



10 December 2015

FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND REPORT

Scottish Government

Work across the Scottish Government is focusing on the Spending Review / Budget processes; SG2020 and starting to prepare for May's elections. The Deputy First Minister is expected to propose the Scottish Budget to Parliament before Christmas. The direct consequences for FCS / FES finances will need to be worked through following this, however, various scenarios are currently being developed.

Future delivery of forestry functions in Scotland

Work is ongoing at both the Scottish and GB level to consider the consequences of the Scottish Minister's June announcement. It is highly unlikely that any substantial further announcements will now be made before the elections. Exempt from publication, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Part 2, Section 35(a) – 'The formulation of development of government policy'.

National Committee

Interviews were carried out for 2 new non-executive National Committee members to replace Gordon Mann and Simon Rennie, who have both recently completed their terms as National Committee member and National Committee and Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) member respectively. There were 38 applications in total for the two vacancies which were sifted down to 8 for interview. Of the 8 candidates, 2 were women.

The panel consisted of Amanda Bryan (Forestry Commissioner and Chair of National Committee Scotland), George McRobbie (Forestry Commissioner) and Linda McKay (Convener of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority Board). The panel felt that all candidates brought interesting and worthwhile perspectives to the roles on offer, and agreed on two candidates best suited for the needs of Forestry Commission Scotland. The Commissioners will be updated once candidates have confirmed their intent to take up the roles.

Forestry's contribution to Scotland's Economy

The new study on the economic contribution of the forestry sector to Scotland was launched by the Minister on 30th November at the Forest and Timber Technologies Industry Leadership Group. The study updates the 2008 forestry figure of £670m, and shows a substantial increase due to increasing harvest volumes and significant capital investment by the processing sector over the period. The key messages are:

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- Forestry in Scotland makes a significant contribution to Scotland's economy – almost £1 billion a year, and generates 25,867 FTE jobs
- Forest management and timber processing supports over 19,500 jobs, mainly in rural areas. An increase of 6,500 since 2008.
- Forest Recreation and Tourism accounted for a GVA of £183m and supported over 6,500 FTE jobs

The report received unprecedented positive media coverage in Scotland – with substantive articles carried on TV, Radio, print and social media. Further communications activity using the report is also planned by both FCS and ConFor, including the Parliamentary Reception in January. A copy of the report and associated materials can be found at <http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/supporting/forest-industries/economic-contribution-report>

Tree Health

Chalara is now known to be established in the wider environment in the sheltered and buffer areas therefore, as is already the case elsewhere in Scotland, no new Statutory Plant Health Notices (SPHNs), requiring the removal of infected, recently planted ash trees, will be issued in either area. Management of *Chalara* will now concentrate on identifying resistant strains.

Phytophthora ramorum was confirmed in 35 sites during this year's surveillance programme. These sites are generally restricted to areas with known infection or where larch trees are already under some sort of stress. A number of these are in the 'lower' risk zones in Perth and Argyll and the Highlands and Islands. The current risk zones will be reviewed in light of these findings and more refined climatic modelling.

Surveillance also highlighted severe defoliation of Sitka spruce caused by the green spruce aphid (*Elatobium abietinum*), particularly in the south east, and several new great spruce bark beetle (*Dendroctonus micans*) outbreaks in the south west.

Revised Action Plans for *Dothistroma*, *Chalara* and *P ramorum* on larch have now been published and the Scottish Government has also published a [status report](#) for *P. ramorum* and *P. kernoviae*, as well as a strategy for managing *P. ramorum*. The Keep it Clean (KIC) campaign went public on 21 September using both social and traditional media and has been well received.

Land Use Strategy 2016 -2021

A consultation on the draft Land Use Strategy 2016-2021 was launched on 20 November. This consultation draft builds on the first Strategy retaining the strategic Vision, Objectives and Principles for Sustainable Land Use. It contains priority activities for the next five years including a review of the Scottish Forestry Strategy, coordinated by FCS. The detailed process and timing for this review are still to be finalised.

Designation of the Forestry Commissioners under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009

The Forestry Commissioners were identified as a responsible authority under Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 in December 2013. The Act introduces a more sustainable and modern approach to flood risk management by calling for a joined up and coordinated process between all relevant stakeholders to manage flood risk at a national and local level. FCS, on behalf of the Forestry Commissioners, will exercise our flood risk related functions with a view to reducing overall flood risk according to our duties under the Forestry Act 1967 and will be delivered through securing compliance with the UK Forestry Standard and its associated 'Forest and Water Guidelines', and the forestry provisions of the EU Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations.

Improving the condition of native woodlands

One of the Big Steps for Nature identified in the Scotland's Biodiversity Route Map to 2020 is 'Ecosystem restoration' which includes the priority project 'Restoration of native woodland'. This project aims to improve the condition and extent of existing native woodlands and further increase new woodland planting. Work will focus on reducing the effects of browsing pressure (predominately caused by deer), improving the age structure of low density woodlands and increasing the control of invasive and non-native species (especially rhododendron).

Community forestry

A commitment to the next 5 year phase of Woodlands in and around Towns (WIAT) was given by Dr. McLeod at the recent Nature of Awards event. FCS policy on our work with communities (including WIAT) has been updated and the web pages refreshed at <http://www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk/supporting/strategy-policy-guidance/communities>.

Youth Employment Skills Training

The employment skills programme commenced in 2011. The first framework was awarded in 2012 and operated until March 2015. A second award this FY was made recently under the current framework of six training providers. Awards were allocated to Living Solutions and Barnardo's which will result in 12 young people receiving full time training for 13 weeks and 10 weeks respectively. The average matched funding on this occasion - 48% - is a record!

Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) Development Fund 2016/17

The latest phase of the CSGN Development Fund was announced recently by Dr McLeod, for projects in Central Scotland that support trees, woodlands and green infrastructure; encourage community growing; or promote active travel. The Minister made the announcement during a tour of the innovative Castlemilk Woodlands Project in Glasgow, which has previously received support from the Fund. The 2016/17 partnership fund of up to £700,000 is managed by the CSGN Trust, with funding provided by FCS, SNH, Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government. Support is

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available for feasibility projects as well as physical projects. Over the past six years, the CSGN Development Fund has supported over 150 projects with £5.8 million.

Prince's Trust

Under a 'Get into Forestry' programme run by the Trust, young unemployed adults and those struggling at school and at risk of exclusion are supported towards positive destinations and employment in the forestry sector. Many of the participants face issues such as homelessness or mental health problems, or they have been in trouble with the law.

FCS recently hosted a group from the Trust based at Dumfries House, Ayrshire, who visited Galloway forest district to learn about timber harvesting and community forestry.

Forest Enterprise Scotland

Health & Safety:

A Notification of Contravention has been served on the Forestry Commission by the Health & Safety Executive in relation to the Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 following a visit by a HSE inspector to West Argyll Forest District. The particular areas being identified where improvement is required are in respect of risk assessment, elimination or control of exposure, and, information, instruction and training. A full audit of local procedures throughout Forest Districts is underway to ensure that correct procedures are in place, and where not, that failings are identified and improvements implemented.

Finance

Work continues to construct a business plan for next year in the light of the anticipated £10M reduction in trading income. This will result in a significant shortfall in investment in key programmes such as replanting and road construction. FES is keeping SG officials aware of this pressure and its potential consequences, and is working with EnFor colleagues on SR15 spending review scenarios.

Association for Heritage Interpretation Awards

Forest Enterprise Scotland received the runner's up award in the visitor and interpretation centre category at this year's AHI awards. It is the first time that the Forestry Commission has been recognised; in this case for the outstanding use of the built space to describe the natural or cultural heritage of the landscape at the re-developed Queen's View Visitor Centre in Perthshire.