



FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND REPORT

Scottish Government

Programme for Government

The Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2016-17 was published on 7 September 2016. It sets out the actions the Government will take in the forthcoming year and beyond. A Forestry Bill is to be introduced in the first year; this will ensure the Scottish Government has control of all aspects of forestry and will bring new arrangements for its governance, development, support and regulation.

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity has asked Jim Mackinnon CBE, formerly the Scottish Government's Chief Planner, to undertake a short review of the approach in Scotland to the consideration and approval of forestry planting proposals. The remit of this work is: To provide Scottish Ministers with an analysis of the current arrangements for the consideration and approval of forestry planting proposals, and to make recommendations which will help reduce the duration, complexity and cost, and improve the management and handling, of the process. The interim findings from this consultant are due to be reported at a forestry summit on 23 September, with the final report due on 24 October.

The future of forestry in Scotland: consultation

The Scottish Government announced its intention to complete the devolution of forestry in June 2015, since when joint work has proceeded with the UK Government, and more recently also with the Welsh Government, on the options for future forestry arrangements.

This consultation is the next significant step. It will help to inform the preparation of a Bill which SG intends bringing forward for consideration by the Scottish Parliament and of secondary legislation that will then be required in both UK and Scottish Parliaments. The consultation period runs until 9 November 2016.

The aims are threefold:

- To introduce new organisational arrangements so that the management of forestry in Scotland is fully accountable to the Scottish Ministers and to the Scottish Parliament.
- To ensure that we have in place effective cross-border arrangements where those suit Scottish needs.
- To replace the Forestry Act 1967 with a modern approach to the development, support and regulation of forestry.

FC Scotland Report

Spending Review

Preparations are underway for a 1 year Scottish Spending Review to follow the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

Tree Health

The 2016 early summer tree health aerial surveillance programme was carried out during May and June and 24 new Ramorum sites have been confirmed to date. Seven of these sites are in Angus and Perthshire, out-with the most suitable climatic area for this disease, four of which are over 10km from previously known infections, although all appear to be single trees within wider areas of woodland. These detections might be an early indication that the wet and windy conditions experienced during summer/early autumn 2015 might have led to a 'jump' of the disease into areas normally less favourable for Ramorum. Four of these sites also adjacent to major roads; this may simply be coincidental but it could also suggest a link with the road transport network although research advice suggests that this is a low risk pathway for disease spread.

The new findings also include the first known Ramorum on larch in the Cairngorms National Park and the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park; the infected sites are close to the respective Park boundaries. One of these is at Kilmun Arboretum on a single *Larix occidentalis* (Western larch), an important timber species in North America. This is the first report on this tree species in the wider environment, and we will be working with our research colleagues and those in the USA as part of our ongoing international collaboration to help tackle tree pests and diseases.

Within the management zone, a number of areas at the north and south eastern edges now have pockets of heavy infection, whereas some sites appear to have only limited disease extension compared with previous years.

The late summer/autumn aerial surveillance programme was completed on the 2nd of September. Results of this will be known after follow-up field and laboratory work to assess any potential findings, around late-October. This will help to determine whether we are dealing with a new trend of spread of Ramorum rather than the sort of isolated occurrences previously seen, and will also include additional monitoring of the A9 transport corridor to further investigate potential links to the road network.

Woodland Creation - Forestry Grant Scheme

The new Forestry Grants Scheme, administered by Forestry Commission Scotland, provides support for the creation of new woodland and management of existing forests and is part of Scotland's Rural Development Programme (2014-20). Annually, £36 million has been allocated for the Forestry Grants Scheme with £30 million of this specifically for new planting.

FC Scotland Report

Since opening in Spring 2015 over 1000 FGS applications, worth £45m have been submitted, including over 8500 hectares of applications for woodland creation. Of these 600 worth £23m have been approved, including 4300ha of woodland creation. Exempt from publication, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Part 2, Section 22 – ‘information intended for future publication’.

Current approval times for woodland creation projects are 16 weeks on average and 12 weeks for other FGS applications that don't include a 28 consultation period. Larger and more complex woodland creation projects, particularly those over 500 hectares or involving EIAs can take much longer and are the main focus of the review.

Increasing the economic contribution of forestry in Scotland

Moving timber by rail

Hitrans published its report on moving timber out of the Flow country and followed this up with a field visit and seminar on 13 - 14 June attended by growers, purchasers and rail operating companies. FCS have been working closely with the Timber Transport Officer and Hitrans to facilitate meetings between the growers and the purchasers and it seems now that there will be sufficient interest to set up a trial to move timber from Kinbrace to Inverness or further south. By developing a consortium of growers and a consortium of buyers there is sufficient volume to attract the rail operating companies and more than one market to sell into.

Sector Skills

The FCS Business Development team is working closely with Scottish Enterprise's Forests and Timber Technologies industry leadership group, particularly in the area of skills. The group has developed a skills action plan with four clear objectives aimed at talent attraction; new entrants; workforce development and; a curriculum review. FCS have commissioned FR to undertake a census of harvesting machinery and personnel to provide a clearer picture of the needs of this particular sector of the forest industry. We will also be working closely with industry and Lantra to examine how the modern apprenticeship scheme might work for the sector.

Increase contribution to Health and Well-being (urban and rural communities)

The Sponsorship Scheme, the National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS) and Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS)

In 1998 FCS facilitated the first sponsored woodland sale directly to a community at Abriachan. Over the next few years more forest land was sold to communities through sponsorship at Aline on Lewis, Leadburn in the Scottish Borders, Strathfillan in Perthshire, at Strontian and, at Buessan and Ledaig on Mull.

FC Scotland Report

In 2005 we launched the NFLS to facilitate Community Right to Buy legislation introduced in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Since then there have been 40 NFLS sales (including 27 community purchases) totalling more than £8.5 million.

The 2015 Community Empowerment Act is the next step in this process, with new legislation for communities who wish to request purchase, lease or use of public land. Scottish Government is currently drafting associated Asset Transfer Regulations, to be laid in the Scottish Parliament later this year. The Community Asset Transfer Scheme – which will be administered by FES - is being developed to replace the NFLS as an asset transfer scheme.

CSGN Development Fund 2017/18

Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham recently announced the latest phase of the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) funding. Green projects are able to bid for a share of £400,000 to enhance woodlands and green infrastructure, boost active travel and encourage community growing. The CSGN aims to transform the central belt into a place where the environment adds value to the economy and enriches the quality of people's lives. Since 2010 more than 150 Development Fund projects have benefitted from a share of £6.2 million. The CSGN Development Fund is managed by the Central Scotland Green Network Trust, with funding provided by FCS, SNH, Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government. Support is available for feasibility projects as well as physical projects.