

forest Renaissance



**THE ROLE OF STATE FORESTRY IN BRITAIN 1919-2050:
A DISCUSSION PAPER**
Michael Garforth and Nigel Dudley





FOREWORD BY DAVID BILLS, DIRECTOR GENERAL, FORESTRY COMMISSION

The future management of our forests sits at an important crossroads at the beginning of the 21st century. The Forestry Commission is splitting its GB Forest Enterprise to create three new agencies, each dedicated to managing the public woods and forests in England, Scotland and Wales. We believe this action in the spirit of devolution will provide more focused support for the three national forestry strategies.

Our predecessors, in founding the Forestry Commission over 80 years ago – and the subsequent generations of staff since then – have passed on an extensive and varied legacy of forests across Great Britain. I am very encouraged, and I know many of our staff will be too, by the recognition this report makes to the considerable achievements made over the last 50 years, and particularly the changes that have been made in the past 10 years.

The authors recognise that more needs to be done, in response to new and changing expectations of stakeholders and society at large. The report sets out some of the key challenges for the new agencies and will, I know, stimulate discussion about how our public woods and forests might be managed over the next 50 years.

I welcome this timely piece of thinking on the future development of the forest estates managed by the Forestry Commission in England, Scotland and Wales.



FOREWORD BY ROBERT NAPIER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, WORLD WILDLIFE FUND UK

This report was commissioned jointly by the Forestry Commission and WWF in response to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in order to report on progress since the Earth Summit in 1992 and to provide a vision for the future of state forests and the forest landscape here in the UK.

The third chapter reflects many of WWF's aspirations, as well as our forests programme targets under the headings of *Protect, Manage and Restore*. With our new devolved country structure, we are ideally placed to monitor, recommend and help deliver forest policies which stop, and eventually reverse, the accelerating degradation of our planet's natural environment, and help build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

Through the UK government's support for credible forest certification and the concept of forest landscape restoration, vitally important steps have been taken over the last 10 years which have a wider, international resonance and have helped the profile of WWF's global conservation work and ultimately the delivery of our targets. On the basis of this performance, we hope that the Forestry Commission can continue its leading role in influencing the management not just of its own forest estate, but also of the UK's wider forest landscape.



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forest
Renaissance



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A decade ago at the Earth Summit in Rio, governments committed themselves to addressing environmental problems that were seen as causing threats to regional and global ecological stability. In Britain, the Forestry Commission (FC) estate was then widely perceived as being in bad shape: too little native forest, too many exotic plantations and a state forest authority remote from the aspirations of many people. Ten years later, the FC's managing agency, Forest Enterprise (FE), has made dramatic internal changes, the whole FC estate has been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and as a result it was presented with one of WWF's prestigious *Gifts to the Earth* awards.

Clearly things have changed: but how much? This study looks back at what the UK committed to in 1992 and at what has been achieved. Because we recognise that there are still many ways to improve the quality and quantity of public forests and also the goods and services they provide in Britain, we also look forward to how forest management might continue to evolve over the next half century.

We hope the report is timely. In summer 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development considered progress since the Earth Summit. In the UK, forestry and the land use sector generally is facing a period of profound changes, with new opportunities, new challenges and a need to reflect on future priorities. The structure of the FC is also the subject of considerable change in response to devolution. The advent of three new agencies responsible for managing the FC estate in England, Scotland and Wales will provide new opportunities to deliver the priorities of government in each country.

Although supported by WWF-UK and FE, the report is an independent study and the content and views expressed are the sole responsibility of the authors. It aims to inform debate at this critical period of change. We make no great claims for originality: many of the things we write about have been suggested before, but we have had the

opportunity to pull them together and perhaps to be a little more ambitious in what might now be achieved.

In the following pages, Mike Garforth took main responsibility for the analysis of Forest Enterprise since 1992 and Nigel Dudley focused on future opportunities, but the whole represents a joint effort. The key sources of information for reporting on FE activities were internal documents, including the recent quinquennial review of the agency. Documents produced by SGS, who undertook the independent certification audit of FE to UK Woodland Assurance Scheme and FSC standards, were also consulted. The authors and FC hold a full account of the review of the documents. We're very grateful to the many people in both FE and WWF who have provided information and advice, and commented on our texts. Particular thanks are reserved for Alan Stevenson of FE and Beatrix Richards of WWF.

Nigel Dudley is an ecologist with Equilibrium consultants, working on issues relating to forest conservation and protected areas. He recently completed a three-year project for WWF, IUCN and GTZ, organising field projects in Africa, Central America and South-east Asia. Current work includes, among others, a series of forest quality assessments with the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, a four-year UNESCO project assessing World Heritage sites, and research with the University of Cardiff on global protected area categories.

Mike Garforth has worked in forestry in the UK and internationally for more than 25 years. His experience includes reform of forestry institutions, evaluation and redesign of forestry policy and legislation, facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes and the development and application of forest management certification standards. Now a freelance consultant, Mike is currently assisting the Georgian government to restructure the republic's forestry institutions.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The state forest lands of England, Scotland and Wales are ideally placed to deliver desired multiple benefits from forest management in the most cost-effective way. The establishment of three new country-focused public sector woodland agencies will provide a unique opportunity to inject new stimulus and momentum into the management of state forests for public benefits.

The British public has shown an overwhelming wish for forests and woodlands to supply more than just timber, and their social and environmental importance is recognised: access, recreation, conservation, soil protection and supply of non-timber forest products. The Westminster Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Scottish Executive all agree that we need a high-quality forest estate to fulfil many global treaty commitments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Private and company-owned forests can help to supply these wider goods and services. But commercial forestry operations cannot be responsible for all non-timber benefits, many of which conflict with wood and fibre production. **The state-owned forest estate is the most effective and efficient vehicle to deliver many of the multiple benefits from forests.**

In the past, state forestry has drawn criticism from environmental groups and local communities, particularly for its reliance on large conifer plantations. Our analysis shows that Forest Enterprise, as manager of the Forestry Commission estate, has made much progress towards meeting the UK's 1992 Earth Summit commitments, including certification of all its forests to Forest Stewardship Council standards, which was recognised by WWF as a *Gift to the Earth*. We believe that these changes are not only real and substantial, but also

that forestry ministers and the Forestry Commission should continue with more radical changes, leading to a genuine renaissance in the extent and quality of forests and woodlands in the three countries.

Until now, progress has been incremental and funded largely on profits from timber sales. This requires a delicate balancing act, which is becoming impossible to sustain at a time when, due to global pressures, the value of British timber sales has fallen by 40 per cent in just a few years. **Changes in the global market mean that state forests are no longer profitable enough to support all the other activities demanded by the public and politicians.** During our research for this report, we found many Forest Enterprise staff members feeling trapped between the conflicting demands of an organisation that some stakeholders see as a commercial company, while others view it as a not-for-profit enterprise delivering social and environmental benefits.

A proportion of the wider benefits from forests will continue to need state funding, as is the case with every developed country. **Forest Enterprise is in the unique position of being able to offset a substantial proportion of these costs through its revenue generating activities.** What it needs now is a strong and matching commitment from ministers: to support the further development of a multi-purpose public forest estate. The three new agencies will require new and inspirational mandates and the necessary resources to make the concept a reality in the 21st century.



“CHANGES IN THE GLOBAL MARKET MEAN THAT STATE FORESTS ARE NO LONGER PROFITABLE...”

“LISTENING TO PEOPLE:
IMPLEMENTING ACTIVE
PLANS FOR COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT...”



Some key 21st century challenges for the new public forest agencies

- **Forest restoration at a landscape scale:** work with partners to contribute to an increase in forest cover to at least 15 per cent of Britain’s land area, with a minimum target of 30 per cent for some localities, including 10 major new forest landscapes in England along with a greater contribution to Community Forests; more community forests on derelict land in South Wales; and a major role in the development of state forests within the Central Scotland Forest and around other major urban areas, along with a further extension of native woodlands.
- **A consensus approach:** developing participatory approaches that help agree a balance between different land uses within a landscape, in partnership with both local and more distant interest groups, to recreate and maintain high-quality forested landscapes throughout England, Scotland and Wales including both forest and non-forest habitats. Partnerships might also facilitate the production of larger grant packaging through combined projects and matched funds, thus creating the resources needed to make vision into reality.
- **Recreating “a wilderness experience”:** building up large core areas of open access, near to nature, woodland (up to and sometimes exceeding 10,000 hectares) in England, Scotland and Wales comprising a mosaic of woodland and other habitats serviced by appropriate access and interpretation opportunities to facilitate learning and healthy lifestyles, including where appropriate conversion of plantations to more natural woodlands. A key target for biodiversity conservation is to move away from isolated protected sites towards networks of protected areas, buffer zones and corridors.
- **Listening to people:** implementing active plans for community engagement, and aspiring to become “partners of first choice” for key projects.
- **Reconnecting people to woodland:** by taking a leading role through innovative and exciting developments in communication, interpretation, education, access and recreation opportunities, aiming to reconnect, re-establish and develop people’s spiritual and cultural links with woodlands.
- **Supporting a sustainable rural economy:** developing strategies to ensure the sustainability of harvest of minor forest products including innovation in use of different timbers and in the design of products, development of wood as an energy source, recreational uses and encouragement of multi-purpose woodland management.
- **Urban renewal:** developing new community woodlands close to people living in disadvantaged communities with despoiled landscapes.
- **Sustainable leisure and recreational development:** creating innovative, integrated and sustainable recreational opportunities and leisure facilities in woods and forests, which provide a whole spectrum of wellbeing, spiritual and health benefits to local residents and visitors.
- **Beyond certification:** providing a leadership role in promoting forest certification at the national level, increasing the access to and uptake of credible certification by small forest owners, and also looking beyond certification to how forest management might continue to improve in the future.

“URBAN RENEWAL:
DEVELOPING NEW
COMMUNITY WOODLANDS
CLOSE TO PEOPLE LIVING IN
DISADVANTAGED
COMMUNITIES WITH
DESPOILED LANDSCAPES.”



WHY DO WE NEED A FOREST RENAISSANCE?

WHY FORESTS?

Forests supply us with more than just timber and fibre. Well-managed, healthy forests also provide biodiversity conservation, soil stabilisation, hydrological functions, mitigation of climate change, employment, livelihood opportunities, health and spiritual wellbeing, leisure and recreational space, and cultural and aesthetic values.

We start from a weak position. Britain has undergone deforestation over many centuries: most natural forests have long disappeared and we depend on imports for more than 80 per cent of timber needs. Although large forests were re-established in the 20th century, we remain one of the least forested European countries, and many forests are actually plantations of non-native species. Yet there is a real potential to change. **Over a million hectares – more than a third of our forests – are owned by the state in England, Scotland and Wales, and managed by Forest Enterprise.** FE was established in the year of the Earth Summit, making it uniquely placed to implement Britain's forest commitments and develop a new vision and reality for our forest estate and its wider place in rural society.

This paper follows the decision by ministers to establish new devolved arrangements for the management of state woods and forests in England, Scotland and Wales. This will see the creation of three new Forestry Commission agencies with new devolved remits during 2003. This paper seeks to explore what state forestry has achieved since the 1992 Earth Summit and how the new agencies could respond to a new agenda for the delivery of truly sustainable state forests which better meet the needs of people in the 21st century.

WHAT DID WE COMMIT TO AT AND BEYOND THE FIRST EARTH SUMMIT?

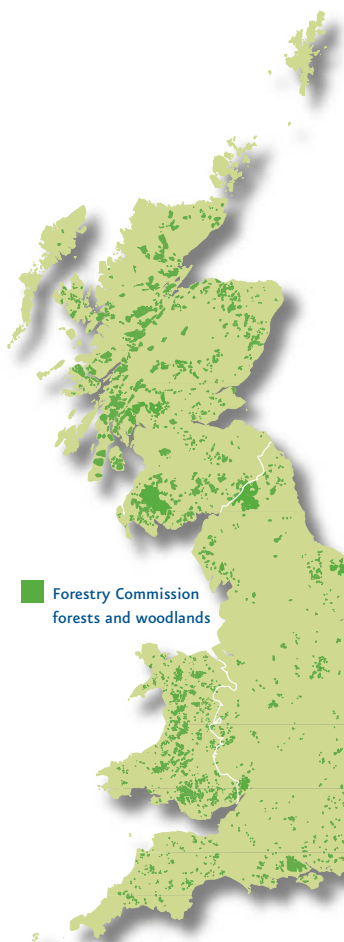
In Rio, governments committed to sustainable development that included reversing environmental degradation. The Summit recognised that forests are central to development, with more than a billion people depending directly on timber and non-timber forest products. The *Forest Principles* and the *Agenda 21* strategy agreed in Rio laid out steps to integrate forests into sustainable development. Countries responded by establishing programmes of their own, reflecting particular circumstances and needs. The *Convention on Biological Diversity* requires governments to develop national biodiversity strategies and action plans. In 2002 parties adopted a forest action programme, including applying the ecosystem approach to management, mitigating impacts of climate change, restoring degraded forests and protecting threatened species. The *Framework Convention on Climate Change* promotes renewable energy and the sustainable management and enhancement of sinks for greenhouse gases, including forests. The associated Kyoto Protocol allows some offsetting of emissions through absorption of carbon dioxide by forests.

Specifically, Britain is committed to:

- **Strengthen institutions**
- **Provide multiple goods and services from forests**
- **Take care of the wider environment**
- **Protect and restore biodiversity**
- **Conserve and enhance landscape and heritage**
- **Provide recreational opportunities**
- **Strengthen demand for forest products**
- **Facilitate rural development**
- **Raise awareness and understanding and transfer know-how**



“OVER A MILLION HECTARES – MORE THAN A THIRD OF OUR FORESTS – ARE OWNED BY THE STATE...”



Forestry Commission forests and woodlands

“THE CURRENT ESTATE HAS ESTABLISHED THE FC AS THE LARGEST PUBLIC LAND MANGER IN ENGLAND, WALES AND SCOTLAND.”

Since 1992, Britain has taken part in several multilateral and bilateral forest processes. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection on Forest in Europe agreed criteria and indicators for monitoring national forest management, which we have agreed to follow. Britain played a leading role in developing the G8’s 1998 action programme on forests, which addresses protected areas, monitoring and assessment, private sector support, national forest programmes and illegal logging.

Within the European Community, Britain has commitments to rural development, conservation of habitats and species and environmental assessment of forestry. In 1998, the European Parliament adopted a *Resolution on a Forestry Strategy*, including commitment to promote sustainable forest management.

**WHERE DO WE START?
THE FORESTRY COMMISSION
AND FOREST ENTERPRISE**

Forests once covered 80 per cent of Britain, but conversion to farmland and settlement

reduced them to 10 per cent by the 14th century. The decline continued, despite some planting in the 18th and 19th centuries, to less than 5 per cent at the start of the 20th century. Rising wood product demands were met by imports. The First World War brought Britain’s dependence on imports into sharp focus. The Forestry Commission was established to create a strategic timber reserve by acquiring and planting land and by supporting planting by private landowners. Governments have continued this programme, although aims have changed. By 1992, forest cover had increased to 10 per cent. Less than a fifth was semi-natural, the rest plantations, mostly of non-native species. Imports to Britain are likely to continue to require the equivalent of more than 6 million hectares of forest around the world.

The Forestry Commission was at first seen mainly as a means of producing timber. From the 1950s to 1970s there was a gradual recognition of wider forestry values, particularly recreation and wildlife conservation. During the 1980s, this interest grew and there was a *backlash against aspects of British forestry, particularly the*



“FROM THE 1950s TO 1970s THERE WAS A GRADUAL RECOGNITION OF WIDER FORESTRY VALUES, PARTICULARLY RECREATION AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION.”





“FOREST ENTERPRISE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1992 AND BECAME AN AGENCY OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION IN 1996...”

reliance on conifer plantations and afforestation of the uplands: this culminated in a public battle about afforestation of the Flow Country in North Scotland. A major policy review focused attention on broadleaf species. This period also saw controversy about the role of acidic pollutants on the health of UK forests and water bodies.

The government pushed for privatisation and halted and reversed expansion of state forests, including significant sell-offs. The private sector, encouraged by tax breaks, planted more trees. Conflicts emerged between the Commission’s support and enforcement functions and its role as manager, leading to the separation of the forest enterprise function. The management of state forests was encouraged to become more commercial with asset sales raising cash to balance the books and environmental and social values being of lesser importance. There was considerable speculation that the government saw this as a precursor to privatisation. The Forestry Commission maintained an important role through advice and grant-giving powers, (which are still key elements in delivering the objectives described in this paper).

This period also saw an exploration of issues relating to sustainability including growth in the conservation debate. Britain’s sustainable forestry programme highlighted biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage, access, recreation and other non-market benefits. Non-governmental organisation blocked moves to privatise state forests. Forest Enterprise was established in 1992 and became an Agency of the Forestry Commission in 1996 complete with it’s own management structure, staff and a framework document which charged the Agency with producing some environmental and social as well as financial targets and outputs. The Agency framework document was essentially a constitution based on a private sector model,

which charged the organisation to operate on commercial lines within the public sector. In the private sector forestry tax breaks were abolished and public debates on forestry increasingly focused on public benefits. By the early 21st century, the state forest estate in Britain had achieved Forest Stewardship Council certification, thus recognising the sustainable forest management achievements of Forest Enterprise. However the demands for even more public benefits from state forests have continued to grow at a time when timber prices and hence revenues have fallen by 50 per cent. This has opened a passionate debate about future directions for the management of the public forest estate.



“BY THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY, THE STATE FOREST ESTATE IN BRITAIN HAD ACHIEVED FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CERTIFICATION...”



THE FORESTRY COMMISSION ESTATE AND ITS MANAGEMENT IN THE 1990s

WHAT TYPE OF ESTATE DID FOREST ENTERPRISE MANAGE IN 1992?

- **Production potential:** 900,000 ha of forest and 230,000 ha of non-forested land. Timber production was 3.9 million^{m³}/year, and was forecast to increase to 7 million^{m³} by 2020. Quality of plantation timber had declined partly because closure of two thirds of pulp and paper capacity in the 1970s-80s had forced forest managers to stop thinning.
- **Biodiversity potential:** 62,000 hectares of legally protected forests, along with remnants of ancient Caledonian pine forest, lowland oaks, heath, blanket and raised bogs, dunes, limestone pavement and pasture. Many areas were recognised as priority habitats under the *UK Biodiversity Action Plan* (which also lists 140 priority

species found on FE land). But management plans were often incomplete and conservation expertise was weak. There was potential for further enhancing biodiversity by managing ancient woodlands; increasing open space; protecting rivers; increasing native trees; minimising harvesting and regeneration damage; maintaining dead wood; and increasing diversity.

- **Landscape and heritage potential:** sixty years of large-scale planting had created antipathy towards plantations. In consequence forest landscape design grew in importance but initially only focused on the visual landscape. Forest Enterprise took over 900 scheduled ancient monuments, plus thousands of unscheduled monuments, listed buildings and important structures. Links to the national heritage agencies and the archaeological community were weak

“MANY AREAS WERE RECOGNISED AS PRIORITY HABITATS UNDER THE UK BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN...”





“...STAFF WERE WELL TRAINED AND HIGHLY MOTIVATED BUT FROM A MALE-DOMINATED, HIERARCHICAL, COMMAND AND CONTROL MANAGEMENT TRADITION...”

and few management plans had been developed.

- **Recreation potential:** fifty million day visits were made to state forests in 1992, and there was freedom to roam in forests without significant tenure or operational constraints. FE managed car parks, campsites and forest cabins, trails and visitor centres provided the opportunity to increase variety and number of visitors. However, much of the recreational infrastructure was tired and outdated, having suffered from lack of capital investment and management commitment.
- **Rural development potential:** forestry was seen as supporting rural development. Interest in community participation had accelerated, but increased mechanisation reduced employment, most timber was sold to large processing facilities, and increased use of more mobile contractors began to break connections between communities and local forests.

WHAT TYPE OF ORGANISATION WAS FOREST ENTERPRISE IN 1992?

- **Culture:** Forest Enterprise staff were well trained and highly motivated but from a male-dominated, hierarchical, command and control management tradition, used to growing timber. FE had to change from being a manager of a production process for the timber industry to steward of a natural resource with many customers. Public perception, though changing, was of an organisation that did not listen.
- **Operating environment:** most expenditure was funded by timber sales, with small and declining government subsidies and some recreation and other minor income. FE could not borrow or roll over annual profits or losses. It faced

pressure to sell forests and increase private sector involvement. While finances became less stable, government commitments and public expectations increased. Devolution transferred responsibility to the new administrations in Scotland and Wales, raising expectations further.

- **Planning systems:** Forest Enterprise had new planning systems based on production forecasts modified that enabled managers to take account of landscape and other constraints in their harvesting plans. These determined investment in forestry, conservation and recreation. Separate plans were developed for landscape, conservation and recreation, making it hard to use an integrated approach.
- **Impacts of management:** the main system was clear felling followed by replanting. Agrochemicals were widely used. Best practice guidelines existed for ground preparation, road construction, harvesting, and agrochemicals. There were attempts to open up streams affected by dense conifer planting. Acidification of forested catchments, caused by air pollution, remained a serious problem. Forests threatened reductions in river flows because of their high water use. Management of deer was inadequate.
- **External impacts:** Forest Enterprise took over at a time when climate change was just being recognised and when global timber prices were becoming less stable.

HOW WELL HAS FOREST ENTERPRISE MET ITS RIO COMMITMENTS?

- **Culture within Forest Enterprise is changing, albeit slowly:** a new mission, vision and values have been agreed. However, gender imbalance remains and is acute at senior levels, and skills are biased



“FIFTY MILLION DAY VISITS WERE MADE TO STATE FORESTS IN 1992, AND THERE WAS FREEDOM TO ROAM IN FORESTS...”

“FE IS NOW PROBABLY THE SINGLE LARGEST PROVIDER OF OUTDOOR RECREATION IN BRITAIN...”



towards traditional forestry. Empowering regional staff has increased responsiveness to local needs, eg through stakeholder panels that inform decision-making. Increased efficiency moved FE into profit after three years, but collapsing timber prices forced it into loss in 1999. Losses continue, putting pressure on non income-generating activities. Forest Enterprise has addressed this by leveraging additional resources, allowing £20 million extra investment over 10 years.

- **Planning has been strengthened and now needs to move to a landscape level:** new planning procedures supported by GIS help to integrate management, resource values and development, although this process now needs to extend to the wider landscape. Forest District Strategic Plans and Forest Design Plans are available for areas scheduled for harvesting and planting; and Site Management Plans for protected sites and features. Monitoring and adaptive management are evolving but need to be further strengthened, particularly for non-market activities.
- **Management is focusing on new approaches:** alternatives to clear felling are being piloted, although large-scale clear felling continues. Guidance on alternatives to pesticides helps managers to minimise impacts. Best practice guidelines and use of different species are improving freshwaters and mitigating impacts on water yield. Research into alternatives to road transport and cooperation with private forestry are reducing timber traffic nuisance.
- **External impacts have been partially addressed:** impacts of high deer populations are being tackled through integrated management. FE has been slower at responding to climate change, with more work needed on planning, species selection and management.
- **Biodiversity has been more effectively protected and restored:** all statutorily protected areas on FE land have management plans agreed by nature conservation agencies. Plans are being implemented for all priority woodland habitats and framework plans for priority non-woodland habitats. All plantations on ancient woodland sites have been surveyed and work programmes are being developed. New guidance on dead wood is helping conserve biodiversity. Weaknesses in catering for natural reserves in Forest Design Plans have been addressed. **Further action** is needed to bring protected areas to favourable conservation status. Forward planning for native woodland restoration should be improved. Local plans are needed for priority non-woodland habitats. More effective links are also needed to national habitat and species action plans and local biodiversity action plans, along with closer collaboration in developing forest habitat networks.
- **Landscape planning has become more sophisticated:** Forest Enterprise has improved landscape planning, with computer-aided 3-D visualisation of different management patterns. Former industrial areas have been improved through partnerships leading to new ownership and management structures. A planning framework for ancient monuments, agreed with the national heritage agencies, should improve protection. Local authority archaeologists and archaeological trusts input to Forest Design Plans.
- **Recreational opportunities have been expanded and access improved:** Forest Enterprise offers 703 forest walks, 392 cycle trails, nearly 800 car parks, more than 500 picnic sites, 82 orienteering courses, 41 children’s play areas, 31 visitor centres and 27 wildlife hides. FE hosts



“MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT ARE EVOLVING BUT NEED TO BE FURTHER STRENGTHENED...”

major events in orienteering and bicycling. FE is now probably the single largest provider of outdoor recreation in Britain, but this aspect of its work is currently under-invested.

- **Forest products have been promoted although timber prices continue to fall:** concerns about timber quality are starting to be addressed by re-introducing a presumption in favour of thinning and implementing a regeneration quality standard. Long-term supply contracts are offered to encourage new investment and wood-for-energy projects. More is needed to develop profitable markets for plantation and native hardwood timber, particularly in the building industry. Quality of products is important: native hardwood products (furniture, window-frames etc) are currently of variable quality, with the result that much is imported.

- **Community involvement has improved but remains a challenge:** it has been hard to reconcile community aspirations with commercial management. Problems include misunderstandings, unrealistic expectations and lack of skills and resources. Progress has been made on facilitating community participation and adapting marketing strategies to support local businesses and some major community appraisal initiatives have taken place. A community involvement strategy and associated funding is still required.
- **Training and extension has received more attention:** Forest Enterprise experience and knowledge has been increased through a network of specialist education centre staff. By involving stakeholders, FE has developed a wider understanding and appreciation of forestry. It has been less successful in communicating this experience to other people related to forestry in Britain and internationally, and there is scope for more transfer of know-how. FE also needs to learn more from other institutions with biodiversity, social and cultural agendas.

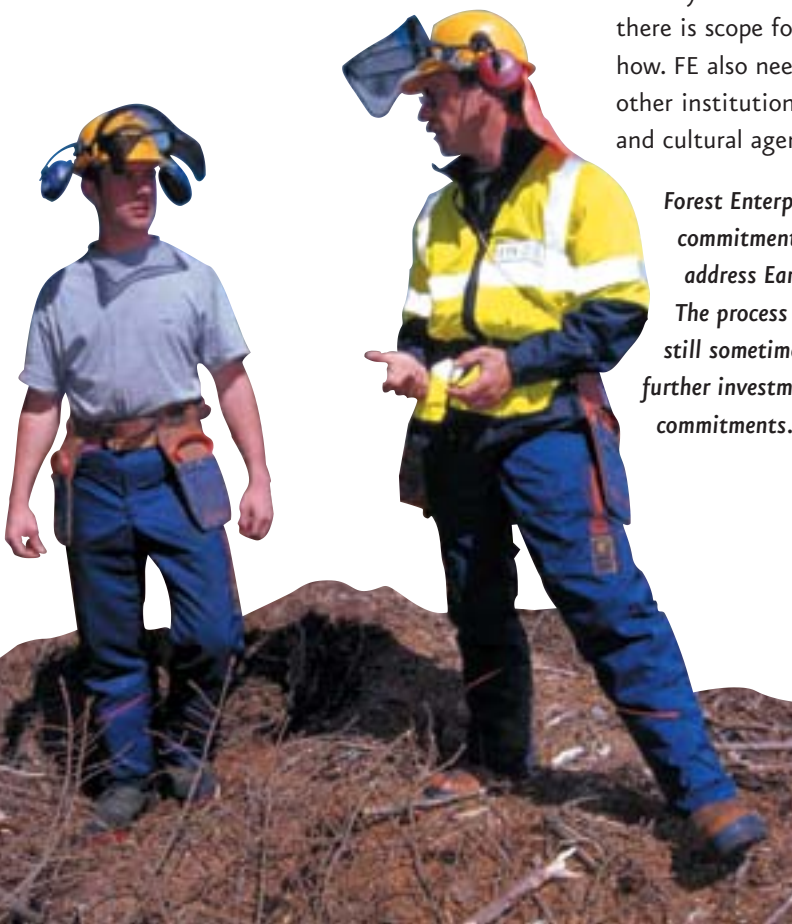


“MORE IS NEEDED TO DEVELOP PROFITABLE MARKETS FOR PLANTATION AND NATIVE HARDWOOD TIMBER...”

Forest Enterprise has made clear commitments and some real changes to address Earth Summit commitments.

The process is not yet complete: action still sometimes lags behind policies and further investment is needed to fulfil desired commitments.

“FOREST ENTERPRISE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE HAS BEEN INCREASED THROUGH A NETWORK OF SPECIALIST EDUCATION CENTRE STAFF..”



A NEW FUTURE FOR STATE FORESTS IN BRITAIN

WHAT DO WE WANT? DEVELOPING A FUTURE VISION FOR STATE FORESTS

In the following section, we present a vision of how forests in general, and state forests in particular, might appear in 2050.

England, Scotland and Wales have larger, higher quality and more varied forest estates which are supported, shaped and influenced by many people. There is diversity in forest types and structures and in management approaches. In the first two decades of the 20th century, partnerships between state forest bodies, private owners, local authorities and others helped to recreate large native forests throughout England and Wales, while in Scotland and Wales several uneconomic state-owned conifer plantations were restored to native species. Long deforested areas, such as the famous Sherwood Forest, the Caledonian pinewoods and the Atlantic oakwoods of Scotland have re-emerged through negotiations with local communities. Britain is recognised as an international leader in forest landscape restoration. More people are dependent on forests for part of their incomes, with leisure activities often replacing forestry in maintaining rural livelihoods. Forest products are an increasingly important part of the economy, replacing alternatives which have higher social and environmental costs.

Existing state forests and woodlands are changing. While some plantations remain, more areas are under continuous cover management and native species and our hardwood forests are starting to be recognised as among the best in the world. A greater emphasis on high-value products and uses – hardwoods, non-timber forest products and recreation – has changed both nature of management and choice of tree. The vast majority of Britain's state forests are truly

multi-purpose with managers focusing on the whole landscape, integrating wherever possible natural ecological processes. Third party certification provides the framework for continued improvements and is recognised as a credible global model.

State forests are much more ecologically robust. Previously threatened species such as the honey buzzard and pine marten are secure and spreading back into lowland areas where their existence was previously a distant memory: several have been removed from the UK Red List of endangered species. For the first time since Neolithic humans cleared forests with flint axes, truly wild forests are growing again in places, through natural regeneration and negotiated restoration. Britain is increasingly seen as an important destination for forest-based adventure holidays.

An expanding network of protected areas and managed natural forests links natural woodland fragments with areas undergoing restoration. Reserves are developing old-growth characteristics.

People play a more central role in decisions about their local forests. New technology helps consultation and a new generation understands the importance and values of forests. State forest managers' expertise and remit has changed; they are expected to listen more and to liaise with local people, to ensure that necessary trade-offs between different forest functions are understood and properly debated. Forestry is considered one of the safer industries and there are more women entering the profession at all levels. People are aware of our forest footprint abroad and Britain, particularly through consumer choice of certified products and a green public procurement policy, helps improve management in exporting countries.

Despite a growing resource base, Britain still relies on timber imports, and the need for



“STATE FORESTS ARE MUCH MORE ECOLOGICALLY ROBUST.”



“OUR WOODLANDS ARE BECOMING FAMOUS: THE LATEST LONELY PLANET GUIDE TO BRITAIN HAS A SECTION ON WILDWOODS.”

new timber and fibre is minimised through recycling and waste reduction technologies. New uses for wood are much more widespread, including a renewed role for wood in energy supply through local combustion/generation units and Combined Heat and Power systems. Whole energy accounting in selection of building materials has led to a greater use of timber for construction.

Our woodlands are becoming famous: the latest *Lonely Planet* guide to Britain has a section on wildwoods. The spreading Caledonian pine forest was featured in the government’s half-century review of the Agenda 21 process. Woodland walking is rated the most popular recreational activity. Despite marked changes in the climate, Britain’s woodlands are considered secure enough to survive the coming millennium.

State-owned forests continue to play a key role in the overall forest estate, particularly in areas where commercial timber values cannot alone support the wider benefits desired by the population, although state forests have changed in location and size as well as in nature. There is now far greater access to woodlands close to where the greatest numbers of people live. Some are now managed by local communities, while elsewhere the estate has expanded to include areas of former industrial wasteland and surplus agricultural land which are more suitable for access, leisure and nature than commercial timber production, or industrial wasteland. State forest managers work mainly in partnership with institutions large and small, as facilitators and entrepreneurs. Overall state forestry has many more stakeholders including many more people with a direct involvement and diversity of interests. While under continuing pressure to pay as much of its way as possible, its wider environmental and social remit has been recognised and supported by successive governments in all three countries.

HOW COULD WE GET THERE? OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NEW STATE FOREST AGENCIES

Forest Enterprise has had one of the broadest remits in British land management, not only on the Forestry Commission estate but also through its role beyond in liaison with community and private woodland owners and in wider policy and outreach through the Forestry Commission. Its successor agencies are ideally placed to deliver on targets such as certification, participation, biodiversity and landscape; devolved powers will allow innovative solutions to be explored differently in the three countries. They will be less well placed to deliver broader economic benefits such as tourism, non-timber forest products and management diversification, and should develop these in partnership. They can respond to wider goals of enhancing value through changing timber uses by producing timber that British customers require. In realising these opportunities and challenges, the agencies will need to be responsive to the differing priorities and public expectations in England, Scotland and Wales.



“...WHILE ELSEWHERE THE ESTATE HAS EXPANDED TO INCLUDE AREAS OF FORMER INDUSTRIAL WASTELAND AND SURPLUS AGRICULTURAL LAND...”

In February 2002, the Forestry Commission supported a workshop on Forest Landscape Restoration in Costa Rica, with WWF, IUCN, the Center for International Forestry Research, the International Tropical Timber Organisation and the Costa Rican government. Forest Landscape Restoration focuses on re-establishing functions and ecosystem processes in a mosaic across a landscape rather than on just restoring individual sites. It involves stakeholders in planning and decision-making.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN? ENACTING A STATE FOREST RENAISSANCE

- **Forest Landscape Restoration:** Britain still needs far more forests. More than three-quarters of the population would like more trees: for nature, for timber, as sources of renewable energy, to renew over-exploited landscapes, to bring money into rural areas and for their aesthetic, spiritual and recreational values. The new forest agencies should *work with partners to increase forest cover to at least 15 per cent of the land area of Britain, with a minimum target of 30 per cent for some districts*, focused on establishment of native broadleaves, increasing the size of small woods to create core conservation areas and increasing linkages between woods. An interim target might be *10 major new forest landscapes in England* and a greater contribution to community forests in



“MORE THAN
THREE-QUARTERS
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TREES...”

England; more forests on derelict land in South Wales; and a major role in the development of state forests within the Central Scotland Forest and around other major urban areas, along with a further extension of native woodlands in Highland Scotland. Such ambitious targets need a strong lead from the new agencies, which could apply Forest Landscape Restoration to plan and negotiate a mosaic of restored forests, woodlands and open areas, complementing existing land uses and involving state and private forests, other landowners and stakeholders. The failure of the market in the private sector to fund wider forest benefits increases the role for state forests. Forest Enterprise has had a track record of forestry involving multiple land deals and this could be applied within a new model in the upland and lowland parts of



England, Scotland and Wales in both rural and urban locations.

- **A landscape scale approach:** emphasis should shift from forest sites to *forested landscapes* – ie to a scale where decisions about the social, environmental and economic uses of forests and other land can be worked out in a balanced way. This is a critical issue in biodiversity conservation, as viable populations of many species cannot survive in isolation and protected areas only work well in a mosaic containing other compatible land uses. It is a scale at which competing land uses – such as forestry and grazing pressure from sheep or deer – can best be addressed. The landscape scale also meets contemporary expectations for leisure activities and participation and local democracy, which reject a single consultation followed by a long-term plan,



as in traditional land-use planning.

Developing a balance between different land uses within a landscape, in partnership with both local and more distant interest groups, will remain a key challenge for state foresters in the next few decades.

- **Recreating “a wilderness experience”:** state forest managers have the chance to recreate “wilderness” in Britain for the first time in recorded history: areas where forests are allowed to develop natural characteristics, maintained by herbivores and providing space for animals and birds currently rare or extinct here. Britain has been a cultural landscape since Neolithic times: today, most apparently native woodlands have been planted and 80 per cent of our ‘forests’ are exotic plantations. Changing economic and social conditions, particularly in the British uplands, coupled with a greater understanding of ecosystem processes, create the possibility of restoring wilderness. Equally, the term “wilderness” can be used in a relative sense. In our very urbanised society, many people would – and already do – enjoy a “wildland” experience within green space close to towns and cities. Although support would be high in some parts of Britain and among some stakeholders, selling the ideas will be challenging in many communities where “wilderness” is still a negative concept. Developing wild areas, probably within existing or proposed national parks, would help secure biodiversity and extend the uses of uplands. It would provide a

magnet for recreation and a model for landscape-scale restoration. *State forest managers could recreate large core areas of unmanaged, native woodland (10,000 hectares or more) in England, Wales and Scotland, ideally surrounded by buffer zones of other multi-purpose forest types driven by Forestry Commission policy.*

- **Listening to people:** a truly community-based approach to forest planning and management could be embraced by the new agencies from their inception. Increased expectations for forests makes it harder than ever to balance needs and priorities, increasing the need for devolved decision-making, and the creation and maintenance of partnerships. Choices about the extent and approach to participation must be made on a case-by-case basis: some people are content to let authorities take decisions, while others want close involvement. Balancing local and outsider views is often challenging. Pressure to deliver forest design plans should not compromise an effective consultative process, with community engagement starting well in advance of delivering a design plan. With the wide management remit of the new devolved bodies, *a unique opportunity exists to implement active plans for community engagement, and aspire to become “partners of first choice” for key projects.* Consultation processes, performance indicators, staff trained in community facilitation, communication and marketing, livelihood-based

“STATE FOREST MANAGERS HAVE THE CHANCE TO RECREATE “WILDERNESS” IN BRITAIN...”



“...STATE FORESTS SHOULD HELP TO MAINTAIN RURAL COMMUNITIES...”



At the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in August 2002, the 'UK Partnership for Action', which includes the UK Government, the devolved administrations, the forestry industry and environmental groups, published details of an action programme to promote sustainable development in the forestry sector at home and internationally. This will build on the UK's experience of partnership working to take action on:

- Forest certification
- Illegal logging
- Timber procurement
- Forest protection
- Forest restoration
- Promotion programme

community analyses and increased support given to local communities could help build such partnerships, which are already spreading beyond traditional forest uses to mountain biking and pop concerts.

- **Supporting a sustainable rural economy:** state forests should help to maintain rural communities; however, this will need new strategies and approaches. Although wood production has more than doubled since the 1970s and continues to increase, this has been offset by a decline in timber prices. Furthermore, mechanisation has reduced employment in forest management. Today more people derive income from other activities dependent on forests and woodlands, including tourism, recreation, high-quality carpentry, sale of wild foods, pheasant-rearing and shooting. State forestry must work hard with partners involved in these activities to maintain and increase levels of employment, while aiming to support and manage other uses. State forestry could contribute by *developing strategies to ensure the sustainability of harvest of minor forest products, development of wood as an energy source, recreational uses and encouragement of multi-purpose woodland management.*
- **Urban renewal:** Forest Enterprise has demonstrated its ability to develop new community woodlands close to people in disadvantaged communities in despoiled landscapes. Recent work in the South Wales valleys, major demonstration projects in Thames Chase, Red Rose and the Mersey Community Forests in England, and some pilot activity in the Central Scotland Forest, have clearly shown what can be achieved both in the creation of new woodlands and through the active interest and participation of local people in some of Britain's most disadvantaged communities. The state forest agencies should be given a clear mandate and the necessary resources,

and they should work in partnership with other organisations to make a substantive difference to people's environments and quality of life.

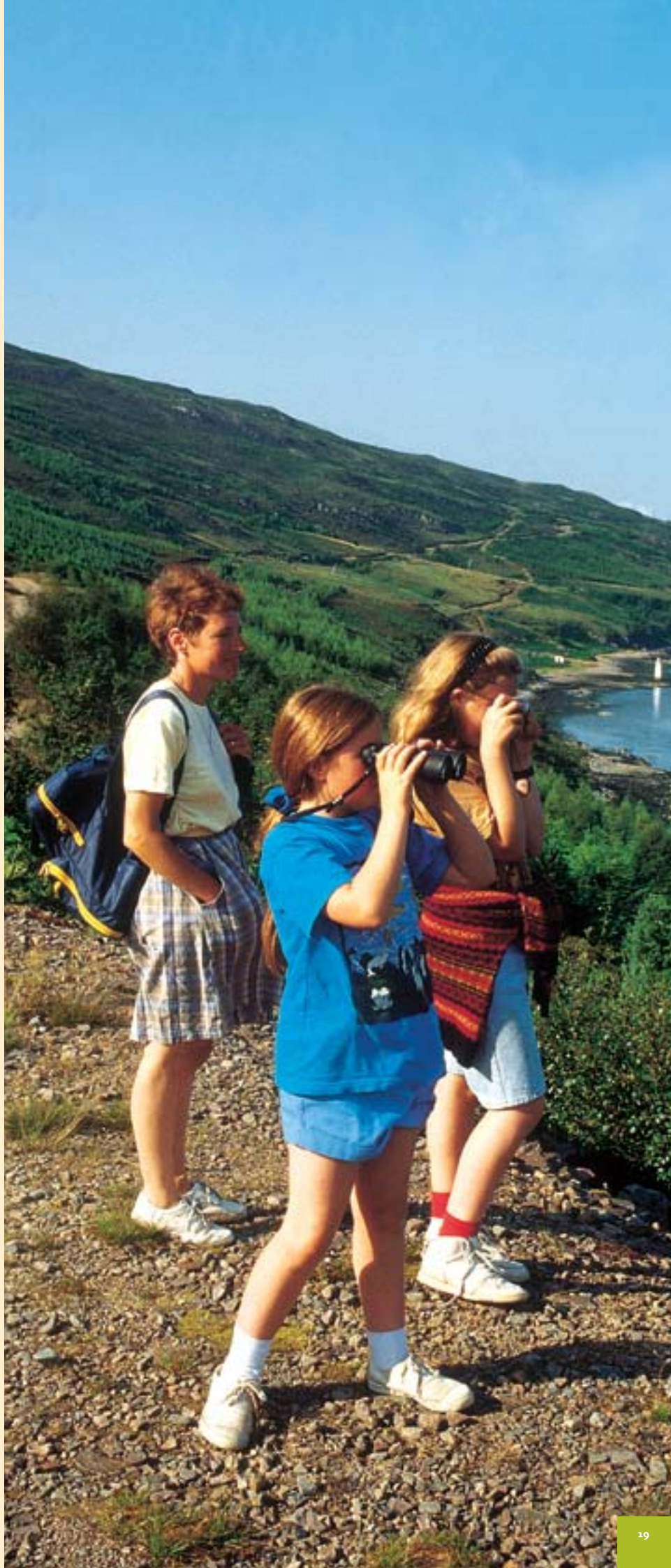
- **Beyond certification:** Forest Enterprise has undertaken the largest single FSC certification in the world to date, covering its entire forest estate. It has joined the WWF 95+Group and committed to promote good forest management and certification and increased trade in credibly certified products. The new agencies should provide a leadership role in promoting forest certification at the national level, and increasing the access to and uptake of credible certification by small forest owners, maintaining its certification to the UKWAS and promoting responsible timber and paper procurement by the public sector. At the same time, as outlined in the proposals above, it needs to look beyond certification to how forest management might continue to improve in the future, particularly with respect to forest landscape restoration and approaches that address the whole forest landscape.

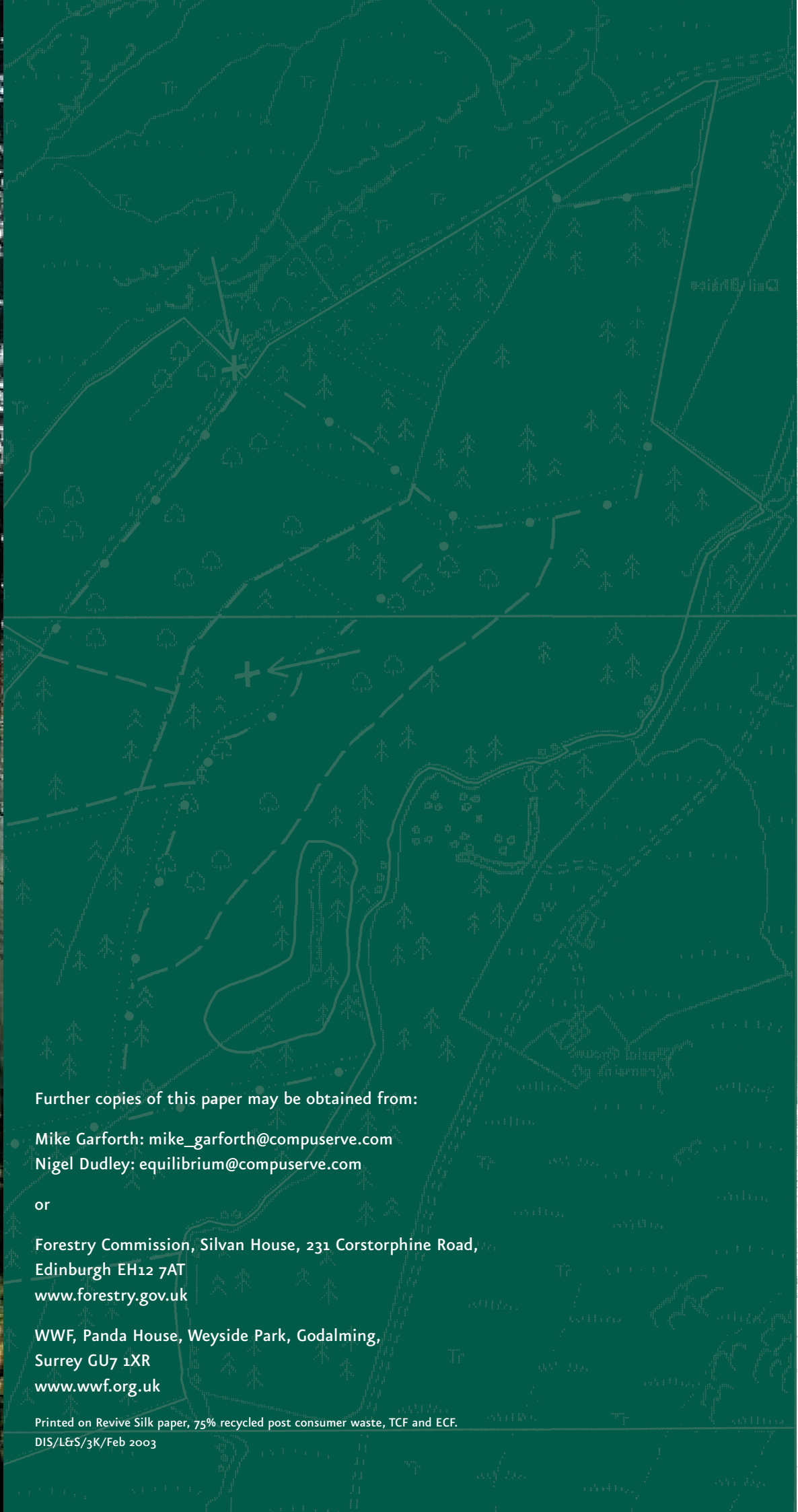


“THE NEW AGENCIES SHOULD PROVIDE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN PROMOTING FOREST CERTIFICATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL...”

HOW DO WE MOVE FROM VISION TO REALITY?

The opportunity exists for the three new state forest agencies to play a defining role in shaping a forest landscape in England, Scotland and Wales that is of a higher quality than at any time during the previous two or three millennia – with implications for Britain, Europe and, through example, for the whole world. Careful stewardship and continuing timber sales can help to fund this process. But they cannot supply all the necessary resources, particularly in the current economic conditions, and the agencies need to be seen as more than just a commercial enterprise. They need a clear political mandate, more and differently trained staff, more funding and more land (or access to land through partnership agreements). A major period of change has started; it now needs the political backing and resources to complete the process. An investment comparable to that made, with popular acclaim, in the Tate Modern Gallery could transform the forested landscapes of England, Scotland and Wales.





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Printed on Revive Silk paper, 75% recycled post consumer waste, TCF and ECF.
DIS/L&S/3K/Feb 2003