



14 December 2017

## FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND REPORT

### Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill

The Scottish Parliament is continuing its scrutiny of the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity responded to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee's Stage 1 report outlining the government's position. A debate on the Bill was also held in the Scottish Parliament on 7 November. Stage 2 is scheduled for 6-13 December, where nongovernment and Scottish Government amendments to the Bill will be considered and voted on. The main topics debated at the first committee hearing related to the Scottish Forestry Strategy, the ongoing role of UKFS, compulsory purchase powers, the publication of forest ownership statistics and the handling of receipts from disposal of land on the National Forest Estate. The remaining sections to be debated on 13 December are primarily about felling licenses and organisational arrangements.

### Tree Health

#### Annual tree health surveillance and monitoring programme

This summer's annual tree health surveillance and monitoring programme identified 497 suspect larch sites outwith the south-west Scotland Management Zone (where Statutory Plant Health Notices are no longer served); ca 80% of these were identified during the aerial surveys, the remainder coming from ground-based observations. Of the 497 suspect sites, 75 new *Phytophthora ramorum* infections have been confirmed (8 of which lie outside the most suitable climatic area for this pathogen). Lineage testing (EU 1/ EU2) has started on those samples from which *P. ramorum* could be cultured. Within the Management Zone, the majority of larch stands now have symptomatic larch present. Elsewhere, the average size of Statutory Plant Health Notices in 2017 has been 2.06 ha (3.55 ha in 2016) – this providing some comfort that the policy of hitting new infections hard and early has very significantly reduced their scale and intensity compared to the south west Scotland experience in 2013,

593 'suspect' spruce sites have been identified this year, from which 106 sites were confirmed to have great spruce bark beetle (*Dendroctonus micans*) present. Although mainly within the current known distribution of this pest in south west of Scotland, one site near Falkirk and several sites in the Ayr/Kilmarnock area represent a significant jump in the spread of this pest towards the Pest Free Area (PFA) of west Scotland. The implications of detection within the PFA (i.e. removal or re-drawing of its boundary and hence impacts on the export market for coniferous roundwood to Ireland) continues to be drawn to the attention of the forestry sector. FCS has also been working closely with Forest Research to re-supply them with adults and larvae of the predator beetle (*Rhizophagus grandis*).

### Woodland Creation

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## Support for small scale enterprises

FC Scotland is working with the Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers (ASHS) to produce a short film about grading and valuing hardwood timber. This is often seen as a "dark art" and the film will provide growers with information about valuing their crops and preparing them for sale to a timber buyer. Mr Ewing has met with ASHS and recently met their sister organisation the Scottish Furniture Makers Association (SFMA) to see the high value added their members can achieve with Scottish hardwoods. One of the topics under discussion was the recent introduction of support for secondary processing equipment to help this sector.

## **Increasing Community Engagement**

### **Green Exercise Partnership**

We have recently secured partnership funding of £250k from Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates Health Finance and Infrastructure Division to help health promoting infrastructure projects within 4 Area health Boards: Forth Valley; Shetland; Greater Glasgow & Clyde; and NHS National Services Scotland. This will support greening projects providing all abilities paths, access connections to greenspace and woodland, and a courtyard demonstration project.

### **Forest Kindergarten**

Forest Kindergarten is an example of woods and greenspace being used to meet the needs of the Scottish people and providing an exemplar of sustainable forest management. An agreement has recently been signed with SQA for the Forest Kindergarten Level 7 National Workplace award. This has been warmly welcomed by the Early Years sector as they prepare to double the hours of free provision for all 3-4 year olds and vulnerable 2 year olds to 1140 hours by 2020. There are real issues with infrastructure sufficiency as there are too few buildings - so the outdoors is being seen as a favourable option. Existing provision lacks gender diversity (the ratio of male to female is 2:98) and so the outdoors with early years is seen as a way of attracting more diversity to the profession.

### **Forestry Enterprise Scotland (FES)**

#### **Health and Safety**

Chainsaw accidents continue to be a major concern on the Estate with two serious incidents in five days. Both sites were being managed under the direct control of FES.

On 16 November an accident occurred in Glen Loy near Fort William. A contract chainsaw operator motor-manually felling oversize 'edge' trees, was injured by a falling tree that he was working on, resulting in a number of injuries. He was airlifted to hospital in Inverness, before being transferred to Glasgow.

Subsequently on 20 November, a member of FES staff, acting as a banksman on a site at

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Crianlarich, was injured by a falling dead tree. The injured person was taken to hospital by ambulance. Both accidents have resulted in significant injuries and extended periods of time in hospital.

Investigations have commenced in to both accidents, to understand the root cause of both of them and highlight further learning.

In response to these serious chainsaw related accidents on the National Forest Estate (and others in recent months), FES has issued additional guidance to staff and is bringing forward outputs from its Health & Safety project looking at tree cutting operations. In addition we are working with our timber purchasers and contractors regarding management of chainsaw operations.

The Sheriff who conducted the FAI into fatalities at two motorsports events in Scotland including the death of Joy Robson on the National Forest Estate reported at the end of November. FES was not invited to participate in the FAI. FES along with others (e.g. MSA) are still analyzing the determination to assess if existing processes and/or event procedures for Motor Sports need to be reconsidered or improved.

## **Political Engagement**

The Peel Tower at Glentress, was the venue for a Forest Tourism Summit co-hosted by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity and the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs on 13 November.

The summit with invited tourism industry representatives, with an interest in forest tourism was aimed at demonstrating the importance of forest tourism in Scotland and its impact on a wide range of tourism-related businesses. Providing an opportunity to highlight the Scottish Government's continued support to the forest tourism sector and its commitment to continued collaborative working.

As part of the summit it was confirmed that plans for an £11.3M Forest Holidays cabin and associated public recreation facilities investment at Glentress have been submitted for planning consent.

A week later (i.e. 20 November) FES hosted a second visit from Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity. Mr Ewing met with FES Functional leads, District Managers, Operational and Planning Managers involved with restocking on Scotland's National Forest Estate to formally launch FES's Restocking Strategy.

In addition he met with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) staff and partook in a media launch for the re-commencement of the FES Modern Apprenticeship Scheme. The Scheme initiated in South Scotland in partnership with SRUC Barony campus, will initially employ and support 8 apprentices across South Scotland in a range of operational forestry activities, utilising SRUC as the official training providers. Discussions are ongoing with Scottish School of Forestry for a similar Scheme to be delivered in the North of Scotland in 2018.

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Finally he met with FES / Scottish Power Renewables staff in a visit to the Harestanes windfarm, to see at first hand the integration of windfarm turbines and infrastructure within a multipurpose productive upland forest.

The visit also provided an opportunity to announce that the 1GW milestone for renewable operating capacity on the NFE was reached when the 1.1MW Bruach Chaorainn hydro scheme in Cowal became operational.

Both the summit and site visits have generated significant media interest.

**Jo O'Hara**  
**Head of FCS**  
**December 2017**