



Briefing Note for South Scotland Industry Meeting 08.02.2022

Grants and Targets.

For 2021 claim year, 12,376ha was approved for Scotland of which 3850ha was within South Scotland. (excludes FLS). This is below the target area for woodland creation set by Scottish Government(SG) but Scottish Forestry (SF) recognise the substantial effort made by the industry to scale up to meet the ambitious aspiration of SG. For 2022 the target is 15000ha rising to 18000ha by 2024. Achieving this target will be very challenging given the staffing and skills shortages facing the industry.

2021 Claims.

Important to highlight the [briefing note issued in February](#) regarding the 2021 capital claims.

The FGS capital claim form for 2021 claim year activities, **and** supporting information, must be submitted to Scottish Forestry by the deadline of **31 March 2022**.

I also wish to highlight that the claim process at the end of the year creates a significant additional workload for the whole conservancy team and an area that will be a priority for ourselves throughout April. This significantly reduces our capacity for other work at this time.

SF Structure.

In 2021, Scottish Forestry reviewed the operating models within conservancies and this exercise identified some areas for improvement and also areas where resources were insufficient. As a consequence, the conservancies are being restructured into area teams to better cope with the spread of work. In addition, a number of new posts have been identified and SF are working through the recruitment exercises for those at present. It is hoped that this will put us in a better position to respond to the increasing demands placed on us by the industry and stakeholders as the targets increase. South Scotland Conservancy has already restructured into 3 area teams but still have some staff vacancies to fill before we at full strength.

Throughout the pandemic, SF have recruited a number of new staff for South Scotland and we have been working hard to support and develop our new colleagues. This has not been easy with the remote working arrangements that have been in place for the last couple of years but as we emerge from the pandemic and into more hybrid working arrangements, greater support will be available for new staff.

Storm Arwen

As you will be aware, Storm Arwen and subsequent storms have had a significant impact on woodlands particularly in the east. Conservancy teams have received a significant workload associated with processing felling permissions and we are still receiving high application levels in the East. Those are being processed as quickly as our resources allow through the fast track procedures. I wish to remind agents of the requirement to submit restocking proposals where those were not included with the original felling permission within 30 days of receiving the felling permission. Going forward, we will expect that the restocking proposal are included with the Felling permission application. This should simplify things for both agent and ourselves.

UKFS

Work is ongoing across the industry on the revision of the UK Forestry Standard and this has stimulated considerable interest from stakeholders. Work will continue on redrafting the UKFS with a target for publishing in December 2022.

D&G council

During 2022, Dumfries and Galloway Council intend to revise their Forest and Woodland Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy and are currently procuring a consultant to undertake this work. Early indications are that this will be a light touch review but clearly an important topic for the Forest Industry in South of Scotland to engage with.

LRUP.

SOSE has started the project to develop the Rural Land Use Partnership for South Scotland (LRUP) Andy Tharne has been appointed project manager and he was involved with the 2 pilot areas in the Scottish Borders. Throughout



2022, the project team will be focussed on stakeholder engagement across the region. I would encourage industry representatives to engage with this to ensure that the importance of the forestry sector South Scotland is recognised in the strategy for the LRUP.

Consultation.

There is increased local debate about the effectiveness of consultation relating to forestry schemes, for south Scotland Conservancy the picture is mixed. There are some very positive examples and others where this is less open and effective. It is essential that time and energy is invested in getting this right at the pre application stages. Getting it wrong generally takes longer and can impact on how the community may view any future forestry schemes in their area. The [Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement](#) and [Guidance on Engaging Communities in Decisions Relating to Land](#) are useful points of reference. Community engagement, community wealth building and just transition are gaining more ministerial attention.

Finally

I Wish to express our thanks to Jamie for the many years of hard work and support that he has given the Forest Industry in Scotland. Jamie will be missed by us all but we wish him the very best for a long and happy retirement.

Neil Murray,
Conservator
South Scotland Conservancy