

VINE response to the Independent Panel on Forestry *Call for Views*, July 2011

Dear Forestry Panel,

Thank you for inviting views. I am responding as Chairman of the VINE Project - Values In Nature and the Environment - a 'not-for-profit' organisation of some 180 nature conservation and environmental people from across the UK, both professionals, amateurs and volunteers. Further details of our constitution can be seen on our website: www.vineproject.org.uk VINE is about recognising inspiration and celebration of nature conservation. We sometimes use literature as a way of expressing our thoughts so before responding to your questions here are three quotes which are perhaps relevant and representative of our interest in trees, woods and forests!

J. Sterling Morton:

"The forests are the flags of nature. They appeal to all and awaken inspiring universal feelings. Enter the forest and the boundaries of nations are forgotten. It may be that some time an immortal pine will be the flag of a united peaceful world."

Enos A. Mills

"Each generation takes the earth as trustees. We ought to bequeath to posterity as many forests [and orchards] as we have exhausted and consumed."

Aldo Leopold in 1949

'It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value.'

Now, without more ado, to your consultation.

We were dismayed to see the forestry (and, less in the headlines, the National Nature Reserve) sell off proposals last winter. We were then relieved to see the setting up of the Panel to undertake this trees, woods and forests review which we very much welcome. We wish you well in your deliberations whilst we wait to see the recommendations of your Report. We do so hope that it will really strengthen the role of trees, woods and forests in providing for nature conservation, wildlife and particularly the inspirational and spiritual experiences that are valued by so many.

I provide here a few responses to your revised brief (April) against each of your suggested questions.

Yours sincerely,
John Bacon.
VINE Chair.

A 'VINE-TYPE' RESPONSE TO YOUR QUESTIONS.

Question 1 – What do forests and woods mean to you?

- Places for nature/wildlife/biodiversity to exist, develop and be protected and conserved.
- Places to enjoy, including: to re-charging of the batteries; for relaxation; to be inspired; to commune with the natural world.

Question 2 – What is your vision for the future of England's forests and woods?

- A landscape scale network of woods and forests that deliver wildlife, nature conservation and biodiversity objectives. Within this to provide, where appropriate, resources that assist with climate change issues. Also to provide appropriate resources for community and individual well being.

Question 3 – What do you feel to be the benefits of forests and woods to:

- a) you personally:** places to enjoy nature; places to recharge the batteries.
- b) society as a whole:** places for wellbeing, health benefits and appropriate relaxation/recreation.
- c) the natural environment:** places for wildlife, nature conservation and biodiversity.
- d) the economy:** a resource for rural businesses through tourism; supply of 'sustainably managed' woodland products.

Question 4 – We would like to hear about your suggestions of practical solutions and good practice which can be replicated more widely:

Examples would be:

- ensuring sustainable management of forests to a high standard e.g. Forestry Stewardship Council type standards.
- woodland and forest National Nature Reserves for wildlife, biodiversity and quiet enjoyment.
- forest management contributory support schemes (e.g. such as run by Cool Earth for rainforests www.coolearth.org)
- community forests.

Question 5 – What do you see as the priorities and challenges for policy about England's forests and woods?

5.1. Management and ownership by Government of key wildlife/ biodiversity/nature conservation woodland and forest sites as a selection of the 'crown jewels'.

Whilst a mix of ownerships and management is desirable - with private and voluntary taking a share under prescribed controls, guidelines and codes of practice - it is also important that government accepts its own responsibility to own and manage important sites. How can we influence international policy and ask developing countries to protect their rainforests if we do not practice what we preach with what's left of our own native forests.

5.2. Recognise they provide 'additional uses' and 'values' alongside the more traditional uses:

Including within nature conservation, the 'spiritual' dimension, areas for escape and recharging of the batteries and recreation. You only have to Google 'trees and poetry' to see the enormous emotional value attributed e.g:
http://www.spiritoftrees.org/poetry/tree_poems.html

Additionally do fully recognise the economic value of forests and woods in attracting people to rural areas with their spending power.

5.3. Climate mitigation benefits of forests and woods should be maximised.

There is a huge potential for a more inventive use of this resource to help deliver climate targets e.g. carbon stores; or conversely, an alternative source of non-fossil fuel.

5.4. Nature conservation and wildlife objectives should be supported by harvesting operations where these are appropriate - not detract from them. There is further opportunity to increase the biodiversity benefits occurring.

5.5. Further develop Defra's 2007 Strategy for Trees, Woods and Forests and the 2008 England Forestry Strategy by incorporating in emerging issues in. These have been regarded as a good strategy. As 'work in progress' it should be developed. Increase and deliver on the UK forest-cover target.

5.6. Develop the remit of the FC and FE to incorporate the above objectives. The Dutch forestry service is an interesting example that could be drawn on.

5.7. Other specific elements:

- Continue to improve the design of 2nd generation conifer plantations in line with the above.
- Do more to remove the adverse side affects of deer browse and game management.
- Why were some woods and forests excluded from the CROW Act? This needs addressing.
- Do more to protect and manage ancient woodland sites, including old trees - the old haulks!
- Manage newly created urban forests with a more ecosystem approach.
- Incentivise the setting up of small scale/local, timber and timber product, processing facilities for added value to rural communities.

and finallya return to the quotes at the top of this document may now be timely!!

Please keep me in touch with the work of the Panel.

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Organisation (if applicable): VINE. Values in Nature and the Environment. A not-for-profit nature conservation, countryside and environmental organisation.

Location (if applicable): UK wide.