

# Minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> Timber Quality Steering Group. Held at The Hill College, Abergavenny, Wales.

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

**Present:** Colin Forsyth (Chair); Steve Lee, Jim Dewar, Roger Coppock, Elspeth Macdonald, Chris Jones, John Moore, Richard Ogilvy, Geoff Cooper, John Morgan, David Lesley. Also present as a guest: Craig Leitch.

1. *Welcome and outline of how the next 24 hours should run*

Chairman Colin Forsyth welcomed Elspeth MacDonald (substituting for Barry Gardiner) and guest Craig Leitch visiting from Charles Ransfords sawmill. CF outlined the proposed programme for 2-day meeting.

2. *Apologies:*

Received from: Barry Gardiner, Tim Liddon, Christine Cahalan, Andrew Cameron, Gordon Callander, Graham Gill, Michael Fairgrieve, Margaret Watson, Alan Corson.

3. *Minutes of the last meeting*

Were accepted as read.

4. *Action points from the last meeting*

*i. Economics of improved Sitka spruce:*

SL explained the small progress made with this Information Note since December 2007 and the need to agree common assumptions between the two economic approaches being reported on. SL needs to arrange a further meeting with Guy Watt. CF impressed upon the group the importance of this piece of work by forest managers in the public and private sector. There was a discussion about leader loss from improved material.

**Action:** SL to investigate historic leader loss data.

**Action:** SL agreed to press ahead and produce this IN by the next meeting in November 2008.

*Impact of climate change on the planting of conifers:*

Concern was expressed regarding the general negativity of the Scottish report. Wales are now producing their own report and feedback on what to avoid – or do better - in the Welsh report is appreciated.

**Action:** All members to contact Chris Jones regarding comments they may have for the Welsh climate change report.

*Update on the use of acoustic tools:*

There is now a link on the Steering Group website to the acoustic tool seminars presented at Lockerbie in November 2007. See [www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/HCOU-4U4JEQ](http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/HCOU-4U4JEQ).

*CFS review of conifer breeding*

SL explained how the review of conifer breeding had been carried out. CFS would now have one programme known as 'Tree Breeding' which would incorporate conifer and broadleaf breeding. There will be no further reduction in budget for 2008/9. The review included an economic analysis of tree breeding and an attempt to investigate the likely change in species demand in future in response to climate change predictions. SL explained the likely shift in emphasis between species including the testing of new species or origins in response to demands of climate forestry and possibly short rotation coppice or short rotation forestry. Money for clonal forestry and Marker Aided Selection had been protected in the short to medium term on the assumption that these technologies will be of value in future to other species or characteristics. There will be a shift in budget spend from conifers, and Sitka

spruce in particular, to broadleaf species and other conifers. SL felt he now had a defensible programme with a clear remit which is more geared towards the challenges of climate change. The possibility of testing origins of Nothofagus, Cherry or Walnut should not be dismissed.

*An update on the review of clonal forestry technologies*

SL updated the Group that an appointment had been made to continue the work of clonal forestry technologies (somatic embryogenesis (SE) and cryopreservation) for Sitka spruce. Trevor Fenning has been appointed on a 15-month fix term appointment. Trevor started with FR on 1 May 2008 with the objective of reviewing protocols and trying to get them to work for Sitka. It is anticipated he will travel to Coillte in Ireland and to see Yill-Sung Park in Canada.

*Visit by Prof Bruce Greaves*

Bruce was funded by Scottish Forestry Trust (SFT) to visit Scotland and spend time with FR, Napier Uni, sawmillers etc to assist in deriving economic values to be attached to selection traits used in the breeding of Sitka spruce. Bruce was in Scotland for the first 2 weeks of April. A report has been written. SL to seek approval from SFT to distribute to the Group membership. This should be an item for discussion at the next Group meeting.

**Action:** SL to seek approval and distribute report

*Discussion paper presented by CF at last meeting:*

CF explained that he would still like to see a best practice guide regarding use of improved Sitka spruce - including guidance on planting distance and when to thin - as an output from this Group. John Moore noted that Napier CTE was currently planning a bulletin detailing the wood properties and utilisation characteristics of Sitka spruce timber.

Roger Coppock reported that a booklet on best practice for energy forestry was to be published.

The publication of an Information Note presenting results of the Kershope study on yield and wood properties of improved Sitka spruce progeny was discussed. SL reported that final edits were being agreed following review by an external editor and that publication was imminent.

5. *Update of Bench Marking project*

John Moore gave an up-date of this work

6. *Update on Timber Quality activities*

Elsbeth Macdonald updated the Group on work being carried out by the Timber Quality team (see attached Word document).

7. *Any other business*

Presentations were made to the Group by Craig Leitch of Charles Ransfords sawmill, (<http://www.ransfords.co.uk/>) and David Cross FC (Wales) responsible for Silvicultural Operations.

There was also an evening presentation by Dai Jones, FMD Coed y Cymoedd, Llandovery. These presentation provided the Group with an excellent insight into the opportunities and market demand for non-Spruce timber in Wales.

The following day the Group viewed stands of large Douglas fir, improved Hybrid larch, Grand fir and full sib Sitka spruce trials. A key conclusion was the opportunity to grow more improved Hybrid larch, which was showing excellent traits after 20 years.

8. *Date and location of next meeting.*

Proposed to be Aberdeenshire in late November/early December.

**Action:** SL to contact Andrew Cameron for possible dates to circulate to Group members.