**Forest Research – A Strategy for Growth**

**Introduction**

It is an exciting time for forestry and Forest Research. Landscape scale woodland creation in England and Scotland, long term Government plans for the environment and the challenges of ensuring our forests remain resilient and meet the changing requirements of today’s society are subject to much attention and are significant areas of our activity.

In this context it is timely for Forest Research to shape, inform and help ensure that decisions for trees, woods and forests are made on the basis of expert science and evidence.

The Forest Research **Strategy for Growth** describes what our purpose is, what we will do over the next five years and how we will do it. It defines our values and our unique attributes, and sets out what success will look like. Our expertise is focused on trees, woods and forests, both rural and urban, and ranges from the microscopic to landscape scale. Forest Research will work to increase our reputation as an outward orientated, impact focused agency, engaging and collaborating with our customers and stakeholders to identify, generate and deliver shared solutions. We will continue to work to inform and inspire change that benefits society, economy and the environment.

The Strategy for Growth will be enhanced by research programme based plans that describe in more detail the science that we will undertake. Our annual Corporate Plans will track and report on our progress to fulfilment of the Strategy. Our individual job plans will help us to contribute to - and be responsible for- delivering the Strategy on a daily basis.

**Our Purpose**

To be a world leader in applied forest science and a trusted and recognised provider of expertise, data, products and services for the tree, wood, forest and natural resource sectors

The concise expression of our vision and what we will use in all our communications is (*this and others to be put to a doodle poll to solicit support/ideas- note that the most popular may not necessarily be the final agreed text):*

**World leading, quality assured, applied forest science and data services**

**or**

**World leading applied forest science and data services**

**or**

**World leading, quality assured, applied forest science and innovation**

**or**

**Forest Research: excellent science - practical solutions**

**Our Themes**

**Engaging with customers**

Our customers are our primary focus. We will conduct timely, rigorous and independent research to give our customers the quality science, evidence, data, products and services they need to make informed decisions, support policy development or develop and grow their businesses. We will grow our relationship with our customers by:

* Understanding our clients’ needs
* Providing constructive challenge, insight and quality applied science and evidence
* Providing authoritative advice, data and statistics

This will be achieved through:

* understanding the challenges our customers face
* creating dedicated customer relationship managers to deliver business growth for our customers
* constantly refining, developing and marketing the range of science, products and services we offer
* proactively and effectively communicating our findings and increasing our digital presence
* monitoring and responding to feedback on our performance

**Developing our science and data offer**

Using and adapting new technology, techniques and approaches are fundamental to our offering quality research and data services. Our interdisciplinary science and data provision will offer trusted, quality assured, insight and innovation by:

* Being objective, impartial and at the forefront of forest science technology, modelling and data development
* Being solution and impact focussed
* Being applied, relevant and easily understood

This will be achieved through:

* Attracting more income and commercial activity by establishing an FR trading subsidiary
* Investing in a world class tree biosecurity and diagnostics facility
* Growing our world leading science in plantation forest management; tree health research; forest inventory and carbon accounting; landscape & ecosystem services; social science and economics.
* Becoming world leaders in forest bioinformatics by establishing a forest information hub and investing in our associated forest remote sensing, decision support system, modelling and forecasting capabilities
* Publishing our quality assured research in the relevant places and formats for our customers, including peer-reviewed scientific journals, the professional forestry media and on digital platforms

**Increasing our value**

Through well-established connections across the forestry sectors, we understand the issues facing our trees, woods and forests. To continue to give the best research advice, information and data to our customers and to grow our business we will improve our offer by:

* Developing new and existing strategic partnerships across the UK and internationally to enhance our capabilities and offer
* Exploiting our unique set of data, forest trials and experimental plots
* Building on, and investing in, our established interdisciplinary approach across the whole supply chain to provide integrated solutions

This will be achieved through:

* Formalising longer term service provision arrangements with key partners
* Developing and extending our knowledge and technology transfer capability through investment in our ‘’Forester and Data Services’’ platform’ and development of forest management tools that can be accessed and used through mobile and digital devices
* Developing our complementary expert modelling, analysis and consultancy services to provide robust and innovative solutions to problems
* Investigating how big datasets, continuous monitoring and artificial intelligence can be applied and used in our work
* Developing bespoke services in the arboriculture and urban forestry sectors through selected research activity and joint ventures

**Working together**

Forest Research’s staff are fundamental to its success. Their expertise, pride and passion have made us the UK’s leading provider of applied forest research. We recognise that our future reputation depends on the work we will do, not just on the work we have done. We will continue to develop ourselves by:

* investing in our staff and facilities
* providing opportunities for career development
* encouraging and rewarding innovation

This will be achieved through:

* growing our business and making FR an attractive and positive place to work
* supporting staff innovation and risk taking through the creation of an internal innovation fund to support the development of new ideas
* investing in new and refurbished facilities and equipment including a tree biosecurity and diagnostics facility at Alice Holt and new bespoke Forest Information Hub centre at Roslin
* Encouraging and facilitating continuous professional development, including staff exchanges, secondment and training
* Establishing joint appointments with research partners

**Our values**

We will be:

•         **Communicative**

We will be honest, professional, impartial and objective with each other and our customers

•         **Open**

We will act with integrity, take pride in our work and be inclusive andwelcoming in our approach, treating everyone with respect

•         **Customer Focused**

We will focus on our customers’ interests and provide them with the best possible service, support, information and advice

* **Collaborative**

We will work in an interdisciplinary way, be co-operative and collaborative in our approach to our science, data provision and business development

•         **Creative**

We will champion scientific challenge, debate and innovation

**What success will look like**

* we are recognised by our customers and partners as the provider of choice for applied forest science and data services
* we are trusted by our customers and partners for our expertise
* our data, products, services and new facilities demonstrably add value for customers and are therefore in high demand
* our science is peer-reviewed; our products and services are user driven and user tested
* our scientific credibility is recognised nationally and internationally
* we continue to attract and retain professional staff who excel at what they do and who are committed to understanding and meeting customer needs
* FR is designed to meet the needs of the business and is able to flex to meet demand
* we have a coherent and inclusive culture
* we are recognised for delivering value for money throughout all our programmes
* we generate new sources of income through engaging and demonstrating our research to increase impact with the private sector and non-government bodies and grow our turnover by 15% over the next 5 years
* we implement a new and streamlined corporate system that makes our business operate more effectively

**Forest Research – our unique attributes**

**Recognised Experts:** we are the largest single employer of specialist forest scientists in the UK. We are internationally recognised with an established reputation for the quality relevance, utility, uptake and impact of our applied forest science and policy relevance of our practically focused approach. We have experts who advise across the breadth of forest topics and issues and, as an organisation, we combine expertise to ensure all aspects of complex forestry related issues are fully addressed. Our staff are passionate about what they do and the difference they make.

**Interdisciplinary:** we are the only provider of interdisciplinary research (forest science, economics and social science) across the full supply chain, from tree breeding and ground preparation to harvesting, wood processing, forest inventory and resource evaluation. We also work in the diverse settings in which trees are valued – from rural to urban locations.

**Information Assets:** we have an unparalleled range and longevity of experimental and forest survey datasets and models, which underpin the evidence and policy needs of Government as well as sector initiatives such as the Woodland Carbon Code, UK Forest Standard and tree health work. Data and models are accessible through our website as are software and decision support systems including Ecological Site Classification (ESC), Forester and Forest Yield.

**Forest trials** **and experimental plots -** we have over 2,670 forest experiments located throughout the UK including, for example, the majority of forest genetic resources trials for the UK. We act as the long term guardian of this resource. Through our long term data, supporting documentation and experience of our Technical Support Unit in establishing, monitoring and managing these sites, we ensure maximum use and benefit from these resources. Our Technical Development team has ownership of the most extensive catalogue of technical reports and data. No other organisation has these skills or resources.

**Value to Government:** we have the capabilities and skills that enable government and devolved administrations to fulfil their statutory obligations and also provide emergency response and policy impact knowledge exchange. FR contributed extensively to the **UK Forestry Standard - the reference standard for sustainable forest management in the UK.**

**Value to the sector:** we are highly valued by the UK’s forestry sector, from forest owners and processors to nurseries, conservation organisations and urban forest managers.

**Collaboration and Leverage:** we have a long history of effective collaboration and partnership working within our own research programmes as well as with other Institutes and Universities from across the world. We keep up to date with the latest scientific developments and attract additional funding for research activities.

**Skills development:** through PhDs and post-doctoral research we provide an essential training ground for specialist expertise in tree, woods and forest. Many leading specialists have worked at, with, or through Forest Research – benefitting them as well as FR and the wider interests of the sectors and people they serve.

**Brand Value**: Forest Research remains as a research agency working across England, Wales and Scotland. We are employees of the Forestry Commission and we continue with our existing corporate branding – for example the “two tree” logo continues to be used by FR.