










Review of Progress on Mackinnon Review

Recommendation	Progress	Commentary
<p>The design of the planting scheme should be separate from the grant application.</p>		<p>The reasoning behind this recommendation is widely accepted. The approach to woodland design will depend on whether a scheme requires an EIA or not. Consideration of grant should flow seamlessly on from approval of a design which meets the requirements of the UKFS, a document agreed by the key stakeholders within the forestry sector. The aim is to have the new system in place by late 2017/early 2018 with supporting guidance and advice.</p>
<p>Accredited agents should be appointed to certify all woodland creation schemes which are below the threshold for EIA screening and the majority of schemes where it is determined that an EIA is not required.</p>		<p>The aims and aspirations are supported but no consensus on how it should be implemented. There is particularly strong support for the concept of Earned Recognition but some nervousness around the idea of an Accredited Agents. It has been agreed to appoint a member(s) of the RICS to advise further on this but this has still to happen, the remit is not clear nor is the timescale within which advice should be provided.</p>
<p>FCS should set up a central team to deal with particularly sensitive/complex proposals and all projects where an EIA is required.</p>		<p>This has not been established but it is understood the structure and staff complement had recently been agreed. The Team Leader post should be advertised in June</p>
<p>With the exception of grant applications above a certain value, or where there are concerns over a potential overspend, grant applications up to £250,000 should be determined by conservancies on an ongoing basis.</p>		<p>FCS is of the view that this would be a direct breach of EU rules and central clearing is required to ensure that schemes are competitive. A number of options have been identified to ensure that new arrangements embrace the thinking behind this recommendation while ensuring compliance with EU legislation. Views to be sought from RPID and Solicitors and aim is to implement for July clearing.</p>

<p>Conservancies should make EIA Screening determinations without the need for consultation.</p>		<p>There are signs, according to the Conservancies, that steps are being taken to achieve this. Industry less convinced but point out that it is early days.</p>
<p>A more rigorous and focused approach is required on scoping, with the EIA focused solely on issues which raise potentially significant environmental effects.</p>		<p>As above.</p>
<p>Informing and engaging communities should happen much earlier and should be proportionate to the scale and impact of a planting scheme.</p>		<p>Evidence that some of the more progressive agents are embracing and see the benefits of this. Some agents remain sceptical and concerned that it raises unrealistic expectations. FCS National Office could do more to promote the Confor guidance (the guidance on the FCS website is not seen as being at all helpful) referenced in the Review. Industry should also actively promote.</p>
<p>Pre-application discussions are vital and the issues/actions should be recorded by agents and subsequently agreed by attendees.</p>		<p>The South Conservancy has taken the lead in circulating their approach to this important issue. Again stronger leadership from National Office and the industry in promoting this approach and ensuring it is embedded across Scotland.</p>
<p>FCS and consultees, where they are involved, must have the confidence to give clear and consistent advice on issues to be addressed.</p>		<p>Again early days but industry view was that some FCS staff are enthusiastic about the agenda, others less so and inclined to continue in their ways. FCS staff point to variability of agents.</p>
<p>Revised protocols setting out the involvement and approach of SNH, SEPA and HES should be agreed and</p>		<p>Protocols agreed and to be signed by 24/5. These protocols are not to be regarded as set in stone and should be reviewed in light of experience with any revisions made to support introduction of new arrangements. Communication and training essential to embed new</p>

<p>implemented within 3 months of the SG decision on this review.</p>		<p>practices.</p>
<p>Requests for information must be clearly justified and there should be an understanding by FCS and consultees of the cost/time implications of additional studies.</p>		<p>FCS is currently undertaking an analysis of the information/survey requirements that are being requested to support different applications. Results will feed in to guidance. Pragmatic guidance from FCS/SEPA on Groundwater Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems being developed and should be available in June.</p>
<p>Performance targets should be introduced for EIA screening determinations and grant applications.</p>		<p>These will be produced in line with the Recommendations of the Review as part of a Customer Service Charter to support introduction of new arrangements..</p>
<p>Planting targets for conservancies should be considered.</p>		<p>Limited evidence of progress. Emphasis is not on wielding a stick but understanding why planting targets are being/not being met.</p>
<p>Focused and post related programmes of training and development should be introduced.</p>		<p>There appears to be good progress on this as the Learning and Development Team is actively seeking a better understanding the needs of National Office and Conservancy staff. Key to the success of the new arrangements will be dedicated training not just for FCS staff but also stakeholders who need to be clear on what is expected of them. Industry keen to assist with training. Material also being fed through in to induction for new recruits.</p>
<p>Better publicity for the scheme – both online and in hard copy - should be introduced.</p>		<p>Again some progress with improvements to the web site and a leaflet explaining the FGS to be in place in time for the show season. Many agents have agreed to make the leaflets available on their stands. Vital that high quality online and paper copies are available in advance of the introduction of the new arrangements. There will be a strong forestry presence at the Royal Highland Show with FCS and the industry represented.</p>

Better management information should be available.		Some progress here too and this is recognised by stakeholders but some way to go, not least in picking up prospective schemes from initial discussions with Conservancy staff. Aim is to have a proportionate system based on needs not wants. It is anticipated that considerable investment in IT is required to support this objective and there are also complications deriving from the RPID system. Clear specification and agreement on information requirements should be achieved by end June.
Conservancies should hold stakeholder seminars.		Some evidence of this but needs a stronger push from National Office.
An annual report should be produced looking at performance and prospects.		A lot of enthusiasm for this and a limited report will be produced this year.
A pilot scheme with a willing local authority to identify areas for large scale planting schemes should be considered.		Some thinking has gone in to what is a complex set of issues but no local authority has been approached.
SG should discuss with FE the current approach to restocking on the National Forest Estate.		FES is producing a Restocking Strategy with an associated Action Plan to improve current practice. The Strategy has been produced with input from the forestry sector, including Confor and UKFPA. FES has committed to publication in June.
There is a strong case for increasing the thresholds where an EIA determination is required.		The Cabinet Secretary was keen to take forward this issue which was highlighted in the review but not as a specific recommendation. As a result the new EIA Regulations have now come in to force and raise the threshold for screening from 5 to 20 hectares in non sensitive areas. Training required to support not just the introduction of the new Regulations but on EIA more generally.

Key:

	Limited progress
	Some/Good progress
	Considerable progress / complete