

FMM Holders

Forestry Commission
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FOREST MANAGEMENT MEMORANDUM 34 ENVIRONMENT PANELS

Scope and Purpose

This memorandum sets out FE policy on Environmental Panels.

Background

Conservation Panels have served a useful purpose in providing FDMs with information on how the conservation value of the estate can be improved. With increasing emphasis on multiple benefits the scope of these panels will be widened to cover all environmental aspects of our management and the recreational use of the forest.

Action

Each Forest District will set up a new Environment Panel or broaden the terms of reference of existing Conservation Panels giving appropriate publicity so that there is an awareness locally of the Panel's existence and their aims and objectives. It is intended that all Panels will have met at least once by end March 1993.

Contact

Any enquiries regarding this memorandum should be addressed to Richard Toleman, Forest Management Division, HQ.

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Forest Management Division
November 1992

ENVIRONMENT PANELS

Background

1. The aims of Forestry Commission embrace management of the estate for non-market as well as marketable outputs. Because there is no price mechanism it is more difficult to identify demands for non-market benefits, give relative weightings for different outputs and develop cost effective solutions. As Forest Managers we may think we know what the public wants and how the estate can best provide this but our decisions are likely to be more soundly based if we have consulted with the people we seek to serve.
2. Environment Panels are seen as a useful mechanism for exchanging views and information on how FC can and is managing the forest for recreation, Conservation and landscape benefits. This memorandum states Forestry Commission's policy with regard to panels and sets out the framework within which they will operate.

Policy

3. All Forest Districts will convene Environment Panels. Regional Directors will ensure that panels are operating in each FD and Forest Management Division will monitor progress nationally.

Aims and Objectives

4. The broad aims of Environment Panels are:

To advise forest Managers on how the estate can be managed to preserve valued features and increase non-market benefits, particularly to local communities.

5. It may be helpful to expand this into a set of more detailed objectives to reflect the nature and potential of the estate and issues of local concern. Objectives should be supported by panel members and once adopted should be respected and adhered to unless there is compelling reason for alteration. Objectives and any amendments will be agreed by the Regional Director.
6. It is not intended that panels formally adopt a constitution except that all meetings will be chaired by a member of FC staff. However it is important that all members are aware of the purpose of the panel, its objectives and functions. It will be made clear that the panel is a vehicle for 2-way exchange of information and opinion and a forum for discussion. Panels have no managerial function.
7. Panels will not be the only form of communicating with the public. Open meetings to explain our plans and policies can be held as necessary and will complement the work of panels.

Composition

8. The composition of each panel will be the discretion of the FDM, taking into account the views of the panel. Members should be invited for their expertise

and / or their standing in local communities. They should also show an interest in the work of the panel. Reluctant members are unlikely to be of value. Preference should be given to people who live within the area covered by the panel.

9. Initial appointment to a panel should be for 2 or 3 years with the option of re-appointment for a further 2 years. Numbers should be in the range 7-10 including the FC chairman. A regular infusion of new members will help to broaden discussion and avoid domination by any single interest.
10. In many instances members will also be employees or representatives of organisations with which FC already has dealings. However panels should not become a substitute for liaison, as appropriate, with statutory bodies and Government agencies.

Coverage

11. While one Environment Panel may be adequate to cover a whole Forest District there may be advantages in having 2 or more where there is wide geographic dispersion, distinctly different communities e.g. islands or distinctly different subjects to be discussed.

Conduct of Meetings

12. Panel members will show a greater commitment to the work of the panel if they have an opportunity to raise issues, are given a fair hearing and receive feedback on how Forestry Commission is responding to panel discussions.
13. Excessive paperwork should be avoided but panel members should be invited to contribute items for the agenda and be given an agenda and any briefing papers in advance.
14. Not all members will be or should be professionally involved in environmental or forestry related activities. They may therefore have difficulty in attending meetings during normal working hours. Consideration should therefore be given to holding some meetings in the evening or at weekends. Lay members may be reimbursed reasonable expenses.

Publicity

15. The launch of panels should be publicised by press releases and local journalists should be invited to attend panel meetings.

Title

16. Throughout this memorandum "Environment Panel" has been used to supersede "Conservation Panel". This is the preferred title but alternatives may be adopted when there is more than one panel in a Forest District dealing with different topics.