

Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committees

Annual Report

June 2017

A report co-authored by the nine Forestry and
Woodlands Advisory Committee Chairs

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Whosoever plants a tree
Winks at immortality.

Woodland cherries, flowers ablaze,
Hold no hint of human praise;

Hazels in a hidden glade
Give no thought to stake or spade;

London planes in Georgian squares
Count no patrons in their prayers;

Seed and sapling seek no cause,
Bark and beetle shun applause;

Leaf and shoot know nought of debt,
Twig and root are dumb— and yet

Choirs of songbirds greet each day
With eulogies, as if to say:

‘Whosoever plants a tree
Winks at immortality!’

Felix Dennis

About this report

The Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committees are the UK Government's Expert Committee supporting the sector across the nine English Regions.

The 2017 report consists of the following four sections:

1. A review of the work from April 2016 to March 2017 of the committees and examples of innovation and good practice;
2. An assessment of the key issues, opportunities and risks to the forestry sector of leaving the EU;
3. A review of the key issues round skills and training; and
4. A forward look at the priorities for action in the coming years.

The Committees are required to provide a joint report annually which describes the business highlights against the four FWAC principles set out in 2013:

- Champion forestry interests and partnership working at local level for woodland resilience and sector development, providing independent insight into local needs and priorities.
- Provide advice on the application of national policies into local programmes, and help feed local priorities into national programmes.
- Support the Government's interests by developing strong local connections and networks to enhance synergies across the diverse forest and woodland sector, including the public forest estate.
- Conciliate in disputed applications for grant aid, felling licences, or approval of forest plans where there is a sustained objection by a statutory body.

The Committee members contribute to a large number of wider networks advocating the interests of the forestry sector and bring together professional knowledge and experience to bear in the regular meetings.

In 2016/17 the Chairs and members met with leaders and officers of the Forestry Commission and Defra and (via the Forestry Forum and other routes) the Forestry Minister.

The Chairs are unchanged from last year and, on each, principally represent three perspectives of the forestry community:

- Social, Access and Environment (4)
- Local community, Economy and Government (4)
- Forestry industry and Land Ownership (1)

The FWAC Urban Network is chaired by Jane Carlsen and includes representatives from across the 9 Committees.

The 100 volunteer members of all of the FWACs and the 9 Chairs are themselves members of many professional organisations, networks and associations, including Chartered Foresters, Surveyors, Planners, and Environmentalists. Many FWAC Chairs are company directors and serve on charity, government and company boards including: Natural England, RSPB, Cabinet Office, Audit Commission and Employment and Skills Boards.

This report is prepared for approval at the May 2017 Chairs' meeting.

Committee members made significant contributions to this report, through agreeing contributing reports and preparing copy. Chris Starr and Ted Wilson provided copy for the section on Skills and Training. Photo credit to Ian Brown for the photos on p1, p3, p5, p17, p23, Steve Scott for the photo on p4, Keith Jones for the photo on p21, Mark Prior for the photos on p11, p12 and p13 and Iain Taylor for the image on p14.

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Executive Summary

This is the third published annual report from the nine Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee Chairs and builds on the themes and key areas of the 2016 report. In just 12 months since the last report we have witnessed an unprecedented series of events. These have provided the catalyst for a wide range of innovative ideas and approaches inspired by the circumstances and driven to find new solutions in an ever tighter financial context.

This report reflects the context of the FWACs, and focusses on the key issues affecting the sector on leaving the EU. The report also focusses on innovation with some excellent examples of research, development, delivery, strategy to inspire and excite in the years ahead.

The decision to leave the EU has refocused attention on the scope and purpose of a Countryside Stewardship programme. The FWACs advocate for an integrated programme of land management that balances the needs of society and provides multiple benefits as well as taking into account fully the range of sustainable solutions for the benefit of communities, urban

and rural, now and in the future. Such benefits include contributions to water management and quality, carbon reduction, air pollution, food productivity as well as conserving and restoring our wonderful landscapes and nature.

The Woodland Creation programme supported by RDPE helped create 525ha of new woodland, less than one third of that in 2012 and lower still than that created in 2015. There is clear support from across the FWAC network to seize the opportunity created by leaving the EU to reform the programme of support and make it far simpler and easier to administer and more fit for purpose.

The 2016 report referred to the precarious situation facing the community forests as local authorities withdraw their core support. A Health Check led by the FWACs identified this in some detail and confirmed the view. In October 2016, as predicted, the South Yorkshire Forest was closed due to a lack of core resources and many others look to follow unless a sustainable solution is found. The FWACs have agreed with Defra and the Community Forest sector £30,000 of support to undertake a business plan into new and innovative approaches to funding the sector long term. Although challenging, the FWACs and



community forests are determined to find a solution and seize the opportunity presented by leaving the EU to ensure that the capability and skills are retained to deliver positive outcomes consistent with the emerging 25 year plan.

In January 2017 Woodland Trust and the four Northern Community Forests started a collaboration to develop a prospectus and business plan for a new Northern Forest - a long term visionary plan to deliver 50m trees over the next 25 years.

The impending loss of Ash has focused foresters in the South West to form a Grey Squirrel Initiative to redouble efforts to find a solution to the grey squirrel and the long-term unsustainability of native species woodland planting and regeneration.

Looking ahead, we remain positive about the strong and growing role FWACs have to play in championing forestry across England, and look forward to working closely with the Forestry Commission including in a refreshed engagement with the Public Forest Estate.

The FWACs look forward to supporting the development of a 25 Year Framework and Plan for the Environment and will make the case for a productive woodland and forestry sector. The Pioneers are showing the benefits of a natural capital approach and focus on landscapes in helping to move the sector forward.

The combination of generational planning for environment, innovating towards in perpetuity funding for the community forest sector, a move towards landscape scale planting for natural capital value really does mark the start of a new chapter in forestry and woodland planning and delivery.

Trees and woodlands have always been inherently long term. Innovative long term funding and strategies are now being discussed across the sector and government. It feels right that as the Forestry Commission approaches 100 years since it was created that think about the next 100 years... and as Countryfile beautifully demonstrated with the volunteers planting a Heart of England woodland... whosoever plants a tree, winks at immortality...



Context

2016 was as dramatic as it was unprecedented. The decision to leave the European Union on June 23, 2016 marked the start of an entirely new chapter in the future of the forest and woodlands sector.

Funding from the EU encourages partnerships in our towns and cities and was the stimulus behind much of the urban and peri-urban woodland creation projects delivered through the network of community forests and their delivery partners. For the forestry sector, half the funding for woodland creation and management currently originates from the EU.

The full implications of the decision are still emerging, but flagship urban woodland projects, such as the Horizon 2020 project in Liverpool, about to commence, are the epitome of how we need to implement improvements in the way our towns and cities function through investment in green infrastructure.

The forestry and woodland grant system, has continued to face major delivery challenges, which appear to have reduced take up and therefore outcomes delivery to historic lows.

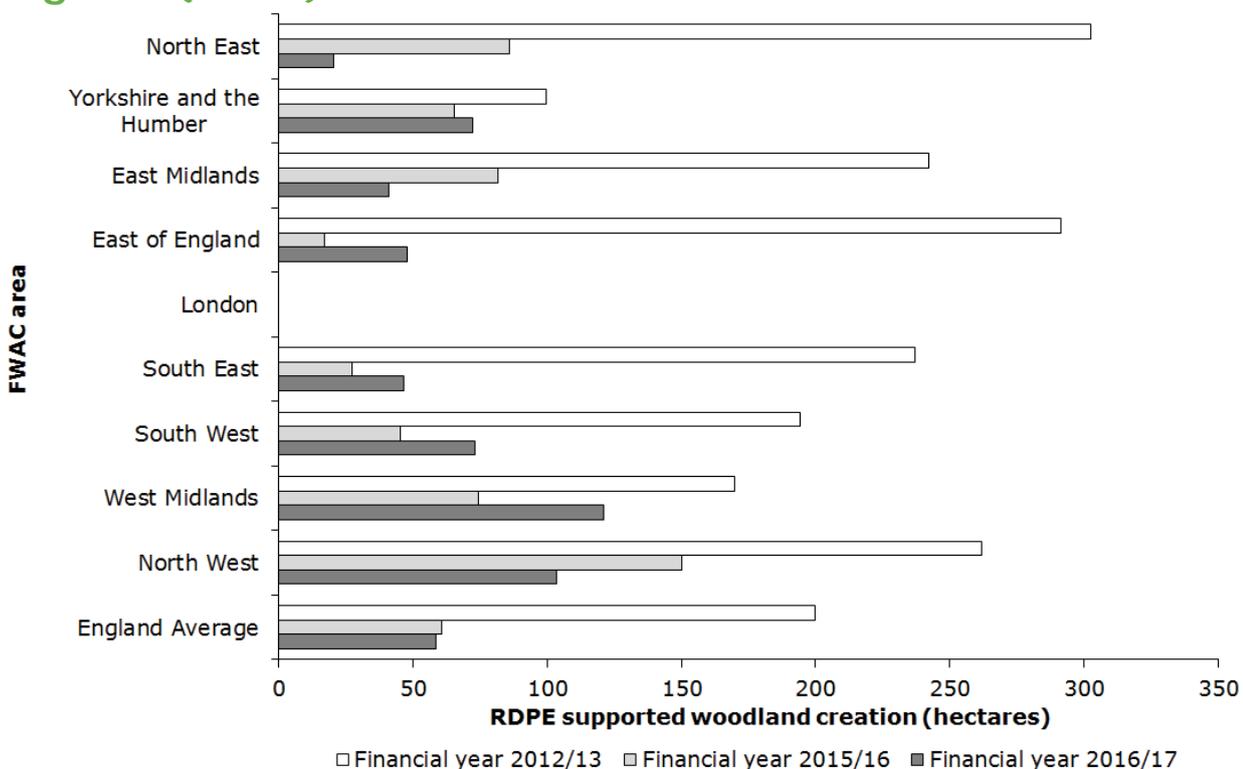
For the administration of woodland grants and Government involvement in the sector directly, leaving the EU presents nothing short of an enormous opportunity to do things better in the future.

Throughout the year, we debated the Government's stated intention to prepare a 25 Year Framework for the Environment. The then environment Minister Elizabeth Truss, in her speech February 1, 2016, outlined a vision for the sector *"We will structure our work around river catchments and landscapes that make up the environment. For the first time, we will have a plan and budget for each area rather than 34 organisations operating with different plans. We are going to be integrating these plans with the 25-year framework we are creating for the environment..."*

Government has continued to refer to a 25 year horizon for planning albeit we await publication of the plans. For the sector though, the experience has underlined some important aspects regarding leadership, the importance of innovation and the timescale for which solutions should be developed. Thinking of programmes and approaches that have the potential to span a generational timescale provides an important driver for the restructure of approaches, which

Woodland creation supported by the Rural Development Plan England (RDPE)

RDPE supported woodland creation



Selected Forestry Commission England headline indicators by FWAC area

FWAC Area	Total Woodland Area (Hectares) ¹	% of Woodland in Management			Woodland Creation supported by RDPE (Hectares)		
		at 31.03.2013 ²	at 31.03.2016 ³	at 31.03.2017 ⁴	2012-2013 ⁵	2015-2016 ⁶	2016-2017 ⁷
North East	116,823	70%	78%	78%	303	86	21
Yorkshire and the Humber	116,262	56%	60%	60%	100	65	72
East Midlands	100,836	53%	57%	57%	242	82	41
East of England	154,825	50%	57%	58%	292	17	48
London	13,062	24%	29%	29%	0	0	0
South East	312,302	48%	55%	56%	237	27	47
South West	253,778	50%	55%	54%	194	45	73
West Midlands	118,663	52%	56%	55%	170	74	121
North West	118,436	54%	60%	60%	262	150	103
Total	1,304,987				1,831	546	525
<i>England Average</i>		53%	58%	58%			

essentially have the scope to deliver benefits in perpetuity.

The Forestry Commission will be 100 years old in 2019. This too is important in thinking about the future direction of policy. Over the last 100 years we have made significant steps, yet woodland cover is low compared to pre-industrial levels and very low compared to continental Europe. There is much more that can be done, and needs to be done in terms of woodland creation maximising the multiple benefits they offer.

The role of trees and woodlands in providing natural solutions to hitherto hard engineering challenges regarding flood protection infrastructure in particular has been debated and emphasised in the year.

The sector has struggled to articulate the benefits of trees in the landscape with a defensive mantra of 'right tree, right place' which has been taken by some to mean 'no trees, anywhere' for fear of them being in the wrong place.

The 2016 FWAC Report reported concerns raised regarding the sustainability of the community forestry sector. Forestry Commission suggested the sector undertake a Health Check to help understand the financial picture in more detail. Three FWAC Chairs (NW, Yorks and WM) collaborated on the scope of the Health Check and prepared a report based on the responses received. The outcome of the Health Check is covered later in this report.

In 2016 Natural England and the Environment Agency aligned their public-facing area boundaries to create 14 common local areas in England, with Forest Services also contributing to Defra Group area integrated planning and more joint working in these 14 areas. The FWACs have engaged in the consideration of how best to align limited Forestry Commission resource to the new aligned areas.

In March 2017 the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) published its report "Seeing the wood for the trees" following an inquiry into the role of Defra in supporting a thriving forest economy and environment.

EFRA state that *"The forestry sector contributes some £1.7 billion a year to the economy and indirectly supports 43,000 jobs.*

Woods and forests, particularly ancient forests, provide many environmental benefits including enhancing biodiversity and supporting a range of

ecosystem services such as water management and climate control. In addition, forests provide recreational and amenity value to society."

The Committee reported that the forestry Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) is *"not fit for purpose. The Committee heard that the grant application process was "torturous", "bureaucratic" and "overly complex", with three organisations involved in administering CSS.*

Poor administration of the grant system is acting as a barrier to greater woodland creation, with under 700 hectares of woodland created in England in 2015-16. The Committee is calling today for the Government to re-introduce a one-stop shop for forestry grants on day one of the UK's exit from the European Union."

The FWACs welcome the Committee's engagement with these important issues and look forward to seeing the Government's response after the General Election.



Section 1: Innovation and Good Practice in the year

Working towards a sustainable Community Forest Sector

The Urban FWAC Network's "Vision for a Resilient Urban Forest", published in March 2016, highlights the value of the urban forest and many of the projects delivered by the Community Forests. Specifically, Community Forests have the capacity to play a lead role in the delivery of current and future government policy, in particular, aspects of the emerging 25 Year Environment Plan in and around our towns and cities.

A team of three FWAC Chairs (Sian Ferguson (Yorks), John Moverley (WM) and Iain Taylor (NW)) undertook a review of the Community Forest Sector, following statements in the 2016 FWAC Annual Report highlighting concerns about their future. This review has been presented to senior officials of the Forestry Commission for their advice. FC has been supporting the FWAC Chairs in their discussions regarding long-term solutions to support the Community Forestry Sector.

Community Forest Trust (CFT), acting on behalf of the Community Forest Sector, has identified a number of innovative financial approaches to sustain the sector through and beyond the 25 year Environment Plan. Such support will ensure that the diverse range of benefits and outcomes delivered by the Community Forest Partnerships

Recognition of Natural Capital

Tarmac (who were among the companies participating in the Natural Capital Committee's pilot to test their corporate natural capital accounting framework) have restored and are maintaining into the future a country park at Panshanger (a Grade 2 listed historic parkland dating back many centuries) in return for mineral extraction rights, preserving the historic landscape and giving public access to communities in peri-metropolitan Hertfordshire.

The London FWAC has been discussing the use of natural capital and in particular the conclusions of the Natural Capital Committee that allowing for the value of recreation, woodland planting would be more focused around inhabited areas to give maximum benefits to both timber output and communities. This again supports the use of access as a criteria for funds and grants.

Smithills Woodland Enterprise Hub

The Smithills project includes the phased acquisition of 1,700 acres of the Smithills Estate in Bolton and is the largest site in the Woodland Trust England portfolio.

Part of the justification for the site is the opportunity to engage the tenant farmers, a community of interested stakeholders and the local community in expanding the scope for enterprise within the estate.

The approach is innovative and will provide new opportunities for valuable ecosystem services across the site and stimulate a range of activities rarely promoted at landscape scale.

A Board has been created and oversaw the preparation of a summary prospectus and an engagement event with potential new businesses on the site with over 50 in attendance. The enterprise approach is supporting an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the investment in essential new enterprise infrastructure on site.

will continue across urban, peri urban and rural communities across England.

The Community Forests have a long history of working in partnership with Defra, Forestry Commission and other third sector organisations to deliver the maximum impact from the resources available, in line with current Government policy and direction.

A recent Forest Research publication (Jan 2017) highlights the role that urban forest play in delivering ecosystem services and enhancing natural capital.

Whilst the Community Forests have been very effective in winning project funds, funders increasingly want to fund capital and not revenue costs. Some funders are even moving away from supporting project management - this impacts on Forests' ability to continue to innovate, develop partnerships, and win funding for future projects.

CFT has developed an innovative endowment based solutions to this problem. Whilst requiring government pump priming this solution can be achieved at zero cost long-term to the government.

Having secured Defra and Community Forest sector support for the business plan, the FWACs look forward to working on the delivery of a Business Plan and will report back to the Urban FWAC Network in July and December 2017.

A Forest for all Londoners

The London FWAC has been advising on a new document to inform the Mayor of London's emerging strategies on the Environment and the London Plan. A 'Forest for all Londoners' - builds on the urban forest vision (FWAC network) to give a London focus and identifies delivery mechanisms and partners through London Tree Partnership

The FWAC has been considering how the emergence of natural capital accounting provides opportunities to reconsider what support/investment should be provided, guided by valuations of the net benefits trees and woodland generate within and close to urban area.

A new Northern Forest

The Woodland Trust is working with the Community Forests in the north of England to develop plans for a new Northern Forest - stretching from Liverpool across to Hull, with the M62 as its spine.

Working with a wide range of stakeholders, the partnership will set out how a new Northern Forest will deliver major environmental and social benefits that complement the significant growth, investment and new infrastructure that is planned for the north of England. This will embrace the core cities of Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds, the cities of Chester and Hull and major towns across the north.

The Northern Forest will both accelerate the creation of new woodland and support sustainable management of existing woods right across the area. Many more trees, woods and forests will deliver a better environment for all by: improving air quality in our towns and cities; mitigating flood risk in key catchments; supporting the rural economy through tourism, recreation and timber production; connecting people with nature; and helping to deliver improvements to health and wellbeing through welcoming and accessible local green spaces.

25 Years, 50m trees.



Defra Pioneers

The FWACs are unanimous in urging government and the Forestry Commission England of the need for a long term (preferably 50 or 100 years) Vision and plan for forestry and woodlands. We therefore urge Defra to initiate consultation on its long-awaited 25 Year Environment Plan.

As a key input to this plan, Defra has launched four “Pioneers” as test beds for application of integrated natural capital approaches. The Pioneers aim to be fast paced (building on existing good practice in their localities), flexible and creative so that other locations and partners will be able to benefit and learn from their experiences. While one of the Pioneers concerns marine ecosystems and is not relevant to the FWACs, the other three are terrestrial, and FWAC members are engaging with each of these.

The “Landscape” Pioneer, in North Devon’s UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is led by Natural England. It builds on the existing successes of the North Devon Biosphere, the Nature Improvement Area, Catchment Partnership and the North Devon Coast AONB. Initial work focuses on defining what natural capital exists, what funding is currently available, and how this might be enhanced through more efficient delivery and innovative

Balancing habitats with economic and social factors

Wangford Warren: a partnership between Highways England and FE to mitigate for SPA habitat (lost when the A11 was dualled) by restoring 225 hectares of FE pine plantation to heathland, providing a habitat for stone curlew and protecting archaeological landscape features.

financing. The aim is to develop a shared and innovative natural capital investment plan by December 2017. The area has a woodland cover of around 12% delivering a GDP of around £1.3M per annum, while the potential ecosystem services from the woodlands should be in the order of £58M. The opportunities to enhance the natural capital of the area through better woodland management and creating more woodlands is immense.

Speeding up the woodland management planning process

Bringing 2/3 of England’s woodlands back into management is an ambitious policy target, given that most are in private ownership and highly fragmented. During 2015-16, the FWACs raised concerns with FC England that the complexity and delays in the approval of management plans



was a key hindrance to achieving this target. This had been exemplified by the Westwoods “Earned Recognition” scheme - a private sector pilot to bring woodlands in SW England back into management by delivering timber (woodfuel) to market. This project had initially attracted 40 woodland owners covering 843ha, but resulted in only 19 plans being submitted with 12 - 18 months delay from initiation to payment for the plans. Agents and contractors are often small businesses, and struggle with cash flow when grants and approvals are delayed. The Westwoods experience highlighted the urgent need for improved systems and consistency of expectation and practice on behalf of FCE and agents for writing, processing and approving the plans.

Following this experience, Forestry Commission England undertook a review of the current system, and some improvements were already visible by the end of 2017 (across England, 341 plans took an average of 108 days from the date received by FC through to the point where the felling licence was issued and the plan was approved). Other planned improvements include: a) Development of a new Felling Licence online system; b) UK Forestry Standard refresh, c) a further round of joint management planning workshops with ICF; d) New Service Level

Water / Natural Solutions / Resilience

Natural Flood Management especially linked to impact of forestry - collaborations with EA sponsored projects in Worcestershire and Warwickshire and close link to work of regional flood and coastal committee

Agreements between FC, RPA and NE which will support the business processes for woodland management planning grant.

A key initiative has been the launch of pilot trials for a Service Standard in the South East, designed to inform an achievable standard for processing management plan approvals to customers and to assess and resolve issues that lead to delays. The findings of the pilot are due report in May 2017, but already the results are showing how the plan approval timescales can be improved through both agent and FC Woodland Officer action.

Supporting the DEFRA 1m Trees programme

Community Forests and Woodland Trust have been working with DEFRA to develop a programme to plant 1m trees with primary school children. £1.3m has been secured for the Community Forests to support deliver of the programme.



FWACs engagement in the Public Forest Estate

The FWACs have had a long and productive history of engagement with the Forestry Commission in support of its management of the Public Forest Estate. We have continued to receive regular briefings from Forest Enterprise local senior managers, and look forward to developing our partnership as critical friend, advisor and advocate for the PFE.

Urban FWAC Network

The Urban FWAC Network has continued to build on the Vision of the Resilient Urban Forest, developing both the evidence base and engagement with stakeholders. The network has developed links with network Rail and Transport for London on their approaches to lineside and roadside trees.

The network also advised Kieron Doick (Forest Research) on the 'Introducing the urban forest' document that clarifies the relationship with green infrastructure, defines the urban forest and details tools and databases for measuring its distribution and composition.

Recently the network supported Kieron Doick's paper to ICF conference on survey of canopy cover in towns and cities and is considering how

to advise on the setting of canopy cover targets for England's towns and cities.

The Network also made a submission to a NICE consultation on air quality guidance and to the CLG Select Committee on Parks. The latter was recognised in the Select Committee's Report.



In June 2016, the SW FWAC visited a new control initiative for Grey Squirrels in SW England

The impending loss of Ash focused foresters in the Southwest to form a SW Grey Squirrel Initiative to redouble efforts to find a solution to the grey squirrel and the long-term unsustainability of native species woodland planting and regeneration.

An early output was the trialling of bait station air rifle shooting as an effective means of population knockdown ahead of automated traps as part of an integrated control plan. Facilitated by Clinton Devon Estates in Harpford Woods, a 77ha ancient semi-natural woodland in East Devon, a partnership of BASC, local air rifle shooters and the ESI were tasked with the objective of reducing the grey squirrel population to a point where automated traps can maintain a sufficiently low squirrel density to enable successful recruitment of native broadleaved regeneration. Pre-trial survey established baseline damage assessment and confirmed no successful pole stage recruitment from 1970's regeneration fellings within beech and oak stands.

Following BASC training and accreditation of all shooters, control started in winter 2015/16 and continues to date. Significant learning has been gained as to effective location of bait stations and by late summer, assessment shows an encouraging 80% decline in fresh damage achieved by a cull of 200+ squirrels. The group is now well into its second control year and has attracted new members, enabling control to be expanded into additional Estate woodlands while maintaining effort in Harpford Wood until such time as automated traps are available.



Section 2: Forestry in England after exiting the EU

Key Facts

c£30m of public support to forestry per annum, half of which is EU money

Forestry Commission will be 100 years old in 2019

Farming the major land management activity, but only 0.7% of GDP

Planting at historically low levels

All FWACs were invited to provide advice and perspectives to Forestry Commission England on the opportunities and challenges created by the UK's departure from the EU. These rich contributions can be summarised under a series of headings.

Integrated land management

Leaving the EU presents an unprecedented opportunity to revisit the idea of integrated land management policy and to open up a refreshed debate on what we want to achieve with our land resource founded on sustaining and improving the UK's natural capital and that recognises the roles of forestry to deliver the Government's goals for the environment, food and farming.

It could allow the creation of an integrated policy approach and plan for land management which includes forestry, owned by Government at the highest level and guide the decisions of all Government departments and agencies and not just confined to DEFRA. We need to get out of the current culture of being continually supported by grants or grant led.

Of course, leaving the CAP might leave uneconomic farming sectors (such as hill livestock) and the communities that depend on them unprotected. There is a real case for forestry to be promoted to fill the gap, with benefits to the rural livelihoods, environment and ecosystem services as well. All in all, this represents a unique opportunity to develop a new balanced land use policy to manage a changing agricultural landscape, delivering public, social economic and environmental benefits.

Defra has a great opportunity to lead new thinking right across government and beyond about the way we use rural land in England. In that endeavour, FWACs believe that forestry should be recognised as a core function with equal status to other land management disciplines, and priority should be given to retaining and strengthening forestry skills.

Changes to public support for forestry

To that end, it will be necessary to align incentives, including subsidies, with this transition with an ultimate goal to support an integrated approach to land management with payment by results.

FWACs felt that 'business as usual' approach to subsidies is not on the cards; leaving the EU creates an overarching opportunity to redesign and recalibrate publicly funded grant schemes as a result of the end of the Rural Development Programme so to address what we are seeking to achieve in terms of sustainable and productive land management delivering multiple benefits and focus support systems accordingly.

A key opportunity is a review of the EU State Aid Rules. The application of State Aid has not supported investment projects in forestry well and been a major hurdle in strategic investment projects.

For example, projects are frustrated by the approach to state aid being location based and on restricted areas of investment.

For example, the current Countryside Stewardship woodland creation grants, which are primarily targeted at flood alleviation, water quality and biodiversity could be replaced or supplemented by designing a new grant scheme which takes full account of the value of biodiversity, flooding and other ecosystem services or natural capital value e.g. new woods for timber production and new woodland on the edge of urban communities where woodland has most social value. Current Countryside Stewardship funding prevents Local Authorities from being able to claim maintenance grants and therefore is a disincentive from creating new urban woodlands.

The disappearance of EU funding rules could allow consideration of innovative finance approaches, including repayable grants based on future returns. The opportunity to re-assess and re-engineer public support for forestry is

immense and should be grasped. Such a redesign could help ensure grants can be made proportionate to the activity and social and environmental gain.

Nonetheless there will be challenges ahead as well. Specifically ESIF funding has been an important source of support for training within the UK forestry sector. How will training for the sector be supported in the future? Despite the optimism many feel about Brexit stimulating serious consideration of new forms of support and reforming public funding, there is also no guarantee that public funding even at current levels will be sustained. For the last 20 years forestry has been fighting for a share of a ring-fenced rural development budget. When RDP funding stops in 2020, England will not be out of austerity, and there will still be great pressures on diminishing public funding not just within sectors but between sectors such as health, education and environment for example. There will be a challenge in making the case for forestry versus other policy areas not just within the land management sector.

Urban areas

UK Government funding for local authorities is increasingly linked to statutory service delivery. European funding has allowed local authorities to deliver wide-ranging socially and environmentally beneficial projects, including green infrastructure, parks and open spaces with capital projects often taking on regular maintenance tasks but fewer opportunities post Brexit to secure flexible non-statutory funding may well place additional pressure on council maintenance budgets and new capital investment projects will be limited.

In particular the community forest sector has attracted considerable capital investment from the EU to deliver important projects to the benefit of communities across the UK. Future arrangements need to take account of this.

The forestry workforce

FWACs are concerned that a reduction in the European skilled and unskilled workforce, many of whom work in UK forestry sector could have a significant impact on many timber related businesses e.g. nurseries, timber processors.

Trade and stimulus to business

Of course, Brexit is not simply about negotiating new trading arrangements with the EU and the

rest of the world. New internal policies will also need to be developed to replace the existing EU ones, giving priority to the need to create vital resilience through a better environment for the whole of the economy to flourish.

Currently levels of timber imports for the housing market from Europe are high but an opportunity arises to advocate use of home-grown timber if trade restrictions kick in or imports decline and there is a considerable related opportunity to develop further the role and importance of the Grown in Britain supply chain assurance across all forest products in this regard.

Nonetheless, for the foreseeable future the UK will continue to import timber to meet its domestic needs. This is a crucial factor in trade negotiations, and in a trading environment governed by WTO rules our traditional rural industries will face severe competition from other countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA who have been operating under these rules for decades. There is a real risk to rural industries and communities.

Pests and diseases

FWACs considered the complex issues created by Brexit on the control of pests and diseases. Might there be a real challenge posed by a loss of collaboration and co-operation between Forest Research and European institutions on research into pests and diseases? Will greater control over our borders lead to a false sense of security that we can protect ourselves from pests and diseases? Or is there is a real opportunity to exploit our island status to develop a bio-security strategy which protects our environment from threats such as exotic animal and plant diseases, pests and invasive species more effectively? This could be achieved by strengthening border checks, tightening controls on imports of plant material, seeking better enforcement of the plant passport system and strengthening quarantine rules.

Legislation and policy shifts

The Government made the valid and important commitment to leave the environment in a better state for the next generation. This commitment should underpin any regulatory and policy changes because of Brexit. It is of course necessary to acknowledge that many UK land managers' businesses are based around and may have significant financial dependences on the current regulatory and policy frameworks including current subsidies and grants. Changes to

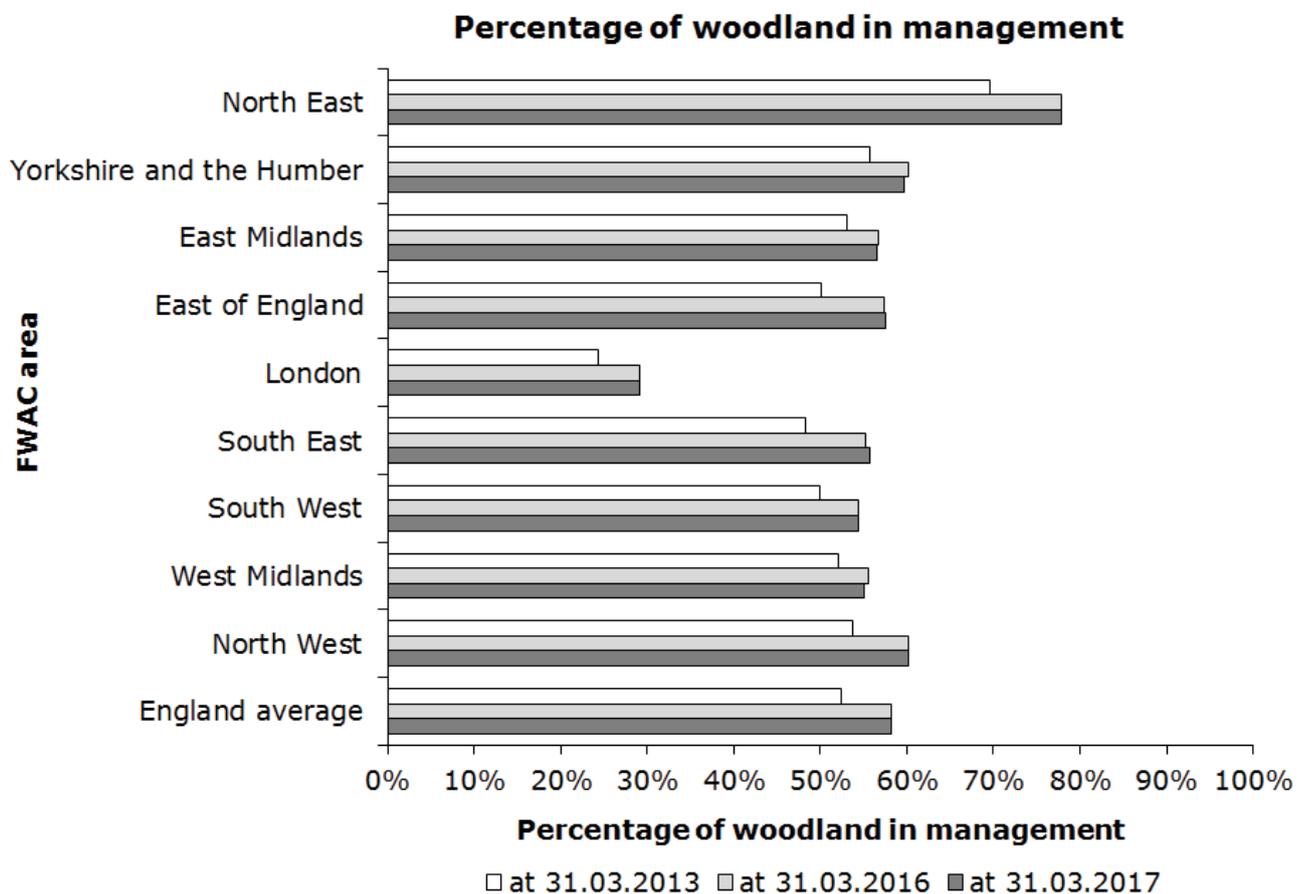


regulation and policy must be fair to these businesses so that they can transition to a new system based on an integrated approach to land management.

The EU has been very focussed on process, such as the production of Directives and then receiving and reviewing national implementation plans. As noted above Brexit opens up an opportunity for more integrated land management which focuses on beneficial outcomes as well as Directives, plans and processes. Notwithstanding this, important environmental legislation has emanated from the European Union and many felt that we should not lose the principles of Water Framework Directive that sets out important principles especially on nature conservation in the urban context. FWACs recommend keeping an EIA process and rules associated with Habitats regulations but aligning them to fit UK conditions so they promote good practice and not unduly prevent good schemes from progressing in a timely manner.

Early clarity on what environment and forestry related forestry policy and legislation will be repealed or can be amended following Brexit (e.g. CROW Act, EIA, Habitats Directive?) would help to prevent opportunity leading to uncertainty.

Woodland in management



Impacts on Research/Science and innovation

There is now uncertainty over the involvement of UK organisations in EU funded research projects and established research partnerships across EU which is already beginning to create some challenges for future collaboration in Europe.

This may lead to a loss of opportunities to continue knowledge exchange and learning with EU Member States especially but not exclusively on plant health issues including potential threats to the UK, and to loss of access to substantial EU research funds.

The UK is now less attractive to EU research projects and as such, key topics of research may have to be undertaken by UK based organisations where capacity and funding are available. This makes it particularly important to support leading UK research initiatives, including Forest Research and to ensure that EU experts with extensive knowledge are encouraged to remain in the UK.

UK must retain capacity to deliver research into controlling pests and diseases as well as research into new uses for timber and woodland products.

Research

Key areas identified for continued research are:

- Forest responses to high carbon atmospheres and global warming
- Phytophthora, Sweet Chestnut Blight, Ash dieback
- Tree health - particularly Oak Processionary Moth
- Reviewing outcomes from Devon Wildlife Trust's Beaver re-introduction Trial



Section 3: Education, training and skills

FWAC members continue to be engaged with education, training and skills for the forestry sector. Strong and stable pathways for technical and professional education are essential for future growth and innovation, and to deliver the diverse ecosystem services from woodlands now required by society.

The following issues and constraints are seen as key to the future prosperity of the sector and FWAC members have been active in helping to develop solutions and promoting these within a highly constrained funding and policy environment. In addition, FWAC members are concerned about the importance of training linked to health and safety in the workplace, which remains a key area for improvement across the forestry sector.

Recruitment

Recruitment to the sector, especially for technical and graduate jobs, is not healthy. The profile of the sector is ageing (33% >50 yrs) and male dominated (approx. 80% Male), which suggests the sector is facing a widening skills gap. More needs to be done to attract younger people and to promote a workforce that better reflects the society in which the sector operates.

FWACs have been involved in a number of initiatives to promote more effectively the many and varied opportunities the sector offers to young people. Challenging stereotypes and promoting forestry as a high-skill, technology-led and innovation sector appears to be broadening the appeal of forestry careers among younger people. Excellent training pathways, competitive salaries and clearly defined career progression pathways are also important to promote forestry as a “career of choice”.

CPD

There is a nationally recognised need for continuing professional development (CPD) and skills development among both woodland owners and contractors/consultants to help meet targets for an increase in active woodland management. Many FWAC members have been involved in initiatives to promote, for example, better management plan production amongst professionals. Engaging new woodland owners

who may be caring for small woodlands, often under 5 ha, is an emerging priority that brings new challenges related to education, skills and engagement.

Awareness Raising and Widening Engagement

FWAC members in a number of regions have been active in raising awareness through initiatives such as the Royal Forestry Society’s (RFS) ‘Education and Learning Award’. One recent example highlighted a very successful approach to skills development in the coppice and greenwood sector.

Success has also been in evidence with initiatives in primary education and engagement, but issues remain around teenagers and young adults accessing woodland education opportunities and promoting forest-based jobs and careers.

The recent launch of FC England’s Forest Enterprise National Learning Strategy is to be welcomed by FWACs and will significantly strengthen educational messages related to sustainable forest management across the public forest estate (PFE).

A recent edition of BBC ‘Countryfile’ highlighted the complex and varied nature of the sector and was well received. We hope this might help raise the profile of sustainable forest management amongst younger viewers. Countryfile also recently featured the volunteer effort to help plant trees within the Heart of England forest.

Apprenticeships

The England Forestry Apprenticeship Trailblazer Group, which counts many FWAC members on its steering group, has submitted all the necessary paperwork to Government for a new Level 2 Forest Operative Apprenticeship Standard. A launch is proposed for summer 2017 pending final approval.

For Higher Apprenticeships there is an urgent need to look at alternative mechanisms for developing ‘work-ready’ graduates, ideally free of student debt. The sector is well placed to take a lead if the right mechanisms and support are available.

More generally, there is a lack of funding for training and qualifications with many short courses now very expensive and a barrier to younger people. Recent changes to part-time fee structures have removed a valuable source of

technicians to a sector that has always relied on 'late entrants'.

Integrated Industrial Strategy

There are real opportunities for a new industrial strategy based on affordable energy, clean growth, and sustainability into the future. Forests and woodlands are an integral part in such a strategy and need more recognition across both the Higher and Further Education sectors.

FWACs wish to support investment in higher level forestry management and operations skills training to create a skilled and professional workforce at governmental, managerial and operational level, delivering both for forestry itself and for related industries.

Scotland has recently completed a sector skills analysis and action plan: FWAC members are currently actively working towards a similar study for England. This initiative will report by the end of 2017 and is spearheaded by the Royal Forestry Society, Forestry Commission England and Woodland Heritage, with support from the National School of Forestry (University of Cumbria) and Scottish Forestry Trust.

Overall the picture in the forestry sector is mirrored across many industries in England where the skills agenda remains a primary focus for employers and employer-led organisations. The hope is that post-Brexit the country can develop an integrated and appropriate industrial skills strategy matched to the demands of the marketplace and the aspirations of both employers and the workforce.

FWAC Membership in England (2016/17)

