

Forestry Commission

Corporate Plan 2009-2012
Great Britain Activities

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Foreword

This Corporate Plan sets out the Forestry Commission's programme of work for its activities across Great Britain and the strategic direction that the Forestry Commission will take up to 2012.

I would particularly like to highlight the focus on two key challenges; climate change and biosecurity.

Britain's trees and forests make a vital contribution in the fight against climate change, particularly by providing renewable, low-carbon forms of fuel and energy and by substituting wood for less environmentally friendly materials. To this end, the Forestry Commission has commissioned an independent review of the existing science of forestry and climate change. It is setting up a Centre for Forestry and Climate Change to research the effects of environmental and climate change and how the sector can alleviate the effects. The Forestry Commission will also develop a framework for woodland carbon management and emissions offsetting.

Climate Change also impacts on the spread of pests and pathogens. Therefore, the Forestry Commission will develop a risk management strategy and action plan to respond to the increasing threats to our trees and forests.

The Forestry Commission will also continue to champion sustainable forestry internationally and promote it throughout the UK. A revised UK Forestry Standard and supporting guidelines will be launched later this year.

I welcome this Corporate Plan, and its targets in particular, as well as the intention and commitment of the Forestry Commission in demonstrating how it can help achieve our aims for dealing with Climate Change.

The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP

Secretary of State for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs

Introduction

This Corporate Plan describes the work the FC does for all of Great Britain. It sets out its strategic direction up to 2012 and the specific actions it is taking forward in 2009/10. It also covers the work carried out by the FC's central support services.

Ministers have agreed that, whilst most of the FC's work is now done at country level, a number of the FC's functions are funded directly by Westminster and operated on a cross-GB basis by Corporate and Forestry Support Division. In this GB role, the FC provides advice and support to the UK Government and to the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales. These activities are covered in the first part of this plan.

In addition, central support services are provided to the entire organisation, funded as shared services by the users. Part two of this plan describes this part of our work.

Part 1

The Forestry Commission in Great Britain

The Forestry Commission in Great Britain

In our GB role, we support the sustainability of forests in the UK and internationally. We set sustainability standards, underpinned by a sound evidence base and authoritative information. We encourage good practice and support delivery through guidance, interpretation and expert advice. We develop and implement regulation at EU and GB levels to protect our trees, forests and timber from harmful pests and diseases.

We have a Board of Commissioners with duties and powers summarised in the Forestry Act as 'promoting the interests of forestry, the development of afforestation, the production and supply of timber and other forest products, the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the conservation of flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest.' Our GB work includes support for our governance structure and the implementation of central Government Initiatives.

At the current time, we are faced with two overarching priorities – climate change and biosecurity (tree health) and our priorities for these are set out separately. However, there is a close relationship between these areas and the rest of our work and we take an integrated approach to delivery.

Forests and Climate Change

Climate change is the biggest challenge facing the world today. Britain's trees and forests have an important contribution to make in addressing climate change, particularly by providing renewable, low-carbon forms of fuel and energy and by substituting wood for less environmentally friendly materials. New woods and forests can also help by locking up carbon from the atmosphere, and forestry also has the special advantage that it can actually remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Whatever action we might take our climate will continue to change, and this makes it inevitable that the makeup of our woods and forests will also change, in some parts of the country quite significantly. We must make the most of the opportunities that trees and woods bring. We also need to be able to accurately forecast how our trees will react to a changing climate and to understand the implications for our landscape and for industry as we plan our forests of the future.

We have unique knowledge and expertise to bring to the issue of climate change. As the government department responsible for forestry in England, Scotland and Wales and the largest single woodland manager in Britain, we are stewards of a vital natural resource. The following key actions have been put in place by the Forestry Commission and will form the centrepiece of our work programme on climate change in 2009/10.

Assessment of UK forestry and Climate Change

We have commissioned a panel of experts to examine the evidence on forestry and climate change. This work is led by a steering group under the Chairmanship of Professor Sir David Read and will conduct an Assessment of UK Forestry and Climate Change. It will produce an independent report that will:

- review and synthesise existing evidence;
- provide a baseline to assess the current and potential contribution of UK forestry; and
- identify gaps and weaknesses to help determine research priorities for the next five years.

Although the report is primarily a review of the science of forestry and climate change, the panel will also make recommendations on how this should influence policy.

Forestry and Climate Change Centre

We are setting up a Centre for Forestry and Climate Change within our Forest Research Agency. The Centre for Forestry and Climate Change will research the effects of environmental and climate change on forestry, and how the sector can play its part in the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. The Centre will also develop entomology, pathology and environmental sciences in order to deliver a holistic understanding of climate change and forestry. As one of three new centres in Forest Research, the centre will ensure that actions on climate change integrate with wider aspects of sustainable forest management. At its heart, the centre will be a knowledge hub on forestry and climate change.

Framework for Woodland Carbon Management and Emissions Offsetting

We are developing a means of verifying voluntary carbon offsetting schemes by creating criteria against which schemes involving domestic tree planting can be accredited or endorsed. The Forestry Commission has convened a group of stakeholders representing the offsetting industry, woodland managers and NGOs, to advise on the development of a code of practice for woodland carbon management and emissions offsetting. The code of practice will be consulted on during 2009.

Actions for 2009/10:

- we will support an independent assessment of forestry and climate change in the UK that will be completed in summer 2009;
- we will enhance the existing evidence base through the creation of a Centre for Forests and Climate Change;
- we will develop a code of good practice for carbon offsetting in forests by spring 2010;
- we will promote greater understanding of forests and climate change through an improved website and by developing a network of partners; and
- we will produce guidance on the management of forests in a changing climate
- we will work with DECC and other stakeholders to provide more robust forestry information for the UK in relation to LULUCF accounting and prepare for changes that may be required if a new accounting option is agreed in Copenhagen.

Ensuring the continued health of our trees and forests

Maintaining healthy and productive trees and forests is an essential component of delivering long term sustainability, be it through carbon capture, wood production or providing a pleasant environment for people. As the impacts of pests and diseases become more evident, concern about the potential loss of much valued trees such as oak and horse chestnut is coming to the forefront of public consciousness. Red Band Needle Blight of Pine is now causing significant damage to our crops of pine, particularly Corsican pine in east England and more recently, especially in Scotland, Lodgepole pine. This could be a major source of damage and loss so we have increased our effort to find ways of dealing with this.

Globalisation and climate change impact on the spread of pests and pathogens bringing new threats to Britain's forests and increasing the virulence of those already

present. We have therefore commissioned a study to better understand how globalisation and climate change may impact upon the risk posed by biotic threats.

Through our regulatory function, we seek to prevent pests and diseases entering the country and respond to outbreaks when they arise.

Actions for 2009/10:

- we will develop a risk management strategy and action plan to respond to the increasing biotic threats to UK trees and forests by Spring 2009;
- we will continue to monitor the spread and impact of pests and pathogens already present;
- we will use the advice generated from evidence-based research to identify a range of control measures;
- we will work in partnership with others to eliminate and reduce the impact of current pests and pathogens; and
- we will monitor and review the effectiveness of the controls in place.

Setting the sustainability standards for forestry in the UK

The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) sets out the approach of the governments in the UK to sustainable forest management (SFM). The UKFS sets the standards, provides a basis for regulation and monitoring (including national and international reporting); and indicates sources of guidance. Along with the supporting guideline publications, it is both a guide and a performance standard for the sustainable management, planning and design of all forests in the UK. The UKFS & guidelines also have an important function as the basis of forestry practice in the UK for the independent UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS), which is used for voluntary independent certification of forest products.

A principal role of the UKFS is to demonstrate that international protocols on sustainable forest management, agreed at a European and a global level, are applied in an appropriate way to the management of forests in the UK. It therefore delivers international obligations, for example by forming a key element of the UK National Forest Programme and establishing a common basis for the national forestry strategies in the four constituent countries of UK.

By implementing and meeting the requirements of the UKFS, managers can demonstrate that forestry activity and the timber that comes from our forests is both legal and sustainable.

The UK Forestry Standard was first published in 1998 and has developed through an open and consensual process, involving many interested parties and the general public.

The 2009 version is a significant revision that will:

- provide an explicit statement of all the forestry requirements for land-managers, in common with statements for other land uses supported by EU rural development measures;
- incorporate forest management requirements from the new versions of the UK Forestry Guidelines and thus link UKFS and guidelines more closely;
- clarify the status of the UKFS and the assurances provided by meeting the standard through the regulatory process;
- strengthen the role of forest planning;
- reflect developments in international agreements, and changes in the way forestry activity is monitored and reported; and
- include domestic and international initiatives on climate change and the role woodlands can play in mitigation and adaptation.

The Standard is augmented by a set of guidelines. The existing suite is to be fully revised and, in addition, new guidelines are to be issued to cover climate change and forests and people, reflecting the growing importance of these topics. The guideline suite now covers the relationship between forests and the following topics:

- biodiversity;
- climate change;
- forest planning and practice;
- historic environment;
- landscape;
- people;
- soils; and
- water.

Actions for 2009/10:

- we will consult on a revised UKFS and supporting guidelines in spring 09 and launch the revised sustainability standard for forestry in the UK in autumn 09;
- we will update the supporting series of guidelines; and
- we will work with Defra and others to develop a straightforward approach that can be used to meet Government procurement policies for legal and sustainable timber.

Providing the underpinning evidence and supporting delivery

One of our main roles is to support the science and evidence base necessary to underpin decisions at the strategic level in setting policy or in the operations that deliver it. We do this through our science budget that is deployed to implement the Science and Innovation Strategy for British Forestry. The Strategy, which has been adopted by all four UK Governments, sets out to improve the base of scientific evidence for effective policy and practice with increased emphasis on communications and knowledge transfer.

Our outputs:

- set the sustainability standards for forestry in the UK;
- demonstrate how forests contribute to the challenge of climate change;
- safeguard UK forests and trees from pests and diseases;
- provide authoritative information on the state of Britains forests;
- provide a robust evidence base underpinned by sound science and analysis; and
- promote forest sustainability through guidance interpretation and expert advice.

Our main supplier is our agency Forest Research but we also commission work from external suppliers with particular areas of expertise.

Actions for 2009/10:

Ensuring decisions are underpinned by sound science and analysis

- we will refresh the Science and Innovation Strategy for British Forestry by Autumn 2009; and
- we will publish a position statement and protocol for dealing with applications from researchers to use GM trees on FC managed land.

Providing authoritative information

- we will produce an updated map of British woods and forests as an early deliverable from the new National Forest Inventory programme; and
- we will survey wood fuel suppliers to improve estimates of use.

Robust evidence base

- we will develop the evidence base and support projects to demonstrate the extent to which forests and trees contribute to people's well being and quality of life;

- we will work with national and international partners in the development and implementation of criteria and indicators of sustainability for procurement of wood and use of wood as a fuel; and
- we will undertake research together with Defra to develop surveillance methods to monitor density and abundance of feral wild boar and to detect range expansion.

Promoting the sustainability of forests globally

The UK has a number of strategic international objectives in the areas of forests, climate change, the natural environment, sustainable development and poverty reduction. The foundation of forestry's contribution to help achieve these objectives is sustainable forest management. Therefore, the Forestry Commission's objective in this area is to ensure that forests contribute effectively to sustainable development and the UK Government's priorities on international forestry and climate change.

In Europe the political framework and standards for the sustainable management of Europe's forests are set by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe (MCPFE). The Forestry Commission represents the UK Government in the MCPFE, and is working with countries across Europe to support and review the sustainable development process and explore the added value of developing a legally binding agreement on sustaining forests in Europe.

The Forestry Commission provides forestry expertise and champions the role of forests in delivering EU policies and strategies. It achieves this through representing the UK's forestry priorities in Europe and advising the European Commission in the EU Standing Forestry Committee.

Globally, the UK continues to play a leading role in promoting the sustainable management of forests, in particular on implementing actions to achieve the four UN global objectives on forests adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007¹. The Forestry Commission chairs the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration

¹ The Global Objectives on Forests aim to:

- reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management (SFM), including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation;
- enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people;
- increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products derived from sustainably managed forests; and
- reverse the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management and mobilise significantly-increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM.

working with IUCN and other international partners to promote the restoration of forests around the world.

The Forestry Commission is actively engaged in the UK Government's Sustainable Development Dialogue (SDD) process in close co-operation with Defra, Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and other government departments. The SDD provides an innovative and effective mechanism for strategic level exchanges and substantive co-operation with target countries on a wide range of sustainable development issues, including forestry.

The Commonwealth Forestry Conference will be held in the UK in 2010. The Forestry Commission currently chairs the Standing Committee on Commonwealth Forestry and is responsible for the development and delivery of the Conference.

The Commonwealth has a unique place in the world today, and forestry plays a fundamental part in the lives and economies of the Commonwealth's citizens and countries, which have significant forest resources and forestry expertise throughout. This Conference will address the issue of how restoring the Commonwealth's forests can help tackle climate change.

Actions for 2009/10:

- with our partners in the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration, produce a global assessment of degraded landscapes and an economic appraisal of forests' contribution to their restoration;
- co-ordinate and develop the UK's position on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe, the review of the MCPFE, the Canadian Initiative on a global legally binding agreement on forests, the effective implementation of the UN's non-legally binding instrument on forests and deliver the programme of work of the UN Forum on Forests;
- contribute to the European Commission's mid-term review of the EU Forest Action Plan and prepare for the mid-term review of the Rural Development Regulation;
- complete UK reporting for the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010;
- work with SDD partners across government to develop and deliver the forestry elements of the UK's Sustainable Development Dialogue work programmes in China, Brazil, India, Mexico and South Africa; and
- co-ordinate preparations for the Commonwealth Forestry Conference, working both to secure support and a high profile for the event and to deliver a successful and effective Conference in Edinburgh in 2010.

Corporate Governance

Forestry is a devolved matter. Forestry Commission England, Forestry Commission Scotland and Forestry Commission Wales report directly to their appropriate Minister, providing advice on policy and implementing that policy within the relevant country. The Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs also has responsibility for the GB activities described in this plan. The Commissioners' programmes to deliver each country's forestry strategy are set out in Corporate Plans for England, Scotland and Wales. These programmes are directed and financed by the three administrations to which the FC is directly accountable.

We have a Board of Commissioners that has duties and powers prescribed by statute. It consists of a Chairman and up to ten other Forestry Commissioners, including its Director General, who are appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of Ministers. We also have an Executive Board which assists the Director General and Country Directors in the effective management of the Commission by providing leadership and setting direction for the Commission as an organisation.

Our Corporate Services team ensures that the FC's statutory framework and obligations are fulfilled and provides support to the Forestry Commissioners and the Executive Board. The team also implements central Government Initiatives including Open Information, Data Protection and Better Regulation and provides security of FC systems and assets.

We also have an independent Internal Audit unit, set up within the FC to evaluate its systems and make recommendations where risks are not identified and managed, or where controls are weak or missing. It is part of the corporate governance framework and functions by examining and evaluating the adequacy and effectiveness of all other elements of the framework.

Better Regulation

The Forestry Commission is playing a full part in the Westminster Government's initiative to ease the burden that government regulation imposes on business. Although we exceeded the five-year target set for us in year one, we have continued to look at what we might do for our stakeholders. Our third Simplification Plan, *'Making Regulation Work for Everyone'*² was published in December 2008. This sets

² [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/SimplifyingRegulation1Dec2008.pdf/\\$FILE/SimplifyingRegulation1Dec2008.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/SimplifyingRegulation1Dec2008.pdf/$FILE/SimplifyingRegulation1Dec2008.pdf)

out additional measures that will potentially save timber hauliers and contractors an additional £50,000 each year through further developments in e-business using readily available technology. Although this is a relatively small sum, it is significant to the small businesses affected and brings the total savings to our stakeholders since this work began to around 30%.

We are committed to good enforcement policies and procedures in line with the recommendations of the Hampton Report as given effect to by the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006. We are also committed to the principles of the Cabinet Office's Enforcement Concordat.

Part 2 of the Legislative Regulatory Reform Act requires regulators to have regard to certain principles of good regulation. Regulators should carry out their activities in a way that is transparent, accountable, proportionate and consistent and should target their activities only at cases where they consider that action is needed. The Act also enables Ministers to issue a Statutory Code of Practice for regulators and the Government has indicated that it intends to issue a Regulators' Compliance Code to stand along side the Enforcement Concordat.

Actions for 2009/10:

- implement Making Regulation Work for Everyone; and
- publish our own enforcement policy statement.

Our regulatory functions

We develop and implement regulation at EU and GB levels in two areas: Plant health and Forest Reproductive Material. The first has the vital task of protecting GB and EU forests and timber from harmful pests and diseases. The regulation of Forest Reproductive Material (seeds, plants and cuttings) provides a system to ensure that planting stock is traceable throughout the collection and production process.

Plant Health

The Plant Health Service's main function is to discharge the Forestry Commissioners' duties as the 'competent authority', empowered under the Plant Health Act 1967, to protect the nation's forest trees and timber from pests and disease. In practical terms, this is focussed on exercising controls to prevent the introduction and spread of listed quarantine pests and diseases. We do this by inspecting imports of timber that are subject to quarantine control at ports. Increasingly, however, we face a bigger risk from imports of non-timber cargoes shipped on wooden packaging material

such as pallets, boxes and crates, as well as dunnage (loose wood used to wedge or support a cargo). Phytosanitary certificates are issued to exporters who need them to ship forestry products and goods on wood packaging material where these are needed to meet the requirements of importing countries.

Forest Reproductive Material

The Forest Reproductive Material Regulations provide a system of control for seed, cuttings and planting stock that is used for forestry purposes in Great Britain. We maintain a control system, in accordance with an EU Directive, which ensures that all reproductive material remains separated and clearly identified throughout the entire plant production process from collector, to grower and to end user. To ensure compliance with the Regulations we carry out inspections at various stages in the process.

Actions for 2009/10:

- we will amend the Plant Health (Forestry) Order 2005 to implement new EU controls against Emerald Ash Borer and revised requirements for wood packaging material; and
- we will publish guidance on seed testing.

Funding the GB activities

Our GB activities are funded as a separate Request for Resources within the Defra vote although some of our work, for example, import inspections and export certification for Plant Health operate on a full cost recovery basis.

The corporate services described in Part 2 are organised centrally but paid for by the countries. The cost of these services is included in the Corporate Plans for each country and Forest Research.

Source and Use of Funds

£m	2008-09 Budget	2009-10 Indicative	2010-11 Indicative	2011-12 Indicative
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SOURCE OF FUNDS				
Parliamentary funding				
Revenue funding	19.70	18.30	18.30	18.30
Capital funding	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
GB Total Parliamentary funding	21.70	20.30	20.30	20.30

USE OF FUNDS				
Science, evidence and monitoring (spend with providers)		11.68	11.68	11.68
Climate change		0.47	0.47	0.47
Biosecurity and plant health		1.00	1.00	1.00
Standards, evidence and knowledge transfer		1.82	1.82	1.82
International		0.65	0.65	0.65
Governance and corporate services		0.58	0.58	0.58
Depreciation and Cost of Capital		2.10	2.10	2.10
Capital Expenditure		2.00	2.00	2.00
GB Total Expenditure	21.70	20.30	20.30	20.30

Part 2 – Corporate Services

Improving how we work – an efficient, effective and sustainable organisation

Improving how we work – an efficient, effective and sustainable organisation

The Forestry Commission operates across Great Britain (GB) as a cross-border public authority. This allows FC England, FC Scotland and FC Wales to benefit from the economies of scale that a GB-wide body is able to offer with regard to support services. This includes services on finance, human resource management, information services, forestry operations, external communications and internal audit. These services are organised centrally and paid for by the countries.

People

We will continue work on the priority workstreams identified in our People Strategy, which was published in 2007. Implementation of improved policies, systems and processes is planned over the course of this Corporate Plan period.

Main achievements delivered during 2008 included:

- Equality & Diversity Strategy;
- Competency Framework introduced;
- new Pay & Reward Strategy;
- Workforce Plans;
- Learning & Development Strategy;
- development of Management Development Programme; and
- review of Data Protection within HR.

HR Processes

We will continue to review our HR policies and processes to ensure they are fit for purpose, as efficient and effective as they can be, and communicated in plain English. Topics for the coming year will include the development of a resourcing strategy and a review of our conduct, performance management, relocation and sick absence processes.

Learning & Development

We will continue to roll out our management development programme across the Forestry Commission. The programme is aimed to identify development needs and provide appropriate learning for three levels of management - operational, tactical

and strategic. We will also implement a leadership strategy that will identify and develop potential talent for senior posts within the Forestry Commission.

We are reviewing the way that we currently deliver technical training in order that we can maintain the quality but increase its availability to appropriate staff.

Equality and Diversity

A great deal was achieved over the last 12 months to implement the FC's Equality and Diversity agenda. The main achievements were as follows:

- an Equality And Diversity Strategy was developed and published;
- an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Framework Tool was devised and published;
- new policies are being equality impact assessed and results published and a rolling programme to EqIA existing policies is currently underway;
- four levels of diversity training have been designed, to ensure that all staff receive appropriate training. Courses have been delivered to senior managers and policy leads to date. This is a two-year rolling programme;
- Equality Schemes are in place, with the new Race Equality Scheme published in early December 2008 after a consultation exercise;
- annual monitoring against each scheme is in place, with Race and Disability completed in early December 2008, and Gender completed June 2008; and
- the Director General has been appointed Diversity Champion, with 'local' champions appointed on management boards.

During the coming year the focus of our attention will be on increasing the diversity of the FC's workforce. Work is underway with recruitment advertising specialists on how to target diverse communities. This work will contribute to a new recruitment strategy. A project has also commenced to examine existing equality and diversity research to inform a new programme of research that will underpin our future programme of work.

Health & Safety

We put a lot of effort into developing and operating safe working systems and practices and ensuring the general welfare of all staff. Particular attention is paid to those who work in the forest, which can be a dangerous workplace. The number of reportable accidents has progressively reduced and now stands at 1 per 100 employees. This has been achieved by using a framework to manage health and safety in forestry, audit systems that measure health and safety performance and improved risk assessment.

Health and safety is also a priority for the Forestry Commission when working with the forest industry as a whole.

Actions for 2009/10:

- roll out of Management Development Programme;
- new Grievance and Discipline policies and procedures;
- introduction of new e-recruitment system;
- Leadership Development Strategy;
- review and revise the Disability Equality Scheme;
- Staff Survey;
- IIP Development Plan;
- review of non-pay benefits; and
- introduce 'no' mandatory retirement age.

Finance and Accounting (FAS)

FAS is committed to working in partnership with customers to deliver effective, cost efficient, high quality solutions to finance and accounting related issues. Its main functions can be split into two main areas:

Finance functions

The services provided include the production of the annual report and accounts for each of the three country administrations. FAS also co-ordinates the development and maintenance of business planning and monitoring systems used across the organisation and implements accounting policies and procedures in line with generally accepted accounting practices. It also delivers banking and credit management services and works with country representatives on the policies and procedures involved in valuing the organisation's substantial fixed asset base.

It seeks to identify and develop new opportunities for improvement to corporate financial and commercial systems including the promotion of efficient business practices within the forest industries across GB.

Effective procurement policies are essential and FAS provides guidance for all FC staff on public procurement legislation, contract management and other legal issues. This includes the development of a procurement strategy and associated documentation to deliver compliant and straightforward procurement processes.

FAS manages the FC's efficiency programme by supporting the customer base to further develop efficiency plans, processes and procedures for delivering outcomes within the financial settlements received from the country administrations.

Grants and Regulations (G&R) support

This unit supports the countries in managing and developing business specifications for new and enhanced developments to G&R systems. It also manages the delivery of all aspects of systems development including technical delivery, testing, documentation and training. Live business support is provided to the countries on the G&R systems and analysis and guidance on the interpretation of EU grant regulations including the preparation of periodic returns, accounts and statistics on EU co-financed grant schemes for countries and the respective paying agencies.

Actions for 2009/10:

- implement updated requirements to enhance the Accounting by Objectives project that is designed to link the allocation of resources to wider government objectives;
- implement processes to deliver interim accounts from 2009/10 under International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and produce re-stated 2008/09 accounts on the new IFRS basis;
- further automation of transaction based services to release resources for priority developments;
- provide leadership and guidance in the development of Business Continuity Plans to meet the accreditation requirements of ISO 27001;
- deliver the agreed development plan for G&R systems to meet country requirements;
- expansion of e-Business for Forestry initiative including mobile technology programme and new English auctions system;
- development of the procurement strategy and manual;
- progress the procurement team co-ordination of policy and strategies for the customer base. Improve links with other government procurement functions to maximise opportunities for co-operation and value for money; and
- implement the CIPFA Financial Management Model and benchmark the finance function utilising the central models prepared by UK Public Sector Audit Agencies "Value for Money in the Public Sector Corporate Services".

Information Services (IS)

The IS organisation is responsible for the development and delivery of information technology solutions to the Forestry Commission. The IS organisation has developed the following priorities to improve the performance of the division:

Focus on customer service

The IS organisation has been restructured to focus on delivering excellent customer service to all commission staff who use IT systems to do their jobs. A key feature of the new IS organisation is the creation of a Service Improvement team who will implement new process-based working practices.

Establish clear IS governance

The IS organisation will further develop a clear governance structure to ensure that IS decision-making is fully aligned with the business priorities and to ensure clarity for the authority and responsibility of IS decisions.

Develop the IS strategy

The future development of the IT systems and infrastructure will be guided by a new information systems strategy. This strategy will establish a five-year vision for information systems across the organisation and become the basis for new systems development and IT infrastructure projects.

Manage business and IT risks

Like any modern business the Forestry Commission is highly dependent on the IT systems and infrastructure in its day-to-day activities. The IS organisation will re-structure the provision of these key systems to minimise the risk of business disruption in the event of a potentially damaging incident.

Actions for 2009/10:

- publish the Information Systems Strategy;
- implement the ISO27001 standard to further reduce security & data handling risks;
- start to introduce video & enhanced voice solutions to help reduce business travel;
- continue to modernise end-user computing facilities; and
- further rationalise the IT infrastructure to reduce costs and improve service reliability.

Forestry Business Units (FBUs)

FBUs exist to provide essential services to forestry operations in England, Scotland and Wales in areas where a common approach across geographies makes sense. These services comprise Civil and Mechanical Engineering, Plant and Seed Supply and Renewable Energy Development. FBUs also provide services to support country objectives such as added value from specialist structures and mountain bike facilities that attract visitors to the forest, the use of low carbon emission vehicles and an asset survey of our infrastructure such as access roads, etc.

The FBUs' remit is to deliver these services efficiently and effectively to agreed financial targets and other performance indicators.

Scale of Operation

To undertake the services mentioned above, FBUs' planned spend over the remaining CSR07 period is as follows:

£000	08/09	09/10	10/11
MES	20.2	19.9	20.3
FCE	15.0	15.0	15.0
PSSB	5.1	5.4	5.5
REBU	0.8	0.6	0.7
Total	41.1	40.9	41.5

The objective is to achieve a balanced budget in each year. Based on 09/10 financials Scotland represents 56% of activity, England 32% and Wales 11%.

To undertake the activities which result in the expenditure above the FBUs employ the following staff:

	08/09	09/10	10/11
MES	143.6	139.8	136.4
FCE	106.0	109.3	108.4
PSSB	90.2	90.1	90.0
REBU	3.6	4.6	5.5
Total	343.4	343.7	340.2

Staff numbers are split (08/09) Scotland 56%, England 34%, Wales 11%.

Efficiencies

Incorporated in the above financial numbers is an accumulated saving of £2,181,000 over the three-year CSR07 period resulting from the FBUs' Value for Money Delivery Plan.

The savings will be realised by a combination of efficiency initiatives and increases in external income. Over and above this, the FBUs see it as a duty to critically appraise all aspects of cost to determine if a better way can be found to decrease forest operational costs while maintaining other targets.

In addition, FBUs expect that the new Renewable Energy Development Unit will deliver significant added value to countries. Already, the negotiation project has achieved an annual improvement of c. £8 million in Scotland and England.

Actions for 2009/10:

- incorporate road and bridge data within the new version of the Forester GIS model which now includes provision for the civil engineering asset;
- commence the Forest Road/Access Condition Survey using ground penetrating radar with a qualitative assessment and video of each section of road;
- start a programme of six-yearly principal bridge inspections on the 2,500 bridges on the forest estate;
- promote the use of Forestry Civil Engineering's stress laminated timber footbridges for both internal and external customers through a new commercial bridge unit;
- implement the findings of a review of Mechanical Engineering Services operations in Wales;
- implement a wood fuel heating system at Crychan workshop in Wales and use this to evaluate further use of wood fuel for heating of workshops;
- issue advice on the potential for use of electric vehicles in the Forestry Commission. Monitor changes in technology and implications this may have. Introduce hybrid electric systems, which make use of regenerative braking to improve vehicle efficiency, on a few vehicles;
- increase the availability of Sitka spruce planting material as cuttings taken from genetically improved material;
- adjust nursery programmes to respond to the change in the Countries requirement for pine species that has arisen from the threat of Red Band Needle Blight; and
- quantify the hydro electric potential on each of the countries Estates with an aim of progressing the schemes through to planning consent in Scotland, and to enable others to do so in England and Wales.

Business Sustainability

The Business Sustainability Group, formally 'Greenerways', is responsible for the environmental management of the FC's corporate business. The sustainable management of forests managed by the FC on behalf of the three country administrations is independently certified under the UKWAS scheme. However, UKWAS does not address the sustainable management of what is sometimes referred to as our 'back office functions'.

Essentially, business sustainability is not just about how we manage our forests, but about how we manage ourselves.

We are continuing the work from previous years to develop systems for gathering the data needed to manage these activities. Due to the range and complexity of the Forestry Commission's work this has proved particularly challenging. We have introduced targets to reduce emissions from offices and travel, and are looking to reduce the volumes of waste we generate and increase the amounts we re use and recycle.

We are also developing policies on the management of our built estate to help ensure that our office facilities and other buildings are fit for purpose in the context of sustainability. This includes working with Building Research Establishment (BRE) to develop a new BRE Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) for recreational buildings in the countryside.

Actions for 2009/10:

- to monitor our use of energy in buildings to achieve a saving of 3% against our energy use from 2008-09;
- to monitor our travel and transport in order to achieve savings of 5% in carbon emissions from administrative travel. The savings will be made against the performance figures for 2008-09;
- to establish a baseline figure for our waste arisings from all of our activities except forest management and a baseline figure for the volume of that waste which is recycled;
- to complete the development of our Environmental Management System (EMS), and put in place the mechanisms to enable us to seek external accreditation to ISO 14001:2004 in 2010-11. We will train a number of staff to act as internal assessors to audit our EMS, and will identify areas where improvements in business practice are required.

Inventory, Forecasting and Operational Support

Inventory, Forecasting and Operational Support (IFOS) will be established as a new cost centre on April 1 2009. It will deliver a range of products and services across FC as mandated by the FC Executive Board and various cross-country business groups. A service board (comprising senior staff from the three countries, Information Services, Forest Research and Corporate and Forestry Support) has been in place since September 2008 to oversee the establishment of IFOS. The board meets quarterly and is accountable to the FC Executive Board and the three countries for the products and services delivered by IFOS.

IFOS will have three main roles:

- to inform policy development and evaluation through the provision of current, consistent and credible information on the status and condition of British forests – the National Forest Inventory of Great Britain. To analyse historic trends and future scenarios including their impact on defined forest products and services. To lead on the development of inventory and forecasting policy and standards across GB;
- to review, support and improve a defined range of systems, procedures and practises used by FC estate managers across GB. This includes specification and support of FC's corporate forest management information system 'Forester GIS'. Also development, maintenance and communication of best practise principally through the suite of Operational Guidance Booklets – OGBs; and
- to ensure that FC's spatial data is fit for purpose and accessible.

Actions for 2009/10:

- complete the National Forest Inventory Strategy and implement the year one work programme;
- implement and maintain the FC Spatial Data policy and the FC Metadata policy. Deliver agreed data capture and data improvement programmes in accordance with requirements defined by each country;
- implement and maintain the OGB Strategy and deliver associated products;
- improve and extend the utility of 'Forester' software in accordance with requirements defined by cross-country business groups;
- meet Service Level Agreement targets for 'Forester' support with countries;
- meet Service Level Agreement targets for GIS Support with Forest Research; and
- compilation of FC estate data for annual accounts and production forecasts.

Corporate Communications

Climate change will continue to be our communications priority. Building on the remarkable success of our 'Forests and Climate Change - A Convenient Truth' DVD we will implement a new climate change communications strategy. This will include launching a new website area and producing further multimedia communication materials to elaborate on specific topic areas. Early in the year we will also work with the 'News of the World' newspaper on an exciting and ambitious project to communicate forest's role in mitigating climate change and to help get more than a million trees planted across the UK. The FC will provide tree seeds, advice, and information for this campaign that will run throughout 2009.

We will continue to play a full part in the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators' Network to work in partnership with other countries to improve the communication of forestry and to encourage the promotion of forests' role in mitigating climate change at a European level.

Recent changes in the structure of the unit will allow greater emphasis to be placed on GB-core communications. A new communications strategy will be developed to focus and plan this activity.

Actions for 2009/10:

- implement a new climate change communications strategy;
- assist the 'News of the World' with their Seeds for Schools initiative;
- help with the preparation and running of a "Taking us Out of the Woods: Communication on Forests and Forestry" workshop in support of the EU Forest Action Plan in the Czech Republic in June; and
- create a communications strategy and plan for GB-core functions.

Meeting our customers' needs

Anyone with comments on this Plan, or suggestions for future Plans is welcome to write to the address below.

If you need this publication in an alternative format, for example in large print or in another language, please contact:

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