

## CENTRAL SERVICES REPORT

### **Purpose**

1. To advise Commissioners of developments within the FC's Central Services and the progress made to achieve the key actions and priorities as set out in the Cross Border and Forest Research Corporate Plans 2015-16 and 2016-17.

### Cross Border Activities and Corporate Plan Update

#### **Resilience: Climate Change and Ecosystem Services**

We will protect our woodland resource and increase its resilience to the impacts of climate change so that our woodlands continue to deliver a wide range of economic, social and environmental benefits.

2. A draft Statutory Instrument (SI), for amending the Plant Health Forestry Order, will introduce a statutory notification scheme for firewood imported into England and Scotland together with various EU Decisions relating to a number of pests. The SI is with Defra lawyers and is in the final stages of drafting. The SI is subject to final approval by UK and Scottish Ministers and expected to be in place by the beginning of October.

3. We have commissioned an eLearning course from FC Learning and Development on the phytosanitary import requirements for wood packaging material with the aim of making it available to the UK Plant Health Authorities, Border Force and stakeholders by 31st March 2017. This will build on the [Biosecurity eLearning modules](#) that we introduced during 2015.

4. There are now over 238 projects registered with the Woodland Carbon Code, of which over half (125) are validated (3<sup>rd</sup> party check at the outset). The validated projects are predicted to sequester 2.3 Million tonnes of carbon dioxide over their lifetime (up to 100 years). There are now 2 projects verified (3<sup>rd</sup> party check on progress at year 5), with more to follow later this year.

#### **Standards**

We will set the standards for sustainable forest management in the UK, within the framework of international agreements, and promote them domestically and internationally.

5. FC staff represented the UK at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Committee on Forests (COFO) on 18-22 July. The meeting was an opportunity to consider

the role of the FAO and its Forestry Programmes in relation to major global policy processes and the milestone agreements of 2015. The need for integrated land approaches was the key message from FAO's flagship publication "State of the World's Forests". There was continued support for FAO, as the leading technical forestry-related international organisation and Chair of UNs Forum on Forest's Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), to strengthen its partnerships with other agencies and to play its full part in the International Arrangements on Forests beyond 2015.

6. A first draft of the UK Forestry Standard was sent out at the end of July to the UKFS Steering Group as a first phase. Over 300 changes were made as amendments to the existing text. Having agreed the changes to the UKFS and the common sections of the Guidelines, the second phase will be to consider the individual Guideline texts. The steering group will meet in September.

## Evidence

We will ensure that there is a robust evidence base available to the forestry authorities across the UK to underpin their policies, decisions and advice.

7. The Research Strategy Management Board recently agreed to fund two areas of work in Programmes 3 and 6 respectively. In P3, new work has been funded on emerging species and resources for permanent sample plots under P6 have been allocated. We are exploring with industry how it might contribute to the funding for these two areas to ensure that the funds are sustainable in the longer term.

8. In addition a number of meetings have been held with industry representatives to explore the development of a National Tree Improvement Strategy. The intention is to develop a shared strategy and action plan to allow resources from government, industry, academia and the third sector to combine to deliver it. Discussions with the sector and others are ongoing.

9. The EU has now published its first list of species of Union concern, to which the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulations apply. The list of 37 species – deemed to be the most invasive and threatening across Europe – includes seven species that habitually live in forests. Two of them are familiar to us in the UK – grey squirrel and muntjac deer – whilst the other five (Bryant's fox squirrel, Pallas' squirrel, racoon, Siberian chipmunk and South American coati) may be problematic in the future. Country policy leads have been briefed, and the work of CFS on the GB Non-Native Species Programme Board is supported by their work on country non-native species groups.

## Forest Research Activities and Corporate Plan Update

10. FR is currently on target to deliver its 21 key actions for 2016-17.

11. FR signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Edinburgh in July which formalises FR status as an affiliated institute.

12. In July FR hosted an event at Alice Holt showcasing the work sponsored by Woodland Heritage, especially the research on acute oak decline being undertaken by FR staff and

collaborators. The event also provided the opportunity for Dr Joan Webber to be awarded the Peter Savill trophy (by Peter Savill himself) in recognition of her services to forestry.

13. As part of its role in the Edinburgh Consortium for Giant Panda Conservation and Forest Landscape Restoration, FR attended a dinner to meet Chen Fengxue, the Vice Minister of the Chinese State Forestry Administration and Director for the China Conservation and Research Centre for Giant Pandas in Woolong that we have been working with.

14. Since 2015 Forest Research's social scientists have been evaluating the impact of Grow Wild, the UK's largest wildflower campaign led by Kew and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. You can find out more about the evaluation [here](#). To date, 3 million people have been involved in the project, sowing enough Grow Wild seeds to cover 3.7 million square metres. Such is the success of the project, it has just won the 2016 National Lottery Award for [Best Environmental Project](#) after receiving 23,493 public votes. The significance of our role in the project and the award has been recognised by Philip Turvil (Grow Wild Programme Manager) who regards it as being 'integral' to the application to the National Lottery Awards team and the voting campaign. Grow Wild was also featured on The National Lottery Stars, broadcast on BBC One on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

15. FR continues to be an active participant in the Defra process for allocating science equipment capital and recently bid for £132,616 of new equipment.

16. FR is pleased to confirm that it met the FC commitment to Defra's 'Open Defra' Data publication deadline in June by publishing 250 datasets, well in excess of the target of 152.

### FR Science Priority: Protect Our Trees and Forests

17. FR had a meeting with key staff from Treeconomics Ltd., the Davey Institute and the Davey Expert Tree Company from Kent, Ohio to discuss the future development of i-Tree (software that provides forestry analysis and benefits assessment) in the UK and Europe. It was agreed that key FR staff would visit the US in the near future to explore the commercial opportunities in more detail with the Davey Institute and their other US partners.

18. FR staff attended a workshop for researchers and policy makers organised by Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and the University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI) to consider research needs for sustainable management of deer populations in Scotland. Population densities, impacts on ecosystem services, and concerns over health and welfare of deer featured as research needs, the latter partly stimulated by news of Chronic Wasting Disease being found in reindeer and moose in Norway. The disease was formerly prominent only in North America.

19. FR staff visited Natural Resources Canada/Canadian Forest Service (with financial support from FCS), to observe and learn from the agency's use of mating disruption on spruce budworm, with a view to seeing if it could have applications in the UK to pine-tree lappet moth and other potential invasive insect pests.

## FR Science Priority: Enhance Forest Ecosystem Resilience and Service Provision

20. The forestry chapter of the Climate Change Risk Assessment 2 was launched on 12 July (<https://www.theccc.org.uk/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017>). FR staff had a major role in collating and evaluating the evidence published since the first CCRA.

## FR Science Priority: Ensure Sustainable Management and Adaptation of our Forests to Climate Change

21. FR delivered a report to FE England summarising FR Seed Origin Trials on Low's fir. The results showed a significant linear relationship between growth and latitude indicating that the best seed origins for planting in lowland Britain are in the north of the range of Low's fir (the Oregon Cascades).

22. The Living With Environmental Change Network (LWEC) have just published the Agriculture & Forestry Climate Change Impacts Report Card, the fifth in a series of such cards published by LWEC. The lead authors were James Morison (Forest Research) and Robin Matthews (The James Hutton Institute), and the card is available [here](#).

23. These report cards present the latest evidence on how climate change is affecting different aspects of our environment, economy and society now and in the future. They are designed for decision-makers at any level but in particular for use by policy advisors, ministers and local authorities. The aim is to improve understanding of the scale of possible change and to help inform decisions on adaptation measures needed. The card provides a high-level summary of the main findings from nine detailed technical papers prepared by leading experts in their fields using the best available science from the research literature.

## FR Science Priority: Effect Knowledge Exchange

24. FR staff presented a paper on Bradford-Hutt analysis of the Tavistock woodlands at the 10th International Workshop on the Science and the Art of Uneven-aged Silviculture in Little Rock, Arkansas. The workshop was hosted by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and the trip was part sponsored by ICF.

25. FR staff gave a very well-received presentation on iTree at a field meeting of the Welsh Government's Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel (WSAP) held in Wrexham on 22 June 2016.

26. FR is arranging a field meeting in early September for Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales plant health officials to discuss the increased impact of *Elatobium* in Wales with a team of FR entomologists.

27. FR participated in a 'Tree data and modelling' workshop organised by TUT (Finland), which brought together specialists from Finland, UK, Netherland, USA, France and Switzerland. The workshop considered new interdisciplinary possibilities in tree/forest modelling from terrestrial laser scanning data for NFI needs.

28. FR assisted in the organisation of, and attended, the ProSilva annual meeting at Stirling University to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Continuous Cover Forestry Group in the UK. 48 delegates from 23 European countries attended to visit continuous cover forestry sites in Scotland and discuss methods of management and challenges ahead.

29. FR staff attended the launch of the RHS's Greening Grey Britain campaign and the London Tree and Woodland Awards. They also presented on valuing urban trees at Hampton Court Palace for the Horticultural Roundtable's conference Health and Horticulture.

30. On 8 and 9 August the Straits research site in the Alice Holt Research Forest hosted participants at an international summer school on measuring and modelling greenhouse gas balances. This was a component of the NERC-funded greenhouse gas programme. Twenty-five early career scientists from across Europe and further afield got hands-on experience of estimating tree biomass (including laser scanning techniques), measuring CO<sub>2</sub> exchanges from soil and whole forest stands, characterising soil carbon stocks, and assessing leaf area and modelling forest carbon uptake. The various activities led up to a consolidation session in the Lodge 'putting the numbers together'. FR staff led the organisation of the visitors and the full programme which involved a number of FR staff and colleagues from Edinburgh University acting as tutors.

31. Recent statistics publications include: Woodland Area, Planting & Restocking: 2016 edition (16 June); Woodland Carbon Code: data to June 2016 (12 July); '2006-2015 GB Canopy Cover' report (12 August).

### FR Business Priority: Grow Our Business

32. Currently, it is "business as usual" for most of FR's European bids now in development. FR is pressing ahead with 2<sup>nd</sup> stage 'MOMENTUM-CS' Horizon 2020 (H2020) bid, led by the UK-based Stockholm Institute, for 6 September submission. We are also continuing discussions and contingency planning for other H2020, LIFE+ and Interreg bids; and reviewing plans for FR to lead Interreg Atlantic Area bids.

33. FR is also taking forward its partnership with the Forest-based Sector Technology Platform (FTP). This is an industry and forest owner driven initiative of the European woodworking industries, pulp, paper and processing industries, along with forest owners and managers. The FTP was established in 2006 as the forest-based sector's European Technology Platform (ETP) - its focus is to drive innovation, knowledge exchange and European competitiveness, by developing strategic R&I roadmaps, encouraging industry participation in research and fostering networking opportunities along the value-chain.

### Ways of Working

34. The Central Service's Change Programme (CSCP) coordinates and updates the composite timeline for establishing new Corporate Service arrangements for the countries and FR. An update on progress is as follows:

- The following services have now been established in the countries/FR:

- Business Sustainability
  - HR Services
  - Equality & Diversity
  - Procurement
- The project to refresh FR is now complete and the IFOS (including the Westminster funded NFI programme), publications and statistics services have now transferred from CFS to FR.
  - The following services are in the process of transitioning to the countries/FR during the remainder of FY 2016/17:
    - Learning and Development
    - Internal Audit (being outsourced)
    - Forest Machine Operator Certification Centre
    - Safety, Health and Environment
  - Working groups have been established to assist the countries and FR to determine their future requirements for IT, finance and HR pay and policy. There is currently no clear timescale for the full business cases for these areas, but progress is expected to continue over the summer.

35. The current Shared Service Cooperation Agreement with NRW is still on course to end on 31 March 2017.

## Shared Services

### **Tax Audits and Tax Working Group (TWG)**

36. HMRC has now completed the audits of Forest Research, FC England, FC Scotland and Shared Services. As agreed with HMRC, the FE audit report on VAT will be submitted to them in September. The England and Scotland National Committees have been informed of the content of the report, including the external tax advice, the potential liability and associated risks.

### **Pay & Reward**

37. Our Pay Remit has been approved by the Defra Minister and the Scottish Minister was informed. On receipt of the formal pay claim from the FCTU, pay talks were held and subsequently a formal offer was made in August.

38. A full Equal Pay Audit has commenced and will be completed by January 2017.

Jean Lindsay  
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 September 2016