

ENGLAND FOREST INDUSTRIES PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

1. As reported at the last EFF meeting a joint FC England and Forest Industries Development Council workshop was held in March. This allowed government and business leaders to discuss how they might best work together to develop the competitiveness of England's forest industries and so their capacity to contribute to the delivery of the England Forestry Strategy.
2. There was consensus that a national partnership approach to reinforcing wood-chain competitiveness was needed. The importance of the partnership developing close working links with regional initiatives was agreed.

Developments

3. A second meeting was held on August 29th to develop proposals and the following work is in hand:
 - A draft Terms of Reference has been prepared for a national England Forest Industries Partnership (EFIP) and is now being discussed.
 - A secretariat is to be established to provide support for the Partnership and drive forward action. A job specification for a project leader is being developed.
 - A "foundation" study is to be commissioned to map the sector and inform the development of an Action Plan. Terms of reference are being developed.

A further meeting will be held on December 5th.

The draft Terms of reference for EFIP are attached.

Peter Wilson
Forest Industries Development Council
21 October 2003

ENGLAND FOREST INDUSTRIES PARTNERSHIP (EFIP)

Terms of reference

1. The partnership will work at a strategic level to strengthen the competitiveness of the England forest industry sector and its ability to contribute to the delivery of the Government's wider objectives as set out in the England Forestry Strategy.
2. The partnership will include representatives from all parts of the forestry and woodland sector from growing through to processing, and relevant government departments and agencies. The partnership may also draw upon advice from experts who are knowledgeable about specific issues but are not represented on the group. The partnership will be affiliated to the England Forestry Forum and will inform the wider Forum group.
3. The terms of reference are to:
 - achieve a broader understanding of the issues/barriers and opportunities facing forestry and woodland businesses in England and identify common actions that can be taken to address them;
 - develop an action plan to improve the capacity of forestry and woodland businesses to contribute to the delivery of the England Forestry Strategy and oversee its implementation
 - identify and promote the contribution of forestry and woodland businesses to the sustainable development of the economy, environment and local communities in England; and
 - provide strategic advice to government and other relevant organisations on issues relating to the forestry sector.

Membership and operation

4. The initial membership of the group is set out below. It will steer the development and activities of the partnership. It is anticipated that the membership will evolve over time to include a greater proportion of representatives active within the sector in England.
5. The Forestry Commission will be a full member of the group and will also have an important role in facilitating and enabling action. In addition the Department of Trade and Industry and a representative of the 9 regional development agencies in England will be invited to join the group.

6. A small sub-group will be established to develop the action plan. As the work of the partnership develops other sub-groups may be established to address specific issues or topics. Membership of these groups may be drawn from the wider sector to reflect key areas of interest or expertise.
7. The partnership will be output focused. Key objectives and targets will be identified in the action plan. Once these have been achieved the role and continued need for the partnership will be reviewed. As a minimum the role and effectiveness of the group will be reviewed every 3 years.
8. A small secretariat will be established to service and take forward actions agreed by the group. This will be partly funded by the Forestry Commission with accommodation and other in kind support provided by the sector.

Initial Membership

Alan Bloomfield, FIDC
Peter Wilson, FIDC
Matthew Rivers, Forestry Contracting Association
Barry Hudson, Forestry Contracting Association
Tony Willis, UK Forest Products Association
David Sulman, UK Forest Products Association
Mike Henderson, UK Forest Products Association Judith Webb, FTA
Alistair Kerr, Wood Panel Industries Federation
Russell Rowley, Small Woods Association
Tony Giddings, independent sawmiller
Brian Mahony, Forest Enterprise
Paul Hill-Tout, FC England
Julie Collins FC England
Vahic Enjilly, BRE (Building Research Establishment)
DTI
RDAs

Potential areas for Action

1. The following areas of potential action were identified at the workshop on 20 March 2003.
 - i. Analysis of the forest industry in England in order gain a better understanding of the key players, strengths and weaknesses, and areas for action. This could include schematically mapping the woodland industry in England as was done in Scotland for the Scottish Forest Industries Cluster.
 - ii. Action to improve the dialogue and understanding between the different parts of the forestry sector
 - iii. Promotion of the sustainability of forestry and woodland products to government and the customer base, building on the 'Wood for Good' campaign and the Industries Sector Sustainability Strategy. This could include the production of a joint 'prospectus' for forestry showing why we should sustain our woodland and use wood.
 - iv. Helping the sector make the most of regional devolution - the first task should be to improve the engagement of the industry with the regional forestry framework process.
 - v. Analysis of the opportunities and costs to the sector of the UK Energy White Paper and what the industry, trade organisations and the Forestry Commission can do to encourage forestry businesses to adapt.
 - vi. Addressing the current problems with the diminishing contractor skills base.
 - vii. Improving the supply-side competitiveness along the wood-chain;
 - viii. Work focused on improving the market demand for timber
 - ix. Promoting the uptake of certification
 - x. Work to demonstrate the interdependence between the sustainable management of our woodland resource and the health and viability of the forest business sector,
 - xi. Assessment of the regulatory burden on woodland businesses.
 - xii. Understanding the regional and cross border issues within the forestry sector.

Julie Collins
Forestry Commission
5 September 2003