

**Minutes of the
Farm Woodland Forum
Annual General Meeting
on 30 June 2005
at Gregynog Conference Centre,
near Newtown, Powys**



Present: Olivia Agbenyega, Paul Burgess (Secretary), David Corry, Tom Dutson, Gerry Lawson (Vice-Chairman), Tim Pagella, David Pilbeam, Peter Quelch, Roger Sheldrick, Ian Short, Fergus Sinclair, Mike Strachan, Lucy Sumsion, and Tony Waterhouse (Treasurer).

Apologies: Arnold Beaton, John Holland, Lynton Incoll (Chairman), Jim McAdam, Steve Newman, Alan Sibbald, and Zewge Teklehaimanot.

The meeting started at 8.05 pm. In the absence of Lynton Incoll, Gerry Lawson chaired the meeting.

1) Minutes of the 2004 Annual General Meeting at Newton Rigg

The minutes of the AGM of 23 June 2004 were accepted as being a true record of the meeting.

2) Minutes of the Special General Meeting at Edinburgh

The minutes of the Special General Meeting on 9 December 2004 were accepted as being a true record of the meeting. This meeting agreed that the objects of the Forum were “to advance public education in all aspects of the science and practice of farming with trees in the United Kingdom and elsewhere”.

3) Matters arising on the minutes

Items arising from the minutes were to be raised as agenda items later in the meeting.

4) Chairman’s report

In Lynton Incoll’s absence, Gerry Lawson drew the meeting’s attention to the Chairman’s written report. Gerry Lawson thanked Lynton Incoll for his work regarding the new charitable status of the Farm Woodland Forum, and verbally described some of the key elements of the report. He drew attention to the fact that Lynton Incoll was planning to step down as Chairman in June 2006. He also reported that the Executive Committee had decided yesterday that JISCmail discussions would continue to be circulated to the Farm Woodland Forum contact list rather than just to paid-up members; the latter had been planned to take effect after this meeting. He also noted that the current meeting on the “Ecosystem Services of Trees” had been excellent, and that various responses had been made to consultations. The transcript of the Chairman’s report, entitled “The Farm Woodland Forum: the Future?” which was distributed to each delegate, is presented below:

Chairman’s report: 2005

The Farm Woodland Forum: the future?

“Over the last several years the Forum’s Executive Committee has been concentrating on giving the Forum a firm basis for its continuance in the face of significant external changes in the support of agroforestry whether via research, technology transfer or subsidies to practitioners. The culmination of this activity has been the adoption of a new constitution at the last AGM on the twenty-third day of June 2004 and the approval in January 2005 by the Charity Commission of our application to register as a charity in the form of an unincorporated association. The broadening of the remit of the Forum had already been achieved in June 2003 with the change in name from the UK Agroforestry Forum to the Farm Woodland Forum.

At the request of the Charity Commission, we altered our object from "to facilitate generation and exchange of information that will support best practice in, and improve opportunities for, farming with trees" to "to advance public education in all aspects of the science and practice of farming with trees in the United Kingdom and elsewhere" at a Special General Meeting in December 2004.

This objective will be achieved by the Forum acting "as a collegiate forum (acting through the whole group, sub-groups or individuals). It will encourage, develop, sponsor and disseminate relevant work on theory and practice of farming with trees, research, awards and grants and other sources of support, training and education, and technology transfer; through the internet, annual scientific meetings, presentations at agricultural shows and field days, developing documents on policy and policy instruments, fund raising; and maintaining a register of demonstration plots."

With the adoption of the new constitution came the election/re-election of the whole Executive Committee; that Executive Committee has to ensure that the objective is achieved. Subsequent to the adoption of the new constitution, the Forum authorised the Executive Committee to levy a subscription on members as a condition of membership. The recruitment brochure and the web site of the Forum advise browsers that the Forum offers the following benefits of membership:

- The opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, the Forum's meetings.
- Membership of a long-established and forward looking learned group.
- Membership of a JISCMail internet group for communication of information and discussion of technical and scientific matters pertaining to farming with trees.
- Travel awards for attendance at international meetings on farming with trees.
- Travel awards to postgraduate students to attend Forum scientific meetings.
- Access to a pool of experts on theory and practice of farming with trees.

I have been on the Executive Committee for six years, three as Vice-chairman and three as Chairman. I had originally agreed to be a stop-gap chairman for one year. I propose to resign in June 2006. It is appropriate therefore to present my vision of how the Forum might continue successfully.

Recruiting and sustaining membership

The recent establishment of a mailing list for dissemination and discussion and the canvass for subscribing members has shown that the 'contacts mailing list' was sadly out-of-date with many retired people on it who have not been to a meeting since I joined in 1991 and were very unlikely to support the Forum in person or in practice in the future. The positive response to the canvass, as the secretary will show, has been pleasing and better than I had pessimistically predicted.

However we cannot afford to be complacent. Recruitment in the past has been largely passive i.e. members, who were really just called contacts, were added to the list if they attended a meeting of the Forum. We cannot afford to rely only on this method; we must recruit actively. My guess is that passive recruiting might just offset the attrition of members through change in direction of their work, retirement, illness etc.

We need to formulate a strategy for increasing the membership and then putting it into action. This will require imagination as we need to think about the subject areas we cover and think about what kind of people we need to have representing those areas, whether they be researchers, educators, extension officers, policy makers, or administrators. How many SRC people do we have as members (one?), how many riparian experts? Indeed what is the personnel base of workers on riparian tree issues? The existence of a recruiting leaflet is a first and welcome step in the right direction. But we do need imagination.

Organising the annual meeting

I cannot emphasize enough that we are the only group which has a tradition of organising annual open meetings on farming with trees. The present crisis management approach to planning of our scientific programme is less than satisfactory. We have kept the meetings going through the generosity of members e.g. Tony organising the 2003 meeting in the face of a deferment. The Forum almost collapsed in 1999 with the East Malling meeting through its poor support of the volunteer organiser.

The theme of meetings have been largely the choice of the local organiser with the almost rubber stamping of an executive committee grateful that something is being organised at all. In future we should be thinking about what topics might be of interest to members and actually canvassing members for ideas of what they think might be topical meetings in the near future. Though recent meetings have been very successful for those attending, they have only been of interest to a small proportion of our members and attendances are about half of what they were at the high attendance of earlier meetings e.g. at the 2001 meeting at Leeds.

The location of a meeting also influences members. We should be careful to ensure that meetings in remoter places have such a good programme that members attend despite the location. The planned meeting in Northern Ireland in 2007 is an example.

Fund raising

Charitable status will bring with it the obligation to have financial plan that will bring in a gross income of at least £1000 per annum. Our treasurer, Tony Waterhouse has prepared a financial plan that was submitted with the application to register.

Our annual turnover should involve expenditure on the following

- Travel expenses incurred by Executive Committee members in travelling to two committee meetings per year (unless the member's organisation is able to support the expenditure).
- Expenditure incurred in printing and disseminating publications e.g. a newsletter, the recruiting leaflet.
- Accommodation, subsistence and travel expenses (cheapest method of travel) of guest/invited speakers who are non-members, to present papers to the annual scientific meeting (unless the speaker's organisation is able and willing to support the expenditure). The speaker being supported will be someone who would be unlikely to attend the meeting unless invited, so members would not normally be supported.
- Travel awards.

Subscriptions alone will not bring in £1000 per annum until we have 100 subscribing members. But the cost of the above activities will exceed £1000, so we cannot rely on subscriptions to raise funds. We must start fund raising right now. There is a sub-committee of the Executive Committee that was formed in December 2003 whose duty was to look after this area of activity. In future it will be under the leadership of the treasurer.

The past laissez faire policy of management of financial income and expenditure has to stop. The requirement of the Charity Commission for annual accounts, and for evidence of meeting the target for gross income, mean that all income and expenditure must pass through the hands of the treasurer. The treasurer will act with the organiser of the annual meeting to ensure that this takes place. The registration as a charity means that budget planning will have to be supervised by the treasurer and it will no longer be optional.

Publishing

Newsletter: With the cessation of publication of the Agroforestry Forum Newsletter some years ago, the Forum no longer had a hardcopy method of communication of news and topical

information. At the Executive Committee meeting in Birmingham 18 months ago there was pressure to reinstate a newsletter. The committee is resolved to act positively on this matter as the newsletter is now stated to be one of the benefits of membership. Funds have been voted and plans are in hand to produce a hardcopy newsletter in the near future.

Recruitment brochure: This brochure, our one publication in 2004, was designed under the leadership of the webmaster. It should help greatly any campaign to actively increase membership.

Communicating

Communications can be divided into the Farm Woodland Forum website, the JISCmail mailing list, and the planned Newsletter (see above).

Farm Woodland Forum website: the web site presents the Forum's face to the outside world. As well as describing past, present and future activities, it invites people to join. The web site is managed by the webmaster via a server at the Macaulay Institute but it could be managed through any academic website without any extra cost as long as the <.ac.uk> domain name is retained. The webmaster and the Macaulay Institute provide an excellent service.

JISCmail mailing list: this mailing list provides the first and best method of communication of Forum matters to the membership. It also provides a forum for communication between all members whether it be discussion of issues, asking for help, publicising events of interest to members that the Executive Committee are not aware of. It is managed by the list owners, presently the Chairman and Secretary. They subscribe and delete members, moderate messages and manage the file archive. The mailing list acts as a warning when members retire or change jobs or locations and messages to them become undeliverable. As list owner, I always telephone the last known address as held in the membership database to trace members whose addresses generate errors. This was not previously done and there were many dud email addresses in the mailing list.

Commenting on National and European Policy

On national strategy and policy: official actions by the Forum in the national arena generally take place reactively i.e. in reaction to consultations set up by government e.g. by DEFRA and by the Forestry Commission. It is gratifying to see that we are now on the mailing lists of such organisations for requests to respond. We have a good record for responding. The Research Councils don't consult in our area, probably because our area of interest does not include gene bending (BBSRC) or climate change (NERC).

However we are rarely proactive. Perhaps the meeting at Henfaes organised by Fergus Sinclair in 1998, and the initiatives of Jim McAdam and Richard Crowe on technology transfer and of Alan Sibbald with the Agroforestry Toolbox might be considered proactive though they are more concerned with technology transfer than with strategy and policy. The questions arise of whether we should be more proactive and in what areas.

On European policy: official actions of the Forum in the area of European policy have been limited, maybe because opportunities to be reactive have been limited. They have also been hampered, until recently, by anti-agroforestry stances taken by the official UK state mouthpiece to the European Union viz. DEFRA.

To conclude: this is a clarion call. It poses questions to you and asks you to think of answers. It is not intended to be critical of your or the Forum's support to me. We do need to capitalise on the turn around in the Forum's fortunes that we have achieved so far.

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

Fergus Sinclair suggested that the Forum could meet biennially, with alternate meetings at a European level, for example could the 2008 meeting be held in France? The general feeling of those present was that it was appropriate for there to be an annual meeting in the UK, and that a European meeting should be an additional event.

Gerry Lawson thanked Lynton, on behalf of the membership, for his report and the large amount of work that he had undertaken as Chairman during the past year.

6) **Secretary's report**

Paul Burgess reported that there were currently 51 members of Farm Woodland Forum, of whom 50 were in e-mail contact. As of 26 June 2005, there were 174 recipients of the Forum's JISMail correspondence; compared to 179 in June 2004. On the basis of a classification of e-mail suffixes, these included academic (58), governmental (38), company (34), private (25), and non-UK addresses (19). During the past year there were a total of 93 approved JISMail messages with a wide range of topics covered.

There was a vote of thanks for the work undertaken by the Secretary.

7) **Treasurer's report**

Tony Waterhouse presented the treasurer's report for 2004/05. A first full year of accounts was produced from October 2003 to October 2004 to provide a full year of financial figures for the Charity Commission application. A six-month set of accounts had been produced from October 2004 until 30 June 2005 to coincide with the AGM. Both sets of accounts had been audited and hereafter it was proposed to maintain an annual set of accounts closing in June to coincide with the AGM. The accounts for the two individual periods were available for viewing, but the table circulated combined the figures for the 18-month period.

Statement of the account from October 2003 to 30 June 2005

	Opening balance	£0.00
Income	Meeting surplus from previous years	£809.88
	Subscriptions	£443.00
	Bank interest	£13.63
	Miscellaneous	£1.25
	Total	£1267.76
Expenditure	Travel expenses	£14.35
	Printing	£67.88
	Postage (subscription mailshot)	£57.85
	Stationary	£0.87
	Total	£140.95
	Closing balance	£1126.81

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Fergus Sinclair, seconded by Roger Sheldrick and carried by the meeting.

8) **Report from the Fund-raising Sub-committee**

Tony Waterhouse reported on the recent meeting on the fund-raising committee. A key point was that each member with a personal subscription would be asked to sign a Gift Aid form to allow the Treasurer to reclaim tax.

Action: Tony Waterhouse

It was also suggested that the Executive Committee would look at the possibility of Corporate membership. It was agreed that if the Executive Committee thought that such an idea was appropriate and workable, then a corporate membership would be created.

Action: Executive Committee

9) Report from Publicity and Publication Working Group

Gerry Lawson reported on the recent meeting of the Publicity and Publications Working Group.

Newsletter: it was agreed that a newsletter would be made available towards the end of July. Lucy Sumsion had agreed to collate the articles for the Newsletter. **Action: Lucy Sumsion**

Conference proceedings: it was agreed that Fergus Sinclair would arrange for the abstracts for the 2005 meeting to be placed on the Farm Woodland Forum website. With the agreement of the authors, a pdf version of the various presentations would also be placed on the website:

Action: Fergus Sinclair

Website: Gerry Lawson praised the work of Alan Sibbald in maintaining and improving the Farm Woodland Forum website. It was proposed that a “bank” of images should be established on the website. Roger Sheldrick noted that it would be useful to advertise the presence of the sites of Silvopastoral Network Sites as a national experimental resource. It was also proposed that separate pages could be established for each national region: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Action: Alan Sibbald

Publicity: Gerry Lawson proposed that the Farm Woodland Forum should have named regional and country contacts. For instance Ian Short could act as the Forum’s contact in the Republic of Ireland.

Action: Gerry Lawson

10) Election of the committee

Mike Strachan had been nominated for a vacant position on the Executive Committee. This nomination had been proposed in writing by Lucy Sumsion and seconded by John Holland. The meeting agreed unanimously to elect Mike Strachan to the Executive Committee.

The current composition of the Executive Committee is therefore:

Lynton Incoll (Chairman)	Tom Dutson
Gerry Lawson (Vice-Chairman)	John Holland
Paul Burgess (Secretary)	Mike Strachan
Tony Waterhouse (Treasurer)	Lucy Sumsion
	Zewge Teklehaimanot

By invitation: Steve Newman, Jim McAdam, Alan Sibbald

11) 2006 Forum Meeting, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire

Gerry Lawson reported that Steve Newman was organising the 2006 meeting (Monday 26 June to Wednesday 28 June 2006) entitled “Trees and Rural Futures in the UK”. This would be organised for the Farm Woodland Forum by Biodiversity International and the Northmoor Trust. Gerry Lawson noted that it would be good if the meeting could include a “realising value” or a “high value” theme with a focus on actual markets for tree products.

Action: Steve Newman

12) 2007 Forum Meeting, Northern Ireland

Gerry Lawson reported that Jim McAdam was organising the 2007 Forum Meeting in Northern Ireland. The proposed topic was “Trees for Farm and Community – Post De-coupling”. The proposed dates were Tuesday 26 June to Thursday 28 June 2007. **Action: Jim McAdam**

13) 2008 Forum Meetings

Gerry Lawson agreed to look at the possibility of organising a 2008 meeting with a French collaborator. Mike Strachan also agreed to look at the possibility of 2008 meeting based in the Perth area of Scotland.

Action: Gerry Lawson, Mike Strachan

14) Any other business

It was requested that members should lobby their respective government departments regarding the new rural development regulations, so that new agri-environment payments would be tree-based.

Paul Burgess thanked Fergus Sinclair for his organisation of the 2005 Farm Woodland Forum Meeting. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

P.J. Burgess

Secretary

26 July 2005

Modified 19 December 2005