

NON TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS (NTFP)

1. Interest in NTFPs continues to grow from a wide variety of organisations and individuals. These range from commercial collectors to community woodland groups.
2. The interest has been further stimulated recently by a series of interconnected events:
 - A well attended seminar at New Lanark in September 2002;
 - Several articles in journals such as FTA news, and Reforesting Scotland;
 - The Scottish Wild Mushroom Forum was created in 2003 to develop guidelines for harvesting and management in a process involving pickers, buyers, landowners, conservation organizations, and public land managers; The development of a dedicated website for Scottish NTFPs www.forestharvest.org.uk;
 - A research project and conference in Beaulieu in May 2006;
 - New guidelines for sustainable harvesting of bulbs and mosses;
 - The creation of the Scottish Wild Harvests Association;
 - This conference today.
3. Within Scotland, use of NTFPs may be viewed as having at least four values:
 - creating and reinforcing relationships between people and woodlands,
 - providing cultural resources,
 - promoting support for the retention of woodlands,
 - as potential sources of income.
4. Forest Research's Social, cultural and economic values of contemporary non-timber forest products project revealed some of the underlying social aspects of NTFP gathering. The report was launched at the last NTFP conference in Beaulieu in 2006.
5. A recent report commissioned by FCS estimated that the gross turnover for Scottish NTFP businesses is between £7m and £21m for 2006. This compares with £4m and £17m in 2001. The sector is thought to have grown by between 19% and 38% over this time.
6. There has also been some conflict in recent years between landowners and informal collectors of wild plants resources in Scotland. Examples include the wild mushroom industry around Muir of Ord and Conon Bridge, where large numbers of pickers scour the woods during the mushroom season to sell to the picking stations, and the wild bulb industry in the Borders where teams from East Anglia are stripping woods of wild bulbs without the landowners'

permission and selling them on as 'cultivated stock'. According to the Scottish Landowners Federation most of the landowners who have concerns of this nature are more worried about the environmental damage that such operations may be causing than about the revenue that is being taken off their land.

7. Similar issues surrounding collection of NTFPs in the New Forest have occurred, and the staff there are currently investigating ways to prevent this happening in the future, and to provide some degree of regulation to the industry.
8. Collection and exploitation of wild plants, in the UK, is governed by a wide range of legislation. This is summarised in the SG's Policy on Non-Timber Forest Products. The policy states the position and approach of FCS to NTFPs on the national forest estate to support and encourage the sustainable development of the sector. Historically, there has been confusion about the legal position of both collectors and forest owners. The rights and responsibilities of landowners and NTFP users are clarified, and a definition given of what constitutes sustainable management and use of NTFPs in Scotland. There is a strong presumption in favour of protecting Scotland's woodland resources, and NTFP gathering should be carried out in a responsible and environmentally sustainable way. The policy stresses that sustainable development of the sector is dependent on mutual respect, and well-defined relationships, between the landowner and gatherer.
9. The management and use of NTFPs from Scotland's forests presents both threats and opportunities. The new policy will raise awareness of the issues, and help all of the stakeholders to understand their roles and responsibilities better.
10. Copies of the policy will be available following the Ministerial launch this afternoon. A more detailed examination of it will be done in the 2nd Workshop
11. Finally I would like to say how indebted I am to all of those who provided input and comment to the policy as it underwent development. Some 30 individuals and organisations formed a small reference group. The time they put into supporting the work enabled me to produce what I hope you will find is a useful and workable policy that provides a supportive framework for the future development of this important sector.

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April 2009**