

**The research centre for inclusive
access to outdoor environments**



WHAT CAN FORESTRY DO FOR THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND?

Simon Bell

**Alicia Montarzino, Catherine Findlay, Sucharita
Srirangam, Anne Boyle, Frances Warren**

Introduction

This project was undertaken as an exercise to widen the consultation base for the Review of the Scottish Forestry Strategy (SFS).

The objectives of the project were:

- To ensure that the SFS is informed by views of people from a wider range of backgrounds and contexts than is evident from responses to the First Public Consultation

Introduction

- To assist FC Scotland in reviewing the SFS in the context of its obligations and commitments in relation to Disability Discrimination and Race Relations legislation.
- To ensure that SFS is informed by views representative of stakeholders whose input may not best be obtained by a process such as that used for the First Public Consultation, including 'hard to reach' groups who may require targeted efforts to elicit a response.

Introduction

A critical review of the process and results of the First Public Consultation identified the following shortcomings and areas to be addressed:

- Many of the questions were difficult to answer without a professional or expert knowledge of current forestry/land use policy and practice.
- Some of the questions were leading and might have elicited a biased response.

Question 7

Is an appropriate balance being achieved between the economic, environmental and social aspects of forestry?

If not, please give specific examples.

Question 8

Do you agree that the Scottish Forestry Strategy should be focused primarily on increasing the benefits of forestry to the people of Scotland?

Question 9

Should woodlands play a greater role in helping Scotland deal with climate change?

If so, how?

Question 10

What should be the role of forestry in sustainable rural development?

Question 11

How could forestry become more of an exemplar of sustainable development in Scotland?

Question 12

How should Scotland respond to the opportunities presented by the increasing supply of timber from Scotland's woodlands?

Question 13

How could the overall economic potential of Scotland's woodlands be increased?

Introduction

- The consultation document did not make it easy for individuals or groups to contribute to a different agenda for forestry, arising out of their basic needs and perhaps very different perspectives from those of FC Scotland
- Of the 180 responses to the first consultation, the vast majority, whether from individuals or groups, appeared to be from people with a background in forestry, woodland or countryside issues, many of whom are professionally employed in that capacity

Introduction

- Some organisations, agencies and community group/trust responses indicated a sensitivity to the needs of urban dwellers but it was unclear how many of the responses represented an urban-dweller's perspective, particularly a lay view.

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- There appeared to be only one response from a young person. i.e. under 20 years old, and only one mentioned the needs of disabled people
- There was no evident response from or relating to people from minority ethnic groups



Method

- A series of five focus groups were undertaken from the following populations, with an average of eight people per group:
 - a) People from a remote rural area, based in Dumfries and Galloway
 - b) Blind and partially sighted people based in Edinburgh

Method

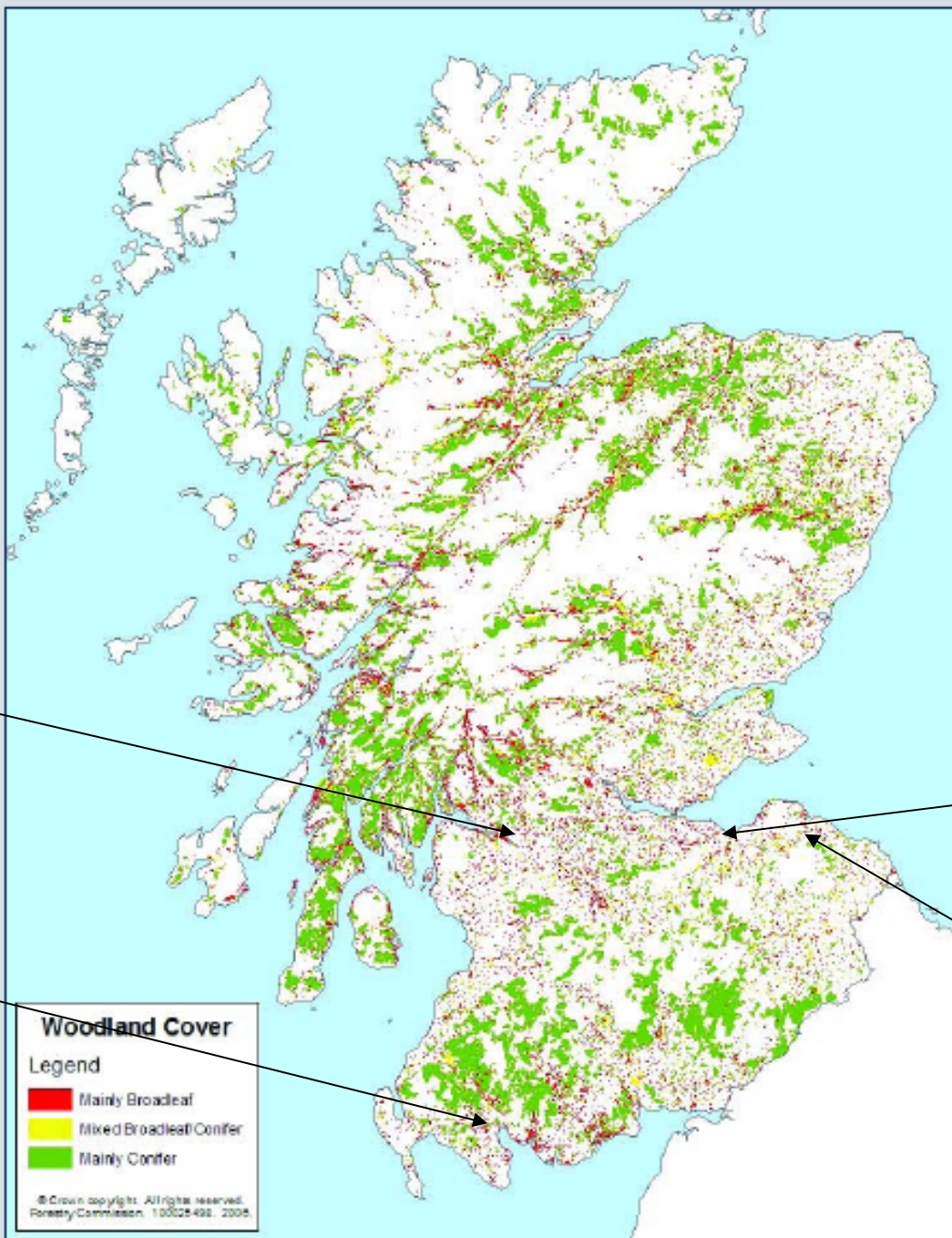
- c) Women from black and minority ethnic groups in Edinburgh
- d) People with a range of disabilities, including mobility impairment and mental illness, based in East Lothian
- e) Young people from an urban area of social deprivation, based in Glasgow.

Glasgow

Glenluce

Edinburgh

East Lothian



Map derived from National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (2002) and Scottish Semi-Natural Woodland Inventory (1990)

Key Findings

- The response people have to woodlands is mostly very positive - trees, parks, meadows, green spaces, waterfalls and canals, wildlife, tranquillity, beauty, pleasure and relaxation – but for some there are concerns about inaccessibility and fear for safety

Key Findings

- Forestry Commission Scotland's name and rôle is not well known to most people, although it has some positive resonances with management and good walks for a few;
- No-one in the focus groups had heard of the Scottish Forestry Strategy, There was little awareness of forestry policy and some negative perceptions (and misconceptions) about modern forestry.

Key Findings

There are three important barriers to people getting as much access to woodlands as they would like:

1. Lack of reliable public transport (especially important for blind, visually impaired and other disabled people and for BME women)

Key Findings

2. Poor access within woodlands – lack of signs, information and well maintained paths are barriers, especially to blind and partially sighted people, and good signage and information are important to everyone. Fear of getting lost and lack of rangers to help are also important factors.

Key Findings

3. Fear of other people in woodlands - many were fearful of undesirable people and activities in woodlands; BME women felt particularly vulnerable in dense woodlands and in rural areas in general.

Key Findings

People believe that woodlands can make a difference to their lives, including:

- recreation and opportunities for days out,
- providing a tranquil environment in which to 'get away',
- contributing to physical and mental health and well-being,
- opportunities for education and coming close to wildlife.

Key Findings

- The potential personal benefits from woodlands are also seen as potential community benefits.
- However, there are cultural barriers that make it harder for certain groups to see benefit – for some BME groups, visiting woodlands is not part of any cultural tradition and therefore not seen as particularly attractive.
- For many young people, visiting local woodlands is not valued as part of their culture

Key Findings

- The importance of visiting woodlands for children was highlighted by many and concern raised about restrictions and regulations, as well as funding barriers, that limit school or other organised access for children.
- It was considered important to overcome this, through school trips, initiatives and government/FCS funding

Key Findings

Improvements to woodlands preferred by most groups would include:

- More native broadleaves or mixed woodlands rather than conifers
- Better public transport and regular trips for communities (and especially children) to woodlands

Key Findings

- Measures to alleviate fear in woodlands, especially fear of personal attack which is common across many disadvantaged groups – rangers are favoured to address issues of safety, information and guidance.
- Creative ways to manage woodlands and link with the local community as well as with recreational and volunteer activities.



The Scottish Forestry Strategy

