



FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND REPORT

Scottish Government consultation on the Future of Forestry in Scotland

The independent summary of the responses to the consultation was published in the middle of February. We are anticipating a response from the Cabinet Secretary in due course (likely to be late March / Early April). The key findings were that the consultation responses were broadly in favour of completing devolution, moving the forestry functions in SG and retaining a pragmatic and co-operative cross border approach to Forest Research and other functions such as UKFS and Tree health. The one area where there was considerable disagreement was in relation to organisational arrangements, however, there was a wide range of views about what appropriate arrangements might be in the future.

Parliamentary debate

A forestry debate in the Scottish Parliament at the end of January resulted in united cross-party support for increasing Scotland's woodland creation ambition. A number of MSPs noted the strong degree of consensus achieved, which is a very positive outcome given the minority government and the other uncertainties facing forestry in Scotland.

Tree Health

Legislation and contingency planning

The new EU Plant Health Regulation came into force in December 2016, triggering a 3 year implementation phase and enhancing pre-border, border and inland biosecurity measures. A new Statutory Notification Scheme for imported solid fuel wood came in to effect in January 2017. Although the volume of solid fuel wood imports in to the UK is relatively small, it is normally unprocessed and thus a potentially high risk pathway for the introduction of tree pests. We have been working closely with SG colleagues to revise the Generic Contingency Plan for Plant Health in Scotland – this went out to consultation with key stakeholders on the 9th December 2016.

Phytophthora ramorum

The 2016 annual surveillance programme identified 71 new larch sites displaying Ramorum outside the Management Zone, resulting in 64 Statutory Plant Health Notices (SPHN). Of these, 16 are outside the most climatically suitable area for Ramorum, all of which are relatively small in scale. Sixteen of the SPHN's are on Mull which is within the most climatically suitable area for the disease, although the outbreaks here are of a much smaller magnitude as the earlier findings in Galloway and Dumfries. A single finding of the EU2 'strain' of Ramorum was identified in a stand of larch near Forfar. This strain has a limited known distribution (SW Scotland and Northern Ireland) compared to the EU1 strain, which is found across Europe. EU2 is believed to be more effective than EU1 at killing larch bark although less effective at producing spores. During 2016 we also increased Rhododendron surveillance outside larch SPHN areas but within the wider woodland environment; 61 new sites were identified. Although greater sporulation occurs on larch, Rhododendron is capable of driving a disease epidemic in its own right, and as it is rarely killed by Ramorum, it can

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act as a long term reservoir for the pathogen. We will continue with our Ramorum surveillance and monitoring programme and will work with the Scottish Tree Health Advisory Group to review existing management and support measures (including those for Rhododendron) to ensure that they remain effective and proportionate.

Dendroctonus micans (Great spruce bark beetle)

Fifty three new *D. micans* sites were confirmed in 2016 in south-west Scotland. Most were either treated with the biocontrol *R. grandis* to help minimise impact of this pest, or were in areas where this predator is already present. There has been a gradual northerly spread of findings of this pest over the last two years and it is now closer to the 'pest free area' in north-west Scotland; currently exports of Spruce with bark can be made to Ireland (where the pest is not known to be present) from this area. We will continue to work with the industry (particularly the timber transport sector) and FR to try and ensure minimal impacts to the health of spruce.

[Forest Health Days](#) were held on the 2nd and 3rd of March 2017 in Inverness and Birnam. Over 200 Delegates attended from across the sector.

Woodland Creation - Forestry Grant Scheme

The Forestry Grant Scheme provides support for the creation of new woodland and management of existing forests and is part of Scotland's Rural Development Programme (2014-20). The 2017/18 budget for FGS will be increasing by £4M to £40M, of which £34 million is for new planting.

Since FGS commenced in April 2015, over 1650 applications worth over £72M have been submitted, including over 12,600 hectares of applications for woodland creation (WC). Of this over 1,200 applications worth over £52M have been approved, including 9,106ha of woodland creation over the next 2 years. A further £10M of applications - including over 2,000 hectares of WC applications - are expected to be approved by the end of March 2017. We also aware that around 12,000ha of WC proposals are in preparation by agents and landowners, and we therefore expect to receive the current steady flow (c1,000ha/ month) of new FGS woodland creation applications. The total woodland creation area in Scotland is forecast to be around 5,000ha in 2016, 9,000ha in 2017 and 10,000ha in 2018. The [draft Climate Change Plan](#) proposals to increase the WC target to 15,000ha per year by 2020 (see below) have been welcomed by the forestry sector, but is seen as significant challenge given the difficulties experienced in recent years in trying to meet the 10,000ha target.

SG published the Jim Mackinnon report in December 2016 and followed this by launching the Delivery Plan in February 2017. The Cabinet Secretary enthusiastically welcomed the report, accepting all the recommendations in principle. He has asked FCS lead on the implementation and to set up a delivery group involving key stakeholders. Work to implement the recommendations has already commenced and the first meeting of the delivery group took place on 3 March 2017.

Climate Change

In January Scottish Government published a Draft Climate Change Plan (2017-2032) to explain how it will deliver its commitments for reducing emissions outlined in the Climate

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Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Forestry will make a more significant contribution to sequestering carbon than in previous plans, through new woodland creation and greater use of wood products in construction.

The Plan introduces a stepped increase in woodland creation, from 10,000 ha per year (the existing target) to 2020/21, followed by a gradual increase to 15,000 ha by 2024/25. This is expected to be delivered through such measures as the Forestry Grant Scheme, planting on the National Forest Estate, implementing the Mackinnon review recommendations and working with the private and community sectors to encourage increased investment. The Plan also aspires to increase use of wood products in construction from the current 2.6Mm³ to 3.0Mm³ in 2032, associated with the FCS Timber Development Programme.

These new targets have received broad support from across the political spectrum (see above), and from a range of key stakeholders including Scottish Wildlife Trust, Confor and the National Farmers Union Scotland (although the Scottish Game Keepers Association and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland raised concerns regarding the impact of large scale woodland creation on upland open habitats and landscape). The draft plan is now undergoing parliamentary scrutiny before being published. Exempt from publication, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Part 2, Section 35(a) – ‘The formulation or development of government policy’.

Increasing the economic contribution of forestry in Scotland

Timber Transport

The Cabinet Secretary recently announced an additional £5 million funding for timber transport, bringing the total to £7.85 million for 2017/18. This will be split between the TimberLink Scheme (£0.8 million) and the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) (£7.05 million). Work is already underway through the Timber Transport Forum to develop projects ready for 2017/18. To assist the development of complicated projects a new STTS Preparatory Project pilot has been launched that will provide small grants to cover some of the costs involved pulling together multiple partners and agreements. The aim is to enable bigger projects to reach completion within the year. The TimberLink tendering process will be completed by early March so that the service can continue to run without a break.

Wider Sector Support

FCS is hosting the final seminar for the EU funded WoodWisdom-Net project on 4-5th April. This round of WoodWisdom has supported 23 transnational research projects focusing on adding value through new products and systems. The main themes are forest resource, timber construction and new products from biotechnology. The seminar will close the 4th call for Wood Wisdom but a 5th call for projects is on-going and FCS will be involved as a core partner again.

Edinburgh Napier University has recently announced a £3 million investment in a testing facility for timber and construction, which will be complimentary to the Advanced Construction facility currently being developed by the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre to encourage industry to develop prototypes with a particular focus on innovative timber components and systems for construction. Together these facilities will offer the timber and construction sectors huge opportunity to add value to our domestic wood supply

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chain.

The *Woodfuel Demand and Usage in Scotland 2015* report was published on 1st March. Total woodfuel used in Scotland in 2015 was 1.25 million oven dry tonnes, an increase of 14% over 2014 but a lower rate of increase than in previous years. Of the total wood used in 2015, 52% was virgin wood fibre, sawmill co-products and process residues, which is equivalent to approximately 19% of the total softwood harvest in Scotland in 2015. In 2014, biomass was estimated to consume 14% of the total softwood harvest in Scotland. The size of the increase seen in 2015 was driven mainly by an overall drop in sawlog production in 2015.

The Fife Forestry Shared Apprenticeship Project

Supported by FCS, Big Lottery, Fife Council and private industry organisations, this project was set up in response to concerns from the industry about an ageing workforce and shortage of new entrants to the sector. It will see 6 apprentices employed by Rural Skills Scotland Ltd for 16 months, during which time they will be placed with a number of different forestry businesses for around 12 weeks at a time. As well as gaining a range of industry experience the apprentices will work for a Level 2 Scottish Vocational Qualification in trees and timber, all delivered in the workplace. As employers, Rural Skills Scotland will pay the wages of the apprentices but require a small contribution towards training costs from the forestry businesses for the time they are with them. Three of the 6 apprentices are commencing their placements with FES.

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

Research Report

In 2016 FCS, the Kennel Club and Paths For All commissioned research in communities near urban woodland in Glasgow. This focused on the role of urban woodlands in promoting outdoor activity and physical fitness for dogs and their owners, with associated wellbeing benefits. The Report 'Getting dog owners (and their dogs) more active in woodlands' provides an overview of research findings and specifications for dog-walking-friendly sites.

Outdoor and woodland learning Scotland (OWLS) event

Seventy participants from a broad range of organisations from all over Scotland attended the annual OWLS weekend networking event in February. The programme included updates from local groups, a series of workshops and a about Tree Health presentation.

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