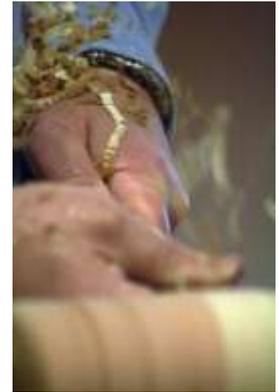## Update for the National Forestry Forum

Primarily a networking and signposting resource, the Forest Education Network (FEN) has a wide remit to promote a whole range of learning experiences, from forest floor to shop floor, and to raise awareness of forests and woodlands as great places to learn. Direct experiences in woodlands give powerful links to understanding more about the important role of trees and woodlands in our world, the social and environmental benefits they can bring as well as links to our forest industry, careers and our growing wood culture. FEN brings diverse members together to promote the sharing of good practice and support those that are helping in this vital role - whether as teachers, activity leaders, woodland owners or facilitators or those working and in the industry who have a passion for trees, woodland and forests.

FEN had its official launch at the APF Exhibition in September 2012 and in April 2014 will be coming up to its second year - since then there has been much development activity. A priority has been the establishment of a web presence and April 2013 saw the FEN pages going live at www.lotc.org.uk/fen , giving a web 'signpost' to information, resources and organisation links as well as details of local groups you can join.

Another key focus for the FEN has been encouraging a broad membership of individuals and organisations and we are now coming up close to 300 members, with 27 local groups too. Our regular FEN members' bulletin keeps members up to date with articles, news, resources and events, and members make their own valuable contributions to these. The 6th October 2013 edition can be seen here.

Contributing to local, regional and national events, such as the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) National Conferences and at the inaugural Forest School Association (FSA) Conference, has helped us share best practice and gain support. Our own North East networking event as part of 'Grown In Britain' week in October 2013 was a great success and we had the chance to see the one of the largest kiln-dried firewood operators in action.

Engaging with the wood and timber sector is vital for the FEN as we hope to encourage more learning and raise awareness about all parts of our wood culture. We contribute to other forums of discussion, for example the England Woodland and Timber Partnership (EWTP) Learning and Development Working Group on education and skills and are supporters of the Grown In Britain Campaign – we also have strong representation through our partner Steering Group including; Confor, Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, Field Studies Council ; Forestry Commission, Royal Forestry Society, Silvanus Trust, Sylva Foundation and the Timber Trade Federation.

A highlight in 2013 was that we were recognised in the Government Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement (Incorporating the Government's Response to the Independent Panel on Forestry's Final Report).

So what for next year? The FEN will continue to seek opportunities for the future development of the network and any projects and opportunities that emerge, and we are currently planning some resources to link to the National Curriculum, as well as more events to meet networking requirements and helping keep members up to date. The next major event is our **FEN National Networking Day** for World Forestry Day, Friday 21st March 2014 and more details can be found here.

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Set up in April 2012, FEN is the successor body to the Forest Education Initiative (FEI) in England which ran for 20 years as a partnership funded project. The network promotes the wide range of learning experiences in relation to trees, woods and forests and more information can be found at www.lotc.org.uk/fen/ .
FEN has been developed by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom as the host, in partnership with the Natural Route and is directed by a Steering Group of representative FEN partners.