

## Improving Conifer Timber Steering Group

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2006

Attendees:	Colin Forsyth	- PB Forestry Lands (Chair)
	Gordon Callander	- Callander Sawmills
	Geoff Cooper	- BRE
	Roger Coppock	- Scottish Enterprise, Forest Industries Cluster
	Jim Dewar	- Forestry Commission, Corporate and Forestry Support
	Michael Fairgrieve	- Northern Ireland Forest Service
	Barry Gardiner	- Forest Research, Timber Properties Programme
	Graham Gill	- Forest Enterprise, FDM Kielder
	Chris Jones	- Forestry Commission Wales
	Steve Lee	- Forest Research, Conifer Breeding Programme
	David Leslie	- Scottish Woodlands
	Tim Liddon	- Tilhill Forestry Ltd
	John Morgan	- Forestry Commission Plant & Seed Supply
	Derek Nelson	- Forestry Commission Scotland
	Richard Ogilvy	- Christie Elite Nurseries Ltd
	Madge Holmes	- Forest Research, Administration (minutes)

Apologies were received from Christine Cahalan, University of Bangor; Alan Corson, Forest Enterprise York; Andrew Cameron, University of Aberdeen and Philip Turner, Centre for Timber Engineering, Napier. Apologies were also received from Vaughan Hammond, Tilhill Forestry Ltd for whom Tim Liddon was substituting, Ed Suttie, BRE for whom Geoff Cooper was deputising and James Pendlebury who has been replaced by Derek Nelson.

### 1. Callander's Sawmill, Falkirk

The meeting commenced at 10.00 hrs rendezvousing at Callander's Sawmill, Falkirk for a tour around the mill to see how incoming logs are processed. A most worth while visit as Group members were introduced to the important aspects of log quality in order to satisfy construction timber markets.

### 2. Opening Discussion

On arrival at the Best Western Park Hotel, Falkirk the group began with a half-hour discussion on the 'Quality requirement of the industry' led by Colin Forsyth. Gordon Callander explained the problems with the wood received at the Sawmill. Callander's Sawmill successfully supplies to a C16 market, but would like to increase their sales to include C24s. It was agreed that breeders and silviculturists should retain the objective of increasing the frequency of Sitka spruce battens satisfying the C24 stress grading requirements.

The group stopped for lunch.

### 3. Welcome and Introductions

Chairperson Colin Forsyth opened the afternoon meeting by welcoming Derek Nelson, Michael Fairgrieve and Tim Liddon to their first "Improving Conifer Timber" steering group meeting.

### 4. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of 21 November 2005 were accepted as a true record with the following exceptions:

- Roger Coppock is a member of Scottish Enterprise and not Scottish Executive.
- Spelling of Callander.
- Item 6. 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, first sentence. Change to read 'Sawmills are experiencing a decline in longer length Sitka spruce material'.
- Item 6. 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, second sentence. Should read 'More time is needed to constrain warp/twist but of course this all costs more money'.

4. Matters Arising

a. Information Note

Barry Gardiner informed the group that the Information Note mentioned in the last minutes on the Timber Quality of Improved Sitka spruce is still in production.

b. Link to ICTSG page

The Improving Conifer Timber Quality steering group web page link <http://fcnotes/fr/INFD-6KYGHS> which went live on 19<sup>th</sup> January is apparently not working from outside the FC. Meeting minutes and presentations can be accessed on this link:

[www.forestry.gov.uk/](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/)  
Forest Research  
Research  
Tree Improvement and Forest Genetics  
Steering Group  
Improving Conifer Timber Quality Steering Group

Steve Lee agreed to investigate why this link is not working from outside the FC/FR.

**Action: Steve Lee**

c. Rename Group

It was agreed that the group should drop the word 'Quality' from it's title.

5. New Grading Rules for Timber – Presentation by Geoff Cooper, BRE

Geoff's presentation commenced with current changes to the strength grading of UK softwoods and how it is being affected by European harmonisation. Geoff explained the basis of machine strength grading, the influence of grade boundaries, single strength grading (C16) and combination strength grading (C16/C24). The difficulties incurred if C24 is removed preferentially leaving the remaining material with a lower overall strength grade was discussed.

Geoff explained that the structural timber codes have undergone a process of harmonisation and their implementation is underway. The UKTGC were meeting the same day to decide the date for implementation of the new standard (possibly 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007). For grading this means the introduction of a new standard that replaces the current grading codes (BS EN 14081). Parts 1 to 4 were published last year and now covers all aspects of strength grading of rectangular timber. Details of the parts, a list of the changes and implications for the UK industry and customers were shown in the presentation that will be available on the website.

**Action: Steve Lee**

At the request of UKTGC, Tony Fewell has produced a simple spread sheet based programme that will calculate the settings to the BS EN 338 strength classes for a range of species and dimensions. These programmes will be made available to the Certification Bodies that are registered with the UKTGC to supply to their customer.

6. Update on Kershope Progeny Trial and Including Results in Sitka spruce Timber Quality Model – Steve Lee and Barry Gardiner

The presentation covered research on improved SS and modelling Sitka spruce timber properties, linking timber quality model with batten performance models and the Kershope progeny trial conversion study. In summary the trials on improved SS progeny have shown that the sawn timber performs as well as QCI while at the same time producing higher volumes of sawn timber. Linking existing timber properties and batten performance models offers the possibility for assessing the impact of tree selection (use of improved SS) on final sawn timber performance and this work is ongoing. The Powerpoint presentation will be included on the website.

**Action: Barry Gardiner**

7. Choosing Improved Sitka spruce – Steve Lee

Steve explained that improving the proportion of wood that satisfies the construction timber markets has always been the objective of conifer tree breeders in Britain. Generally, breeders have taken the precautionary principle of trying to improve growth rate and straightness while at the same time holding wood density close to zero. But Tree Breeders do not have all the answers to hand regarding what influences timber quality and have responded to customer demands by providing a choice of planting stocks. Consequently there are now an array of planting stocks available some of which meet the original model, but others which offer greater quality gains at the expense of vigour. Also full-sib(ling) material is now becoming more commonly available offering further gains in uniformity relative to half-sib(ling) family mixtures.

It was recognised that to some forest managers the choice of planting stocks could be confusing. What was really needed was an economic model that linked expected proportion of log types and construction grades to predicted genetic gains. Steve explained that no such model existed at the moment, but that he and Barry had been asked to compose one during the 2006/7 financial year, and that the results from the Kershope study (subject of Barry's presentation) would probably be part of that model.

Steve's presentation will be available on the website.

**Action: Steve Lee**

8. Wrap-up and Any other Business

Today's discussions were felt to be interesting and thought provoking. Further points mentioned were:

- Jim Dewar - Our group meetings could help steer the Research Management Strategy on how best to use funding allocated to the Timber Quality Programme if the Group accepted that it could also play the role of a Programme Advisory Group. Jim requested that we consider this proposal.
- Richard Ogilvy – A question of Nature versus Nurture. A model which involves genetics and management would be useful. Derek Nelson enquired whether the concerns over aspects of the SFGS revision relating to restock quality and use of improved plant material were being put to FCS.
- Colin Forsyth – Would like to see greater concentration on the economic area.
- Richard Ogilvy – Agreed with Colin Forsyth's request to see more of the economic area which show real financial returns.
- Colin Forsyth felt the use of acoustic tools for sorting of trees and logs should not be dropped from discussion but should be kept for a future session.
- Barry Gardiner asked if there was value in working groups within the overall Steering Group to tackle specific questions.
- Roger Coppock felt we should move along on green log assessment of what is out there and minimisation of juvenile wood. In discussing the introduction of a resistance to weevil attack through breeding it was agreed nematodes are incredibly effective and cheaper than breeding, but it is necessary to allow a fallow first year.
- Colin Forsyth – Discussed the impact of climate change and leader loss resulting from great vigour and the problem that windy sites are going to lose more leaders leading to crooked stems. We also need to deal with Lammas growth which is likely to become more common with increasing temperatures.

9. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November in the Kielder area and will include a field trip. The nearest rail station to the area is Hexham. Graham Gill will suggest a suitable venue.

**Action: Graham Gill**

Madge Holmes  
5 July 2005