

**REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
WOODLAND INITIATIVES**

FINAL REPORT

**Prepared for The Forestry
Commission and Countryside
Agency**

**by
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We would like to thank those involved with the Woodland Initiatives for the time given to the study in interviews and in attending the study workshop. We appreciate the difficulties of time spent on 'non-project' work and we are grateful for the very useful information provided.

We have made every effort to record the information in an accurate way. However, in an attempt to achieve a consistent and concise report, we have summarised some of the data and trust that this has not significantly altered the content or meaning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

1. In January 2002, the Forestry Commission (FC) and Countryside Agency (CA) commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to undertake research to review the effectiveness of Woodland Initiatives. The aim of the research was to determine whether Woodland Initiatives are or could be valuable and cost-effective partners in implementing government forestry policy in England.
2. The Small Woods Association (SWA) maintains a register of over 150 Woodland Initiatives operating in the UK varying from local community groups to national and international organisations. This study has examined those Woodland Initiatives operating at the sub-regional level in England. The focus of these sub-regional Initiatives is on the management of woodlands which are not currently under sustainable management (which are primarily broadleaved woodlands, and particularly - but not exclusively - small woods), although in some cases this may form only part of their overall remit. Characteristically these Initiatives offer some or all of a wide range of services from advice, information, training, promotion and support to various points in the wood chain (from owners to contractors and processors). Their primary objective is to encourage sustainable woodland management. These Initiatives are non-statutory organisations and are often funded and steered by a partnership of organisations.
3. The methodology used for the study involved structured interviews with 23 selected Woodland Initiatives (to provide both geographical coverage and information the range of diverse activities undertaken by Initiatives) and a workshop to which a representative of each of the selected Initiatives was invited. The workshop was used to feed back the preliminary findings of the study, and obtain clarification and confirmation of the study findings.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF WOODLAND INITIATIVES

4. The study found that, in broad terms, Initiatives are aiming to contribute to one or more of the following three long-term objectives:
 - Promoting the sustainable management of woodlands to protect and enhance landscape and biodiversity;
 - Stimulating and enhancing the contribution made by woodlands to the economy of local areas;
 - Promoting public awareness, use and involvement in woodlands, and the wider socio-economic benefits that they can provide.
5. However, within this very broad context, the study has demonstrated that there is considerable diversity amongst Initiatives in the way they undertake activities to achieve these objectives and that there is no single model which could be used to describe them. The diversity reflects the 'bottom-up' approach taken by Initiatives in responding to local priorities and reflecting the wide regional and sub-regional differences in terms of the woodland resource, market for products, social and economic need, status of woodland businesses, types of woodland owner, the expertise of staff and funding availability.
6. The range of activities currently being undertaken by Initiatives (in comparison to the situation in 1995), also demonstrates that, in general, they were effective at identifying and adapting to changing needs over time. Since the Canopy Report was prepared in 1995, Initiatives have responded to policy change (and consequently funding availability) and in response to what was perceived to be successful. In particular there has been a shift in activity from 'push' activities (principally activities with woodland owners) towards 'pull activities (stimulating demand for the products of sustainably managed woodland). Between all of the Initiatives, there is now coverage of activities across the whole of the wood chain.
7. The activities of Initiatives are summarised below. Although this is an attempt to summarise where activities are successful, it is not intended to indicate that all Initiatives are undertaking these activities or that they are all achieving the same level of success.

8. **Involvement with woodland owners.** Initiatives are good at contacting and engaging with woodland owners. Once they have made initial contact, they are providing advice and training with the aim of stimulating sustainable management of woodlands. This advice is distinct from that provided by other organisations and there was no evidence from this study that Initiatives were in competition with either the private sector or other public bodies (indeed there was evidence that Initiatives had moved away from areas of competition). However, the quality and effectiveness of the advice and/or training (in terms of bringing woodlands into sustainable management) was not monitored. In general, it is realised that advice on its own is unlikely to be sufficient to achieve sustainable management, but that advice needs to be taken hand in hand with other measures to stimulate the 'pull' factors for managing woodlands.
9. **Involvement with the contracting sector.** Although support for the contracting sector was identified as a key issue, with the exception of the Forestry Contracting Association (FCA), there are no other organisations working in this sector. The study showed that Initiatives worked with the FCA rather than in competition, but that the support provided by Initiatives tended to be 'broad and shallow' rather than targeted at the needs of contractors. The effectiveness of the support (in terms of its impact on contracting businesses) was not monitored. The exceptions are Wessex Coppice Group and Kent Interreg which both provided targeted services to contractors and which consequently are more likely to be successful in achieving the desired outcomes.
10. **Stimulating demand for woodland products.** In their work to stimulate demand for products from woodlands, Initiatives are at the cutting edge of a problem which as yet has no obvious resolution. Initiatives are addressing and having some success with supporting small scale and higher value craft wood users but they have yet to prove continued success with finding markets for low value products (principally charcoal and woodfuel). Areas which are not tackled by Initiatives include the wider bulk market for potentially higher value timber products (such as construction materials).

11. **Supporting networks of viable woodland businesses.** Initiatives are working to support processors and other elements of the wood chain in trying to promote networks of viable businesses. It is difficult to gauge the success of their activities, but it is clear that none of the Initiatives have yet been successful in establishing a sizeable self-sustaining network (although there have been some successes at the small scale). However, trying to create viable business networks at a time of falling margins and rising economies of scale, is extremely difficult unless clearly defined specialist markets can be built up. There are also no other organisations currently providing this kind of support.
12. **Promoting Woodlands as a Social and Community Resource.** Woodlands have the potential to act as a major leisure, recreational and educational resource and to contribute to healthier lifestyles, particularly where they are easily accessible from centres of population. They can also contribute generally to the quality of life of local communities. The Community Forests stand apart in that promoting recreational and educational access and working with local communities is amongst their primary objectives. Some of the other Initiatives (e.g. Silvanus and Greenwood Trusts) have been using woodlands and woodland craft activities as a means of increasing social inclusion. Other Initiatives are involved in activities contributing to these objectives, but to a lesser extent, and many do not view this as a core activity.
13. **Partnership working.** In many cases, the problem being tackled by Initiatives is an extremely difficult one, and it is not clear whether these small organisations acting alone will be able to make any considerable impact. The need for a co-ordinated approach appears inevitable. As a result of their partnership structure, Initiatives provide an ideal mechanism for bringing together different organisations to achieve a common aim. They have also been successful in building up local contacts and knowledge beyond this partnership, creating a reputation and acting as a contact point for a range of interested parties. Some of the Initiatives were also demonstrating co-operative working at the regional level, which can bring a number of potential benefits.

14. This study has demonstrated that although the Initiatives have collectively undertaken a large amount of work across a wide spectrum of activities, many Initiatives have not seen the need to collect data on their outputs, much less the outcomes of their work. Where data is collected, the Initiatives that are involved in contacting and engaging with woodland owners to promote the benefits of management and in the provision of advice and training could demonstrate the outputs of their activities (e.g. in terms of numbers of owners contacted and in terms of numbers of training days held). Where Initiatives are involved in other activities including networking, promotion of woodland products or in raising the public profile of woodlands, their outputs were much more difficult to measure.
15. Furthermore, the 'outcomes' of these activities are intangible and their contribution to supporting the management of non-commercial woodland is more difficult to ascertain. Consequently, even where information is collected it says little about whether the desired outcome of better managed or more accessible woodland, or of jobs created, has been met.
16. Consequently, whilst it has not been possible to give a reliable empirical measurement of the effectiveness of Initiatives, a more subjective assessment has been undertaken. Initiatives are successful in addressing issues that are currently not being tackled by others (even where there was potential for the work to be undertaken by other organisations there is currently no real evidence of overlap) and there is a demonstrated need for this work to be undertaken.
17. The research has also shown that, as a group, Woodland Initiatives have been successful in identifying the gaps or market failures which are contributing to the lack of woodland management and, having identified the gaps, are starting to address them. What is clear is that without the existing Woodland Initiatives, little practical work would have been done in this area over the last ten years.
18. One of the key strengths of Woodland Initiatives is their flexibility, and ability to respond to the particular conditions and requirements within their area. Although Woodland Initiatives are doing valuable work with

woodland owners, it is their activity 'beyond the forest gate' that is particularly important, since they are usually the only public body working in this area at the sub-regional or more local level.

CONTRIBUTION TO GOVERNMENT FORESTRY POLICY

19. The England Forestry Strategy (EFS) outlines the Government's objectives for multi-purpose forestry and it now provides the best means of judging whether the Initiatives have been effective at helping to deliver these objectives. Under the four programme headings of Forestry for Rural Development; Forestry for Economic Regeneration; Forestry for Environment and Conservation and Forestry for Recreation, Access and Tourism, the EFS lists a series of actions which establish the desired outcomes of the strategy. The UK Forestry Standard sets out the Government's approach to sustainable forestry, with criteria and indicators against which management can be measured.
20. However, it is important to recognise that most of the Initiatives were formed before the publication of the EFS in 1998 and in the absence of a national 'guiding hand' or of regional forestry strategies. It is also important to appreciate that the EFS establishes broad 'outcomes' at the national level which the Government wishes to deliver but that it does not establish quantifiable targets against which the local activities of Initiatives can be measured.
21. As a result, it has only been possible to undertake a broad assessment of Woodland Initiatives against the four main policy objectives, highlighting where Initiatives are contributing and where there is potential for additional work to be undertaken.
22. It is clear that to date, the work of Initiatives has not been co-ordinated with the objectives of the EFS in mind. Initiatives do not record or monitor their progress against the objectives of the EFS. Nevertheless, the work of Initiatives does have potential to (and is currently) contributing to achievement of the EFS under each of the four programme headings. However, the nature and extent of this contribution is variable across the country and between Initiatives.

23. In general, the Initiatives are contributing most towards the Rural Development and Environment and Conservation objectives of the EFS. The Community Forests are the only Initiatives to be using woodlands to repair derelict industrial land and are more closely involved in promoting recreational access and the needs of local communities than other Initiatives.

FUNDING

24. The study has shown that the work currently undertaken by Initiatives is not commercially viable and, indeed, Initiatives have moved away from commercial areas of work to ensure that competition with the private sector is avoided. Although the initial policy in setting up Initiatives was to provide pump priming, and then for Initiative to become self-sustaining, this has not proved possible. In view of the uncertainty of funding, Initiatives are suffering from a hand-to-mouth existence.
25. In the absence of significant sources of national government funding, Initiatives have been successful in accessing different, mainly public, sources of funding. Thus for only a small level of government funding, at least the same amount if not more has been gained from other sources. This leverage effect multiplies the effect of government investment.
26. Despite the success of some Initiatives, others are in severe financial difficulties. All Initiatives pointed to the requirement for secure and long-term sources of funding to enable them to develop staffing and business plans.

COST EFFECTIVENESS

27. The study has shown that Woodland Initiatives can assist in delivering elements of the EFS. However, the question remains, can this be achieved in a cost-effective manner (when compared to other delivery mechanisms) and, if so, how can Woodland Initiatives be better supported in undertaking their work? For example, it could be argued that, rather than expecting a group of small and diverse partnerships

to undertake these activities, that the work should be addressed in house by the FC.

28. The answer to this question remains unclear. This is because:
- the EFS establishes high level objectives and outcomes without specifying measurable targets against which performance can be measured;
 - in general, Initiatives have not collected data to demonstrate the outcomes of their work, and indeed these outcomes are very difficult to measure and to relate to the EFS;
 - Initiatives are all very different, they are undertaking different activities and have different strengths and weaknesses which makes it extremely difficult to generalise;
 - data on other methods of achieving objectives (e.g. using in-house FC staff) are currently unavailable.
29. Given these problems, it is clear that cost-effectiveness is currently and likely to remain difficult to assess at the national level. For this reason, assessment at the regional level (where measurable targets can be set and objective assessment is easier) is likely to be a more successful approach. It is also clear that the requirement for action is variable and best identified at the regional level. This also reflects the creation of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), greater devolved powers, the regional chapters of the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) and likely adoption of Regional Expressions of the EFS (REEFS), together with a move towards regional funding and the emergence of regional co-operation between Initiatives.
30. Although a quantitative study of cost effectiveness has not been possible, a subjective assessment has shown that there are a number of distinct advantages in using Woodland Initiatives to help in delivery of the EFS, since they:
- have the flexibility to respond to local circumstances providing those services most needed in the locality;

- are potentially more able to undertake pilot projects and to trial new approaches (such as the Bowland Added Value Project);
- are able to draw in funding from a wide variety of sources, many of which (such as EU structural programmes, the National Lottery, and Landfill Tax) are not available to government departments and agencies, increasing the leverage on public investment;
- have established a good network of contacts and local knowledge and become established sources of information and guidance;
- are an established mechanism for partnership working.

31. However, the study has highlighted some problems suffered by Initiatives in providing cost-effective delivery. One general issue which was raised by many of the Initiatives was the high proportion of staff time spent on administrative type activities (e.g. staff management or applications for funding). This is of concern regarding the cost-effectiveness of funding supplied to Initiatives since it leads to a high proportion of staff time involved in non-project (or core) activities. In the absence of strong top-down direction, there is also likely to be a continuing element of duplication between Initiatives.

32. Initiatives could therefore benefit from increased support in order to achieve their objectives in a more cost effective manner. Due to the variation both in requirements around the country and also in the nature and type of work undertaken by Initiatives, there is no single solution to providing this support. However, there are a number of common issues facing Initiatives which could be addressed. These are discussed in the recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Role of Initiatives in Regional Strategies

33. Despite the lack of evidence regarding effectiveness, we believe that Woodland Initiatives offer the potential to be cost-effective partners in delivering the EFS. If they are to continue to assist in the delivery of government objectives then continued public funding is required. However, if this public support is to be justified, there must be a clear

statement of the role that they are to play in delivering government objectives for sustainable development in the forestry sector, with clear and measureable targets against which the performance of Initiatives could be assessed. Due to the considerable differences between regions, we recommend that this statement is provided at the regional level, and could form part of Regional Expressions of the England Forestry Strategy (REEFS).

34. Although the REEFS will form a useful tool for defining the role of Woodland Initiatives and setting targets, it is understood that the REEFS may vary considerably between the regions, and that in some regions they may form more of an informal strategy. The mechanism for defining the role of Woodland Initiatives will consequently vary from region to region, taking into account the approach adopted.

Recommendation 1: Woodland Initiatives should assist the FC and others in helping promote elements of the England Forestry Strategy. The method of delivery should be determined at the regional level, potentially as part of Regional Expressions of the England Forestry Strategy (REEFS).

Recommendation 2: The REEFS (or other strategies at the regional level) should be used to:

- ***Bring together different agencies to provide an agreed agenda for forestry within which Woodland Initiatives and others can operate;***
- ***Identify the 'gaps' to achieving sustainable woodland management in the region and the tasks required to address these 'gaps';***
- ***Address the role of Initiatives, and other groups, and their co-ordination in meeting objectives;***
- ***Set targets for the region and also criteria for performance monitoring, thus setting realistic and relevant goals for monitoring of success and cost-effectiveness;***
- ***Provide access to funding to meet the targets.***

Support for Initiatives

35. Although the study has indicated that the Initiatives do have potential to help deliver the EFS, it has also highlighted a number of problems and difficulties faced by Initiatives in undertaking their work. Thus, if Initiatives are to be viewed as partners in achieving the EFS, then additional support will be required. This is set out below.

Recommendation 3: Funding from the FC and others should be made available to support Initiatives where they are clearly meeting the objectives set at the regional level and provide the most cost-effective means of doing so. This funding should be managed through a service level agreement.

Recommendation 4: Funding from the FC and others should allow for an element of strategic development and other work to be included in the service level agreement.

Recommendation 5: In the interim period whilst strategies are being prepared at the regional level, the FC should consider if it is appropriate to support those Initiatives in extreme difficulty in the short-term.

Recommendation 6: National support for Initiatives should be continued. The role of the FC as the key 'champion' of Woodland Initiatives should be strengthened. The FC should continue to work with the SWA in considering the best mechanism of supporting Initiatives at a national level.

Recommendation 7: A facilitator should be appointed to assist with (but not direct) the making of funding bids for discrete woodland projects. This could build on the experience of the Countryside Agency in assisting the Community Forests with fundraising.

Recommendation 8: The needs of sustainable economic development of the forestry sector, and the role of Woodland Initiatives within this, need to be fully taken into account during the Mid Term Review of the England Rural Development Programme.

Recommendation 9: If Woodland Initiatives are to continue to give advice to private landowners and managers as part of their overall service, it is essential that this advice is of a high professional standard. We therefore recommend that woodland advisors (either officers of Woodland Initiatives or consultants used by the Initiatives) should be accredited at the regional level.

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

- 1.1. In January 2002, the Forestry Commission (FC) and Countryside Agency (CA) commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to undertake research to review the effectiveness of Woodland Initiatives. The aim of the research was to determine whether Woodland Initiatives are or could be valuable and cost-effective partners in implementing government forestry policy. The specific aims were:
- to examine the achievements of Woodland Initiatives since the report undertaken in 1995 by ERM/Canopy;
 - to assess the impact of Woodland Initiatives on government multi-purpose forestry objectives (as set out in the England Forestry Strategy and UK Forestry Standard);
 - to identify funding mechanisms most commonly accessed by Woodland Initiatives;
 - to determine how initiatives might most cost-effectively be supported in the future.
- 1.2. The research has been undertaken with advice from the Steering Group, comprising representatives from the Forestry Commission (FC), Countryside Agency (CA), Forestry & Timber Association (FTA) and Small Woods Association (SWA).
- 1.3. The research is intended to feed into a review currently being undertaken by the FC into the priorities for the support of sustainable management of woodland in England.

METHODOLOGY

- 1.4. The study has involved interviews with a selection of Woodland Initiatives in England¹. One of the first stages of the study involved

¹ It was recognised that it was not possible to interview all Woodland Initiatives, therefore a selection was made in order to provide coverage of both a geographical range and to cover

discussions regarding the definition of a Woodland Initiative and consequently the remit for the study.

- 1.5. The list of initiatives to be interviewed was obtained by discussion with the Steering Group, and is set out in Table 1.1. A structured interview was held with each of the Initiatives during February and March 2002. This was undertaken face-to-face where possible. Telephone interviews were held with those Initiatives which it was not possible to visit.
- 1.6. In addition, a workshop was held on 19 March 2002, to which a representative of each of the Initiatives was invited. The workshop was used to feed back the preliminary findings of the study, and obtain clarification and confirmation of the study findings.

the range of diverse activities undertaken by Initiatives. However, the selected list is not a definitive list of Woodland Initiatives.

Table 1.1: The Initiatives included in the study

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anglia Woodnet• Bowland Added Value Project• Chiltern Woodlands Project• Cotswold AONB• Cumbria Broadleaves• Forest of Avon Wood Products Coop• Greenwood Trust• Kent Interreg Project• Lincwoods• Marches Woodland Initiative• Mersey Forest• Northwoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oxfordshire Woodland Project• Red Rose Forest• Rockingham Forest Trust• Silvanus Trust• Stroud Touchwood• TWIG• Weald Woodnet• Wessex Coppice Group• Working Woodlands• Wychwood• Yorwoods
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1.7. Although the main focus of the study was on the Woodland Initiatives listed in Table 1.1, it was recognised that they form part of a much wider range of initiatives concerned with woodlands. It was therefore agreed that in three case study areas (Kent and East Sussex, the West Midlands and East Midlands), that the role of more local initiatives would also be examined. In particular, the interaction of local activity with the selected Woodland Initiatives would be assessed.

REPORT STRUCTURE

1.8. The factual information which has been provided by the Initiatives is summarised in a separate supplementary report². This information has been used throughout this report, with the remainder of the report structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** provides background information, and context to the study;

² Summary of Information Provided by Woodland Initiatives, Supplementary Report to the Review of the Effectiveness of Woodland Initiatives, by Land Use Consultants, June 2002.

- **Chapter 3** examines the factors that have influenced the origins and objectives of Initiatives, how successful the Initiatives have been in fulfilling their objectives and how Initiatives have changed (in particular, what has happened since the ERM/Canopy report was prepared in 1995);
- **Chapter 4** examines the impact of Woodland Initiatives on government multi-purpose forestry objectives (as set out in the England Forestry Strategy and UK Forest Standard);
- **Chapter 5** identifies the current funding mechanisms most commonly accessed by Woodland Initiatives and identifies the potential problems associated with accessing funding sources in the future;
- **Chapter 6** discusses whether Initiatives might be a cost-effective method for delivering the England Forestry Strategy objectives and how they might be supported in the future;
- **Chapter 7** provides conclusions and recommendations.

A bibliography is provided at the end of the report.

2. BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

- 2.1. Throughout history people have altered woodlands through management, making use of the many products and services that woodlands provide. However, management of the semi-natural broadleaf woodland resource of England declined through the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century in response to falling demand for traditional woodland products, an increase in labour costs matched by a fall in bulk timber prices, and severe competition from cheap timber imports from abroad – today imports account for more than 80% of domestic timber and wood product consumption in England. In consequence, the majority of small woodlands remain unmanaged and in turn there has been a loss of traditional skills amongst woodland contractors and a decline in their numbers, presenting a problem to those owners who still wish to undertake active management.
- 2.2. Current data on the management status of small, largely broadleaved, woodlands is generally lacking. But it is clear that a large proportion of England's broadleaved woodland resource is undermanaged or not managed at all, with small woodlands being the worst affected owing to their inaccessibility and low value compared to the effort that needs to be expended in management.

What is a Woodland Initiative?

- 2.3. The focus of this study has been on the Woodland Initiatives operating at the sub-regional level in England. The focus of these Initiatives is on the management of woodlands which are not currently under sustainable management (which are primarily broadleaved woodlands, and particularly – but not exclusively – small woods), although in some cases this may form only part of their overall remit. Characteristically these Initiatives offer some or all of a wide range of services from advice, information, training, promotion and support to various points in the wood chain (from owners to contractors and processors). Their primary objective is to encourage sustainable woodland management.

These Initiatives are non-statutory organisations and are often funded and steered by a partnership of organisations.

2.4. These Woodland Initiatives in England, a few of which have now been operating for over 20 years, form part of a much wider range of initiatives concerned with woodlands, from local community groups to national and international organisations. In total the Small Woods Association maintains a register of over 150 Woodland Initiatives operating in the UK.

2.5. In parallel with this study, the Steering Group for the Initiatives Network³ has also been working on a definition for Woodland Initiatives. The group considered the following criteria to be key in defining a Woodland Initiative:

- democratic support;
- the legal structure adopted by the Initiative;
- partnership working (i.e. all partners signed up to the objectives in writing);
- the results of work are made publicly available;
- there is a wider public benefit to the work undertaken;
- the Initiative is not an individual or share capital company.

So Why Manage Woodlands?

2.6. Against the current context of a general lack of a market for poor quality hardwoods and coppice products, it might be questioned why the sustainable management of our semi-natural woodland resource is a priority? The reasons are many and include:

³ The Steering Group for the Woodland Initiatives Network is intended to guide the work undertaken as part of the proposed new post of a Woodland Initiatives Network Officer. The post is funded by the Forestry Commission (FC), Countryside Agency (CA) and Small Woods Association (SWA). The steering group comprises representatives from FC, SWA, CA and selected Initiatives (Yorwoods and Silvanus Trust). The composition of the Steering Group was agreed by Initiatives at the recent Woodland Initiatives Networking Day held in May 2002.

- to ensure the longevity of woodlands by managing woodland regeneration;
- to maintain and enhance the value of woodlands for biodiversity through, for example, maintenance of an uneven age structure and a diversity of woodland habitats;
- to control invasive species (e.g. sycamore) and pests (e.g. grey squirrel);
- to maintain the place of woodlands as part of the working landscape;
- to maximise the contribution of woodlands in the economy;
- to utilise a renewable natural resource in a sustainable way;
- to provide a resource for communities and for recreation.

2.7. These potential benefits of woodland management, and the role of Woodland Initiatives in fostering it, need to be seen within the broader context of the woodland resource and, more particularly, the emerging policy context for the future of the land-based economy.

The Woodland Resource Base

2.8. The Forestry Commission's National Inventory of Woods and Trees (NIWT) provides the most up to date and accurate information regarding England's woodland resource. The total area of woodland of 0.1 ha and over in England is 1,096,885 ha which represents 8.4% of the land area.

2.9. The Forestry Commission defines 'small woodlands' as those from 0.1 ha to <2 ha. Small woodlands cover some 70,000 ha⁴ of England, equivalent to between 6.5 and 7% of the total woodland area. The average small woodland size is 0.47 ha. These small woods are

⁴ Two different survey methods were employed in gathering the data– a main woodland survey (MWS) and survey of small woodlands and trees (SSWT). MWS gives a total of 75063 ha of woodland between 0.10 ha and 2.0 ha (6.8% of woodland area). The SSWS gives a total area of 62294 ha.

primarily broadleaf in nature (approximately 75% of woodlands under 0.25 ha are broadleaved).

2.10. However, there is some variation in the definition of a small woodland, since the Forest Stewardship UK Council Working Group defines a small woodland as "*an individual wood under about 10 ha in size*" (based on information obtained from the FSC website). In practice, some of the Woodland Initiatives are utilising a working definition of woodlands under 20 ha, although this was variable. It is often the total area of woodland ownership which is important rather than the size of individual woodland blocks.

2.11. The FC does not own very many small woodlands (only 1% of woodlands under 10 ha in size are in FC ownership). Indeed, there is a general lack of data on the ownership of these woodlands, although anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a wide range of ownership, which is very variable throughout the country. The main types of owner include:

- farmers;
- small scale 'amenity' owners (who own an area of woodland for private recreational purposes), usually in urban fringe areas;
- charities and conservation bodies (e.g. National Trust, Woodland Trust);
- local authorities;
- large private estates.

Policy Context

2.12. The management of the woodland resource provides one piece in a much larger jigsaw concerned with the future of the land-based economy.

2.13. Over the last ten years there have been fundamental shifts in the national policy context both for agriculture and for forestry which now set the context for the activities of Woodland Initiatives.

2.14. **Agricultural policy:** The England Rural Development Programme (2000 – 2006) forms the centrepiece of the Government’s action plan for agriculture. This Rural Development Programme is considered important for three main reasons:

- *“it is the first major step in bringing about the radical re-direction of agriculture by reducing payments which support production for its own sake and increasing payments for what society wants: sustainable farming and forestry systems which contribute to a living, working countryside*
- *it provides for the first time an integrated approach to support for rural areas*
- *it recognises the diversity of England by focusing on its regions”⁵.*

2.15. The three main priorities that underpin the programme⁶ are:

1. *The creation of a productive and sustainable rural economy which underpins sustainable management of the rural environment and the maintenance of vibrant, resourceful and enterprising communities.*
2. *The protection and enhancement of the rural environment to safeguard its integrity and value for future generations, to provide a source of economic opportunity to help sustain the lives of those who live, work in or visit the countryside.*
3. *The maintenance of thriving rural communities.”*

2.16. **Forestry Policy:** The England Forestry Strategy (1998) sees a major shift in Government thinking, not least it focuses on how woodlands can bring a wide range of benefits for society – a theme that is taken up by the Government’s strategy for sustainable development (paragraph 8.60). The strategy covers forestry under the four main headings of:

- Forestry for rural development;

⁵ MAFF *England Rural Development Plan 2000 – 2006 Summary 2000*

⁶ As above

- Forestry for economic regeneration;
- Forestry for recreation, access and tourism;
- Forestry for environment and conservation.

2.17. This emphasis on multi-purpose benefits highlights the role that woodlands can play in socio-economic development. The Strategy places forestry and woodlands within the rural policy framework – a point that has been picked up in the Rural Development Regulation which, for the first time, sees forestry and woodlands as an integral part of rural development policy. The role of forestry in wider socio-economic development is also recognised, not least as part of the Community Forest programme. The Strategy highlights the role of forestry in improving the quality of the environment close to where people live.

2.18. The Strategy also places emphasis on partnerships and the involvement of as many sectors as possible in maximising the benefits of woodlands whether this is through the management of woodland or other methods. Equally it sees greater targeting of public resources to maximise the delivery of public benefits.

2.19. Thus Woodland Initiatives have the potential to directly assist in the fulfilment of aspects of the England Forestry Strategy in terms of maximising the benefits provided by the woodland resource and helping this contribute to the vitality of the locality – either directly in terms of contributing to the economy or indirectly as an important component of the environmental quality of the area.

2.20. The Forestry Commission's '*Sustaining England's Woodlands Review*' was announced in 2001, with the aim of reviewing support for the sustainable management of existing woodland outside the FC estate in accordance with the priorities of the England Forestry Strategy and UK Forestry Standard. The review is examining the role of the FC under the following headings:

- engagement and sustainability;
- support for management;

- partnership and targeting.

2.21. This study of Woodland Initiatives has been undertaken in order to contribute to the review.

OTHERS ALSO INVOLVED IN THE DELIVERY OF FORESTRY AND WOODLAND POLICY

2.22. In addition to the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Initiatives, there are many organisations with a role in the delivery of the England Forestry Strategy. These include government, landowners, the public, private and voluntary sectors. These organisations have, or have the potential, to work in partnership with the Woodland Initiatives. A list of some of the principal players is outlined and briefly described below, demonstrating the large number of organisations involved. However, the list could also be expanded to include many other organisations such as the National Farmers Union (NFU), Country Land and Business Association (CLA), wildlife groups, private sector businesses (e.g. forestry contractors, forestry consultants or wood users), business support organisations, educational establishments, local community groups, users groups (e.g. recreational interests) and others, all of which also have a potential role to play.

Forestry Commission

2.23. The Forestry Commission (FC) is the government department responsible for forestry throughout England. The mission of the FC is to *"protect and expand Britain's forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment"*.

2.24. The FC plays a key role in implementing the Government's forestry strategy for England. The key methods of implementation by the FC are:

- direct management of the FC's national forest estate (by Forest Enterprise);
- administration of woodland grants (e.g. Woodland Grant Scheme);
- administration of felling licences;

- support through partnerships initiatives such as Woodland Initiatives;
- research and development on woodland and forestry issues.

Countryside Agency

2.25. The Countryside Agency is the Government's statutory body working to:

- conserve and enhance the countryside;
- promote social equity and economic opportunity for the people who live there;
- help everyone, wherever they live, to enjoy this national asset.

2.26. The Agency recognises the role of profitable woodland enterprises in protecting and enhancing the countryside. Together with the FC and others, the Agency was responsible for establishing the 12 Community Forests with the aim of creating well wooded landscapes for wildlife, work and education with new opportunities for a range of recreational facilities, within easy reach of England's population. The Agency is also currently involved in work supporting economic products from sustainable land management.

English Nature

2.27. English Nature wishes to see woods rich in wildlife that also support prosperous and sustainable forestry. Their priorities include:

- contributing to national policies for sustainable forestry and seeking greater integration with other rural sector policies through the England Rural Development Programme;
- collaborating with partners to deliver the forestry objectives of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan;
- exploring ways to increase the funding available to support sustainable forestry, including more targeted and flexible use of existing grant-aid, but also bids to Heritage Lottery Fund, European funds etc;

- supporting national and local initiatives aimed at the creation and management of woods and the marketing of sustainable woodland produce, including use of wood as a fuel;
- promoting the understanding of woodland and its wildlife to the public;
- demonstrating principles and priorities through exemplary woodland management on National Nature Reserves, e.g. by seeking certification for them under UKWAS.

DEFRA and Other Government Departments

2.28. Work undertaken by DEFRA and other government departments in relation to sustainable woodland management includes:

- administration of the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP);
- administration of various ERDP schemes which may link, either directly or indirectly, to woodland management, e.g. Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS), Vocational Training Scheme (VTS), Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), and Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES);
- research and development;
- support for Woodland Initiatives such as the National Forest Company.

Forestry Contracting Association (FCA)

2.29. The FCA is the national trade association for the forestry sector, with the aim of improving the profitability and safety of forestry and arboricultural contracting. The FCA works on behalf of members from across the full range of the industry. It provides training, research and development (e.g. wood product markets opportunities) and is a significant contributor to the sustainable management of broadleaved woodlands acting as a lead partner in two of the main Woodland Initiatives. It also offers political representation for the whole of the contracting sector.

Forestry and Timber Association (FTA)

2.30. In February 2002, the Association of Professional Foresters and the Timber Growers Association merged to form the Forestry & Timber Association. The FTA represents a range of members associated with woodlands (both for business and for pleasure). It provides information services to members and undertakes lobbying on the full range of issues affecting growers from grants to training, from tax to research.

Small Woods Association (SWA)

2.31. The SWA is a national organisation that aims to encourage the care and enjoyment of small woods through bringing together all those with an interest in small woodlands and through restoring the links between people and woods. SWA is involved with woodland owners, local community based groups and Woodland Initiatives as well as the general public, in achieving these aims. It has acted as an informal umbrella group for Woodland Initiatives for over a decade. It provides education, training and information, in addition to raising public awareness and understanding of issues relating to small woodlands. In particular, SWA provides support to Initiatives through advice and by maintaining the Woodland Initiatives Register.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

2.32. The FSC is an international not-for-profit organisation that supports environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests. It is an association of Members consisting of a diverse group of representatives from around the world (e.g. environmental and social groups, the timber trade and the forestry profession). The FSC is introducing an international labelling scheme for forest products, which provides a credible guarantee that the product comes from a well-managed forest. It also supports the development of national and local standards that implement the international principles at the local level.

2.33. The FSC recognises that there is a real need to help small businesses who cannot afford certification, and is therefore also involved in supporting group certification.

United Kingdom Forest Products Association (UKFPA)

2.34. The UKFPA represents the technical and commercial interests of the Forest Products Industry to support the sustained growth in the utilisation of timber. It provides regular information on market conditions within the sawmilling and wood processing sector of the British grown timber industry.

Timber Research and Development Association (TRADA)

2.35. TRADA provides information on the specification and use of timber and wood products and aims to build markets for timber and wood-based products and increase sales in the UK by undertaking a programme of research and information.

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)

2.36. FWAG provides farmers and landowners with practical advice on making adjustments to farm operations and enhancing farm features in order to support wildlife, landscape, archaeology, access and other conservation issues. It can also provide advice in relation to farm woodlands.

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)

2.37. The RDAs are responsible for preparing a Regional Economic Strategy (RES), setting out a framework for economic development within their region. They are also responsible for administration of various funding streams (e.g. the Single Regeneration Budget) as a means of achieving the objectives of the RES. The RDAs have a duty to address sustainable development, but their emphasis on forestry is variable (see Box 2.1).

2.38. However, based on work initially undertaken in the South West region, all of the RDAs are at various stages of investigating the role of the environmental sector (including primary industries such as farming and forestry) in meeting sustainable development objectives.

Box 2.1: Examples of the role of forestry in Regional Economic Strategies (RESs)

South East

The Regional Economic Strategy prepared by the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA) is entitled '*Building a World Class Region*'. There is no mention of woodland/ forestry strategies but there is mention of the aim to enhance the quality of the rural environment and to foster demand for local products. However, SEEDA is currently funding a Woodland Enterprise Centre to promote the design, manufacture and training in the forestry and wood using sectors. SEEDA has also commissioned a study of the role of the environmental sector in the region's economy. This study will contribute to the review of the RES.

West Midlands

In the West Midlands Economic Strategy, Rural Development Areas are mentioned, as well as a need to diversify the rural economic sector. It states that there is currently too much reliance on farming and forestry but there are no specific proposals to diversify the forestry industry. However, together with the Forestry Commission and Countryside Agency, Advantage West Midlands (the RDA for the West Midlands) is currently supporting work to promote advice and support, market products and forge stronger links with the large timber using sector in the region.

Local Authorities (LAs)

2.39. Finally, many local authorities are involved in the management of woodlands through activities such as:

- ownership and direct management of woodlands;
- countryside management activities (e.g. as part of Countryside Strategies);

- activities of trees and woodland officers;
- support for community groups and tree wardens.

2.40. The LAs are also a major funding source for Woodland Initiatives.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS OF WOODLAND INITIATIVES

INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. This section of the report examines the achievement and successes of Woodland Initiatives.
- 3.2. The England Forestry Strategy (EFS) outlines the Government's objectives for multi-purpose forestry and it now provides the best means of judging whether the Initiatives have been effective at helping to deliver these objectives. However, it is important to recognise that most of the Initiatives were formed before the publication of the England Forestry Strategy in 1998 (See Table 1 in the supplementary report) and, in the absence of a national 'guiding hand' or of regional forestry strategies, many formed as bottom up approaches in response to local priorities (the exceptions to this are the Community Forests which were established as a result of a national initiative in 1989 by the Countryside Agency and the Forestry Commission and which consequently share a common origin and broadly common objectives).
- 3.3. It is also important to appreciate that the EFS establishes broad 'outcomes' at the national level which the Government wishes to deliver but that it does not establish quantifiable targets against which the local activities of Initiatives can be measured. There is as yet no regional action plans for delivery of the EFS.
- 3.4. As a result, this report first examines the achievements of Woodland Initiatives in meeting their own objectives (as summarised below) before relating these to the desired outcomes of the EFS (Chapter 4). The remainder of this chapter looks in more detail at the products of Woodland Initiatives work and draws conclusions on the successes and failures of the approaches they have taken. The evidence for this analysis is based on the information provided by Initiatives (see the supplementary report). It addresses the following issues:
 - What factors have influenced the origins and objectives of Initiatives?

- How well do Initiatives provide coverage of the relevant issues?
- How successful have the Initiatives been in fulfilling their objectives?
- How have Initiatives monitored their success?
- How have initiatives changed and why? In particular, what has happened since the ERM/Canopy report was prepared in 1995?

ORIGINS AND OBJECTIVES OF INITIATIVES

- 3.5. The origins and objectives of different Initiatives are summarised in Tables 1 and 3 in the supplementary report. These tables show that there has been no standard way in which Initiatives have developed.
- 3.6. In broad terms, they contribute to one or more of the following three long-term aims:
- Promoting the sustainable management of woodlands to protect and enhance landscape and biodiversity;
 - Stimulating and enhancing the contribution made by woodlands to the economy of local areas;
 - Promoting public awareness, use and involvement in woodlands, and the wider socio-economic benefits that they can provide.
- 3.7. However, within these very broad aims, it is clear that there is considerable diversity amongst Initiatives in the way they set objectives to achieve these aims. The objectives adopted by Initiatives have been shaped by local priorities, for example:
- **The woodland resource.** The wide regional and sub-regional differences in woodland types, woodland owners, contractors and markets have produced tailored objectives. For instance, in much of the South East of England, the priority has been the management of large sweet chestnut and hazel coppice woodlands resulting in a focus on craft uses and the need to train and promote coppice workers (typified by Wessex Coppice Group and Kent Interreg). In the Northern uplands, the focus has been on the small, often grazed, woodlands on livestock farms, resulting in the need to

provide suitable advice to farmers and to investigate and promote the markets that exist for timber that is often inaccessible and of poor quality (typified by Yorwoods and Bowland Added Value Project).

- **Social and economic need.** To a greater or lesser extent all of the Initiatives have objectives which address social or economic needs that can be met by involvement with woodland. The contribution of woodlands to the quality of life of urban residents is a strong motivation behind the 12 Community Forests which form a special group of Initiatives, described below. Initiatives such as the Rockingham Trust and Wychwood address the cultural importance of woodland in rural landscapes, promoting their value to local residents and visitors. The Greenwood Trust, Silvanus Trust and Wessex Coppice Group seek to use training in woodland crafts as a means of stimulating employment and enhancing social inclusion. Many of the rurally based Initiatives see woodland management and processing activity as a means of diversifying agricultural incomes. The opportunity to add value to wood products, providing employment and income to forestry contractors, processors and manufacturers is also a key objective of many Initiatives.
- **Availability of funding.** As described at the end of the supplementary report, the ability of Initiatives to adapt to new funding streams has also shaped their objectives. Funding streams have tended to concentrate Initiatives spatially, such as in the areas where European Structural funding is available (Objectives 1 and 5b) or thematically, with grant giving charities in particular, keen to assist Initiatives fulfil community-related objectives. However, it is important to note that funding does not necessarily follow need.

Even where Initiatives are making use of funding from the same source, such as those Initiatives that obtained Objective 5b funding, the specific priorities and measures identified in the Single Programming Documents tended to be different and each of the Initiatives therefore has a locally determined flavour (though the outcomes tended to be measured in the same way in terms of jobs and businesses supported and created). The origins of these

Initiatives are also diverse. Four of them (Anglia Woodnet, Bowland Added Value Project, Cumbria Broadleaves and the Mersey Forest) predated the Objective 5b programme which started in 1996. Of the five that formed specifically to take advantage of the new funding stream, Northwoods and Yorwoods were managed by the Forestry Contracting Association, Marches Woodland Initiative by the Forestry Commission, Lincwoods by ADAS and Working Woodlands by the Silvanus Trust and Bow Maurice Ltd (a limited company specialising in product and market development and in reconnecting supply chains).

- **The expertise of staff.** There is an element of chicken and egg here since it can be argued that Initiatives have attracted the staff that will best carry out their objectives. However, it is noticeable that Initiatives that are lead by people with strong experience in the commercial sector such as Andrew Davis of Anglia Woodnet or Chris Bow of Working Woodlands, have developed in ways that respond more to market need and the availability of financial incentives and less to the strategic objectives of local public sector bodies, when compared to Initiatives that employ staff with a long experience in the public sector.

COVERAGE PROVIDED BY INITIATIVES

- 3.8. The location of the Initiatives studied is listed in Table 2 in the supplementary report. It was beyond the remit of this study to examine the geographical coverage of England by Initiatives. However, based on anecdotal responses from the Initiatives themselves, it is interesting to note that given that there has been no deliberate national strategy to target the location of Woodland Initiatives, almost all of the areas with a significant small woodland resource in England are covered by an active Woodland Initiative. Although there are undoubted exceptions to this rule (e.g. the Cotswolds and the county of Surrey), it demonstrates the success of the 'bottom-up' approach. Nevertheless, there would still be merit in assessing at the regional level, whether sufficient geographical coverage is provided, and how any 'gaps' may be most appropriately addressed.

- 3.9. The focus of some Initiatives has traditionally been on woodland owners (e.g. Cumbria Broadleaves and Chilterns Woodlands Group), whilst others focus on other elements of the wood chain (e.g. The Wessex Coppice Group, which promotes the use of hazel coppice and services the needs of coppice workers). Those Initiatives focussing more on contractors or marketing are extending their geographical sphere of influence and many training courses run by Initiatives gained attendance from a wider area than their traditional geographical boundaries. For example the Wessex Coppice Group is based in Hampshire, the densest area of hazel coppice in the country, but provides a service throughout the country. The Greenwood Trust, which promotes craft and value added use of small diameter round wood is based in the West Midlands but also has a national (and to a degree, international) membership, drawing people to its training events from around the country. Anglia Woodnet, though based in East Anglia, has aspirations to provide a national service for group FSC certification.
- 3.10. As a whole, Initiatives seem flexible in responding to the requirements in their particular area. The development of Weald Woodnet over time from providing advice to woodland owners to its current activities in promoting the Woodland Enterprise Centre provides a good example of this flexibility. However, as with the 'geographical gaps', there would still be merit in assessing at the regional level, whether sufficient coverage of different issues is provided, and how any 'gaps' may be most appropriately addressed. This is discussed in Chapter 7 (Conclusions and Recommendations).

HOW SUCCESSFUL ARE INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES?

- 3.11. Initiatives are involved in a number of activities to achieve their objectives. These include:
- involvement with woodland owners to stimulate management of woodlands;
 - involvement with and support of the contracting sector;
 - building demand for woodland products;

- creating and supporting networks of viable woodland businesses;
- promoting woodlands as a social and community resource (e.g. high quality access, recreation and educational opportunities) and raising public awareness;
- forming and working in partnership with others.

3.12. These are summarised below to highlight where a 'need' exists, what Initiatives are doing to address the need, and to what extent these activities are successful in achieving the aims summarised in paragraph 3.6. Before approaching each of these issues, it should be said that the study was frustrated by the lack of empirical data against which to judge effectiveness. The information recorded by Initiatives does not give a good indication of the extent or quality of their involvement. While Initiatives were usually able to say how many woodland owners they circulate information such as newsletters to, how many woodlands they had visited in a given year, or how many owners had attended training courses and other events, they were the first to acknowledge that these figures do not indicate the outcomes in terms of improved woodland management or level of economic activity. Much of the following analysis is therefore based on a subjective assessment rather than on comparison against indicative targets.

3.13. With minor exceptions the Initiatives are not involved in direct management of woodland and do not view this as a core area of their work. This activity is not considered further.

Involvement with Woodland Owners

The need

3.14. Initiatives have identified that many small woodland owners do not have the awareness, knowledge or resources to assess the management needs of their woodland or to undertake the necessary management. The Forestry Commission's own data supports the position that large numbers of woodland owners are not being reached (FC research indicates that some 70% of private owners are not currently interacting with the FC).

3.15. However, the need for involvement with owners is variable, both in terms of the types of owner present in the area (for example owners of large estates tend to have retained woodland advisors) and in relation to the strength of other agencies in the area (see below).

Who is addressing the need?

3.16. A range of other organisations are also potentially involved with woodland owners, providing them with information, advice or financial assistance. The key organisations include the Forestry Commission's Woodland Officers, English Nature (with owners and managers of woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest), forestry officers in county councils or unitary authorities, the Small Woods Association (to its membership of around 1,000 woodland owners), The Timber Growers Association; the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) (on farmland habitats), private sector businesses such as forestry consultants and contractors and a variety of local initiatives (usually focussed on issues of local importance).

What are Initiatives doing?

3.17. Most Initiatives provide a free or heavily subsidised advisory service to owners, most from their own staff and some by subsidising private sector providers. Many Initiatives are currently, or have recently been, providing training on practical woodland management issues and most issue a periodic newsletter which is circulated to woodland owners 'on their books'. A minority of Initiatives do not see contact with woodland owners as a priority (such as Wessex Coppice Group and Stroud Touchwood). Few Initiatives provide a practical contracting service to woodland owners.

How effective is support to woodland owners?

3.18. An assessment of Initiatives' effectiveness in this area needs to take account of a range of issues. These are:

- the extent of their engagement with owners who are not currently assessing the management needs of their woodland,
- the quality of the outputs of their contact with woodland owners,

- the extent to which support to woodland owners can help to bring woodlands back into management;
- the additionality or displacement of activity in relation to other providers – and hence the cost effectiveness of Initiatives' involvement.

3.19. **The extent of engagement:** At its crudest, the breadth of the involvement that Initiatives have with woodland owners can be measured by the number of owners that they maintain some kind of contact with. Initiatives can point to large numbers of owners that have been contacted. Some Initiatives have put a large effort into compiling databases of owners who then receive newsletters that seek to influence what they do with their woodland. However, it is significant that databases such as the WOODSS database in the North West are now not being actively maintained. Systematic surveys of woodland owners, such as that compiled by the Red Rose Community Forest, or the Marches Woodland Initiatives in the Oswestry area, were useful in providing a strategic analysis of the resource but are now not used to target contact with specific owners. The use of mail shots to raise awareness of Initiatives' services to woodland owners (for instance most of the Objective 5b funded Initiatives sent leaflets to DEFRA's list of farm holdings) was important to generate work for Initiatives in their early days. However, such a scattergun approach is not considered effective in the long term, since there is no means of knowing whether the owner is interested in, and receptive to, the information they receive.

3.20. **The quality of engagement:** If woodland owners are to take action after receiving information, the information must be of a high quality and must be delivered in a professional manner. Initiatives that devolve this service to private sector consultants were aware of the issue of assuring the quality of advice and used a number of different methods to do so. Initiatives who provide advice to woodland owners from their own staff resources were generally less aware of the need to review quality.

- 3.21. The wide range of knowledge and expertise required by the small number of staff who work in Woodland Initiatives means that membership of professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Foresters is not sufficient, on its own, to assure the quality of advice given by these staff. Nor is it likely to be cost effective for a national register tracking the professional qualifications and development of Initiative staff, and the advisers used by them, to be developed. Instead, a system of exchange and qualitative benchmarking of best practice, in terms of the format and content of reports given to owners and of newsletters and leaflets should be established. The proposed Woodland Initiatives Networks Post should could consider how this might be taken forward.
- 3.22. The effectiveness of training provision is obviously related to whether it is meeting the required needs. All initiatives reported that training events were well subscribed indicating that there was a demand for the events. However, training needs analysis, as undertaken by Northwoods, is the most valuable way of ensuring training is addressing identified gaps.
- 3.23. **Effectiveness in bringing woodland back into management.** The extent to which support for owners is sufficient to bring woodland into appropriate management was an important talking point during the study. As stated above, most Initiatives were unable to give hard data on the areas of woodland brought into management. The exceptions were the Objective 5b funded Initiatives for whom this was an indicative target. There are no standard criteria or methods for calculating these statistics. However, Lincwoods Initiative indicated that 680 ha of woodland were brought into management through its services during its three- year operation and Marches Woodlands Initiative brought 1,341 ha of woodland into sustainable management over its six-year project.
- 3.24. Discussion with the Initiatives suggests that in many situations, uptake of the recommended management is only triggered by advice and support that leaves the action needed by the woodland owner to an absolute minimum. There was also a strong feeling that provision of advice and training alone was insufficient to bring woodlands into

management unless it was economically viable to do so. Consequently, many of the longer running Initiatives reported a shift in their activities and are now seeking to intervene, to a greater or lesser degree, at a number of points along the wood chain, with woodland owners, forestry consultants, contractors, processors and to a lesser extent with consumers (mainly corporate consumers such as local authorities). The change in focus in Initiative activities is described further later in this Chapter. That said, advice to owners cannot be ignored and where it is provided it should include sufficient follow-up which can be time consuming.

3.25. **Additionality and displacement:** Making a judgement on the degree to which activity by Initiatives has enhanced or displaced the work of others who are seeking to assist woodland owners is difficult in the absence of empirical data.

3.26. As explained above, there is a range of other organisations who aim to provide advice to woodland owners. However, there are a number of ways in which Initiatives are distinctive from other providers:

- They are often better funded to give on-site tailored advice to woodland owners focussed on the needs of the owner. This reflects a deliberate decision by local partners to pool their resources with others in support of the Initiative, rather than seek to provide the service themselves. Local authorities, the Countryside Agency, English Nature, the Forestry Commission and some Regional Development Agencies have followed this approach.
- Initiatives have often promoted themselves as specialists in the area of assessing the management needs of small neglected woodlands, in comparison with more generalist advisers such as FWAG or with private sector consultants whose expertise tends to be in the management of larger scale woodlands and often for more commercial objectives.
- Within the sphere of small woodland management, Initiatives aim to give 'multi-issue' or holistic advice integrating environmental and economic issues of management rather than the 'single-issue'

advice from more focussed organisations such as some of the local project based providers.

- Initiatives also have a degree of independence from statutory bodies, based around their partnership structure, which can give them access to certain woodland owners who might be wary of inviting the Forestry Commission or local authority, for instance, into their woodland.
- Some Initiatives (specifically those that received funding under the various EU structural fund programmes) have had access to delegated grants that were not available to other bodies.

3.27. The number of different organisations involved in giving advice, gives rise to the possibility of competition between these providers.

However, with the exception of competition with the private sector (described below), this study found no evidence of conflict or competition. Northwoods Forwards (the business plan for the Northwoods Initiative) specifically looks at the issue of additionality, concluding that in the North East region, there is no significant work being undertaken by others, with which the Initiative would compete.

3.28. Indeed referral between the public sector providers was common, with Initiatives receiving many referrals from other organisations such as the Forestry Commission, Small Woods Association and Local Authority Forestry Officers. Those Initiatives which do not provide advice often have to pass on enquiries to other organisations.

3.29. The potential for competition between Initiatives and the private sector was a significant issue for almost all the Initiatives. This competition primarily relates to the giving of woodland advice (which could be given by private consultants) rather than with contracting services, which are rarely provided by Initiatives. Nevertheless, most Initiatives were keen to point out that they see their role as providing advice to owners who would not otherwise pay for it and will refer owners to private sector consultants when appropriate. Potential competition was greatest where in-house staff were used to provide advice. While the study found no evidence, through talking to Initiatives, of conflict between Initiatives and consultants, this issue was not raised in any

systematic fashion with consultants. It is also a moot point whether the availability of free or subsidised advice from Initiatives and other providers reduces owner's willingness to pay for advice from the private sector.

3.30. Competition with the private sector is also the chief reason why Initiatives have not developed to provide commercial woodland management services. During their early years both the Chilterns Woodland Project and Weald Woodnet (formerly East Sussex Small Woodlands Project) employed their own woodland contractors. Both have moved away from this work to avoid competition with the private sector. Notably, the staff who were trained by these Initiatives have gone on to set up their own contracting business.

How should advice be provided by Initiatives?

3.31. Where Initiatives provide advice to woodland owners, this was undertaken either using in-house staff or outside consultants. The relative effectiveness of these two approaches, though, is difficult to assess as there is insufficient data on the 'outcomes'. Nevertheless, the following issues are relevant:

- quality assurance and continuing professional development of advisors presented different issues depending on whether consultants or in-house staff were used, but were still relevant to both methods;
- use of consultants enables more owners to be reached (resources of in-house staff is an issue);
- use of in-house staff raises greater potential for competition with private consultants whereas the use of consultants can provide support for these businesses (some consultants reported that they had taken the opportunity provided to enlarge their business);
- the perceptions of the owners about the type and quality of advice provided in different ways is likely to be an issue, but was not covered during the study.

3.32. The issue of charging for advice was also raised. Several of the Initiatives have identified that advice is more likely to be valued, and a commitment gained from the owner, if a financial value is attached to it. However, there is also a cost to the Initiative of running a charging system which might exceed the benefit if prices are too set too low.

Involvement with Contractors

The need

3.33. All the Initiatives studied have come to the conclusion that without a viable forestry contracting sector the goal of sustainable woodland management cannot be achieved. The viability of woodland contractors is perceived as a common problem amongst many of the Initiatives and in many areas (such as the North East and Kent) the scarcity of contractors is seen as the 'weakest link' in the wood chain. Although maintaining a viable contracting sector is a valid socio-economic objective in its own right, support for the contracting sector is also seen as essential to enabling sustainable woodland management.

Who is addressing the need?

3.34. In comparison with the number of organisations (other than Woodland Initiatives) seeking to influence woodland owners, there are many fewer organisations involved with the contracting sector. The Forestry Contracting Association (which has a membership of 1800 businesses across the UK who employ around 6,000 people) is the only significant organisation currently involved in this sector.

What are Initiatives doing?

3.35. All of the Initiatives now work to some degree with the contracting sector. There is evidence that the older Initiatives have moved in this direction from a position in the early 1990s of engagement, primarily, with woodland owners. Initiatives are involved in supporting the contracting sector in a number of ways, including:

- almost all Initiatives produced and maintained trade directories, often on the internet, including a database of local contractors to which they can refer woodland owners;
- many Initiatives have run training courses on practical woodland management topics and skills. Though these were primarily aimed at woodland owners, some were of interest to contractors;
- most of the Initiatives that received funding under the Objective 5b programme allocated capital grants to assist with investment in plant and equipment;
- a minority of Initiatives developed a referral system to encourage contractors to obtain business management advice (such as Mersey Forest's Timber Project which directed contractors to the Small Business Service and Chester and Ellesmere Port Enterprise Agency);
- although several Initiatives reported teaming up with a contractor to put together a display at local agricultural shows, only the Wessex Coppice Group saw one of their key activities as promoting contracting businesses (in this case taking coppice workers to the GLEE and SALTEX trade shows).

3.36. None of the Initiatives, with the exceptions of the Wessex Coppice Group and Kent Interreg, reported work to assess the needs of contractors to ensure that their particular requirements were met. The work undertaken by Kent Interreg involved a study to establish the assistance required to retain existing and attract new entrants to the Sweet Chestnut Industry. A training package was piloted to improve efficiency and earnings of those involved in cutting and harvesting Sweet Chestnut Coppice. This subsequently led to bid for funding to carry out more training in the sector. Health and safety training, leading to certification, was seen as a key aspect.

How effective has this been?

3.37. Once again, the difficulty of relating the activities of Initiatives to hard data on the number of contracting businesses, their turnover or

employees influenced, makes it hard to objectively assess the effectiveness of Initiatives in this area. The following is therefore based on the discussions held with Initiatives and others during the study.

- 3.38. **The breadth of engagement:** Because of the relatively small numbers of businesses providing forestry contracting services, Initiatives have been able to compile substantially complete lists for their area, though the distinction between a qualified forestry contractor and an individual with a chain saw is obviously blurred.
- 3.39. **The quality of engagement:** For the majority of Initiatives, the depth of their involvement with contractors was relatively shallow, being limited to referring contractors to woodland owners, usually through a trade directory. A commentary on the effectiveness of trade directories is given below under the heading 'Creating networks of viable businesses'. With the exception of courses run by Wessex Coppice Group and Kent Interreg, the training courses offered were usually aimed more at woodland owners than contractors and the level of expertise available would usually have been below that appropriate for most qualified contractors.
- 3.40. The Initiatives that were able to allocate capital grants towards investment in machinery (Marches Woodland Initiative, Mersey Forest, Working Woodlands and Yorwoods, all of them using European Structural funding) were able to provide more substantial support to contractors but to a relatively small number of businesses (Marches Woodland Initiative for instance assisted 6 businesses to purchase forestry harvesting and extraction equipment).
- 3.41. A few Initiatives attempted to relate the area of woodland brought into active management to the likely employment for contractors. The Marches Woodland Initiative, for example, used a multiplier of 55 ha of woodland producing employment for 1 full time person. But without clear evidence such statistics may not be that helpful.
- 3.42. Bowland Added Value Project is something of a special case in that it purchased standing timber, using the services of contractors to harvest and extract the timber, as part of its pilot project. It experienced

difficulty in finding contactors to do the work, despite being able to pay above current market rates, but the remit of the project did not allow it to address the problem, other than by compiling a list of local contractors.

- 3.43. Without specific data on effectiveness, it can be generally concluded that those Initiatives which undertake research to define the need of contractors and then provide specific services to address those needs, are likely to be more successful than some of the more 'general' support provided by other Initiatives.
- 3.44. **Additionality and displacement:** The fact that the Forestry Contracting Association were involved in supporting a significant number of Initiatives suggests that the sector sees Initiatives as being complementary and supportive of their work. The relationship worked in both directions, with the FCA providing the management function for Northwoods and Yorwoods, and Marches Woodland Initiative providing the administrative support to establish a local branch of the FCA. Since Initiatives did not seek to provide contracting services, there is clearly little risk of displacement, though the level of additionality provided by most Initiatives is currently limited to their advertising and referring contractors to a new client base.

Building Demand for Woodland Products

The need

- 3.45. The quality of the harvestable timber and roundwood in many small woods is relatively poor, principally through lack of long term management. When combined with the relatively high harvesting and extraction costs and the difficulty of selling small volumes, it is not surprising that the management of small woodlands is often uneconomic. If these disadvantages are to be overcome, ways must be found to increase demand and the price for products from small woodlands.
- 3.46. It is clear that the market is variable. There is a re-emerging market for coppice products (hazel and sweet chestnut) and in some parts of the country there is strong market from craft workers. But these

markets tend involve low volumes of product and the need for bulk markets remains.

- 3.47. At a national level, there is now considerable activity headed by the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) to ensure that Forestry Standards Council (FSC) certification is accessible to UK timber growers. Certification has grown rapidly, and is now required by many major timber purchasers (e.g. DIY stores, builders merchants, supermarkets) but the take up of certification remains dominated by owners of larger woodlands. It is acknowledged that the costs of FSC certification are relatively high for wood products grown in small woods, not only because of the high unit cost of accreditation to the woodland owner but also because of the high standards that must be met by all of the stages in the wood chain, effectively ruling out many of the small contractors and processors who usually handle these products.
- 3.48. It is recognised that timber products are not the only marketable resource of woodlands, and that their wider benefits in terms of, for example, landscape and recreation have a value. The problem here is to ensure a return to the owner from such benefits in ways that encourage woodland management (although a payment of a supplement through the WGS can help to address this).

Who is addressing this need?

- 3.49. At a national level, the issue of certification is being pursued by the Forestry Commission, Small Woods Association and Timber Growers Association, amongst others. Again at a national level, the Timber Research and Development Association (TRADA) disseminates information and promotes the raising of quality in the timber processing sector.
- 3.50. At the local sub-regional level, the study found no evidence of bodies, other than Woodland Initiatives and the work of individual companies, in promoting demand for woodland products from home produced woods, although it is known that in some regions Forest Enterprise is exploring new local markets for its hardwood timber resource.

What are Initiatives doing?

3.51. Most Initiatives are involved to some degree with processors and end users of wood products to stimulate demand for wood products. This activity includes:

- raising awareness of the connection between woodlands and wood products amongst partners, particularly local authorities;
- promotion of higher value local wood products at shows and events;
- identifying the current demand for wood products and how this demand could be met, such as the surveys of demand and supply undertaken by the Mersey and Red Rose Forests;
- attempting to find markets for low grade wood, particularly by addressing the viability of wood heat and charcoal (for instance by Anglia Woodnet, Cumbria Broadleaves and Yorwoods);
- assisting with FSC group certification for small woodland owners (particularly Anglia Woodnet who are developing group certification schemes throughout the country);
- developing local brands to identify the local provenance of products (such as the use of the Forest of Avon brand by their Wood Products Co-op and the use of the Forest of Bowland kestrel brand by Bowland AVP);
- promoting the wider benefits of woodlands (particularly the Community Forests and Wychwood project);
- direct marketing of products (e.g. Rockingham Forest Trust and Anglia Woodnet).

How effective has this been?

3.52. While the activities of the Initiatives is sporadic, with greater variation between Initiatives than in other areas of their work, they are at the cutting edge of a problem which as yet has no obvious resolution – how to raise the value of products from small woodlands such that their management becomes self sustaining. Broadly products from small woodlands can be classified into:

- high value/low volume (e.g. specialist wood for crafts and furniture);
- medium-high value/high volume (e.g. coppice products and construction timber);
- low value/high volume (e.g. firewood).

3.53. Initiatives are addressing and having some success with supporting small scale and higher value craft wood users. Where high quality wood products are being made, Initiatives report that producers find no difficulties in selling their products (such as Kent Interreg, the Chilterns, the Forest of Avon Co-op and Wessex Coppice Group). In many cases it is the lack of quality craftspeople and the poor knowledge of how to source timber from local sources that is holding back growth in the market. These are both issues that the Initiatives are attempting to address. For these products statement of provenance (branding) and FSC certification were not seen as a priority. Some products already have strong association with local areas (e.g. hazel coppice in Hants, Wilts and Dorset) or sweet chestnut coppice (Kent) and may not benefit from further branding.

3.54. All of the Initiatives were aware of the problem of finding a more profitable market for the low quality products that tend to come from previously undermanaged woods. Despite considerable support and effort by some Initiatives, there was a widespread view that the charcoal market is unlikely to provide a widespread solution. Anglia Woodnet's support for an innovative approach to making deliveries of firewood more convenient for households by packing it in large polypropylene sack 'cubes' is a low cost solution, but still has to be proved. Where direct marketing of *branded* low value products has been employed (such as by the Rockingham Forest Trust for charcoal and firewood), sales were disappointingly low. Most firewood is sold locally due to its weight and cost of transport – but this is rarely considered a marketing advantage. The use of woodfuel also has some potential, but is also still to be proved. The activity of Working Woodlands in the South-West is promising in this regard.

3.55. Initiatives are generally not yet tackling the wider bulk market for potentially higher value timber products such as construction

materials. FSC certification, which concentrates on quality assurance is of particular importance to this market, and the group certification schemes (if successful in overcoming the problems of certification for small woodland owners) will be a key component of this market. However, equally or even more pressing is the need to create demand for these products and review specifications for wood products amongst timber users, as these can often exclude local timber resources.

- 3.56. With the exception of Community Forests, Initiatives are not generally tackling links between woodlands and access and potential tourism revenue.

Creating Networks of Viable Businesses

The need

- 3.57. The business infrastructure to connect the products of small woodlands to the end user either does not exist or is dwindling fast. For instance, the number of saw mills willing to buy relatively small volumes of timber and who have rack saws to process round wood is shrinking and many timber merchants are unwilling to invest in green wood when cheap imported kiln dried wood is so freely available and at a quality and quantity which domestic processors strive to achieve. Processors are unwilling to invest in providing this capacity, as there is a problem with obtaining high quality wood, with guaranteed supply contracts, and with the high cost of timber from small woodlands.

Who else is addressing this issue?

- 3.58. Business advice is provided to small rural businesses by organisations such as the Farm Business Advisory Service (a scheme operated through Business Links which is part of Small Business Service) and the Enterprise Agencies which provide advice to business particularly small and medium sized enterprises. In addition, local authority economic development officers operate at a district level, providing an overview rather than advice to individual businesses. None of these are providing tailored advice to woodland businesses.

What are Initiatives doing?

3.59. Initiatives are involved in supporting wood based businesses as follows:

- promoting clusters of businesses to link producers and users to form viable networks and create advantage through economies of scale;
- provision of business support and training and in some cases grant aid;
- providing and maintaining trade directories;
- forming liaison groups to forge links between woodland owners, contractors and users (e.g. the Wood Industries Liaison Group, set up by the TWIG project).

How effective has this been?

3.60. None of the Initiatives have yet been successful in establishing a sizeable self-sustaining network. There have been some successes at the small scale (e.g. a sawmill using grant aid from the Lincwoods project has set up a mini-cluster of activity in the Lincolnshire area). However, trying to create viable business networks at a time of falling margins and rising economies of scale, is extremely difficult unless clearly defined specialist markets can be built up.

3.61. Business support has been a relatively minor activity to date by Initiatives, and it has not been possible to gauge its success. Where provided, business advice is unlikely to overlap with that provided by other organisations as there is currently a lack of advice tailored to woodland businesses. Similarly, the impact of grant aid on the businesses to which it was provided has not been monitored.

3.62. It is difficult to gauge the value of trade directories in stimulating management of woodland. They do have potential to both increase the profile of the wood chain, and general awareness of woodland management. To be most effective, they need to be designed to suit the audience (e.g. consumers, contractors and/or owners) and targeted to reach this audience. They also need to be kept up to date.

However, on their own, producing lists of businesses does little to create productive working relationships between the businesses who need to understand the capacity and needs of others in the wood chain. There was little evidence in this study that the majority of Initiatives were actively bringing potential collaborators together to purchase timber from local woodlands. An exception is the Mersey Forests Timber Project. The future development plans of Marches Woodland Initiative would also address this.

Promoting Woodlands as a Social and Community Resource

The need

- 3.63. Woodlands have the potential to act as a major leisure, recreational and educational resource and to contribute to healthier lifestyles, particularly where they are easily accessible from centres of population. They can also contribute generally to the quality of life of local communities. Consequently, high quality woodlands (especially those close to centres of population) have the potential to deliver a wide range of benefits.

Who is addressing the need?

- 3.64. The Countryside Agency is the statutory agency working to help everyone, wherever they live, to enjoy the countryside. Organisations which own woodlands such as the Woodland Trust (e.g. as part of their "*Woods on Your Doorstep*" initiative), the National Trust and Forest Enterprise are also involved with access to their sites. In addition, Forest Enterprise is active in acquiring land on the urban fringe. The Forestry Education Initiative (a partnership between forestry and timber processing sectors, environmentalists and educationists) is involved in promoting the educational value of woodlands.

What are Initiatives doing?

- 3.65. The Community Forests stand apart in that promoting recreational and educational access is amongst their primary objectives. Both of the Community Forests studied had staff dedicated to working in communities, usually with funding from local authority partners or

European Structural Funding. Activities undertaken by Community Forests include promoting the use of woodlands for exercise and health improvement, organising activities for children which deliver educational benefits and providing access and recreation opportunities on forested and open land. Community Forests are also working towards involving all sectors of the local communities.

- 3.66. All of the other Initiatives viewed the promotion of awareness of woodlands and woodland products as important to achieving their objectives. However, this generally did not extend to promoting woodland access. Some Initiatives mentioned the concern that this may alienate woodland owners.
- 3.67. Nevertheless, most Initiatives are keen to champion the social and cultural benefits of woodlands with some, such as the Wychwood Project, Stroud Touchwood and Rockingham Forest Trust, stating that they see direct benefits in terms of increased tourism arising from this. In addition, several of the other Initiatives, including the Silvanus and Greenwood Trusts, have been using woodlands and woodland craft activities as a means of increasing social inclusion. For example Greenwood Trust has been successful at a small scale, but with relatively low resources, working with disabled groups.

How effective is this work?

- 3.68. The Community Forests demonstrate that Woodland Initiatives can get involved in and be successful at maximising the potential of woodlands to deliver a wide range of benefits to the local community and local environment. However, none of the other Initiatives have become involved in these types of activities to the same extent and do not view this as a core activity.

Forming Partnerships

The need

- 3.69. As described in Chapter 2, there are many different agencies with a potential involvement in stimulating management of small woodlands, from national government and Regional Development Agencies to local

authorities and local community groups. Despite common objectives in improving the management and appreciation of woodlands, and a commitment to the actions described in the England Forestry Strategy, there is little co-ordination of effort between these agencies and organisations.

What are Initiatives doing?

- 3.70. By working in partnership with others, many of the Initiatives are bringing together diverse groups of organisations. For example, the TWIG project, utilising the availability of EU funding, brought together a wide range of partners including national agencies and local authorities alongside educational establishments and an existing Woodland Initiative (the Chilterns Woodlands Project).
- 3.71. At a regional level, some of the Initiatives help co-ordinate networks to exchange best practice and encourage joint working. For example, SERLAWN, operating in the South East region, brings together the local authority run woodland projects and their officers. In the East Midlands, EMWING involves a wider range of woodland bodies to share experience and build capacity.
- 3.72. At the level of local community and project based Initiatives, this study found little evidence that the sub-regional Initiatives, or any other organisations, are co-ordinating the considerable energy and enthusiasm that exists within these local groups in the South East, East Midlands and West Midlands (the three regions in which these local groups were studied). The Initiatives did not view this role as part of their remit.

How effective has this been?

- 3.73. Initiatives provide an ideal mechanism for bringing together different organisations to achieve a common aim since their partnership structure means that many of the appropriate organisations are already co-operating in the funding and management of the Initiative. Initiatives have been successful in building up local contacts and knowledge beyond this partnership, creating a reputation and acting as a contact point for a range of interested parties. The longer standing

Initiatives such as the Chilterns Woodland Project, Silvanus Trust and Weald Woodnet provide continuity and a repository of information. Many Initiatives have formalised parts of this information in databases of useful contacts and on websites (such as the Wessex Coppice Group).

- 3.74. Initiatives are also successful at instigating projects which, once running, no longer require the support of the Initiative. Some of these are self sustaining, whilst others are taken on by partner organisations. For example, a training scheme for furniture makers, which was set up by the TWIG project, is now being continued by Rycotewood College.
- 3.75. Where Initiatives are working together and helping to bring together the work of other organisations, there are a number of potential benefits:
- co-ordinated policy lobbying at regional level (including input to the Regional Economic Strategy);
 - exchange of information;
 - working to a common action plan (e.g. to agree amongst Initiatives which area of work they should focus on).
- 3.76. While Initiatives will not necessarily be the best organisation to take a lead in setting policies, their partnership structure (which lends a degree of independence) makes them well suited to networking between the various regional and more local organisations that work with the small woodland resource.
- 3.77. It is evident though, that the time inputs involved in contributing to existing networking has proved to be problematic for some Initiatives. This is because it forms one of the 'core' activities for which output related project funding has been hard to obtain.
- 3.78. Most Initiatives operate at a sub-regional role (though Marches Woodland Initiative looks set to take on a more regional role and other Initiatives such as Anglia Woodnet and the Wessex Coppice Group have a reach which extends beyond a single region). However, co-ordination between organisations involved with small woodlands

naturally fits at the regional level (based on the experience of existing networks such as EMWING and coinciding with Forestry Commission Conservancies and the economic development activities of Regional Development Agencies).

- 3.79. If there is role for Initiatives to take the lead role in facilitating regional co-ordination of effort, it is clear that there is potential competition between Initiatives in certain regions, such as the South East and North West, where there are more than one established Initiative. In other regions, such as the South West, West Midlands and East Anglia, there is one obvious candidate (Silvanus Trust, Marches Woodland Initiative and Anglia Woodnet respectively).

MONITORING OF SUCCESS

- 3.80. This Chapter has demonstrated that although the Initiatives have collectively undertaken a large amount of work across a wide spectrum of activities, many Initiatives have not seen the need to collect data on their outputs, much less the outcomes of their work. The Initiatives that were the most rigorous about keeping numerical records of their activities were those whose funding bodies set indicative targets against which activity was measured – particularly the Community Forests and Objective 5b funded Initiatives where indicative targets were set by DETR and MAFF (now DEFRA) respectively. However, the Initiatives themselves tended to regard this data as a necessary evil rather than providing them with information from which they could improve their service, as the targets failed to address the quality of work undertaken.
- 3.81. Where data is collected, the Initiatives that are involved in contacting and engaging with woodland owners to promote the benefits of management and in the provision of advice and training could demonstrate the outputs of their activities (e.g. in terms of numbers of owners contacted and in terms of numbers of training days held). Where Initiatives are involved in other activities including networking, promotion of woodland products or in raising the public profile of woodlands, their outputs were much more difficult to measure.

3.82. Furthermore, the 'outcomes' of these activities are intangible and their contribution to supporting the management of non-commercial woodland is more difficult to ascertain. Consequently, even where information is collected it says little about whether the desired outcome of better managed or more accessible woodland, or of jobs created, has been met. There is a genuine problem for Initiatives in that collecting information on their outcomes would be extremely time consuming and would often be regarded as an intrusion on the people that have assisted.

DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITIES IN THE LAST 7 YEARS

3.83. The report undertaken in 1995 by the consultants Environmental Resource Management and Canopy reviewed the activities of Woodland Initiatives and it is interesting to see how Initiatives have changed since then.

3.84. This study found little evidence that the primary objectives of Initiatives had changed significantly during the intervening period. Then and now Initiatives aim to improve the environmental, social and economic value of small woodlands. However, it is clear that there has been a change in the focus of activities undertaken by Initiatives, as outlined below.

3.85. These changes are partly in response to changes in policy and consequently the funding available. One of the main drivers for change has been access to EU structural funds which have required specific outputs to be achieved, derived from policy objectives. There has also been a change in the attitude of government agencies away from pump-priming of projects (which were expected to be self-sustaining) towards a longer term view which accepts that projects that address areas of market failure may justify longer term support providing they are able to demonstrate sufficient public benefit, monitored through a service level agreement.

3.86. Initiatives are also developing their activities to take account of what is successful and works well, responding to local circumstances.

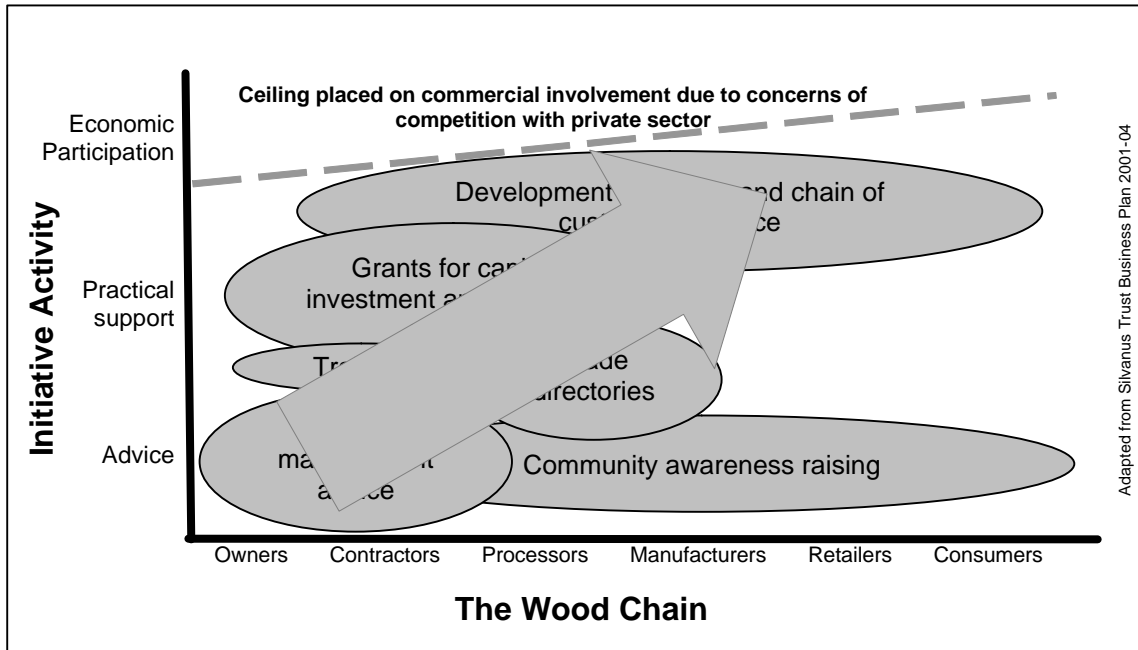
3.87. This study has provided evidence of a continuing shift in the activity of Woodland Initiatives from one of 'pushing' woodland management by

advising woodland owners to one of 'pulling' demand for the products of sustainably managed woodland. The ERM/Canopy Report reported that Initiatives were involved in activities such as marketing, training and networking, but that much of the activity of the Initiatives was concentrated 'behind the forestry gate'. Most Initiatives have a wealth of experience in engaging with woodland owners and providing advice. Some remain heavily involved in this area (e.g. Chilterns Woodlands Project and Cumbria Broadleaves), while many of the Objective 5b funded projects saw working with woodland owners as their core activity. Indeed, almost all the Initiatives interviewed stressed the importance of continued involvement with woodland owners in terms of advising on management priorities, identifying potential markets and referring to private contractors and buyers.

- 3.88. However, many of the longer running Initiatives reported a shift in their activities to 'pull' activities (the various stages of Initiatives in the Weald area being one example of this). Initiatives such as the Bowland Added Value Project were set up primarily to deal with 'pull' activities. Many of the Woodland Initiatives are now seeking to intervene, to a greater or lesser degree, at a number of points along the wood chain, with woodland owners, forestry consultants, contractors, processors and to a lesser extent with consumers (mainly corporate consumers such as local authorities). Some are specialising in one particular area (e.g. Kent Interreg project has focussed on providing support to contractors) whereas others are broadening their focus to cover a number of different points in the wood chain (e.g. Marches Woodland Initiative together with Advantage West Midlands).
- 3.89. Whilst much of their **experience** lies with 'push' factors, it is interesting that the issues that the Woodland Initiatives would most like to address in the future tend to involve activity further down the wood chain.
- 3.90. Figure 3.1 is intended to provide a simple illustration of this development of Initiatives over time. The broad arrow shows the change in emphasis from involvement with woodland owners to greater involvement with others in the wood chain (on the X axis) and at the same time change from provision of advice to greater practical and economic support (on the Y axis). There is a 'ceiling' to the level of

economic support, determined by the onset of competition with the private sector.

Figure 3.1: Development of Initiative activities



SUMMARY

- 3.91. While it may be impossible to give a reliable empirical measurement of effectiveness, a more subjective assessment is certainly possible. The Initiatives are successful in addressing issues that are currently not being tackled by others (even where there was potential for the work to be undertaken by other organisations there is currently no real evidence of overlap). There is also a demonstrated need for this work to be undertaken.
- 3.92. Initiatives are very diverse in their objectives and in their activities to achieve these objectives. Consequently, although this is an attempt to summarise where activities are successful, it is not intended to indicate

that all Initiatives are undertaking these activities or that they are all achieving the same level of success.

- 3.93. **Involvement with woodland owners.** Initiatives are good at contacting and engaging with woodland owners. Once they have made initial contact, they are providing advice and training with the aim of stimulating sustainable management of woodlands. This advice is distinct from that provided by other organisations and there was no evidence from this study that Initiatives were in competition with either the private sector or other public bodies (indeed there was evidence that Initiatives had moved away from areas of competition). However, the quality and effectiveness of the advice and/or training (in terms of bringing woodlands into sustainable management) was not monitored. In general, it is realised that advice on its own is unlikely to be sufficient to achieve sustainable management, but that advice needs to be taken hand in hand with other measures to stimulate the 'pull' factors for managing woodlands.
- 3.94. **Involvement with the contracting sector.** Although support for the contracting sector was identified as a key issue, with the exception of the FCA, there are no other organisations working in this sector. The study showed that Initiatives worked with the FCA rather than in competition, but that the support provided by Initiatives tended to be 'broad and shallow' rather than targeted at the needs of contractors. The effectiveness of the support (in terms of its impact on contracting businesses) was not monitored. The exceptions are Wessex Coppice Group and Kent Interreg which both provided targeted services to contractors and which consequently are more likely to be successful in achieving the desired outcomes.
- 3.95. **Stimulating demand for woodland products.** In their work to stimulate demand for products from woodlands, Initiatives are at the cutting edge of a problem which as yet has no obvious resolution. Initiatives are addressing and having some success with supporting small scale and higher value craft wood users but they have yet to prove success with finding markets for low value products (principally charcoal and woodfuel). Areas which are not tackled by Initiatives include the wider bulk market for potentially higher value timber products (such as

construction materials) and, with the exception of Community Forests, the links between woodlands and access and potential tourism revenue.

3.96. Supporting networks of viable woodland businesses. Initiatives are working to support processors and other elements of the wood chain in trying to promote networks of viable businesses. It is difficult to gauge the success of their activities, but it is clear that none of the Initiatives have yet been successful in establishing a sizeable self-sustaining network (although there have been some successes at the small scale). However, trying to create viable business networks at a time of falling margins and rising economies of scale, is extremely difficult unless clearly defined specialist markets can be built up. There are also no other organisations currently providing this kind of support.

3.97. Promoting Woodlands as a Social and Community Resource.

Woodlands have the potential to act as a major leisure, recreational and educational resource and to contribute to healthier lifestyles, particularly where they are easily accessible from centres of population. They can also contribute generally to the quality of life of local communities. The Community Forests stand apart in that promoting recreational and educational access and working with local communities is amongst their primary objectives. Some of the other Initiatives (e.g. Silvanus and Greenwood Trusts) have been using woodlands and woodland craft activities as a means of increasing social inclusion. Other Initiatives are involved in activities contributing to these objectives, but to a lesser extent, and many do not view this as a core activity.

3.98. Partnership working. In many cases, the problem being tackled by Initiatives is an extremely difficult one, and it is not clear whether these small organisations acting alone will be able to make any considerable impact. The need for a co-ordinated approach appears inevitable. As a result of their partnership structure, Initiatives provide an ideal mechanism for bringing together different organisations to achieve a common aim. They have also been successful in building up local contacts and knowledge beyond this partnership, creating a reputation and acting as a contact point for a range of interested parties. Some of

the Initiatives were also demonstrating co-operative working at the regional level, which can bring a number of potential benefits.

3.99. **Development over time.** The range of activities currently being undertaken by Initiatives (in comparison to the situation in 1995), demonstrates that, in general, they were effective at identifying and adapting to changing needs. Since the Canopy Report was prepared in 1995, Initiatives have responded to policy change (and consequently funding availability) and in response to what was perceived to be successful. In particular there has been a shift in activity from 'push' activities (principally activities with woodland owners) towards 'pull' activities (stimulating demand for the products of sustainably managed woodland). Between all of the Initiatives, there is now coverage of activities across the whole of the wood chain.

3.100. The next Chapter examines how this activity matches up to the strategic objectives set for the England Forestry Strategy. Chapter 6 examines whether Initiatives are likely to be cost effective partners in delivering these objectives.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO GOVERNMENT FORESTRY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1. This Chapter examines how the activities undertaken by Initiatives match up to the policy objectives set out in the England Forestry Strategy (EFS) and UK Forestry Standard.
- 4.2. Under the four programme headings of Forestry for Rural Development; Forestry for Economic Regeneration; Forestry for Environment and Conservation and Forestry for Recreation, Access and Tourism, the EFS lists a series of actions which establish the desired outcomes of the strategy. The UK Forestry Standard sets out the Government's approach to sustainable forestry, with criteria and indicators against which management can be measured.
- 4.3. The majority of Woodland Initiatives were established prior to 1998 and hence were not specifically focused on fulfilling the EFS. Furthermore, the EFS is a broad strategy document rather than a detailed action plan and therefore does not contain specific actions or targets against which Initiatives can be measured. Consequently, the following provides a broad assessment against the four main policy objectives, highlighting where Initiatives are contributing and where there is potential for additional work to be undertaken. Figure 4.1 provides a summary of the contribution of Initiatives to specific objectives where these are of potential relevance⁷.

FORESTRY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.4. Sustainable development is a central theme of government policy. Within the England Forestry Strategy, forestry for rural development covers the role of forestry in the wider countryside, including its

⁷ The objectives and strategies of other organisations contribute to forestry policy in England. These include the Rural White Paper and Urban White Paper, and the objectives of organisations such as English Nature in meeting Biodiversity targets. The contribution of Initiatives in meeting these broader objectives however, was beyond the scope of this study.

contribution to the rural economy. The strategy focuses both on the role of new woodlands and on how existing woodlands can be managed to deliver more benefits to local economics, by creating jobs both upstream and downstream of the forest industry.

4.5. Woodland Initiatives are demonstrating that they have a key, perhaps a unique, role to play at a sub-regional level, promoting the contribution of existing woodlands to local economies. In many cases they are the only public sector organisation seeking to overcome market inefficiencies and failures in the wood chain - by liaising directly between owners, contractors and processors. Their motivation in moving away from the traditional 'push' factors of management to the 'pull' factors has been to provide an economic incentive for managing woodlands, but in doing so, they are contributing to the role of woodlands in the wider economy. In particular, Initiatives are involved in:

- advising owners of markets and potential for their woodland to be economically viable and providing advice and skills to bring wood to market (and integrating this production with downstream wood users);
- assessing local supply and demand of woodland products (e.g. Mersey and Red Rose Community Forests, Bowland AVP, Working Woodlands);
- stimulating markets for wood products (e.g. Anglia Woodnet, Bowland AVP, Forest of Avon Wood Products Co-op, Rockingham Forest Trust, Wessex Coppice Group, Silvanus Trust);
- increasing the efficiency and connectedness of local supply chains by provision of support for woodland businesses, including contractors, processors and users (e.g. Bowland AVP, Forest of Avon, Greenwood, Kent Interreg, Marches WI, Silvanus, Stroud Touchwood, Wessex Coppice Group, Working Woodlands);
- promoting the environmental and social quality of woodland products through certification and local brands (e.g. Anglia Woodnet, Forest of Avon Co-op, Bowland AVP).

- 4.6. In undertaking their work, Initiatives are also very aware of the potential for overlap between their work and that of other businesses. All of the Initiatives are sensitive to the issue of providing publicly subsidised services that would compete with private woodland consultants and contractors.
- 4.7. In view of the underlying economic problems faced by the industry, it is likely that public grant aid to enable businesses to reinvest in new plant and machinery and subsidised business advice to improve standards of management will be required to stimulate industries. Nevertheless, there is considerable scope for additional work by Initiatives or others, in the following areas:
- Promoting the 'pull' factors by supporting woodland owners, contractors and processors in helping woodlands to contribute to the local economy. Several Initiatives anticipated new projects in this area (such as Marches Woodland Initiative, Working Woodlands and Rockingham Forest Trust). A key aspect will be in improving the return on low quality timber (for which woodfuel seems the most promising market). Initiatives were also keen to promote use of local timber in existing markets (e.g. by changing the timber product sourcing policy of public bodies).
 - Creating clusters of activity which then become self-sustaining. The Marches Woodland Initiative, in particular, has plans to undertake further work in this area.
 - Invigorating the contracting sector, by increasing the demand for, and supply of, timber from local woods and by working with the Forestry Contracting Association to raise standards amongst contractors. Initiatives would be greatly assisted in this latter task by the introduction of relatively modest capital grants to enable investments in new plant and machinery and by funding for business advice through the Small Business Service (similar to the Farm Business Advisory Service).
 - Greater involvement in the wider wood market.

- Stimulating recreation and tourism associated with woodlands, which then provide a return to the owner.

FORESTRY FOR ECONOMIC REGENERATION

- 4.8. This objective covers the use of forestry for regeneration of industrial land and as a green setting for future development.
- 4.9. Most of the Initiatives included in this study worked primarily in rural areas and thus have not contributed to this objective.
- 4.10. By contrast, the Community Forests score highly against this objective in their work to improve the environmental quality of urban landscapes. Indeed, Community Forests are the principal delivery mechanism, with the grant supplements and other incentives at their disposal, that support this objective. The establishment of woodland on derelict industrial land, sometimes as an interim measure prior to eventual redevelopment has been a key objective of many Community Forests and three (The Mersey, Red Rose and Thames Chase Forests) have acquired large sums from the Capital Modernisation Fund to enable them to do this.
- 4.11. Since most of the activity in this programme of the EFS has more to do with woodland creation than management of existing woodland, it is somewhat outside the remit of this study and no further analysis of this activity was undertaken.

FORESTRY FOR RECREATION, ACCESS AND TOURISM

- 4.12. The Community Forests stand apart from other Initiatives in that promoting access, recreation, education and community involvement in woodlands are amongst their primary objectives. They are active in the urban fringe areas, which are easily accessible to large centres of population, in addition to the wider countryside.
- 4.13. Other Initiatives are involved in activities contributing to these objectives, but to a lesser extent. All of the Initiatives viewed the promotion of awareness of woodlands and woodland products as important to achieving their objectives. This was usually achieved via newsletters and events and more recently via websites. It generally did

not extend to promoting woodland access. Some Initiatives were concerned that this may alienate woodland owners.

4.14. A few of the Initiatives have also been more closely involved. For example the Silvanus and Greenwood Trusts, have been using woodlands and woodland craft activities as a means of increasing social inclusion. Rockingham Forest Trust and Wychwood are involved in promoting social and community activities in their particular areas. Interestingly, both of these areas have a distinct identity as a historical woodland resource and differ from the urban fringe locations of the Community Forests.

FORESTRY FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

4.15. This programme of the EFS covers the role that woodlands can play in sustaining the environment, by enhancing the character of the countryside, cultural heritage and in delivering the government's nature conservation, biodiversity and climate change objectives.

4.16. Initiatives are contributing directly to this objective by providing owners with environmental surveys of woodland, advice (particularly long term management plans) and training on sustainable management practices. As already discussed, it is impossible, on the basis of the information available to this study, to demonstrate the connection between these surveys, advice and training and real improvements in management. Nevertheless, the fact that these services appear popular with woodland owners suggests that they are effective at improving the knowledge and motivation of the woodland owner.

4.17. Initiatives have also contributed to improving the environmental management of woodlands by providing grants linked to sites of high conservation value or where specific management for biodiversity was involved (such as the Objective 5b funded Initiatives of Lincwoods, Northwoods and Yorwoods) and by helping to increase the supply of locally native trees and shrubs (e.g. Northwoods).

4.18. This is an area of work where there are a large number of other organisations, many of whom have a higher profile and greater specialism than the Woodland Initiatives. However, these organisations

rarely have the resources to provide this expertise to many of the small woodland sites, whereas Initiatives usually have greater coverage and are seen to be more independent by woodland owners. All in all, the availability of specialist knowledge to Initiatives from these organisations, many of whom are represented as partners, ensures that Initiatives can provide a high quality and effective service in this area.

- 4.19. Finally, it is also worth observing that the activities of Initiatives to stimulate the market for locally produced woodland products is aimed at encouraging sustainable woodland management.

UK FORESTRY STANDARD

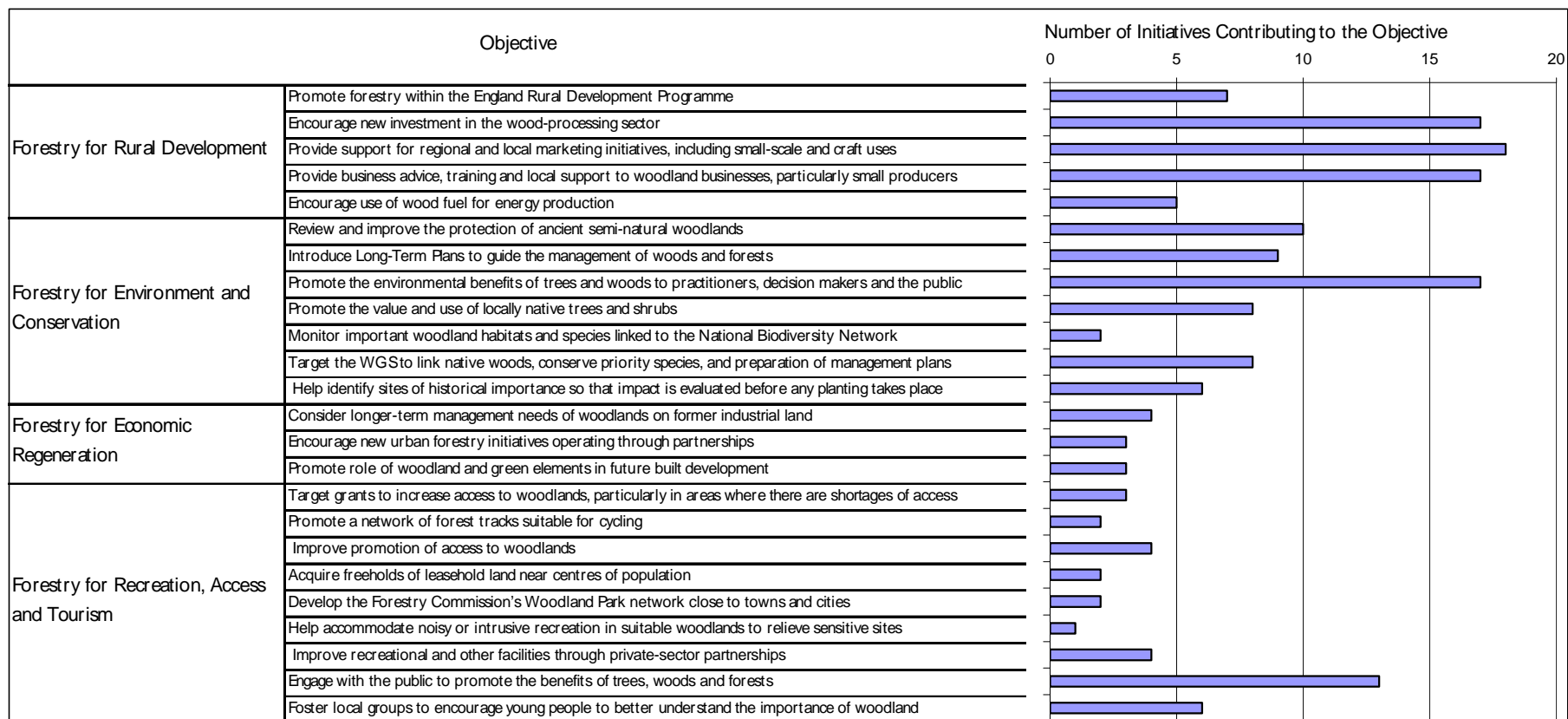
- 4.20. Initiatives were generally aware of the UK Forestry Standard, but none of the Initiatives reported that they referred to it on a day to day basis. Activities are not recorded against the criteria of the Forestry Standard hence there is no measure of performance against the Standard. However, most Initiatives would argue that where they were providing advice to owners that they were meeting the objectives of the Standard.
- 4.21. It became apparent during the study that, though the UK Forest Standard is highly regarded, it is not seen as addressing the particular needs of small woodlands, where the availability of labour and the economies of scale are, for instance, very different from larger commercial woodland areas.

SUMMARY

- 4.22. It is clear that to date, the work of Initiatives has not been co-ordinated with the objectives of the EFS in mind. Initiatives do not record or monitor their progress against the objectives of the EFS. Nevertheless, the work of Initiatives does contribute to achievement of the EFS under each of the four programme headings.
- 4.23. There is considerable variation between Initiatives in the activities they undertake and how these fit with the EFS. In general, the Initiatives are contributing most towards the Rural Development and Environment and Conservation objectives of the EFS. The Community Forests are the only Initiatives to be using woodlands to repair derelict industrial

land and are more closely involved in promoting recreational access and the needs of local communities than other Initiatives.

Figure 4.1: Contribution of Initiatives to the objectives of the England Forestry Strategy



Notes: This figure summarises only those objectives which are of potential relevance to Woodland Initiatives. Objectives which could not be implemented by Initiatives (e.g. policies for agricultural reform) have not been included.

The objectives have been summarised to enable pictorial representation, therefore the England Forestry Strategy should be referred to for the wording of the full objective.

5. FUNDING

PUMP PRIMING

- 5.1. Many Initiatives have been set up using pump prime funds. It is clear from this study that Woodland Initiatives are not able to make a profit from their activities (with the exception of separate trading companies which were not covered by this study). The financing of small public sector bodies that have no statutory mandate is inevitably not easy. Following the end of the initial funding period, alternative sources of finance have had to be found, often requiring annual applications to a variety of different bodies. Most of the Initiatives have therefore had to adjust to a hand-to-mouth existence where long term programmes are severely limited by the uncertainty of funding. Some of the Initiatives are now in severe financial difficulties. Current sources of funding which are used by the Initiatives are described in the supplementary report and summarised below.

CURRENT SOURCES OF FUNDING

- 5.2. **European funding.** One of the most significant funding sources has been from the European Union, in particular in those areas designated as Objective 1, Objective 2 and Objective 5b. These funds have been instrumental in the start up of a number of Initiatives (e.g. Lincwoods, Northwoods and others). Outside these areas, Initiatives have to rely on other sources of European money e.g. LIFE, Interreg, Leader or RECITE although these can still be significant funding sources. A feature of all the European Union funded schemes is the level of administration and auditing required. Initiatives reported a confused, repetitive and time-consuming application procedure. Once projects received approval, the need for separate accounting to measure project outputs against the targets of the programme created a significant extra cost.
- 5.3. **National funding.** At the national level, MAFF (DEFRA) was a major contributor to Initiatives as match funding for 5b projects. The Countryside Agency has provided significant funding for many

Initiatives (such as the Community Forests and, at a smaller scale, the Wychwood Project, Cumbria Broadleaves and the Chiltern Woodland Project) but as short term 'pump priming' funds. Consequently, Countryside Agency funding for Initiatives is declining. The Forestry Commission has provided only small amounts of funding to Initiatives, with the exception of the Community Forests, where they were the joint partner with the Countryside Agency.

- 5.4. Several of the Initiatives studied, including Northwoods, Yorwoods and the Lincwoods, were attracted to the Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES) forming one of the funding streams under the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP). It was hoped that this would enable the Initiatives to provide capital and revenue grants to forestry contractors, processors and woodland owners, in a similar fashion to the Objective 5b programme. These Initiatives made lengthy applications to this Scheme late in 2001, having been given indications by DEFRA staff that the projects proposed in outline would be eligible. However, by December 2001, it became clear that applications under article 33 (the article under which applications were made) were ineligible and the applications to the RES were rejected. Due to the non-enactment of article 30 of the RDR, almost all activities involved in woodland management and timber harvesting and processing were not funded. An application made by the Wessex Coppice Group covering training and support of craft workers is still being considered.
- 5.5. **Regional funding.** In general, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) have not been a source of funding for Woodland Initiatives to date, with the implication that RDAs do not view forestry as an economically important sector. A notable exception is SEEDA which has provided Challenge Funding to Weald Woodnet for the construction of the Woodland Enterprise Centre in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and to Wessex Coppice Group. This partly reflects the lack of European funding streams in the South East. Equally, Advantage West Midlands has made a commitment to support the development of the Marches Woodland Initiative.
- 5.6. **Local authorities.** Local authority funding has been central to the establishment and continuation of some of the Initiatives studied (e.g.

Chilterns Woodland Project, Rockingham Forest Trust). Due to the nature of local authority budgets, Initiatives must bid on an annual basis for funding, with no guarantee that funding will be forthcoming often until close to the beginning of the financial year in question. Local authority funding has tended to bring a landscape management and nature conservation focus to the work of Initiatives, compared to the more enterprise-centred activity of some other sources of funding.

- 5.7. **Other sources of funding.** There are a large number of charitable trusts that have educational, craft, recreational or rural objectives that could provide funds to Woodland Initiatives. However, such charities tend to be an unreliable source of repeat funding, firstly because the Trustees deliberately avoid regular contribution to the same beneficiary and, secondly, because funding tends to be allocated on an annual basis, with applicants from a wide variety of areas competing between each other. Although lottery funding has been obtained by some of the Initiatives, work involving the 'pull' factors of woodland management is unlikely to meet the current requirements of the main lottery distributors. Landfill tax funding has also been used by some Initiatives (e.g. Rockingham Forest Trust).
- 5.8. Most Initiatives had not spent a large amount of time in attempting to obtain funding from business sponsors and perhaps, as a consequence, none of the Initiatives were receiving significant amounts of money from this source. It is likely to remain difficult to attract business sponsors to support work involving the 'pull' factors of woodland management as these overlap with perceived commercial activities. Sponsors are more likely to fund work with clear 'environmental' results (e.g. archaeology, biodiversity), those with an element of community involvement or providing wider public benefit.
- 5.9. **Earned income.** Initiatives have been successful at gaining some income from training events. Although these were subsidised in many cases, those attending were willing to pay towards the cost of training provision. However, certain funding bodies (e.g. the Recite II programme) required any income from these events to be offset against the funding provided. Only one of the Initiatives (The Silvanus

Trust) receives significant amounts of earned income, which is covenanted to the Trust from its trading arm (Silvanus Services Ltd).

LEVERAGE

5.10. The partnership approach adopted by Woodland Initiatives means that they have been able to access a wide variety of funding sources, including many of those described above. Thus, funding provided at a national level can be doubled or trebled by accessing funds from other bodies, especially when in kind contributions of office accommodation, financial accounting, seconded staff, and project management are taken into account. For example, when annual funding for Initiatives is considered, funding from national sources (including Forestry Commission, Countryside Agency, English Nature and MAFF/DEFRA) only contributes up to 50% of the income of Initiatives (and some such as Greenwood Trust or Oxfordshire Woodland Project receive no income from these sources). For example, TWIG received approximately 50% of funds from national sources (principally DEFRA and Countryside Agency), Rockingham Forest Trust received approximately 15% (principally Countryside Agency) and Working Woodlands received 15% (principally from DEFRA)⁸. The remaining 50% or more of funding is provided by other sources (see the supplementary report for a list of sources).

CORE FUNDING AND PROJECT FUNDING

5.11. A key issue for all the Initiatives studied is the relationship between core and project-based activity and how this work is funded. Core activity covers liaison and reporting to the Initiative's partners, general administration of the office and staff, maintenance of the Initiative's profile and presence at shows and conferences, development of a long term strategy or business plan and development of new projects, including applications for funding. Project-based activity involves discrete programmes of time-limited work to deliver specific outcomes.

⁸ Note that these figures may be an average over several years of data provided.

- 5.12. Since the products of project-based work are both tangible and auditable against specific costs, there has been a tendency by both public and private grant giving bodies to favour applications to fund discrete projects rather than general administration and development. Indeed, the Countryside Agency, who provided pump-prime funding for many Initiatives (such as Stroud Touchwood, Chilterns Woodland Project) has made a policy decision at national level only to consider funding project work against its stated priorities.
- 5.13. There is a valid argument that project-based funding is a much more cost-effective means of acquiring particular public benefit. Public funding to set-up an Initiative may be justified to establish an Initiative and give it an identity, but thereafter, the Initiative should rely on identifying and meeting demand for particular products in the form of separately funded projects.
- 5.14. The problem with this rationale is that, with little or no co-ordination of new projects, delivery can become inefficient, creating peaks and troughs of staff funding governed by financial years. Without ongoing funding, cash flow becomes a major issue since most funders pay grants in arrears on delivery of work. In addition, as Initiatives become established and known, the number of unsolicited requests for information and assistance tends to rise, demanding a response whether or not it relates to an area of work for which funding has been found. Initiatives have found a variety of ways of coping with these demands, including leaflets and websites with answers to the commonly occurring questions and referrals to others such as the Forestry Commission, county council Forester/Woodlands Officer and private consultants.
- 5.15. As a result many Initiatives have found themselves starved of funds to maintain their core identity and to develop their long-term strategy. Instead they have found their activity dictated by the availability of grants for project-based work. Many Initiatives gave this as the reason for pulling back from providing advice to woodland owners (though competition with the private sector is also an issue – see Chapter 3). Several Initiatives acknowledged that they had spent too little time on long-term strategic planning which caused major problems when

project-based work came to an end. Secure funding is also important to maintain continuity, especially of staff, between project-based work.

- 5.16. Some Initiatives organise all their outputs as discrete and separately funded activities (such as the Wessex Coppice Group and Stroud Touchwood), and write an element of 'core activity' into their bids (i.e. to write business plans, identify demand for new projects and apply for funding to run these projects).

FUTURE SOURCES OF FUNDING

- 5.17. Initiatives were very uncertain about the security of future sources of funding. There were clearly a number of options for future project funding, although it was not yet evident how successful some of these bids were likely to be. Experience with applications to RES (under the ERDP) has reinforced the uncertainty associated with bids for funds. Many of these sources are also likely to be relatively short-term. Some of the potential sources mentioned were:

- The Environmental Action Fund (EAF) which is a DEFRA fund which helps English voluntary groups to advance the Government's environmental policies, supporting work which does not qualify for grant under other programmes. The Fund's priority areas are sustainable development and biodiversity. Anglia Woodnet is applying for funding under this scheme.
- European Funds will continue to play an important role in funding e.g. Objective 1 (Silvanus Trust and Working Woodlands), Objective 2 (The Mersey Forest) and Leader+ (Rockingham Forest Trust).
- Vocational Training Scheme funding (part of the ERDP) will be used by Rockingham Forest Trust and Wessex Coppice Group.
- Many of the Initiatives view RDA funding as a potential source (e.g. Marches Woodland Initiative). This will require RDAs to recognise the importance of woodland management, and its potential to contribute to the economy of rural areas, and for Initiatives to demonstrate that they can contribute to RDA agendas.

5.18. In line with the shift in national policy there appears to be a move away from funding for 'forestry projects' and towards funding for forestry as part of wider rural or social development issues. Initiatives which can tap into these wider sources are likely to be more successful. Inevitably, though, this will involve activities towards the 'pull' factors of woodland management.

5.19. The main problems in accessing these potential funding sources are considered to be:

- lack of core funding means that developing new projects and applying for funding is difficult;
- applying for funding can be a time consuming process, and there is no guarantee of success;
- advice on funding sources and application procedures is not available (e.g. lack of advice regarding applications to DEFRA for the RES under the ERDP);
- there are potentially lots of different sources of funding from a number of agencies, but there is no common strategy between agencies to bring together their aims;
- funding is likely to be short term and does not provide Initiatives with long-term security to develop staffing levels and business plans.

5.20. The Countryside Agency is assisting the Community Forests with their future funding bids. A funding strategy is being prepared which will identify sources of funds which should be targeted and are likely to be successful. The strategy identifies both national and regional funding opportunities.

SUMMARY

5.21. The analysis undertaken in Chapter 4 has demonstrated that Initiatives are undertaking work which is directly contributing to government objectives. This work is not commercially viable and, indeed, Initiatives have moved away from commercial areas of work to ensure that

competition with the private sector is avoided. Although the initial policy in setting up Initiatives was to provide pump priming, and then for Initiative to become self-sustaining, this has not proved possible. In view of the uncertainty of funding, Initiatives are suffering from a hand-to-mouth existence.

- 5.22. In the absence of significant sources of national government funding, Initiatives have been successful in accessing different, mainly public, sources of funding. Thus for only a small level of government funding, at least the same amount if not more has been gained from other sources. This leverage effect multiplies the effect of government investment.
- 5.23. Despite the success of some Initiatives, others are in severe financial difficulties. All Initiatives pointed to the requirement for secure and long-term sources of funding to enable them to develop staffing and business plans.

6. COST-EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR INITIATIVES

6.1. The majority of Woodland Initiatives were established prior to 1998 and hence were not specifically focused on fulfilling the EFS. Despite this, Chapter 4 of this report shows that Woodland Initiatives can assist in delivering elements of this Strategy. However, the question remains, can this be achieved in a cost-effective manner (when compared to other delivery mechanisms) and, if so, how can Woodland Initiatives be better supported in undertaking their work? These issues are discussed below.

ARE INITIATIVES COST-EFFECTIVE WAYS OF DELIVERING THE EFS?

- 6.2. The question as to whether Initiatives are a cost-effective way of delivering the EFS remains unclear. This is because:
- the EFS establishes high level objectives and outcomes without specifying measurable targets against which performance can be measured;
 - in general, Initiatives have not collected data to demonstrate the outcomes of their work, and indeed these outcomes are very difficult to measure and to relate to the EFS;
 - Initiatives are very different - they are undertaking different activities and have different strengths and weaknesses which makes it difficult to generalise.
- 6.3. One very positive element is the ability of Initiatives to access a number of different funding sources. Thus for each pound of national government contribution, at least the same again if not more can be gained from other funding sources (particularly European or regional sources).
- 6.4. However, a general issue that was raised by many of the Initiatives was the high proportion of staff time spent on administrative type activities (e.g. staff management or applications for funding). Initiatives all

maintained a small permanent staff number due to uncertainties about the long-term availability of funding, and a perception that higher staff numbers were likely to be unsustainable (perhaps borne out by the experience of Anglia Woodnet). This led to a high proportion of staff time involved in non-project (or core) work. Where there is no significant co-ordination of activity, there may also be a duplication of effort by these locally based but largely unconnected groups (e.g. in the production of newsletters).

- 6.5. Where Initiatives are likely to be cost-effective is in the delivery of the specified targets associated with project work. Initiatives were familiar with undertaking performance monitoring on a project by project basis and could demonstrate 'outputs' (e.g. in terms of numbers of training days held). However, the 'achievements' or 'outcomes' of these activities are more intangible, particularly where Initiatives are involved in the 'pull' factors and their contribution to supporting the management of non-commercial woodland is more difficult to ascertain.
- 6.6. It is therefore clear that to move forward will require measurable targets against which cost-effectiveness can be measured. In view of the considerable regional differences, including differences in funding streams, it would be best for these targets to be defined at the regional level. This reflects the creation of RDAs, greater devolved powers, the regional chapters of the ERDP and likely adoption of regional versions of the EFS (REEFS), together with a move towards regional funding and the emergence of regional co-operation between Initiatives.

SHOULD INITIATIVES RECEIVE PUBLIC SUPPORT?

- 6.7. In many cases, Initiatives are the only organisation involved in their particular work area. However, it could be argued that, rather than expecting a group of small and diverse partnerships to undertake these activities, that the work should be addressed in house by the Forestry Commission. This question is examined below.
- 6.8. The data to compare the effectiveness of Initiatives with other delivery mechanisms is not available and was beyond the scope of this study. It

would also have required comparison against common targets (which are not available).

- 6.9. Nevertheless, what is clear is that without the existing Woodland Initiatives, little practical work would have been done in this area over the last ten years. The potential advantages of such work being undertaken by independent Woodland Initiatives are that they:
- have the flexibility to respond to local circumstances providing those services most needed in the locality. Indeed, where appropriate, they may set up commercial operational arms which might not easily be set up by a government department or agency;
 - are potentially more able to undertake pilot projects and to trial new approaches (such as the Bowland Added Value Project);
 - are able to draw on funding from a wide variety of sources, many of which (such as EU structural programmes, the National Lottery, and Landfill Tax) are not available to government departments and agencies;
 - have established a good network of contacts and local knowledge and become established sources of information and guidance - there is a need to avoid 're-inventing the wheel';
 - they often represent an established partnership of organisations.
- 6.10. Since Initiatives have the potential to deliver elements of the EFS, and there are potential advantages involved in using Woodland Initiatives rather than other mechanisms, there therefore appear to be good reasons for supporting Initiatives in their work.
- 6.11. In providing this support, it is important that suitable performance targets and monitoring are set up to provide data on the effectiveness of the Initiatives in undertaking their work.
- 6.12. Initiatives demonstrate a wide variation in the way in which they currently assist in the delivery of the EFS and as a result of this difference in expertise, they also differ in their potential to contribute to the EFS in the future. There is therefore not a case for 'blanket'

support of Initiatives, but instead support should be targeted to the needs of the area and to the ability of Initiatives to contribute.

HOW COULD INITIATIVES BE SUPPORTED TO DELIVER THE EFS MORE COST-EFFECTIVELY?

6.13. Due to the variation both in requirements around the country and also in the nature and type of work undertaken by Initiatives, there is no single answer to this question. However, there are a number of common issues facing Initiatives which could be addressed to provide them with greater support. These are set out below.

An agreed strategy

6.14. The work of Woodland Initiatives encompasses aims of a number of different governmental departments and agencies (Forestry Commission, Countryside Agency, DEFRA, English Nature, RDAs, amongst others). These departments and agencies could be key partners in supporting and funding the Initiatives to deliver the objectives of the EFS. The EFS provides a common agenda to which these organisations are working, but with the exception of the FC/CA, there is little joint collaboration over providing funding for projects. This makes obtaining potential funds difficult for Initiatives.

6.15. In addition, the EFS provides only 'high level' objectives, and there is no clear statement of the role that Initiatives could play in delivering these objectives. Regional Expressions of the England Forestry Strategy (REEFS) could be used to identify the tasks required to achieve sustainable woodland management which would enable Initiatives to identify how they could assist in undertaking these tasks.

A strategic overview

6.16. There is no strategic overview governing the work of Initiatives. This leads to potential duplication amongst Initiatives and also potential gaps in coverage (both geographic and in provision of services). Where Initiatives work together at the regional level, this provides many benefits, but this type of activity is difficult to fund.

6.17. A strategic overview would need to be flexible enough to respond to differences both between and within regions and set targets against which to measure performance. One of the key strengths of Woodland Initiatives is their flexibility, and ability to respond to the particular conditions and requirements within their area.

Secure funding sources

6.18. Almost all Initiatives pointed to the need for more certain funding sources so that long-term plans could be drawn up and the Initiative kept alive (to retain the built up knowledge and contacts). This study has shown that lack of secure sources of funding, as well as inadequate resourcing of co-ordination at a national and regional level, have constrained the effectiveness of many Woodland Initiatives. The issue of ongoing funding to maintain continuity is an important one. While discrete packets of funding to deliver specific time-limited outputs are likely to make up the majority of Initiatives' income, sufficient long-term funding is needed to cover strategic thinking and to ensure Initiatives remain in place between projects.

Assistance with obtaining funding

6.19. Initiatives find that accessing funding sources is time consuming and advice would be beneficial.

Lobbying

6.20. The SWA provides a national umbrella organisation for Initiatives, but is itself a non-statutory organisation which is reliant on obtaining funding in order to undertake its work. Initiatives would benefit from a statutory organisation or 'champion' acting on their behalf, for example by undertaking lobbying at national level. This issue was raised in relation to the problems encountered by Initiatives when applying to DEFRA for funding under the RES. The 'champion' could lobby DEFRA in the mid-term review of the ERDP to ensure that funding for activities undertaken by Initiatives is provided.

Sharing information and advice

6.21. There are at present good opportunities for Initiatives to learn from each other and exchange information on operational and technical issues and national policy developments. This activity increases the operational efficiency and stability of Initiatives and ensures that they have access to the best and most up to date information. However, this type of activity is difficult for Initiatives to fund. Initiatives would also benefit from assistance with dissemination of research information, which is currently poorly disseminated outside the geographic area of the Initiative. The proposed new Woodland Initiatives Networking post which is funded by Forestry Commission, Countryside Agency and SWA, should provide Initiatives with assistance in tackling this problem.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1. The research has shown that, as a group, Woodland Initiatives have been successful in identifying the gaps or market failures which are contributing to the lack of woodland management and, having identified the gaps, are starting to address them. What is clear is that without the existing Woodland Initiatives, little practical work would have been done in this area over the last ten years.
- 7.2. One of the key strengths of Woodland Initiatives is their flexibility, and ability to respond to the particular conditions and requirements within their area. Although Woodland Initiatives are doing valuable work with woodland owners, it is their activity 'beyond the forest gate' that is particularly important, since they are usually the only public body working in this area at the sub-regional or more local level. Indeed, this study has provided evidence of a significant shift in the activity of Woodland Initiatives, from one of 'pushing' woodland management by advising woodland owners to one of 'pulling' demand for the products of sustainably managed woodland. Whereas the activity of Woodland Initiatives in the mid 1990s was concentrated on woodland management and on influencing woodland owners and managers, Woodland Initiatives are now seeking to intervene at a number of points along the wood chain.
- 7.3. The study has demonstrated that there is considerable diversity amongst Woodland Initiatives and that there is no single model which could be used to describe them. The diversity reflects the 'bottom-up' approach taken by Initiatives in responding to wide regional and sub-regional differences in terms of the woodland resource, market for products, status of woodland businesses, types of woodland owner and funding availability.
- 7.4. It is clear that Initiatives do have the potential (and are currently) contributing to elements of the England Forestry Strategy. However, the nature and extent of this contribution is variable across the country and between Initiatives.

7.5. It could be argued that, rather than expecting a group of small and diverse partnerships to undertake these activities, that the work should be addressed in house by the Forestry Commission. However, this study has found that there are a number of distinct advantages in using Woodland Initiatives to help in delivery of the EFS since they:

- have the flexibility to respond to local circumstances providing those services most needed in the locality;
- are potentially more able to undertake pilot projects and to trial new approaches (such as the Bowland Added Value Project);
- are able to draw in funding from a wide variety of sources, many of which (such as EU structural programmes, the National Lottery, and Landfill Tax) are not available to government departments and agencies, increasing the leverage on public investment;
- have established a good network of contacts and local knowledge and become established sources of information and guidance - there is a need to avoid 're-inventing the wheel';
- are an established mechanism for partnership working.

7.6. However, the study has highlighted some problems suffered by Initiatives in providing cost-effective delivery. One general issue which was raised by many of the Initiatives was the high proportion of staff time spent on administrative type activities (e.g. staff management or applications for funding). This is of concern regarding the cost-effectiveness of funding supplied to Initiatives since it leads to a high proportion of staff time involved in non-project (or core) activities. In the absence of strong top-down direction, there is also likely to be a continuing element of duplication between Initiatives.

7.7. The question whether Initiatives or other organisations are a cost-effective way of delivering the EFS remains unclear. This is because:

- the EFS establishes high level objectives and outcomes without specifying measurable targets against which performance can be measured;

- in general, Initiatives have not collected data to demonstrate the outcomes of their work, and indeed these outcomes are very difficult to measure and to relate to the EFS;
- Initiatives are all very different, they are undertaking different activities and have different strengths and weaknesses which makes it extremely difficult to generalise;
- data on other methods of achieving objectives (e.g. using in-house FC staff) are currently unavailable.

7.8. Given these problems, it is clear that cost-effectiveness is currently and likely to remain difficult to assess at the national level. For this reason, assessment at the regional level (where measurable targets can be set and objective assessment is easier) is likely to be a more successful approach. It is also clear that the requirement for action is variable and best identified at the regional level.

7.9. In the light of these conclusions, the recommendations are set out below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Role of Initiatives in Regional Strategies

7.10. Despite the lack of evidence over effectiveness, we believe that Woodland Initiatives offer the potential to be cost-effective partners in delivering the EFS. If they are to continue to assist in the delivery of government objectives then continued public funding is required. However, if this public support is to be justified, there must be a clear statement of the role that they are to play in delivering government objectives for sustainable development in the forestry sector, with clear and measurable targets against which the performance of Initiatives could be assessed. Due to the considerable differences between regions, we recommend that this statement is provided at the regional level, and could form part of Regional Expressions of the England Forestry Strategy (REEFS).

Recommendation 1: We recommend that Woodland Initiatives should assist the FC and others in helping promote elements of the England

Forestry Strategy, and that the method of delivery is determined at the regional level, potentially as part of Regional Expressions of the England Forestry Strategy (REEFS).

- 7.11. Although the REEFS will form a useful tool for defining the role of Woodland Initiatives and setting targets, it is understood that the REEFS may vary considerably between the regions, and that in some regions they may form more of an informal strategy. The mechanism for defining the role of Woodland Initiatives will consequently vary from region to region, taking into account the approach adopted.
- 7.12. As proposed outside this study, these regional strategies should be developed by a partnership of organisations, including funding and policy agencies such as FC Conservancies, RDA and other funding agencies. The Woodland Initiatives should inform this partnership, and as the regional strategies develop, opportunities to widen this partnership (particularly outside the landowning and forestry section) should be sought. Through such development work, Woodland Initiatives can help set the agenda for the region, and use their knowledge and experience to ensure that the strategy delivers key benefits of relevance to the region.
- 7.13. The co-ordination with other agencies involved, together with the agreement of a common agenda and a shared vision, should also mean that funding is complementary and more focussed to regional objectives.
- 7.14. Initially, REEFS (or other strategies developed within the regions) could be used to address the following:
- identify the 'gaps' in delivering the EFS in the region (gaps may occur either geographically or in delivering different elements of the EFS);
 - identify the tasks required to address these 'gaps' and targets for measuring performance and cost-effectiveness;
 - identify the resources to address these issues (e.g. Woodland Initiatives, local groups, Forestry Commission in-house staff or other organisations) in terms of both ability and availability;

- allocate funding to undertake this work.
- 7.15. We envisage that in many regions, the Initiatives could be key organisations in implementing these strategies. The input of Initiatives will however vary considerably between regions, depending on the needs of the region and the strengths of the Initiatives. We do not recommend that there needs to be just one Initiative per region, but that there is a 'mix and match' of Initiatives based on their strengths and weaknesses, and in order to cover all of the tasks identified.
- 7.16. In order to assess cost-effectiveness we recommend that Initiatives bid for work, which can then be considered alongside other delivery mechanisms. Where Woodland Initiatives are considered to be a suitable mechanism for delivery, implementation should be guided by clear targets set within a service level agreement.
- 7.17. The role and relevance of local and community groups and how they may be better supported to assist in achieving the aims and objectives of the EFS should also be considered at the regional level. The role of Woodland Initiatives in achieving this type of co-ordination should be considered.

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the REEFS (or other strategies at the regional level) should be used to:

- ***Bring together different agencies to provide an agreed agenda for forestry within which Woodland Initiatives and others can operate;***
- ***Identify the 'gaps' to achieving sustainable woodland management in the region and the tasks required to address these 'gaps';***
- ***Address the role of Initiatives, and other groups, and their co-ordination in meeting objectives;***
- ***Set targets for the region and also criteria for performance monitoring, thus setting realistic and relevant goals for monitoring of success and cost-effectiveness;***
- ***Provide access to funding to meet the targets.***

Support for Initiatives

- 7.18. Although the study has indicated that the Initiatives do have potential to help deliver the EFS, it has also highlighted a number of problems and difficulties faced by Initiatives in undertaking their work. Thus, if Initiatives are to be viewed as partners in achieving the EFS, then additional support will be required. This is set out below.
- 7.19. **Long term security of funding.** This study has shown that lack of secure sources of funding have constrained the development of many Woodland Initiatives. The issue of secure funding to maintain continuity is an important one. While discrete packets of funding to deliver specific time-limited outputs are likely to make up the majority of Initiatives' income, long-term funding is needed to ensure Initiatives remain in place between projects, so long as they are clearly meeting objectives and actions set out at the regional level.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that funding from the FC and others is made available to support Initiatives where they are clearly meeting the objectives set at the regional level and provide the most cost-effective means of doing so. This funding should be managed through a service level agreement.

- 7.20. **Funding for development.** The Forestry Commission, together with Initiatives should consider how to build into the service level agreement an allowance for 'non-project' activities where these overlap with objectives of the EFS. This might include involvement in partnership working, fund raising and co-ordination (with local groups or other initiatives in regional fora). It may also include strategic thinking and development.

Recommendation 4: We recommend that funding from the FC and others allows for an element of strategic development and other work to be included in the service level agreement.

- 7.21. **Short term support.** In the short term, it is clear that many of the Initiatives are facing a very uncertain future and at least one (Northwoods) has ceased operation as previous funding streams have come to an end. There is a danger that in the time it takes for new

project-based work to be established, more of the Initiatives will have stopped operating due to lack of core funding. The loss of core staff knowledge risks undoing many of the contacts and goodwill with the private sector and other partners that have been gained in recent years.

Recommendation 5: In the interim period whilst strategies are being prepared at the regional level, the FC should consider if it is appropriate to support those Initiatives in extreme difficulty in the short-term.

7.22. **National support and co-ordination.** The focus on decision-making at the regional level should not stand in the way of co-ordination and support of Initiatives at the national level. This role is currently largely undertaken by the FC and SWA (with support from CA). The proposed new Woodland Initiatives Networks post will be a key component of this work. The cost effectiveness of national advice to Initiatives did not form part of the remit of this study, therefore, the benefits of providing the support in-house as opposed to through the SWA have not been addressed. Nevertheless, this is an important role which needs to continue and expand.

7.23. Initiatives would benefit from an organisation or 'champion' acting on their behalf, for example, to lobby at national level (e.g. with DEFRA in relation to the RES). Whilst the SWA acts as an umbrella organisation for the Initiatives, it is itself a non-statutory organisation, and is not funded to undertake lobbying amongst governmental departments and agencies. Initiatives would also benefit from continued exchange of information to increase their operational efficiency and stability and ensure that they have access to the best and most up to date information.

7.24. Initiatives would also benefit from assistance with dissemination of research information, which is currently poorly disseminated outside the geographic area of the Initiative.

Recommendation 6: We recommend that national support for Initiatives is continued. The role of the Forestry Commission as the key 'champion' of Woodland Initiatives should be strengthened. The

FC should continue to work with the SWA in considering the best mechanism of supporting Initiatives at a national level.

- 7.25. **Facilitation with funding.** Funding will be needed to undertake many of the actions put forward at the regional level. Currently much staff time within Initiatives is absorbed in making funding bids. Initiatives find that effort may often be duplicated between Initiatives and advice is lacking on the specific funding availability within the different regions. Due to the variation between funding availability in the different regions, it is important that facilitation is able to reflect the different perspectives of different Initiatives.

Recommendation 7: We recommend that a facilitator should be appointed to assist with (but not direct) the making of funding bids for discrete woodland projects. This could build on the experience of the Countryside Agency in assisting the Community Forests with fundraising.

- 7.26. **National sources of grant-aid:** Though perhaps outside the scope of this study, the research has demonstrated the apparent lack of connection between the work of Woodland Initiatives in stimulating local wood chains on the one hand and the incentives available to landowners under the England Rural Development Programme to add value to land-based products, on the other. This is despite the England Rural Development Programme seeing agriculture and forestry as complementary and symbiotic land uses capable of playing a broader role in rural development. In particular, activities which are eligible for grant aid under the Rural Enterprise Scheme for developing and improving the environmental quality of the food chain are apparently not eligible where they apply to the wood chain.

Recommendation 8: We recommend that the needs of sustainable economic development of the forestry sector, and the role of Woodland Initiatives within this, need to be fully taken into account during the Mid Term Review of the England Rural Development Programme.

- 7.27. **Quality Assurance.** If Woodland Initiatives are to continue to give advice to private landowners and managers as part of their overall service, it is essential that this advice is of a high professional

standard. This suggests that some form of accreditation is required. This accreditation should be concerned with professional competence, a clear understanding of the regional objectives of the Strategy, and the knowledge to signpost land managers to other advisory services and support, where relevant e.g. other agricultural and business advisory services. This links to steps that are likely to be taken for other advisory services available to land managers.

Recommendation 9: We therefore recommend that woodland advisors (either officers of Woodland Initiatives or consultants used by the Initiatives) are accredited at the regional level.

Land Use Consultants

24 June 2002

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