

## StarTree Regional Stakeholder Group (Scotland)

### Minutes of 2nd meeting: 23 July 2015, Battleby

#### Venue:

Auditorium, SNH Conference Centre, Battleby

#### Present:

**Emma Chapman**, StarTree Project Manager for Reforesting Scotland (RS); **Toni Dickson**, Research Assistant for StarTree; **Sally Macpherson**, RS Director; **Fi Martynoga**, RS Director (minutes);

**Nick Marshall**, Scottish Working Woods Label; **Mike Strachan**, Forestry Commission Scotland, Policy and Development Officer for Perth & Argyll Conservancy; **Fred Conacher**, Tree Officer, Angus Council; **Daye Tucker**, Scottish Land and Estates; **Andy Fraser**, Foraging Co-ordinator for Fresh Direct; **Tony Wilson**, Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association; **Margaret Lear**, Secretary, Scottish Wild Harvests Association and owner/director, Plants with Purpose; **Andrew Barbour**, land owner, estate manager and advisor to Scottish Land Strategy Group and Woodland Expansion Advisory Group.

#### Apologies:

**Jamie McIntyre**, Woodland Crofts; **Amanda Calvert**, Community Woodlands Association; **Phil Baarda**, SNH; **Stephen Baillie**, Scottish Enterprise.

### Minutes of previous meeting, of 13 Nov 2013

Emma summarised the salient sections of the minutes and noted the Action Points that had, or were being, implemented:

**Previous AP1** Firewood will be investigated as part of Action Research

**Previous AP4 Data Collection:** RS has delivered 60 outputs to StarTree but, to date, none has yet been published. Their *State of Sector Report* with material already submitted by Emma and Toni will be out in the next few weeks. Daye requested that our reports and submissions to such publications should be circulated to Stakeholders in advance of any subsequent meeting.

**AP1** : Emma agreed to 'an information dump'.

#### Action Research

Emma defined Action Research as a 'reflective process of problem solving' and explored possible outcomes for the non-wood forest products (NWFP) sector in Scotland of any we might undertake in the next few months. Her wishlist included: a species-by-species best practice guide that might be at the core of the Code of Conduct sought by the SWHA; a portal containing links to existing businesses in the sector that would amount to a directory, but one maintained by existing organisations; some knowledge-building seminars; a Delphi Study; and a Scottish presence at the NWFP Fair in Wales next May.



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## In-depth Case Study Report, 'Innovation'

Toni Dickson spoke of her study of Cairn o' Mohr, country wine producer in the Carse of Gowrie, and the only successful one surviving in Scotland. They have built their business with very little formal support, as it is too time-consuming for a small business to apply for any. They rely on family and local support; exchange of goods for picking rights; networking, especially at the many fairs and festivals they attend; and have diversified into having a café and winery tours. This profile is similar to that of the other businesses featured in the study (Welsh tea, Catalonian mushrooms, Finnish birch sap), all of which are family businesses that are tailored to their particular situation. Daye commented that farmers are starting to attend courses on diversification and that the time is ripe for them to take on new messages about the potential of NWFPs.

**AP 2:** investigate Soil Association courses for farmers to see if this is possible (Lyn White contact?)

## In-depth Case Study Report, 'Informal institutions'

Emma described how she chose Scottish berry pickers to examine the way their business was really conducted, with special attention to their relationships with land owners and managers, and to how forests are managed. Currently there is little management for NWFPs, which are helped by 'neglect' (as opposed to tidying up), and grant schemes are unhelpful if the aim of planting forageable woody species is made clear. Fred and Mike both suggested that the phrase 'native broadleaves' should be used in grant applications to legitimise species such as blackthorn. Good grant applications and management are held back by the cost of consultants competent at applying for money from appropriate schemes, and the difficulty of finding ones who are sympathetic to and knowledgeable about the aim of planting to increase the foraging resource. One solution would be to produce a leaflet giving guidance on what to look for in a consultant. Berry pickers worry about sustainability, as do mushroom pickers. Tony Wilson referred to a British Mycological Society paper that explores the impact of foraging: its conclusion is that the fungal species are robust but that other species in a habitat may suffer from trampling and removal of a food source, which can have an effect on a whole section of a food chain.

**AP 3 :** Find reference.

It was suggested that the Scottish Polish Society in Glasgow and the North Glasgow Food Initiative might be useful sources of knowledge about foraging, drawn from other cultures but applied here.

**AP 4 :** Emma to note for future reference.

## Supply Chain Surveys

Emma explained the problems of the lengthy questionnaires supplied from Italy. A colleague applied them to mushroom picking, with great difficulty, especially in finding collectors who were willing to talk. Venison proved too problematic, so she worked honey, with great co-operation from beekeepers, and their associations. Toni had a much harder time approaching retailers, due to the commercially sensitive nature of some of the questions. More work could usefully be done on the venison supply chain but would need to be funded.

**AP 5:** Fi to investigate the Environmental Ecological Co-operation Fund (SRDP) for collaborative approaches and Scotland Food and Drink (said to be well endowed) and



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the Lowland Deer Network, which could also be useful – contact: Richard Playfair, secretary.

### Scottish Working Woods (SWW) Label

Nick Marshall explained that other certification is too expensive for small producers, so the Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers and the Scottish Furniture Makers Association became the first member organisations of the Scottish Working Woods (SWW) label, which is peer-controlled. Those applying for certification for their products must be SMEs based in Scotland, and 90% of the woodland materials used in their labelled products must be Scottish. If they want to use the logo on their general promotion as well, 50% of the woodland material used in their business as a whole must be Scottish. SWHA joined the label to enable NWFP producers to access it. As part of StarTree Action Research, RS has helped revamp their website and develop a new logo. RS will also undertake a survey of current and past members of the labelling scheme, which should help to tailor it even more closely to its members' needs and aspirations, and then work with NWFP businesses to develop the first criteria for using NWFP products for the label, starting with discussions with coppice workers.

### Scottish Wild Harvests Association (SWHA)

For RS's Action Research work with the Scottish Wild Harvests Association, Emma and Toni will be surveying current and previous members of SWHA, developing their website, creating a directory of businesses and a listing of courses and events, and supporting efforts to create a foragers' Code of Conduct. Emma is in communication with SNH which is currently developing a project called Scotland's Natural Larder, and is interested in working with SWHA. Emma and Toni will also assist with the development of a Coppicers' Network.

**AP6** Toni: circulate the Report from Reforesting Scotland's *2014 Coppice Network Study Report* to the respondents. An online forum, hosted by RS, as called for in the Coppice Network report, seems the most useful way to sustain a network of coppicers.

**AP7** Emma: continue working with RS volunteers to set up and design an online forum. Members will be offered the opportunity to apply to use the SWW label on products.

**AP8:** Emma or Toni investigate current Fife and Tayside Landscape coppicing projects.

### Delphi Study

Toni outlined the aims and methods of this research approach, designed to get convergence of opinions between experts, without face to face confrontation. Between 12 and 20 participants are needed to respond to a series of electronic surveys, delivered at approximately 3-week intervals. From brainstorming initially, the themes are refined progressively. Emma will use it this autumn to investigate salient issues as preparation for the proposed 'Land, lore and law' seminar.

### Two potential seminars

**Land, lore and law:** this could investigate some of the controversial issues likely to be raised by the Delphi study, particularly biosecurity, territoriality, potentially divergent views between landowners, tenants and harvesters over foraging issues, what is good practice, habitat disturbance, etc. Andy Fraser stated that his company would consider paying land owners for collecting rights. Andrew Barbour commented that it would be important to get a range of opinion. Scottish Land and Estates could be asked to find participants currently negative about foragers on their land. Malcolm Strang Steel was suggested as a retired lawyer with extensive knowledge of land law.



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**AP9:** Emma to investigate.

**Food, fuel and fibre:** this could be the title of a seminar looking at hazel coppice, firewood coppice and other ways of managing land for NWFPs. Lochore Meadows Country Park, Fife or the Fordie Estate, Perthshire were suggested as possible venues. It may happen after StarTree ends.

**AP10:** Emma and Toni to discuss the idea with potential partners as part of their work with the Coppice Network.

### **StarTree Forest Products Fair, Wales, May 2016**

The penultimate gathering of StarTree participants will be in North Wales. A Forest Products Fair will take place as part of this, and also merged with the annual gathering of Llais y Goedwig. (Llais y Goedwig is the Welsh community woodlands association, and like RS it is a member of the StarTree consortium.)

The emphasis of the Fair will be on demonstrations and skill share, with ample opportunity for stall-holders with every kind of NWFP to take part. RS and SWW hope to attend and it is a great opportunity for Scottish producers to showcase products such as country wines, baskets, wild plants, etc in an interesting environment, with interested participants, and to learn from other producers from Wales and across Europe. The host organisation, Llais y Goedwig, has good local connections and will also be advertising the event to a wide public.

**AP11** RS will investigate possible sources of funding to assist with transport costs.

### **In conclusion...**

Emma concluded with two more elements of RS's proposed Action Research work: to create a 'Wild and Woodland' portal for all the organisations which make up Scotland's non-timber forest products sector. Alongside this she would like to see a leaflet with thumbnails of these organisations and their web addresses, which would act as a way of introducing the public to both the portal and the individual organisations at the same time.

Emma also thanked everyone for attending and for the useful exchanges throughout the day.

**Date of next meeting:** suggested dates to be circulated as work progresses.

### **Contact:**

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### **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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