

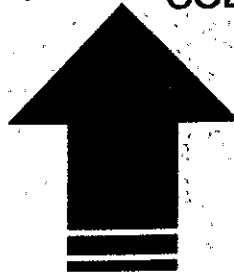
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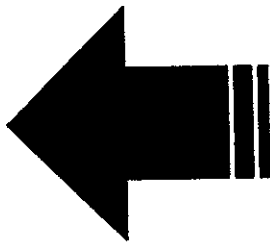
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Joint Circular from the
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2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3EB

Welsh Office
Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NQ

15th December 1992

INDICATIVE FORESTRY STRATEGIES

Introduction

1. The purpose of this circular is to provide guidance to County Councils, Metropolitan Districts, outer London Boroughs and National Park Authorities who may be considering the preparation of indicative strategies for the creation of new woodlands and forests in England and Wales. The circular also explains the relationship of indicative forestry strategies to development plans. Advice on the standard form and content of indicative forestry strategies is set out in **Appendix A**. This circular has the support of the Forestry Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Government forestry policy

2. The Government policy for forestry was restated by the Secretary of State for Scotland as the lead Forestry Minister on 18 September 1991. The full text of the statement is attached as **Appendix B**. It describes how the consideration of new forests and woodlands should meet a range of objectives: production of wood, enhancement of the landscape, the provision of new habitats for wildlife, and increased opportunities for public recreation and tourism. Such activity can also help provide employment and offers a key use of land as an alternative to agriculture.

The Woodland Grant Scheme

3. The main support for the creation of new woodlands in accordance with these aims of policy is the Woodland Grant Scheme. The scheme provides additional incentives for the creation of new woodland on arable and improved grassland, for the establishment of broadleaves, for smaller-scale planting and for community woodlands.

Farm Woodland Premium Scheme

4. In 1988, Agriculture Departments and the Forestry Commission introduced the experimental Farm Woodland Scheme to encourage the establishment of new woodland by farmers, primarily on arable and improved grassland. The scheme was replaced on 1 April 1992 by the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS) under which the Agriculture Departments make annual payments to farmers establishing new woodland on their farms to help compensate for the agricultural income forgone. Entry into the FWPS is conditional upon the proposed planting having been approved for establishment grant, including the Better Land Supplement where appropriate, under the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme.

Tree planting opportunities and forestry strategies

5. The creation of new woodlands can make a valuable contribution to the landscape and to recreational opportunities. Sympathetic design and subsequent management of such woodlands can also restore habitats for wildlife, provide an enhanced environment for the built heritage, and help establish a sustainable natural resource. Most new woodland is developed through the Woodland Grant Scheme—including the supplements for planting on better land and for community woodlands and farm woodlands. Such planting is thus subject to the procedures which the Forestry Authority (the arm of the Forestry Commission responsible for implementing forestry policy) has in place to ensure that environmental and silvicultural standards are achieved, and that woodlands will not replace an existing land use of higher environmental value. In areas where it is expected that expansion of forestry will be on a small scale no more may be required. However in others where there appear to be significant opportunities for expansion there may be advantage in developing a broader framework—an indicative strategy—to identify these opportunities, and possible constraining factors.

Objectives and functions of forestry strategies

6. The Government believes that indicative forestry strategies can offer benefits to local authorities and landowners alike. In particular by:
- (a) identifying preferred opportunities for the creation of new woodlands on a significant scale;
 - (b) identifying areas where such expansion would be inappropriate in terms of present or alternative land use;
 - (c) providing a framework for responses by local authorities and others when consulted by the Forestry Authority on applications for establishment grant under the Woodland Grant Scheme; and
 - (d) setting the context for other proposals for more specific purposes.

Discretion of local authorities to prepare strategies

7. It is for individual local authorities to decide whether preparation of such strategies is appropriate in their circumstances. In National Parks such strategies would be incorporated in National Park plans.

Consultation with others

8. Where an authority wishes to proceed, the effectiveness of the strategy will depend on preparing it in the closest consultation and liaison with all interested parties including: the Forestry Authority; the industry; landowners (and their agents); farmers; representatives of conservation, recreation and amenity interests; and business and commerce.

Indicative nature of strategies

9. Strategies will be essentially indicative. They cannot be prescriptive; nor do they represent an extension of planning controls. Where such a strategy is considered appropriate, it should normally be drawn up at County, Metropolitan District, outer London Borough or National Park level. In some areas there may be advantage in developing a strategy which crosses administrative boundaries, or conversely, for a specific and distinctive zone within them.

Standard format for strategies

10. A standard format should be used in the preparation of strategies, in the terminology employed and in map presentation, so that comparisons can be made within a national framework. This is particularly so in areas where opportunities or constraints cross authority boundaries. Appendix A gives guidance.

Guidelines for landscape, nature conservation, water and recreation

11. Guidelines setting the environmental standards required of applicants to the Woodland Grant Scheme are published by the Forestry Authority. The guidelines cover the following topics:

- * Forest Landscape Design
- * Lowland Landscape Design
- * Community Woodland Design
- * Forest Nature Conservation
- * Forests and Water
- * Forest Recreation
- * Guides to the Good Management of Semi-Natural Woodlands
(8 separate guides)

Environmental Assessment

12. In addition, on occasions the Forestry Authority may require the preparation, by the applicant, of a formal environmental assessment under The Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988. It is not expected that many projects will require environmental assessment. In general only those new planting proposals which will be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and may lead to adverse ecological change by virtue of such factors as their size, nature or location, will require formal environmental assessment.

Relationship with development plans

13. Since the creation of new woodlands on a significant scale may have implications for other land uses, planning authorities should take indicative forestry strategies—where they have been prepared—into account in formulating their general policies and proposals for development and use of land in their structure plans. The relationship between the two documents should be made clear in the structure plan. A fuller explanation (including, if necessary, the policy statement and schematic strategy map described in Appendix A) may be given in an explanatory memorandum where this would be helpful to understand the policies and proposals (for example, on tourism, leisure and recreation) in the plan itself. Authorities should make clear that forestry planting is not subject to planning control. The general policies and proposals in the structure plan will provide the context for detailed development control policies and proposals for specific sites in local plans. Through this process the provisions of indicative forestry strategies will be reflected in planning decisions on related development proposals.

Existing woodlands

14. Existing woodlands are an important resource. It is the Government's policy to improve the sustainable management of existing woodlands and management grants are available under the Woodland Grant Scheme for this purpose. The Forestry Authority has issued general advice on environmental standards required in managing existing woodlands, and is willing to consider refining this national guidance in certain areas where a need can be demonstrated. It is not the function of indicative strategies to duplicate such guidance. However in some instances local authorities may wish broadly to identify particular areas where, within existing resources and the present framework of financial incentives, they consider that improved management of the woodlands concerned could achieve specific local benefits reflecting the Government's wider policies for landscape, recreation and amenity.

Circulation of drafts and final strategies

15. The strategy document should be publicised and circulated to a wide range of interested bodies at the draft stage. When finalised it should be made publicly available and copies should be sent to all the bodies consulted.

Consultation on applications for establishment grant

16. The arrangements for consultation between the Forestry Authority and local authorities on applications for establishment grant under the Woodland Grant Scheme are published by the Forestry Authority. The preparation of indicative forestry strategies is intended to complement the consultation procedures, not to replace them.

Effect on local government manpower and expenditure

17. Local authorities who wish to draw up indicative forestry strategies should seek to utilise existing staff. Resource costs for authorities undertaking such strategies are likely to be modest. Experience in Scotland—while not directly comparable—is that the costs attributable to preparing a strategy may be weighed against its value and usefulness to a wide range of countryside interests. In the longer term the local authority may benefit from general administrative economies, as interested parties make use of the strategy as an initial point of reference.

Enquiries

18. Any enquiries about this circular should be addressed to Mr D Holgate-Pollard, Department of the Environment (Tel 0272-218003), Mr D R Thomas, Welsh Office Agriculture Department (Tel 09743-301), Mr B Hibberd, Forestry Authority England (Tel 0223-314546) or Mr D M Hughes, Forestry Authority Wales (Tel 0970-625866).

P L LEONARD
D R THOMAS

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County Councils
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National Park Authorities

The Chief Executive, Broads Authority

For information:

The Chief Executive, District Councils in England and Wales

[DOE: DRA 3164/17]

[WO: LGV 62/8/1]

APPENDIX A

ADVICE TO COUNTY COUNCILS, METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCILS, OUTER LONDON BOROUGHS AND NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES ON THE PREPARATION OF INDICATIVE FORESTRY STRATEGIES.

Introduction

1. The purpose of this appendix is to provide advice on the preparation of an indicative forestry strategy.

Form and content of an indicative strategy

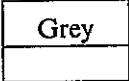

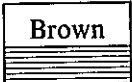
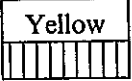
2. The function of the strategy is to identify the main areas of opportunity for the creation of new woodland on a significant scale for environmental or other land use reasons, and those areas where such expansion would be inappropriate. In preparing a strategy there will be three key elements: the collection of **background information**, leading to a **general policy statement** and the preparation of a **schematic strategy map**.

Preliminary consultation

3. At an early stage a County Council, Metropolitan District, outer London Borough or National Park Authority should make a preliminary assessment of the likely demand for the creation of new woodland and thus the value of preparing an indicative strategy. Information and advice should be sought from the Forestry Authority, from landowners and farmers in the area, from the forestry industry at large and from conservation, amenity, business and other interests. **Annex 2** provides a check list.

The schematic strategy map

4. A schematic strategy map is at the heart of an indicative forestry strategy. Using up-to-date and authoritative information from all relevant sources (see below), it should present the local authority's own assessment of the scope for creating new woodland on a significant scale together with any major constraints. The map should be based on a generalised version of an Ordnance Survey map at a scale of 1/100,000. The map is indicative and should not seek to identify boundaries with any precision. Four standard categories should be identified as defined in the table below, but these are intended only as a general description (eg classing an area as 'preferred' would not imply that comprehensive planting of such an area would be acceptable; conversely some limited planting may be appropriate in land defined as 'sensitive'). The categories can be shown in colour or in black and white notation.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Notation</i>
<p>NB: It is not necessary for all the land to be allocated to one or more of the categories.</p>		
Existing	Existing woodland and forest (including areas already approved for grant under the Woodland Grant Scheme). Show only areas which are relevant at the scale adopted.	
Preferred	Areas where the creation of new woodland on a significant scale would be most advantageous, and would bring important local benefits. Local authorities may wish to indicate if special factors apply: eg if certain types of woodland would be particularly welcome in specific areas.	
Sensitive	Areas where the creation of new woodland on any appreciable scale would not be appropriate because of their present value for landscape, nature conservation, archaeology, water quality considerations or other specified reason.	
Unsuitable (where likely to be helpful)	Existing built-up areas and other land which is physically unsuitable for the creation of new woodland.	

Background information

5. The schematic strategy map should be built up from a series of maps, each in turn analysing the opportunities (if any) and constraints (if any) from the different perspectives set out below. Comparison of the maps will indicate any areas of conflicting interest. In such cases the local authority should try to resolve the question through consultation with interested parties. If agreement cannot be achieved, the authority will have to reach its own conclusion based on the best information available, but set out the issues in the supporting statement.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Existing woodlands and markets	A map of existing woodland and forest. Show only areas which are relevant for strategic planning purposes at the scale adopted. Include major wood-using industries, if the location is relevant for these purposes.
Unsuitable	A map of built-up areas or other land which is physically unsuitable for the creation of new woodland.

Landscape	A map showing existing landscape designations and identifying broad landscape types, together with an indication where more woodlands could be helpful in enhancing the landscape, (and where they would not be desirable). Where authorities have already mapped landscape assessments the strategies should draw on such work, simplified as appropriate.
Agriculture in Wales	A map showing agricultural land classes and identifying any areas which, from this perspective, are deemed either inappropriate or particularly appropriate for the creation of new woodland.
Nature conservation	A map of relative conservation values for existing land uses overlaid with existing conservation designations, and identifying any broad areas where the creation of new woodland of defined types would either be particularly beneficial or detrimental.
Minerals	A map showing any major areas where past or present working of minerals may offer opportunities for new woodlands, or where proposed working may offer scope for woodland planting as part of restoration schemes. However care must be taken to avoid the sterilisation of new mineral sources, which might result from their inclusion in a preferred area.
Public recreation	A map indicating areas where new planting could be valuable to take advantage of the Community Woodland Supplement and associated public access, recreation possibilities and tourism.
Archaeology	A map showing areas with varying degrees of archaeological importance, overlaid with scheduled sites, and historic landscapes, parklands and commons.
Water	A map indicating the constraints and opportunities for new planting from the perspective of the water industry and water-based recreation. Nitrate sensitive areas and flood control areas should be shown, and DOE 'critical loads' maps of areas vulnerable to acidification will also be relevant.

Consultation during preparation of background information

6. Local authorities will already hold a great deal of the background information required and may have mapped it in some form, so the task will frequently be one of updating and checking. Similarly many of the major sources of information will have it available in mapped form. The process of compiling information in each case will thus differ, but each interest map must be based on the closest liaison between the local authority and the relevant statutory and non-government bodies. Major sources are listed in Annex 2.

The policy statement

7. The policy statement should describe how the schematic strategy map was produced, justify and where necessary amplify on the allocation of land to the categories, and indicate any issues requiring resolution on the part of the local authority or requiring further study.

8. It should explain the purpose, use and status of the strategy, drawing on this circular where appropriate. It should emphasise that the existence of a schematic map does not imply automatic acceptance or rejection of an application under the Woodland Grant Scheme. The fact that forestry is not subject to planning control should be stated, together with a description of the notification and consultation arrangements operating between the Forestry Authority and the local authority.

9. The statement should list the bodies which have been consulted and describe major contributions to the preparation of the strategy and any unresolved dissenting views. It should also refer to the main related land use policies and proposals in the structure plan.

10. An indication may be required of any further studies which may be needed to investigate specific areas or to amplify particular topics. The need and urgency for such studies will depend on the local demand. Recommendations can be made as to how studies might be undertaken and who should take the lead in their preparation. Such studies should be produced as self-contained reference documents and not as an integral part of the strategy. Completion of a strategy should not be delayed until local area studies are available.

11. The policy statement should, where appropriate, refer to ways in which the creation of new woodland can be stimulated in preferred areas.

Updating of strategies

12. Indicative forestry strategies should be regarded as being flexible and capable of being updated to take account of new circumstances as they arise.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS ON TREE PLANTING, WOODLANDS AND FORESTRY

1. *Forestry Authority grant scheme*

Leaflets:

Woodland Grant Scheme (applicant's pack 1990)

Guidelines:

Forest Landscape Design

Lowland Landscape Design

Community Woodland Design

Forest Nature Conservation

Forests and Water

Forest Recreation

Guides to Good Management of Semi-Natural Woodland
(8 separate guides)

2. *General advice on planting and woodland types*

Management of Broadleaved Woodland

Forestry Practice

Use of Broadleaved Species in Upland Forests

Farm Woodland Practice

Farm Woodland Planning

Urban Forestry

Forestry Authority

The Forestry and Woodland Code

Timber Growers UK

Beyond 2000—the Forestry Industry of Great Britain

Forestry Industry Committee of GB

Conservation in Forests—case studies of good practice

Countryside Commission for Scotland/Nature Conservancy Council

Nature Conservation and Afforestation in Britain	}	<i>Nature Conservancy Council</i>
Nature Conservation and the New Lowland Forests		
Native Trees and Shrubs for Wildlife in the UK		
Deer Management in Small Woodlands		<i>The Game Conservancy</i>
Deer and Forestry—factsheet		<i>Institute of Chartered Foresters</i>
Birds and Broadleaves	}	<i>Royal Society for the Protection of Birds</i>
Birds and New Farm Woodlands		
 3. <i>Farm Woodland Premium Scheme</i>		
Farm Woodland Premium Scheme: Rules and Procedures	}	<i>Agriculture Departments</i>
Farm Woodlands: A Practical Guide		

MAJOR SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Forestry as a whole	Forestry Authority (the arm of the Forestry Commission responsible for implementing forestry policy)	Advice on all aspects of forestry including: * location of woodlands; * information on wood production potential
Tree planting	Institute of Chartered Foresters	Advice on all aspects of forest planning and practice
	Forestry Industry Committee of GB (FICGB)	Advice on the privately owned forestry industry as a whole.
	Timber Growers UK (TGUK)	Advice on requirements of private growers
	The Royal Forestry Society	Advice on creation and management of woodlands
	The Woodland Trust	Advice particularly on regeneration of semi-natural woodlands
	ADAS	Advice on creation and management of woodland on farms
	Coed Cymru	Advice on woodland schemes in Wales
Wood processing	The Tree Council	Advice on small scale tree planting schemes
	UK Wood Processors Association	Advice on pulp and chipboard processing
	UK Softwood Sawmillers Association	Advice on existing and new sawmill potential
	British Timber Merchants Association (England and Wales)	

Landscape/ recreation	Countryside Commission	Location of designated areas of landscape value; advice on landscape conservation and on informal recreation
	Countryside Council for Wales	
	GB Sports Council and the Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation (England)	Advice on sport and recreational opportunities
	The Sports Council for Wales	
	English Heritage	Specialist knowledge of historic parks, historic gardens and battlefield sites
	Council for the Protection of Rural England	Advice on landscape matters
	Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales	
Nature conservation	The Ramblers Association	Advice and information about access to forests
	English Nature	Advice on nature conservation and regional evaluation; location of designated areas
	Countryside Council for Wales	
	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	Advice on relationship of birds to woodlands
	Wildlife Trusts (Royal Society for Nature Conservation)	Advice on wildlife
Tourism	Appropriate Regional Tourist Board	Advice on tourism development
Agriculture	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Advice on all aspects of agriculture

	Welsh Office Agriculture Department	Location of areas of prime agricultural land (in Wales only)
Archaeology	English Heritage	Advice on the management and protection of scheduled monuments; location of archaeological sites, both scheduled and non-scheduled, and general advice
	Cadw	
	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England	
	Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales	
	County Archaeologist Sites and Monuments Records Office	
	Welsh Archaeological Trusts	
Water	National Rivers Authority	Advice on water catchments and supplies
Minerals	British Geological Survey	Advice on minerals resources
	British Coal Corporation	Advice on coal reserves
Other rural land uses	Country Landowners Association	Advice on rural land use and views of landowners, farmers and tenants
	National Farmers Union	
	Farmers Union of Wales	
	Tenant Farmers Association	
	Natural Environment Research Council	

Local issues

**District Planning
Authorities**

**Advice on local planning
issues**

Deer

**The Game Conservancy
The British Deer Society**

**Advice on deer
management**

APPENDIX B

FORESTRY POLICY FOR GREAT BRITAIN

On 18 September 1991, The Rt Hon Ian Lang MP, Secretary of State for Scotland, set out the following statement of the Government's Forestry Policy for Great Britain.

AIMS

Forests and woodlands are an integral part of the rural environment, providing important opportunities for recreation and for public access to the countryside. They are also a valued component of our landscapes and an essential habitat for wildlife. Our forestry industry makes a substantial and increasing contribution to meeting the growing national demand for timber and provides support and employment to people living in rural communities. As recognised in the Environment White Paper 'This Common Inheritance' published last September, trees in forests and woodlands are also an effective means by which carbon dioxide can be absorbed from the atmosphere and stored over long periods of time.

The two main aims of the Government's forestry policy are thus:

- the sustainable management of our existing woods and forests;
- a steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many, diverse benefits that forests provide.

In both, we recognise the advantages of basing policy on the realisation of multiple objectives.

THE BENEFITS OF POSITIVE MANAGEMENT OF WOODLANDS

Encouragement will be given to the management of existing woodlands to ensure that they yield a wide range of benefits, including the production of quality timber. Our broadleaves policy is firmly in place and is to be enhanced by the introduction of management grants from 1 April 1992. These new grants are carefully tailored to cater for the differing needs of small woodlands, broadleaved woodlands, native pinewoods and woodlands of special environmental value. We are also looking to bring neglected woodlands under management plans. We shall keep these incentives under review in the light of experience and refine them as appropriate. The restructuring of the first-rotation forests will be continued by the Forestry Commission both in its own forests and through conditions attached to felling licence and replanting grant approvals.

Access and Recreation

The use of woodlands for recreation will also be given priority. The Forestry Commission has a long and commendable record of welcoming the public into its forests and in providing recreational facilities, and a number of private owners follow enlightened policies in this respect. Private owners generally will be encouraged to open their woodlands to visitors—this will be helped by

the special management grants to be introduced next year. Arrangements are also to be introduced shortly aimed at securing continuing access where appropriate to Forestry Commission woodlands which pass into private ownership.

Preventing Woodland Loss

The Forestry Commission's statutory felling controls have for many years been exercised with an emphasis on maintaining and improving the woodland environment and have been refined to improve their effectiveness. The erosion of semi-natural woodland has been largely halted as a result of the introduction by the Commission in 1984 of a general presumption against the conversion of woodland to agriculture or other uses. The Commission has also followed a policy of prosecuting where there is clear evidence of illegal felling. These policies have met with considerable success and will continue.

EXPANDING THE FOREST AREA

Forests and woodlands at present occupy 10% of our land area. Woodland also represents a promising alternative use of agricultural land. There is scope therefore for new planting to take place in the foreseeable future at the indicative level of 33,000 hectares a year which we announced in 1987. As the economic situation improves, we expect to see new planting rise steadily, with the major contribution coming from the private sector.

Multi-Purpose Grants

The Woodland Grant Scheme will continue to be the means of support for new planting by private owners. This flexible scheme is tailored to multiple-purpose objectives. Grants under the scheme are targeted to encourage an increasing amount of broadleaved and mixed planting on suitable sites, a shift in planting 'down the hill' onto land of better quality, the planting of small woodlands, and the maintenance and extension of semi-natural woodlands including native pinewoods in the Highlands. It is accepted that conifers will continue to comprise a high proportion of planting because they are particularly suited to the British climate, are in great demand by the wood-processing industry and can be an asset in the landscape when planted on the right sites and carefully handled. But the days of insensitive monoculture are over. All planting schemes approved under the Woodland Grant Scheme are required to meet high standards of design which are in sympathy with the landscape and meet relevant environmental considerations, as set out in the guidelines published by the Forestry Commission.

PREFERRED AREAS FOR NEW PLANTING

The Government recognises that the suitability of sites for new planting is by no means uniform. Some will be incapable of sustaining tree growth for physical and climatic reasons, while others will be unsuitable by reason of environmental and other factors which limit the area or species of trees that should be planted. There is, however, a large reservoir of land where tree planting can be undertaken in harmony with the environment and where new woodlands will be an environmental gain. There will continue to be a presumption against large-scale planting of predominantly coniferous species in the English uplands, where much of the unimproved agricultural land in

England is to be found. We see no need to extend this presumption to Scotland and Wales, where the position is very different. There is still a significant proportion of land in the Scottish and Welsh uplands where tree planting will be of environmental benefit when carried out in accordance with the standards set by the Woodland Grant Scheme. Indicative forestry strategies in Scotland will identify those areas where planting is to be preferred or where special consideration will have to be given to other factors before decisions on planting are taken. Consideration will be given to the extension of such a system to England and Wales in the light of the experience gained in Scotland.

New Opportunities

In the lowlands, tree planting offers opportunities to enhance amenity and wildlife values on land which has been intensively cultivated. Planting in such areas also provides alternative uses for agricultural land producing food crops which are in surplus. We shall therefore continue to encourage more planting on such land through the Better Land Supplements available under the Woodland Grant Scheme, which we have recently increased. We are also reviewing the three-year experimental Farm Woodland Scheme. The location of new woodlands close to areas of population will continue to be encouraged, through such vehicles as the Community Forests Initiative and the special supplements which we are making available under the Woodland Grant Scheme.

TAKING ACCOUNT OF ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS

The introduction of our broadleaves policy and of the Forestry Commission's statutory balancing duty in 1985, and the establishment of the environmental assessment procedures in 1988, have signalled the Government's determination that forestry planting should take proper account of environmental needs. These policies are bearing fruit. The area of broadleaves being planted each year has risen substantially and the introduction of management grants next year will ensure that full account is taken of silvicultural and environmental needs during the establishment phase, and beyond in the case of woodlands of special environmental value. The environmental assessment system, coupled with the stricter standards under the Woodland Grant Scheme, will ensure that woodlands are properly designed and sited.

Consultation Procedures

The Commission's long-standing consultation procedures have proved their worth in ensuring that even-handed and thorough consideration is given to the effect of forestry operations on other interests, including those of amenity and conservation. In the vast majority of cases, planting and felling proposals are uncontroversial. Those which give rise to disagreement are usually modified, often substantially, in the course of consultation. We shall continue to seek ways of improving these procedures, including the work of the Regional Advisory Committees in their important conciliation role in the handful of cases which do cause problems, in a way which will improve their cost effectiveness and reduce bureaucracy. The environmental membership of these Committees will be considerably enhanced as a result of the Forestry Act 1991.

Research Priorities

Priority will be given to research into the possible effects of atmospheric pollution on tree growth and, through tree planting, on water acidification. Significant progress has been achieved in arriving at a fuller understanding of the complex interactions involved. This will both inform us and place the problems into proper perspective, so that sensible and balanced measures can be evolved.

A STREAMLINED FORESTRY COMMISSION

The Forestry Commission continues to play the central role in the development of forestry throughout Great Britain; it also has an important part to play in discussions at the international level. The internal reorganisation on which it has now embarked will improve its efficiency and effectiveness in performing these important tasks. Our programme for rationalising the Commission's estate was clearly set out in 1989. This will contribute to the streamlining of the Commission's management structure and enable it to achieve further improvements in its operational efficiency, while providing a valuable opportunity to widen interest and participation in British forestry. In setting the Commission's land sales programme, we have also had regard to the needs of the wood-processing industry for a steady and secure source of supply, to the effects on the use of the Commission's forests for public access and recreation, and to environmental considerations.

FORESTRY OVERSEAS

The importance of forestry in international terms has been highlighted by concerns over global warming and the destruction of tropical forests. We shall participate in a constructive way in discussions, both in the European Community and in the context of the development of international forestry instruments.

DELIVERING PUBLIC BENEFITS

Forestry is now entering a new phase in which increasing emphasis is placed on social and environmental, as well as economic, benefits. Financial support for woodlands now requires that clear benefits should be delivered for the community at large and our policy seeks to achieve a more balanced development of forestry than hitherto. The Government remains firm in its support for British forestry, which has a bright and challenging future. We are determined that the public benefits that forestry can offer will be realised in good measure.



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