

**Minutes of the  
UK Agroforestry Forum  
Annual General Meeting  
on 24 June 2003  
at SAC, Crianlarich, Perthshire, Scotland**



**Present:** Francesco Agostini, Arnold Beaton, Paul Burgess (Secretary), John Blyth, David Corry, Maeve Dardis, Lynton Incoll (Chairman), Simon Jacyna, Emyr Jones, Gerry Lawson (Vice-Chairman), Mark Malins, Peter McEvoy, David Pilbeam, Fiona Reynolds, Ian Seymour, Roger Sheldrick, Ian Short, Fergus Sinclair (Editor of Newsletter), and Tony Waterhouse.

**Apologies:** Gerry Hoppé (Treasurer), Paul Jarvis, Jim McAdam, Steve Newman, Patrick Norris, Karen Russell, Alan Sibbald, and Zewge Teklehaimanot.  
The meeting started at 9.20 pm.

**1) Minutes of the 2002 Annual General Meeting**

The minutes of the AGM of 17 June 2002 were accepted as being a true record of the meeting (proposer, Roger Sheldrick; seconder, Fergus Sinclair).

**2) Matters arising on the minutes**

*11.2 Stoneleigh demonstration*

Lynton Incoll reported that, regrettably, the silvoarable demonstration site that was established by Arnold Beaton at the National Agricultural Centre (NAC) at Stoneleigh was to be removed as part of a major reorganisation; it was in the path of a new entrance road. Arnold Beaton noted that although the demonstration now looked impressive, his experience when manning the demonstration was that public interest in the silvoarable system had been minimal. However, Jimmy Birchmore of RAC was keen to keep the Forum involved in the environmental aspects of the activities at the show ground and Zewge Teklehaimanot and Lynton Incoll would be available to represent the Forum in any discussions on future developments that might include agroforestry.

**Action: Zewge Teklehaimanot and Lynton Incoll**

Fergus Sinclair reported that he had been asked to advise about a proposed agroforestry demonstration at the Eden Project in Cornwall. Any such demonstration would need to include a historic perspective. The members supported a proposal that Fergus should reply on behalf of the Forum. Arnold Beaton said that he was visiting the Eden Project in the autumn, and that he would like to be kept informed of progress. Roger Sheldrick, who lives in Devon, also asked to be kept informed of progress.

**Action: Fergus Sinclair**

*15. Forum website*

Paul Burgess had contacted Alan Sibbald (Web-master) regarding the future of the domain name agroforestry.ac.uk, which was first registered by the MLURI on our behalf on 2 April 2001. It appears that as long as the domain name remains within the JANET network, there will be no charge for the site. Alan Sibbald has kindly agreed to act as the Web-master for another year.

*Postscript: Alan Sibbald has subsequently reported that from 25 January to 22 June 2003 there were 8672 visits to the top level of the website and 243 visits to the download area.*

**3) Chairman's report**

Lynton Incoll made the following Chairman's report.

I propose to review the last 12 months of activity of the Forum by examining the 'plusses' and 'minuses' of the year.

As a considerable 'plus' the work of the UK National Silvopastoral Network culminated in the launch of the "Silvopastoral Agroforestry Toolbox" on the WWW in November 2002. Since launch there have been 120 requests for a copy of the CD-ROM including 30 from farmers when Alan Sibbald presented a poster at the Bronydd Mawr Open Day this June and 16 from the Scottish Woodlands Trust. Farmers, environmentalists and researchers accounted for 70% of the requests with disappointingly small proportions from educationalists, advisors and foresters (see Forum web site for details). The Forum web site remains an effective means for communication between the Executive Committee and members and recent months have seen an increasing number of visits to the site (see Forum web site for details).

On the other hand a 'minus' has been the decreasing interest of members in the activities of the Forum and, worryingly, decreasing attendance of members at our annual scientific meetings. I have analysed the affiliations, interests and attendance of members over the last 6 years (see Forum web site for the complete analysis) and conclude that there are about 21 members (4 of whom are retired) out of a membership list of 197 names, who are likely to be active members in the future. Attendances have fallen from 42 members at Leeds two years ago to 19 members at this meeting. Your Executive Committee, recognising that we cannot go on this way, have resolved that we must act now. Accepting that, despite successes like the Toolbox, agroforestry has a poor image in the UK, the Executive Committee brings to this meeting a proposal to change the name of the Forum to reflect better the changing emphasis in research and its application to the growing of trees on farms. There is no other association of people in the UK that provides a regular annual Forum for reporting research and technology transfer on trees on farms at the same time providing an opportunity to see current research projects or current practice. The programmes of recent meetings have reflected the changing emphasis. We need you as members to help us to recruit new members from new emerging fields of research, development and technology transfer.

The Forum was already aware of an approaching crisis over falling active membership in 2001 and the lack of a proper financial structure to support the activities of the Forum. To this end the 2002 AGM charged the Executive Committee with investigating the possibility of the Forum becoming a charity and Steve Newman has prepared a proposal on behalf of the Committee for consideration by this meeting.

At its meeting in February, the Forum Executive Committee recognised that the cessation of publication of *Agroforestry Forum* had left a vacuum in communications between members. They felt that members missed being able to read topical news on agroforestry in a hand-held copy. Consequently Fergus Sinclair offered to look into the publication of a several-A4-pages newsletter for distribution to members and to bring a proposal for such a publication to this meeting.

Progress with forming a European Federation of agroforestry research groups similar to the Forum had faltered because of no progress being made by the French group, the strongest and most research-active group in Europe, in forming a "Forum"-type French group. This may develop in the coming year and we are heartened to hear of the enthusiasm of the French Farmers' Union for policy changes which will favour agroforestry.

The status of agroforestry in Scotland and Northern Ireland gives cause for concern, especially when it is remembered that members there have led the Forum with distinction. The complete failure of the Scottish Executive's Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme to include provisions for agroforestry in the new tree planting scheme for Scotland is an insult to the pioneering work of Alan Sibbald and MLURI, a victory for the luddites of Scottish academia and Scottish professional foresters and a real setback for agroforestry. As well the loss of the silvoarable demonstration site at Stoneleigh, the possible loss of the silvoarable site at Henfaes and uncertainty about the future of the silvoarable experiments at Leeds and RAC are further disappointing setbacks for the Forum.

In October 2000, the Forum Executive Committee resolved to prepare a set of strategy papers, one for each 'State of the union', that would be to hand whenever the Forum was asked to comment on government reviews and consultations. Regrettably progress has been very slow and I do not detect any real will among the responsible members to get them completed. The papers in draft form range from statements of policy instruments and implementation with no strategy to strategy without policy instruments or policy implementation. Consequently we were caught out when the Forestry Commission asked specific questions about agroforestry and we had no policy on what we would wish to see in the form of subsidies. We cannot afford to be making our policy on the hoof. Progress with the preparation by Executive members of a Forum policy on subsidies for agroforestry remains disappointing.

The previous year was a busy one for government seeking views on its strategy and policy. This year saw only one consultation. We submitted a response to the DEFRA/Forestry Commission Review of Woodland Creation in England in August 2002. Paul Burgess will report later on the disappointing subsequent response of DEFRA and the Forestry Commission to the results of their consultation. Here is an example where having a policy to hand on subsidies might have been useful.

So I end what you will realise is a very pessimistic report. The minuses are such that Paul Burgess, as secretary, and I are seriously considering that the 2004 meeting of the Forum may well be the time to call it a day for the Forum unless you, the members, take radical action.

**4) Matters arising from the Chairman's report**

Fergus Sinclair, on behalf of the members, thanked Lynton for his report and for 'shepherding' the Forum during the past year. Fergus Sinclair noted that the Forum should be proud of many things that it had achieved, and there were exciting developments in Wales. Arnold Beaton noted that the Poplar Forum was also in state of flux due to the problems with the susceptibility of currently recommended poplar cultivars to a new race of rust, and the proposed ending of its funding from the Forestry Commission. Emyr Jones noted the importance of being proactive in the recruitment of new members, and he welcomed the representation at the SAC meeting of delegates from the Environment Agency and FWAG.

**5) Secretary's report**

Paul Burgess reported that he had notified Forum members by email about an invitation to the 'First Agroforestry Congress' from 27 June to 2 July 2004 in Florida. See <http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/WCA/>

Fergus Sinclair reported that he had been asked to chair two sessions. Abstracts need to be submitted by the end of September, and Paul Burgess was asked to send a reminder to members. Fergus Sinclair thanked Paul on behalf of the Forum for his work as Secretary during the past year.

**Action: Paul Burgess**

**6) Treasurer's report**

Paul Burgess reported that he had received no report from the Treasurer. He understood that the surplus of £810 from the Agroforestry Forum meeting at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester was still with Barbara Hart.

*Postscript: Gerry Hoppé has subsequently confirmed that no progress had been made with opening a bank account, and that the money is still with Barbara Hart.*

**7) Election of the committee**

No election was required as each member of the committee was elected in 2002, with the exception of Tom Dutson who was elected in 2001.

**8) Change in the name and stated objectives of the Forum**

Lynton Incoll initiated a discussion on a proposal from the Forum's Executive Committee that the Forum's name be changed from the 'UK Agroforestry Forum' to the 'Farming with Trees Forum' or the 'Farm Tree Forum' (a supporting paper had been distributed to 'member' delegates by email

before the meeting). Ian Seymour noted that his perception of 'agroforestry' was a wide-ranging one including a range of farming systems, which included trees. However Roger Sheldrick, Gerry Lawson, Fergus Sinclair and Ian Short noted that the 'public' perception of 'agroforestry' was limited (i.e. widely-and-regularly spaced trees in pasture, alley cropping or 'aggravating forestry'), and that the name agroforestry was a 'turn-off' in the UK.

Arnold Beaton and Mark Malins questioned whether the name 'Farming with Trees Forum' would have similar problems to 'Agroforestry Forum', as they were not terms that people naturally connected with. By contrast Emyr Jones, Mark Malins, Simon Jacyna, and Tony Waterhouse suggested that 'Farm Woodlands' was a much more recognisable name, which could also be defined to include short rotation coppice, widely spaced trees with crops and pasture, and hedgerow trees. Paul Burgess noted that, when seeking a title for a conference held in 1999, which included short rotation coppice and alley cropping, the title selected was 'Farm Woodlands for the Future'.

After substantial discussion, Lynton Incoll firstly proposed that the name should be changed. This was agreed unanimously. Lynton then proposed that the title 'UK' should be dropped from the organisation's name. Formally proposed by Fergus Sinclair and seconded by Tony Waterhouse, the motion was passed by 12 people, with no votes against. Lynton then proposed that the title 'Farm Woodland Forum' should be the new title of the organisation. This motion was formally proposed by Fergus Sinclair and seconded by Gerry Lawson. The resolution was agreed by 16 members with one abstention. **The new name of 'Farm Woodland Forum' was therefore adopted.**

It was agreed that the Executive Committee's proposed change in the objectives should be deferred until later in the meeting (see item 11).

#### 9) **European collaboration**

Gerry Lawson, acting on behalf of the Executive Committee, reported on initiatives to foster European collaboration, in particular on the opportunities that exist to form a European Economic Interest Group (EEIG). Such a group is a form of association between companies, legal bodies, or individuals from different EU countries. See:

<http://ws5.companieshouse.gov.uk/notes/gb04.html>

However he felt that he could not yet recommend an initiative to form an EEIG for agroforestry.

He noted that it was likely that a French agroforestry group might be set up over the coming year. Fergus Sinclair felt that it was important that a European Network for agroforestry be developed. Gerry Lawson proposed that the Forum should proceed to apply for funding, with the French group and others, for a European Network related to agroforestry within the EU-sponsored Marie Curie programme, which seeks to provide opportunities for young researchers to spend time in European research laboratories. Gerry said that he would follow up his proposal.

**Action: Gerry Lawson**

#### 10) **Charitable Status**

At the last AGM, the Executive Committee was charged with investigating the advantages and disadvantages of proceeding with an application for charitable status as a charitable trust. A proposal had been prepared for the Executive Committee by Steve Newman, which had been circulated by email beforehand to attendees of the meeting. It had been received too late to distribute for discussion by the whole membership. Steve had informed the chairman that he already had one non-member volunteer for trustee and had a second suitable non-member in mind. Several members with experience of charities and applications for charitable status questioned the appropriateness of the charitable trust governance model (trust deed) with trustees from outside the organisation and no significant role for members and suggested that an unincorporated association with a constitution seemed more appropriate to the Forum. A reading of the relevant Charities Commission literature to the meeting suggested that this might be the case.

At this point it was judged inappropriate to discuss further the details of Steve Newman's proposal for the formation of a charitable trust and Fergus Sinclair proposed that Lynton should be asked to investigate the various governance models, and that he should bring forward a revised proposal for charitable status to the next Executive Committee Meeting. The proposal was accepted. The chairman noted that if the Forum wished to become a charity on the unincorporated association model then its new constitution must be adopted at a formal meeting of the proposed trustees and the general membership. Unless a special general meeting is called, this would be at the 2004 AGM.

**Action: Lynton Incoll**

**11) Objectives of the Forum**

The proposal, originally item 8 on the agenda, to change the objectives of the Forum to 'to support best practice and opportunities related to farming with trees' was raised again. Tony Waterhouse noted that any new statement of the objectives should now include a clear definition of what the group understood by farm woodlands. The chairman noted that the governance documents of the Charities Commission require succinct statements of objectives but these are followed by a detailed description of related activities. It became obvious that any reformulation of the objectives would require some time. It was therefore agreed that, for the present, the current objectives of the Forum, which include specific references to agroforestry, should remain in place.

**12) Consultations**

Paul Burgess reported that the Forum had submitted a ten-page response to the FC/Forestry Commission Review of Woodland Creation in England on 1 August 2002. In April 2003, the response of the independent Steering Group to agroforestry (page 63) had been positive including the following:

'The FWPS scheme rules currently prohibit agroforestry. The government's view has been that it would be administratively very difficult and more costly to adjust agricultural income forgone on a case by case basis to take account of new or continuing, but perhaps variable, sources of agricultural income from land converted to woodland. This view was challenged by a number of public consultation exercise respondents.....The Steering Group agrees in principle that agroforestry should be allowed under the FWPS or its successor. In particular we noted the research which indicates that temperate agroforestry systems are beneficial in terms of carbon sequestration when compared with other land uses.....'

The recommendation of the Steering Group was: 'Agroforestry should be allowed in woodlands created with WGS/FWPS support, provided that the agroforestry systems selected provides for effective woodland establishments, that it complies with the Code of Good Farming Practice and that environmental sensitivities are observed. Any mechanism for adjusting forgone payments to reflect the income potential for agroforestry should balance fairness with the need for administrative simplicity'.

The response from the Forestry Commission and DEFRA was negative and included the following: 'DEFRA have been looking closely at possible approaches to allowing agroforestry to be included within FWPS. However they could not find a simple mechanism, and that any mechanism which avoided these problems would be prohibitively complicated to administer. Although we are not against the principle of encouraging appropriate agroforestry, it is open to question whether the FWPS is the right mechanism for achieving this...'

Fergus Sinclair suggested that there was a need to discuss this negative response with institutions at a high level; it arose because of the separate agendas of DEFRA and the Forestry Commission.

**Action: Paul Burgess**

**13) Strategy Papers**

Lynton Incoll gave an overview of the progress with producing strategy documents in relation to agroforestry for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Fergus Sinclair noted that they were hoping to publish a Welsh agroforestry strategy, based on five case studies, in a journal, such as Landscape Ecology. It was agreed that once the strategy documents were in a similar format, then with the agreement of the authors, they should be placed on the Forum website

**Action: Steve Newman, Paul Burgess, Zewge Teklehaimanot, Fergus Sinclair, Alan Sibbald, Tony Waterhouse, Gerry Hoppé, Jim McAdam**

**14) Newsletter**

Fergus Sinclair described how the previous newsletters had been successful, but that there was now a need for a new type of newsletter. He proposed a short feature-based newsletter, comprising four sides of A4 paper (An A3 sheet folded) which would be sent to members every six months. He proposed a name such as 'Branching Out' or 'Trees Unlimited'. The typical cost would be about £470 for one issue to a membership of 180. It was suggested that some support could be provided from the Forum's funds. Tony Waterhouse noted that it would be useful to ensure that the newsletter went to the Forestry Commission and DEFRA.

**Action: Fergus Sinclair**

**15) Annual Meeting 2004**

Lynton Incoll reported that Tom Dutson was still willing to host the next Forum meeting 'Trees and Upland Farming' from 21-23 or 22-24 June 2004 at the National School of Forestry, Newton Rigg, Penrith, Cumbria. He read out Tom's proposals for possible field visits and for topics for invited speakers. The members felt that the continuity of the focus on uplands and grazing was good, but that the scientific programme was perhaps rather ambitious so Tom should work with the Executive Committee to focus and develop the programme.

**Action: Tom Dutson**

**15) Future Forum Meetings**

Fergus Sinclair offered to host the 2005 meeting in Pontbren area in mid-Wales. The members felt that this would be a good venue, and they welcomed the invitation.

**16) Any other business**

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12.15 am.

P.J. Burgess

27 June 2003/4 August 2003