

## **PROGRESS UPDATE ON WORKING WITH LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Purpose**

- 1) To provide the Board with an interim progress update on Forestry Commission work with the Defra network to influence the scope and opportunities of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) strategies and projects, and to forge local connections to enable the forestry and woodlands sector to realise economic growth projects during the next rural development funding period.

### **Recommendations**

- 2) That the Board:
  - a) Notes the strong progress to date, led by FS Area teams, in influencing some of the LEP strategies towards recognising the forest and woodlands resource as an important local growth opportunity, and that FC's contribution to date compares favourably to the wider Defra position;
  - b) Provides a steer on any of the specific emerging opportunities and risks identified in the paper;
  - c) Notes the need for continued engagement and effort to ensure for priority LEPs that strategy documents progress to successful projects attracting the public and private funding they will need.

### **Background/Introduction**

- 3) The Forestry Commission is helping to build a stronger economy. Working with our partners, we are doing everything possible to stimulate sustainable growth in our sector, creating more jobs and opportunities for businesses to flourish. (Forestry economy narrative, 2014)
- 4) One of the major Forest Services contributions in 2013/14 to the local growth priority has been our engagement and influencing work at Area level on the draft LEP strategies and plans. This has been undertaken as part of a Defra network approach to joined-up working between the main agencies, steered by the Single Voice Group in connection with Defra policy leads providing the links with other Departmental interests.
- 5) Forest Enterprise has also been active in helping to build the LEPs' appreciation of the forestry sector and links to key businesses, such as in the visit by the LEP Director to Kielder Forest and Egger UK to highlight the potential of the sector.
- 6) Defra 'asks' of the LEP strategies have been subject to scrutiny by other Departments leading on removing so-called blockers to growth, and the Forestry Commission has been successful in positioning itself as experts on woodland protection priorities as well as strong advocates of economic growth linked to improving levels of woodland resource management.

**Key facts**

- 7) The context for the FC’s work with LEPs is England’s European Structural and Investment Growth Programme where LEPs have been tasked to produce EU Structural and Investment Fund (ESI) Strategies (often abbreviated as SIFs). ESI Fund Strategies will complement the LEPs’ Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs), which ESI Funds will be an important part of.
- 8) Details on the national programme to agree new structural fund allocations, including growth fund dimension and relationship to LEPs, are covered in Appendix 1.
- 9) In preparing advice on relative forestry priorities in LEP areas as part of Defra network advice to its LEP Rural Roundtable communications, FC has identified high and high-medium priorities for forestry-related activities for 50% of the 39 LEPs:

Priority	LEP
High	Leeds City Region; Sheffield City Region; Tees Valley Unlimited; NE LEP Cumbria; Birmingham/Solihull; Marches Derbyshire and Notts; SE Midlands; New Anglia; Northamptonshire South East; Enterprise M3; Coast to Capital; Oxfordshire Heart of SW
High-medium	York/North Yorks/East Riding; Gt Lincolnshire; Leicestershire/Leicester

- 10) FC and Defra agencies continue to review these priorities as part of ongoing intelligence gathering and advice to the department, which then informs cross-departmental processes. FC collaborated with Defra network in analysis of LEP ‘asks’ in the draft SEPs. FC has advised on references including Woodland Enterprise Zones, Forestry and Timber Growth Plan, and flood mitigation. Defra’s view on draft SEPs records its agencies being ‘user-friendly’ and collaborative on growth priorities, more flexibility around floods money, and currently focused around lists of development sites.
- 11) FC has specified two critical parts of the Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee (FWAC) remit as concerning firstly the advocating and championing role, and secondly the development and engagement with strong local connections and networks. We will be looking to FWACs for more advice on woodland resilience and sector development insight, as well as asking FWACs to challenge our thinking on some key (LEP) projects that will support growth objectives if successful.
- 12) Appendix 2 presents the current detailed assessment of forestry opportunities by LEP, summarised by each Area Director for the Board’s information.

**Resource Implications**

- 13) FS Area teams continue to support the Defra-led approach to securing stronger links to the environment and rural agendas in LEP strategies, working through Defra RDT Local teams to provide forestry expertise. This Defra network approach has helped offset some capacity pressures on partnerships staff but there remains a need to carefully prioritise our influencing work towards selected LEPs. There is an emerging risk of competing demands between this engagement with LEPs and the new RDPE scheme (NELMS) preparations in terms of assessment and stakeholder engagement on local targeting approach at the natural character area level, as currently proposed by Natural England.
- 14) Options include considering FWAC and Local Nature Partnership networks to help increase the capacity to influence LEP strategies and sector connections.
- 15) FE teams can provide valuable targeted assistance to help demonstrate the sector's economic connections where it proves possible to engage senior LEP contacts in site visits. This will help to identify opportunities for business developments linked to the forest estate, which can then act as exemplars for the private sector. FE can also consider the scope for new partnerships with business where, for example in the southeast, it is apparent that the LEP is very interested in Forest Holidays ventures and supply chain initiatives. This may have some potential benefits to successful PFEMO implementation.

### Corporate Plan linkage

- 16) This work to enable connections between local growth plans, associated development funding opportunities for businesses, and increased economic development in the sector is aimed at increasing the proportion of woodlands and forests that are sustainably managed.
- 17) Linking to the Grown in Britain campaign, FS Area teams are seeking to use local economic strategy connections to help put in place the conditions that enable landowners and managers to improve the woodland resource. For example:
  - a. NWWW Area – To support the development of the Woodland Enterprise Zone concept<sup>1</sup> North West and West Midland Area has commissioned growth studies within the most heavily wooded, Marches and Cumbria, LEP areas. Whilst seeking to identify the main woodland and forestry growth opportunities, including commercial recreation, the Area team supported by national expertise, have sought to identify the most readily harvestable undermanaged woodlands and therein the realistic and sustainable harvesting volumes, and potential for additional jobs. Work with supply chain representatives is ongoing to develop growth proposals for both the Cumbria and Marches LEPs.
  - b. SE and London Area – Woodlands (160,000 hectares) are a key rural asset within the EM3 and Coast to Capital LEP areas. Forest Services has led Woodland Enterprise proposals to both LEPs, focused on bringing more of the productive volume from woods in EM3 and Coast to Capital to the market. By

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<sup>1</sup> As cited and supported in the Government's January 2013 Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement.

including Woodland Enterprise in the Strategic Economic Plan it can enable and encourage end to end investment in the timber and wood to warmth supply chain based on mobilising production from just 35% of the existing woodland area (56,000 hectares). With appropriate support, collaboration and investment there is potential to double production and establish in the region of 300 new jobs in the period 2014-2020.

c. North of England - a key part of our work on economic growth has been to support the development of a North England Growth Plan (Roots to Prosperity). This is a sector led partnership (UKFPA / Confor) supported by the relevant Local Authorities, and designed to offer a strategic opportunity to the relevant LEPs. The Headline Report is now available [here](#) and a supporting Action Plan is under development.

### **Risk Assessment**

- 18) This work to influence opportunities for economic development of the sector is aimed at mitigating Forest Services risks FS/12 – inadequate forestry budget, incentives and delivery mechanisms in next Rural Development programme, and FS/15 – the forestry sector and our own staff lack capacity to respond to FC withdrawal/reduction in resource allocation. It is too early in the process to assess the impacts of this work on these risks but influencing the economic strategies and forging new local networks and relationships will be serving to maintain local stakeholder links to enable knowledge exchange, a key risk control mechanism.
- 19) In relation to the various funding streams that might need to be assembled in new growth projects for forestry businesses the Area Directors' intelligence is highlighting at present a risk that LEP money might be forthcoming but Defra-controlled elements for supply chain projects might prove very difficult to access. The poor understanding in BIS of the forestry sector's potential growth role also remains a concern and appears to be very challenging for Defra forestry policy to successfully influence, though engagement of Grown in Britain is being applied.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 20) No diversity implications of this work to position forestry opportunities in local growth strategies and plans have been identified to date.

### **Communications**

- 21) External communications opportunities may arise from ongoing process of LEP preparation of projects to bid for growth fund support. FS Area teams are currently focused on a small number of potentially key new growth investment projects that link our priorities for more woodland management and enabling sector growth to the local growth and jobs-related focus for LEPs. Some of these are profiled in this paper. We will also look to use LEPs' communications to get messages about the role of FC across.

- 22) Internally, we have seen some examples of FS enabling work in places such as the Heart of England Forest and bringing LEP interests together with the Defra network. The Board will wish to note the current central government priority for LEP projects submissions and the late 2014 deadline for final sign-off on LEP strategies. This suggests early 2015 as the appropriate point to next review the outcome position in terms of forestry links in strategies and associated project decisions.

### **Conclusions**

- 23) We are mid-way through a year-long process in which FC is deploying its national and local Forest Services expertise to influence the hooks and connections in LEP strategies and plans which will be finalised for the new EU structural funding period by late 2014. The focus of opportunity is now rapidly shifting to enabling LEPs to capture forestry opportunities in the projects they must present for growth fund decisions.
- 24) Our protect, improve and expand priorities, combined with the challenge of analysing opportunities against a complex future funding picture and involving up to 39 LEPs and over 60 Leader groups, has required increasing prioritisation. An increasing focus on around half the LEP areas, whilst retaining some flexibility to support other LEPs and key projects if these can best deliver the outcomes we seek for woodlands, is starting to shape the programme for forestry's role in rural development and local growth objectives.

**Richard Britton  
Head of Forest Services Delivery  
17 April 2014**

**Appendix 1 - National context for FC engagement in LEP strategies and economic plans to enable sector development bids**

The Growth Programme Board governance has concluded that the latest SIF submissions have improved considerably and Government departments are now working with LEPs to finalise strategies. Defra agreed some key messages to feed into Government's feedback to LEPs, including on rural priorities and other interests such as on: environmental protection and wider sustainability; climate change adaptation (including flood management); and coastal areas. Evidence of needs in rural areas is only partially addressed in some cases and there is a need for stronger evidence on how sustainable development principles are being applied.

The UK has to secure a Partnership Agreement in which the business case, strategy and priorities for the ESI Funds, including the policy framework for English programmes, is established. In this Partnership Agreement the local objectives will be informed by the LEP ESI Funds Strategies.

The UK Partnership Agreement and ERDF, ESF and EAFRD Operational Programmes are due to be submitted to the EC over the coming months. These will then be negotiated with the EC and adopted during 2014. As ESI Fund Strategies have been informed by the Partnership Agreement and Operational Programmes, and vice versa, agreement of ESI Fund strategies therefore is conditional and subject to change dependent on the outcome of negotiations with the EC. Negotiations are expected to conclude by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014.

In May EAFRD workshops for LEPs are planned to help LEPs understand how EAFRD allocations can be used. EAFRD through the Growth Programme provides:

- Growth Programme £177m allocated to 37 LEPs ranging from £340k - £15.5m (no allocation for Black Country & London);
- Farming Forestry Productivity Scheme (FFPS) £141m – National Programme in which FC is working alongside Defra forestry policy to secure a Forestry Productivity Scheme component (value c.£10m). Forest Services strategic partnership project investment 2014/15 to support sector capacity and plans for new programme;
- Leader £138m – currently 64 Local Action Groups and likely to increase in the next programme; forestry-linked investment assumption being clarified but expected to match or exceed FFPS. FS Areas now identifying priority Leader areas in relation to strategic protect, improve and expand opportunities.

Eligible rural activities for EAFRD cover knowledge and skills, new and developing micro and small sized businesses, small scale renewables and broadband, and tourism activities.

## Appendix 2 – Individual Forest Services Area updates

### 1. Yorkshire and North East Area Team – LEP Update

The Area Team responded to both the ESIF and SEP drafts for all LEPs in Y&NE except for the Humber LEP. We responded formally via the local RDPE Rural Delivery Teams and have attended a number of meetings with the LEPs alongside colleagues from RDT, EA and NE.

#### North East LEP: (High priority)

- FS has coordinated a visit by the LEP Director to Kielder Forest and Egger UK to highlight the potential of the sector.
- We have worked closely with Northumberland County Council to highlight the Roots to Prosperity work is recognised by the LEP and we are awaiting the final ESIF version which will hopefully provide a clear reference.
- We have presented the Roots to Prosperity work to the North East Farming and Rural Affairs Network (NEFRAN). Their Chairman, Anthony Braithwaite, was particularly impressed by the economic opportunities offered by the sector.

#### Tees Valley Unlimited: (High priority)

- We recommended Woodlands for Water and the Woodland Carbon Code during the consultation and the final strategies recognise the importance of flood risk reduction and support for the low carbon sector.
- Kate Hawley (FC Local Partnerships Advisor) has been asked to sit on a low carbon task and finish group for TVU, representing through 2014/15.
- We are working with NE and EA colleagues to help develop an outline programme of potential projects.

#### Sheffield City Region (High priority)

- There are no specific references to the sector within the SEP but the South Yorkshire Green Infrastructure strategy has been recognised and the SEP seeks to develop opportunities surrounding carbon capture and storage.
- We are working closely with the South Yorkshire LNP who has engaged positively with the work on the Low Carbon Sector Group.

#### Leeds City Region (High priority)

- We helped influence the ESIF to include a reference to climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration and both the FC and NE are mentioned specifically with regards to 'maximising local biomass supply chains to support multi fuel power generation plans'.
- Green Infrastructure also plays a large part in their ESIF, referencing a local project we are involved in - 'Fresh Aire'. The changes made to the finalised Leeds SEP and ESIF to include forestry, carbon, biomass and green infrastructure strategy are positive. We are working closely with the West Yorkshire LNP (board members) who has been leading on the Green Infrastructure work.

**York, North Yorkshire and East Riding (Medium Priority)**

- The ESIF and SEP talks of an action to implement flood prevention measures and capitalise on green infrastructure, but this is in the abstract and listed under ‘additional actions’, rather than being key. We have worked with ALB partners and the National Park to help support the LEP.
- The York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP have elected to go through the LEED (Local Environment and Economic Development) Toolkit approach. The FC supported the initial meeting and we are aiming to attend the workshop session (Level 1) in mid-May.

**Humber Update (Low)**

- We have agreed locally that NE and EA will lead on the Humber LEP due to the flooding and biodiversity (marine and estuary focus) within this specific LEP area. We have therefore ranked this LEP as being a low priority.

**2. North West & West Midlands Generating Growth via Woodlands and Forestry - Support from the Area's Local Enterprise Partnerships**

**Synopsis** ~ After a period of concerted, but varied enabling<sup>2</sup>, the overviews below represent the position taken by each of each of the Area's 11 LEPs within their Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs) and Strategic Investment Frameworks (SIFs). The main opportunities arise from bringing undermanaged woodlands into management, development of commercial recreation and tourism ventures and the development of supply chain and secondary processing.

**2.1 Cumbria – High Priority ; total area woodlands 68,167ha; area undermanaged 23,187 ha Poss Jobs<sup>3</sup> - 41**

**SEP** ~ includes strong sector development statements e.g. “Encourage the growth of the forestry industry, bolstering its commercial presence and value in Cumbria, establishing a Woodland Enterprise Zone and developing a forestry and timber programme” & “A commitment to support the development of the Forestry and Timber Growth Plan by identifying a designated senior Government contact to whom progress and emerging issues can be reported to and who can ensure that links are maintained with relevant Government Departments as appropriate.” **SIF** ~ includes similar statements as the SEP it goes on to detail Cumbria as the largest forestry processing hub in England and outlines opportunities from Cumbria's forest resource. Deer/venison and upland management to address floods are also included. Strong links to Whinlatter, Grizedale & Centre Parcs. Strong links between this work and the North England Roots to Prosperity work.

**2.2 Lancashire – Med Priority; total area woodlands 20,044ha; area undermanaged 13,681ha; Poss Jobs – 24**

**SEP & SIF** ~No forestry/woods opportunities specifically outlined. However there is a nice £7.4m Green Infrastructure project for Blackpool (significantly deprived northern city) that we are trying to engage with and support delivery.

**2.3 Liverpool/Mersey – Med Priority; total area woodlands 5,009ha; area undermanaged 3,205ha; Poss Jobs – 6**

<sup>2</sup> Varied enabling: for high priority LEPs we directly input to each LEP on the opportunities for growth; for medium there was a limited amount of direct input but more often this was done via partners. There was the minimum of input to low priority LEPs.

<sup>3</sup> From estimate of new employment in woodland management and, by way of example, woodfuel production.



**SEP & SIF** ~ Some mention of the environment as a context for growth and improving urban environments related to tourism. The Mersey Forest is named in a cover letter about the Sustainable Transport Fund. There is specific mention and funding for Green Infrastructure. Atlantic Gateway – a lot of mentions relevant to our work on Newlands.

**2.4 Gt Manchester – Med Priority; total area woodlands 9,899ha; area undermanaged 6,555ha; Poss Jobs – 11**

**SEP & SIF** ~ Atlantic Gateway – couple of mentions but a lot less than Liverpool Several refs to GI under Competitive Places, where the natural environment & LNP is also mentioned & climate change resilience especially water issues. Good para on natural environment & GI and later one on low carbon and resilience in Opportunity section.

**2.5 Cheshire & Warrington – Med Priority; total area woodlands 14,537ha; area undermanaged 10,174ha; Poss Jobs -18**

**SEP & SIF** ~ Support for rural as a setting and rural economy for visitor economy ~ thus links to Delamere Forest Park. Natural environment and GI seen as a strength and growth opportunity. Atlantic Gateway – 1 of 3 overarching intervention priorities. Mersey Forest engaged. ‘We will work closely with the DEFRA family to develop our dialogue around the Cheshire & Warrington Rural economy so that the agri-environment schemes in the next programme align with our rural priorities.’

**2.6 Marches ~ High Priority; total area woodlands 57,505ha; area undermanaged 25,011ha; Poss Jobs – 44**

**SEP & SIF** – Tough nut to crack. No specific mention of woods, forestry or WEZ but recognition of environment as key economic asset’, low carbon (inc biomass and therein woodfuel), GI, tourism, food and drink (venison). Developing sector grouping; topic for discussion at CONFOR Marches meeting.

**2.7 Stoke & Staffs ~ Med Priority; total area woodlands 25,114ha; area undermanaged 13,705ha; Poss Jobs – 24**

**SEP & SIF** ~ Recognition of high quality landscape, energy generation (inc biomass) a priority, tourism (Cannock Chase, FoM & NF mentioned). Also mentions low carbon, flood risk and GI.

**2.8 Black Country ~ Low priority; total area woodlands 2,108ha; area undermanaged 1,354ha; Poss Jobs – 2**

**SEP & SIF** ~ Recognition of the environment, GI, low carbon etc

**2.9 Birmingham & Solihull ~ High Priority; total area woodlands 16,921ha; area undermanaged 9,120ha; Poss Jobs – 16**

**SEP & SIF** ~ Recognises Cannock Chase, Wyre and Nat Forests as key visitor attractions. No specific mention of trees, woods forestry mentions GI, low carbon (biomass) & quality of life

**2.10 Worcestershire Med Priority; total area woodlands 17,066ha; area undermanaged 9,482ha; Poss Jobs – 17**

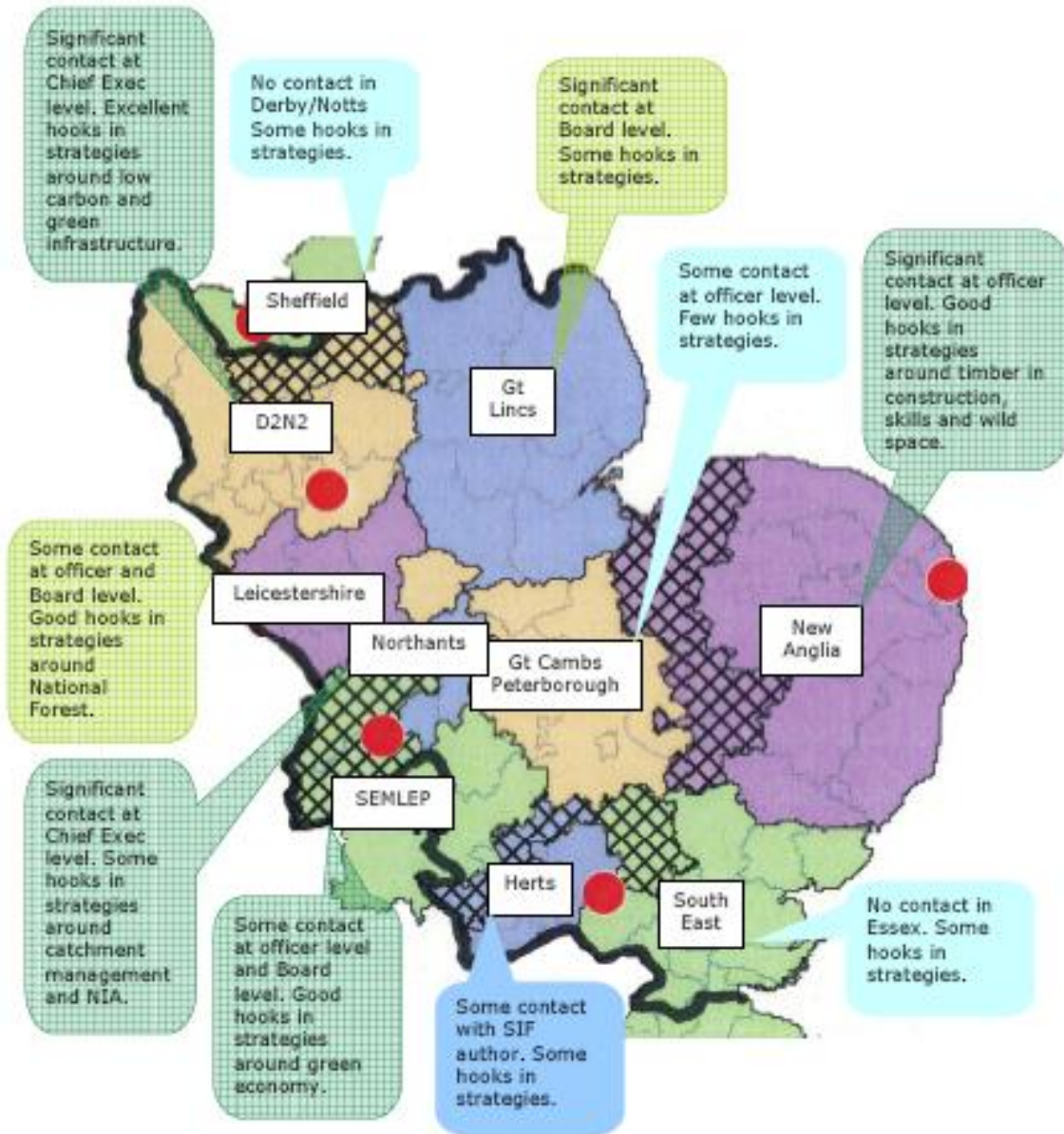
**SEP & SIF** ~ Recognition of the environment, GI, low carbon, no specific ref to trees, woods, forestry Ref to ‘forestry enterprise zones’ & tourism. FS and NE collaboration on visit by the LEP Chair to the Heart of England Forest highlighted opportunities within the PFE/NE within Wyre Forest.

**2.11 Warwickshire & Coventry; Low Priority; total area woodlands 13,538ha; area undermanaged 7,574ha; Poss Jobs - 13**

**SEP & SIF** ~ Few refs to trees and woods and recognition of the environment, GI, low carbon (biomass) and tourism

**3. East and East Midlands Area**

East & East Midlands. Progress with LEPs. April 2014



Note that progress with individual LEPs fluctuates, and assessment of priority is affected by opportunity, sector engagement and intelligence.



#### 4. Update on Local Enterprise Partnership Engagement in SW Area – March 2014

- 4.1 There are 6 LEPs covering the SW and FS has had variable levels of engagement with all to date.
- 4.2 FS SW Area Team contributed comments on all draft LEP strategy documents (EU SIFs and SEPs) through a co-ordinated Defra response led by the SW Rural Development Team. Despite very comprehensive feedback the final versions of these documents have largely ignored the economic potential of the wider rural economy and the benefits to growth of a vibrant and well managed natural environment.
- 4.3 LEPs admit to keeping their strategic documents “sector blind” with the deliberate aim of giving greater flexibility for future investments. Themes and outcomes are expressed only in very generic terms.
- 4.4 The SW Area team commissioned (in partnership with SW Woodland Renaissance Group and UKFPA), and distributed to all LEPs, a short and generic forest sector “offer” paper to provoke greater interest from LEPs. This had no impact and resulted in no further engagement.
- 4.5 The SW Area team has since adapted its approach to more direct contact with LEP Board members or the consultants writing their strategy documents. We did, for example, write a specific document for the Heart of the SW LEP Low Carbon Working Group promoting the potential of woodlands in its area to deliver renewable energy supplies. This did raise interest and opened the door for potential submission of investment projects in the future.
- 4.6 We judge that the main areas of potential interest from LEPs lie in major timber processing, woodfuel contributions for rural heat and power solutions and possibly tourism investment. The FC SW Timber Development Fund in 2013 has supported a number of timber processing businesses to research their future investment needs. We have also had separate approaches by businesses wishing to make major investments in timber processing in the SW. We are assisting these businesses with timber supply estimates and signposting them to the funding opportunities through LEPs.
- 4.7 It is clear that LEPs are now focussed on demonstrating a positive track record for growth and are actively encouraging business to offer “ready-made” projects for investment.
- 4.8 The SW Area team will focus its activity in the coming months on the following LEPs:

##### **Heart of the SW (Devon & Somerset)**

Likely to be geographic focus of major timber processing investment, so we will continue to enable and support those opportunities and advise investors on the potential of LEP support and how best to frame their business cases.

##### **Cornwall & Isles of Scilly LEP**

The LEP Board have encouraged a forestry sector proposal and we have supported and encouraged the development of a sector-led proposal that will now need to bring forward firm investment projects. We will assist this where we can with advice and information. There are greater opportunities here because this LEP will have significantly higher funds at its disposal than other LEPs due to its development status.

##### **Swindon & Wilts LEP**

Although we have not had good contact with this LEP, Wiltshire CC has commissioned a Woodland Enterprise Study for the LEP area akin to that produced for the Marches. We have contributed data and advice to the preparation of this study and it will form an important evidence base for potential investment for the forestry sector.

- 4.9 We will maintain a watching brief on the other 3 LEPs in the SW (**West of England, Gloucestershire and Dorset**) as they develop their investment plans. It is possible that investment in woodfuel heat and power may be encouraged in these areas.

#### 5. SE&L Summary of LEP’s potential and interest in ‘forestry’ 13 April 2014

**5.1 General points:**

- Total area of existing woodland in SE&L is 322,000 ha, if 2/3rds were actively managed = yield of > 1,000,000m<sup>3</sup> per year est. only about 300k is currently harvested (most low quality broadleaves and hence woodfuel priority).
- Opportunities suggested to the LEPs:
  - Attractive landscapes attract and retain high quality staff (v. pertinent to hi tech industries)
  - Renewable resources: – both woodfuel helping meet their carbon targets and local timber in construction (in particular building in the vernacular of the SE – weather boarded homes)
  - Commercial recreation opportunities: major links with FE here as they have led the way (Bedgebury now supports 50 jobs, as opposed to 10 prior to the rec developments) with rec hubs and cycle related businesses (major pressure from this sector). FE could provide the hub of further developments linked to adjacent woods e.g. Blean and Cobham woods (next door to Ebbsfleet Garden city and Jeskyns).
  - Flood management: woods for water BUT building on the business opportunity for a landowner to swap his heating oil bill for his own woodfuel.
- Statistical analysis: C2C advised that they need to demonstrate at least an 8:1 return on investment. Using FC statisticians we have demonstrated that forestry developments can achieve at least this.

**5.2 Coast to Capital (C2C):** Woodland area 61k potential production from 2/3rds est. 185kyr

Have grasped the forestry agenda wholeheartedly; forestry fully embedded in their strategies. Particularly interested in timber in housing which suites the vernacular of protected landscapes (South Downs, High Weald and Surrey Hills) and whether we could design a £60k home. Exploring SIP's panel. frame, Sussex weather board cladding and woodfuelled mini-district heating. Also major commercial rec opportunities in Surrey Hills and High Weald.

**5.3 Enterprise M3 (EM3):** Woodland area 97k pot prod from 2/3rds est 315kyr (more conifer)

Also well engaged and particularly interested in developing woodfuel opportunities.

**5.4 Oxfordshire:** Woodland area 23k pot. production from 2/3rds est 70kyr

Leader of the LEP has direct forestry experience. This is the least wooded part of the SE (in many ways similar to most of England). Have promoted woodland creation to help manage flood flows, but with link to local Woodheat production as the business driver. Seeds sown with partners, hooks in the LEP documents, awaiting W4W maps from FR before we bring everyone together to talk action.

**5.5 South East:** Woodland area 81k in SE&L and another 21k in Essex, pot prod from 2/3rds in SE&L est 244kyr (311k inc Essex)

The LEP with the largest rural budget (£18M as opposed to rest with < £4M each), with huge woodland opportunities BUT the most challenging, partly due to the LEP teams level of interest in Thames Gateway and coastal communities. However, this continues to be a priority as opportunities for woodfuel (especially with [Estover Energy](#) building their new woodfuelled powerstation at Discovery Park nr Sandwich), this weeks Local Growth Fund grant to the Kent Woodland Employment Scheme and major opportunities for commercial recreation (with links to FE e.g. Jeskyns/Cobham Woods, Blean).

**5.6 Buckinghamshire Thames Valley:** Woodland area 19k pot prod from 2/3rds est 58kyr

Forestry embedded in strategy courtesy of NGAGE who wrote them.

**5.7 Solent:** Woodland area 6k pot prod from 2/3rds est 16kyr

Obsessed with loss of jobs in Southampton and Portsmouth but will continue to pursue interest re Isle of Wight rural jobs and green infrastructure in urban south Hampshire

**5.8 Thames Valley Berkshire:** Woodland area 20k pot prod from 2/3rds est 65kyr

Good links via the LNP and businesses like Waitrose but strategies don't recognise rural agenda at all.

**5.9 London:** Woodland area 13k pot prod from 2/3rds est 24kyr. This LEP is managed through the GLA and focussed on commercial development. Green infrastructure is noted and we will continue to work with our GLA contacts to support them in how they liaise with their colleagues in the way this LEP programme moves forwards.

**5.10 South East Midlands:** Overlaps into SE&L picking up Milton Keynes, Aylesbury Vale and shares Cherwell with Oxon LEP. Major interest re green infrastructure linked to woods for water. Milton Keynes 'wrote the book', big opportunities around Aylesbury Vale.