

# Review of Land Managed by Forestry Commission Scotland

## Response of Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland

February 2004

<b>SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS Please express your views below</b>	
<b>Name: Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland</b>	<b>Address:</b> <b>Longmore House</b> <b>Salisbury Place</b> <b>Edinburgh EH9 1SH</b>
<b>Daytime Tel:</b> <b>0131 668 8810 (Secretary)</b>	
<b>E-mail: Secretary</b> <b>malcolm.bangor-jones@scotland.gsi.gov.uk</b>	

<p>Question 1: We propose a vision for Scotland's national forests. This is that they will benefit everyone in Scotland, promoting vibrant and healthy communities, enriching natural environments and creating opportunities for economic development. Do you agree with this proposed vision? If not, what changes should be made?</p>	<p>There is a need to recognise in the vision the importance of cultural heritage. Suggest wording should be "... enriching cultural heritage and the natural environment...". This would recognise that FCS policy should be brought more into line with other key environmental and countryside agencies.</p> <p>There should be a reference to the vision being long-term rather than short term.</p>
<p>Question 2: Should Forestry Commission Scotland do more to encourage local community involvement in the management of national forests? If so, how?</p>	<p>This is highly dependent on local circumstance - and the need to consider future maintenance regimes. There is no point in passing on to communities a burden for the future. There would need to be certainty that the implications of long term woodland management are fully understood - it is not a simple issue and could involve considerable costs.</p> <p>Nevertheless for communities willing to accept this option there should also be a requirement for long term support.</p> <p>The obvious means of achieving this is through the publication of a good</p>

	<p>practice guide showing exemplars both in this country and abroad.</p> <p>It is also useful to consider how FCS interests can be picked up in the school curriculum considering that the involvement of young people is also a long term investment for the future. There may also be scope to involve students of a secondary age in discussions about the future of forests.</p>
<p>Question 3: Should local communities be able to purchase or lease woodland (or other national forest assets) that are not identified as “surplus”? If so, what criteria should apply?</p>	<p>Yes, but see above answer to Question 2</p> <p>There should be the greatest degree of flexibility in this as opportunities will vary enormously. It should be possible to dispose of all forestry land Provided there is a scheme which can show clear public benefit and/or a community group with well thought out proposals and an ability to carry them through.</p>
<p>Question 4: Should Forestry Commission Scotland seek to provide new opportunities for recreation in national forests in and around towns and cities? If so, how should priorities be set?</p>	<p>This is a complex issue.</p> <p>In principle this type of opportunity should be welcomed especially where it can be linked to improving the landscape setting and particularly the restoration of designed and historic landscapes as at Callendar Wood, Falkirk and potentially the Pollok Estate in Glasgow.</p> <p>However, in national policy terms, there are already several agencies including local authorities, Greenspace, NTS promoting this type of opportunity. The FCS estate is extremely limited in and around town and cities and it is difficult to see how much of it can be used for this purpose. The question therefore raises the issue of whether or not FCS is raising the prospect of acquiring more land in order to develop this option - and if so where</p>

	<p>this cash would come from. The implication could be from the sale of land in other parts of Scotland - but this does not seem viable or indeed possible and could be counter-productive.</p> <p>A more profitable route would be for FC to use their expertise in support of the agencies working in the field through the realignment of grant aid to this type of planting. Priorities would need to be established through working on joint schemes with these local agencies - not defining a new set of priorities.</p> <p>FCS could do more to publicise existing recreational opportunities that currently exist and encourage more people to think of the forests as a location for a range of outdoor pursuits. It needs effort to persuade people many people they are not trespassing and are actively encouraged to use this asset.</p>
<p>Question 5: Should Forestry Commission Scotland undertake a number of large-scale, long-term environmental projects (such as forest landscape restoration, or water catchment or wilderness projects) on the national forest estate? If so, how should priorities be set?</p>	<p>Unequivocally yes.</p> <p>This proposition is vital to the sustainable future of the Scottish landscape. Once again there seems to be a lack of recognition of the significance of cultural heritage in determining the pattern of future Scottish woodlands. Of particular significance should be the gradual replacement of monoculture conifers.</p> <p>Priorities should be based firstly on cost/benefit analyses and then how projects relate to Government policies on sustainability and inclusion. It is important they are set in conjunction with other agencies.</p>

<p>Question 6: Should Forestry Commission Scotland become more ambitious in its environmental work on the national forest estate, including – in particular – delivery against Biodiversity Action Plans, improving the biodiversity of conifer forests and enhancing the contribution that national forests make to Scotland’s landscapes? If so, how should priorities be set?</p>	<p>Again, yes.</p> <p>Both Question 5 and 6 can only be achieved if FCS seeks to involve with other agencies dealing with the broader landscape and set in the context of broader Government policy. With many of the previous FC plantations coming to maturity in the next 10/15 years there is potentially a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reconsider upland landscapes hidden for 40/50 years in trees. This is particularly important for clearing pre-improvement settlement lost in forests for many years.</p>
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<p>Question 7: Should Forestry Commission Scotland do more to recognise and conserve the cultural heritage value of the national forest estate? If so, how should priorities be set?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>However, HEACS is concerned to learn that in large parts of Scotland when new planting takes place there is no work on defining the cultural heritage and no protective measures included. It is understood this is because FC refuses to pay for the necessary work, and that FC is now the only public or private sector agency/local authority taking this stance. This seems at odds with the general improvement of environmental objectives within the FC.</p> <p>Once again priorities must be established with other agencies such as HEACS, Historic Scotland, NTS, communities and the private sector. An appropriate way to tackle this subject might be through an exercise that established the existing cultural heritage in the forest estate and then concentrate on those areas where the heritage is most in danger of being lost.</p>
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<p>Question 8: What emphasis should be given to the strategic role of national forests in the supply of timber to Scotland's wood processing industries? What are the priorities?</p>	<p>It is fundamental that the national forests should continue to supply the wood processing industries. It is also fundamental that potential new industries are developed and funded such as biomass fuels. Close working with FIDC should ensure the correct priorities are established.</p> <p>There is also a need to recognise and develop other timber needs for the future. Of particular significance if Scotland is to become more sustainable is a requirement to develop timber for the building industry and hardwoods for other uses, eg. furniture.</p> <p>This will require a concerted campaign to help combat the use of unsuitable and unsustainable materials.</p>
<p>Question 9: Should sustaining and developing local economies be a key objective for the management of national forests? If so, how should this be done?</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>A priority should be the provision of strong local programmes for community heating systems using timber/timber by-products. Priority might also be given to the development of high specification timber buildings – emulating the Scandinavian success in encouraging the spread of eco-friendly systems through the use of natural resources.</p>
<p>Question 10 (a): Should there be a more dynamic approach to the size and distribution of the national forest estate?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>This would allow for local opportunities to be developed.</p>
<p>Question 10 (b): In what circumstances should land be added to the national forest estate? What criteria might be applied?</p>	<p>It is difficult to see the circumstance in which land should necessarily be added. The only option might be if it was agreed that in broader landscape or cultural heritage terms a portion of land was protected and managed in the national interest.</p>

<p>Question 10 (c): In what circumstances should national forest estate land be sold? What criteria might be applied?</p>	<p>It is difficult to see how this might be done except to promote local initiatives - and at current timber prices it is difficult to see this option generating much funding. Also see answer to Question 4.</p> <p>In crofting areas it should be open to local communities to apply to take over the national forest where the communities have sustainable plans for development of the asset.</p>
<p>Question 11: In what circumstances should there be a radical re-appraisal of management options in national forests, for example in relation to wood production objectives?</p>	<p>The Scottish Forestry Strategy already advocates this approach but as yet outside a few areas there have been few tangible results. There are several European options to explore eg. Denmark. Having a greater focus on cultural heritage and natural environment would seem highly desirable, converting land to native woodland is important. Change should be gradual but determined so that wood production for papermaking, building construction, furniture and fuels still found its place.</p>
<p>Question 12 (a): Do you have any views on the creation of a challenge fund for special projects aimed at significantly increasing public benefits from the national forest estate?</p>	<p>Agreed it is a good idea particularly if linked to promoting more stringent environmental criteria.</p>
<p>Question 12 (b): Should this be funded in part by any ring-fenced income derived from the sale of national forest estate assets?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Question 13: How should Forestry Commission Scotland take forward its approaches to working in partnership in order further to develop the national forest estate?</p>	<p>Partnership is the only way to achieve creative change. The FC estate is not necessarily large in total Scottish land coverage terms and requires interaction with other agencies and land owners. The greater openness in recent years is appreciated, but there is more that can be done. There are no easy answers to this other than to develop partnerships with a variety of different agencies</p>

	<p>and through this explore new working practice. More flexibility in grant aid would help and closer ties with organisations such as SEERAD, SNH, NTS, HS, Visitscotland etc. The interdependence of natural and built environment needs to be recognised.</p>
<p>Question 14: How should the national forest estate be used to take forward wider Executive priorities, for example in relation to renewable energy, rural housing, health and tourism?</p>	<p>Through the development of local initiatives and with increased community support.</p>
<p>Question 15: How should we ensure that everyone is aware of what Scotland's national forests have to offer?</p>	<p>Greater publicity about the positive contribution forests/woods can make. FC is still shackled by the image of large monocultural forestry plantations. Although this policy has now changed unless progressive improvement to these forests is linked with enhanced community involvement and the implementation of local priority little will change.</p> <p>FCS might experiment with various recreational opportunities – conducted walks, cycle runs, organised plantings/removals. What about the possibility of aerial walkways in the most spectacular areas.</p>
<p>Question 16. Given the long-term nature of forestry, the proposed vision will largely be delivered through gradual, evolutionary change. Is there a need for a more rapid approach to bring about some elements of the vision and, if so, what are they?</p>	<p>The balance between gradual long term evolutionary change and more rapid change must depend on local circumstance. It is the nature of forestry to take a long term view but short term objectives can always be found.</p> <p>It would help if some thought were given to mapping out the major stages of progress towards the final vision and publicising milestones and achievements. It is possible to think of each stage in iconic terms and determine what that icon might be.</p>

<p>Question 17: Is it useful to try to express the proposed vision in more detail, perhaps quantifying the size, mapping the geographical distribution and describing the nature of Scotland's national forests at some date in the future (say 2025, or 2050)? If so, how should this be done?</p>	<p>The vision is already expressed through the Scottish Forestry Strategy. It may be more appropriate to work through a pilot project for one part of Scotland expressing how the vision can be realised. This cannot be done without partnership however and it is not clear how and why this should just be something the FCS does in isolation.</p>
<p>Question 18: What approaches might be adopted to strike a balance between local and national interests?</p>	<p>A national discussion on the future of the Scottish landscape is necessary before deciding on whether national or local priorities are necessary.</p>
<p>Any Additional Comments:</p>	<p>The Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS) was established in June 2003 as an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). The function of HEACS is to provide Scottish Ministers with strategic advice on issues affecting the historic environment. We very much welcome this consultation from FCS</p> <p>The main concern throughout this consultation paper is that solutions are postulated through action by FCS.</p> <p>This is the second consultation running in parallel that deals with substantial change to the Scottish landscape (SNHs Scotland's Future Landscapes). There have also been Ministerial announcements about a proposed policy statement for the Historic Environment and on CAP reform. All of these will impact in a profound way on both the natural and cultural heritage landscapes. An integrated approach to this issue must be developed through working in partnership.</p>