

**Forest Policy Group
Annual Report 2010-11
June 2011**

Forest Policy Group

The Forest Policy Group will further the development of sustainable forestry in Scotland by contributing informed research and comment to policy makers and politicians, and to organisations in the land use and forestry sector. It acts by:

- providing an independent forum for analysing land use and forestry policy;
- producing policy-related research and developing policy proposals;
- targeting its work in order to achieve effective policy implementation;
- networking amongst members and member organisations; and
- collaborating on research and 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; and
- 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 and by Dynamic Woods, the Mingulay-Prewell Trust and the Patsy Wood Trust.

FPG ACTIVITY 2010 - 2011**“Towards a future forest” – FPG position paper**

FPG published a position paper in the journal *Scottish Forestry* setting out its vision for the future of forestry and the policy proposals that would deliver this. Climate change, oil price fluctuations, alien pests and diseases, currency movements, emerging economies, and the volatility of the timber market all have impacts on the Scottish forest sector. Whilst Government policies often emphasise the need for building resilience within the forest sector to national and international impacts, the reality is that there is an inadequate allocation of funds and resources towards achieving such resilience. The paper sets out proposals for improving policy effectiveness for diversifying: woodland types and species; forest land ownership and tenure; public participation; timber processing; forest enterprises; and forestry's links with other land uses. (See *Scottish Forestry* Volume 64, No. 4, 2010, pp5-8).

Forest tenure

Encouraging and assisting people and communities to become involved in woodlands through ownership, leasehold or management would diversify and strengthen the fabric of Scottish forestry. It would encourage local innovation, provide opportunities for more local enterprise and allow a broader spectrum of societal engagement in forestry and land management. Scotland has a disproportionate area of very large forests owned by relatively few people, many of whom are absentee owners, investment companies or remote financial institutions. In Scotland in 2011 there is a groundswell of people wishing to own or manage small areas of forest; unfortunately Government disposals of State forest militate against this aspiration. Examples from the Continent and from Scandinavia suggest that a pattern of tenure comprising large numbers of small scale forest owners and managers is a sustainable model and one which may be successful in Scotland.

FPG has commissioned Andy Wightman, expert on land ownership in Scotland, to research forest tenure and to make recommendations with respect to current policy.

Species composition of Scottish forests

FPG's work on species composition (see Annual Report 2009/10) has formed the basis for dialogue with Forest Enterprise Scotland about planned changes in tree species composition for the national forest estate over the next 20 years. Discussion has focused on the potential for establishing a higher proportion of durable conifer species and broadleaved species, specifically for timber production. FPG will publish a paper on this topic in autumn 2011.

Deer management and forestry

Control (culling and exclusion) of wild deer is essential to the establishment and management of robust forests composed of a diverse range of species. Scotland will not achieve its woodland expansion target of 25% forest cover by 2050 without effective deer control. The antiquated pattern of land tenure means that sporting interests often over-ride the interests of other land uses, such as agriculture, as well as forestry, and to date the Scottish Government has been unable to balance the often minority and restricted sporting benefits with wider public benefit. The FPG Deer scoping paper (January 2011) is intended to stimulate debate amongst a wide range of land using and managing stakeholders, and a more detailed and targeted follow up paper is intended for autumn 2011.

Consultation Responses

FPG submitted responses to consultations on the Land Use Strategy (December 2010) and on reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (January 2011).

External Meetings

FPG met with Scottish Natural Heritage's Wildlife Management Group and Forestry Commission Scotland for deer management discussions in June 2010, and has since taken up a place on the Government-convened Deer Management Round Table. In March 2011 FPG met with representatives of the Confederation of Forest Industries (ConFor) which represents large-scale industrial interests. Our programme of regular meetings with the Director and senior policy staff of Forestry Commission Scotland continues.

FPG ACTIVITY IN 2011 – 2012

We will maintain our focus on the above topics, undertake new work on deer management and forestry, and examine opportunities for more diverse forest ownership and management. We will seek more opportunities to collaborate with other organisations and we are responding to the changes in the Scottish administration following the election. We intend to expand our membership and will be upgrading our website to improve our outreach and information dissemination.

ENQUIRIES

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