

**REPORT OF THE 8<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE ENGLAND FORESTRY FORUM  
HELD AT NOBEL HOUSE, LONDON, TUESDAY, 1 APRIL 2003**

1. The meeting was chaired by Mr Elliot Morley MP, Forestry Minister for England.

<b>Present:</b>	Mr Rupert Lane	Association of National Park Authorities
	Ms Judith Webb	Country Land and Business Association and Forestry and Timber Association
	Dr Keith Kirby	English Nature
	Mr John Sheaves	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
	Mr Peter Wilson	Forest Industries Development Council
	Professor Martin Whitby	Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committee (North East England)
	Ms Bridget Bloom	Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committee (South East England)
	Ms Claire Glaister	Forestry Contracting Association
	Mr John Vaughan	Community Forests
	Mr Humphrey Temperley	Local Government Association
	Mr Simon Evans	National Forest Company
	Dr Andrew Clark	National Farmers Union
	Mr Russell Rowley	Small Woods Association
	Ms Nerys Jones	National Urban Forestry Unit
	Mr Ray Kessler	North West Regional Development Agency
	Mr Rob Rees	Planning Officers Society
	Ms Kate Conto	Ramblers Association
	Dr Mike Clarke	Royal Society for The Protection of Birds
	Mr Adrian Martin	Small Business Service
	Mr Tim Leavers	United Kingdom Forest Products Association
	Mr James Cooper	Wildlife & Countryside Link Forestry Group
	Ms Hilary Allison	Woodland Trust
<b>In attendance:</b>	Mr Paul Hill-Tout	Forestry Commission
	Mr Mark Pritchard	Forestry Commission
	Mr Richard Barker	Forestry Commission
	Mr Geoff Hatfield	Forest Enterprise
	Ms Ann Dolphin	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
	Ms Katrina McLeay	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
	Mr Joe Watts	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

## Introduction

2. In welcoming members to the meeting, Mr Morley said the main business of the meeting was to consider the final report of the Biodiversity Working Group.



## **Report of the Seventh Meeting of the Forum Held on 22 October 2002**

3. Mr Morley invited members to note the report of the Forum Meeting held on 22 October 2002.

### **Regional Forestry Frameworks (Paper 01/03)**

4. Mr Hill-Tout introduced the paper, noting that the guidance on the preparation of Regional Forestry Frameworks was based on the original work done by the Forum's Regional Issues Working Group and incorporated subsequent advice from other Government departments and agencies.
5. The paper also summarised current progress with preparing the Frameworks in each region, including estimated completion dates. Work was underway or planned in all nine regions. In response to Mr Cooper's query on the emphasis being put on designated areas in Annex 1 (last paragraph) of the Guidance Mr Hill-Tout said that it was not an exclusive list and that the Frameworks should be consistent with the objectives of the designations.

### **Forestry Reviews (Paper 02/03)**

6. Mr Morley reminded members that implementation of the Forestry Devolution Review was nearing completion and that the SR2002 Forestry Review and Lord Haksins' Rural Delivery Review were both ongoing.
7. Mr Hill-Tout highlighted the closer integration that was being developed between the Forestry Commission and Defra as a result of implementing the Forestry Devolution Review. This was set out in an internal Concordat which had just taken effect. It linked policy and delivery at three levels: the GB/UK level; England nationally; and England regionally. In response to a question from Mr Cooper asking if the Concordat would be published Mr Hill-Tout explained that this was an internal document not intended for publication.

### **Forestry and Biodiversity Working Group (Paper 03/03)**

8. Dr Clarke (Working Group Leader) introduced the paper, noting the four key topics it covered. These were landscape-scale conservation; restoration of priority open ground habitats; the role of woodland in water catchments; and short rotation coppice.
9. The Working Group had aligned its work against two broad policy areas: forestry to deliver the England Biodiversity Strategy in regard to landscape scale conservation and restoring priority open ground habitats; and land use change with regard to woodland in water catchments and short rotation coppice.
10. The Group had taken into account the Forum's response to the earlier Progress Report (Forum Paper 12/02) presented to the previous meeting. The Group was planning to meet again if necessary to finalise the report in the light of any final comments from Forum members.



11. Dr Allison drew attention to paragraphs 11 and 12 of the report and the importance of the Regional Forestry Frameworks for informing spatial planning and landscape scale conservation. There was also a need for landscape scale resourcing to meet Habitat Action Plan targets. Dr Clarke agreed that UK targets needed to be linked to the Regional Forestry Frameworks.
12. In response to a question from Dr Allison about the Commission's involvement in the Government's Foresight programme on flood and coastal defence Mr Morley explained that he Chaired the Flood and Coastal Defence Foresight Project which was looking ahead at possible changes over the next 50 to 100 years. Defra were evaluating different strategies including the role for woodlands in floodplain management and whole catchment structures. This work included looking at natural features, including woodland, which was an exciting prospect. However, flood control was a very complex subject and all the options needed proper long-term evaluation. Dr Kirby added that English Nature and the Countryside Agency were also studying the subject.
13. Mr Temperley commenting on recommendation 38(a) drew attention to research from overseas and commented that more research was needed in England. He also noted a soon to be published research report from Cranfield National Soil Resources Institute by Godwin and Dresser that makes the point that forestry could ameliorate flood flows.
14. Mr Evans had some concerns about the development of planning policy and urged the Forestry Commission to ensure that forestry was included in the proposed Regional Spatial Strategies. He also commented on paragraph 42, pointing out that to date research on short rotation coppice had concentrated on technical issues related to the growth of crops and not the ecological benefits that short rotation coppice might be able to provide.
15. Mr Rowley suggested that paragraph 9 of the Report was somewhat dismissive of previous conservation work by NGOs and private owners. However, Dr Clarke explained that it was not intended to be dismissive, rather it was to draw attention to the need to link existing conservation sites.
16. Mr Morley concluded by thanking the Working Group, noting that the recommendations may have implications for the agri-environment programme and that they included cross-departmental issues. The Government's response to the recommendations would be discussed at the next meeting of the Forum in the autumn.

### **Integration Working Group**

17. Mr Pritchard explained that progress in establishing the joint sub-group with the Rural Affairs Forum had been slow. However, the membership was expected to be finalised within the next few days. Mr Michael, Chairman of the Rural Affairs Forum, would be writing to those members of the Forum who are being invited to join the joint working group.

### **Progress Reports (Paper 04/03 and 05/03)**

18. Mr Morley thanked members of the Forum for their contributions and urged them to continue to supply updates.

19. Dr Allison asked if the information in the Report was more widely used as it included a lot of examples of good practice. In addition, a more structured publication would show the progress made to date in implementing the England Forestry Strategy. Mr Pritchard explained that the report created as a running record of implementation even though some of the contents had been overtaken by events. He added that it was perhaps time to draw the information together, with the help of the original contributors, and publish a more structured report. All of the Forum's papers including the progress reports were available on the Forestry Commission's web site ([www.forestry.gov.uk/englandforestryforum](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/englandforestryforum)). Mr Morley added that he would welcome the wider audience that a publication would attract.
20. Mr Leavers expressed concern that there appeared to have been very little action to encourage investment in the wood processing sector. His view was that the difficulty for the industry was not the availability of roundwood but sufficiently skilled people and infrastructure to supply raw material to processors. Mr Hill-Tout replied that the Forestry Commission had recently held a workshop involving representatives of the processors to scope the issues for the industry in England. Two significant points had come out of the meeting. Firstly, there was a need to consider England separately from the GB and Scottish situations. Secondly, the Forestry Commission needed to gain a more detailed understanding of the specific needs of the processing industry in England.
21. Mr Wilson commented that the workshop had improved engagement between government and industry, which was important to underpin sustainable forest management. The workshop had looked at other UK experiences, especially the Scottish Forestry Cluster that was taking a holistic approach to timber production, processing and marketing. The key question was whether this experience could be readily transferred to the different circumstances of the industry in England.
22. Mr Temperley suggested that the next level of users needed to be involved in any development plans as many manufacturers found it easier to use imported timber because of consistency of quality and security of supply. Mr Wilson reported that work on this had been going on in Scotland for some time and there had been major developments with timber engineering, such as I-beams and finger jointing. Some manufacturers had started out using Swedish timber but were now using domestically grown timber. Matching the Scottish approach in England would help development of the high value end of the market.
23. Mr Hill-Tout noted that the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan delivery unit, responsible for developing new build projects, was linked into the role of timber in sustainable construction. This should create a pull for regional products and reinforce the opportunities for locally produced sustainable wood products. Mr Wilson added that the use of timber in construction was very important to the UK Forest Partnership for Action which had an 18 month programme on sustainable timber for development, covering both procurement and construction. There was potential to grow the demand from UK growers with timber engineering if Government were to remove some of the barriers to timber in construction.
24. Professor Whitby asked for more information about the Public Benefit Recording System and how this worked. Mr Pritchard explained that it had been developed in the North West as part of the Newlands project. It took into account the whole range of potential benefits from woodlands. He offered a paper and demonstration of the system to the next Forum meeting. Mr Rees added that he had seen the system, which he thought was simple yet



adaptable and he could see how it could be applied to his own area. [Note: it is proposed to arrange a presentation of the system for the autumn Forum meeting.]

25. Ms Bloom asked for an update on the Commission's study into the potential for converting its own buildings' heating systems to woodfuel. Mr Pritchard agreed to provide an update to the next meeting.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

28. The next meeting of the Forum will be held in London in October 2003.