



Meeting Note: SFTT ILG Strategy meeting.

Edinburgh Napier University, 30th May 2018

Present: Martin Gale (Chair), Andy Leitch, George Webb, David Sulman, Jamie Farquhar, Hugh Montgomery, Ian Archer, Ian Robinson, Jason Hubert, Gerry McBride, John Paterson, Sean Smith, Steven Hutcheon, Scott Shiells

Apologies: Guy Watt, Ian Pirie, Scott Gordon, Stephen Good, David Symons, Stuart McKill, Richard Palmer, Neil Sutherland, Greg Walker, Elisabeth Stark, Julian Pace and Alistair McKinnon

Purpose of the meeting

The main focus of the meeting was to discuss and agree the text for the draft Scottish Forest and Timber Technologies economic strategy "Roots for Further Growth: Growing Scotland's wood-based bioeconomy through innovation and investment".

Outline of the draft strategy and action plan

In short, it was agreed that this is an extremely important document for the sector as it outlines where we think we can deliver economic growth for the sector and Scotland's economy over the next 12 years and beyond within the parameters set out in the strategy. It will be a key document for future reference for the sector to measure its success and to identify opportunities for public and private sector partnerships to deliver the action plan.

During discussions, a number of issues were identified from around the table:

1. The text should recognise that many of the companies in our sector have been very successful through incremental growth and market development without significant innovation. **Action: Guy Watt/Andy Leitch**
2. The text should mention future opportunities and potential importance of internationalisation in parts of the sector, such as importing fibre as feedstock and exporting expertise such BSW investment in Slovenia. **Action: Guy Watt/Andy Leitch**

3. It was agreed the strategy should include a short executive summary and a foreword from the Cab Sec. **Action: Guy Watt for exec summary and Martin Gale to discuss foreword with Cab Sec.**
4. It was also agreed that it would be beneficial to include some sort graphic that illustrates how growth will be achieved. For example, focussing on turnover associated with fibre availability. Sean Smith volunteered to work with Guy Watt and Andy Leitch on this to agree what vectors to use. Scottish Enterprise economics team may also help with this. **Action: Guy Watt/Martin Gale/Andy Leitch/Sean Smith**
5. There was a strong desire to include turnover as a measure of success as well as GVA. It was noted that if we adopted this, it would include positive engagement from our main companies in the sector to provide their turnover figures (in confidence) to enable a sector calculation. **Action: Guy Watt/Martin Gale/Andy Leitch**
6. It was agreed to mention that current and future community forest ownership has a part to play in growing the rural economy and a significant source of fibre feedstock. **Action: Guy Watt**
7. Everyone round the table agreed that their companies/organisations would contribute to the delivery plan where appropriate, e.g. populating working groups, etc. **Action: All**
8. In principal, the contents of the action plan were welcomed and agreed with the caveat that the plan will be reviewed and reported on annually.

Supplementary publication: “Scotland’s Wood-based Bio-economy – Shaping the Future”.

Andy Leitch outlined a plan to create an “aspirational” highlighting how future technologies and processes could improve our sector and help deliver bioeconomy in a similar vein to the recent Finnish Government document “Wood-Based Bioeconomy Solving Global Challenges”. The document will be a series of articles by experts in their field on specific parts of the supply chain and could be used to promote the industry to other industries, new talent and non-forest stakeholders.

The idea was agreed, but it should possibly be delayed to Spring 2019 so that it didn’t distract from the launch of the economic strategy.

Next steps and timescales for launching the Strategy & Bio-economy documents

It was agreed to plan for the small changes and executive summary to be complete in the next few weeks, accounting for holiday periods. In the meantime, with agreement of Scottish Enterprise, the draft can be forwarded to their publication editors/design team with a view to launching the refreshed strategy document in September.

Resourcing the work of the ILG and methods of operating

Breadth of Sector

Andy Leitch shared a graphic that illustrated the breadth of the Scottish forest and Timber Technologies sector everyone agreed.

Membership and Working Groups

It was agreed that the ILG was a vital element in promoting the industry to Government and those around the table were happy to play their part where and when required. There was some discussion on the future membership of the ILG and working groups(when required) with the conclusion that the Group were happy for Martin Gale and Andy Leitch to organise without too much consultation of the wider group.

Regional Groups and website.

There was discussion on the regional group meetings and the ILG website.

Firstly, it was unanimously agreed that the regional meetings were very successful which was reflected in the consistent good turnouts across the country. The events not only enable the ILG to share its strategic ambitions and hear about regional issues, the meetings are also recognised as an excellent upskilling tool for front line staff/contractors. FCS and HIE are willing to continue co-funding these events, but require some evidence of industry support. After some discussion, it was agreed that Andy Leitch would request financial support from the companies present and those who sent apologies, for approx. £500 contributions towards the co-funding of the events and towards the hosting/update of the website.

It was agreed that the website is an excellent asset for the sector and the ILG is happy to support it. Jamie Farquhar explained the site is used to promote the regional meetings and provide the presentations. The costs associated with the hosting and update of the site is currently co-funded by SE and FCS on behalf of the ILG. John Clegg Consulting on behalf of the ILG sub contracts Claire Glaister to carry out this role.

It was agreed that the content of the website will need reviewed and updated in relation to the new strategy later in the year which might require more significant expenditure. In the meantime, Andy Leitch will try and get data analytics on the use of the site.

Public Sector Support for the ILG and implementing it's action plan.

It was discussed that whilst the “Roots for Further Growth” is mainly a private sector strategy for economic growth it was agreed that public sector agencies had an important part to play in supporting the sector achieve it's ambitions where appropriate. In addition, FE Scotland activities contributes significantly to the economic output of this sector.

Andy Leitch proposed that he would bring together “a community of interest” of public sector agencies that have an interest and locus in the SFTT sector with a view to discussing and agreeing how they can support the ILG deliver their strategic ambitions. This proposal was welcomed by all.

Update on current work programme

A progress report on current work was sent out with the agenda for the meeting. In addition, Andy Leitch gave a short presentation on current activities, if anyone wishes a copy please contact him.

AOB

Sean Smith announced that ENU were launching a new degree in Timber Architectural Technology. David Sulman welcomed this and stated that we should focus more on engaging with schools and colleges. Andy Leitch asked David to bring this up at the next sector skills group meeting.