Private Sector data working group, 1st meeting, 27th March 2008
Silvan House, Edinburgh

Roger Coppock   Colin Kennedy
Oliver Coombe   Mark Lawrence
Martin Craig   David Leslie
Chris Edwards   Andy Mason
Justin Gilbert   Robert Matthews
Simon Gillam   Jez Ralph
Gabriel Hemery

In addition to the members of the working group the meeting was attended by Steve Lavery (programme board) and Ben Ditchburn (programme manager).

1. **Apologies**
Steve Connolly, Graham Taylor

2. **Welcome and Introductions (RC)**
RC welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked members for being prepared to make the time to contribute to the important work of the group. He emphasised that the group has a weighty task ahead of it but the future rewards are high. The working group comprises a wide ranging membership, with a GB scope.
The morning continued with a short series of presentations.

3. **Context for the working group (RC)**
PS production is increasing and over 60% is going to come from the PS. Supply and demand coming more into balance, promoting a desire for improved forecast information. Approaching the peak of production and need for study to sustain the sector.
The forecast will cover the period from 2010 to 2035
Scope – softwood removals
Objectives – to improve the accuracy by involving the PS more closely in the process by improving the crop data
Sawlog look likely to have supply to cover demand but small roundwood is likely to be under more pressure
Need for improvement in PS data
Comparison of FC production forecast and PS availability forecast need to distinguish and work towards greater commonality between the two.

4. **Working group terms of reference (RC)**
GH asked about the lack of hardwoods in the forecast. BD said still under debate but resource/time limitation and lack of basic data. GH suggested getting the PS to do the data collection forming a new initiative. JR new initiative would include hardwood forecasting and could potentially fund some of this work. RC could refer to hardwood forecasting in the TOR. BD maybe by 2012 and linkage to woodfuel strategy. GH emphasised interest from the PS in broadleaved forecast. SG consider steps to improve data and develop broadleaved/hardwood forecast. SL valid point but need softwood result first. Need for continuity of group for the subsequent hardwood forecast. Broadleaves are an important, but secondary priority – improved forecasts need to be underpinned by better data. Access and ownership are important, different to softwood sector.

4.1. Action RC to add item to ToR reflecting the need to address broadleaves/hardwood forecasting and circulate to working group.

5. **PF 2010 project management (BD)**
BD's presentation covered the need for reliable production forecasts, outlined vision for the build of forecast, fit for purpose information at each stage. Data availability better than it has been in the past, future plans for long-term forecasts, replanting factored into the forecast, 100 year forecast. need to reflect felling at correct time and other management. Better data and a better approach (confidence intervals, distinguish between measures and prediction), better modelling. Ownership type can be used as a proxy for management intention where we lack specific information. National map as aspiration underscored by National Inventory of Woodlands and Trees (NIWT) with other additional sources enhancing the detail available in particular areas. Top-up system for sampling by PS adding further samples to add detail, using same standards and protocols. Interval between committed felling and biological availability – production lies somewhere in between.

Although dependant on funding BD suggested the following target confidence limits for the volume forecast: GB +/- 2%; country +/- 4%; region +/- 8%. Finally he outlined the benefits and spin-offs that could be derived therefrom, and highlighted the governance structure in place to ensure delivery.

Matters raised:

- impact of disposals programme on FE forecast (remit concern to FE fcst group)

5.1. Action BD.
- Windfarms and PAWS restoration generate large volumes early.
- AM need to remember that PS is not one homogeneous ownership and include this factor in scenario modelling.

6. **Current private sector data (or what we used for PSF 2005) (JG)**
JG outlined the way in which the NIWT was carried out and the data that it supplied to the forecast. The role of the working groups was explained in detail and also the use of other data for the forecast such as YC.

7. **2010 forecast system (RM)**
RM said that we currently had two forecast systems leading to difficulty in maintenance, risks of inconsistency etc. There were limitations on what we can produce e.g. forecast of growing stock not currently possible.

We need common outputs, scaleability, and a quality measure is important.

Requirements - links to other forecasts, common inputs. Need common models e.g. forest yield, M1, ASORT, QSORT. Ease of data input and update;

development principles, proven methodologies, kernel system and then add on other requirements as future proofing.

RM provided an illustration of M1 model flexibility which works for all species including hardwoods (need to understand the assortment in more detail, branchwood) BSORT. MI needs the data to support it.

A system description was outlined showing possible stages of development, and data options for assimilating PS data – species, planting year, YC stocking (if available) (thinning history/yield model) management prescription, metadata – data quality

How far through we are with development of the models? The aim is to complete by Christmas within a framework for testing. SL asked for further information on BSORT; RM offered to bring it to a future meeting.

7.1. Action RM.

8. **Forest Map (ML)**
NIWT 2 – what's included and the timeline for completion
0.5ha or 20% cover giving quantitative estimate of woodland
Estimated completion: England - July 2009, Wales - May 2008, Scotland March 2009. The map is produced using orthorectified aerial photography; Wales was flown in 2006; rest from 2003 onwards. Then updated/added to and using Remote Sensing (RS) for change detection and analysis (RS will not do species (yet)) Update by 2009 using SPOT imagery (free at the moment)

SG the map will not give a complete conifer / broadleaved split. BD spoke about possible ways in which updating could utilise other data sources. RC said map was a great thing but needed the intelligence underneath from good quality data.

9. **Data availability**
RC introduced the discussion outlining the need to identify what data is available, in terms of ease of access, currency, quality, barriers to access and use, and whether confidentiality issues might pose difficulties.
Martin Craig Tillhill 130kha – fairly good information
RM need for standard formats or process into accessible format for the forecasting system, QA important. SL create standard data format, RM agreed and said that it was a side of A4. Forms to owners may vanish, address to managers/agents.
BD – different variables have different levels of risk attached to them, more likely to be wrong. The design of the survey will be affected by the data that is available
SL confidentiality issues – RM suggested using aggregate data might overcome this – problems might result from the scaleability of the data but might degrade the data interms of spatial relevance. ML had a different viewpoint with need for access for NIWT2. Possible unwillingness of owners to supply FC with information. RC said that we would not communicate anyone's personal information and only publish aggregate results. Engagement with owners through Confor and RSFS/RFS/press articles to reach other (smaller) owners. Good information about our intentions may overcome owner's misgivings.

RC – FC could take responsibility for re-formatting data to make it usable and then return data to submitter for checking. Web application – small owners might be tempted to add their data but major owners/managers would be better sending us a CD. Need for spatial data might make it harder to provide data.

SL need for enduring process to be developed, asking for participation in the longer term, as well as for 2010.

RM 3 phases
1. woodland map
2. scavenging within a framework of metadata
3. tactical operational survey – set of woodlands with need for specific data – could be built back into the forecast post-2010. Potential for PS top up surveys to improve local data.

AM design of mensuration protocol – can we give it to people – RM said largely designed but not yet written.

Scottish woodlands – data for 100kha, need for carrot as an incentive. BD suggested biomass / carbon assessment – RC these were options for the longer term but may not be possible for 2010.

RC need to identify areas without data to enable the targetting of survey needs. RM need for QA of the incoming data

Suggested that members of the group submitted information on what they thought could be provided, SL suggested that this is done through ConFor.

Action points.
9.1.   SL and RC to write note for publication to encourage PS owners, agents, and management companies to take part in the process by end April.
9.2.   RM with BD guidance on data, and non-spatial data location by 11th April.
9.3.   BD to investigate creation of website as reference for articles, based with ConFor.
9.4.   Members to provide BD with: Description of data available; data quality assessment; other potential sources of data and how best to gain access to it by mid May.

10. **AOCB**

JR – asked if the sampling being done by Napier for the SIRT project can be included in the data – RC replied that FC is fully aware of this data, and is liaising with Napier to make full use of it.
RC briefly outlined actions being taken to improve the information about timber quality – Barry Gardiner is applying the Timber Quality model to the 2005 FE forecast for Scotland; this will then be discussed with industry – relevance and quantification will inform the development of QSORT.
Hardwood aspects – RM said design would be extensible for broadleaves.
RC provided members with a schedule of work for the group over the next few years indicating key tasks and milestones, and timing of future working group meetings.

11. **Date of future meetings.**

Future meetings were agreed:
24th June – Crewe Arms Hotel, Crewe
3rd September – Silvan House
25th November – Crewe Arms Hotel, Crewe

RC thanked members and others for attending and contributing and closed the meeting at 15.05.

Minute prepared by Justin Gilbert and Roger Coppock