

Forestry Commission

Corporate Plan

for

England

and Great Britain

Activities

2002/03-2003/04

The Forestry Commission Corporate Plan for England and Great Britain Activities 2002–2004

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Foreword by Elliot Morley

This Corporate Plan describes the current activities of the Forestry Commission in England and the functions it performs at a Great Britain level on behalf of the Westminster Parliament. It also sets out the strategic direction of the Forestry Commission's work up to 2004 and the specific tasks to be undertaken in 2002.

Securing and delivering public benefits from woodlands is a long-term enterprise. While we must continue to pursue these long-term goals, it is also important to demonstrate the continued relevance of woodlands and forestry policy to the wider priorities of today. I am therefore particularly pleased to see the attention the Forestry Commission is giving towards contributing to the Government's wider programmes for sustainable development. This approach is well demonstrated through their plans in 2002 for:

- leading the Government's work on forestry in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development;
- developing regional expressions of the England Forestry Strategy which respond to the distinctive needs of each part of the country;
- contributing to the development of new measures to foster a sustainable countryside in the light of the Policy Commission on the Future of Food and Farming;
- implementing the access and environmental measures in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act;
- developing innovative woodland solutions to the challenge of providing and maintaining green spaces which are accessible to all members of our urban communities.

Elliot Morley, MP
Forestry Minister for England

Introduction

The Forestry Commission in Britain

As the Government department for forestry throughout Great Britain, we provide advice and support to the UK Government and to the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales. We develop policy, set the standards for sustainable forest management and encourage good forestry practice. We conduct forestry research, provide information and offer grants for managing and expanding woodlands and forests. We have statutory duties to regulate forestry through the control of tree felling and to protect forests from pests and diseases. We manage the public forest estate in England, Scotland and Wales, providing recreation for many millions of visitors, producing more than 5 million tonnes of timber each year and making a major contribution to the conservation of our natural heritage.

The Forestry Commission operates across Great Britain as a cross-border public body. This allows England, Scotland and Wales to benefit from the economies of scale that a GB-wide body is able to offer. This includes support services such as finance, personnel and IT skills; expertise on matters such as climate change, biodiversity, forest protection and industry development; and access to shared resources such as economic, statistics and forestry training services.

The Forestry Commission answers separately to Ministers in England, Scotland and Wales for the development and implementation of forestry policy. 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 Commission is directly accountable. In addition, a number of the Commission's functions are funded directly by Westminster and operated on a GB basis. These include:

- European and International Forestry Policy – the Forestry Commission's international policy staff (working with other departments) formulate UK policy in international negotiations, develop the UK's national forest programme and advise on implementation of international and European obligations;
- Plant Health and Forest Reproductive Materials – the Forestry Commission's Plant Health Unit operates throughout GB with the vital task of preventing entry of harmful pests and diseases from overseas. We also control the marketing of forest seed, cones, cuttings and plants by approving, registering and certifying reproductive material and inspecting the nursery trade;
- Forest Research – the Forestry Commission's Executive Agency is a centre of excellence for scientific expertise in forestry. We will spend £10 million in 2002-03 through our Agency and external providers looking at issues such as silvicultural practice, insects, pests and other threats to tree health, ways of measuring the social and environmental benefits of woodlands and the restoration of derelict land;

- Setting and Monitoring Standards of Sustainable Forest Management – the Forestry Commission’s policy and practice experts are responsible for developing the UK Forestry Standard setting out how the principles of sustainable forest management will be delivered in practice against international agreed criteria. This work includes monitoring the state of the UK forestry sector and supporting the UK Woodland Assurance Standard which provides for the independent certification of forest management in the UK.

Forestry Ministers in England, Scotland and Wales meet regularly to review issues of common interest. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has overall responsibility for forestry interests within the European Union and for international negotiations on forestry, including the formulation of UK policy. The Secretary of State consults with Scottish Ministers, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly on UK-wide issues.

The Forestry Commission’s executive agencies, Forest Enterprise (which manages Britain’s public forest estate of over 1 million hectares) and Forest Research (which conducts research to inform the development of forestry policy and practice), operate on a GB basis. The agencies’ programmes are set out in their Corporate Plans and reflect priorities as expressed in the country strategies.

In January 2002, Forestry Ministers announced a review of the devolution arrangements for delivering sustainable forestry policies in England, Scotland and Wales and the UK’s international forestry commitments. The review is being undertaken by a working group from the Forestry Commission, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Scottish Executive, the National Assembly for Wales, the Cabinet Office and the Treasury. It will report to Ministers during 2002.

The Forestry Commission in England

The Forestry Commission’s National Office for England is based in Cambridge and is responsible for leading implementation of the Government’s Forestry Strategy for England. The National Office is supported by 9 Conservancies (regional offices) which are responsible for carrying out our regulatory and grant support functions and connecting the England Forestry Strategy to the distinctive needs of the Regions.

Forest Enterprise is responsible for managing the Commission’s estate which amounts to 265,000 hectares in England and contains 20% of England’s woodlands. Forest Enterprise has an England office in Bristol and 11 Forest Districts.

Forest Research has a major research station at Alice Holt near Farnham and several field stations.

Corporate Plan

This Corporate Plan describes our current activities at the Great Britain and England levels, the strategic direction of our work up to 2004 and the specific actions we are taking forward in 2002. It also includes the performance targets set by Ministers which we plan to achieve by 2004. Progress with achieving these targets will be reviewed in our published Annual Reports to Parliament.

Anyone with comments on this Plan, or suggestions for future Plans, is welcome to write to:

Paul Hamilton
Forestry Commission
National Office for England
Great Eastern House
Tenison Road
Cambridge
CB1 2DU

Tel: 01223 314546

Fax: 01223 460699

Email: paul.hamilton@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

**DELIVERING
GOVERNMENT
POLICY**

Sustainable Development

Sustainable forest management forms part of the UK Government's wider strategy for sustainable development set out in "A Better Quality of Life" published in 1999. Our approach to sustainable forest management is set out in pages 11-16.

The Forestry Commission is leading the Government's work on forestry in preparation for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Commission is supporting the forestry industry in preparing a sectoral sustainability strategy covering the whole wood chain from growing trees through to timber processing. The Commission is working with other Government departments on actions to tackle global illegal logging, Government procurement of wood and wood products and working with business and NGOs to promote greater uptake of forest certification in the UK. The Government will be publishing a UK Statement on Sustainable Forestry for the World Summit, drawing on this work.

England Forestry Strategy

In December 1998, the Government published the first forestry strategy for England – "A New Focus for England's Woodlands" – which can be obtained from our website at:

www.forestry.gov.uk/england

This Strategy sets out the Government's strategic priorities and programmes for forestry in England. It is founded on 4 guiding principles: **quality, integration, partnership and public support**, which will frame our work on implementation. The Strategy is based on 4 interrelated programmes which reflect the Government's wider policy aims:

- **Forestry for Rural Development**
- **Forestry for Economic Regeneration**
- **Forestry for Recreation, Access and Tourism**
- **Forestry for Environment and Conservation**

This Corporate Plan explains how the Forestry Commission intends to lead the implementation of these programmes with partners over the next few years.

England Forestry Forum

At the same time as publishing the Strategy, the Government established a Forum to share ideas and review progress with the Strategy's implementation.

In 2000 the Forum established 8 Working Groups to examine specific issues. The Working Groups submitted their reports in January 2001 and the Government published its response in October. Papers and reports of the Forum's work are available on our website at:

www.forestry.gov.uk/englandforestryforum

Recent Legislation and Policy Development in Government

The year 2000 saw the launch of new statements of Government policy and a major piece of legislation which will set the wider context for forestry policy for the next few years. These developments include:

- **Rural White Paper** “Our countryside: the future” whose overall aim is to “sustain and enhance the distinctive environment, economy and social fabric of the English Countryside for the benefit of all”;
- **Urban White Paper** “Our towns and cities: the future” whose vision is that of “towns, cities and suburbs which offer a high quality of life and opportunity for all”;
- **England Rural Development Programme**; which redirects some support for agriculture and forestry, enabling land managers to adapt to changing markets and adopt sustainable production systems which both enhance the countryside and support the wider rural economy;
- **Countryside and Rights of Way Act**; which makes new provisions for access to the countryside; amends the law relating to nature conservation and the protection of wildlife and makes further provision for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2001 saw a major outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease and the setting up of several fora to consider the steps necessary to secure a sustainable countryside. In January 2002, the report was published for the findings of the Policy Commission on Food and Farming. The Forestry Commission has been actively engaged in these debates and our specific further contributions will be set out in relevant chapters of this Corporate Plan.

In 2002 the Government set up the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce to look at the measures necessary to sustain and enhance the public benefits from urban green space in the long-term. The Forestry Commission has been contributing to the work of the Taskforce and highlighting the particular contribution of trees and woodlands to urban green space.

Connecting to Regional and Local Agendas

It is vital that the England Forestry Strategy sets down strong roots in every part of the country so that it may respond effectively to the distinctive needs of different regional and local agendas.

We are therefore keeping closely in touch with evolving Government policy on the Regions within England. As a consequence, we have:

- aligned our Conservancies with the boundaries of all the Government Offices for the Regions and taken steps to encourage closer working between our respective staffs, including secondments;
- modernised our Regional Advisory Committees, constituted one for each Region (except London) and ensured that their expertise better reflects distinctive regional priorities.

Tasks for 2002

Through the GB Forestry Commission we will:

- lead the Government's work on forestry in preparation for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development;
- participate in the review of devolution arrangements for delivering sustainable forestry policies.

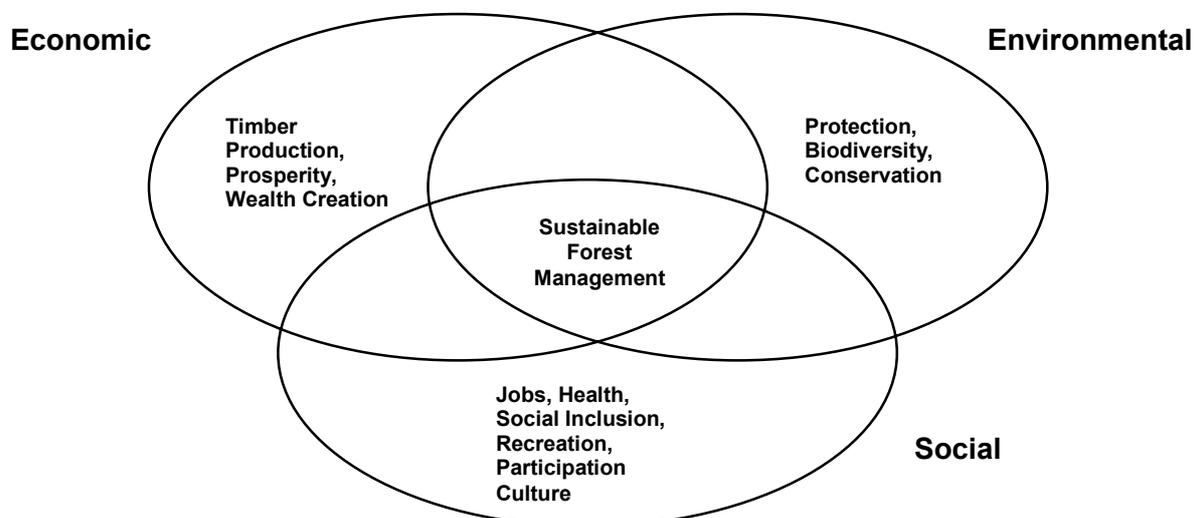
Through the Forestry Commission in England we will:

- lead implementation of the Government response to the recommendations of the England Forestry Forum;
- produce guidance and support the preparation of regional expressions of the England Forestry Strategy;
- consider the future relationship between the Forestry Commission and the Government Offices for the Regions and Regional Development Agencies in the light of the White Paper on Regional Government;
- consider the scope for increasing the role of woodlands in contributing to the quality of life in urban areas in the light of the report from the Urban Green Space Taskforce;
- contribute to developing the Government's response to the Policy Commission on Food and Farming.

**SUSTAINING AND
EXPANDING OUR
WOODLANDS**

Sustainable Forest Management Principles

Sustainable forest management is achieved when the social, economic and environmental functions of a woodland are interacting in support of each other. This interaction is represented in the following model:



The precise point of balance between social, economic and environmental functions will vary in every woodland in response to local circumstances and priorities.

Sustainable forest management is secured when the following pre-requisites are in place:

- **a woodland resource** which is able to provide the goods and services which individuals and society require in the long-term;
- **public and private support** which provides the mandate for any necessary management operations;
- **a workforce** which is willing and able to manage woodlands;
- **secure income** which pays for work to be undertaken.

Implementing Sustainable Forest Management in the UK

The United Nations has established a Forum on Forests with the aim of promoting the implementation of sustainable forest management world-wide. The UK is an important player in international negotiations on forestry. In close consultation with other Government departments, the aim of the Forestry Commission is to ensure that the UK is both a leading proponent and a leading exemplar of sustainable forest management.

The UK has made international commitments to the principles of sustainable forest management which are set out in the **UK Forestry Standard** published in 1998. This explains what our commitments mean in practice and provides a mechanism for ensuring that they are consistently applied. The Forestry Commission is responsible for monitoring the state of UK forestry against criteria and indicators in the Standard and refining guidance on our regulatory framework where this proves necessary. The UK Forestry Standard also provides a flexible framework for enabling a range of approaches to sustainable forest management which respond to the specific needs of country forestry strategies.

The **UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS)** launched in 1999 and chain of custody provide the opportunity for woodland owners to demonstrate to consumers that timber comes from sustainably managed forests. Over one million hectares of woodland have now been certified against UKWAS in Great Britain including the entire Forestry Commission estate. The costs of certification, however, remain a constraint upon the involvement of many small woodland owners. In recognition of the work of the Forestry Commission in this area, we were presented with a Gift to the Earth award by the World Wildlife Fund in 2001.

The Government published its **UK Climate Change Programme** in November 2000, setting out the policies for adapting to climate change and measures to mitigate its effects. These include the protection and enhancement of forests as carbon sinks and continued support for the planting of new woodlands. The forestry sector can contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by producing energy crops and wood fuel, which can help to offset emissions from burning fossil fuels. An enlarged market for fuel wood will support the sustainable management of many undermanaged woodlands. Woodlands can also help to mitigate the effects of irregular rainfall on vulnerable catchments.

The increased use of timber in construction is recognised as a highly desirable objective in sustainable development. Wood is a renewable and recyclable resource. Its production and use in building reduces atmospheric carbon while providing great advantages to the energy efficiency of buildings throughout their lives. Yet, despite the increasing availability of supply from UK woodlands, wood has been losing out in competition with less sustainable materials. The Forestry Commission is a partner with UK and overseas producers in **wood for good**, a commercial campaign which aims to increase the market for timber by promoting the advantages of using wood from sustainably managed forests, and providing information to consumers and to people involved in specification, design and building.

The Forestry Commission's Plant Health Unit operates throughout GB. With support from Forest Research it has the vital task of preventing entry of pests and diseases from overseas which could harm our woodlands and controlling the spread of any that may become established. Specific threats include:

- Ips typographus

The Eight-toothed Spruce Bark Beetle is considered the most aggressive pest of spruce. We will continue to be vigilant at ports around the country to ensure that this insect is not inadvertently introduced. We will also maintain our monitoring programme of forest health survey plots required under EU legislation to preserve our "Protected Zone" status and thus maintain our import controls on relevant goods from other EU Member States.

- Pine Wood Nematode

Following detection of an outbreak of this pest in Portugal in 1999, there have been no further findings in EU Member States. The nematode has, however, been detected in imported wooden packaging material arriving in Finland, Sweden and France. As a consequence, the EU introduced emergency measures in 2001 for the treatment of coniferous wood packaging from Canada, China, Japan and the USA. EU Member States have also been required to increase monitoring of such imports.

- Asian Longhorn Beetle

This insect is also associated with wooden packaging material and is a serious potential pest of many hardwood trees and some fruit trees. An outbreak (the first recorded in Europe) was reported in Austria in 2001. We will continue to monitor a wide range of imports from China which are now covered by statutory requirements.

- Wood Packaging Material

There is now widespread recognition of the risk of introducing pests via this pathway. The Forestry Commission has been playing an active role in the preparation of an international standard to regulate these products and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations will be recommending adoption of this new standard in 2002.

A new EU Directive on the marketing of **Forest Reproductive Material** was introduced in 2000. Work is currently underway following consultation to implement the EU Directive through GB regulations by 1 January 2003.

The Context for Sustainable Forest Management in England

England is one of the least wooded countries in the world and our woodland resource is one of the most intensively used.

International comparisons of woodland areas are:

	Woodland Area (Millions of Hectares)	Percentage of Total Land Area	Population (Millions)	Area of Woodland Per Person (Sq Metres)
England	1.1	8.4	50	220
UK	2.7	11	58	470
EU	103	33	450	2290
World	3455	27	6000	5758

Of the woodland resource in England 22% is owned or leased by the Forestry Commission and managed by Forest Enterprise. The remaining 78% is owned by a diverse range of other public bodies, charities and private owners. The composition of woodland ownership in England is not fully understood. Half of the woodland area is currently the subject of active management plans agreed with the Forestry Commission. The potential of woodlands to contribute towards sustainable development priorities has not yet been fully realised.

The four key programmes of the England Forestry Strategy are designed to tackle these challenges. Their effective interaction in accordance with the principles of sustainable forest management will support more woodlands across England, producing a diverse range of public benefits.

Strategic Priorities

We will:

- seek to increase awareness about the contributions which new and existing woodlands can make to sustainable development;
- support the active management of woodlands where this is necessary to deliver public and private benefits;
- seek to increase understanding with partners about the potential for woodlands to contribute towards protecting the wider environment;
- promote awareness amongst woodland owners and agents about sustainable forest management principles and the UK Forestry Standard;
- seek to involve more woodland owners and wood users in helping to implement the England Forestry Strategy;
- promote the preparation and implementation of long-term woodland plans;
- use Forest Enterprise as an exemplar of sustainable forest management and expand its role wherever it is able to add value to existing arrangements.

Tasks for 2002

Through the GB Forestry Commission we will:

- publish a UK Government Statement on Sustainable Forestry for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development;
- publish a set of UK Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management;
- implement the new EU Directive on Forest Reproductive Material;
- contribute to adoption and implementation of a new international standard aimed at ensuring wood packaging material used in international trade is free of pests;

Through the Forestry Commission in England we will:

- complete the review of FC measures for supporting the management of existing woodlands and start to implement any relevant changes to support/incentives mechanisms;
- complete the joint review with DEFRA of measures to promote the creation of new woodlands and consider how best to implement any relevant changes;

- promote regional reports for the National Inventory of Woodlands.

Forestry Commission in England Targets for 2004

We will:

- support 500,000 hectares of woodland under sustainable forest management plans;
- create 17,000 hectares of new woodlands over the period 2001-04.

**IMPLEMENTING
THE ENGLAND
FORESTRY STRATEGY**

Forestry for Rural Development

Setting the Context

Woodlands provide significant income and work opportunities in many rural areas. Over 14,000 people are currently engaged in forestry and related wood-processing industries in England. Many more jobs are sustained through woodland recreation, tourism, game management, wildlife conservation and support services. All of these contribute to local economies and rural development.

We use large quantities of sawn timber, boards, paper and other wood products in England amounting to the equivalent of about 50 million cubic metres of wood every year. However, less than 8% of this demand is currently supplied from England's woodlands and forests. Domestic wood production in England is unlikely to rise significantly in the future without a substantial increase in the level of new woodland creation, which currently averages about 5000 hectares per annum.

Prices for home-grown timber are currently experiencing their worst recession for at least 20 years. This has arisen largely as a consequence of the strength of the pound in relation to European currencies which has had the effect of reducing the price of imports and thereby the market price for timber in the UK. This has led to many forestry businesses undergoing severe economic pressures, and many private woodland owners have deferred plans for forestry operations.

New markets need to be developed for wood products, particularly for lower-grade broadleaves, if the long-term management of woodlands is to be assured.

We currently support a wide range of regional and local partnerships which aim to improve markets for wood, help forestry businesses and provide opportunities for farmers to diversify. Examples include: the South West Forest in Devon, Anglia WoodNet and the Marches Woodland Initiative. We will continue this work with the support of the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP).

The ERDP 2000-06 was approved by the European Commission in September 2000. This will make additional resources available to support forestry:

- an extra £4 million per annum from 2002 to support woodland management and new woodland creation through the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS);
- a new Energy Crops Scheme which will support the establishment of up to 25,000 hectares of short-rotation coppice;
- increased funding for the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS).

The Energy Crops Scheme (ECS) and the FWPS are both DEFRA schemes but are jointly administered with the Forestry Commission. They have strong connections with our work because ECS will have a major influence upon the development of the woodfuel market and over 50% of current new planting under the WGS is undertaken with the support of annual FWPS payments.

Forest Enterprise has an important diverse role to play in supporting rural development through:

- sustaining forest management operations and related opportunities for employment;
- developing the public forest estate as a major resource for tourism, particularly in areas with vulnerable rural economies such as Kielder in Northumberland, the Lake District and the Forest of Dean;
- identifying opportunities for providing more affordable homes on land surplus to the public forest estate.

Government Policy

The Rural White Paper seeks to facilitate the development of competitive and sustainable economies in the countryside and the tackling of poverty in rural areas.

Strategic Priorities

Our aims are to support the development of our woodland resources and to increase the contribution of woodlands to rural development.

We will work closely with partners in DEFRA, the Countryside Agency, Regional Development Agencies and representatives of the industry as we advance our aims through the following strategies:

- reviewing our policies and practice to ensure that they continue to contribute towards the implementation of Government priorities;
- fostering the development of new markets for wood and wood products;
- fostering the use of wood as a source of renewable energy, particularly in areas that do not have a mains gas supply;
- helping woodland-related businesses by providing advice, business and technical training to serve their needs;
- supporting the Countryside Agency “Eat the View” programme to increase consumer awareness of the links between valued countryside and the marketing of distinctive local and regional products;
- helping farmers to utilise farm woodlands and diversify into forestry;
- using Forest Enterprise as an exemplar of diverse and sustainable approaches to rural development.

We will sustain our programmes across the country, but will increasingly target resources for rural development where woodlands are best able to contribute towards the regeneration of the most disadvantaged rural areas. We will be particularly active in considering the potential for woodlands to address the needs of Rural Priority Areas identified by the present Countryside Agency.

Tasks for 2002

We will:

- undertake research at a GB level through case studies on the contribution of woodlands and forestry to rural development;
- develop a strategy for both highlighting and enhancing the contribution of the wood processing sector to the England Forestry Strategy;
- launch a woodfuel strategy for England and measures to support woodland owners and contractors in its implementation;
- develop and launch the Cumbria Woodlands partnership as one of a series of pilots to demonstrate and develop the role of woodlands and forestry in rural development.

Forestry Commission Targets for 2004

We will:

- create 8000 hectares of new woodlands in Rural Priority Areas over the period 2001-04;
- support 230,000 hectares of woodlands in Rural Priority Areas under sustainable forest management plans;
- harvest 4.2 million cubic metres of timber from Forestry Commission woodlands over the period 2001-04.

Forestry for Economic Regeneration

Setting the Context

This is a new direction for forestry which lies close to the heart of the Government's for social inclusion. The White Papers recognise that woodland can play a valuable role in helping to make urban areas healthier and more attractive places to live in.

Historically, the use of woodland for this purpose has been limited in England. This has been due to a number of factors: woodland was perceived to be an inflexible land-use in dynamic urban and industrial environments, planning policies assumed restoration of brownfield land to agriculture and there was a general lack of confidence about woodland as a cost-effective and sustainable use of land.

We have been tackling these prejudices in partnership with DTLR, English Partnerships, the Countryside Agency, the Environment Agency and Regional Development Agencies.

Our efforts have concentrated on a comprehensive research and information programme and practical demonstration in the pioneering Community Forests and the National Forest. This work has demonstrated that well-designed woodland can be more cost-effective to establish and maintain than traditional after-uses and provide more public benefits.

Brownfield Land

Our particular focus is brownfield land and the contribution which sustainable restoration can make to the regeneration of deprived areas. It is estimated that there are currently about 175,000 hectares of this land with the potential for restoration to woodland. This falls into 3 main categories:

- derelict and contaminated land which is incapable of beneficial use without treatment and may pose a hazard to health or the environment;
- vacant land often in association with industrial activity but not in productive use;
- operational land in use by activities such as mineral working and waste disposal.

Encouraging planting on just 10-20% of this land could create up to 30,000 hectares of new woodland or up to 2000 new woods close to where people live.

The Forestry Commission's science and design base coupled with the practical ability of Forest Enterprise to undertake large-scale projects over the long-term are becoming increasingly valued by local authorities, owners and operators of damaged land.

We are increasingly working with the Regional Development Agencies to explore ways in which we can help to deliver their regional regeneration objectives.

Forest Enterprise

The economic regeneration programme is the focus for the development work of Forest Enterprise. Its dedicated Land Regeneration Unit works with local partners to source funding and acquire land for tree planting, access and amenity, and provides a focus for the development of good practice.

Forest Enterprise has regenerated 670 hectares in the Nottinghamshire Coalfield in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council and is currently developing a further 1000 hectares in partnership with the Mersey, Red Rose and Thames Chase Community Forests with the support of a £9m award from the Government's Capital Modernisation Fund.

Community Forests and the National Forest

Throughout the 1990s, the Forestry Commission has been working with the Countryside Agency and broadly based local partnerships to develop 12 Community Forests on the edges of several of our larger conurbations.

Their aim is to create new, well-wooded and vibrant landscapes around and within major urban areas in which people will live, work, learn and play. The 12 forests are at the forefront of a cultural change integrating social, economic and environmental benefits. Each forest has prepared long-term plans setting out its response to local needs. Over the period of these plans they will work towards increasing woodland cover in their areas towards 30% while also promoting a wide range of other countryside and land-use improvements.

The National Forest encompasses the former North West Leicester/South Derbyshire coalfield. We provide support for the work of the National Forest Company through the Woodland Grant Scheme and land acquisitions by Forest Enterprise. From being an area suffering from widespread dereliction and decline, it is being transformed by the National Forest Company into a green and attractive land helping to attract tourism and investment.

Government Policy

Within this context, the White Papers seek to:

- bring brownfield land back into sustainable social and economic use in order to regenerate communities disadvantaged by industrial change or decline;
- promote more open green space to provide an attractive setting for future urban development.

Strategic Priorities

Our aim is to use woodlands to support Government policies for regeneration by:

- increasing awareness about the potential of woodlands to improve the environment of areas disadvantaged by industrial decline and providing a green setting for future development;

- seeking ways to highlight the potential of woodlands more effectively in planning guidance;
- adding value to the programmes and existing resources of the Government's regeneration agencies;
- ensuring the sharing of good practice in urban and community forestry;
- using Forest Enterprise as a major instrument for implementation where strategic land holdings can be secured;
- promoting the importance of long-term support and management in order to secure enduring public benefits.

We have identified former coalfield areas, the most deprived wards in urban areas, brownfield land, the Community Forests and the National Forest as the foci for concentrating our resources on this programme.

Tasks for 2002

We will:

- implement Memoranda of Understanding agreed with English Partnerships, the Regional Development Agencies and the National Forest on improved new joint working arrangements;
- refine criteria for using woodlands in economic regeneration by aligning investment more closely with areas in greatest need in the light of the index of deprivation;
- work with the National Land-Use Database Team and RDAs to establish agreed baseline data on brownfield land and the opportunities for beneficial woodland creation;
- work with English Partnerships and Groundwork in developing a trust for the long-term support of brownfield land reclaimed for public use;
- launch the Newlands partnership with the North-West Development Agency for expanding woodland on brownfield land to enhance the appearance of disadvantaged areas and attract inward investment;
- work with the Countryside Agency, DEFRA and DTLR to provide a report on the Community Forests Programme as the basis for continued Government support to community forestry after 2005;
- sponsor continued research into the economic and social benefits of community forestry and new woodland in disadvantaged areas.

Through Forest Enterprise we will:

- continue to develop a partnership with Yorkshire Forward, English Partnerships and local authorities, to create a large area of new woodland on former coalfield sites in South Yorkshire;

- complete the acquisition of land and planting of new woodland in the Mersey, Red Rose and Thames Chase Community Forests under the Capital Modernisation Fund;
- undertake, with EU funding, a programme of recreation and conservation enhancement for woodlands planted in the Nottinghamshire Coalfield in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council.

Forestry Commission Targets for 2004

We will:

- create 4500 hectares of new woodland in economic regeneration priority areas by 2004;
- create 1,000 hectares of new woodland on land previously used for industry, landfill and mineral extraction by 2004;
- create 4500 hectares of new woodland in the Community Forests and the National Forest by 2004.

Forestry for Recreation, Access and Tourism

Recreation

England's forests and woodlands are a major resource for recreation, tourism and sport. Over 300 million visits are made each year and a recent survey showed that 70% of people in England have enjoyed a visit to a wood during the year. Woodlands are the largest focus for land-based recreation in the countryside.

About 350,000 hectares of woodland currently provide access as part of plans agreed with the Forestry Commission.

The public forest estate, managed by Forest Enterprise, is the largest resource available for informal access and recreation in England. Visitors have freedom to roam over 200,000 hectares where there are no legal or other constraints. Additional facilities provided by Forest Enterprise include walks, cycle ways, nature trails, car parks, picnic sites, camping and caravan sites, holiday cabins and visitor centres. The forests are also used for a wide range of specialist activities such as car rallies, horse riding and orienteering. The Forest Park network is a major focus for tourism, attracting millions of visitors to areas such as the New Forest, Forest of Dean, Thetford and Kielder. A wide range of maps and guides is published to help people enjoy the public forest estate and Ordnance Survey maps will progressively show the boundaries of this land.

The Forestry Commission also encourages **private landowners** to provide access opportunities to woodland. This is promoted through management grants and the Community Woodland Premium.

Many challenges, however, remain:

- less than one third of woodlands are currently open for access beyond public rights of way;
- most woodlands are located in relatively isolated rural areas and there is a severe shortage of access opportunities close to major population centres;
- information on access opportunities remains fragmentary;
- young people, disadvantaged and minority groups are currently underrepresented amongst those visitors using woodlands for recreation;
- most existing access provision lacks long-term security.

Community Participation

The creation and sustainable management of woodlands can present significant issues and opportunities for society. The active early involvement of stakeholders will often improve plans and enable woodlands to make a valued long-term contribution to sustainable development.

The Community Forests, the National Forest, the National Trust and the Woodland Trust, amongst others, are making valuable contributions to the fast-developing field of community involvement in countryside and peri-urban land management.

Forest Enterprise is committed to increasing the involvement of people and communities in the sustainable management of the public forest estate and in 2000 published its approach in “Our Commitment to Working with Communities in England”.

Many other woodland owners develop their plans with the involvement of local communities and stakeholders. The Forestry Commission, in addition to formal consultation procedures on felling licences and Woodland Grant Schemes, now also supports landowners in undertaking wide-ranging scoping studies which are used to inform the preparation of long-term Forest Plans.

Life-Long Learning

The Forestry Commission also has an important role in promoting a better understanding of the role of woodlands in sustainable development and the contribution played by wood products and the forestry industry.

We undertake this role by:

- working directly with the formal and informal learning sectors through education rangers and forest classrooms provided by Forest Enterprise and other woodland managers;
- working indirectly through our support for the Forest Education Initiative (FEI) which is a partnership between the forestry industry, environmental NGOs and educationalists seeking to maximise the use of woodlands for learning.

Government Policy

The Rural White Paper seeks to:

- increase opportunities for people in all sections of society to get enjoyment from the countryside;
- encourage people to be fully involved in influencing and shaping the decisions that affect them.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides new measures to open up public access to mountain moor and heath and will enable landowners to dedicate their woodlands for public access in perpetuity.

Strategic Priorities

Our aim is to use woodlands to help deliver the Government’s access and recreation policies through the following strategies:

- increasing access opportunities to woodlands closer to where people live;
- securing more convenient access to woodlands and providing recreational opportunities for all;
- enhancing the contribution to recreation made by the public forest estate;

- improving the quality and usefulness of information about access;
- encouraging community participation in the creation and sustainable management of woodlands;
- promoting a better understanding about the benefits of trees, woods and forests.

We will concentrate our resources upon providing recreation opportunities which are closer to the major urban areas and more convenient for disadvantaged communities.

Tasks for 2002

We will:

- put in place arrangements for the FC to act as relevant authority for woodland dedication under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, and introduce measures to encourage dedication and support the provision of more long-term public access to woodlands;
- start to develop a woodlands access inventory (in association with the National Access Database) in order to help prioritise resources, promote opportunities to the public and identify areas of unsatisfied demand for further attention;
- contribute towards the implementation of the English Tourism Strategy “A Working Countryside”;
- contribute to the Government’s “Welcome Back to the Countryside Campaign”;
- host a national seminar to develop policies and research agenda on woodlands and health;
- develop a strategy in England for the role of woodlands in Life-Long Learning in the light of the FC education review;
- refine procedures for consulting communities on proposals for felling trees and creating new woodlands in the light of the Green Paper on Planning and the FC internal review;
- foster increased local community involvement with woodlands by developing pilot initiatives working with the Tree Council and the Tree Warden network.

Through Forest Enterprise we will:

- start to dedicate the FC estate for access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act;
- redevelop the two English Forest Holiday Cabin sites in Cornwall and North Yorkshire with support of the Capital Modernisation Fund;
- continue to develop the arboreta at Westonbirt and Bedgebury as national destinations for leisure and learning.

Forestry Commission Targets for 2004

We will:

- increase the area of woodland with public access by 12,000 hectares over the period 2001-04;
- increase the area of woodland with public access near major urban areas by 10,000 hectares over the period 2001-04;
- achieve 340 million day visits per annum to woods and forests.

Forestry for Environment and Conservation

Setting the Context

Trees and woodlands play a critical role in our environment. They absorb carbon dioxide, provide habitats for wildlife, create distinctive landscapes and provide wood – a renewable and sustainable resource for our everyday needs. With appropriate management they can be used to protect vulnerable habitats and species, contribute to the maintenance of our finest designated countryside and improve the wider environment.

The UK Forestry Standard and associated Guidelines set the environmental standards for forest and woodland management in the wider environment. Forest design plans are used to improve the environmental quality of the public forest estate in a holistic manner. A similar concept of long-term plans has been developed for other woodlands.

Biodiversity

There are no natural forests left in England, but over 20% of our woodlands are of ancient and semi-natural origin. Many of the new woodlands created last century were established on open semi-natural habitats and some ancient woodland sites were planted with exotic species.

The Government's priorities for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity are set out in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP). At the heart of the Plan is a range of Habitat and Species Action Plans which will guide nature conservation efforts over the next 10-15 years.

The Forestry Commission has the lead responsibility under the UKBAP for taking forward Habitat Action Plans for woodlands and the action plans for some species associated with woodlands. We have been working closely with English Nature and other partners to prepare and implement strategies for the improvement, restoration and expansion of native woodland habitats and for bringing them into a favourable condition. The focus for our work has been our remaining ancient semi-natural woodlands. We have established an English Native Woodland Partnership to advise us on suitable measures. With their guidance we have launched pilot arrangements to support owners in the preparation of Native Woodland Plans and a challenge fund (JIGSAW) to encourage the linking up of fragmented ancient woodland.

We work in partnership with English Nature, the Government's statutory adviser on nature conservation, and have prepared an Accord with joint programmes.

In 2000, the Steering Group of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan decided that a Habitat Action Plan should be developed and implemented for Lowland Mixed Broadleaves. This will have major implications for the Forestry Commission since the area of Lowland Mixed Broadleaves is greater than the combined extent of all the other native woodland habitats.

The public forest estate is a key biodiversity resource. It incorporates 180 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), including the New Forest, the largest in England, all managed in accordance with management plans agreed with English Nature. Forest Enterprise is a leading agency for delivering the UKBAP in England and is implementing plans for key habitats such as lowland heath, upland oakwoods, pasture woodland, limestone pavement, red squirrel and butterflies.

Landscape

Woodland is a key component of the English landscape. It makes a special contribution to many National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

We have an Accord with the Association of National Parks and have been running a challenge fund for the last 4 years to encourage the establishment of new native woodlands. Several Forest Parks also make major contributions to National Park objectives. We are closely involved with the work of the Countryside Agency in designating proposed new National Parks in the New Forest and the South Downs.

Woodlands also play a major role in sustaining the key valued features of many AONBs, eg Wye Valley, Chilterns and High Weald.

We are committed to safeguarding the distinctive variety of landscapes across England and will continue to support the Countryside Character Programme as a framework to guide our consideration of tree felling and planting proposals.

Heritage

The character of the countryside today owes much to the activities of previous generations, and the remains of their settlements, burial sites, fortifications, field systems, earlier industrial processes and designed landscapes are all around us. Areas of ancient woodland often contain features that relate to earlier woodland management as well as archaeological sites which have been lost to developments in surrounding agricultural areas.

The Forestry Commission recognises that some activities associated with forestry operations can have a damaging effect on archaeological sites and deposits. In order to safeguard against these risks, we regulate all applications for grants and licences in accordance with the Forestry and Archaeology Guidelines and consult local authority archaeological services about all applications for creating woodlands.

The public forest estate contains a wide range of archaeological sites. These include almost 600 Scheduled Ancient Monuments which are actively conserved through management plans agreed with English Heritage. Many archaeological sites are also equipped with interpretation as part of forest recreation provision.

Government Policy

The Rural White Paper seeks to:

- protect and enhance our most valuable landscapes and cultural heritage;
- provide better protection for special designated wildlife sites;

- sustain and restore species and habitats at risk.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act gives greater protection to wildlife and natural features by making provision for the conservation of biological diversity and by improving protection for SSSIs together with measures for the better management of AONBs.

Strategic Priorities

Our aim is to use woodlands to help deliver the Government's environmental policies through the following strategies:

- improving understanding about the role of woodlands in contributing to conservation in the wider environment and the impact of neighbouring land management practices upon woodland wildlife;
- using the Biodiversity Action Plan to guide priorities and target resources for nature conservation in England's woodlands;
- assessing the condition of our Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands and introducing appropriate steps to bring them towards a favourable condition;
- strengthening the contributions which woodlands make to the objectives of National Parks and AONBs;
- supporting work by the Countryside Agency in preparing for the designation of the New Forest and South Downs as National Parks;
- enhancing links with archaeological organisations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of consultations and heighten the appreciation of the cultural heritage within woodlands;
- using the public forest estate as an exemplar for Government policies on the environment, conservation and the cultural heritage.

Amongst resources supporting our environmental programmes in the countryside we will give particular attention to the needs of: SSSIs, ancient semi-natural woodlands, National Parks and AONBs.

Tasks for 2002

We will:

- lead preparation of the forestry and woodland elements in the England Biodiversity Strategy;
- publish a policy framework for assisting decisions on deforestation for biodiversity objectives;
- produce and obtain approval for a Habitat Action Plan for Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan;

- develop guidance on the monitoring of any losses of ancient woodland as a consequence of development;
- launch the Woodland Bird Index survey to guide future research and management action aimed at reversing declines in woodland bird species;
- revise and expand the current Accord with English Nature;
- develop a revised and expanded Accord with the Association of National Park Authorities setting out how the environmental, social and economic roles of woodlands can be enhanced in support of National Park objectives;
- develop a new Accord with the Environment Agency in order to advance the contribution of woodlands to environmental protection.

Through Forest Enterprise we will:

- start to implement a major programme to restore and enhance native woodlands on ancient woodland sites in Northamptonshire;
- implement EU LIFE funded programmes for the restoration of mires and limestone pavement in Kielder and Cumbria;
- manage all 180 SSSIs and 595 Scheduled Ancient Monuments on the public forest estate in accordance with plans agreed with English Nature and English Heritage.

Forestry Commission Targets for 2004

We will:

- increase by 35,000 hectares the area of ancient semi-natural woodland with approved plans for sustainable forest management in accordance with the UK Biodiversity Action Plan;
- create 3000 hectares of new native woodlands in accordance with the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

**EFFICIENT
USE OF
RESOURCES**

Financial Resources and Efficiency Measures

Source of Funds

Cash funding for our activities in England and our GB functions comes from Westminster, from the EU (which contributes to the cost of woodland grants) and from income from the public forest estate managed by Forest Enterprise. Like the rest of the public sector, we now also make provision for resource costs which do not involve movements of cash – mainly the cost of the capital invested in the public forest estate and depreciation charges for use of assets.

Westminster funding for the Forestry Commission was decided as part of the Government's 2000 Spending Review. Table 1 shows the planned sources of income and expenditure up to 2003/04.

In November 2000 the Government announced that, as a consequence of modulation arrangements introduced in the England Rural Development Plan, additional **EU** funds would be available until 2006/07 to support landowners in sustaining woodlands and creating new woodlands for public benefit. This support is provided through the Woodland Grant Scheme (FC), and the Farm Woodland Premium and Energy Crops Scheme operated by DEFRA. Additional EU support is also potentially available through the Structural Funds. The Forestry Commission is currently actively engaged with partners in connection with Objective 1 funding in Cornwall, Merseyside and South Yorkshire and Objective 2 in most of the northern counties, the Welsh Marches and Devon.

Timber sales represent the main source of **income for Forest Enterprise** and its financial performance is closely linked to the strength of the round timber market. Over recent years, there has been a major decline in the price of round timber. Measured in pounds in real terms, prices remain at the lowest levels ever encountered. Factors such as the strength of sterling and high sawn timber production levels in Sweden and the Baltic States have contributed to the fall in prices. There is no sign of an early recovery and this Plan assumes that prices will continue at their present depressed level.

Use of Funds

At the GB level, our resources support work which benefits all three countries. The largest component is research and development carried out by our executive agency Forest Research (about 90%) and by other providers (about 10%): almost all research results are applicable to more than one country. The remaining expenditure is on protecting Britain's trees from pest and diseases, representing British interests on the international stage, and other GB-wide work including the costs of the Board of Forestry Commissioners, the development of the timber market, and the development and promotion of standards for sustainable forest management.

Resources in England are used to sustain and expand woodlands and woodland services in accordance with the England Forestry Strategy. We plan to spend approximately 54% of grants on woodland expansion and 46% on the management of existing woodlands over the period of the 2000 Spending Review.

TABLE 1

Source of Funds

£m	2000-01 Outturn	2001-02 Estimated Outturn	2002-03 Budget	2003-04 Plan
Provided by Parliament				
– Grant	67.0	62.9	52.2	52.2
– Capital Modernisation Fund	2.7	3.1	10.6	3.0
- Civil Service Modernisation Fund	0.2	0.9	–	–
- Invest to Save Budget	-	-	0.6	0.2
Total Cash Funding Provision	69.9	66.9	63.4	55.4
Other Resource Provision ¹	29.8	34.5	34.5	34.4
Total Parliamentary Resource Provision	99.7	101.4	97.9	89.8
EU Co-financing of Woodland Grants	3.8	4.5	5.4	5.5
Forest Enterprise				
– operating receipts	31.7	24.4	28.5	33.4
– recreation, conservation and heritage	4.5	5.6	5.3	6.4
– sales of surplus assets	2.2	5.5	2.0	1.9
Total Cash Funding/Receipts	112.1	106.9	104.6	102.6
Total Resource Provision	141.9	141.4	139.1	137.0

¹ Other Resource Provision covers accruals changes and the cost of capital and depreciation charges for the use of assets

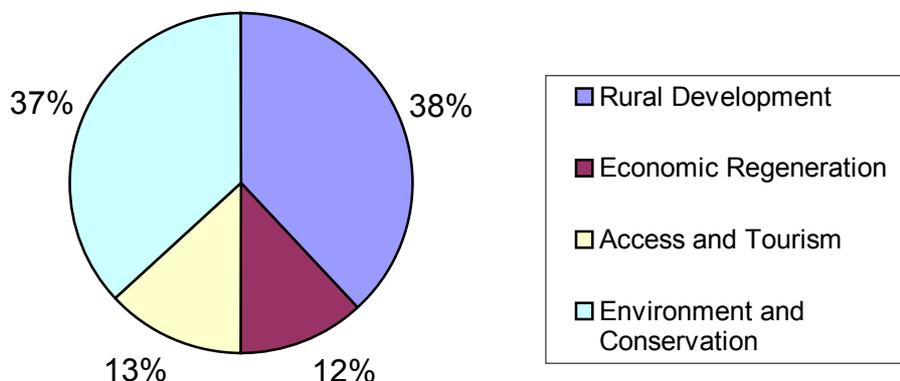
Use of Funds

£m	2000-01 Outturn	2001-02 Estimated Outturn	2002-03 Budget	2003-04 Plan
GB				
Research and Development	10.0	9.7	10.2	10.0
Pensions and Retirement Compensation	18.8	14.8	1.6	1.6
International Forestry Policy	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Plant Health	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other GB-level policy matters	5.4	6.7	6.6	6.7
Civil Service Modernisation Fund	0.2	0.9	–	–
Invest to Save Budget	-	-	0.6	0.2
Total Cash Expenditure	34.8	32.6	19.5	19.0
Other Resource Costs ²	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
Total GB Resource Expenditure	36.4	34.2	21.1	20.6
England				
Forestry Commission				
Woodland Grants	18.5	17.5	18.7	21.3
Policy, Regulation & Administration	7.2	7.6	8.2	8.0
Total Cash Expenditure	25.7	25.1	26.9	29.3
Other Resource Costs ²	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Total Resource Expenditure	25.9	25.3	27.1	29.5
Forest Enterprise				
Operating Costs	32.1	29.2	32.2	34.1
Recreation, Conservation & Heritage	12.3	14.1	13.0	14.6
Cost of Surplus Land Sales	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3
New Planting	0.7	0.5	1.0	0.3
Other Capital	3.5	1.1	1.2	2.0
Capital Modernisation Fund	2.7	3.1	10.6	3.0
Total Cash Expenditure	51.6	48.3	58.2	54.3
Other Resource Costs ²	28.0	32.7	32.7	32.6
Total Resource Expenditure	79.6	81.0	90.9	86.9
Total England Resource Expenditure	105.5	106.3	118.0	116.4
Total England and GB Resource Expenditure	141.9	140.5	139.1	137.0

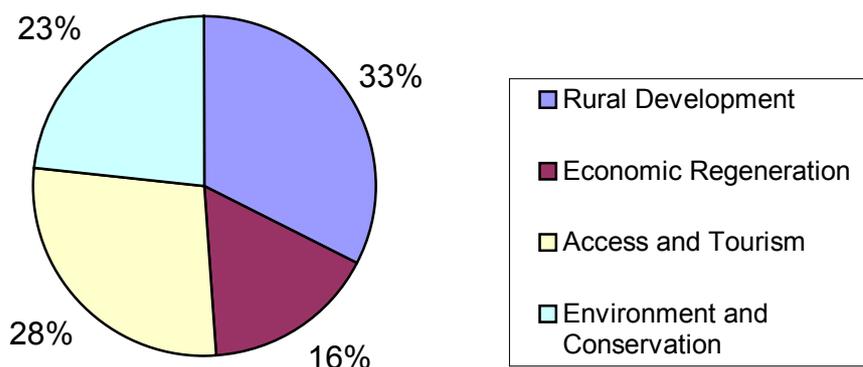
² Other Resource Costs are accruals changes and cost of capital and depreciation charges for the use of assets

Forestry Commission Grants, Licensing and Partnership Funding

In England



Expenditure by Forest Enterprise on the public forest estate



The underlying methodology for the pie-chart is only indicative, since by its nature multi-benefit forestry delivers a range of benefits from individual woodlands and so apportioning costs can be difficult.

Improving Efficiency

The Forestry Commission Service Delivery Agreement for 2001-04 requires us to actively pursue efficiency gains and achieve better value for public money.

The targets for the Commission in England are set out on page 43. The main risks in achieving these targets are: reductions in funding as a consequence of a further decline in the timber market, and changes in the demand for woodland grants as a consequence of external factors which may change the relative attractiveness of woodland as a land-use.

Strategic Priorities

We will continue to strive to achieve better value for public money by:

- improving the performance of our executive agencies;
- improving the administration of our grant schemes by streamlining processes and making life simpler for applicants;
- implementing our E-business strategy to improve our use of IT to enhance services and increase efficiency through the increased use of IT;
- ensuring that all key services which we deliver to business and citizens are available electronically by 2005;
- evaluating the effectiveness of mechanisms for implementing the England Forestry Strategy.

Tasks for 2002

Through the GB Forestry Commission we will:

- implement the results of the Quinquennial Review of Forest Enterprise;
- complete the Quinquennial Review of Forest Research;
- enable the creation, storage and management of electronic records;
- enable the electronic application for felling licences and grants;
- introduce eCommerce links with timber customers;
- implement initial measures to improve efficiency in the administration of the Woodland Grant Scheme following the review in 2000.

Through the Forestry Commission in England we will:

- introduce enhanced administrative arrangements for partnership working, particularly at the regional level.

Forestry Commission Targets for 2004

We will in England:

- reduce the unit cost of administering grant aid from the current 20p to 16p/£ of grant;
- reduce the unit cost of producing a cubic metre of timber on the public forest estate from £14.00 to £13.55/m³.

People in the Forestry Commission

Setting the Context

People are the Forestry Commission's most important resource. We are an employer of choice for many people who want to work in forestry and we make a useful contribution to local employment for people in rural areas. We employ about 1,200 people in England. This includes staff working for Forest Enterprise, Forest Research and the National Office and Conservancy functions of the Department. In our search for greater efficiency, we have greatly reduced our staff in recent years (by over 25% since 1994). Further significant reductions are unlikely without compromising our ability to effectively lead the implementation of the England Forestry Strategy.

Civil Service Reform

As a Government department, we are committed to making a range of improvements to the management of the civil service. We are **making good progress**. In 2001, for example, we introduced 360 degree feedback and a new pay and appraisal system for our top management and provided leadership training for 130 senior managers – as part of the “improving leadership” strand of civil service reform.

Diversity

We want to improve the diversity of our staffing throughout Britain. The Forestry Commission will achieve more if it draws contributions from all sections of society. This is not an easy task: the forestry industry has traditionally been regarded as a male preserve and there tend to be few female applications for forestry jobs. We have, nevertheless, made some progress: ten years ago, for example, women accounted for 22% of staff and there were no women in senior positions – whereas now women account for 27% of staff and there are 13 in senior positions. But that still represents only 7% of all senior staff. We have set a target to increase the number of women in senior posts throughout Britain to 14 by March 2005. The Commission's record in employing disabled people and people from ethnic minorities could also be improved and will be important foci for future attention.

Training and Development

The entire Forestry Commission, throughout Britain, achieved Investors in People status in November 2000. We are making further improvements in our training of staff – including especially a new leadership training event for middle managers, modelled on a very successful equivalent developed in 2001 for our senior staff. We have applied for re-accreditation in Spring 2002.

In September 2000, we asked all our staff to complete a survey about their views on the organisation and how it might be improved. Two-thirds of staff responded. They highlighted many positive points (for instance, that staff had a clear idea about how their work fitted into the work of the Commission and that line managers were seen as open and approachable). But staff also drew attention to a number of points of concern (for instance, that only one-third felt that morale in their unit was high, and too few felt that their contribution was recognised or that staff were treated with respect). A series of workshops was held throughout Britain, attended by over half of our staff, to work out the best way of tackling

these concerns. An action plan was drawn up in November 2001 and changes are well underway, including the adoption of a values statement describing the sort of organisation which staff wish the Commission to be. A further survey will be undertaken in 2002 to check whether proper progress is being made.

The Forestry Commission has continued to be actively involved in discussions about the future of training for the wider forestry industry and its relationship with the National Training Organisation structure. In December 2001, at a meeting chaired by the Commission, industry representatives agreed to form a Sector Industry Group within the proposed Sector Skills Council for land-based industries, to be set up in April 2002. This will give a firm footing for long-term action to improve training in the industry.

Health and Safety

We put a lot of effort into developing and operating safe working practices and ensuring the general welfare of all staff, particularly those working in the forest which can be a dangerous workplace. The number of reportable accidents per hundred employees has progressively reduced and now stands at 2.6 for Forest Enterprise. This achievement has been helped by a series of forestry safety seminars run jointly with the Health and Safety Executive and a new system of support visits which have measured the performance of safety management. Health and Safety will remain a priority for the Forestry Commission in working with the forestry industry as a whole.

The Forestry Commission's sick absence record (an average of 8.3 days per employee year) is already significantly better than the average for the Civil Service (10.3 days). Ill-health retirements, however, are running at a higher level than the Civil Service as a whole. We are giving fresh attention to occupational health policies and management practices, in order to reduce both sick absences and ill-health retirements.

Strategic Priorities

Through careful recruitment, training and development, we will seek to increase the diversity, skills and potential of our staff and enable them to pursue fulfilling careers and strengthen their contribution to the achievement of this Corporate Plan.

Tasks for 2002

We will:

- seek re-accreditation as Investors in People;
- make further increases in the diversity of our staffing, including an increase to 9% in the proportion of senior posts filled by women;
- implement the action plan of measures to be taken in response to the survey of all staff;
- carry out a further staff survey;
- introduce a new pay and performance system with pay based specifically on relative performance, as a way of encouraging continuous improvement in performance;
- improve our occupational health policies and management practices in order to reduce sickness levels to 6.3 days per year;
- take further steps to build the capacity of the Commission to lead the implementation of the England Forestry Strategy.

Forestry Commission Targets for 2004

We will:

- complete implementation of the Government-wide package of reforms to the Civil Service.

Public Service

The Commission is committed to achieving high standards of public service. The following formal Statements of standards are now in place:

- Statement of General Standards of Service (Forest Enterprise);
- Woodland Grant Scheme Applicant's Charter;
- Felling Licence Charter;
- Plant Health Charter.

Performance against these standards is reported in our Annual Report.

We work extensively with partner organisations, with customers, and with the people who use England's forests. We recognise that good communications with all these groups is essential.

In all our contacts we aim to be:

Honest – we will treat people honestly as befits our responsibilities as Crown servants.

Open – we will make information available on all our services and how we are performing. In line with Open Government, we will also make information on all our activities available on request.

Accessible – through our helpline and Internet site, and through personal contact and published materials. Wherever possible we will use plain language. We will also make contact names and addresses widely available.

Listening – we encourage views about forestry and what we do. We will consult openly about our policies and about the range of services we provide, at both national and local levels.

Responsible – if we get something wrong we will admit to it and put it right. We will also respect people's privacy and dignity.

Forestry Commission Target for 2004

We will in England:

- achieve 85% compliance with the Forestry Commission Customer Services Standard for the Woodland Grant Scheme.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND TARGETS FOR 2001-2004 FOR THE FORESTRY COMMISSION IN ENGLAND

Existing Woodland	
Area of woodland with approved plans for sustainable forest management by 2004	500,000 ha
New Woodland	
Area of new woodland created by 2004	17,000 ha
Forestry for Rural Development	
Area of woodland in Rural Priority Areas with approved plans for sustainable forest management by 2004	230,000 ha
Volume of timber harvested by Forest Enterprise 2001-2004	4.2 million m ³
Area of new woodland created in Rural Priority Areas 2001-2004	8000 ha
Forestry for Economic Regeneration	
Area of new woodland created in Economic Regeneration Priority Areas 2001-2004	4500 ha
Area of new woodland created on land previously used for industry, landfill and mineral extraction 2001-2004	1000 ha
Area of new woodlands created within the Community Forests and the National Forest 2001-2004	4500 ha
Forestry for Recreation and Community Participation	
Increase in area of woodlands with public access by 2004	12,000 ha
Increase in area of woodland with public access near major urban areas by 2004	10,000 ha
Day visits to woods and forests in 2004	340 million per annum
Forestry for Environment and Conservation	
Increase in area of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland with approved plans for sustainable forest management in accordance with UK Biodiversity Action Plan by 2004	35,000 ha
Area of new native woodlands created in accordance with the UK Biodiversity Action Plan 2001-2004	3000 ha
Efficiency Measures	
The unit cost of administering grant aid in 2004	16p/£ of grant
Unit cost of producing a cubic metre of timber on the FC estate in 2004	£13.55/m ³
Compliance with the Forestry Commission Customer Services Standard for the Woodland Grant Scheme in 2004	85%

NB. Progress in 2001-02 will be included when available.