

Timber Quality Steering Group.

Meeting at Northern Research Station, Wednesday 5th December 2007

Present:

Colin Forsyth (CF)	-	Chair, Scottish Woodlands Ltd
Richard Ogilvy (RO)	-	Christie Elite Nurseries Ltd
Alan Corson	-	Forest Enterprise (England), York
Barry Gardiner (BG)	-	Forest Research, Timber Properties Programme
David Lesley (DL)	-	James Jones & Sons Ltd
Roger Coppock	-	Forestry Commission (Scotland)
Stewart Snape (SS)	-	Forestry Commission, Corporate and Forestry Support
Steve Lee (SL)	-	Forest Research, Conifer Breeding Programme
Tim Liddon (TL)	-	Tilhill Forestry Ltd
Christine Cahalan	-	Bangor University
David Sulman	-	UK Forest Products Association
Andrew Cameron (AC)	-	Aberdeen University
John Moore (JM)	-	Napier University
Geoff Cooper (GC)	-	BRE
Mike Over	-	FC (Wales)

Also present:

Stuart Kennedy - PhD student Aberdeen Uni

Apologies: Chris Jones (substituted by Mike Over); Jim Dewar (substituted by Stewart Snape), Gordon Callander (substituted by David Sulman), Graham Gill, John Morgan, Michael Fairgrieve, Margaret Watson.

1. *Introduction:* CF welcomed everybody to the meeting and especially people who had not attended before including Andrew Cameron, Stewart Snape and Mike Over. CF explained that Margaret Watson will represent Scottish Enterprise at future meetings. Unfortunately Margaret was not able to attend this meeting.
Action SL: to produce an up to date list of members and the organisations they represent.
2. *Minutes of the last meeting:* There was just one correction to the minutes of the meeting held at NRS 25th June 2007. Para. 4, Chris Jones represents Wales and not England (as stated). The minutes were then accepted as a true record.
3. *Matters arising:* CF asked that these be taken as items listed on the agenda.
4. *Economics of improved Sitka spruce:* SL explained that little had happened in this area of work since the last meeting but a recent meeting with Guy Watt had rekindled activity. SL still intended to have an Information Note ready by March 2008. CF asked that an early draft be circulated around H&M foresters in the public and private sector for consultation. AC mentioned that there was now more than just circumstantial evidence that cuttings were more resistant to weevils.

Action SL: to distribute to members a recent scientific paper on increase weevil resistance of cuttings.

CC mentioned the visit of Prof. Bruce Greaves (Australia) planned for April 2008. Bruce will be based at NRS and will reproduce for Sitka spruce complete wood chain economic appraisal already carried out for species in Australia. This work will be funded by Scottish Forestry Trust and Forest Research.

5. *Impact of climate change on the planting of conifers:* BG read out pertinent sections of a report due to be launched by the Minister for Forestry in Scotland early in the New Year. The group did not like the negative spin on much of what was written. BG later spoke with the author and has agreed that there is time enough for key sentences and paragraphs to be re-written. **Action BG:** to circulate amended wording for approval by the group.
6. *Update on the use of acoustic tools:* BG updated the group on two presentations that had taken place since the last meeting – one in Dunkeld and one in Lockerbie. It would seem that the potential of these tools is being taken on board by sectors within the sawmilling industry. Growers now need to be aware of their potential. **Action BG:** to give a link on website to presentations made in Dunkeld or Lockerbie.
7. *CFS review of conifer breeding:* SL explained that the conifer breeding budget for 2008/9 had been reduced by £117k (17%) even before the review process had been completed. SS explained how the PAGs (Programme Advisory Boards) fed into the RSMB (Research Strategy Management Board) and the need to save money over-all. AC agreed that Sitka spruce was not such an important species in England; CC agreed that was the case also for Wales. GC reminded the group that England might be more interested in other conifers such as Douglas Fir.
Action All and CF: to draft document by end of January 2008; input invited from all Steering Group members. Document to be put to the PAG in March 2008 explaining the value of conifer breeding and its impact on the forestry strategies of the various countries.
8. *An update on the review of clonal forestry technologies:* SL told the group about the positive visit by Yill-Sung Park (Canadian Forestry Service, University of New Brunswick) – who's report of his findings has already been distributed to the group. The report stated that with a push and a new recruit in charge of this research, work could be completed in 12-months. A case for a fixed term appointment has been made to the acting Chief Executive FR – no answer received at the time of distribution of these minutes. The group agreed that they would like to see this area of work completed.
9. *Discussion paper by Colin Forsyth – Forest Management issues on the use of improved Sitka spruce:* CF introduced his paper (see website) which the group discussed. JM took the opportunity of updating the group on some of his work from the Kershope and Baronscourt experiments at the same time. A take home message emphasized by AC was that planting should be around 2,700/ha and thinning must be seen as an objective where at all possible; if thinning was not possible, consider late respacing. The objective must be to keep the juvenile core (11-13 years – regardless of silviculture) in check before opening the trees out, and keeping the bottom branches in check. It was agreed that new improved seed sources require new yield models. **Action BG and SL:** to invite Robert Matthews to the next Steering Group meeting along with Tim Reynolds (BRE)

Action SL: to forward relevant papers on wood quality mentioned by AC to group members.

Stimulating discussion followed on the link between wood density and growth rate, the need for a best practice guide, and the role of genetics in the future, but of forest management in the mid-term to influence the quality of timber leaving our forests.

10. *Date and location for next meeting:*
 - i. The meeting should be in Wales in May 2008 (– further details soon). **Action SL:** to contact Chris Jones about potential dates and then circulate amongst the group. The meeting should take the form: arrive lunch, PM business meeting; night in hotel, field trip following morning; lunch then depart.
 - ii. A possibility for the following meeting would be to visit the Model D house incorporating improved SS currently being built in Aberdeenshire.