

# Wild Harvests of Scotland: building a sustainable forest culture

15th - 16th April 2009, Dunkeld & Birnam, Perthshire

## *Two days of events to celebrate and develop Scotland's wild and woodland products sector*

These two days in April 2009 saw a meeting to form a new trade association; a networking event bringing together orchards activists and organisations from around Scotland; and a one-day Wild Harvests conference.

The conference saw the launch of a new non-timber forest products policy document for Scotland, and a report on the latest sustainable harvesting research, and also brought together insights from the Cittaslow movement and European network marketing research.

The events were organised by  
Forestry Commission Scotland and Reforesting Scotland,  
with support from Perth & Kinross Cittaslow and Scottish Enterprise

Report compiled by Emma Chapman of Reforesting Scotland

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## Meeting of Scottish Wild Harvests businesses, Hilton Dunkeld House, 1-5pm 15 April 2009

On 15 April 2009, Reforesting Scotland,<sup>1</sup> funded by Forestry Commission Scotland, hosted a meeting to invite Scottish wild harvests businesses to form a trade association. This was part of the work of Reforesting Scotland's Wild Harvests Sector Support project, and followed on most recently from two meetings for businesses in November 2008.<sup>2</sup>

After introductions, a representative of ASHS (the Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers) spoke about the process and advantages of forming a trade association.

Prior to the meeting the project officer, with the help of the Wild Harvests steering group, had drawn up and circulated a draft constitution and an accompanying document of questions. Circulation was via email lists, including the scottishwildharvests egroup.<sup>3</sup> Delegates at the meeting considered the draft constitution and the questions presented, and the project officer relayed feedback from potential members who were not able to attend the meeting.

By the end of the day delegates had agreed to form a founding committee, had appointed chair, treasurer and secretary, and had agreed on the name "Scottish Wild Harvests Association".

The committee released this statement at the Wild Harvests of Scotland Conference the following day:

*"We are pleased to announce the formation of the SWHA. We are now looking for individuals and businesses to show an interest in future membership, with a launch planned at The Big Tent in July. We would ask all individuals and businesses with an interest in wild harvesting and Scottish natural products to get involved at this stage to contribute to creating the organisation that these industries need to flourish."*

To contact the Scottish Wild Harvests Association phone the secretary, Fiona Guest on 01356 626425, or email [secretary@scottishwildharvests.org.uk](mailto:secretary@scottishwildharvests.org.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Reforesting Scotland is a membership, campaigning and project-based charity: [www.reforestingscotland.org](http://www.reforestingscotland.org)

<sup>2</sup> 'Ways forward for Scotland's Wild Harvests businesses' [http://www.forestharvest.org.uk/pdfs/WildHarvests\\_nov08\\_meetings\\_report.pdf](http://www.forestharvest.org.uk/pdfs/WildHarvests_nov08_meetings_report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> scottishwildharvests egroup: <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/scottishwildharvests/>



# Orchards of Scotland evening, Birnam Arts & Conference Centre, 7-9pm 15 April 2009

On 15 April 2009, orchards enthusiasts, orchards groups, and orchard fruit users from around Scotland were invited to come to an evening of celebration and networking.

## ***A Slow Food meal***

Some attendees convened beforehand in the Centre's cafe for a slow food meal – locally sourced as much as possible, and with soft drinks from Perthshire's Cairn o' Mohr Winery (including Carse of Gowrie apple juice) and from Alloa-based Ella Drinks.

## ***Main speakers***

We had three guest speakers to set the scene:

**Crispin Hayes of CW Hayes Associates** opened the evening, with a presentation packed with beautiful orchards images and in-depth research – he has conducted surveys of the Carse of Gowrie and of the fruit town of Newburgh in Fife for Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust and Newburgh Orchard Group. He took us through the story of the orchards, from their monastic roots to the reduced and threatened remnants which are only now coming to be treasured and valued again. He told us about their place in the economies of former times, their decline, their importance for wildlife, and the fascinating range of varieties still remaining. He showed images of what has been lost – and of what still remains to be reclaimed and shared.

**Pam Rodway of Soil Association Scotland** gave an eloquent speech about the need to make more use of apples, to appreciate their cultural value (brought to us from the same part of the world that gave us domestic horses!), and to rediscover the traditions of preparing and eating them. She reminded us of the scent of apples, the pleasure of sharing them, the cooking skills required to make the best of them – so much culture that has been lost and that our coming generations need to relearn.

**Douglas Ritchie of Cittaslow Perth** is passionately and locally involved in the Carse of Gowrie orchards – and professionally involved in the tourism industry, which, he told us, comprises 10% of the entire world economy. He drew on examples such as Herefordshire, which celebrates its apple heritage, attracts visitors, and generates wealth, by holding blossom time promotions, harvesting events (tastings, live music, theatre, visits to cider & perry makers) and other orchards-related happenings. The first Carse of Gowrie Orchard Festival took place over 9 days in October 2008. Another is planned for October 2009, with a view to making it an annual event. Another possibility is to develop orchard trails. Local produce can add value to tourism – visitors are given something unique, something with provenance and character, something they can't get elsewhere. This kind of approach can help to revive areas, like the Carse, which are in danger of becoming no more than dormitories.

## ***Speakers from the floor***

The heart of the evening was a mapping event: we had a map of Scotland, some coloured markers to put on it, and the roomful of people who had come from around Scotland with stories to tell.

We heard from:

**Cath Lloyd, Tayside Biodiversity Co-ordinator** – with a new publication to launch: “*Traditional Orchards in Tayside – a guide to wildlife and management*”. This practical pamphlet is available from Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, c/o Dundee City Council, Floor 13, Tayside House, Dundee, DD1 3RA 01382 433042 [Tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net](mailto:Tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net) [www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk](http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk)

**Rose Clarkson** spoke about the **Clyde Valley Orchard Project**, an initiative involving local orchard owners, schools and community groups in efforts to restore and develop some of the many old orchards in

the area. Activities include the first ever Clyde Valley Fruit Day last autumn and a recent workshop on Orchard Enterprises. The project also provides support to the local Orchard Group who run their own orchard management training programme, have purchased fruit juicing equipment, and established a number of nurseries with grafted fruit stock.

Rose mentioned John Butterworth's name, so a dot was also placed on the map for **Butterworths Organic Nursery** - the first commercial organic fruit tree nursery in the UK, and one which specialises in varieties which will grow and produce well in Scotland. John Butterworth has done a lot to research and promote fruit trees in Scotland over at least the last two decades. He was unable to attend the evening, but sent his good wishes.

**J Tweedie Fruit Trees** was also mentioned – another tree nursery which provides a range of varieties of fruit trees.

Melanie Nicoll spoke about **Dunkeld & Birnam Community Orchard**. This is a newly-planted orchard, just a short walk from the evening's venue. The orchard group brought one of the most decorative displays of the evening - simply twigs from the different varieties of trees in the orchard – along with some apples – bought in, but expressing the hope of future harvests!

**John Hancox** – one of John's many orchards involvements was the planting of the Dunkeld & Birnam Community Orchard. He also brought information about the Children's Orchard project and the Commonwealth Orchard project, and was keen to promote the latter's Google Map of orchards in Scotland and beyond. He also recently helped to form the Scottish Orchards group, a membership group to coordinate everyone with an interest in orchards in Scotland.

**Jools Cox, of South West Community Woodlands Trust**, introduced the new **Orchards and Wild Harvests project** which she is co-ordinating for the Trust. They plan to plant both orchard trees and native fruit and nut hedges, both on dedicated areas of land (including school grounds) and along pedestrian and cycle routes. Jools is working with other local projects to find out which fruit varieties are growing well in the area.

**Diane Alderdice of Forth Valley Food Links** announced a proposed orchard regeneration initiative for the Forth Valley. The first phase would be a mapping and feasibility study, investigating where people want to see more trees, what skills they have, what skills they want to learn. Ultimately the project would aim to promote harvesting, juicing, using the fruit... “We'll know next week if we have the other half of the funding.”

**Kate Morison**, Countryside Ranger with the **Fife Coast and Countryside Trust** – just planted 250 orchard trees with schools; hoping to commission a survey towards the end of 2009. Responsible for the Tay trail. The schools are very engaged with the orchards – but she was still mindful of finding new ways to engage people, and recommended running moth nights in orchards as a way of getting people in to visit them and become aware of them.

Caroline Guthrie, **Newburgh Orchard Group** – the group originated from a local historic society, with great initial momentum and impressive survey work; more recently Caroline has become chair of the group, bringing a new momentum towards using the fruit. Sales of fruit where the money is split 10:60 between the group and the orchards owners – a difficult way of raising funds with recent poor harvests, especially last year. They run pruning workshops, and are interested in getting businesses involved in using the fruit as well. (They'd provided a display for the evening, as well – featuring their local preserves.)

**Louise Myles of Isabella's Preserves** – a commercial apple user in our midst; as well as a range of other fruit preserves, she makes apple jellies - apple & cinnamon, apple & mint, apple & juniper. One source of apples is National Trust Scotland's Pitmedden Garden in Aberdeenshire. The garden hosts an apple Sunday at the end of season, after which any unused fruit goes to Louise, who makes apple jelly for NTS to sell to their customers. She would be happy to provide the same service to other orchard owners.

**Peter Stuart of Belhaven Fruit Farm** – promoting the Thistly Cross Cider which he makes for Belhaven. When asked about varieties he said “we'll use what we can get”. They too can provide a service for orchard owners – they've produced an estate cider, for example – though the need to transport large volumes of fruit can be a limiting cost over greater distances

Perthshire fruit wine makers **Cairn o' Mohr** had been present earlier in the evening in the form of the (delicious) Carse o' Gowrie apple juice provided for the evening meal. Cairn o' Mohr have also begun making cider and apple pureé from Carse apples, when fruit is available.

**Cuddybridge Apple Juice** were unable to travel up from the Borders due to the imminent opening of their new shop. This business started with a model which community groups might well wish to emulate – local people with surplus apples in their back gardens or other land supply apples, in return for a share of the cider or apple juice produced. The flavours are as variable as the types and quality of apples provided, which makes the product both unique and uniquely valuable to the people who know the places and trees from which they come.

**Laprig Fruit** – dedicated producers of pure, single-variety apple juice, the flavours varying from dry to sweet depending on the variety of apple used. Based in Duns, they are the furthest south of all the apple product makers we found in Scotland and sent some bottles of juice for tasting, along with their regrets that they were unable to attend the evening. They are delighted to have started finding sources of the single variety apples they need within Scotland, and are keen to find more – if you can help, please contact Jackie Fleming 07778 364415 / [laprigveg@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:laprigveg@yahoo.co.uk).

**Pam Rodway of Forres** – as well as being a guest speaker this evening, Pam lives on a farm which has both a small orchard and a fruiting hedge, planted by local schoolchildren. She also spoke of other orchards in that area with its wonderful soft climate – local monks replanting with historic varieties, and the well-established orchards within Forres town such as the one at Newbold House.

**Kenneth Knott** Chair of the **Fort Augustus & Glenmoriston Council** – their Community Company wants very much to start an orchard, and has money available to establish it, but their local climate – in strong contrast to Forres – is very cold, and they are struggling to find varieties that will survive.

**Bernard Planterose, Ullapool** – also interested in planting a community orchard, in a place with a difficult climate. His inspiration is the Hardanger area of Norway, which has amazing orchards despite having similar rainfall to Scotland's west coast. Ullapool, however, poses a further challenge, with its high winds. So far Bernard has mostly planted crabapples, elder and hawthorn, by way of fruit trees.

**Bill Slee, Aberdeenshire** – lives in an area which is kinder to apple trees, and has trees in his own garden. But he had an idea based on his experiences years ago, working as a gillie on an estate. There was great scrumping to be had on the estate... Even in the hardest climates, the big houses, with their walled gardens, will have had fruit trees growing if at all possible. Those old gardens – many of them now owned by National Trust Scotland – would be great places to go fishing for hardy, well-adapted varieties. Another observation he made was of the kind of people – himself included – present at the evening. The room was full of the kind of people who join community groups... there might be a lot of knowledge about fruit tree techniques and varieties to be found amongst the kind of dedicated amateur fruit and veg growers who don't feel any need to join such groups.

**Miles Irving, Kent** – the solution might be to grow native fruit trees and bushes, instead of trying to get apples to grow where they're not suited – e.g. has anyone thought of growing sea buckthorn?

We had run out of time. Looking at the map, we used the last few minutes to try to fill in a gap in the dots we now had colouring in our map of Scotland – was there anyone here from **Argyll**? No, but there was some knowledge – Ardchattan Priory, north east of Oban, has an orchard, despite Argyll's damp and windy climate.

## **Conclusion**

The evening drew together a fascinating group of around 50 people from around Scotland. It was wonderful to hear from people from throughout the country with common aims, inspiring to witness the amount of orchards-related activity that's starting to happen around Scotland, and useful to gather the ideas and contacts that people contributed.

Feedback indicated that people found it a very useful evening. If it had a downside, it was that two hours is simply not long enough to bring together all these people and groups and give them a chance to talk to each other – demonstrating the need for future events and for the work of the ongoing orchards networks which are active within Scotland.

## **Further info – groups, projects & companies which spoke and provided displays for the evening**

### ***orchards groups & organisations***

Ardchattan Priory <http://www.gardens-of-argyll.co.uk/gardens/ardchattan-priory-garden.html>

Carse of Gowrie Historic Orchards Project <http://www.perthshire.co.uk/index.asp?pg=450>

Central Core Orchard Network <http://www.centralcoreorchardnetwork.co.uk/>

Children's Orchard <http://www.childrensorchar.d.co.uk/>

Clyde Valley Orchard Project <http://www.clydevalleyorchards.co.uk/>

Commonwealth Orchard <http://www.commonwealthorchard.com/>

Dunkeld & Birnam Community Orchard Group – contact Melanie Nicoll [m.nicoll@virgin.net](mailto:m.nicoll@virgin.net)

Fife Coast and Countryside Trust <http://www.fifecoastandcountrysidetrust.co.uk/>

Fort Augustus & Glenmoriston Community Company <http://www.fortaugustus-glenmoriston-cc.com/gpage3.html>

Forth Valley Food Links <http://www.fvfl.org.uk/>

Newburgh Orchard Group <http://www.newburghorchards.org.uk/>

Scottish Orchards group <http://www.scottishorchards.com/>

South West Community Woodlands Trust's Orchards and Wild Harvests project contact Jools Cox 01556 503649 [joolscox@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:joolscox@tiscali.co.uk)

Tayside Biodiversity Partnership <http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/>

### ***publications***

Carse of Gowrie Orchards Survey & Newburgh Orchards Survey - available for download at <http://www.crispinwhayes.com/projects.html>

Fruitful Scotland newsletter – available from [john.d.hancox@btinternet.com](mailto:john.d.hancox@btinternet.com)

*Old and new fruit varieties for the Clyde Valley*, by Jeremy Gilchrist (2008). £2.50 (inc postage) – available via <http://www.clydevalleyorchards.co.uk> or contact [info@clydevalleyorchards.co.uk](mailto:info@clydevalleyorchards.co.uk)

*“Traditional Orchards in Tayside – a guide to wildlife and management”* available from Tayside Biodiversity Partnership [Tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net](mailto:Tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net) [www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk](http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk)

Tree Fruit for Scotland (A3 folded leaflet) by Kenneth Cox & Raoul Curtis-Machin

### ***apple product suppliers***

Cairn o' Mohr <http://www.cairnomohr.co.uk/>

Cuddybridge Apple Juice <http://www.cuddybridgecider.com/>

Isabella's Preserves <http://www.isabellaspreserves.co.uk/>

Belhaven Fruit Farm – Thistly Cross Cider <http://www.belhavenfruitfarm.co.uk/>

Laprig Fruit contact Jackie Fleming 07778 364415 / [laprigveg@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:laprigveg@yahoo.co.uk)

### ***fruit tree nurseries***

Butterworths Organic Nursery <http://www.butterworthsorganicnursery.co.uk/>

J Tweedie Fruit Trees 01387 720880



## Wild Harvests of Scotland conference, Birnam Arts & Conference Centre, 16 April 2009

Three years on from Scotland's last national Wild Harvests seminar,<sup>4</sup> this event showcased the developments in the Scottish wild harvests sector which have happened since then, many of them responding to themes from the previous seminar's findings. This year's conference saw the launch of a new non-timber forest products policy document for Scotland, the start of a new association of wild harvests businesses, and a report from Reforesting Scotland's Sustainable Forest Harvest project. Supported by Perth & Kinross Cittaslow, the event also looked at the tourism and quality of life potential of the wild harvests sector, drawing on both Scottish and international experience.

### Presentations

Our chair for the day was **Bill Slee**, of the **Macaulay Institute**. His introductory presentation set the scene, with a rapid overview of the Scottish wild harvests products, reasons for being interested in them, wild harvesting culture (or the lack of it) in Scotland, and some of the issues to be addressed during the day.<sup>5</sup>

**Roger Coppock**, of **Forestry Commission Scotland** gave a brief introduction to the new non-timber forest products (NTFPs) policy document, prior to the formal launch later in the day. He outlined how interest in NTFP use in Scotland has developed over recent years, and spoke about their value – for creating and reinforcing relationships between people and woodlands, providing cultural resources, promoting support for the retention of woodlands, and as potential sources of income. Issues have also been emerging – conflicts between landowners and harvesters, and uncertainty over the legal position. The new policy aims to raise awareness of these issues, and help all of the stakeholders to understand their roles and responsibilities better. In conclusion, Roger thanked the 30 individuals and organisations who helped to develop the policy, and expressed the hope that it will provide a supportive framework for the future development of this important sector.<sup>6</sup>

As Co-ordinator for **Cittaslow Perth**, **Douglas Ritchie** was well placed to speak on the connections between wild harvests and quality of life. He spoke of Gross National Happiness, and ways of defining progress which look at increases in wellbeing, rather than just at economic growth. He introduced Cittaslow: “a network of over 100 towns in 17 countries across the world that have committed themselves to a common set of goals and objectives that aim to enhance their quality of life for residents and visitors”, and took us through the principles and accreditation criteria involved – many of which are very familiar to people who work with wild harvesting. He provided a definition of Slow Food – food which is Good + Clean + Fair – and a description of how the international Slow Food movement is organised. By the end, the links and common ground with wild harvests were abundantly clear: reconnecting people with the food they eat; environmental awareness & protection; encouraging local traditions, arts & crafts, produce and economies; healthy, active lifestyles; personal well-being – and quality of life.<sup>7</sup>

**Emma Chapman** spoke about the work she has done for **Reforesting Scotland** with Scotland's wild harvests businesses. Starting by taking on the ForestHarvest website ([www.forestharvest.org.uk](http://www.forestharvest.org.uk)), she first began to get in touch with businesses while looking for new entries for the website's directory, and was struck by the diversity and enterprise of the sector. She was later involved in the 2007 NTFP Research & Development project, which found that businesses felt the need for more communication and networking opportunities. In response, Reforesting Scotland developed the Wild Harvests Sector Support project.<sup>8</sup> This

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<sup>4</sup> *The Future of Wild Harvests in Scotland*, Beauly, May 2006 <http://www.forestryscotland.com/pages/displaypressrelease.asp?pr=171&loc=latest&home=true>

<sup>5</sup> Bill Slee's presentation can be downloaded from the ForestHarvest website: <http://www.forestharvest.org.uk/WHapr09.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Roger Coppock's presentation can be downloaded from the ForestHarvest website: <http://www.forestharvest.org.uk/WHapr09.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Ritchie's presentation can be downloaded from the ForestHarvest website: <http://www.forestharvest.org.uk/WHapr09.htm>

<sup>8</sup> See the Reforesting Scotland website for information about the Wild Harvests Sector Support project:

project had led to the formation of a new trade association, just the previous day, and she was delighted to be able to read out the following announcement, given to her by the Association's founding committee:

*“We are pleased to announce the formation of the Scottish Wild Harvests Association.<sup>9</sup> We are now looking for individuals and businesses to show an interest in future membership, with a launch planned at The Big Tent in July<sup>10</sup>. We would ask all individuals and businesses with an interest in wild harvesting and Scottish natural products to get involved at this stage to contribute to creating the organisation that these industries need to flourish.”*

**Davide Pettenella**, of the **Università di Padova**, has studied “rural network marketing” in Italy and Finland. He compared two models: a Finnish company which specialises in bulk wholesaling of wild mushrooms, buying from a large number of part-time pickers, and a network of small independent producers who use *porcini* mushrooms as an 'imago product' for marketing their local region of Italy. The network emphasises tradition, environment, and 'slow food' culture, and co-ordinates marketing efforts around the central concept, with hotels, B&Bs, museums, open farms and restaurants participating, as well as sellers of *porcini* mushrooms and *porcini*-based products. As a result, indirect benefits are spread around the local economy, and income is less vulnerable to changing seasons and harvests.<sup>11</sup>

**Alison Dyke** is **Reforestation Scotland's** Sustainable Forest Harvest project officer. This project was developed in response to the recommendations of delegates at the 2006 Beaulieu seminar, who said that guidance and procedures on monitoring harvests of NTFPs should be developed. Alison brought together groups of species experts, harvesters, buyers, NGOs and government agencies to discuss 3 target species groups; fungi, moss and lichens. These were variously chosen because of statutory monitoring obligations, the visibility/scale of the harvest, or controversy over the harvest. The approach she recommends to fostering sustainable use is this: regarding gathering as a privilege with responsibilities attached; opening dialogue between groups; providing guidance to the sector of harvesters that are receptive to sustainability messages; and incorporating harvesting and management guidance into forest certification. She highlighted the need to recognise the social context of harvesting – whether it is done under license or not; whether it is done for commercial gain or domestic use – and gave outline guidance for each situation for the three species groups. Last and most important, she emphasised that we now need to make sure that people use the guidance that has already been developed – we need to spread the word.<sup>12</sup>

## **Discussion sessions**

In the afternoon there were two sets of discussion sessions, with delegates choosing one of three options for each session. The first set of three explored issues and made recommendations; the second set of three gave participants a chance to listen to an in-depth presentation.

Detailed recommendations are shown below. Some common threads that emerged during the day were:

- two key target audiences to engage with (for very different reasons) are (1) school children & young people; and (2) landowners;
- we should work with existing organisations and routes (including schools and Forest School curricula) to raise awareness and appreciation of wild harvesting, rather than creating stand-alone material.

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[http://www.reforestingscotland.org/projects/wild\\_harvests\\_sector\\_support.php](http://www.reforestingscotland.org/projects/wild_harvests_sector_support.php)

<sup>9</sup> The Scottish Wild Harvests Association can be contacted by phone or email: [secretary@scottishwildharvests.org.uk](mailto:secretary@scottishwildharvests.org.uk) 01356 626425

<sup>10</sup> The Big Tent eco-festival is held in Falkland, Fife: <http://bigtentfestival.co.uk/>

<sup>11</sup> Davide Pettenella's presentation can be downloaded from the ForestHarvest website: <http://www.forestharvest.org.uk/WHapr09.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Alison Dyke's presentation can be downloaded from the ForestHarvest website: <http://www.forestharvest.org.uk/WHapr09.htm>

## **'Spreading the Word' – how can the Wild Harvests sector raise public awareness, interest and appreciation of what it is about?**

**[Douglas Ritchie, Tourism and Leisure Solutions]**

This discussion group made the following recommendations:

- The term “Wild Harvests” does not adequately convey the diversity of the sector, but no one could come up with a better name.
- Key target audiences to reach include school children (to bring about culture change), small town communities, and woodland owners (to break down their suspicion of the sector).
- In Sweden wild harvesting forms a regular part of school field trips; there is potential to build wild harvesting activities into the Scottish schools curriculum.
- Some landowners are suspicious of the wild harvests sector; work needs to be done to demonstrate benefits to them of facilitating and supporting responsible wild harvesting on their land.
- Awareness of wild harvesting should be spread through highlighting practical examples like mushroom gathering and berry picking, or specific individuals and businesses doing interesting things with wild harvests.
- Messages about wild harvesting need to be adapted and tailored to suit different audiences:
  - The message of sustainability and responsible harvesting should be an integral element of any communications to the wider public about wild harvesting.
  - Other key messages in public communications should be –
    - Everyone can enjoy wild harvesting.
    - Know what you're picking.
    - Know how best to pick it.
    - Leave some for the wildlife.
  - There was unresolved discussion about whether or not “Ask for permission to wild harvest” should also be a key message.
- We should use existing mechanisms to raise awareness and appreciation of wild harvesting. This could include working with Scottish Natural Heritage, National Park Authorities, Ranger Services, the Outdoor Access Code etc. to include information and messages about wild harvesting in their literature, websites and on-site interpretation materials. This approach would be preferable to producing separate, stand-alone materials to promote the sector.

## **Sustainability & harvesting guidelines – how best to disseminate the harvesting guidelines & procedures we now have?**

**[Alison Dyke, Reforesting Scotland]**

This discussion group made 5 key recommendations:

- We need to develop a culture of sustainable harvesting and reach audiences who are not already interested.
- Children and young people are a route to a gathering culture, but educators are nervous of using edibles. A publication that tells the story of safe and identifiable species would be very useful.
- A network of practitioners could share good practice.
- Sustainable harvesting should be included in curricula for accreditation programmes for bushcraft and forest education.
- We should use existing routes to publicise and distribute the guidelines that we have, for instance: ranger services, forest enterprise, FEI.

## **Product & supply chain development for Scotland's Wild Harvests businesses – how can a Wild Harvests trade association and other networks help?**

**[Douglas Hardie, Scottish Wild Harvests Association]**

3 main topics arose from this discussion:

### 1. Communication with others

- This is a vital issue that would deal with both product and supply chain development. Members complained of not knowing who was doing what they were trying to do, and likewise had no idea of who was involved with the other stages.
- Some work has already been done on a directory of wild harvesting businesses. The format and access to information is crucial. Such a directory should include all players, members of the Trade Association or not, but members should be able to include more details. The directory/member list should be investigated as the basis for communication between members.

### 2. Credibility within the supply chain

- Credibility is important for marketing at the national and local level of products to retailers and end users.
- It is also important in dealing with the other end of the chain in terms of managing relationships with landowners.

### 3. Credibility out-with the supply chain

- There is a need for a single voice to lobby on behalf of the differing voices of the members with agencies dealing with funding, labelling and policy.
- The organisation should be used to attract funding and banking facilities from organisations such as Triodos ethical banking networks, or LEADER, to allow members access to investment, loans and funding.

## **Non-timber forest products (NTFP) policy for Scotland**

**[Roger Coppock, Forestry Commission Scotland]**

This was a presentation to give a more detailed understanding of the new policy for non-timber forest products in Scotland.<sup>13</sup> During informal discussion amongst participants some reservations about the policy were expressed on behalf of forest landowners: it was pointed out that Forestry Commission Scotland owns only part of the forest estate in Scotland, and that a Forestry Commission policy document should not be seen as being binding on other landowners, or indicative of the approach that they might take to NTFP management and harvest. In response, Roger Coppock agreed that the policy has no aim to be binding on other landowners, rather it provides the legislative framework, and states the Forestry Commission's own approach. This will provide useful information to allow private sector owners to make their own decisions about how to manage this resource in the way which suits their objectives of management best.

Overall, the policy was received very positively – as it had been during the earlier plenary session.

## **SRDP and business diversification – support linked to business development and tourism opportunities. Interactive session on internet to view the opportunities.**

**[Mike Strachan, Forestry Commission Scotland]**

This informative session took participants through the complexities of the Scotland Rural Development Programme grant application process. In common with other commentators, those present agreed that the

<sup>13</sup> The detailed policy presentation can be downloaded from the ForestHarvest website:  
<http://www.forestharvest.org.uk/WHapr09.htm>

grant scheme – billed as “a £1.6 billion programme of economic, environmental and social measures designed to develop rural Scotland” – is currently a challenge to apply for.

## **Wild harvests and healthy/slow living – the connections** **[Miles Irving, *Forager*]**

This session browsed the possibilities of wild harvests for increasing quality of life. Led by professional wild food supplier Miles Irving, it drew on his extensive and practical knowledge of edible wild plants.<sup>14</sup>

## ***Launch of the new policy for non-timber forest products in Scotland***

Finally, Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham addressed the conference.<sup>15</sup> She celebrated the rediscovery of the importance of wild harvests in recent years, both in Scotland and worldwide, and spoke of their environmental, economic, and cultural importance, and welcomed the formation of the new Wild Harvests trade association. Formally launching Forestry Commission Scotland's new non-timber forest products policy document,<sup>16</sup> she highlighted the need for policy as a framework within which we can develop sustainable management, sustainable harvesting, and an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all involved.

In his concluding remarks, the chair exhorted delegates to be realistic, aware of constraints (while working to ease them), and to explore how to extend our networks beyond the existing core of enthusiasts.

## **Conclusion**

The April 2009 Wild Harvests conference proved to be both a celebration of what has been achieved so far, and a call for further action in awareness raising and network building; supporting the development of a diverse, interconnected, self-aware wild harvests sector (with links to wider sustainability and tourism activity); working with existing educational, forestry and conservation organisations to promote a culture of sustainable harvesting; and engaging with land owners and land managers.

Since the conference, media attention – especially around the new non-timber forest products policy and the Scottish Wild Harvests Association – has underlined the level of public interest in wild harvests, indicating the potential for spreading the messages of the conference to a wider audience.

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<sup>14</sup> The wild food workshop presentation can be downloaded from the ForestHarvest website:  
<http://www.forestharvest.org.uk/WHapr09.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Notes from Roseanna Cunningham's speech can be downloaded from the ForestHarvest website:  
<http://www.forestharvest.org.uk/WHapr09.htm>

<sup>16</sup> The non-timber forest products policy document is available from Forestry Commission Scotland's website:  
<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forestry.nsf/byunique/infid-7r4hk4>