**Note of the meeting of the National Forestry Stakeholder Group**

**11 May 2022**

**Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan 2022-2025: workshop**

This was the third meeting of the National Forestry Stakeholder Group. The purpose of the meeting was to review the draft actions for inclusion in the Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan 2022-2025, and to identify potential delivery leads and partners.

The meeting was hosted by Mairi McAllan MSP, Minister for Environment and Land Reform, and chaired by Alan Hampson, Scottish Forestry – Head of Policy and Practice.

Alan welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced the discussion topic.

The Minister gave a short speech to the group which emphasised:

* The successes of the forestry sector post-devolution in developing a reputation for delivery and making vital contributions to the economy, communities, environment and Net Zero ambitions.
* The scale and pace of opportunities ahead, with targets for the creation of 80,000+ hectares of new woodland across Scotland in this Parliament, and the challenges of decarbonising the timber supply chain, improving forest resilience and increasing the integration of forestry with other land uses.
* The need to engage with communities in the process of forestry creation, and to collaborate across the public, private and third sectors in delivering the identified actions.

Amy Nicolson, Scottish Forestry – Green Infrastructure & Communities Advisor, gave a presentation on the development of the new Forestry Strategy Implementation Plan and setting out the topic for discussion, noting:

* The Strategy’s 50-year vision, 10-year delivery framework, and 6 priority areas for action – with an overarching ambition for Scotland to have more forests and woodlands, delivering more benefits for the people of Scotland.
* The need for a new Implementation Plan to cover the period 2022-2025, the development process of the Plan so far, and the assessment criteria for actions to be included in the Plan.

Bob Frost, Scottish Forestry – Head of People and Communities, then introduced the breakout rooms and explained how these sessions would work. The meeting then split into two groups to discuss the draft actions (and potential lead and supporting partners) that have been developed with input from across Government as well as from stakeholders and delivery partners for inclusion in the new Implementation Plan. A summary of the breakout room discussions is provided in Annex 1.

Summing up, the Minister thanked attendees for their input and explained that this plan would reflect the joined-up working taking place across Scottish Government and its agencies regarding the response to the climate emergency and related environmental challenges, with conscious linkages being made across the legislative programme.

Regarding next steps, Alan noted that any further comments on the proposed actions, and volunteers to lead or support delivery, would be welcomed over the next week (deadline 18th May) to Amy and Bob, and the ambition is to publish the Plan in June.

The next meeting of the group was expected in August, with future meetings around three times a year. Likely future meeting topics included resilience and climate change adaptation and community wealth-building. Hybrid in-person and virtual meeting arrangements would be explored, with feedback about the current arrangements welcomed.

**Summary of breakout room discussions**

| **Strategy Priority** | **Room** | **Points raised or actions suggested** | **Who?** |
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| Ensuring forests and woodlands are sustainably managed | 1 | * UKFS – would like to see more on gathering evidence and compliance, especially outwith grant schemes.
* Significant proportion of existing woodland is un/under managed. Can more be done to focus on management of existing forests, and improving current woodland stock, rather than just creation of new woodland?
* Improving resilience across the board (native, productive..) is important
* Biodiversity loss – trades offs between improving situation for woodland species, but potential negative impacts on open ground species.
* If aiming to support landscape scale regeneration, need appropriate support in FGS
 | Cairngorms NPA |
| 2 | * Broadly content
* Degrees of spatial thinking and application required
* Need to ensure that sustainable forestry is incorporated across other priorities and is not linear.
 | RSPB or Environment Link to help deliver against some of these actionsNational Parks to have a roles in delivering actions  |

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| **Strategy Priority** | **Room** | **Points raised or actions suggested** | **Who?** |
| Expanding the area of forests and woodlands, recognising wider land-use objectives | 1 | * Plan doesn’t currently have much in terms of:
	+ trades offs/risks especially when thinking about restocking on peatland
	+ Not much readily apparent in terms of agro forestry in the plan
* Green Action Trust interested in providing support to delivery bodies for woodland creation
* FR happy to support increasing trees in urban environment
 | GATFRSOSE can be a partner in delivering landscape-scale projects |
| 2 | * This is the priority that has the potential to cause the most tension on how to best utilise productive land, however it should not be shied away from.
* Language could be improved to change towards integration with other land use rather than just recognise them.
* Need to be specific about how to integrate trees and woods within an agricultural context. It will be crucial to take the agricultural sector along and win hearts and minds.
* Ensure future agricultural policy is incorporated and that their needs and expectations included
* Trial and pilot integration and showcase and disseminate
* Grant funding and incentivise integration of trees and woodlands not just productive forests.
* Need to ensure that the native woodland target is increased in tandem with woodland creation target.
 | SEPA happy to be involved in delivering some of these actions |

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| **Strategy Priority** | **Room** | **Points raised or actions suggested** | **Who?** |
| Improving efficiency and productivity, and developing markets | 1 | * Carbon markets – will they reflect differences in values between productive CF & native BL, and also taking into account community benefit?
* Recreation & leisure is substantial element of forest use, and revenue generation – could more be done in the plan is this area?
* Skills shortage in, and resilience of, the sector – difficult to do everything else we want to do if this isn’t addressed. More needs to be done to encourage people into Forestry, particularly in the 3rd Sector (possibly through a hub approach?)
* Urban forests can be a great stepping stone for coming into forestry, so think about how to link that with skills development
* Minister’s question – what are the best routes to getting more people into the sector? Suggestions:
	+ Uni courses governed by demand by entrants, rather than demand by industry 🡪 need to come at this from both ends (i.e. encouraging pupils to apply, industry to think about how to increase appeal)
	+ Currently only 1 provider of HE for forestry in Scotland. TreErasmus type programme which would allow any student to pick a forestry module (or more broadly, nature-based skills) might be a good approach
	+ Need to stitch funding streams together across wider land management sector (not just a forestry problem)
* SoSE keen to engage on Roots for Further Growth
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| 2 | * Need analysis to identify and provide focus on areas where the greatest impact can be had
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| **Strategy Priority** | **Room** | **Points raised or actions suggested** | **Who?** |
| Increasing the adaptability and resilience of forests and woodlands | 1 | * FR supportive of tree health service, and would be beneficial to bring other centres of expertise for joined up approach to tree health. Also link up to Biodiversity Centre of Expertise once it’s up & running later this year?
* P & D affecting tree health – consider developing metrics to monitor this
* Can we tackle P & D threat by prevention rather than cure – increase domestic supply means reduced imports and potentially reduced risk. Especially relevant for larger trees.
* Could we see something in here on developing approach to combat likely increase from threat of wildfires. Not just an issue for woodland but also peatland
* Woodland ecological condition could be referenced as one of key measures underpinning resilience
* Resilience & diversity go hand in hand. Not just resilience of forests, it’s also about resilience of forest species and thinking at the wider ecosystem level. Look for ways to build in ‘naturalness’ into systems, but at a landscape scale so e.g. more naturalness in agricultural sector has knock on consequences (benefits) for forestry further up the hill..
* Deer mgmt. not an end in itself, it’s what gets delivered. Not just deer mgmt. of forestry but also on wider land, so integrated approach is key. Local Authorities have large landholdings – need to involve them in deer management approaches.
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| 2 | * The actions focus predominately on pests and diseases there is also a large issue with controlling invasive species
* Need to get on with diversification of species, age and structure of the woodlands and disseminate the knowledge, info and funding that can assist with this.
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| **Strategy Priority** | **Room** | **Points raised or actions suggested** | **Who?** |
| Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands | 1 | * FR done a lot of work on water quality & riparian habitats in Highlands – keen to support on this work
* Integrated approach to riparian management – where is this likely to happen? Pilot approach on specific sites?
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| 2 | * Need to prioritise restoration to improve and enhance the current woodland stock to ensure it is performing to maximum potential.
* No need to wait for inventory of ancient woodlands work can start while this is ongoing
* Taking and making use of opportunities that are presented due to felling undertaken due to pathogens and disease to restructure the woodlands and forests and enhance the benefits.
 | RSPB willing to partner on ancient woodlands& rainforests actions. |

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| **Strategy Priority** | **Room** | **Points raised or actions suggested** | **Who?** |
| Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands | 1 | * Good to establish common language around community benefits - especially in terms of local employment, housing, infrastructure etc.
* Change reference from CSGNT to GAT
* Difficult for community groups to get forestry advice – can we look to develop a mechanism to address this?
* Promoting/supporting access provision – who owns the forest, what are the public transport links etc
* All access is important (i.e not just urban and peri-urban). Massive increase in numbers over the last 2 years. Spreading visitor load around more might be a good way to reduce strain on some of most heavily visited sites
* Finding out information about local forest – where is compensatory planting, what happens to the timber post felling etc. Great way to foster sense of ownership and engagement with local population
* Working with communities to increase opportunities – need to make clear it’s about involving communities in decision making process, not just commenting on decisions that have been made. Also feeding back positive stories to the communities down the line.
 | GAT (although not lead, but working as delivery partner) |
| 2 | * Community wealth building will be crucial and will feed into the wider natural capital.
* Historic and Environment Scotland – opportunity to open up spaces around ancient monuments within woodlands to enhance the cultural benefits to woodlands
* Outreach work with communities to ensure active engagement on broader areas not just accessing the woodlands but their wider management and development.
 | National Parks |