

**REPORT OF THE 7th MEETING OF THE ENGLAND FORESTRY FORUM
HELD AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION, LONDON,
TUESDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2002**

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

Present:	Mr Nick Atkinson	Association of National Parks Authorities
	Ms Judith Webb	Country Land and Business Association
	Mr Rob Green	Countryside Agency
	Dr Keith Kirby	English Nature
	Mr Steve Trow	English Heritage
	Mr Peter Wilson	Forest Industries Development Council
	Professor Martin Whitby	Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committee (North East England)
	Ms Bridget Bloom	Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committee (South East England)
	Sir Harry Studholme	Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committee (South West England)
	Mr Ken Buswell	Forestry Contracting Association
	Mr John Vaughan	Community Forests
	Mr Neville Elstone	Institute of Chartered Foresters
	Mr Humphrey Temperley	Local Government Association
	Mr Simon Evans	National Forest Company
	Mr Ray Hawes	National Trust
	Ms Nerys Jones	National Urban Forestry Unit
	Mr David Hunter	North West Regional Development Agency
	Mr Jim Stewart	Planning Officers Society
	Dr Mike Clarke	Royal Society for The Protection of Birds
	Mr Chris Stapleton	Royal Town Planning Institute
	Mr Adrian Martin	Small Business Service
	Mr Tim Leavers	United Kingdom Forest Products Association
	Mr James Cooper	Wildlife & Countryside Link Forestry Group
	Mr Nick Collinson	Woodland Trust
In attendance:	Mr Paul Hill-Tout	Forestry Commission
	Mr Mark Pritchard	Forestry Commission
	Mr Richard Barker	Forestry Commission
	Mr Geoff Hatfield	Forest Enterprise
	Mr Ray Anderson	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
	Ms Esmee Brenalls	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
	Mr Mike Seddon	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs



Introduction

2. In welcoming members to the meeting, Mr Morley thanked members for their contribution to the morning workshop which looked at the developing draft guidance on Preparing Regional Forestry Strategies and the response to the Sustaining England's Woodlands Review.

Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Forum Held on 19 March 2002

3. Mr Morley invited members to note the report of the Forum Meeting held on 19 March 2002.
4. Mark Pritchard introduced Paper 8/02 (England Rural Development Programme Forestry Funding 2000/2006), which detailed the information that Mr Perrins undertook to provide following the last meeting, on ERDP funding that had gone to forestry related projects. There was a suggestion from Mr Collinson that there should be more integration between the schemes or even a single integrated scheme.
5. Mr Morley explained that the mid-term review of ERDP would take into account experience to date and that increasing modulation may offer additional funds. The range of schemes had to take into account the range of approaches in the ERDP. In response to a question on the Rural Enterprise Scheme Mr Morley pointed out the strict rules governing state aid to industry and that the Rural Enterprise Scheme was to help encourage innovative new businesses.

Small Business Service (Paper 9/02)

6. Mr Martin introduced the paper, highlighting the way the Service worked through a network of Business Link Operators to meet local needs. He encouraged forestry businesses to engage with these operators and drew attention to the possibility for links with the Farm Business Advice Service.
7. There was interest in what the service could do for the industry, and how forestry and agriculture could be linked. There was also some concern over the lack of experience that the Business Link Operators had with forestry. Mr Martin urged forestry businesses to ask for advice and he pointed out that much of the available business advice was generic and did not need a forestry specialist. If the Forum members could provide some actual examples of problems with the advisory service he would see how these could be addressed.
8. It was suggested that many forestry businesses were not aware of the service offered and the change to include advice to businesses with less than 10 employees. In addition these small businesses may not see the need for advice and there was work to be done getting this type of business to accept that they could benefit from the advice available. The industry bodies indicated that they were publicising the work of the Small Business Service in their publications.



The England Native Woodland Partnership (Paper 10/02)

9. Mr Pritchard introduced the paper noting that the creation of the Partnership was one of the first actions in implementing the England Forestry Strategy. The Partnership allowed detailed examination of the issues surrounding native woodland. Attention was drawn to paragraphs 7 to 10 which summarised work to date and paragraphs 11 and 12 which set out future work proposals.
10. There was support for the work of the Partnership, in particular its unrestricted thinking and the network it had created. There was some concern over the lack of publicity for the Partnership's work and the top down approach to some issues. Members of the Forum were asked to suggest if there was any role for the group on issues that they were not already addressing.

The Relationship between the England Forestry Forum and the Rural Affairs Forum (Paper 11/02)

11. Mr Pritchard introduced the paper noting Mr Morley's role as Vice Chair of the Rural Affairs Forum. The paper proposed a formal relationship between the two forums and noted the discussions which had already taken place over a joint subgroup. A parallel paper was being submitted to the Rural Affairs Forum in November.
12. The arrangements for joint working were agreed and members were asked to write to the Forum Secretary if they wished to be considered for members of the joint sub group on the Role of Woodlands in Rural England. The membership would be chosen with a view to creating a balance pool of knowledge. (Expressions of interest should be sent to the Forum Secretary by 25 November.)
13. It was also agreed that the work to date by the Integration Working Group would be passed to the new joint sub group, after the Integration Working Group members had had the opportunity to comment on the information being passed on.
14. In response to a query from Ms Jones on whether there was an equivalent to the Rural Affairs Forum for Urban areas Mr Morley explained that this was the responsibility of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Forestry and Biodiversity Working Group (Paper 12/02)

15. Dr Clarke (Working Group Leader) summarised the group's work to date. He noted that Short Rotation Coppice was a long-term strategic issue despite the current difficulties with end user developments. It was suggested that some of the existing establishment trials could be maintained and used for biodiversity research.
16. The other four subject areas reviewed in the paper (open ground habitats, biodiversity of non-native woodlands, woodland within floodplains and landscape scale conservation) had been chosen as key topics to be progressed.

17. In response to members comments on the role that the Environment Agency could play in promoting woodland within floodplains Mr Hill-Tout advised the Forum that he and the other senior Forestry Commission staff were meeting the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency in November. This would provide an opportunity to consider the scope for a more strategic relationship between the two organisations.
18. It was suggested that looking at landscape-scale conservation would highlight the need for integrated policies between the Commission and Defra. There was also some discussion on the meaning of 'landscape-scale' which was being widely used but was not clearly defined. Mr Vaughn offered to write to the Forum Secretary with some suggestions on clarifying the definition and understanding of landscape-scale. Dr Kirby noted that English Nature had done some work on defining landscape-scale which might be relevant.

Forestry Devolution Review (Paper 13/02)

19. Mr Hill-Tout introduced the paper and advised the Forum that the further review of forestry, announced by Treasury as part of the 2002 Spending Review, would consolidate the work of the Forestry Devolution Review. Mr Anderson added that forestry was not being looked at in isolation and that the review would be looking at the delivery of the wider rural and environmental policies by Defra.
20. There were a number of supportive comments on the outcome of the Forestry Devolution Review, especially the retention of the Forestry Commission as a specialist Government department whilst being more integrated with Defra.
21. Mr Morley commented that reorganising the Commission to be more focused on each country was a good outcome from the review. However, keeping the Commission as a single body would maintain the GB economies of scale, encourage collaboration over common issues and ensure a focus for international issues was maintained.

2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (Paper 14/02)

22. Mr Morley commented that there was a lot of follow-up work from the Summit, especially for the Department for International Development, the Forestry Commission and Defra. The G8 countries were keen to take action on illegal logging and the certification of the chain of supply. The UK's overseas aid programme was supporting sustainable forestry issues, particularly the supply chain in Indonesia.
23. The business sector had been represented at the summit by Mr Wilson and he acknowledge the role Mr Morley had played in leading the UK Forest Partnership for Action. He also drew the Forum's attention to the way the imported and home grown timber interests were increasingly working together to promote the whole of the industry, especially on 'Wood for Good' and in the preparation of a sustainability strategy for the UK forest industries sector. The consultation draft of this was on the Forest Industries Development Council web site. (www.fidc.org.uk)

Taking Forward the Government Response to the Forum Working Group Reports - Progress Report (Paper 15/02)

24. Mr Morley reminded members of the Forum that this was the second progress report and it only included the recommendations from the working groups that had been accepted by Government. In response to a question from Mr Evans on planning issues Mr Pritchard said that implementing the recommendation had slipped because of the publication of the planning Green Paper. This was likely to change the wider policy context for planning and the proposals for guidance on best practice would need to reflect this.
25. Mr Morley had written to the planning Minister to flag up the need to include forestry as an end use for restored land, rather than the generally poor quality grassland that was often the end result of restoration projects.

A Summary of Actions Planned or Underway to Implement the England Forestry Strategy – Progress Report (Paper 16/02)

26. This had been updated with the information provided by members of the Forum. Mr Pritchard reminded members that they should continue to send in items of national significance for the update.
27. The report prompted some discussion on the use of wood fuel and how support for the supply infrastructure could help utilise the fuel that was readily available from existing woodland. Sir Harry Studholme suggested that using wood for heat was presently a more viable option than electricity generation from wood. Mr Morley explained that there were government targets for energy generation from renewable sources and that there was a need to establish wood as an option in peoples' minds. Wood fuel was not just a non-fossil fuel, it also had the added potential benefit of the delivering wider environmental gains through effective woodland management.
28. Ms Bloom asked if the Forestry Commission could show a lead, and demonstrate the potential of the technology, by using wood as a fuel for its own facilities. Mr Hill-Tout said that the Commission had set up an internal working group to look at all the Commission's buildings and carry out an analysis on the potential for using woodfuel. The results of this analysis could be made available to the Forum.
29. In response Mr Temperley's questions on the difficulties in getting funding to support woodfuel projects outside designated areas Mr Hill-Tout said that the Forestry Commission's current business planning round was looking at regional partnerships to act as a catalyst for the use of woodfuel. He invited members to bring forward or encourage others to submit bids for projects to establish and develop the wood energy market. These in the first instance should be discussed with local Conservators.

Date of Next Meeting

28. The next meeting of the Forum will be held in London in spring [*25 March or 1 April*]

