

## A valuation of the economic and social contribution of forestry for people in Scotland -

Over the last decade an increasingly diverse range of social and economic benefits has been recognised within the forestry sector. Scottish forestry is now seen to deliver on such governmental agendas as improving quality of life, tackling social exclusion and promoting sustainable lifestyles. But how valuable are these benefits, and to whom? Answers to these questions are essential if policy and investment decisions are to be based upon sound evidence. With this in mind, Forestry Commission Scotland commissioned Forest Research to carry out a two-year evaluation of the current social and economic contribution of forestry, forests and woodlands to the people of Scotland.



### Background

This study was structured around 30 quantitative indicators distributed across seven themes. Additional insights from qualitative research highlight how people value forestry in multiple and often intangible ways that cut across the seven themes to support both individual and community development.

### Objectives

The research aimed to provide a comprehensive valuation of the current social and economic benefits of Scottish forestry, forests and woodlands derived by the people of Scotland.

### Methods

The project was carried out between April 2006 and March 2008. An interdisciplinary methodology was used, which included:

- economic analyses of the market and non-market benefits of forestry
- two national surveys, each using representative samples of 1000 adults
- geographic information system (GIS) analyses to assess the visibility of forests from residences in Scotland as a basis for economic valuation of the contribution of forests to the Scottish landscape

*“There is not a day that goes by that I don’t send people walking in the forest. The interest in those trees is tremendous”*

Tourism operator, Loch Ness region

*“It is more than just a nice place to walk the dogs ... [it’s about] being part of something”*

Scoping study participant

*“I just like going to the woods ‘cause they’re fun!”*

Special Needs School Student, Glasgow

- questionnaire surveys of all known organisations in Scotland that carry out forest-related activities
- two qualitative case studies, of Loch Ness and Glasgow & Clyde Valley
- literature and data searches

## Findings -

- Total employment associated with the use of Scottish timber was estimated to be 13,200 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs.
- The total Gross Value Added (GVA) was estimated to be £460 million at 2007/2008 prices.
- In addition, the total employment resulting from first-round (direct) spending from tourism and recreation attributable to woodland, where woodland was the primary reason for the visit, is estimated to be around 17,900 FTE jobs, while the total GVA associated with tourism and recreation is around £209 million.
- In 2006–2007 around 7500 volunteers carried out forest-related work, representing a total of 47,400 volunteer days.
- The numbers of visits to Scottish woodlands by Scottish adults was shown to have varied from 37 million to 68 million per year. Estimates for the non-market value of these visits exceeded £44 million per year. In addition, in 2006/2007 an estimated 63.5% of Scottish children made a total of 11.6 million visits.
- Adults from the most deprived areas in Scotland were significantly less likely to have visited woodlands.
- Of those adults with a local woodland, 22% did not feel it was safe to visit, with women more likely to feel unsafe than men.
- Around 24% of children had visited woodland in the previous 12 months as part of a nursery or school trip, a total of around 510,000 visits.
- Around 82% of adults agree that woodlands are places to reduce stress and anxiety, while 79% agree that woodlands are places to exercise and keep fit.
- A total of 57% gain substantial benefit from seeing trees or woods from where they live. GIS analysis showed that around 557,000 people in Scotland have visible woodland within 1 km of their homes.
- 138 active community woodland groups with around 13,500 members were identified, who together manage around 250 woodlands covering a total of 18,275 hectares, or 1.4% of the woodland area in Scotland. The total income was around £4.5 million in 2006/2007, of which 50% was grants from public bodies.

## Recommendations

The study provides a model for similar evaluations of the forestry sector in other countries. A number of areas for further research have been identified. In particular:

- Further work is needed to provide data to show trends over time, and to compare values for woodland with other competing kinds of land use.
- Further use of spatial datasets and GIS would enhance understanding of how the benefits associated with each indicator are distributed across regions and social groups.

### Partners

David Edwards, Forest Research; Professor Bob Crabtree and associates, CJC Consulting; Rhys Evans, Integrate Consulting; and Alex Franklin, BRASS, Cardiff University.

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### Reports and publications

Edwards, D., Morris, J., O'Brien, L., Sarajevs, V. and Valatin, G. (2008). *The economic and social contribution of forestry for people in Scotland*. Research Note FCRN102, Forestry Commission Scotland, Edinburgh. [www.forestresearch.gov.uk/forestryforpeople](http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/forestryforpeople)

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