

# StarTree Regional Stakeholder Group (Scotland)

## Minutes of 3rd meeting: 15th April 2016

**Venue:** Forestry Commission Scotland office, Battleby

### **Present:**

**Amanda Calvert**, Community Woodland Association and Small Woods; **Emma Chapman**, StarTree Project Manager for Reforesting Scotland (RS); **Fi Martynoga**, RS Director; **Fred Conacher**, Tree Officer, Angus Council; **Margaret Lear**, Scottish Wild Harvests Association and Plants with Purpose owner/director; **Mike Strachan**, Policy and Development Officer for Perth & Argyll Conservancy, Forestry Commission Scotland; **Monica Wilde**, forager and foraging course leader, Association of Foragers (secretary); **Nick Marshall**, Scottish Working Woods Label; **Toni Dickson**, Research Assistant for StarTree (minutes); **Sally Macpherson**, RS Director; **Stephen Baillie**, Scottish Enterprise

### **Apologies:**

**Becky Shaw**, SNH; **Daye Tucker**, Scottish Land and Estates; **Tony Wilson**, Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association

### **Introduction/overview**

A brief reminder of work packages, deliverables from each work package and summarised work produced at different stages of the project. Planning to revisit the Regional State of the Sector Report; asking for feedback and input once the stakeholders had read it.

StarTree has six months to go, work will finish on 31/10/2016. The Action Research work will finish in six weeks and the remainder of the work will be focused on dissemination. A time to stop, look at what information has been generated and find ways to make that information more accessible. Emma asked that the stakeholders help with deciding the best methods of dissemination, where it would be most useful and what form it should take.

### **Themes that have come up in StarTree research**

#### ***Embedded & artisan vs bulk products***

The first studies on non-timber products in Scotland, in the early 2000s, anticipated that the development of the sector would be about bulk production of products. Subsequent work found that the sector is actually more about niche, artisan and embedded products. StarTree has confirmed this, but more surprisingly has showed that is largely the case not only in Scotland but across Europe.

#### ***Supply chain insights***

**Honey** During the honey supply chain survey, it seemed there were marketing angles that some honey producers were just starting to utilise. For example, all honey on the comb is actually raw honey and raw honey attracts a premium price in today's market. A small number of producers promoted themselves on ethical grounds as well; two of those have gone out of business since the survey was conducted.



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**Venison** Last autumn Reforesting Scotland visited the Assynt Foundation and heard a talk by the switched-on deer stalker who is responsible for deer management on its two community-owned estates. The Assynt Foundation has no capacity to process the venison produced on the estates, losing the chance to add value to the product. It was suggested that the solution was to set up a community-owned butchery, working in collaboration with a community in the Central Belt, thus keeping more of the value within the estate.

**Wild mushrooms** Mushroom pickers are mostly reluctant to talk or be interviewed. The supply chain has little public profile, with distributors selling straight to the catering trade.

There is a case in Romania of reverse price fixing, where the landowner guarantees the picker a price for each kilo of mushrooms harvested, instead of the pickers being subject to price fluctuation depending on buyer. The landowner benefits from increased knowledge and control of the mushroom harvest from their land.

### Scaling up

- The economics of bulk NWFP (non-wood forest product) produce rely heavily on cheap labour. In Finland Malaysian pickers fly in to harvest as the Russian migrants who used to do the work now cannot make enough to make it worth their while. One Scottish basketmaker had to outsource to Eastern Europe when given a bulk order by a large supermarket chain. Most professional Scottish basketmakers make a living by selling courses or selling baskets as art.
- The Italian StarTree team have proposed that to make the wild mushroom supply chain work there should be a tax break, that the distributors should be taxed and not the pickers.
- The other limit to bulk NWFP production is, of course, the limited wild resource in Scotland, & the potential adverse impacts on wild ecosystems and on public amenity.

### *Foraging to farming - another way of scaling up*

When people want a steady reliable source they tend to grow it. Examples include Catalonian truffle plantations, mass-cultivated Scottish raspberries, and, on a much smaller scale, hogweed being grown in the Borders for a wild food distributor. Starting with wild food, the final destination can be anything from working sensitively with natural habitats to mainstream intensive agriculture.

### *Sustainable harvesting*

During StarTree project discussions, Reforesting Scotland and the Welsh project partners have raised this issue as important and one to talk about. There are still conversations to be had about this issue and some are ongoing. The ongoing Delphi study is part of this. Several RSG members are also on the Delphi panel, so the study will be discussed separately once it has been completed.

### *“NWFP is a non sector”*

- according to a spontaneous discussion during the last general StarTree meeting, in November 2015. Cairn O’Mohr Wines and the West Moss-side Centre provide examples of this. The use of NWFPs is only a small part of their businesses - but they wouldn’t be the same without that part. It is impossible to quantify and measure the value of the NWFPs in these cases. Fred suggested their value could be quantified in how much time people commit to NWFPs rather than a monetary value.



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The term “NWFP” is also hard to define and unexpressive. Since that meeting StarTree partners have begun to use the term “Wild Forest Products” instead.

## **Action Research**

RS's Action Research is aimed at working with and supporting existing NWFP sector initiatives. The method involves adapting to feedback and new information along the way. Four short presentations gave a flavour of some of the work done and some of the discoveries made over the last few months.

### **1. Toni Dickson - Tutors and Venues**

Toni reported on the survey of tutors and venues, which is part of Work Package 3 and is the subject of a social network analysis. We wanted to know the relationship between the networks. She distributed a diagram of the networks found. Snowball sampling was used, and three venues identified. Tutors giving courses at these venues over three years were surveyed as to the subjects offered, size and frequency of classes, whether courses were free or charged for, if there were collaborations and what proportion of the tutors' income they provided. The survey quickly uncovered a further complexity - the need to add “host” organisations to the networks, rather than just “venues”.

Respondents would like a directory of NWFP courses in Scotland. Funding and updating were discussed. The CWA, RS and SWHA websites were suggested as potential hosts. Cross-Scotland LEADER funding was suggested, a partnership of member organisations providing a portal or gateway.

Data analysis is underway.

### **2. Monica Wilde - Association of Foragers**

Monica gave a brief outline of the history of this new association. A meeting of professional foragers on Islay led to setting up a Facebook group for the “International Guild of Foragers”. Following withholding of permissions in Dungeness and the New Forest, 23 delegates met in December 2015 and agreed on a flat structure providing support and information exchange. Principles and practice for sustainable foraging have been agreed after a fourmonth consultation. There is minimal admin and no membership fee. Would-be members apply and are vetted before being accepted. To date there are 60+ members including some from overseas, as similar problems are being encountered in other countries. The website is [www.foragers-association.org.uk](http://www.foragers-association.org.uk) Discussion covered resource and place controversies, and species loss due to infrastructure projects rather than through foraging.

### **3. Emma Chapman - Action Research overview: adapting and responding**

The Action Research projects have evolved from an original given remit of creating NWFP branding to one of supporting existing initiatives. The Scottish Working Woods Label, SWHA and coppicers research have all resulted in further developments, such as the SWHA survey, the Coppice Forum (almost ready to run), and directories. Strands will come together in time for the Wales Fair on 27 May. The research has confirmed the potential usefulness of a seminar on “land, lore and law”, which could happen post-StarTree. The “food, fibre and fuel” strand now seems better addressed via a series of workshops. CWA was suggested as a possible partner in that, and Patrick Gordon Smith as a contact. This discussion could continue as part of RS's dissemination work.



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#### **4. Nick Marshall - Scottish Working Woods Label (SWW)**

Nick distributed the SWW leaflet and a list of the 16 current licensees. SWHA has become a member organisation and negotiations are ongoing with the Scottish Basketmakers' Circle, a tree nursery and coppice producers. A founding member organisation, the Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers (ASHS) is looking at extending use of the licence to its associate members of ASHS. The project has been given a recent boost by ASHS funding, new volunteer input from ASHS, and StarTree time, resulting in a new logo and website (<http://www.scottishworkingwoods.org.uk>).

#### **Dissemination**

A session asking for stakeholders' input into dissemination, asking what strands of work they thought are worth sharing in dissemination and what channels and methods RS should use.

#### **Suggested organisations:**

- Arboriculture Association
- Association of Foragers
- Borders Forest Trust
- Butterfly Trust
- Central Scotland Green Network Trust
- Community Woodlands Association
- Confor
- European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF)
- Farm Woodland Forum
- Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens
- Field Studies Council
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- Institute of Chartered Foresters
- Leith Food Assembly
- National Access Forum
- National Trust
- Nourish
- Organic Research Centre
- Permaculture Scotland
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- Royal Scottish Forestry Society (Gavin Strachan mentioned)
- RSPB
- Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)
- Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association (SCRA)
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Scottish School of Forestry
- Scottish Tree Officers' Group
- Small Woods
- Soil Association
- Transition Network
- Woodland Trust



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## **Suggestions of where to share information/publish for farmers specifically:**

- Radio - Out of Doors, Farming Today, Archers
- Farming UK
- Farming Futures
- Farming conferences

## **Suggestions of messages and approaches:**

- There needs to be better awareness of what foraging is generally. Private landowners need to be involved in the discussion and should know about the principles of foraging as this is part of the solution. The messages could be: Do you realise your woodland has an edible value? - woodlands are not only valuable for timber.
- Sustainable harvesting and sympathetic land management.
- Commercial aspects of NWFPs. Experiential tourism is one aspect of this and it would be good to share how organisations or businesses can tap into this market, it would also be beneficial to share what happens in other countries in respect to this.
- There are 3 audiences: Landowner, Gatherer, Tourist and each needs practical information, not academic.
- A product-by-product directory, for land managers and the public. e.g. mushrooms - who harvests them, who dries them, where you can buy them.
- Put papers and reports from StarTree on the research section of the Association of Foragers' website.
- A leaflet, for industry rather than general public. There was a comment that this would still be too niche. The niche markets are known, and StarTree results, papers and key information should be given to the relevant organisations to distribute to their stakeholders through their networks.
- Break information down into smaller "bites" to post on Facebook pages and Twitter feeds. Also have a one-page summary or short synopsis for each of the StarTree papers. Succinct summaries will hook people more readily.

## **NWFP "institutions"**

A discussion around a set of questions sent by Irina Prokofieva, leader of StarTree Work Package 4. (Notes in separate document.)

## **Date & venue of next meeting:**

**Tues 27th September 2016,**

**Monimail Tower, Monimail, by Cupar, Fife KY15 7RJ**



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