

Forest Policy Group Annual Report 2009-10 May 2010

Forest Policy Group

The Forest Policy Group will further the development of sustainable forestry in Scotland by contributing informed inputs to the development and implementation of forestry policy. It acts by:

- providing an independent forum for analysing policy;
- producing policy-related research and developing policy proposals;
- targeting its outputs towards ensuring more effective policy implementation;
- facilitating networking amongst its members and collaborating on policy work with like-minded individuals and organisations.

Membership

FPG membership is drawn from forestry and land use professionals, policy advisors, timber processors and users, woodland owners, community woodland organisations and woodland NGOs. Members subscribe to a view of forestry in which:

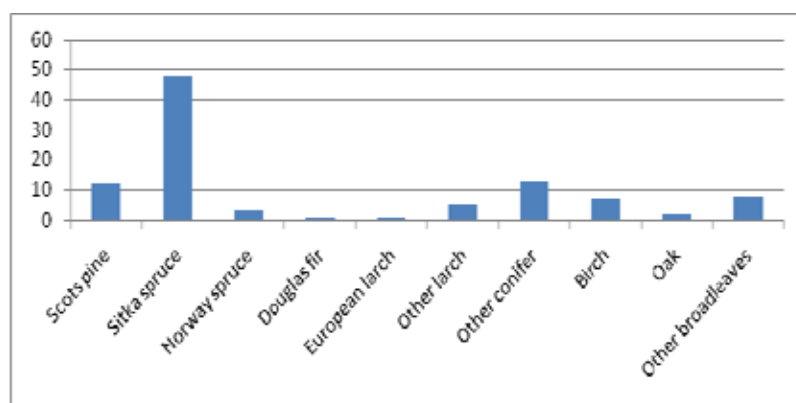
- environmental and social issues are core elements of forestry on an equal footing with timber-related economic interests.
- diversity is actively fostered – diversity of tree species and woodland types, woodland tenure, management approaches, timber production and processing, and wider economic opportunities.

FPG is funded by its membership, Dynamic Woods and the Mingulay-Prewell Trust.

WORK UNDERTAKEN DURING 2009/10

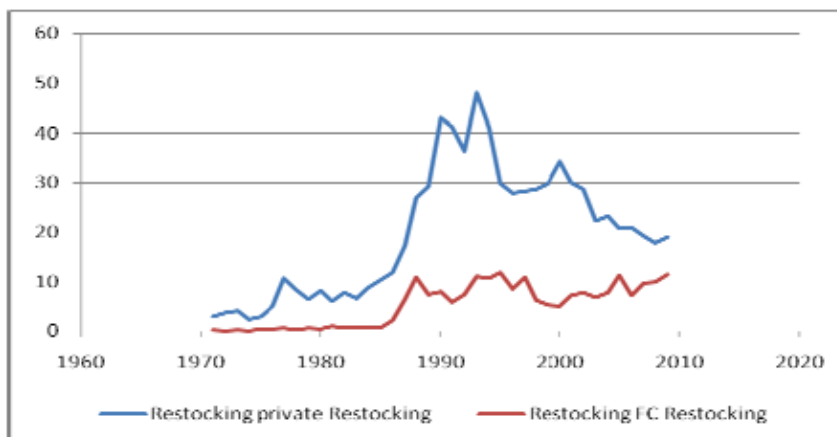
1 Species composition of Scottish forests

A cornerstone of FPG's thinking is that the Scottish forest resource needs to develop a more diverse array of woodland types and tree species. This is vital to ensure that it provides a fuller range of products and is resilient to change (e.g. in climate, economic conditions, social preferences or pests and diseases). Diversification has been an aim of forestry policy for 20 years but very limited progress has been made.



*The proportion of different species in the resource at the time of the last inventory (1995)
(Source FCS Statistics branch)*

Recent work by Rick Worrell for FPG highlights that: the historic dominance of spruce in the resource continues; that the proportion of broadleaves has only increased by about 4% in the last 15 years; most of the diversification has happened in private rather than Forestry Commission forests; that the proportion of broadleaves remains high in new planting (70%) but too low in restocking (10% in FC woods and 20-30% in private woods); and that the planting of quality durable conifers (Douglas fir and European larch) has fallen to very low levels.



*The proportions of broadleaves in restocking
(Source FCS Statistics branch)*

The paper contains constructive mechanisms for remedying the current situation.

2 Construction timber

Work by Bernard Planterose for FPG highlights low levels of availability of quality durable construction timber (larch, Douglas fir and oak), especially for cladding timber. This is unfortunate during a period of rising demand from the construction industry and government policies encouraging use of timber in buildings (especially cladding). This disconnect between policy, forest resource and markets restricts the development of building in timber in Scotland, and mitigates against the use of durable timber, sourced locally, by small sawmills and builders.

3 Deer management and forestry

The destocking of sheep in the uplands, specifically the North West, presents an opportunity for the development of native woodland at low cost, provided deer numbers can be controlled to allow regeneration. FPG is in discussion with the Government agencies responsible for deer management, to explore mechanisms for a reduction in deer numbers.

4 Scotland Rural Development Programme

The SRDP is the main source of grants for forestry and land management in Scotland. FPG has a representative on Forestry Commission Scotland's Customer Representative Group (CRG). During 2009-2010 CRG pressed the Forestry Commission and Scottish Government to improve aspects of the SRDP. The CRG has also started to look at support for forestry at the end of the current SRDP in 2013.

5 Meetings

FPG has arranged for regular meetings with the director of Forestry Commission Scotland and other senior policy staff.

6 Consultation Responses

FPG submitted a response to consultation on the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill (August 2009).

7 Website

In order to share its thinking with a wider constituency and invite commentary on its work, the Forest Policy Group launched its website (www.forestpolicygroup.org) during summer 2009, where FPG papers are available for download.