

Private Sector Production Forecast Working Group

Meeting at Crewe Arms Hotel
25th November 2008

Attending:

Roger Coppock (Chair)
Justin Gilbert (Secretary)
David Leslie
Keith Jones
Colin Kennedy
Adrian Kirby
Jez Ralph

Gabriel Hemery (until lunch)
Andy Greathead
Andy Mason
Oliver Coombe
Martin Craig

Ben Ditchburn (PF programme manager)
For item 6 – Barry Gardiner and John Fonweban (both FR)

Roger opened the meeting and welcomed Barry Gardiner and John Fonweban from Forest Research, and Adrian Kirby and Andy Greathead who were joining the group.

1. Apologies

Chris Edwards – Keith Jones attending for FCW
Mark Lawrence – Justin will present on his behalf
Robert Matthews
Simon Gillam

2. Note of Previous meeting – Roger Coppock

Agreed

3. Actions arising

Suggestions for the presentation of the data and the importance of stem straightness – agenda item
Circulate an enhanced data format/strategy to carry this forward and quantify benefits. – agenda item

4. The web data portal – Gabriel Hemery

Proposal to include and bring in the smaller woodlands, particularly broadleaved ones, rather than the larger blocks.

Data to support the forecast and the Inventory process will be gathered. The web site includes a tool that will enable a woodland owner to capture the woodland as a polygon and measure the woodland. The page will also enable the capture of simple inventory information. Wood users can see a map giving approximate locations of woodlands and can pick up a description of the woodland and can then indicate interest in products from the woodland. Woodland Trust and RSPB are also supportive of improving woodland management. At the moment this is a research project but will be rolled out over the next 18 months. Will go live in January and the roll-out will begin in Oxfordshire.

AG – how do you get people to go on to the site? Scotland owners must be registered with IACS before they can claim grants – add a link to feed to this site. Poor imagery in parts of Scotland may hamper the ability of owners to map their woodlands. KJ mentioned the problem of Google data and OS data not being permitted on the same site. The grid ref is generated by the application and we could use this to link to the inventory map, although we could not link the polygon directly. BD queried if the intention of GHs work was chiefly to enable brokerage between producers and processors, rather than actually building a woodland map.

CK – would this develop to join with the inventory map and track any owners not registered with the application to build a full data resource. GH said it might be possible to identify 90% of woodland owners but this was primarily a proposal to reach out to people and bring them into management and get signed up to data sharing. BD said that he liked CKs vision but that it would not arise directly from this application but could be an appropriate direction for the FC. AK hoped for a mechanism that would enhance management including not only production but also other aspects. GH agreed the need for a link with the right partners for the service. MC asked who was funding the project. GH said that they were funding it themselves at the moment with some support due from SEE region of the FC. JR suggested that an extension service that could be funded for an inventory service that would support owners who were unsure of what to do. BD made the point that inventory and forecast operated at different scales to the one that applied to this project. This data might not be compatible with the aim of adding data that could be linked to an estimate of a confidence limit for the forecast. For a local area forecast this data would be useful at that level and perhaps deliver more than the national dataset. DL asked about the problem of finding owners and the balance of the extra information that would also be offered on the website. GH asked about the use of the data to the forecast. BD said that he would ask a statistician about this aspect. RC offered a picture with this data moving towards the NFI and closing the gap; some of the data was easier to capture for non-specialist owners. AM said that keeping it simple was important and not to worry too much about supplying data but perhaps enabling advice to be linked with those who needed it. BD said we could explore the use of the data within the PF. JR said that species choice was not available through imported timber but for small processors/users it was a way of finding the material desired in a local scope. Need for grant or felling licence must include government at some point building the jigsaw of woodland ownership and management. The group were supportive of the proposal and agreed it is worth endorsing..

5. PF2011 programme update – Ben Ditchburn

Progressing well, good dialogue with sector, informing process, talking to ConFor processor group, which is very keen on timber quality. Incorporating this would be a sensible strategy for the forecast. The new forecasting software has been run for the first time. It now includes better handling of mortality, and is based on real crop history rather than assuming adherence to yield model. 15000-20000 plots for the NFI will be surveyed on top of the mapping work. Funding has been agreed and a new statistician is to be recruited. . Ben outlined how biodiversity can be included in the plotting process. RC mentioned that the new name for NIWT2, NFIGB has now been adopted to better reflect the work being undertaken, and bring it into line with other European countries. GH asked about the new IFOS unit and BD outlined the current situation harmonising the approach across FE and the PS. DL outlined a vision of a slight 2-track approach with bringing owners with information in to the process. Delay in bringing this data in might undermine the confidence in the survey. CK wondered about building the base data for the PS perhaps starting with the larger blocks. DL spoke about the progress against existing Forest plans in the current financial climate and market.

6. Timber quality forecasting – data presentation, stem straightness, other issues – Barry Gardiner / John Fonweban and discussion

BG spoke about the ongoing work including

- Measurement to test straightness and conversion models completed in FE felling coupes in Inverness and Lochaber Forest Districts.
- Testing of straightness models has been extended to areas not covered to date (Aberfoyle and Tay) in conjunction with acoustic measurements on trees and logs and Terrestrial Laser Scanning
- Measurement of straightness and harvester output will also be carried out in FE Wales felling coupes later this year.
- Validation of straightness model against data obtained by Napier University as part of benchmarking study of Sitka spruce in Scotland
- Survey of stem form of Scots pine in north and east Scotland has been started (due for completion in January 2009)
- Mapping of stem straightness, wood density and KAR across the whole FC Sitka spruce estate in Great Britain (for illustration of methodology)

BG spoke about remote sensing tools and Juan Suarez' work in generating dbh and tree height data. JF has been working with Juan to get better models established. Work on predicting straightness and density (from age, height and dbh) is progressing well, but further work is still required in this modelling. This is supported by work at Napier University on benchmarking the spruce resource in Scotland using acoustic data and cores. Early results indicate that variation in stiffness within the stand (55%) and between stands (36%) is quite large. Most of the stands studied were grown from wild collected seed rather than improved or nursery-based material. Deep crowned trees are less stiff. BG covered the potential modelling links to add timber quality into the forecast.

BD described discussions with the ConFor processor group. In a hierarchy of needs, quantity is the first thing to get right and then we can move on to other descriptors. There is also a shift in species emphasis from region to region. BG acknowledged that he had been now asked to move onto DF in the future. Straightness is a critically important issue, which can be delivered in the next production forecast. Stiffness is also important, but more work is required to understand how it should be presented in a strategic way to avoid wrong interpretations of the data. OC need for proper health warnings and good explanation of the work and problems of linking future stiffness to forecasting. BG stiffness less certain than straightness. Could do straightness in time for the next forecast but stiffness less likely.

Action point BG to produce a discussion paper on stiffness for the next meeting.

Action point RC to circulate paper that went to Confor processors group and the Treemetrics report for Argyll on breakout optimisation at the pre-harvest stage.

7. Forest map development and pilot survey work – Justin Gilbert

Justin outlined the previous survey (National Inventory of Woodlands and Trees) and then progressed to the National Forest Inventory GB and explained progress to date on the forest map and the pilot survey introducing the variables that were being recorded and the future course of likely events to produce a final specification for the fieldwork and the reporting scheme.

8. SWE Forecast – data and project update – Jez Ralph

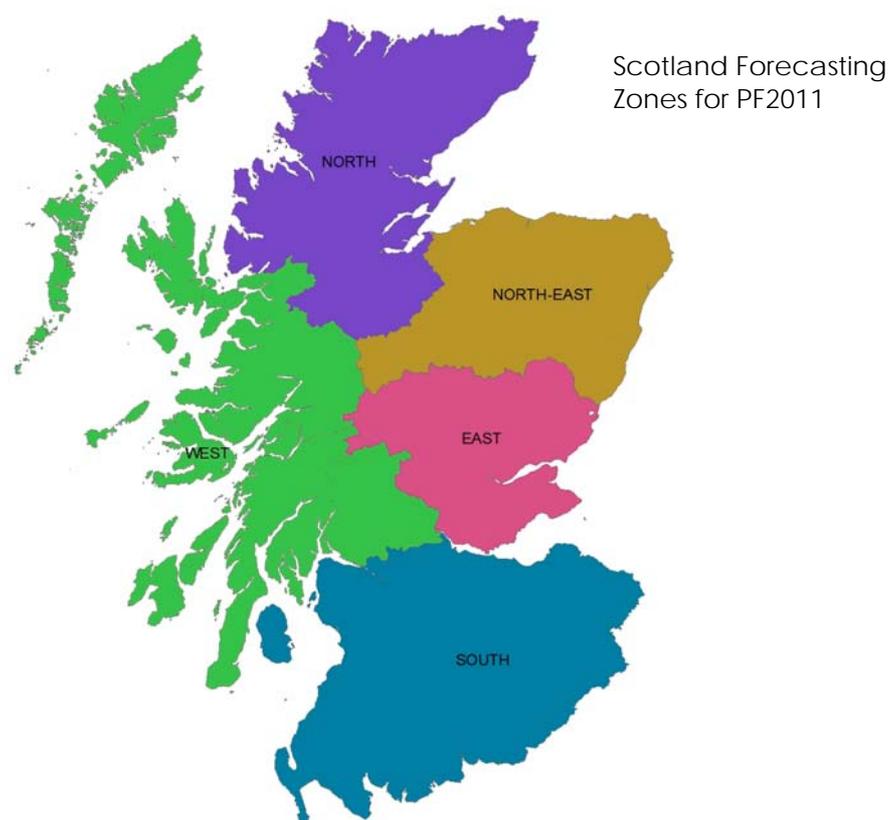
JR gave a brief overview of the intention of the project, addressing the need for locally grown timber but recognised the need to tie in to the national scale. Data

collection has now been completed in spite of the wet summer. The survey had been restricted to 10ha conifer forests and above, allowing ownership to be determined much more easily. Contractor and ConFor contacts were vital for completing the ownership picture and gaining access. Now analysing the data and moving towards a forecast. Further work on DF for stem straightness/stiffness is underway at Bath, linking in with John Moore's work at Napier. Will link the sites for this with the sites already used for the resource assessment. The aim is to enhance use of timber for structural and non-structural uses. The sites will also link into the forecast. Money might be available from the Rural Development Programme to run similar projects in other regions. Access to RDP funding was discussed and was stated as being complex, with the need for a 'bridge'.

9. PF reporting boundaries – Justin Gilbert

JG outlined the use of the forecasting zones (FZ) in previous exercises and then outlined this history for England and Wales. For PF2011 it was agreed England will be presented as 8 zones corresponding to the Government Office Regions, London being treated with South-East England. Wales will be treated as one zone as had been the case in PF2005. Scotland was discussed in more detail and the 2005 breakdown explained. A modification of the 2005 map was suggested, transferring Ettrick & Lauderdale to the South Scotland FZ and this was regarded as being helpful. ConFor's suggestion of dividing Scotland across the Central valley was discussed and accepted.

Action point JG to produce a revised map (included in minutes)



10. Data collection format and process – Ben Ditchburn & all

RC introduced this item, which is the core of the group's work. Discussions have indicated that early thinking around a simplistic approach is having to move to one that will provide data that will be statistically robust. BD, SG and RC have worked on this and AK and MC have since seen and modified the data gathering form to a

more useable version. The issues are whether we can use the data to augment the NFIGB dataset, and how much can be supplied. It will also be very important to take account of felling since the map was created. DL spoke of a concern in the PS that they needed to get more involved in the data gathering for the forecasting process. The swing in timber prices and land lost to windfarms creates more uncertainty so we need to move things forward quickly. There is a need for visible data collection being underway to retain industry confidence in the exercise, for instance by gathering woodland ownership data in a very broad way, perhaps through a ConFor group. A general discussion suggested several routes to data, through the native woodland survey in Scotland, through IACS and its equivalent in England and Wales, even through FCS certification. Building a map of ownership in Scotland, expanding into Wales and England might be slightly more complicated but key contacts could realise a very high yield of forest owners.

Action point BD, RC with DL AK MC to get methodology out by mid-Dec. Group members to identify key individuals, bringing this together for early Feb?

11. AOCB

RC – agenda for next meeting – asked for comments for the next meeting. Example areas of mapping for next meeting

12. Location and time of next meetings.

March 9th Silvan House

Justin Gilbert
Secretary, PSPFWG
26.11.08