

**REPORT OF THE 1ST MEETING OF THE ENGLAND FORESTRY FORUM
HELD AT THE ROYAL OVERSEAS LEAGUE, LONDON, WEDNESDAY 7 JULY 1999**

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

Professor Ian Mercer	Association of National Park Authorities
Mr Ian Cox	Association of Professional Foresters
Mr John Vaughan	Community Forests
Ms Sarah Govan	Council for British Archaeology
Mr Alastair Rutherford	Council for the Protection of Rural England
Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher	Country Landowners Association
Dr Roger Clarke	Countryside Agency
Mr Jeff West	English Heritage
Dr Keith Kirby	English Nature
Mr Emyr Poole	English Partnerships
Mr Richard Howell	The Environment Agency
Mr Christopher Stratton	Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committee (Midlands and East England)
Mrs Rachel Thomas	Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committee (South and West England)
Mr Roger Hay	Forestry Contracting Association
Mr Peter Wilson	Forestry Industry Council
Mr Martin Wilkinson	Institute of Chartered Foresters
Mr Humphrey Temperley	Local Government Association
Dr Andrew Clark	National Farmers Union
Mr Simon Evans	National Forest Company
Mr Russell Rowley	National Small Woods Association
Mr David Russell	National Trust
Ms Nerys Jones	National Urban Forestry Unit
Mr David Pollard	Planning Officers Society
Mr David Beskine	Ramblers Association
Mr Ray Kessler	North West Regional Development Agency
Dr John Jackson	Royal Forestry Society of England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Mr Kenneth Bartlett	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Mr John Waldon	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Mr Chris Stapleton	Royal Town Planning Institute
Mr Edward Brun	Timber Growers Association
Mr Alan Powell	United Kingdom Forest Products Association
Dr Hilary Allison	Wildlife and Countryside Link
Mr David Stewart	Wildlife Trusts
Mr Michael Townsend	The Woodland Trust

In attendance:

Miss Bridget Bloom	Forestry Commissioner
Mr John James	Forestry Commissioner
Mr Tim Rollinson	Forestry Commission
Mr Mark Pritchard	Forestry Commission
Mr Geoff Hatfield	Forest Enterprise



Ms Diana Kahn

Department of the Environment, Transport and the
Regions

Mr Brian Oliver

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Introduction

2. In welcoming members to the first Forum meeting, Mr Morley highlighted the Forum's terms of reference (Paper 1/99). Mr Morley emphasised the importance he placed on working in partnership to deliver the aims of the England Forestry Strategy. He wanted the Forum to play a key role in helping to implement the priorities, programmes and actions in the Strategy. He attached great importance to the value of pooling knowledge, expertise and resources and working together. Forum members commented that they welcomed the Strategy and the establishment of the Forum.

Review of England Forestry Strategy (Paper 3/99)

3. Mr Rollinson introduced the paper which provided some background to the preparation of the Strategy, highlighted the underlying principles and provided some examples of action that was already underway to deliver the Strategy.
4. He emphasised that the Strategy provided the framework for forestry in England with the Government, working in partnership with others. The Strategy looked forward over the next five to ten years. A key feature of the Strategy was that it looked outward at the role forests and woods should have in meeting society's wider needs. The Strategy was based on four guiding principles: quality, integration, partnership and public support. For the Forestry Commission, the Strategy would be the starting point for work in England in the future, for example for the targeting of grants. Mr Rollinson referred to Paper 7/99 which provided an initial overview of activity that was already underway to deliver the Strategy. In the subsequent discussion, Forum members highlighted the following points:
5. The Forum needed to ensure that progress with implementing the Strategy was carefully monitored so as to ensure that real progress was being made. If blockages to implementation were found, then the Forum should have a real role to advise how these could be overcome. Some of the issues relating to successful implementation required further work and the Forum should give advice on how they should be addressed. There was also a need to bring together the lessons of past experience, including the work of specific woodland initiatives, and build on them in developing new approaches. The availability of resources was a key issue; in the short term there was a real opportunity to make the existing resources more effective. In the longer term, the challenge was to secure more resources. Forum members said that the key to achieving this lay in gaining public support. Forum members commented that woods and forests were generally well liked by the public. The challenge was to present the benefits of the Strategy's aims in ways that were relevant to people's needs. Forum members noted that the Strategy was ambitious and involved a potentially large number of partners. Clarity of responsibility was important.



6. Summing up the discussion, Mr Morley commented that the discussion was helpful to set the scene. Some of the issues touched on in the discussion would be raised later on in the agenda. Others should be substantive issues for discussion at future meetings.



Implementation Issues (Paper 4/99)

7. Mr Morley commented that there are a range of issues relevant to implementing the Strategy which the Forum might wish to consider. Mr Morley suggested that the Forum could consider such issues by using working groups to examine them in more depth. He added that the working groups would operate effectively if they considered specific tasks rather than undertake more open-ended work. The Forum agreed that this approach would be the most effective way to make progress. Small working groups should be established, each with a specific task to be completed by an agreed time. These groups would consider the issues and provide advice and recommendations to the full Forum. Mr Rollinson added that there were a number of existing or proposed groups which could be invited to submit advice and information to the Forum. For example, the Native Woodlands Partnership was about to be launched to co-ordinate implementation links between the Biodiversity Action Plan and the Strategy. Where working groups were established these should be led by a member of the Forum and could include individuals who had relevant experience but who were not members of the Forum.
8. Mr Morley then invited the Forum to consider the issues in Paper 4/99. He commented that the issues discussed in the paper were the ones that had been identified most often by commentators on the Strategy. The issues covered by the Paper included: marketing, business advice and training; community forestry; town and country planning; land regeneration; access and recreation; protection of ancient semi-natural woodlands; regional issues. Mr Morley invited the Forum to consider whether there were additional issues that should be considered and what the priorities for further work should be.
9. In the subsequent discussion, Forum members identified the following issues which were also relevant:
 - business advice and training (separately from marketing as suggested in the paper);
 - education and public understanding/confidence about forestry, perhaps related to work on the development of the recreation and access programme;
 - future investment in the wood processing industry;
 - cultural heritage and the place of woodlands in the landscape. It was suggested that this should be considered as a horizontal issue, rather than a subject in its own right;
 - resources and funding - particularly new sources of funding;
 - data and information sharing;
 - opportunities for the forestry sector to work more closely with the planning sector so as to help raise the profile of forestry especially at the regional and local levels;
10. Mr Morley thanked Forum members for their views. He said that the Forestry Commission Secretariat would draw the discussion together and write out to Forum members with a revised list of issues for consideration. Members should then indicate which of the issues listed should be given priority and also to suggest which working

groups they felt best placed to lead or contribute to. The Secretariat would also provide guidance on the structure for reports on the issues and timings. The aim would be to have a number of working groups established by the end of August with reports coming forward to the next meeting of the Forum.

Promoting the Work of the Forum

11. Mr Pritchard introduced this item by noting that one of the aims of the Forestry Strategy was to increase understanding of and support for forestry. There was an opportunity to help achieve this through promoting the work of the Forum. This could be achieved in a number of ways including wide distribution of the Forum's papers by the organisations represented. Reporting of progress on implementation of the Strategy was also important. Paper 7/99 presented a summary of action planned or underway to implement the Strategy. The paper as drafted, summarised work by the Forestry Commission and could be extended to include action by other Forum member organisations. Mr Pritchard suggested that the paper should be regularly updated and be a standing item on the agenda for Forum meetings. Information and issue papers could also be circulated between meetings with the Secretariat providing a co-ordination service. There was also scope to use the Internet as a resource to support the Forum and the Forestry Commission were examining the opportunities.
12. Forum members welcomed the proposals and agreed to provide information on their own work relevant to implementation of the Strategy for inclusion in the proposed progress reports. It was also agreed that a database of events and organisations concerned with implementing the Strategy should be maintained. The Secretariat would circulate guidance to Forum members on providing relevant information.

Any Other Business

13. Mr Hatfield summarised Paper 9/99 which reviewed Forest Enterprise's contribution to delivering the Strategy. He commented that the paper presented a challenging range of activity and success would depend heavily on resources. He invited Forum members to send comments on the paper to him. Mr Morley suggested that it would be helpful for Forum members to prepare similar summaries of the contributions they felt they could make. These would help to provide a context for the progress reports discussed under the previous agenda item.

Next Meeting

14. The next meeting of the Forum would be arranged for January 2000 in London.

