

2015/16 Statement on Sustainable Economic Growth

During a year of considerable organisational change, FCS was able to meet Scottish Government's economic priorities and support the growth of the forest and timber sector in Scotland. It is important work: a hugely significant two-year study, which published its concluding report in November, found that the entire forest sector is worth £954 Million to the Scottish economy every year and supports over 25,000 jobs (FTE) many of which are in fragile, rural areas.

FCS also approves, regulates and monitors long-term Forest Design Plans, which are an integral element in the production of 9 million cubic meters of timber from Scotland's forests – around 3 million cubic meters of this coming from the National Forest Estate (NFE).

We continue to support the creation of woodland by helping to ease the transition into the new Forestry Grant Scheme. We have also taken steps to improve the way that we deal with grant and licence applications that should alleviate some of the perceived barriers to a quick decision and approval of large new planting schemes in particular.

We continue to build relationships with the farming sector. In March 2016, an event was held in the Scottish Borders with the National Sheep Association, which brought together the interests of 'Sheep and Trees' to explore the mutual benefits of integrating forestry and farming.

Our community engagement work has also gathered pace: for example the innovative Cunningar Loop project in Glasgow's East End, on which FES has fostered strong community and partner relationship, is nearing completion and we additionally launched the 4th phase of the WIAT initiative to support the development of urban woodlands

The value of our inner city woodlands in promoting health and wellbeing has also been recognised. We have continued to support and grow programmes like the award winning 'Branching Out', woodland based project that tackles addiction and mental health issues across Scotland. We also work with NHS Scotland to green hospital grounds providing an enhanced environment for rehabilitation.

We continued to promote the value of Scotland's woodlands as an educational resource, which led us to support Outdoor & Woodland Learning Scotland (OWL Scotland), which encourages schools to take children into a woodland classroom.

Another major aspect of our work is tourism. FES has continued to invest heavily in long distance footpaths on the estate that help to attract over nine million visitors a year.

Woodlands can be valued social and economic resources for communities in other ways too. Our hugely successful National Forest Land Scheme has played a significant part in developing community ownership. The scheme

is now being refreshed in line with the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) act 2015 and it is hoped that in future years it can continue to support communities.

The development of renewable energy schemes on the NFE continues to grow with several local community schemes now fully operational.

This year the area of woodland felled to tackle the spread of Phytophthora ramorum was considerably less than previous years, but Tree Health issues remain a top priority for the forestry sector. In the past year FCS has contributed to the completion of the Scottish Plant Health Strategy and, launched the 'Keep it Clean' campaign to raise awareness and to promote biosecurity practice.