

UK Reply – October 2001

Voluntary report by the United Kingdom on progress towards the implementation of the proposals for action of the IPF and the IFF in preparation for the second session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

Introduction

We had considered using the UNFF 2 agenda as the basic structure for our report on implementation, building as much as possible on the IPF/IFF proposals for action and the work undertaken as part of the Six-Country Initiative. We feel this would be a sensible way to ensure that reports on implementation were relevant to the agenda items to be addressed in March 2002. A similar approach could be taken for reporting to future sessions, incorporating a range of innovative approaches to reporting on implementation to enrich the debate such as lessons learned, regional/national presentations, showcases and examples of good practice relevant to the session theme.

However, for us to produce such a detailed report to meet the deadline of 31 October, would have required a little more time and opportunities for consultation. I am sure that the UK was not alone in its confusion at the conflicting demands for reports, lack of clarity in what was actually required, and in failing to compile a detailed analysis on progress towards implementation in the short time available.

In the light of experience gained from UNFF2, it is our hope that improvements can be made in requesting and compiling reports for future sessions and progress can be made in formulating a simple and logical framework. This will, of course, be one task for the Expert Group on Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting.

However, we hope that the following report, drawn up from readily available material, will be of use in the lead up to UNFF2. Our plan is now to work in detail between now and UNFF2, in consultation with others, and focus on the agenda for UNFF2. Firstly, we provide some general remarks on the subject of reporting, followed by some points on action at the domestic level, and then reference to action internationally (***report on this to follow***).

Reporting

Reporting on progress certainly provides an opportunity to report positively on forests. Reviewing, monitoring and reporting activities should benefit policy, planning and field work at the national level.

Nevertheless, it is important to avoid creating a huge and costly reporting burden, as well as duplicating effort. There is already much valuable work completed or underway in this area, and the UK has always been in favour of harmonising reporting requirements in some way, as well as co-ordinating and

streamlining information gathering and checking compatibility with other relevant processes (FAO Forest Resource Assessment, State of the World's Forests, CSD national reports, CBD, ITTO, and UNECE, to name but a few). Involvement of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests is key, since it is the CPF members who already hold much of the information.

As reporting is voluntary in nature, any framework needs to be straightforward and user-friendly, or forest services and others will simply not be inclined to provide the information requested. Information gathering and reporting should have a clear end use, and effective feedback from international organisations to countries providing data is invaluable.

Domestic Action in Implementation of Sustainable Forest Management

UK Forestry Policy

The UK is committed to sustainable forest management and despite the size of our forest estate, we are seen as a valuable player in international forestry discussions. The UK has a good story to tell on sustainable forestry, especially Government actions since Rio, forest certification; and the development and implementation of industry standards.

The UK has a long record of contributing to the shaping of international forest policy deliberations, both in intergovernmental discussions and expert level working group initiatives on specific issues, as well as a long-term history of collaboration and international co-operation with developing countries.

The UK continues to honour its commitments under all the international agreements related to forests and plays a positive and constructive role in international and multilateral bodies, as well as in the Commonwealth and the G8.

UK forestry policy has two aims: the sustainable management of our existing woods and forests, and the continued, steady expansion of our woodland area.

The mission of the Forestry Commission (the Government Department responsible for the protection and expansion of Britain's woodlands and forests) is to protect and expand Britain's forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment.

The Forestry Commission has other objectives, in support of the Government's policy of sustainable forest management, which provides social, economic and environmental benefits:

- Protect Britain's forests and Woodlands
- Expand Britain's forest area
- Enhance the economic value of our forest resources
- Conserve and improve the biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage of our forests and woodlands

- Develop opportunities for woodland recreation
- Increase public understanding and community participation in forestry.

Environment

The UK's forest resource continues to expand as the area of new planting and replanting exceeds the area felled. Only in a very few instances are felled areas not replanted, usually where this will bring significant environmental gain.

Tree felling in the UK is regulated through felling licences, management plans, tree preservation orders and statutory development control. Cases of alleged illegal felling are thoroughly investigated and if confirmed, the individuals responsible are prosecuted.

Trees, woods and forests provide ideal habitats for wildlife such as roe and red deer, pine marten, siskin and wood ant. Native woodlands are now at the forefront in terms of their value for conservation and enhancing biodiversity, promoting their expansion, keeping them in good order, protecting their ecological diversity and enhancing their appearance will all bring long term benefits.

Forestry and Biodiversity

The UK has prepared a programme known as the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity. Britain's forests are a great habitat and species resource. Biodiversity conservation is an integral part of sustainable forestry, the Government's approach to which is detailed in the UK Forestry Standard and supporting guidelines. The FC will contribute to the UKBAP by helping to deliver habitat and species action plans – especially native woodland action plans. The aim is to enhance the nature conservation value of our forests and to safeguard special habitats.

Planting and Managing Woods

The Forestry Commission not only plants and manages the public estate under its control, but also helps and controls the planting and management of privately owned woodlands. It does this through the payment of grants to help landowners plant and manage woodlands, and the issuing of licences to control the felling of existing trees.

It also plays a key role in protecting the health of Britain's forests by controlling the import of timber into Britain and ensuring no foreign pests and diseases which could harm our trees can become established. The import of seeds and saplings is also closely monitored.

Environmental Benefits

Timber from sustainable managed forests is one of the most environmentally friendly materials available. Timber is not only a renewable resource, it is also

recyclable. Recycling is vital for environmental conservation. It is essential to expand the UK market for wood products, not only for ensuring the sustainability of the forestry industry, but also to reverse the use of other less environmentally friendly materials in places where wood can be used.

Research

The Forestry Commission undertakes a wide range of research in order to achieve objectives in support of the Government's policy of sustainable forest management.

Forest Research, an agency of the FC, is the principal organisation in Britain involved in forest and tree- related research. It is the main contractor undertaking research programmes for the FC.

The Forest Research Co-ordination Committee was established in 1982 to promote better co-ordination of forestry research in Britain. It brings together the various research organisations with an interest or responsibility for commissioning research into forestry, including the FC.

UK Forestry Standard

The UK Forestry Standard, published in 1998, provides a single, comprehensive statement of the Government's approach to sustainable forestry, and defines the criteria and indicators of sustainable management for all forests in the UK. These are linked to the developing international protocols for sustainable forestry and the Standard explains how the principles of sustainability will be delivered in practice. The Government has published a number of guidelines to support the Standard which it will continue to refine and develop.

Sustainable Forestry Indicators

The Forestry Commission in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Forest Service plan to publish a set of indicators of sustainable forestry towards the end of 2001. These national-level indicators of the economic, social and environmental aspects of forestry which are linked to the UK Forestry Standard, will provide information about their current state and trends over time for woodlands and their management, monitoring forestry's contribution to sustainable development.

UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS)

The UKWAS, launched in June 1999 with the backing of a wide range of organisations in the environmental and forestry sectors, is a voluntary scheme for the independent assessment of forest management in the UK. UKWAS was a world first, as the only national standard for sustainable forest management that has the support of all interested parties. UK growers can use the scheme to assure buyers and retailers that their wood products come from forests managed in an environmentally sound way.

Country-level Forestry Strategies

Forestry responsibilities were devolved in July 1999 and individual country strategies for England, Scotland and Wales have been published. A strategy for Northern Ireland is being prepared. The strategies are part of the UK's contribution to meeting our international commitments on sustainable forest management.

A New Focus for England's Woodlands sets out the Government's priorities and programmes for delivering sustainable forestry, based on four key programmes: forestry for rural development, forestry for recreation, access and tourism, forestry for economic regeneration, and forestry for environment and conservation.

Forests for Scotland provides a framework with priorities for action for forestry under the overarching principle of sustainability. The other principles are integration, positive value, community support, diversity and local distinctiveness.

Woodlands for Wales presents a vision for forestry and woodland policy over the next 50 years and sets a direction for the way in which trees and woodlands will contribute to a sustainable future for the people of Wales. This will be guided by five key principles: sustainability, social inclusion, quality, partnership and integration.

UK National Forest Programme

The UK participated in the Six-Country Initiative in support of the IFF, which explored how the IPF proposals for action could be put into practice at the national level, and included a detailed assessment of the proposals for action. We have since built upon the outcomes of the Initiative and made good progress in pursuing sustainable forest management through our national forest programme and country level strategies.

The UK is now preparing a strategy for delivering sustainable forest management, and aims to develop a more integrated approach and improve co-ordination of the mechanisms and processes that deliver the UK's national forest programme. This will be presented as: a UK statement on sustainable forest management (an overarching UK framework), the UK Forestry Standard (the underpinning policy document) and the four country strategies. The statement will:

- Articulate the UK's international commitments to sustainable forest management ;
- Make links between the UK's commitments, the UK Forestry Standard, and the delivery of forestry programmes through the country strategies;
- Cross-refer to other international and UK programmes, including the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, and biodiversity, climate change and energy policies;

- Set out the framework to monitor and review the performance of UK forestry.

Sustainable Forest Management - the International Framework 2001

The value of the IPF/IFF proposals for action is their political and strategic coherence, and implementation requires a “translation” into country-specific actions. Over recent months, we have drawn up a paper to provide an outline, from a domestic perspective, of some of the key international commitments on forests and the actions associated with each, explaining how they relate to the national situation. The document provides background to the main international processes and has been written in a way to “translate” our commitments from “UN-ese” into plain language and to interpret them to our domestic situation. This was initially developed for a domestic audience, to provide information for those not normally exposed to the international consideration of forests, but the current draft has proved of wider interest to international colleagues.

The paper will be finalised in February 2002, in time for the second session of the United Nations Forum on Forests and its ministerial segment.

Regeneration

The National Forest in the English Midlands demonstrates the social benefits that lowland multi-purpose forestry may bring. Stretching over 200 square miles of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire, the National Forest encompasses a mix of good and poorer agricultural land; working and derelict mineral land; remnants of two ancient forests; transport corridors; and busy towns and settlements. Over the next 20 years, the area will be transformed into a mosaic of land uses framed within a working forest, with one-third of the area planted with trees. The objectives are to improve the landscape and environment and, in the process, to regenerate the coalfield and stimulate economic enterprise and employment opportunities; to create a major new recreation and tourism resource; to produce new supplies of timber for industry; and to encourage the diversification of farmland and rural businesses. A widely agreed Strategy supported by new incentives, including the first Tender Scheme for forestry, is stimulating planting, with associated public benefits including public access, by a range of participants, including a growing number of private landowners. Partnership and participation are the heart of the approach being promoted by the National Forest Company, sponsored by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Libby Jones, International Policy Adviser, Forestry Commission
231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh EH12 7AT

Tel: + 44 131 314 6137

Fax: + 44 131 334 0442

Email: libby.jones@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

International Perspective/ Development assistance

Section to follow, under preparation