

StarTree Regional Stakeholder Group (Scotland)

Notes on institutions discussion, April 15th 2016

1. “Which NWFP do you see as having the biggest potential in Scotland?”

The group agreed tourism had the biggest potential. Finland was given as an example, where at the airport there are many NWFP products for tourists to buy, there is a market for local produce and tourists want to buy into a local experience. This could be a product, or could be a course such as a guided foraging walk in the local landscape.

It was suggested that if landowners hosted these walks on their land they could make money, either directly or by accommodation or other service businesses, but it was also noted that not all landowners are welcoming to people on their land and that landowners would need reassurance that their land was not going to get ruined. If landowners started to charge it could be a problem for forage leaders. It was also observed that a small business can put a lot of effort into developing a product, then an arbitrary decision by a land manager can change everything, removing the resource the business is based on.

It was concluded that tourism is a wide market to tap into, it was felt the market was growing and untapped presently and all agreed that when selling end products it was important to find the best places to sell it. The 240% retailers' markup and the remote location of some of the producers were felt as aspects that could affect the economic viability of some of the products.

It was suggested that the food assembly model could be used. Producers become members of the assembly, and buyers place orders and collect all produce from a specific site/venue. This is a model that enables producers to sell directly to buyers. There is only one food assembly in Scotland at present –Leith Food Assembly (<https://thefoodassembly.com/en/assemblies/7377>); there are hundreds across Europe. One could be developed for wild woodland products.

2. “Would these changes be useful in Scotland?”

Better co-ordination between public and private actors, sharing and consolidation of information

The discussion brought up that collaboration is key, sharing and consolidation of knowledge is important and there needs to be more education and information for the end user. Many people are not sure of what they are buying and often chefs aren't aware of the provenance of the food they are buying. A recent incident of accidental poisoning in a restaurant was mentioned.

Some form of picker certification was suggested. It was stressed that it would not need to take the form of a big legal sledgehammer but could incorporate small steps that would make it simpler for pickers to comply. A register of commercial pickers was also suggested. On one hand this would be a positive as pickers would have certification that they could show chefs and there would be traceability but the process would have to be handled in a sensitive way to avoid discrimination and crossing privacy boundaries – no forager would be happy about disclosing their best picking sites. There was no consensus among the group as to whether either certification or a register was the right way to go.



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People in Scotland are very resourceful and will start businesses anyway but with a sharing of knowledge the terrain can be created for successful businesses.

Re-education in forest management

A course or a module in forestry or land management courses about managing for wild harvests and about foraging was suggested. Could there be a LANTRA certificate for foraging?

It was pointed out that not everyone has money to go on a course and that there are many different styles of foraging – some concentrate on medicinal purposes, others folklore etc. Who is to say which is right? - foraging can't be put in a box.

Harvesting rights guidance written up. Advisory research group set up by government

A set of principles for foraging was suggested as a good way forward.

One stakeholder stated it would be good to have clarity and that there are a lot of inconsistencies in the law with regard to commercial picking. In the old common law the wild plants on land do not belong to the landowners. A forage walk leader was unsure if they need to ask permission, they are being paid to lead the walk but nothing is being picked. It was suggested that permission should be asked for anything that is a commercial venture on someone's land.

It was pointed out that some people want to leave the law as it is, they think it works fine in practice and see no need for clarity.

Others thought clarity on quantities would be seen as useful. Picking blackberries for a few jars of jam to sell was seen as different to picking large amounts of mushrooms to sell to wholesalers. Clarity is also needed on issues such as harvesting on a SSSI, as there is not always a blanket ban on foraging in these areas.

It was felt that there is an interesting discussion to be had with landowners but there was no call for it to become a government issue.

Species-by-species measures written up in regards to harvesting practices

The group agreed that it is important to consider not only differences between individual species but also differences between individual places. What may be scarce in one patch may be very abundant somewhere else. As well as differences in the ecology of different places, one participant mentioned that it can also depend on the number of people picking in a certain area. The guidelines for places where very few people pick would be different to guidelines for places where lots of people pick.

Information about which species should not be picked at all was suggested, as were guidelines for places where you shouldn't pick at all, such as Scotland's National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Although it was noted that some abundant or invasive species (such as nettles or bracken) could be harvested even in these areas.

More funding made available for associated training and NWFP business support

Yes, LEADER funding to support businesses would be useful.



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<http://www.reforestingscotland.org/projects/startree/>

3. Scenarios for future economic development

“Which is the most desirable scenario that you can imagine for NWFP sector development? Where do you see the sector in the long term, 10-20 years?”

- Scotland has a wonderful position with its land access compared with England. A suggested vision was that people would still have access to the land and this should be preserved, at least, if not increased to a reintroduction of rights to the commons. With rights come responsibility and there needs to be constant dialogue and information available about resources in order to avoid heavy-handed legislation coming in.
- People better informed about foraging and sustainability.
- Signs that could be put up when resources in a certain area were getting depleted.
- Published principles (such as the Association of Foragers' ones) to let landowners know what they can expect from pickers.
- More land actively managed for NWFPs, humans and wildlife.
- More education for farmers on managing farm woodlands.
- More value added in Scotland.
- An alliance between groups such as wild harvesters, landowners and beekeepers to give one voice about managed habitats.
- Education about woodlands and woodland produce starting from an early age.
- More forest gardens.
- Grants for small-scale operations.
- Wild forest products on the CAP reform agenda and EU directive.
- Grants given to enable groups to lease land from farmers in order to protect and create woodland for forageables.
- Campaign for grant support to get woodland areas into more favourable condition for multipurpose benefits.
- A FORAGELOTS scheme - on a similar principle to the current WOODLOTS (<http://www.scottishwoodlotassociation.co.uk/>).
- Right of access to land is only part of the picture. Communities should have more of a say in land use as in the old commons law. Should be able to arrange a commons lease and arrange a self-sustaining community to manage the land - a “transition” woodland model.



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