

CHAPTER 20 - Mechanisms and Targets

- 20.1** A number of mechanisms exist to help in achieving major change in land use. Grant aid to farmers and landowners is likely to remain one of the most important. Currently, grant schemes are run by the Forestry Commission and DEFRA. Other grants for smaller-scale work are available from a range of sources including English Nature, the Environment Agency and Local Authorities.
- 20.2** In late 1999, government introduced the principle of modulation (recycling of farmers' direct payments) of CAP support with the proportion to rise from 2.5% in 2001 to 4.5% in 2006. Thus DEFRA administered funding for the broader rural economy is to increase by 60% over the next 7 years so that by 2006-07 spending on agri-environment schemes (including CSS and Organic Aid) will be double the 1999-00 level. There will also be extra money for the Woodland Grant Scheme, for marketing and processing, the growing of energy crops and farmer skills training. There will also be a Rural Enterprise Scheme, not confined to assisted areas to promote rural development on and off the farm.
- 20.3** The Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), operated by DEFRA, aims to conserve and enhance valued English landscapes and wildlife habitats and help the public enjoy them. Grant is paid under a 10 year agreement, including annual payments, for habitat protection and management. One-off payments are made for capital works. Funding for this scheme across England is projected by DEFRA to increase from £35.5m in 2000-01 to £126.0m in 2006-07. This will be a great opportunity for the Forest partners to achieve the Forest's objectives and other landscape, access and wildlife strategies. Retaining the Forest as a target area for CSS support will be important.
- 20.4** The Community Forest remains a high priority for the Countryside Agency and targeted support is available for partners to bid for in order to achieve Forest objectives.
- 20.5** The Woodland Grant Scheme, operated by the Forestry Commission currently encourages the establishment of new woodland and the management of existing ones assisting the delivery of the priorities and programmes of the Government's England Forestry Strategy for rural development, economic regeneration, recreation, access and tourism, and conservation and the environment. The Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS) with annual payments made by DEFRA encourages woodland establishment on farmland by providing annual payments to productive farm units, compensating for income forgone from agriculture. Entry to FWPS is dependent upon the scheme being accepted by the Forestry Commission under the Woodland Grant Scheme. The grants have changed and will continue to change to reflect government priorities. The Community Forest is a both a project and an area which will help deliver a significant proportion of the Government's forestry objectives under all four programmes of the Strategy. Grants, along with partnership funding and other support from the Forestry Commission will remain a pre-eminent mechanism in helping achieve the Forest.
- 20.6** Local authorities provide various environmental improvement grants to groups undertaking projects within their areas. They are available on a discretionary basis and may include land purchase, management plans, arts projects, tree planting and access improvements. The Community Forest Team currently administers small grants on behalf of the local authority partners which aims to demonstrate the concept and scope of the Forest, involving local communities where possible. These resources, closely focused at local communities needs will continue to be an important element in the front line of realising the Forest in direct relation to people's own aspirations.
- 20.7** Grant for improving derelict land is available through the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA). Finance is available towards meeting eligible costs for reclamation of derelict land including schemes with landscape treatment and tree planting. The Single Regeneration Budget has already helped achieve considerable Forest objectives in areas of greatest social need and these funds and their successors, administered by SWRDA, will remain an important tool for Forest partners.
- 20.8** Land acquisition has become an important part of the Forest's implementation and key purchases have been made by the Woodland Trust covering small, locally important areas. Forest Enterprise, has purchased 70 ha of land at Overscourt Farm, Siston which will become an important community woodland on the east side of Bristol. Such large areas will be important to achieve some critical mass of woodland to ensure the wide range of benefits are available. They are also a priority objective for woodland creation under the government's Forestry Strategy. These sites may currently be few and far between but acquisition or long lease may be the

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only way in which they are sustainable into the long term. In many cases, particularly in the urban fringe where planning policies deny hope value, farmers may wish to sell or lease rather than participate directly in the Forest. It should be emphasised that any such purchases would be on the open market and voluntary. Compulsory purchase for woodland creation is not supported as an option.

20.9 A major source of funds for implementation is the National Lottery and its various funds. The partners have already made use of these and helped build the Forest. The Millennium Fund provided Woods on Your Doorstep through the Woodland Trust, Millennium Greens were achieved through the Countryside Commission, grants of several millions for historic estates in Bristol have been made by the Heritage Lottery Fund and new funds such as the New Opportunities Fund offer the means to help implement even more. The partners will ensure that every opportunity is grasped.

20.10 Sponsorship and support from the commercial sector is playing a key role. The proposals for the Forest contain a range of potential projects and community initiatives which will meet many companies' objectives for environmental and social responsibility. Businesses are rising to the challenge through sponsorship of events, publications, competitions. The partners' task is to develop this relationship further and to build the business sector in as main partners and supporters of the Forest.

20.11 The Landfill Tax credit scheme has helped partners fund projects which contribute to the creation of the Forest and it is envisaged that this source of funding will continue into the future.

Targets

20.12 There are currently five main elements of national first order priorities:

i) Creating well designed woodland:

Of at least 20 hectares in size with full public access and incorporating public open space

On smaller sites with full public access: immediately adjacent to housing, connected to other woodland sites and/ or part of a recreational path network;

on sites which are on damaged or reclaimed land.

ii) Securing access to, and good management of, existing woodlands which meet the criteria above.

iii) Creating or re-opening good quality walking/ cycling/ riding networks for leisure, recreation and/ or commuting.

iv) Securing involvement in the Community Forest by a wide range of local communities, especially those presently socially excluded from their environment. This involvement will aim to focus on awareness raising, education, training and empowerment.

v) Securing financial and in-kind investment from local businesses and external sources to support major restoration and recreation projects leading to environmental regeneration and to develop a woodland economy.

20.13 Second order priorities include:

i) Creating woodland on sites other than those in priority 1 where there are significant landscape, heritage and / or biodiversity gains.

ii) Securing landscape, heritage and bio-diversity benefits on the non-wooded parts of the Community Forest where opportunities are presented by new development or on agricultural land or reclaimed land, including hedgerow restoration.

20.14 The targets given here are ambitious and are an indication of the level of activity required to bring about the Forest in all its aspects. They are achievable but will need a refocusing of existing resources as well as the introduction of new resources, including finance, staff time and effort from the partnership to be realised.

20.15 Woodland establishment targets are as follows (see Table 20.1):

20.15.1

The current grant mechanisms and those that grow and develop over the years will need to be applied for a considerable period. The overall objective for tree and woodland cover on land available for planting in the Forest is to increase it to 27%. Given the dearth of derelict land and publicly owned land in the area, most new planting will need to be on privately owned land, much of which is in agricultural use. This will take time and depend on shifting attitudes to woodlands, active promotion and marketing and the prevailing levels of grant incentive.

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Table: 20.1 Woodland cover proposed for each strategy area.

STRATEGY AREA	LAND AREA (HA)	EXISTING COVER (HA)	EXISTING COVER (%)	PROPOSED COVER (HA)	PROPOSED COVER (%)	AREA OF NEW WOODS (HA)	INCREASE IN AREA OF WOODLAND (%)
Severn Vale and Ridge	8638	488.4	5.65	1834	21.23	1345.0	15.58
Northavon Vale	6045	128.6	2.13	1702	28.16	1573.0	26.02
Pucklechurch Ridges	5458	89.3	1.64	1682	30.83	1592.5	29.19
Dundry and River Valleys	6053	187.1	3.09	1386	22.91	1199.4	19.82
Lulsgate Plateau	5075	1053.2	20.77	1715	33.82	662.0	13.05
Gordano and Parkland	6231	1454.0	23.35	1807	29.02	353.4	5.57
TOTAL	37500	3400.6	9.07	10126	27.02	6726	17.94

Notes: New woodland includes up to 20% open space. The City strategy area and other urban areas are not included, though some new woods will be planted in these areas.

20.15.2 Forest partners should adopt a 50 year time frame for achieving the planting objectives.

20.15.3 The amount of new woodland required to achieve the 27% cover target on available land, given that currently 3400 ha is wooded, is over 6726 ha; at least 1100 ha of this will need to have free open public access. Assuming an even rate of establishment, 134 ha of new woodland will be needed each year for 50 years an area approximately equivalent to the whole of the Downs in Bristol. Baseline planting rates prior to the Forest's launch were 13.3 ha per year. In the first five years, this rate has been trebled yet needs to at least treble again; 175 ha of new woodland will be required each year, on average for the next 10 years. Much more effort will be required from the partnership to achieve this, the most important objective of the Forest. The Forest partners should aim to achieve 70% of the woodland cover target within 30 years.

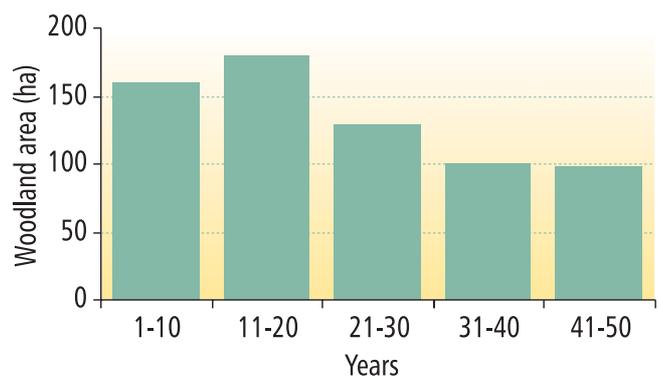
20.15.4 Every opportunity should be taken by the partners to establish woodlands in association with parks, greenways and other public open space. This will primarily serve the urban populations, providing a 'woodland on the doorstep'.

20.15.5 By linking with greenways, there should be a woodland within easy walking distance of each household in urban areas by the year 2010.

20.15.6 The creation of new community woodland over 20 ha in size will receive priority and the partners will aim to establish 200 ha of woods with public access close to the urban edge as identified in the strategy areas, by 2010.

20.15.7 The effort put into new establishment will increase over time, and as the programme gains momentum. It is reasonable, therefore, to expect that the rate of establishment will not be even but will broadly follow the pattern indicated in Figure 20.1. Efforts will be concentrated in those strategy areas where the greatest change in cover is proposed.

Figure 20.1 Woodland Establishment per 10 year period



20.16 Woodland management targets are as follows:

20.16.1 Given the gradual increase in the rate of establishing new woods, the management of existing woodland for multiple objectives should receive a high priority in the early years. By the end of 1998-99, two-thirds of existing woodland was in management, mostly under the auspices of Forestry Commission grants.

20.16.2 The remaining one third (or about 1000 ha) will be brought into management over the next five years. Those woods already within areas proposed for new woodland cover and community use will be prioritised.



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- 20.16.3** By 2010, one third of existing woodlands will be certificated to UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) or equivalent standards.
- 20.16.4** By 2010, a further 1000 ha of woodland will be secured for public access, in addition to the existing 1000 ha.
- 20.17** Creating and re-opening access network targets are as follows:
- 20.17.1** The Forest partners will seek to ensure that public rights of way in the Forest are legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised and that the local authorities will set milestones and targets to reduce the backlog and to sustain the improvements already achieved under the Milestones 2000 initiative. The Public Rights of Way network will be fully operational by 2010.
- 20.17.2** New access will be created through CSS, amounting to 1000 ha by 2010. A more detailed breakdown into open, linear and educational access will be carried out.
- 20.17.3** All new gateway sites will be identified by 2005 and a programme to establish them agreed. The Forest gateway programme will be complete by 2010.
- 20.17.4** The route of the Round Avon Ride will be completed by 2005.
- 20.17.5** The Forest partners will develop a strategy for the improvement and creation of new key access routes, including greenways and cycleways, linked to gateway sites.
- 20.18** Community involvement targets are as follows:
- 20.18.1** The Forest partners will aim to maintain a programme of at least 250 community events each year.
- 20.18.2** The Forest partners will aim to sustain over 4000 volunteer days of activity each year.
- 20.18.3** The Forest partners will establish a programme to develop dedicated community groups for woodlands and other sites (open space, wildlife sites etc.) and will aim to develop 20 self-sustaining new groups by 2010.
- 20.18.4** The Forest partners will develop a strategy for involving socially excluded groups in the Forest by 2001.
- 20.18.5** A programme of educational events and campaigns will be identified.
- 20.18.6** By 2010 90% of people living in the forest should be aware of its existence and its key objectives.
- 20.18.7** The Forest partners will establish the means to gather qualitative as well as quantitative data regarding community involvement.
- 20.19** Targets for securing resources for environmental regeneration are as follows:
- 20.19.1** A charitable company will be established to assist with fundraising, sponsorship and land ownership and will involve the business, voluntary and public sector.
- 20.19.2** The Wood Products co-operative will be developed and used to model other sustainable business projects.
- 20.19.3** The Forest partners will identify major projects which meet national priorities and bid for funds to achieve them through, for example, the New Opportunities Fund.
- 20.19.4** The Forest partners will develop a fundraising and bidding strategy to complement the business plan.
- 20.20** Landscape/ heritage/ biodiversity targets are as follows:
- 20.20.1** Create/ restore habitats as identified in Local Habitat Action Plans
- 20.20.2** Create/ restore 2500 ha of non-woodland habitat on farmland through CSS
- 20.20.3** Create/ restore 150km of hedgerows by 2010.