

IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMENDATIONS OF THE FORUM'S WORKING GROUPS

Introduction

1. In January 2001 the Forum's eight ad hoc Working Groups submitted their final reports and recommendations. The Government's response to these (Forum Paper 12/01) was discussed at the October 2001 meeting of the Forum. The Government undertook to prepare reports showing progress with implementing the recommendations that were accepted for consideration at subsequent Forum meetings. This paper is the first of these progress reports.

Background

2. In July 1999 the Forum established eight ad hoc Working Groups to examine a range of detailed issues relevant to implementation of the England Forestry Strategy. Subject areas examined by the Working Groups included Business Advice, Training and Support; Land Regeneration; Regional Issues; Land Use Planning; Protection of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands; Community Forestry; Landscape; and Funding. An additional two Working Groups on Integration of Woodland Policy and Forestry and Biodiversity were established in January and October 2001 respectively. These are scheduled to submit their final reports and recommendations in the latter half of 2002.
3. The initial eight Working Groups submitted their final reports to the October 2001 meeting of the Forum. They included a total of 47 recommendations. Of these, the Government accepted 26 outright and a further 10 with qualifications. The Government undertook to provide the Forum with regular reports summarising progress with implementing those recommendations accepted. The Annex to this paper is the first such progress report. The Report will be updated for each future meeting of the Forum. In addition papers with more detailed proposals for taking forward specific recommendations will be brought forward to the Forum for consideration. The first of these, on Regional Issues, is covered in Forum Paper 2/02.

Conclusion

4. The Forum is invited to consider the Progress Report in the Annex to this paper.

Forestry Commission
March 2002

IMPLEMENTATING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ENGLAND FORESTRY FORUM'S WORKING GROUPS

Note: To help establish the context for the commentary below, readers should cross refer to Forum Paper 12/01 which sets out the full text of the Government's response to the Working Groups recommendations.

BUSINESS ADVICE, TRAINING AND SUPPORT		
No	Recommendation	Commentary
1.1	The Small Business Service should be encouraged to include the micro forestry, woodland and woodcraft businesses within their role. This should be facilitated by sector engagement with SBS to develop a partnership.	
1.2	Each Regional Development Agency in England should include a positive statement on forestry and woods within its strategy and, in combination with the Forestry Commission and the Small Business Service, provide an appropriate statement on the training for the sector in each region. This should be preceded by an update of the FASTCO training needs survey at regional level.	The Government has replaced the National Training Organisation structure with Sector Skills Councils (SSC). These have a wider and more strategic remit and are guided by employer led Industry Sector Groups. Lantra Sector Skills Council will be operative as a "Trailblazer" SSC on 1 st April 2002 and will immediately take over the qualifications, occupational standards and training standards functions from the Forestry and Arboriculture Safety and Training Council (FASTCo), which will be wound up. The appointment of the representatives for the forestry and arboriculture industries group is almost complete and the first meeting of the sectoral group will be on 19 th April 2002. The Group will advise Lantra on the priorities for the industry across the business plan areas identified for the land-based sector and agree the work programme. The new structure should provide the impetus needed to secure enhanced levels of training uptake while retaining the excellent standards and training infrastructure developed by FASTCo.
1.3	The existing support organisations, such as the Forestry Contracting Association, Association of Professional Foresters, and the Arboricultural Association, together with the employing bodies such as the Community Forests, Forest Enterprise, and United Kingdom Forest Products Association members should be used to provide the initial contact. This will require a much more pro-active role from the whole forestry and woodland industry and a willingness to seek out and disseminate best business/technical practice.	
1.4	The level of training given should be appropriate for the needs of the sector and the Department for Education and Employment should recognise that it is not always necessary to have a qualification to improve skills. Pump priming funding for some of these initiatives will be necessary at National and Regional level. Collection and distribution of information, in a form that can be understood, may well require a part-time secretariat at the national level.	

LAND REGENERATION		
No	Recommendation	Commentary
2.1	<p>Increasing the effective use of information is very important. This should be achieved through a database of good practice and a brownfield land database (both to be web based), together with computer and/or web based decision support and specification tools. This work should be co-ordinated by a steering group of central and local government members together with forestry and regeneration representatives.</p>	<p>(a) First tranche of CLEA (Contaminated Land Exposure Assessment) Guidance scheduled for publication in March 2002. This will provide a framework for assessing risk to human health of contaminated land.</p> <p>(b) The Decision Support Software being developed by English Partnerships and the Forestry Commission is now being taken beyond its phase 1 stage (colliery spoils) to look at other types of brownfield land, with completion planned during July 2002.</p>
2.2	<p>An ongoing programme of research to help determine the costs and benefits of restoration with trees, including natural regeneration, compared to other uses is required. Priority should also be given to continued research into the economic case for regeneration using trees.</p>	<p>Details of research programmes will be set out in a future paper to the Forum.</p>
2.3	<p>The process of reclaiming brownfield sites to forestry depends on the formation of effective partnerships at all levels, together with the development of decision-making frameworks. This requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved links between forestry interests and regeneration agencies; • appropriate distinctions between mineral/waste management sites and brownfield land; and • overcoming (real and perceived) constraints imposed by environmental risk and liability. 	<p>The Interdepartmental Group on Land Regeneration is due to report in Spring 2002. The report will include a range of high level recommendations aimed at furthering forestry's role as vehicle for delivering wider regeneration policy aims.</p> <p>The English Partnerships/Forestry Commission joint framework was published in November 2001 and is an important cornerstone in developing a more mainstream role for forestry in regeneration. The Framework sets out areas of joint activity over the next three years with a focus on the regeneration, management and long-term ownership of land to help deliver the Government's social, environmental and economic regeneration objectives. It framework includes an action programme covering:</p>

2.3 ctd.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the development of a Land Reclamation Trust (b) a review of English Partnerships' land holdings against the relevant priorities of the England Forestry Strategy; (c) an assessment of current Forestry Commission land in relation to English Partnerships and Regional Development Agency programmes and priorities; (d) identifying further pilot areas to develop potential partnerships covering large-scale planting and long-term management; (e) exploring opportunities for commercial and income-generating activities; (f) a strategy for the coalfields, in partnership with the RDAs;
2.4	<p>There is considerable potential for a more collaborative approach between the Environment Agency and forestry practitioners in respect of planting on potentially contaminated land. High priority should be given to the production of joint Forestry Commission/Environment Agency technical guidance for the assessment of potentially contaminated brownfield sites. The Forum might consider a recommendation to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution that the role of the Environment Agency should be extended to provide direct help to public sector forestry practitioners where tree planting is considered to be in the wider public interest.</p>	
2.5	<p>The cost of the long-term management of trees is a particular problem in respect of the restoration of mineral and waste management sites, where there is so much potential for forestry. It is necessary to address the concerns of operators and planning authorities, and this can be done by carrying out research to establish the costs involved in woodland management. This information should be entered on the proposed website as part of the good practice guidelines. Publicity should be given to projects which demonstrate the various ownership and management options available, perhaps as part of a network of demonstration sites and projects, and centred, perhaps, on the National Forest and the Community Forests.</p>	<p>Will be addressed by response to recommendations 2.1, 2.2 and the conclusions of the Land Regeneration Inter Departmental Group which is due to report by the summer 2002.</p>

REGIONAL ISSUES		
No	Recommendation	Commentary
3.1	There is a need to develop the policy, networking and influencing skills available to the Forestry Commission's Conservancies. This implies the need to provide more "policy" support to its Conservators together with their co-location in Government Offices for the Regions (as per MAFF).	The Forestry Commission proposes to work with the Regional Co-ordination Unit and each Government Office during 2002 to study the key issues associated with formally joining the Government Office teams. (See also Forum Paper 2/02.)
3.3	The Forestry Commission's Regional Advisory Committees should have a wider role in promoting the implementation of the EFS within the regions. Their meetings should be open to the public and the advice they give to the Forestry Commission should be in the public domain. London should be treated as a region - having an RAC or similar advisory group established - but probably not having a separate Commission conservancy. Whatever new arrangements are put in place for the RACs, they should be reviewed in, say, two years' time, to assess how they are working within the new regional arrangements, and whether further change in their constitution and membership is needed.	The Commission will provide guidance to Regional Advisory Committee chairs in May on opening up subsequent meetings to attendance by the general public. (See also Forum Paper 2/02.)
3.4	Regional forestry fora should be urgently established, to reflect the EFF at the regional level, providing a focus for the EFS within each Region. There is no single model for how they should emerge, but the Forestry Commission should have the responsibility for making sure that there is one established in each region. The fora need to be linked to the new Regional Rural Sounding Boards which are to be established in each region.	<p>During 2002 the Forestry Commission proposes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider the most appropriate mechanisms for engaging and sustaining a regional role for forestry and woodlands; • contribute towards the joint funding of several strategic partnerships in each region to develop shared agendas and increase awareness about the potential for forestry and woodlands to contribute towards regional agendas. <p>(See also Forum Paper 2/02.)</p>

3.5	Each region (including London) should produce a regional forestry strategy to translate the EFS down to the regional level. Preparation of a regional strategy should go through a similar process to the EFS - i.e. starting with some sort of scoping work, followed by widespread consultation, leading to a draft Strategy for consultation prior to finalisation. The process of developing regional strategies will be as important as the document itself, but it is important that the final strategy is endorsed by the Government Offices for the Regions and Regional Development Agencies amongst others.	<p>The Forestry Commission therefore proposes to work with other government departments and the Regional Co-ordination Unit to provide guidance on regional forestry frameworks. It is proposed to tackle this work as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draft guidance will be developed in 2002 setting out Government advice on how to take forward the England Forestry Strategy at the regional level; • the guidance will establish a set of criteria to assess the effectiveness at of regional approaches but will not specify inputs or format; • the draft guidance will be subject to public consultation; • the aim will be to have completed strategies for taking forward the England Forestry Strategy in each region by 2004, this will enable further development of the regional dimension of the England Rural Development Plan and further delegation to the Commission's Conservators in the allocation of grant aid; • the Forestry Commission will be prepared to joint fund appointees and any studies necessary to facilitate preparation of regional forestry frameworks. <p>(See also Forum Paper 2/02.)</p>
3.6	Each region should be urgently required to have an action plan, approved by the regional forestry forum, for implementation of the regional forestry strategy. This is the only way in which forestry will be able to pull down funds and actions from other sources and bodies.	
3.7	It will be desirable to establish a small core or executive group within the regional forestry fora to take responsibility for initiating and driving forward the strategies. The organisations and individuals represented on this group should be the ones able to commit or influence resources for delivering the strategies.	

LAND USE PLANNING		
No	Recommendation	Commentary
4.4	It is recommended that the England Forestry Forum considers whether a Best Practice Guidance publication should be produced to help towards implementing the England Forestry Strategy.	<p>Draft proposals for guidance on best practice (and the dissemination of) to be presented to the Forum during latter half of 2002.</p> <p>Note: Planning Green Paper published by DTLR in December 2001.</p>

PROTECTION OF ANCIENT SEMI-NATURAL WOODLANDS		
No	Recommendation	Commentary
5.1	<p>It is recommended that English Nature should measure the nature, extent and rate of loss by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> collecting information on actual cases of loss – ‘anecdotal monitoring’. through a systematic (temporally) re-survey of the data in the AWI by reference to either the sample squares of the CS2000 or the National Inventory of Trees and Woods (or some other agreed sampling method). 	<p>A working group under the UK Native Woodland Habitats Action Plan Group, involving English Nature, the Forestry Commission and other partners is currently engaged in looking at how data-sets might be linked to provide a basis for assessing changes in the extent, distribution and quality of the woodland resource in England. The group's conclusions are expected during summer 2002.</p>
5.4	<p>It is recommended that DETR should ensure that the current draft guidance for local authorities on the preparation of community strategies includes reference to the desirability of establishing a system of local wildlife sites as part of local strategies.</p>	<p>English Nature is preparing guidance on the operation of local wildlife site systems in England. This stems from recommendations made by the Local Sites Working Group, set up by the then DETR during the passage of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill through Parliament to consider issues associated with the identification, protection and management of local wildlife sites. The intention is that the guidance should promote best practice amongst local authorities and, by leading to improvements in the robustness of local designations, ensure local sites are better protected against damage, and better resourced.</p>
5.7	<p>It is recommended that the Forestry Commission reviews and re-launches (in the current or alternative form) its series of guides on the management of semi-natural woodlands. This should take into account current knowledge and understanding, and current technology, in particular the use of web technology.</p>	<p>The guides are being re-printed, and will be re-aunched during 2002. They will be linked to a package of support measures intended to encourage the better management of both ancient and native woodlands. Over the next 2-3 years the Forestry Commission will also be updating the content of these guides, and is also considering more in depth handbooks. A guide on restoration of planted ancient woodlands back to native woodlands is also being developed and will be published by the end of the year.</p>
5.8	<p>It is recommended that the Government ensure that in addition to the current contributions being made by the Forestry Commission and other members of the Deer Initiative, sufficient funding is made available via the Forestry Commission for the Initiative to be sustained.</p>	<p>The Forestry Commission has extended its core funding for the Deer Initiative to 2004.</p>

5.9	It is recommended that there be further measures through incentives, cross compliance or other mechanisms to encourage farmers to reduce the level of grazing pressure on woodland in the uplands. Action should accordingly be taken by the Forestry Commission, MAFF and English Nature.	To be covered by Review of Sustainable Forest Management (see 8.2 below).
5.10	The group welcomes the changes introduced in the recent Rural Development Regulations to base hill farm payments on area rather than stocking levels. However we understand that the position on the control of grazing of woodlands under these provisions may offer less protection than was at first envisaged. We recommend that the position be regularised by MAFF in association with FC as soon as possible.	To be covered by Review of Sustainable Forest Management (see 8.2 below).
5.11	It is recommended that the Forestry Commission and other relevant Government agencies consider how the criteria for the regeneration of upland ancient woodland (where landscape and biodiversity measures are foremost) can be amended to reflect the relatively few trees needed to ensure continuity of the woodland.	In relation to the regeneration of existing woodlands, the conclusions of the Review of Sustainable Forest Management (due to report summer 2002) will inform changes in the required planting densities and timescales. These issues will also be taken into account by the review of Woodland Creation Grants in England which is due to report in autumn 2002.
5.12	The Forestry Commission should review the WGS and felling licence procedures to capture data on loss of ancient woodland and on planted ancient woodland sites particularly in relation to Habitat Action Plan targets.	Linked to action under 5.1 above.
5.13	It is recommended that a clear and defined programme for the expansion of woodland be developed so as to help to meet the need to extend and buffer ancient woodland.	Proposals for a strategic statement of priorities will be prepared by the English Native Woodlands Partnership during 2003/04 and after the England Biodiversity Strategy has been finalised (see Forum Paper 5/02).

COMMUNITY FORESTRY		
No	Recommendation	Commentary
6.1	Creation of a central database of community forestry initiatives, including details of partners, coverage, aims and objectives, resources etc.	Proposals for establishing a new structure to act as a champion for community forestry will be brought forward for consideration by the Forum during summer 2002. It is envisaged that this forum will act as a facilitator and enabler advising Government, through the Forum, on the continued development of community forestry in England. It is envisaged that this new structure will work in partnership with the existing community forestry initiatives and centres of expertise to provide an overarching framework for action. The recommendations of the Community Forestry Working Group will form a starting point for developing the proposals.
6.2	Establishment of a national 'community forestry forum', bringing together a network of practitioners and researchers on a regular basis to share experience and develop forward thinking.	
6.3	A programme of senior level expert seminars/workshops to embed recognition of the potential contribution and benefits of community forestry into strategic Government programmes, including agricultural change, health promotion, sustainable development, regional regeneration, cultural strategies and social inclusion.	
6.4	The establishment of an institutional or academic 'centre of expertise' in community forestry, to create a focus for research, advice, technology transfer, building the knowledge base, documenting and sharing good practice.	
6.5	The need to document, collate and disseminate the innovative and high quality experience, expertise and good practice being accumulated within community forestry initiatives through the regular publication of authoritative case studies, possibly along the lines of the Forestry Commission's existing 'Information Notes'.	
6.6	Production of a series of 'advocacy based' publications illustrating the potential contribution and relevance of community forestry to a range of external agendas beyond the 'green sector'.	
6.7	Development of a better understanding of how strong local partnerships, founded on an integrated and inclusive approach, are brought together and sustained to create community ownership, and how the skills required to develop and manage such partnerships can best be nurtured.	
6.8	An analysis of the potential barriers to the growth and expansion of community forestry as a step towards identifying new mechanisms and approaches to overcome them and enhance future progress.	

FUNDING		
No.	Recommendation	Commentary
8.2	It is recommended that a substantial study be initiated to identify the most appropriate mechanisms for properly supporting woodland management in order to secure the long-term delivery of public benefits. The Woodland Grant Scheme has an important role in this and a review of its resourcing and targeting seems essential.	Review of Sustainable Forest Management underway and due to report in summer 2002. A public consultation, which closed in January 2002, sought views on how the Forestry Commission should support the sustainable management of woods and forests in private ownership and woodland owned by voluntary bodies, businesses and public bodies other than the Forestry Commission. A report and analysis of the consultation is due to be published in spring 2002.
8.3	It is recommended that the Forestry Commission work with key partners within Government (especially the RDAs, Countryside Agency and DETR), the industry (through the Forest Industries Development Council) and the research community (especially BRE and TRADA) to support the development and expansion of the forest-based industries in England so as to boost the market for English wood.	<p><i>Wood. for good</i> is the largest single timber industry promotion ever mounted in the UK, and is targeting both trade and consumer audiences. It is funded by the experts in the industry including the Nordic Timber Council, the Forestry Commission, the Timber Growers Association, the UK Sawn Wood Promoters, the Timber Trade Federation and the Northern Ireland Forest Service. The three-year campaign will aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the consumption of wood • change perceptions about wood • encourage its use in interior and exterior design, and building • tackle issues surrounding the use of wood • encourage good practice in the industry. <p>There are three main strands to the campaign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>wood. for good's</i> trade campaign, Building with Wood, is aimed at professionals and concentrates on promoting the benefits of timber-framed construction. • <i>wood. for good's</i> consumer campaign, Living with Wood, is aimed at the general public and will promote the use of wood both inside and outside the house. • <i>wood. for good's</i> issues campaign is aimed at those who shape and influence opinion and policy on housing, targeting politicians, senior government officials, senior executives in building and construction and local government planners. It will focus on the environmental benefits of using wood.