

Forestry Policy

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This paper describes the position of forestry in the UK after the 1994 Forestry Review, and the decision to retain the Forestry Commission in public ownership. The plan for the new national forest and the community forests is explained, along with some comment. The questions of public access and of enhancing biodiversity are discussed. Comparisons are made with some other EU countries.

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I. Do we need more forests?

Deforestation has been a gradual historical process in the UK, although during the later part of this century some replanting has occurred. 80% of the UK was once covered by forests, but the proportion had fallen to 50% probably more than 2,000 years ago. More surprisingly, the forest cover had fallen to 20% by 1000 AD and about 10% by the middle of the 14th century. It fell to 5% by 1920 but is now back up to around 10%¹.

It has often been taken for granted that forests are beneficial, and their planting should be encouraged. Yet this view has been increasingly challenged over the past decades. The dense rows of conifers loved by the timber industry offer little to the general public. Popular discontent led to a change in policy in 1988 when the tax advantages of forestry were replaced by grants. The Government has considered, and rejected the view that the Forestry Commission should be privatised, thereby accepting that forestry in some sense is not just another industry. In addition, it is encouraging (but not financing) the planting of a national forest and several community forests.

The Government recently reaffirmed² that it remains committed to *Sustainable Forestry: the UK Programme* (produced in 1994 as part of the UK's follow-up to the UNCED Earth Summit³) and to *Forestry Policy for Great Britain*⁴, which stated the two main aims of the Government's forestry policy (p.1):

The sustainable management of our existing woods and forests.

A steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many, diverse benefits that forests provide.

A more recent statement of policy⁵ reaffirmed the importance of sustainability, commenting:

6 The Government's policies for the management of the woods and forests are aimed at promoting the domestic production and supply of quality timber and other forest products through the sustainable development of forests; other important aims include preventing the loss of woodlands, and especially ancient semi-natural woodlands; the use of woodlands for public access and recreation; maintaining and improving woodland habitats; and restructuring first-rotation plantations into attractive and more varied woodlands.

Forestry policy requires the balancing of many different interests. The commercial timber industry wants a tax regime such that investment is undertaken which cannot bring any return for decades, until some trees are cut down, and it wants to plant dense rows of conifers. The

¹*Sustainable Forestry: the UK programme*, Cm 2429 January 1994

²HC Deb 24 May 1995 c.636w

³see Library Research paper 93/71 *The Earth Summit: One Year On*

⁴Forestry Commission, 1991

⁵ *United Kingdom Report to the Commission on Sustainable Development 1995*, Chapter 11

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Forestry Commission is a timber producer, but has broader objectives, taking account of the environment and recreational needs. Farmers will only allow their agricultural land to be converted into woodland if offered favourable grants. Environmentalists may favour particular types of forest, such as low density mixed forests to encourage wildlife. Some supporters of the nature conservation interest want to limit public access. The sporting interest, in favour of woodland either as cover for pheasants or, in Scotland, for deer on commercial deer-stalking estates, definitely wants to keep out the public. The recreational interest favours public access and attractive-looking hardwoods, which are never felled.

The Government's aim is to reach as much common interest as possible, partly by woodland grants and partly by encouraging new mixed-use forests. The most important is to be the new National Forest, but there are also to be some smaller versions, called community forests. This paper discusses whether such mixed use is really feasible, or whether the various interests are really incompatible, linked only by the use of trees. Even within the Forestry Commission, the conflicts of interest may present problems. Although a review in 1994 was followed by a decision over the Commission's future, presenting little immediate change, commercial pressures towards felling and sales of forests are bound to increase, at possible cost to the environmental objectives. Already, the first decade of sale of Commission forests, 1981 - 1991, was marked by a dramatic loss of public access, even in forests near to centres of population which had used them for recreational purposes. There are now public access guidelines attached to such sales, but access remains a problem and may have been a factor in preventing privatisation of the Commission in 1994.

Some critics of forestry argue that the commercial forestry industry benefits unfairly from naive public ideas of what forests are. Its rows of conifers are densely planted to encourage straight growth, allowing little wildlife or public access, and have nothing to do with the oak forests of old England like the New Forest. Public disquiet increased during the 1980s, partly because of increasing awareness of the ecological value of the empty land on which they were planted - like the flow country in Scotland. High earners often went into forestry purely for tax reasons. Almost all such planting took place in Scotland, but the owners were often English (including pop stars, city financiers and media people) who arranged for the planting through a management firm and probably never visited the site. Forestry policy was criticised by conservationists. In 1988 the tax breaks were removed, while grants were given instead for tree planting and management.

Since then, there has been a decline in new planting and a considerable change in its location, but the overall fall is less dramatic than is sometimes suggested by those lobbying for a return of the tax breaks. It is true that private new planting,⁶ for which grants were paid, peaked at 25,108 hectares in Great Britain in 1989 (years ending 31st March) while the old system remained in force, and has now fallen to 15,897. It is also true that the Government target

⁶Forestry Commission Annual Report and Accounts 1993/94 p.112

has not been met. In 1987⁷ the Government announced a target (implying an increase in planting) for total new planting of 33,000 hectares a year, well above the level of planting in any year since then. The most recent Government target⁸ is considerably lower - 66,940 hectares in the three years 1995/6 - 1997/8, comprising 65,250 hectares by the private sector and 1,690 hectares by Forest Enterprise. The new target also implies very low new planting by Forest Enterprise, of around 565 hectares a year. That compares with Forestry Commission new planting of 5,066 hectares in 1987 and the lowest figure in many years of 1,289 hectares in 1994, itself representing little more than half of the 1993 level.

However, the total privately planted, for which grants were paid, in 1994 (24,352 hectares) was higher than in any years since 1980 except 1988 and 1989, being more than twice the level of 1981. Restocking forms a much larger proportion of the total. In 1989, for example, restocking was 4,834 hectares and new planting 25,108. In 1994, restocking was 8,455 and new planting 15,897. Yet that ratio will reflect the amount of forestry which has been felled and the proportion of restocking is almost bound to increase over time.

The other trend is a steady increase in private planting in England and a corresponding decline in Scotland. For example, in 1989 4,082 hectares were planted in England and 24,681 in Scotland. In 1994 9,971 hectares were planted in England and 13,494 in Scotland. The trees are different too. In England the 9,791 hectares contained 7,824 hectares of broadleaves, whereas the 13,494 hectares in Scotland only contained 6,346. We do not, of course, know why trees are planted but one can only assume that the motive for the broadleaves is not to supply timber, which partly explains why some people are concerned over trends.

The dilemma remains that commercial timber production will rely upon conifers, because they provide a return in the medium-term rather than the long-term. There are ways of increasing the aesthetic and conservation value of conifer stands (see section IV). In a sense, the story of the Forestry Commission is the story of trying to find a balance between timber production and forests as recreational and environmental assets. The Commission is often criticised for insensitive planting, such as on the Quantocks in Somerset, but this took place a long time ago, when the Commission objective was simply to maximise production. Over at least the past two decades the Commission has found a compromise offering some satisfaction to all sides. The commercial timber industry has found the compromise much harder, although some environmental projects have been undertaken. However, the Forestry Commission has had to sell off numerous forests where generally there is no freedom to roam and often no public access at all. New planting may be undertaken by private foresters, who cannot be expected to care for either the environment or for public access in the same way.

The arguments for commercial forestry often include concern over the balance of payments. The UK imports £7.5 bn of wood materials and manufactures, only exporting £2.3 bn, thus leaving a £5 bn trade gap. The import total includes about £2 bn of crude materials: wood,

⁷ HC Deb 9 February 1987 c.38w, reaffirmed at the time of the abolition of tax privileges, HC Deb 16 March 1988 c.586w

⁸ Serving Scotland's Needs : the Government's expenditure plans 1995/6 to 1997/8, Cm 2814, March 1995

lumber and cork; pulp and waste paper. The manufactures cover: wood and cork manufactures; along with paper and paperboard manufactures.⁹ There does seem to be a lost opportunity here, particularly as the land is often not used for anything else. Not everyone agrees as to how much timber could, in principle, be produced in the UK. The high-quality conifers come from cold countries where growth is very slow. However, there is a great deal of low quality timber used in the UK which could in principle be home-produced. However, some economists are suspicious about arguments for subsidy to produce substitutes for imports. After all, the very fact that subsidies are required suggests that it is not such a costless option as one might suppose. Forestry is not merely a matter of planting trees and watching them grow. Other costs are incurred in maintaining them and preventing fire while they are growing. Harvesting often involves more costs in building roads and bridges. Once we admit that resources are being used, then the balance of payments question really becomes one of the best use of the available resources, in terms of rate of return. It does not even help the balance of payments if resources are put into less productive import-substituting activities.

If forestry is not just an industry like any other, then its justification will partly be either environmental or recreational. The normal environmental justification is in terms of encouragement to wildlife and biodiversity. That applies to some forests, but not all. Some conifer plantations may do little for either wild animals or plants. The other main environmental argument in favour of forests is to reduce global warming, but that does not really apply to British forests because they are on such a tiny scale, and they would, in any case, have to be managed in a special way to make any difference.

The extreme view, held by Marion Shoard, the author of *This Land is Our Land*¹⁰, is that the point of forestry is simply to find an excuse to give yet another subsidy to farmers. A cheerful vision from the chartered surveyors, Cluttons¹¹, does nothing to dispel the environmental fears.

The drift back to commercial conifers at the expense of amenity broadleaves will appeal to those wanting a land based investment, business property relief for inheritance tax and the prospect of returns of 6% after tax, which is broadly in line with the long run performance of equities at 7%. The outlook for investment in forestry is now brighter than at any time since the late 60's and leading economists forecast that timber prices will rise at 2% - 5% over inflation for the next 20-25 years. This equates to real returns of 8% - 11% during the course of a rotation.

However, there are still hopes for multi-use forestry that can offer something to everybody. The next two sections discuss two attempts at this aim. First, there is the Forestry Commission, which has faced these problems for many years. Second, there are the ambitious plans for the new National Forest and the Community Forests, explicitly intended to be multi-use.

⁹Monthly Digest of Statistics May 1995

¹⁰*The Struggle for Britain's Countryside*, 1987

¹¹*Landlines* winter 1994/1995

II. The Forestry Review and the 1994 White Paper

A. The Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission has been by far the most important single operator in British forestry policy since its establishment by the Forestry Act in 1919, with the aim of promoting afforestation and timber production. This was a reaction to general concern about British forestry. Before the First War, most British forests were composed of hardwoods although some conifers had been introduced in the 19th century and were being felled. Scientific forestry on the continental model was largely absent, and attempts were being made belatedly to introduce it. The First War resulted in a large demand for timber and restricted imports, so that large-scale felling of British hardwood forests took place. Timber was now seen as a strategic material and the Commission was founded to increase its supply. Once again in the Second World War there was a timber shortage and the trees planted by the Commission were too young to meet it. Postwar policy again saw the need to increase timber production as a strategic aim, but over time this objective has been modified.

The Forestry Act 1967 gave the Commission the duties of promoting the interests of forestry, the development of afforestation, along with the production and supply of timber and other forest products in Great Britain; the duty of promoting the establishment and maintenance of adequate reserves of growing trees; and also a specific duty to seek to achieve a reasonable balance between the needs of forestry and the environment, in addition to its duty under the Countryside Acts to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside.

On 1st April 1992, the Commission was reorganised, with a clear distinction between the Commission's Departmental and forest management roles. The **Department of Forestry** contains two parts. It has a policy and resources group responsible for advice to Ministers, policy development etc. It also contains the Forestry Authority responsible for implementing the Government's forestry policy, including the control of tree felling and the payment of grants. **Forest Enterprise** is a trading body responsible for the management of Forestry Commission forests.

A sign of the varied pressures on the Commission came in March 1993 when two reports were published within a week. One was by the Audit Commission¹², and the other by the House of Commons Environment Committee¹³. Clearly the Commission had to defend both its environmental and its commercial record at the same time.

¹² *Forestry Commission : Timber Harvesting and Marketing, 1992/93 HC 526*

¹³ *Forestry and the Environment, 1992/93 HC 257*

The Audit Commission considered the way that the Commission chose which trees to harvest, and when to do it, noting that the age structure of trees made a doubling of timber output by 2010 likely. Their conclusion was mixed (para 19).

The Commission's harvesting and marketing activities make major contribution to the achievement of their overall forestry and other objectives. They have achieved significant economies over recent years in the cost of producing timber. But in the longer term interest of the forest asset, attention must be given to reducing the disparity between timber production plans and the sources of timber actually harvested. Planned increases in timber production could accentuate this problem. The Commission therefore need to address these questions while they increase output from the forests as they intend over the next decade.

The Environment Committee argued that the Forestry Commission's accounting system should operate at a more local level, in order to assist its decision-making. More important, it argued against a commercial domination of Forest Enterprise policy.

130 We were very interested to hear the Countryside Commission's view that perhaps the mandate given to the state forest should change from one of primarily commercial production to a focus on managing areas which are of national importance because of their environmental or recreational significance, and a programme which does not just include managing the existing resource but of purchasing and planting new land...We believe that as a result of its history, its staff and the nature of its land holding, Forest Enterprise is still dominated by commercial forestry. We recommend that in the context of the new Community and National Forests the Government redirect Forest Enterprise and enable it to adopt a more dynamic role in creating, buying and managing multi-purpose forestry, in both small and large blocks.

B. The 1994 Forestry Review

In 1993 the Government announced a review into the forestry Commission. This was a confidential review by civil servants, and at the time it was widely believed that it was considering whether to recommend privatisation of the Forestry Commission. According to one widespread rumour, the group would recommend a division of Forestry Commission forests into two : heritage forests and commercial forests. Heritage forests would be handed over to a charity such as the National Trust, while the commercial forests would be sold off. That, indeed was apparently one of the options under consideration, but it was not the Government's conclusion.

The Government published the conclusions of the forestry review on 18 August 1994 ¹⁴. The main conclusions were the rejection of privatisation, the need for revision to the woodland grant scheme and the conversion of Forest Enterprise into a trading agency. This change is expected to take place later in 1995.

¹⁴Our Forests - The Way Ahead, Cm 2644

It is difficult to assess the importance of the change to agency status since forestry is such a very special industry, with its immense gestation periods. It would be possible to imagine commercial strategies which would have damaging effects on the Commission's forests, but it is also possible that the changes might have little effect in practice.

Indeed, the target for disposals has not been changed. The programme announced in June 1989 for the sale of 100,000 hectares of forestry land and other properties continues. The disposals programme for the years 1995/6 to 1997/8 is expected to realise £60 million from the sale of some 45,000 hectares of forestry land and surplus properties¹⁵.

Some indication of the nature of the commercial objectives of the new trading body are included in the review.

3.25 Like Forest Enterprise at present, the new Trading Body will have financial targets. These will be demanding, but achievable. At least one will be drawn from the profit and loss account, and will be closer to the types of target which are used in the private sector than those hitherto applied to Forest Enterprise. Another target might be set in terms of the value of wood in the Trading Body's estate : such a target would be designed to ensure that the new body was not seeking short-term profits at the expense of long-term timber potential of the estate.

3.26 The Trading Body will provide non-market outputs. Provision will be made for direct expenditure on recreation, conservation and heritage activities with details of how funds would be allocated between locations and between different types of project...Clearer arrangements will be developed to ensure that decisions regarding environmental outputs are integrated into the management of the estate's outputs as a whole. These might cover the different proportions of species to be planted in different parts of the country and agreed principles for the acceptable levels of income forgone in areas of different landscape and conservation sensitivity. These arrangements would reflect the requirement that, in discharging its statutory duty to balance its commercial, conservation and environmental objectives, the Commission may need to pursue a more commercially-orientated approach in some areas, whereas in others of specific conservation importance above-average attention to non-commercial duties may be required.

In other words, the Trading Body can act in an environmentally sensitive way, but within the framework of the financial targets for the various activities. A great deal will depend on how strict the financial objectives turn out to be and how far the Body is allowed to specify non-commercial objectives in areas of environmental importance.

C. Public Access

Public access has been a considerable problem in the sales of Commission forests in the 1980s. The Commission has a good record in that it has allowed "freedom to roam" in its forests and also in that it has often created forest trails, picnic sites and other visitor facilities in sites conveniently near to large populations. Problems arose when it sold forests in the

¹⁵*Serving Scotland's Needs : the Government's expenditure plans 1995/6 to 1997/8*, Cm 2814, March 1995

1980s. The 1994 White Paper ¹⁶ notes that "the importance of public access was recognised by the government when the current disposals programme was introduced in June 1989" but it omits the fact that previous disposal programmes had been operating since 1981. The Forestry Act 1981 allowed the Minister to sell any Commission land, except for the Forest of Dean. The disposal programme from 1981 to 1989 took place with no official concern over loss of public access.

According to the *Independent on Sunday* ¹⁷ : "Not one private owner of English land was prepared to grant access. All the new owners which have granted access over English land are charities and public organisations such as the Woodland Trust, the National Trust and local authorities." Nor has access been lost only on remote Scottish plantations. Woods near population centres which served as leisure facilities have also lost access. Only in November 1990 did the Government announce that in future sales, the Commission would give advance notice to local authorities of its sales and offer to enter into legal agreements with them to provide for continued public access to the woodlands after sale¹⁸.

These new arrangements have secured a little continued public access, but problems remained, partly because local authorities may have been unwilling to carry the cost of public access provisions. In addition, many sale negotiations were far advanced when the new system came into force and it was considered too late to insist on access. The overwhelming majority of sales up to the end of 1993 had been made without securing public access and the 1994 White Paper¹⁹ admitted the need to improve the arrangements then in force, and announced some changes.

4.6 The Government appreciate the value of the Commission's forests for public access and recreation and will ask the Commission to take much greater account of this when selecting forests for sale. Rationalisation will remain the basis for selecting properties for disposal, but certain new safeguards will be introduced, based on a classification of woodlands according to the level of existing public access...

4.7 In general, there will be a presumption against the sale of woodlands with a high level of access. Where such woodlands are clearly suitable for disposal on rationalisation grounds, it is proposed that sale should normally take place only if an access agreement is in place or the purchaser is able to guarantee continued public access. Such purchasers are likely to be voluntary organisations (such as the Woodland Trust) or local authorities.

4.8 Every effort will be made to secure an access agreement for other woodlands. If no access agreement is reached for a woodland which is regularly used by the public, the Commission will refer the case to Ministers when it wishes to proceed with a sale.

4.9 Where woods are not accessible from public roads, but are accessible via public rights of way, they will no longer be excluded from the access agreement arrangements.

¹⁶Cm 2644 p.18

¹⁷5 September 1993

¹⁸HC Deb 21 November 1990 c.164w

¹⁹Cm 2644

Further details of the arrangements are provided, along with a plan to increase access to Forestry Commission forests on land which they lease and where access is often not available. It also points out and slightly strengthens provisions by which private landowners can receive grants for allowing public access to their woodlands.

A recent PQ²⁰ shows that access is still not being granted in the majority of woodland sold by the Commission, but that the reasons are various. In England 632 hectares of forestry are currently for sale, on which access arrangements have only been agreed for 12 hectares, although for another 72 hectares the local authority is considering an arrangement. In Scotland 5,098 hectares are for sale and access has been concluded on 835 hectares. No further access plans are under consideration. In England 164 hectares are under offer, and access arrangements have been concluded on 34 of them. In Scotland 2,518 hectares are under offer and access arrangements have been concluded on 1,073 of them. Often the reason is that the local authority is declining to enter into an access arrangement, but another common reason is "a third party with an interest has declined to enter an access arrangement or restrictions in the Commission's title prevented the offer of an access agreement".

The Forestry Commission Annual Report for 1993/94 (p.42) noted that since the scheme began, local authorities had been notified of 348 possible sales falling within the access guidelines, but had only expressed interest in 130 cases.

D. The revised woodland grant scheme

The changes to the woodland grant scheme are aimed at encouraging a higher level of planting. Ever since the removal of the tax breaks in the late eighties, the level of planting has been much lower than the Government's targets and there has been considerable concern that under the previous arrangements government plans such as the National Forest and the Community Forests would never take place.

Some people felt at the time that the revised grants were insufficient in themselves to encourage tree planting, but farmers were waiting to see if they would be allowed to plant trees on their land set aside under the Common Agricultural Policy cereals regime. The European Commission gave permission for this in principle in December 1993, but details were only finalised in the June 1995 Agriculture Council²¹. The permission should offer real encouragement to farmers, who have to find a use for the land on which they are no longer able to plant cereals. They would not, however, be allowed to combine set-aside payments with woodland grants for planting trees. Plainly, farmers were reluctant to plant before knowing the details of the new scheme so as not to find that they lost out by planting before a certain date.

²⁰HC Deb 25 May 1995 c.744w

²¹MAFF News Release, 22 June 1995

The woodland grant amendments encourage much denser planting, which makes it harder for wildlife to live in forests. The *New Scientist*²² noted that under the revised woodland grant scheme, full grants will only be paid where 2250 trees are planted per hectare, more than twice the previous requirement of 1100 trees. Trees were previously planted about 3 metres apart, but that would be reduced to just over two metres. The dense planting would reduce the low branches and knots, thereby increasing the value of timber production. However, dense planting is bad for conservation since it discourages natural regeneration and the growth of other plants (see section IV).

"The government may say that it retains the ideal of multipurpose forests," says Ben Plowden, head of land use at the CPRE, "but what exactly can you do in a double density forest apart from grow trees?"

III The National Forest and the Community forests

A. The Plan for the National Forest

The Forest boundary encompasses some 500 square kilometres (194 square miles) reaching through Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire. About one third of the area will be woodland, compared to about 6% now, so that about 13,500 hectares of new planting will be required. Up to 70% of this planting should be achieved within the first decade of the implementation phase in order to maximise the achievable benefit. The nature and scope of the planting will vary according to the objectives of the owner concerned and the Strategy guidelines for that particular area. The overall aim is to achieve a 60:40 ratio of broadleaf trees to conifers. The Strategy section of the *Implementation Plan*²³ describes the aim of the National Forest.

Over a third of the land will remain in agriculture. While substantial conversion of farmland to forestry is a pre-requisite, retaining a healthy agriculture is also key. The Forest should assist farming in adjusting to the new agricultural climate not subsume it. As with all potential participants in the Forest, farmers will be encouraged rather than required to take part. From the outset the Forest will be developed as a major local and national resource for recreation, sport and tourism. Trails, for a variety of users, will interlink sport, recreation and tourist attractions and radiate from car parking and public transport points.

Managing visitor traffic and maximising the use of public transport will be essential to ensure that the Forest's role as a major tourist attraction does not endanger its sustainability. About 9% of the Forest is of recognised conservation value. Existing sites of nature conservation and historic interest will be safeguarded and wherever possible enhanced. Encouragement will be given to the management of sites as well as to the creation or restoration of wildlife

²²6 August 1994

²³ *The National Forest implementation plan: making it happen*. Countryside Commission. 1994.

habitats...With around 2,000 hectares of land in operational minerals use, and some 500 hectares of derelict land, there are opportunities to be seized for restoration of such sites to Forest uses such as forestry, recreation and conservation.

B. Some critics of the National Forest Plan

There are two real issues. Will the forest be planted ? and, if it is, what will it be like ?

There is nothing automatic about the planting and there has been some pessimism as to whether it will happen. Indeed, at a national level, tree planting has been quite low since the abolition of tax privileges in 1988. Two measures have been undertaken to encourage tree planting.

The planting is to be undertaken by local landowners who have to be persuaded that it is worth their while to plant trees. They will do so on their own terms, which may not include public access, except for paying recreation in some areas. The *New Scientist* ²⁴ was gloomy about the developments likely in such a forest, in a passage quoting the Director Susan Bell.

"Mining will continue to be a major activity within the forest," says Bell, "The case for [minerals] development is certainly strengthened if the developer can show a benefit to the national forest." This kind of talk sets alarm bells ringing with environmentalists. "A clear trade-off is implied here," says Ben Plowden, the CPRE's land use officer. "Promises to plant trees will win permission to mine that would not otherwise be given." That is a "reasonable fear," admits Bell. "But it depends how robust the planning authorities are." She advises them but has no final say.

On land already covered by permits to mine, developers will want other inducements to plant trees. Eventual permission to build money-spinning "leisure developments" is the main carrot. One obvious model is the Alton Towers theme park. Britain's largest tourist attraction, the park is less than 20 kilometres from the edge of the forest. And it is built in old mining slag.

What else ? The forest could easily become a dumping ground for noisy, troublesome neighbours. As the consultation paper puts it : "The Forest could offer new opportunities for outdoor pursuits like motor sports, which cannot easily find sites." One idea is to develop a national centre for motor sports. Bell also envisions motorised water sports on the local reservoirs. Other suggestions include golf courses, holiday villages and war games. The plan states that such initiatives "would benefit from being sited in a wooded setting.". Indeed. But it is less clear which activities would benefit the forest, and which would damage it. Environmentalists want to encourage leisure activities that are truly part of the forest, rather than sited there for convenience.

²⁴24 September 1994

The National Forest area would appear to be one where tree planting is not particularly economic, as was noted in a report of a committee representing timber processors and private woodland operators²⁵. The *Financial Times*²⁶ summarised the result.

It is based on an analysis of crop gross margins on a range of land classes and soil types in England And Wales. It shows that forestry can be more profitable than dairying and grassland, but cannot usually compete with arable farming. Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire, where the government plans to encourage the planting of 200 square miles to create the National Forest, shows up as a particularly uncompetitive area in which to plant trees because farming is so profitable.

Mr Peter Wilson, chief executive of the Timber Growers Association, which represents commercial forestry companies, said ; "No rational person would convert farmland into forestry in that area unless a great deal of money is available as an incentive."

That is a negative view of the prospects, but it may act as a counterbalance to possible over-enthusiasm over the concept of multi-use forests. The Community Forests are smaller versions of the National Forest, organised by local authorities and also using only existing grants.

C. The Community Forests

The community forest programme is a major long term initiative by the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Commission to develop woodland areas on the urban fringe of twelve conurbations. All twelve have now had their business cases approved and have started implementation of their strategy plans. The forests are : Greenwood (Nottinghamshire); Cleveland; Mersey; Red Rose (Greater Manchester); South Yorkshire; Bristol/Avon; Watling Chase (South Hertfordshire). The aim was described in an announcement by the Environment Minister Sir Paul Beresford:²⁷

The forests will bring a variety of improvements to the urban fringe, providing a more attractive landscape for people to live and work in, and creating exciting new local opportunities for recreation. The projects will depend on a successful partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors...The forests are long term projects. Development will be phased over 30 or more years and the aim will be to achieve about 30% forest cover in each area by the end of that time.

In each forest the Countryside commission and the local authorities have jointly funded a local team to consult landowners, voluntary bodies and the private sector on a forest strategy. Planting will be funded under existing grant schemes, including the Woodland Grant Scheme

²⁵The Potential for Extending Forest Cover in the Lowlands of England and Wales. FICGB, 1994

²⁶1 December 1994

²⁷DOE News Release 28 March 1995

run by the Forestry Commission. The forests will also be eligible to apply for funding under regeneration grants.

The approval of the Community Forest Plan means that the Forest Teams will continue to be funded to implement the strategy plan by encouraging local landowners to create new woodlands, to assist in the development of local recreational opportunities, and to promote educational activities and community involvement.

IV Forestry and Conservation

Although planting has increased in Britain over the past few years, forest cover in England, for instance, is low compared to almost all other EU Member States²⁸. It is also important to note that most increase in forest cover between 1978 and 1990 has been in coniferous (5%) rather than in broadleaved (1%) woodland²⁹. Moreover, with regard to conserving wildlife the improvement and preservation of existing woodlands is usually more important than planting new woodlands³⁰.

A. Ancient woodlands

Forests vary in type across a wide spectrum. At one extreme is the single species (monoculture) forestry plantation, with close planting, little light reaching the ground through the dense canopy, little ground cover (no plants growing on the floor between the trees) and little in the way of wildlife. The over-riding impression may be of a quiet, dark, dense forest carpeted only with beds of pine needles. Forestry plantations may be felled all at once over large areas, they may interfere with water run-off, ground water level and the acidity of water bodies, and they may have replaced semi-natural habitats.

At the other extreme are the UK's ancient woodlands. These are forests that have been on a site continuously since the last ice-age. Ancient forest may have been clear-felled at one time, but if the forest has regenerated itself naturally by seedlings or small saplings left at felling, and so long as any such felling occurred before 1600, the woodland is still termed 'ancient'. This date is chosen because in Britain woodland was rarely created by planting before around 1600. Ancient woodland is however termed 'secondary' rather than 'primary' if such clear felling and natural regeneration has occurred³¹.

²⁸*England's Trees and Woods* Countryside Commission 1993 p.6

²⁹*Countryside Survey 1990 Main Report*. DoE, IFE, ITE 1993 p.49

³⁰*Future Forestry. A new direction for forest policy*. Wildlife Link April 1992 p.9

³¹*Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ecology*, 1994

However, natural ancient woodlands are present only in remnant form in the UK and are usually not pristine (see next section). Even ancient woodland that we would regard as fairly natural differs from the primeval wild woods- it probably has fewer lime and elm trees, no large predators, and added exotic introductions such as the grey squirrel, muntjac and sitka deer and rhododendron; it will probably also be fragmented³².

Extensive natural broadleaved forests remain in Poland and Western Russia, and natural native coniferous forests survive in Scandinavia and North America. Such forests, and the remnants left in Britain, have developed high levels of biodiversity and ecological complexity during their many years in existence. To understand the importance of ancient woodlands, it helps to consider the botanical concepts of 'succession' and 'climax communities'. A grassland, over many years, might be colonised by seeds coming in from elsewhere on the wind or in animals' droppings. The grassland might turn to shrub and later to a thin wood of stripling trees as vegetation communities (with accompanying fauna) successively replace one another. The process might escalate and end with a mature oak woodland, the classic example of a climax community, in an equilibrium state with its environment. (Climax communities do not have to be forests; depending on soil type, weather, and the level and nature of human and animal interference they might be a flower-rich grassland or a heather moorland.)

In reality this may over-simplify the situation and not all botanists subscribe to such a sense of natural order, but the key points are that ancient woodlands have become established over very long periods, they are tuned to their surroundings, they contain associated animal communities and if removed completely, they cannot be replaced within human timescales. Forestry plantations, established almost instantaneously, cannot compare with a natural ancient woodland.

B. Enhancing biodiversity in all woodlands

In 1985 the Government introduced its Broadleaved Woodlands Policy. Broadleaved woodlands are roughly split into³³:

- Ancient woodlands
- Ancient semi-natural woodlands
- Other broadleaved woodland

³²*Biodiversity in Britain's Forests*. Philip Ratcliffe, Forestry Authority 1993.

³³*Forestry Commission Broadleaves Policy Progress 1985-88, 1989*

Forestry policy has to aim to balance timber production and nature conservation requirements. The two aims can be presented as being in direct conflict. For instance, requirements to use native or broadleaved species can lead to loss of yield and reduction of profitability from a forestry point of view, while conifers and non-native species are deemed inappropriate, unnatural and unattractive from an environmental viewpoint. One of the main aims of the Government's Broadleaved Woodlands Policy has been the need to increase the quality and value of timber produced by broadleaved woodlands as a whole³⁴. Conservationists have expressed concern about possible effects on biodiversity and access of denser planting (see page 14). However, it is acknowledged that generally the degree of conflict between commercial forestry and conservation needs has lessened in recent years, thanks to, for instance, the Woodland Grant Scheme, the loss of tax relief for upland afforestation and the publication by the Forestry Commission of *Guidelines for the management of broadleaved woodlands* in 1985 and of *Nature Conservation Guidelines* in 1990, showing how more natural woodlands could be achieved.

Of course, with careful management, plantations do not have to be barren habitats. In 1993 the Forestry Authority produced the small booklet *Biodiversity in Britain's Forests*³⁵, which notes that a varied woodland structure with numbers of dead trees will provide structural diversity and thus allow bird life in conifer stands to approach that of broadleaved woods. Even the natural effects of forest fires and wind-blow, which affect only limited areas of forest, can be mimicked by careful felling and harvesting regimes. Old growth, dead wood, river banks, and continuity between woods (allowing dispersal of animals) are all important for wildlife and can be recreated to some extent through plantation management.

A dead tree is as important ecologically as a live one in forest ecosystems. If dead and dying wood is removed from a woodland, it can lose more than one-fifth of its fauna. Dead and dying wood provides homes to birds and bats, growing substrate for fungi and many other organisms (decomposers) involved in the natural processes of breakdown, and a good site for seed germination.

Many insects, particularly many beetles and flies, are dependent on moist shady conditions and upon dead and decaying timber. They may have very specific requirements (such as being able to burrow under the bark of a specific tree species) and are often not able to tolerate even short periods of unfavourable conditions or changes brought about by, for instance, clear-felling. Different life stages of insects may need different micro-habitats, and they often depend highly on the shrubs, herbs and other features of a woodland rather than simply on the trees themselves. Insects of course play a vital role in pollinating flowers, but the types that live in dead wood are important as decomposers, breaking down the waste (dead wood,

³⁴The *Broadleaved Woodlands Policy on the Forestry Commission Estate*. In: *Broadleaves Policy Progress 1985-88* Forestry Commission February 1989 Appendix 3 p.4

³⁵ Philip Ratcliffe, Forestry Authority 1993.

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dung, dead leaves) produced by nature; in so doing they recycle and make available nutrients. Insects provide an invaluable food source to animals including birds, bats and other mammals.

The variety of tree species used is also important in increasing structural and thus biological diversity. A mixed species stand can;

- improve soil fertility
- reduce susceptibility to pests
- reduce risks of wind-throw
- increase yield-perhaps because tree mixtures make more efficient use of soil nutrients
- increase biodiversity - through structural heterogeneity, with different live and dead tree structures
- increase biodiversity - because different animals and microbes live in association with different tree species
- increase ground cover and biodiversity on the forest floor, because deciduous tree canopies are open, allowing light in for at least part of the year
- diversify the wood market
- increase aesthetic value

Broadleaf species recommended for interspersation with conifers include sessile oak, alder, birch, rowan, holly, aspen, bird cherry and goat willow, with ash, wych elm and hazel on well-drained (not acidic) soils. As forests are periodically felled, such trees should be able to regenerate naturally, having seeded themselves. In broadleaved woodlands, the Forestry Commission *Guidelines* recommend that native or traditional broadleaved species be planted, and that in ancient semi natural woodland these should also be species 'present on the site and native to the area'³⁶. There is a case for taking this one step further and specifying trees actually descended from or related to those growing in the area (rather than simply being of the same species). This would further increase the extent to which the planted trees would be adapted to local conditions. The Environment Committee noted in 1993 that there is a tendency for hardwood trees to be grown from the most ubiquitous and cheapest seed, which might be of unknown genetic quality and produce unreliable stock. Although it is often more expensive to collect and grow seed locally, this is apparently common practice in Germany where locally collected acorns are grown, so as to preserve local genotypes (particular genetic makeups)³⁷.

On Forestry Commission land, oak and common alder (the latter can be planted along riverbanks) have been the most commonly planted species during new planting and restocking

³⁶*Broadleaves Policy Progress 1985-88* Forestry Commission February 1989 Appendix 2 p.6

³⁷ *Forestry and the environment* First Report Session 1992-93 HC 257-I p.xxxii

of ancient woodland sites³⁸. On the Commission estate conifers have been removed from stream sides (to help animals move through wildlife 'corridors', let some ground vegetation grow and improve the stream biota), regeneration of broadleaved trees has been encouraged, and help has been given to declining species such as red squirrels, dormice and barn owls³⁹.

It is not fair to say that all artificial woodland plantations are bad for wildlife, just as natural habitats are not always necessarily rich in biodiversity. Forestry plantations can be artificially managed to enhance biodiversity but this can only be done if soils, nutrients and climate permit; biodiversity could be enhanced in a 70-100 year old upland spruce forest by encouraging dead wood communities and a shrub layer, but upland conifer forests

"...will never be able to sustain the variety of species and ecological niches available in lowland broadleaved forests and attempts to introduce such variety are undesirable and almost certain to end in failure"⁴⁰.

Remnants of ancient woodland must be retained since they are irreplaceable. They will also need to be actively managed to reduce the effects of intrusive species such as grey squirrels and to prevent overgrazing by deer and other animals. Environmental groups also remain extremely concerned about plantations being created which may remove existing habitats and landscapes⁴¹.

The Environment Committee recommended in 1993 that the Government should strengthen the protection given to ancient and semi-natural woodlands and take steps to prevent their loss to building and transport developments⁴²;

"...ancient and semi-natural woodlands are our common heritage and common bequest: once destroyed, their diversity of wildlife is impossible to recreate within timescales of hundreds of years".

The Government agreed that such woodlands were a 'valuable resource' but felt that they were already adequately protected⁴³.

³⁸*The Broadleaved Woodlands Policy on the Forestry Commission Estate.* In: *Broadleaves Policy Progress 1985-88* Forestry Commission February 1989 Appendix 3

³⁹*Our Forests The Way Ahead. Conclusions from the Forestry Review* Scottish Office Environment Department Cm 2644 August 1994 p.14

⁴⁰*Biodiversity in Britain's Forests.* Philip Ratcliffe, Forestry Authority 1993 p.21

⁴¹*ibid* pp19-20

⁴²*Forestry and the environment* First Report Session 1992-93 HC 257-I p.xxiii

⁴³Government's Response, Cm 2259 June 1993 pp.4-5

C. Conservation of ancient woodlands

Only a tiny part (perhaps 1%) remains of the native Caledonian pine forest which once covered much of Scotland. Most of it is in private hands. This is one of the UK's priority habitats under the EU Habitats Directive⁴⁴, but at present it is severely depleted, largely through sheep or deer eating the tender shoots of new trees. The forest has therefore not been regenerating naturally for many years, perhaps for more than a century. Unless the numbers of red deer in Scotland are sharply reduced, it would seem unlikely that even the remnant of the Caledonian forest will regenerate. The policy document on sustainable forestry notes the desirability of research into deer, but there are real problems in controlling them. One can erect fences to keep deer out of areas, but this is of little use in the views of many conservationists because deer, if restricted to given areas, end up trampling ground cover there, while inside fencing the total lack of grazing leads to unnatural growth. Also, game birds such as grouse and capercaillie are low and fast fliers which can hit such fences and kill or injure themselves. Owners often encourage the deer so as to increase the value of their sporting estates. There is a conflict of interest and it remains to be seen how the Government would intervene. The Scottish Office Cairngorms Working Group set up in 1991 called for a large cull of deer to reduce populations by half⁴⁵.

A proposal has been put to the Millennium Commission to encourage the recreation of the old forest. The idea is to start with developing two or three areas of "sensational new forest". There would then be demonstration projects around Scotland. A final phase would extend the demonstrations and create a network of local projects involving all sections of the community, including schools, businesses and voluntary groups.

In England, the New Forest is perhaps the most important of the ancient forests. There has been much pressure in favour of making it into a National Park, and the Government consulted on this issue. Eventually, the Government decided instead to give the New Forest Heritage Area a statutory designation and to apply to it a planning regime similar to that which applies in the national parks. Originally, in 1992, it had proposed to establish a statutory body, based on the existing New Forest Committee, to co-ordinate the management of this wider area. Consultation showed opposition to that proposal, and the Government decided not to make the Committee a statutory body in case it tried to take over the role of the other bodies in control, such as the Forestry Commission or the Verderers (*DOE Press Notice* 14 July 1994). Whether that change of plan will reduce the conservation effort remains to be seen. The New Forest has been included on the list of candidate Special Areas of Conservation which the Government has just sent to the European Commission as required by the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)⁴⁶.

⁴⁴see Library Research Paper 94/90 *The Habitats Directive...* for a background

⁴⁵"Last chance for the wasting wilderness?" *New Scientist*, 18 September 1993 p.3

⁴⁶*First list of candidate SACs sent to European Commission* DoE Press Notice 299 20 June 1995

Although there is a little encouragement to plant hardwoods, the revision of the woodland grant scheme leaves most incentive to plant conifers rather than hardwoods. That may be desirable commercially but it is difficult to see how it makes UK forestry sustainable. In fact even for forestry the idea of sustainability is not straightforward. For example, it could be argued that any existing forests should be encouraged to regenerate. However, the Forestry Commission has decided that in order to allow the Caledonian forest of native species to regenerate, it is right positively to fell trees which are not native species. In some cases, the non-native species are virtually indistinguishable but they might react differently to the weather or be more susceptible to disease. The policy is logical, but unpopular locally when established trees are felled for this reason. The problem arises because the Commission was so late in acting. It accepted a 1959 report recommending the renewal of the Caledonian pine forest, but continued the monoculture policy. By 1989 another 15% of the original forest had disappeared while further vast areas of lodgepole pine and sitka spruce had been planted.

D. Sustainable Forestry

The idea of sustainable management of forestry applies mainly to commercial forestry. In January 1994, the Government produced a statement of how its forestry policies related to the Rio Principles and Helsinki Guidelines⁴⁷. It explained what it meant by the term "Sustainable Forestry".

3.5 Sustainable management of forests is a concept that has won strong and widespread support because it holds ethical and moral messages with which most people can easily sympathise - meeting the social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual human needs of present generations without compromising the ability of our heirs and successors to meet theirs. But it has not proved easy to define in a way which allows us to judge whether we are achieving it, moving towards it, or moving away from it.

3.6 The Helsinki conference adopted the following definition, in so far as it applied to the guidelines for the sustainable management of Europe's forests :

sustainable management means the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems.

3.7 The Government interprets this definition in a way that takes account of our willingness to trade the goods and services that forests produce for other benefits. This will avoid applying the principle of sustainable management in a way that might actually prevent improvements in present and future welfare. For example, sustainable management should be understood not to rule out the conversion of forest land to a better use or trading off a degree

⁴⁷Sustainable Forestry : the UK programme, Cm 2429

of biodiversity for greater recreational enjoyment, where one of these changes would clearly be desirable without compromising the opportunities open to future generations.

Most of the document was in general terms, but para 3.20 summarised how British policy on forestry related to international concern about emissions of CO₂ and the threat of global warming.

Against this background, the Government's current policies are :

To operate a general presumption against the conversion of woodlands and forests to other uses and to control the felling of trees.

To encourage the regeneration of woodland.

To apply rigorous controls over the standard of imported material which is a potential host to pests and diseases.

To promote the development of environmentally acceptable methods of controlling attacks by insects and diseases.

To promote research into Grey squirrels and deer and to encourage their effective control.

To monitor tree condition and to promote research into the relationship between tree health and atmospheric pollution.

To pursue policies for reducing potentially harmful emissions.

To press for early ratification of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and for agreement on CO₂ emissions.

To promote research into the likely impact of climate change on the United Kingdom's various forest types.

V What some other EU countries do about Forestry

Forestry issues, of course, depend largely upon the climate and geography of each country. In this section, four examples of EU countries are taken. Scandinavian countries contain the huge forests of conifers which grow slowly in the North to produce high quality timber. Sweden is described as the main example, but some possible criticisms are given of clear-felling in Finland, which would apply more widely. Germany and France have mixed forests containing more broadleaved trees. In each case, the much higher population density encourages the use of forests as recreational assets, not just sources of timber production.

A. Sweden

Forestry remains important to Sweden, contributing around 18% of Swedish exports. The sector only employs 127,000 people, although another 85,000 jobs are indirectly contributed by the sector. The National Forest Enterprise and the large forest companies manage their forests according to management plans. When a stand matures, it is clear-cut. Within three years the cut must be planted or naturally regenerated from left seed trees. In recent years around 195,000 hectares have been clear cut each year. Of this area, 70% has been planted and the rest has regenerated naturally. When the stands reach 2-3 metres, a pre-commercial thinning is carried out. About 70% of the timber harvested comes from clear-cutting and 30% from thinning⁴⁸. However, environmental pressure has led to considerable reduction in the size of the areas which are clear cut. Swedish clear cuts today average 5.6 hectares, compared to Canada where the figure is nearer 40 hectares⁴⁹. The main pressure has come from Germany, the region's single largest export market.

As in Norway and Finland, Sweden allows common access, so that everyone may wander freely in the woods and meadows, picking wild berries, mushrooms and flowers. About 1,200 areas of particular interest from a scientific or recreational aspect have been set aside under the Nature Conservancy Act as nature reserves and put under special management. Another twenty areas have been set aside as national parks⁵⁰.

B. Finland

Finland combines timber exports of around £6 billion a year with widespread claims that the wood comes from sustainable forests. However, a recent article⁵¹ challenged this claim, pointing out that only a tiny proportion of Finland's remaining ancient forest is protected, while the rest is being actively logged. The article also criticised the practice of clear cutting (p.37).

The clear-cutting is greeted enthusiastically by some ecologists who have close ties with the forestry industry. They claim that clear-cutting simply mimics the effects of natural forest fires, which are caused by lightning every 50 to 200 years on average, depending on the type of forest. But most forest ecologists argue that fires always leave some groups of trees standing so that as the forest regenerates, it maintains a range of species, ages and a diversity of habitat. Clear-cutting, on the other hand, results in disruption of ecosystems, and if widespread, the forest is unlikely to recover. Environmental groups such as the Finnish section of the WWF and Greenpeace agree. They point to a 1991 report compiled for Finland's Environment Ministry, which estimated that a total of 692 species are facing extinction as a result of the forestry practices.

There was recently a clash between environmental and economic considerations in Kuusamo, in Northern Finland, when a collective of private owners dismantled a large area of old-growth forest. The owners said that their livelihood depended upon it, but environmentalists

⁴⁸ *Forestry and the Forest Industry*, Fact Sheet on Sweden 1993

⁴⁹ *Financial Times*, 5 July 1995

⁵⁰ *Forestry and the Forest Industry*, Fact Sheet on Sweden 1993

⁵¹ Death by a thousand cuts, *New Scientist*, 11 February 1995

insisted that the destruction should stop. A long-term solution has not yet been found, and might require the state to buy such land, but that would be expensive⁵².

C. Germany

Nearly 30% of the unified Germany is covered with forest (7.4m hectares in the West and 3m from the East). Nearly half of the Western forests are privately owned and rather more of the Eastern, even before a planned privatisation programme there. When the House of Commons Environment Select Committee investigated Forestry and the Environment, their specialist assistant noted what could be learnt from German experience⁵³.

There are some most useful lessons of German federal forestry policy for the UK. For example, there is much shared history in the development of forests over the centuries; like the UK, there has been a change in function so that the German forests of today are both important for wood production and for the provision of environmental and leisure benefits; there is a top-down approach to developing forestry policy whereby the Federal Forest Act 1975 provides a national framework, but the 16 states (Laender) have autonomous powers to develop their own individual, and often very different, forestry policies and programmes; the Federal Act requires each state to develop "forestry framework plans"; there is also a Federal Hunting Act 1976 which provides the national framework for the control of game in German forests; the current federal objective is to create more mixed forest both by skewing afforestation grants in favour of broadleaves (up to 85% as opposed to 50% for conifers) and by restructuring existing conifer stands; it is significant that as part of its new afforestation scheme federal government grants cover not only the costs of planting trees, but are accompanied by a premium for managing those trees and for the loss of agricultural earnings; together with the top-up grants that the state provides, this constitutes a highly attractive package of incentives for German farmers to diversify into forestry; there are other grants for forest management such as thinning and fencing; the government actively supports the creation of local forest groupings or cooperatives to coordinate among other things forest planting, management and felling, forest road construction and the marketing of timber; there has been a policy of free public access to all German forests since 1975; there is no planning control over forestry and no regulation for felling as there is in England, but forestry planning is integrated at state and community levels through the land use planning system; afforestation and replanting require the use of "appropriate" tree species, and although there is no restriction on the use of foreign species, it has been found that indigenous varieties are preferred because they in fact grow better; there is a pervasive emphasis that in all German forests economy and ecology have to go together.

The problem of damage by deer is a serious one, partly because the deer are retained for hunting, for which there is a strong lobby. A recent book by a former Director of Research at the Forestry Commission⁵⁴ comments that in Germany there is an amazing toleration of damage to forests caused by game, compared to that caused by air pollution.

⁵² *Financial Times*, 5 July 1995

⁵³ 1992/93 HC 257-I; Annex II

⁵⁴ Grayson *Private Forestry Policy in Western Europe* 1993 p.152

D. France

France is also strongly wooded, with 26% of the land covered by forests, partly as a result of afforestation policies followed since the mid 19th century. In fact the total area, 14 m hectares, is considerable larger than that of German forests. France gets 80% of its wood needs from its own forests or recovery activities. Private forests account for 71% of the forest area ⁵⁵. French forestry policy has been highly centralised, but the 1985 Forest Law provided procedures to adapt and shape its application locally. Most control of private forests is left to the owners, but forests of over 25 hectares have to be subject to a management plan approved by the regional centre of forest ownership ⁵⁶.

While the French problem of forest fires is different from UK concerns, other concerns are more similar. There are strict controls over deforestation, although relaxed for areas under 4 hectares, woods under 20 years of age, and parks or gardens of less than 10 hectares. Grayson comments (p.107) that the French assume that the splitting of properties is bad, while anything that achieves larger units of management is desirable, and continues:

The contrast with the situation in Britain is remarkable since much policy in the latter recognises the contribution of small woods, usually associated with small ownerships, to the appearance of the landscape and the protection of wildlife, with the only strongly expressed dissent coming from farmers who are typically not woodland owners.

The attention paid to conservation and, to a lesser extent, to landscape considerations is less than in other countries at a comparable stage of economic development.

⁵⁵Grayson p.87

⁵⁶J.Gadant, "Sustainable forest conservation and development in France," Readings in Sustainable Forestry Management, FAO Forestry Paper 122