

StarTree Regional Stakeholder Group (Scotland)

Minutes of 1st meeting: 13 November 2013, Perth

Venue:

Forestry Commission Scotland offices, Algo Business Centre, Glenearn Road, Perth PH2 0NJ

Present:

Amanda Calvert (Community Woodlands Association), Andrew Barbour (Bonskeid), Daye Tucker (Scottish Land & Estates), Emma Chapman (Reforestation Scotland), Fi Martynoga (Reforestation Scotland), Fred Conacher (Angus Council), Jamie McIntyre (Woodland Crofts), Jenny Wong (Wild Resources Ltd), Jools Cox (Scottish Wild Harvests Association), Mike Strachan (Forestry Commission Scotland), Stephen Baillie (Scottish Enterprise)

Apologies:

Andy Fraser (Fresh Direct Ltd), Bianca Ambrose-Oji (Forest Research), Charlie Cornelius (Iglu Restaurant), Phil Baarda (Scottish Natural Heritage), Tony Wilson (Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association)

1 Introductions

Emma Chapman welcomed everyone to the meeting and briefly introduced the StarTree project and Reforestation Scotland. Members of the group then introduced themselves:

Jenny Wong (Wild Resources Ltd): runs a small consultancy called Wild Resources Ltd. She has researched NWFPS for many years, mostly overseas. WRL is one of the partners in the StarTree consortium, and she is responsible for Work Package 1, which is the main part of the StarTree project that Reforestation Scotland is involved with.

Daye Tucker (Scottish Land & Estates): Owns and manages Carbeth Home Farm, with 400 acres of pasture and woodland. She is interested in a more integrated farming and forestry approach to land management – the land has more potential than producing sheep and a bit of timber. Interested in StarTree to learn more about what else might be possible and to share this information with SLE and with the community to provide them with opportunities on her own land. Interested in the potential of mushrooms and birch.

Andrew Barbour (Bonskeid): As an active landowner he knows about farming, trees and fish. Interested in StarTree professionally and personally and has previously lived and worked in Spain and Norway so is aware of the potential of a wider range of forest products. Sits on Scottish Land Use Strategy Steering Group and was part of the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group.

Jools Cox (Scottish Wild Harvests Association): Founder member and Chair of the Scottish Wild Harvests Association. Also organises events with South West Community Woodland Trust and runs their Orchards and Wild Harvests project, planting fruit trees and in particular ‘fruit pockets’. Fruit pockets are fruit trees underplanted with berry shrubs and wild strawberries in small patches, usually on school grounds and other public spaces. Her own enterprise is outside catering, featuring seasonal and foraged



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SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

(wild harvested) food. Her interest is in the promotion of use of wild food to the public & education in sustainable harvesting.

Fi Martynoga (Reforestation Scotland): Fi is a long-term member and currently a director of Reforestation Scotland. She was a founder of Carrifran Wildwood, active member of the Borders Forest Trust, local food groups, and the Scottish Wild Harvests Association, among others. Editor of the '*Handbook of Scotland's Wild Harvests*'. Lifelong forager.

Stephen Baillie (Scottish Enterprise): Present position is manager for Scottish Enterprise, responsible for promoting and supporting economic development especially in rural areas. Also is a director of Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust so is very aware of the need for diversification of the rural economy.

Mike Strachan (Forestry Commission Scotland): Policy & Development Officer for Perth & Argyll Conservancy. Presently involved in proposals for the post-2014 Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). Has a particular interest in agroforestry and integrated approaches to farming and forestry. Chair of the UK Farm Woodland Forum, founder member of the European Agroforestry Federation, supports Forth Environment Link's work on traditional orchards. Involved with five LEADER groups and European projects including a transnational project with a partner in Romania developing community wild food processing facilities. Looking to support opening up of poor plantations for grazing and planting up equivalent areas on better land – in effect, moving the forests around the landscape. There is a need to consider provisions for the 21,000 ha of woodland grazing in Scotland.

Fred Conacher (Angus Council): As a Tree Officer his principal responsibility is trees, but also involved in land management in general for the Council. A member of Reforestation Scotland since it was the Tree Planters' Guide to the Galaxy, and an active member of the Scottish Wild Harvests Association. Promotes wild food through his work. Interested in by-products of forests. Identified the need for a code of conduct for pickers, to make it easier to handle requests from people wanting to harvest from council-owned land.

Amanda Calvert (Community Woodland Association): Consultant who combines contract work with voluntary roles in the Community Woodland Association and the Highland Aspen Group. Her consultancy work includes auditing HETAS-certified suppliers of fuelwood (the first in the UK). Grows her own food and does some personal foraging. Interested in rural and community development and the creation of economically and environmentally sustainable businesses.

Jamie Macintyre (Woodland Crofts Partnership): Longstanding interest in woodland crofts, currently delivering projects for the Woodland Crofts Partnership (Scottish Crofting Federation, Community Woodlands Association & Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust). Also member of Forest Policy Group and member of the Scottish Woodlot Association. People with small areas of land (such as crofts or small woodlots) can't afford to have land doing just one thing – it all needs to be multi-functional, including production of a range of products. Woodfuel is a common reason for people to want access to small areas of woodland...

Firewood!

...the session ended with a spontaneous discussion on integrating farming with forestry and in particular on woodfuel.

There are considerable problems with access to machinery which is appropriate to small scale working. Sometimes a risk-avoidance (rather than risk-management)



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approach by authorities and landowners can limit the scope for small scale working, e.g. by banning the use of equipment which, although unsuited to large-scale forestry work may be appropriate on some sites where a site-risk assessment indicates low risk.

There is also a shortage of skills, with a need for mentoring, especially on issues to do with safety, training and insurance. It is hoped that the new SRDP will support local wood working hubs with machinery rings at a higher level.

Access to land is another big issue. The Forest Croft model gives one way of providing access within crofting areas. Woodlot Licences – an idea which is new in Scotland – would also enable local people to lease areas of forest land to manage as small scale forest enterprises and to gain experience in forestry. A detailed template lease has been prepared to protect interests of landowners and ensure that liability and health and safety issues are covered.

There was considerable enthusiasm among the group for the subject of woodfuel. There was also considerable disappointment that StarTree is not planning to look at firewood: the group felt that there was a lot of work that needs done in Scotland, especially to facilitate use of simple log firewood as a resource for local use.

2 Introduction to StarTree

Jenny Wong presented an introduction to StarTree, including some of the background to the project.

Action Point: Emma to put all presentations on the Reforesting Scotland website.

3 The Regional Stakeholder Group

Emma Chapman presented an introduction to the role of the Regional Stakeholder Group (RSG).

4 Data Collection

The next presentation introduced the current data collection work and the choice of the Eastern Scotland NUTS2 region. The group were invited to help with information and contacts for addressing some of the outstanding questions, and generously did so.

5 Action Research ideas

A presentation introducing the Action Research element of StarTree, and suggesting:

- building on initiatives that are already underway in Scotland,
- learning from parallel and related initiatives,
- exploring the possibility of a wider promotion involving the various subsectors that make up the NWFP sector in Scotland.

The presentation gave a brief overview of NWFP initiatives which are currently active in Scotland. As part of this Fi Martynoga spoke briefly about the *Handbook of Scotland's Wild Harvests*. She edited and co-ordinated this multi-contributor book, which showcases the knowledge of the Scottish Wild Harvests Association and RS networks and has been promoted and distributed successfully by SWHA members.

More details on these two presentations can be found in the draft Action Research proposal which will be circulated to RSG members and once approved will be available on the RS website.

Discussion on these ideas, and more widely on RSG members' NWFP concerns and interests, took up most of the rest of the meeting.



Action Point: Emma to draft an Action Research proposal and circulate it round the group for comments.

6 Discussion - NWFP issues

The group shared a strong desire for more information:

...information about species and products:

- the SWHA Code of Conduct will need different rules for different species, as sustainability concerns are different for each
- can we have an indicative value for everything on that list? (this has been done for willow, comparing with prices from willow grown down in England)
 - some species shouldn't be commercially exploited at all
 - some will be very niche (one person could satisfy the whole demand)
 - some products will provide significant income for individual people, but not generate revenue on a scale to influence woodland management (e.g. seed collection, which also is an important part of the tree nursery supply chain).
 - we want more information on the ones which have bigger commercial potential:
 - a list of easy hits e.g. things already used in Scotland but which could be produced locally? But it is difficult to compete with imports on price, e.g. blaeberrries which are imported from Finland.
 - a list of robust products for larger scale commercialisation.
 - a list of products that could be sold on to make end products - i.e. develop the supply chain.
 - it would be useful to quantify the full value of products e.g. what is the value of a tree for foliage? Need to determine values for different revenue streams for different species and products. e.g. Fred has developed prices for different sizes of willow based on prices of willow bought from down south.

...information about businesses:

- we need to know the baseline - how many businesses there are, and their value - in order to measure whether anything has been improved by Action Research interventions. The group also simply wanted to know what businesses are out there.

...information on silviculture

- e.g. thinning regimes which wouldn't compromise other products.

...information provision

- planters and owners need advice on how to access markets even for familiar products, e.g. they may know that mushrooms can be sold but not how to go about selling them.
- get info out to woodland owners on potential alternative income streams
- produce a directory of all Scotland's NWFP businesses



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Some of the discussion focused on commercial exploitation and the potential for bigger income streams:

- Woodland is abandoned because it's seen by landowners as just a cost. What would persuade people to plant more woodland? What will change the behaviour of woodland owners, persuade them to manage for NWFPs? Can we make woodland pay? Can this be a significant opportunity for landowners?
- There is a need to move what are generally considered to be fringe activities into the mainstream commercial world, which will mean analysis to identify bottlenecks and opportunities.

...but local is important, as well:

- keep it sustainable by focussing on local markets.
- local surveillance... one firewood gatherer "grasses" on another - because now they have a permit to gather, it's "their" firewood that's being taken by someone who hasn't got permission.
- local residents keep an eye out for illegal bulb harvesting in the Borders.
- if the landowner gives people permission to harvest then they will let you know who is picking what.
- look from the forest perspective - what could be done on a specific site? What is the total income from a forest, including community benefit?
- scale is important - small scale just for personal use and do-it-yourself businesses - but for larger harvests leases could be an important income for owners.

...and so is firewood!

- again, firewood was seen as an essential part of what woodlands can provide, and a resource which is currently underexploited in Scotland, due to lack of skills, knowledge, appropriate equipment and supply chains.

Promotion of the whole sector is needed:

- people in general don't understand the term "NWFP", aren't aware of NWFPs as a sector. We need to raise awareness.
- there's a need to recapture the term "productive forestry", which is routinely used to mean only Sitka spruce plantation. Maybe start a twitter campaign based on #productiveforestry, related to tweets about other forest products?

6 StarTree Knowledge Exchange Events (KEEs)

The final presentation was an introduction to the KEEs and their function within StarTree, followed by an initial discussion about how we might get more value from them for stakeholders in Scotland. There were some thoughts on possible sources of funding for more people to travel to the KEEs. Also a discussion of provisional plans for the StarTree General Assembly meeting and KEE which will be held in the UK in May 2016.



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7 What will you remember from today?

Variety of experience and knowledge.

Names to faces, faces to names.

Different angles...

New people: different from the conventional world.

I'm dazzled by the breadth depth of knowledge, especially of who to contact in Scotland.

Joy of meeting of minds; the first Stakeholder group I've been to where I've felt at home.

Nice to meet a group with a wholistic view of the woodlands, how to get the most out of them without putting a particular badge or label onto them.

The interest in firewood - get in touch!

Woodfuel is local!

The gap in knowledge is appalling – especially firewood.

Additional notes:

NWFP products

During all the breaks there were NWFP products available to taste:

- berry preserves brought by Fi Martynoga from the Scottish Borders;
- woodland herb tea from Aberdeenshire (harvested and blended by Erica Hollis of Rowancott Herbs www.rowancottherbs.co.uk/); and
- sparkling birch juice from a StarTree stakeholder in Latvia (Dabas Dobe <http://www.dabasdobe.lv/>).

Presentations online

All presentations from the meeting will be available on the Reforesting Scotland website: <http://www.reforestingscotland.org/projects/startree/>



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