

## Regional Forestry Forums

### Background

Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) is responsible for delivery of the Scottish Government's forestry policies as set out in the Scottish Forestry Strategy, through working in partnership with others to promote the interests of forestry.

FCS serves as the forestry department of the Scottish Government, advising on and implementing forestry policies. Our mission is to protect and expand Scotland's forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment.

Forestry Commission Scotland has established Regional Forestry Forums to advise on forestry policy and practice in their areas. These Regional Forums replaced the Regional Advisory Committees as regional advisory bodies to FCS.

There are five Regional Forestry Forums within Scotland who advise on the development and implementation of the Scottish Forestry Strategy. Forums have been established in:

**South Scotland    Central Scotland    Perth and Argyll    Grampian    Highland and Islands**

### The Role of Regional Forestry Forums

- ❖ Advising on regional implementation of the Scottish Forestry Strategy and providing a regional perspective on the Strategy's future development
- ❖ Developing close relationships with the forest industries regional cluster groups
- ❖ Promoting the principle of local forestry frameworks, indicative forestry strategies, and other woodland strategies, their development and implementation
- ❖ Advising FCS on the suitability of frameworks and strategies which are in preparation
- ❖ Advising on how the new Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) and Partnership Funding can be locally focused to better meet local needs
- ❖ Where possible, providing linkages with Community Planning Partnerships

Regional Forums are likely to meet three to four times per year in their region and some may set up smaller working groups to take forward specific local issues. Local issues identified by the Forum can be taken forward by the Conservator (an FCS Regional Manager). Regional issues of national significance will be taken forward to the Scottish Forestry Forum.

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### Membership of Regional Forestry Forums

Regional Forums will have between 12 and 15 members, balanced between the economic, environmental, and social aspects of sustainable development.

Appointments are normally based on a three-year term with the opportunity of re-appointment thereafter.

The Chair will represent each of the Regional Forums on the Scottish Forestry Forum and both Forestry Commission Scotland and Forest Enterprise Scotland will have a seat on each Forum.

### Remuneration

Reasonable travel and/or accommodation costs incurred to attend Forum meetings will be reimbursed at the appropriate rate.

### Code of Conduct for Forum Members

It is appropriate that forum members are made aware of the conduct expected of them during their tenure of office.

This Code describes the responsibilities of members in relation to their individual conduct. The role of the Chair is also described.

### Responsibilities and Conduct of Individual Members

Members need to draw a distinction between their position as the Commission's appointees and their activity in other capacities.

Membership is not an impediment to participation in other forms of public work or in the work of forestry and countryside organisations, but the position imposes some obligations. Individual members should at all times act with an awareness of their wider responsibilities. They should at all times:

- ❖ comply with this Code;
- ❖ act in good faith and in the best interests of furthering the aims of the Forestry Commission.

Members should not:

- ❖ act in a way which may bring the Forestry Commission into disrepute;
- ❖ use information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain;
- ❖ disclose confidential information received by virtue of their appointment;
- ❖ use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests.

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As a general guide members should not take any action which cannot be publicly explained.

Public criticism of the Forestry Commission by the member would not be compatible with membership of a Commission's forum or committee unless the member makes clear that they are expressing a personal opinion and not operating in their capacity as an appointee of the Forestry Commission.

### *Attendance*

Members are expected to attend meetings. The office of a member of a forum or committee shall become vacant if he/she has been absent from more than two consecutive meetings of the forum or committee, otherwise than by reason of illness or some other cause approved during the period by the Chair.

### *Declaration of Interests*

#### Formal Business

Any member who has a clear and substantial interest in a matter under consideration by the Forestry Commission should declare that interest at any meeting where the matter is to be discussed. Such declaration should make clear the interest and whether it carries either direct or indirect financial interest to the individual.

Where such an interest constitutes a direct or indirect financial interest, the member involved should withdraw from any meeting and not seek to influence any decision taken by the Forum or Committee relating to the matter under discussion.

In all circumstances, members should ask themselves whether members of the public, knowing the facts of the situation, would reasonably conclude that the interest involved might influence the approach taken or the actions of the forum or committee. If so, the interest is sufficient for the member to withdraw.

Members who have any queries or concerns about these matters should discuss them with their Chair.

#### Informal and other business

Members should apply the same standards regarding the declaration of interests and non-involvement in relevant business in their dealings with the Forestry Commission's staff and in informal meetings of members.

### *Gifts, Hospitality and Fees*

Members should treat with caution any offer of gifts, favours, hospitality or fees arising from their position in the Forestry Commission. Members should consult their Chair in cases of doubt.

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### Role of Chairs

Chairs have (where appropriate) particular responsibility for providing effective leadership on matters such as:

- ❖ encouraging high standards of propriety, in particular ensuring that individual members comply with this Code.
- ❖ providing an assessment of performance of individual members, on request when they are being considered for reappointment.

Chairs will ensure that the minutes of meetings accurately record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual members.

### Resolution of Difficulties

If members have difficulty in complying with this Code, or believe that their forum or committee is proposing to act improperly, they should raise the issue with their Chair who will advise on its resolution. If a forum or committee member remains concerned they may seek guidance from the Chair of the Forestry Commission.