COMMUNITY FORESTS: CONFLICTING AIMS OR COMMON PURPOSE?

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JUNE 1993
ABSTRACT

The community forest movement, initiated by the Countryside Commission and supported by the Forestry Commission (now the Forest Authority) has gripped the imagination of those who have, for some time, commented on the sad state of the countryside around our major towns and cities. The concept is refreshingly radical and appealing in that it seeks to implant a new set of green lungs in our densely populated lowland landscape. It is claimed that this patchwork of trees, fields and small scale developments will not only revitalise the aesthetic appearance of the countryside around our towns but establish a multi-purpose resource benefiting urban fringe agriculture, commercial interests, conservation objectives and the recreational needs of the public at large.

The vision represents the 'common purpose' in as much as it constitutes a dream few would find much to disagree with. This study however seeks to explore the strata beneath this ideological common ground in the interests of exposing the deeply rooted philosophical and practical land use realities which exist in Britain today. This exploration involves charting the forces which have shaped the modern landscape, including the twin leviathans of agriculture and forestry. It involves examining the central issue of planning and the system's ability to orchestrate change and it entails probing the expectations of the many groups and organisations with a vested interest. The exploration of what is past leads to an examination of what is present in the form of an infant project - the Marston Vale Community Forest in Bedfordshire. By viewing the area as a microcosm of community forest implementation issues generally the study seeks to shed light on the complex network of relationships at play in the Vale in order to set out the major areas of conflict and the measures which may be required to re-align ideology with reality.
I would like to thank Linda Johnston for enduring the endless re-types and bad handwriting, the Marston Vale Community Forest Team for their candid and open views, David Bowles of the Mid Bedfordshire District Council and all those who answered my postal questionnaire. Last but not least, I would like to note my appreciation for the help and guidance of Mike Collins at UCL and my colleagues at North Hertfordshire District Council.
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CHAPTER 1

FORESTS FOR THE COMMUNITY: ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

"In the early days of my exposure to Forestry, I had occasion to discuss forestry problems with very many foresters, foresters of every conceivable specialisation. Had I believed implicitly everything they told me, I would have been driven inexorably to the conclusion that Forestry is about trees. But, of course, this is quite wrong. Forestry is not about trees, it is about people. And it is about trees only insofar as trees can serve the needs of people".

(Westoby, 1987)

In the late 80's the Forestry and Countryside Commissions launched the concept of community forests. Since then the term 'community forest' has come to be associated with what many perceive to be a radically new land use. The marketing of the concept has focused on trees as the environmental glue with which a number of essential human activities are welded together in such a way as to improve the quality of modern life in every dimension. The community forest vision is a bold one which, if it is to materialise, will involve the co-operation of many agencies. The process will, by definition, necessitate radical changes of land use in and around our major towns and cities and in this respect will need to be closely allied to the land use planning process. With the new emphasis now being given to the development plan making process there can be little doubt that the realisation of the dream will hinge significantly on the planning system at both the strategic and local levels. Not only will there be a need to co-ordinate land use designations and policies across administrative boundaries there will also be a need to recognise the cumulative role to be played by individual development control decisions.

However, before any discussion relating to the problems of community forestry as a modern land use concept can take place it is essential to establish a historical framework. Trees have played an important role in man's interaction with the land for a long time - indeed the concept of multi-purpose forestry is not a new one. An examination of man's past relationships with one of the Earth's most useful commodities will reveal an affinity with trees which has, in historical terms, only recently been lost. A historical overview is important in as much as it may provide clues as to the necessary pre-conditions if the concept of multi-purpose woodland is to be revived.

Pre-Industrial Forests

Prior to the Bronze Age man's impact on the indigenous woodlands of the British Isles was limited to using wood where and when it naturally occurred. During the
Bronze Age however, large tracts of woodland were cleared for grazing. A form of early woodland management, the act of clearing large areas of trees facilitated the development of agriculture. The important point to note about these early woodlands is that they were only cleared by man not cultivated or manipulated by him. Many people mistakenly use the word 'forest' to describe the tree cover of these early times but strictly speaking the term is incorrectly applied in this context. The term 'forest' appeared as a word describing woodlands with a special purpose (Westoby's definition of forest as trees which serve the needs of people) at a later time in history when the concepts of ownership and utility were formally embodied in law.

It was the Normans who developed the concept of forests as tracts of land (including trees, not necessarily wholly afforested) which could be allocated, bounded and controlled. Successive Norman kings ranked forests as valuable assets and such places were controlled by the sovereign of the day and were subject to special laws which gave him a singular degree of control over them indeed many forests became possessions of considerable economic and social value. The King could give gift of a hunting rights, timber and venison warrants or permission to create agricultural land from former forest (an assart) in exchange for services.

"Thus the medieval forests had considerable material value as well as providing sport and entertainment for the King and his friends".

(James, 1990, P74)

Thus the term forest became synonymous with areas of woodland bounded, controlled and used at the discretion of the ruling monarch. Definitions of the term forest can be found in early writings such as that contained in the Dialogues de Scaccario of Richard Fitz Nigel circa 1179.

"The King's forest is a safe refuge for wild beasts; not every kind of beast, but those that live in woods; not in any kind of place, but in selected spots suitable for that purpose".

(Fitz Nigel, 1179)

Notably, entertainment was a principle function of these early forests and the law of the time reflected this use. The Magna Carta, drawn up in 1215, included a number of references to forests and in 1217 the Charter of the Forest, the most important medieval legislation in this respect, was passed with the ultimate objective of protecting and securing forests, principally for the enjoyment of the Crown.

The medieval forest survived for many Centuries, even as late as 1665 the principles of use, as laid down by the Norman Kings, could be seen permeating the definition of the day. J A Manwood, in his ' Treatise of the Laws of the Forest' illustrates this
royal legacy.

"And therefore a forest doth chiefly consist of these four things, that is to say, of vert, venison, particulars and privileges, and if certain meet officers appointed for that purpose, to the end that the same may be better preserved and kept for a place of recreation and pastime meet for the Royal dignity of a Prince".

(Manwood, 1665)

In these early forests then the concept of utility was strongly embodied in their management to the extent that laws protected them physically while encouraging their multi-purpose use by the privileged.

By the beginning of the 16th Century, the extensive areas of land controlled as Royal forest began to contract. Economic pressures on the Crown, such as the war with Spain, forced the monarchy to seek ways of economising. Forests had been created principally for what Manwood called 'princely delight and pleasure' and as such were deemed an asset which could be temporarily neglected in times of financial hardship. This demise was further accelerated by the Civil War between 1642 and 1646 when the demand for firewood, building materials and shipping also began to eat into the physical structure of forests. Britain's prominence as a naval power was also being threatened by a diminishing supply of woodland. In 1543 the Tudor King Henry VIII passed an act which attempted to stem the haemorrhage of trees suitable for shipbuilding. It laid down that when coppice or underwood of 24 years growth or less was felled 12 oaks (known as standils) should be left per acre. In 1558, 1581 and 1585 further acts were passed in an attempt to stem the consumption of wood by the newly emerging iron industry. In fact the situation soon became noticeably dire, as the Commissioners of Waltham Forest attempted to point out to the King in 1793.

"...it behoves the King's officers to be very attentive to the growth and preservation of the timber trees upon this forest, as, in a few years, it would be the supply of Deptford and Woolwich yards".

(cited in James, 1990)

Industrialisation and New Priorities

The demise of forestry's wider function of 'vert' (wood gathering), 'venison', 'particulars and privileges' as outlined by Manwood can also be seen to correspond with the rise of industrialism in Britain. While the industrial revolution relied principally on the iron and coal (coal replacing wood as a material for smelting iron) trees were still used to build ships. The Tudors had tried to stem the consumption
of wood but in the headlong rush to industrialise other materials and techniques eclipsed wood as the prime resource and the dire state of Britain’s timber reserves was largely forgotten. Indeed, it was left to a few informed writers of the time to highlight the perilous nature of supplies.

“For 300 years contemporary writers such as Evelyn (1684), Wade (1755), Nichols (1793) and McKew (1831) had appealed to the patriotism of landowners and had urged them to plant oak in the hope that it would grow to the size the dockyards needed”.

(James 1990, P88)

Other aspects of industrialisation which de-emphasised the plight of Britain’s forests included urbanisation and rural depopulation. During medieval times the woodlands and forests of Britain were an essential resource, not only of the Kings but of the peasantry. Rights of common and wood gathering rather than hunting were enjoyed by the rural proletariat. The Enclosure Acts and the consequent out migration of people to the towns had a marked effect on the use of forests as a community resource. The industrial revolution therefore, marked a period in British history when the multi-purpose importance of forests was temporarily forgotten. Attention was focused on the new age of iron and steam. Thousands flocked into the ever swelling towns and cities and these places assumed the role of providing for the wide spectrum of human needs, albeit in unprecedented environments of squalor and deprivation. The tide of industrialisation also buried the realisation that Britain’s supply of forest had been severely depleted and it was not until late in the 19th Century that the state of affairs began to re-assert itself as a political priority. The industrial revolution had created a mercantile mentality which had largely lost the foresight to recognise the wider value of trees as a multi-purpose resource. The fledgling arboricultural societies of the late 1800’s were principally concerned with the commercial viability of forestry and it was this concern rather than wider ranging anxieties which prompted a new look at dwindling stocks. After the first International Forestry Exhibition in 1894 in Edinburgh a select committee was appointed to review the issue of Forestry but it would be sometime before the potential of the resource would surface above the purely utilitarian value ascribed to the cultivation of trees. Continental interest and practice, especially in Germany, was to have a profound effect on the early forestry organisations in this country. Returning members of the Indian Forest Service, strongly influenced by German practitioners, were instrumental in disseminating new ideas the key protagonist being a man called Sir William Schlich. He was particularly active as a lecturer in forestry and in giving advice to private estate managers and his contribution, albeit commercially orientated, should not be overlooked.
In 1902 a Departmental Committee, appointed by the Board of Agriculture, were commissioned to report on the state of British forestry and its management and to make recommendations such as to be of use in carrying the industry forward. The Committee's findings are encapsulated by one paragraph in the Minutes of Evidence 1903.

"We endorse the conclusions of the select Committee of 1885 - 1887 as regards the neglected condition of forestry in Great Britain, the possibility of improvement and the necessity for the provision of better means of education".

(Cd 1565, 1903)

During the early years of the 20th Century other pressures also influenced attitudes towards afforestation. A Royal Commission report in 1909, originally set up to deal with coastal erosion and the reclamation of tidal lands, added to its remit by linking afforestation programmes with new employment opportunities.

"Whether in connection with reclaimed lands or otherwise, it is desirable to make an experiment in afforestation as a means of increasing employment during periods of depression in the labour market..."

(Cd 4460, 1909)

During Lloyd George's Budget Speech of 1909 he announced that grants would be available for 'schools of forestry' acquisition of land for planting and the creation of 'experimental forests'.

Interest in trees around the turn of the Century was gathering momentum. As mentioned earlier however, much of the interest centred on the commercial and economic advantages of forestry. Furthermore, some prominent figures in the forestry movement were highly sceptical that anything practical was actually being done. Sir William Schlich concluded that:-

"...very little has as yet been done to increase the area under forest. Too much talking and too little action, that is the long and the short of it".

(Schlich, 1915, P1)

The First World War, while not actually placing a direct demand on timber resources, did raise governmental anxieties regarding the supply of pit props for the collieries which in turn provided fuel for the Royal Navy and Britain's industry. Again, the economic as well as logistical value of home grown timber forced its way onto the political agenda culminating in the formation of the Home Grown Timber Committee in 1915 chaired by the influential M.P. the Right Honourable F D Ackland. In 1917
this Committee transferred its duties to the Directorate of Timber supplies and then to the Board of Trade. Ackland's contribution to British Forestry can not be overstated. As the war progressed it became evident that timber was essential for economic survival. Ackland was again appointed to head a prominent Sub-Committee, this time the Reconstruction Committee. The Committee's final report, published in May 1918, was to become famous as representing the backbone of British Forestry policy. One of the main recommendations of the report was the establishment of a Forestry Authority with the power and funds to acquire and plant land. The report preceded the Forestry Acts of 1919 and 1923 in which full powers were given to the newly established Forestry Commission. The rate of planting by the Forestry Commission was not as prolific as envisaged by the Ackland Committee however, by 1927, the Commission had planted some 138,279 acres. The establishment of the Forestry Commission gave greater impetus to the creation of a broader perspective. As the 20th Century wore on then the strictly utilitarian approach towards forestry, clearly evident since the early 1800's, gave way somewhat to a wider agenda based on the concepts of social good.

The Second World War proved a major stimulus in the arena of forestry as it did in other areas concerning the supply and use of land. Not only did the conflict reinforce the idea that Britain should be self-sufficient in timber it also underpinned a widely held belief in the primacy of agriculture. Furthermore, the war heightened political sensitivity to the general state of Britain's long neglected industrial conurbation's. Out of the melting pot of post war political debate came the concepts of central planning and the welfare state. Many politicians, such as the Fabians and the Labour Party, saw the war as an ideal opportunity to construct an egalitarian society built on socialist principles - in such a society all would have equal access to housing, employment, health and recreation. The 'right' in British politics also saw the war as an opportunity. They realised, somewhat against the grain, that a healthy economy and an effective work force depended on some measure of social justice. Thus, post war, there existed a broad political consensus for change which lay beyond the purely utilitarian aims of physical and economic reconstruction. In 1943 the Forestry Commission reflected changing attitudes in a report on post-war forest policy. In this report the Commission stated that an additional 3 million acres of bare land should be afforested over a period of 50 years and, significantly, that due attention be paid to amenity and recreational facilities and the creation of national forest parks. In 1944 a supplementary report on private woodlands paved the way for the first universal system to encourage planting on private land in the shape of the Dedication Scheme, brought into being by the 1947 Forestry Act. Britain's invigorated Forestry lobby moved from strength to strength after the war. The 1951 Forestry Act was passed to ensure that sufficient stocks of standing
timber accumulated. In 1959, the 40th anniversary of the Forestry Commission, the Commission's report stated that:-

"British Forestry has reached the point at which substantial progress has been made in repairing the excessive felling of the two wars. The problems of creating and establishing the country's forest estate have largely been solved; the problems of how to manage it so as to reap a return on the investment, while at the same time preserving the asset so laboriously built up, are now to be faced".

(F.C. 1959, P15)

Although the Act of 1943 mentioned recreational facilities and the creation of national forest parks in passing, the tenor of the Commission's policy statements was still largely confined to the economic utility of trees. Not until the 70's did the focus begin to change significantly.

A New Look at Old Ideals

In 1972, a report produced jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Secretary of State for Wales and Scotland, opened up the debate. Based on investigations undertaken by economists employed in Government departments using cost benefit analysis techniques, the report made a number of radical policy recommendations in relation to Forestry Commission owned woodlands. Firstly, the report suggested that new afforestation (and re-afforestation) be limited to 55,000 acres per annum. Secondly, it emphasised the need to pay closer attention to the effect of woodlands on landscape. Thirdly, it highlighted the need to pay closer attention to the recreational and amenity potential of woodlands. In other words the report was attempting to revive the concept of multi-use. New criteria were suggested for the issuing of government money to support private forestry including the need to prove an environmental gain such as preserving or creating amenity. Not surprisingly there was a reactionary outcry from the traditionalist private forestry industry. The Timber Grower (1972) referring to the Government stated:

"..it has allowed its fashionable preoccupation with the environment to blind it to the great potential which exists in Britain for the development of a viable Forestry industry".

(The Timber Grower, 1972, p. 12)

Tree 'awareness' was generally on the increase during the 70's with 1973 being designated 'Year of the Tree' - the objectives of which was the planting of trees to contribute the beauty of the countryside and, of special significance to this study, the improvement of urban areas. In 1974 a new scheme for encouraging the afforestation of private land was introduced. Known as Basis 3 it required the owner
to discuss issues of access to private woodlands with Local Planning Authorities who, of course, had few statutory rights of control over forestry or agricultural land. Additionally, the new scheme encouraged more variety by offering increased rates for hardwood planting. Also in 1974 the 'Tree Council' was created with the purpose of promoting the care and planting of trees. Significantly, also in 1974, the Forestry Commission re-defined its objectives to include safeguarding the environment, the provision of recreational facilities and the integration of forestry and agriculture. While attitudes in general towards the wider benefits of forestry had changed since the war, the inertia of the forestry industry was still proving a stubborn obstacle to all but superficial change.

Within five years of the 1972 report, based on cost benefit techniques, the Forestry Commission itself was arguing for an increase in the area of land under commercial timber. The strength of the Commission's argument was backed, in no uncertain way, by a private response to the 1972 study (see Wolfe and Caborn, 1973). Eight years later in 1980 the Centre for Agricultural Strategy published a report which reinforced the forestry lobby's reaction to the changing tide of opinion regarding forest policy by the 'outside' world. The conclusion recommended four options - the planting of 30, 40, 50 and 60,000 ha of commercial timber per annum. The report naturally favoured the higher figure and gave little emphasis to the non-market benefits of forestry and afforestation.

While the private sector continued to kick against the tide of shifting attitudes the mood of change persisted. In 1986 an economic evaluation of the Forestry Commissions objectives and achievements was undertaken by the National Audit Office (NAO). NAO commissioned the consultants PIEDA (1986) to carry out the investigation. The resulting evaluation was very critical of the practice of subsidising Forestry Commission enterprises and, indeed, the financial prudence of investing in forestry as an industry. The report, while recognising the amenity benefits of forestry, considered that these were small in relation to the total forest estate. It also highlighted the limited extent of environmental improvements on forest estates and the dubious benefit to the nation of subsidising, from the public purse, private forestry through grant and tax relief mechanisms. Again, in the spirit of counter response the forestry industry hit back. The Forestry Industry Committee of Great Britain (FICEB) stated that forestry was a renewable resource and should not be viewed in a purely 'cost/benefit' fashion.

The hiatus period for British Forestry policy is thus characterised by a series of arguments and counter arguments. On the one hand there existed a governmental as well as public perception that existing forest practices were over utilitarian in
concept and poor value for public investment. On the other, existed a deeply entrenched forestry industry who's outlook, which permeated the Forestry Commission, asserted that the British forestry industry was an institution to be supported at all cost. While the Forestry Commission had broadened its policy objectives to include references to amenity and recreational facilities, its primary raison d'être was still the production of timber. The period of heated debate over the value of forestry to society was prolonged by the absence of any widely accepted method of calculating the true costs and benefits involved in the industry and in this respect both Labour and Conservative administrations left well alone. Towards the end of the 1980's however a clear shift in the emphasis of forestry policy was beginning to emerge, a shift which was beginning to acknowledge the benefits of a wider view.
CHAPTER 2

A NEW ERA FOR FORESTRY POLICY

Traditional afforestation policy continued to prevail over the rising tide of arguments for alternative approaches well into the 1980's. Tompkins (1989) and Wilson (1987) suggest that the united nature of the commercial forestry lobby has been more successful than the often disjointed front shown by environmentalists despite the tenuous economic social and environmental rationale behind traditional forestry practice. As with any shift of attitude within society it is difficult to identify a single factor or point in time which signifies the adoption of an alternative view. However, towards the middle of the 1980's cumulative events appeared to be accelerating the demise of the simplistic economic monoculture view of forestry practice. In 1985 the Wildlife and Countryside Act (Amendment) introduced new conservation duties for the Forestry Commission. The amendment to the Act required the Commission to:

"endeavour to achieve a reasonable balance between (a) development of afforestation, the management of forests and the production and supply of timber and (b) the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the conservation of flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of special interest".

(The Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1985)

Also in 1985, the Forestry Commission introduced the "Broad-leaved Woodland Grant Scheme (F.C, 1985) which constituted an important departure from the myopic aims of rural employment and timber production. Amongst the objectives of the scheme were the enhancement of the broad-leaved character of well wooded areas in the country; the promotion of broad-leaved woodlands in areas of scarcity (including the edges of towns and cities); the encouragement of more diverse planting in the uplands and the encouragement of a greater use of all types of broad-leaved woodland for the purposes of conservation, recreation and landscape improvement as well as for wood production. In the following year the Forestry Commission for Scotland produced a paper "Forestry in Scotland" (1986) in which the emphasis centred on the need for 'trees in the right places'. The Commission tried to encourage local authorities to come up with indicative strategies for forestry in their area. In 1987 the Countryside Commission entered the fray. In its policy paper "Forestry in the Countryside" (F.C. 1987) the Commission called for a national forest policy based on "multiple objectives". In line with the Commission's thinking these should be:

- Produce a national supply of timber as a raw material and as a source of energy.
- Offer an alternative to agricultural use of land;
- Contribute to rural employment either in timber industries or through associated recreation development;
- Create attractive sites for public enjoyment;
- Enhance the natural beauty of the countryside;
- Create wildlife habitats.

(C.C., 1981, P7)

As well as suggesting that planning controls should be extended to forestry schemes over 5ha and that statutory development plans include areas for forestry in their own right, the Commission launched initiatives aimed at creating forests around towns and the establishment of a major new forest in the Midlands.

Forestry and Fiscal Policy

Fine words are one thing but direct financial intervention is a more potent catalyst for change. On the 5th of March, 1988 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that, as of midnight on that day, forestry would be taken out of the income taxation system (except for transitional arrangements). Many had argued that the old system of relief for investment in afforestation schemes was both an inappropriate use of public funds and a cause of much environmental trauma, especially in the Highlands of Scotland where vast estates of conifers were planted in the tax interests of the rich and famous. On the day following the 5th the Secretary of State for the Environment announced that, with minor exceptions no more coniferous afforestation would be allowed in the uplands of England. On the same day the Secretary of State for Scotland supported by the Welsh Secretary re-stated the Government's commitment to a target of 33,000 ha per annum of 'traditional afforestation' outside of England.

The March of 1988 proved an active month concerning forestry matters. On the 23rd the Forestry Commission, replaced its old Forestry Grant Scheme and Broad-leaved grant scheme with the Woodland Grant Scheme (F.C. 1988). The new scheme differed from the old Forestry Grant Scheme in that it encompassed the spirit of multiple objectives for planting schemes. Still present were the aims of encouraging timber production and the provision of jobs. However, the new scheme emphasised the need for agricultural diversification, landscape enhancement, the provision of new habitats, recreation and the conservation and regeneration of existing forests and woodlands. Thus here was a convergence of the Countryside Commission and the Forestry Commission - two organisations driven by totally
different engines harmonising over the issue of forestry - or so it seemed. Also in 1988 MAFF launched the Farm Woodland Scheme (MAFF, 1988) as a further device to encourage farmers to move away from surplus creating agricultural practices (The scheme has subsequently been re-named the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme, MAFF, 1992 - see also Chapter 3). The European Commission was also active in 1988. The Commission's document "Community Strategy and Action Programme for the Forestry Section" (1988) echoed the sentiments of environmental enhancement and the protection of the 'Community's' Forest's.

Some viewed the new changes in the 88' period with cynicism. As Bishop (1990) points out, the new rate (as then) for conifer planting over 10ha under the Woodland Grant Scheme was greater than under the previous system, thus the Woodland Grant Scheme could actually be seen as an incentive to plant large areas with a single species. The economies of planting trees on farmland are explored in more detail in Chapter 3 suffice to say the 88' scheme was not seen by many as the panacea for all forestry's previous ills.

Since 1988, the Woodland Grant Scheme has been updated to make it more attractive in certain areas and circumstances. The 1992 version of the scheme includes the following 3 refinements:

- **The addition of management grants - with increased management grant available where recreation or nature conservation are special considerations;**

- **Increased payment for planting on 'Better Land';**

- **A Community Woodland Supplement of £950/ha for planting close to towns and cities.**

The following claim for the new Woodland Grant Scheme is made by the Forestry Commission's Marcus Sangster (1992).

"The Woodland Grant Scheme is not just a grant aid scheme for planting trees. It has evolved into a sophisticated system for ensuring that environmental considerations are given careful attention. The Forestry Commission's advisory network of Foresters ensures that applicants receive personally the advice they need to establish and manage their woodlands. The suite of guidelines associated with the scheme set the industry standards for Landscape Design, Water Management, Nature Conservation and Community Woodland Design. Additional guidance on Woodland recreation and Archaeology will be available later this spring".

(Sangster, 1992, p.7)
These bold claims for the scheme are yet to be validated fully but there can be little doubt that the Forestry Commission’s intentions are worthy.

**A Policy for Forestry**

In 1991, the Government joined the "multi-purpose" movement in the form of its "Forestry Policy for Great Britain" (F.C. 1991). Representing the views of the Government Departments concerned the Secretary of State for Scotland had the following to say:

"I have accordingly arranged for the Forestry Commission to publish this document on behalf of Forestry Ministers - myself, John Gummer and David Hunt - setting out a composite summary of the Government’s forestry purpose”

(Ian Lang MP in F.C., 1991, P1)

In the document the stated aims of the Government are:

- The sustainable management of our existing woods and forests.
- A steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many, diverse benefits that Forests provide. In both we recognise the advantages of basing policy on the realisation of multiple objectives.

The Government was at last embracing, in words at least, the value of setting multiple objectives for Forestry.

"The Forestry Commissions Woodland Grant Scheme is the main system of financial support for the planting and restocking of forest and for the management of existing woodland areas”.

(F.C., 1991, P7)

This Chapter has, thus far, concentrated on the evolving policy framework surrounding forestry in this Country. Some of the reasons which lie behind this evolving policy have already been touched on. Bishop (1990) sums up a number of the most crucial:

"This increasingly vocal concern about the nature and impact of forestry policy in Britain with wider changes in rural land use and the 'greening' of British politics, has resulted in a dramatic period of change in forestry policy, unrivalled since the establishment of the Forestry Commission in 1919. The new policies that are continuing to evolve adopt a multi-purpose approach, the concentration upon timber production that dominated policy into the 1980's is now tempered more by recognition of Forestry’s wider, non-market benefits, such as wildlife habitat creation,
Later Chapters deal with the impact of agricultural land use change and the wider influence of environmentalism on British politics. There is, however, one area of activity, not touched on as of yet, which has played a crucial role in promoting multi-purpose forestry - the urban forestry movement.

Trees in Towns

When talking about 'forestry' the normal perception is that of an activity which takes place in a rural setting. Chapter 1 made the assertion that community forestry was not a new idea. An historical examination of forestry in this Country shows this to be true in all but one respect - the urban setting. While it is obviously the case that urban conurbation's did not really exist to any great degree in this country until the period known as the industrial revolution, it is also true that when they did, the issue of healthy urban environments was not high on the political agenda.

"By the beginning of the nineteenth Century the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation was becoming clear. Problems of poverty, disease, crime and squalor were demanding attention".

(Byrne, 1990, p.12)

The industrial revolution had severed a large number of people in Britain from the common land rights their forefathers had enjoyed. The Victorians and, in particular, enlightened individuals such as Ebenezer Howard, realised that urban inhabitants would benefit from 'greenspace' and the approach taken by the early municipal authorities centered on the provision of such spaces as a utility. In other words public open space and landscaping schemes were seen as a social cost rather than a resource. This mentality still prevails today in this country. Local authorities spend vast amounts of community revenue on schemes which are expensive to maintain (such as vast expanses of grass, ornamental trees and manicured flower beds) and which are cosmetic in as much as they do not contribute to the public purse as a resource base or form an integral part of the lives of the average town dweller. In other words 'greenspace' in the municipal context has lost its 'essential' relationship with man such that existed in pre-industrial times. As a reaction to this the urban forestry movement has grown out of a real need to maximise the value of shrinking areas of urban open space - not just as areas which give aesthetic relief from the build environment but which interact with and benefit local communities.

"The urban forestry movement has grown out of the urgent need to bring urban tree management out of the dark ages and into the 20th Century".

(Johnston, 1991, p.7)
Paradoxically, the application of market forces to the running of local government parks departments has spawned a new interest in a range of more self-sustaining forms of urban greenspace management of which urban forestry is a leading component. Urban forestry outside of the UK is not a new phenomena (see Anderson and Granger 1986; Miller 1988, for example). Advanced urban authorities abroad have developed urban forestry to sophisticated levels using valuation techniques in some cases to actually cost the value of the wooded resource.

"The City of Huntsville, Alabama, which has one of the most advanced urban forestry departments in the United States, recently valued its street tree population, using the ISA formula, at a massive US $27.2 million. With some 22,300 trees that is an average value for each tree of almost $1,200. Armed with this information the city felt justified in granting the necessary funds to effectively manage such a valuable community asset".

(Johnston, 1991, p.7)

In Britain the urban tree lobby is giving momentum to and fuelling the multi-purpose woodland debate. The magazine "Urban Forests", supported by the Countryside
Commission, is at the vanguard of the movement and is experiencing a steadily expanding list of subscribers (see Chambers, 1991, p.6). The Forestry Commission is also proactive in this area. In 1986 it became involved with the "Black Country Urban Forestry Initiative" and co-sponsored the first UK conference on urban forestry, in 1989 the Commission published its own handbook on "Urban Forestry Practice" (Hibberd, 1989). As has already been mentioned the recently re-vamped Woodland Grant Scheme has been extended to include a supplement (currently £950.00 ha) for community woodland planting the purpose of which is "to encourage the creation of new woodlands close to towns and cities which will be of value for informal public recreation." (F.C., 88/91).

The ideas underpinning the urban forestry movement have found some expression in the new town movement. Certain new towns in Britain such as Milton Keynes and Cumbernauld have, built in, a multi-purpose woodland principle although the rationale in both these cases is one of screening and landscaping with some recreational utility rather than full blown woodland including timber production. Amongst the more established urban authorities with a multi-purpose woodland policy Leeds City council is a good example. The departments responsible for forestry have merged into a single Forestry Office, and with an established timber mill, the Council is not only self sufficient in timber but sells surpluses of milled softwoods to local users. The woodlands under the Council's control are managed primarily for wildlife and recreation - timber production is a useful by-product. Other urban authorities have successfully used trees as the focal point for social cohesion projects. The "Forest of London" project, launched in 1987 to encourage Londoners to plant trees and take a pride in the fabric of their communities, is one such scheme. These initiatives aim to make local people feel that they have some investment in their environment in an attempt to create a sustainable greenspace resource and help reduce the mindless vandalism which has been an all to common occurrence in the manicured urban environments of the 60's and 70's. But perhaps one of the most striking thing about the rise of the urban forestry movement compared with its rural counterpart is the drive to make trees more productive - that is extract some tangible material benefit from an aesthetic resource. This is occurring, paradoxically, at a time when traditional 'out of town' forestry policy is moving away from its long held objectives of timber production.

The Birth of a Vision

In 1987 the Countryside Commission, following a major review of countryside recreation policy, published "Policies for Enjoying the Countryside" (C.C, 1987). The focus of the document was the management of the countryside to facilitate greater
access for the population and in this respect they identified a need for "major new forests on the edge of our large cities" to serve as a recreational resource. As has already been mentioned, the theme of new woodlands was also adopted in the Countryside Commission's policy statement on Forestry in the same year "Forestry in the Countryside" (C.C, 1987). To illustrate the move towards multi-purpose forestry the Countryside Commission proposed the creation of forests around some of Britain's major cities and the establishment of a new forest in the English Midlands. Following these two initiatives by the Countryside Commission the Forestry Commission joined the lobby to establish the "Community Forest" concept. In July 1989 the Community Forest programme was launched by the two Commissions with the aim of establishing such forests on the fringes of major cities in England and Wales. The vision comprises three lead projects: South Tyne and Wear/North East Durham (The Great North Forest), South Staffordshire (Forest of Mercia) and East London (Thames Chase) followed by a further nine forests dotted around the country.

Fig. 1 - Community Forest Programme in England and Wales

Each forest is envisaged covering between 10 and 15,000 ha of which 30-60% will be afforested with mainly but not exclusively, broad-leaved species. The Commissions do not anticipate continuous forest rather a patchwork of landscape features including woodland, farmland, heathland, meadow and water features. An extract from the Thames Chase Draft Plan (1992) illustrates the 'community' concept.
"Community forests will provide a unique environment for many outdoor activities. Set among the woodlands, open grasslands, rivers and lakes will be facilities for all kinds of sports and recreations: active and passive, formal and informal, simple and sophisticated."

(C.C, "Forests for the Community", 1989, p.15)

Amongst the other benefits it is envisaged that the forests will encourage and facilitate the creation of new wildlife habitats; the enhancement of green belts; the provision of employment opportunities; the reduction of air pollution and a
contribution to reducing the effects of global warming. In addition it is anticipated that private landowners will benefit from commercial leisure opportunities; productive use of former agricultural land; an improved public image and, in some cases, enhancement of the development value of their land. Large scale changes in land ownership are not envisaged. In the three lead areas project teams, funded jointly by the Countryside Commission and the relevant local authorities, are responsible for compiling a non-statutory community forest plan which will outline the aims of the scheme and how it will be implemented (See Thames Chase and the Great North Forest, Chapter 5). As the name given to the vision suggests 'community' involvement and participation will be an important ingredient in the success of each venture. As for long term funding, it is hoped that this will be forthcoming from the private sector. In terms of implementation (getting trees planted), it is assumed that the existing grant structure will suffice. This hope is reinforced by the Government's latest statement on British Forestry Policy (1991).

"The location of new woodland close to areas of population will continue to be encourage, through such vehicles as the Community Forests initiative and the special supplements which we are making available under the Woodland Grant Scheme."

(F.C, 1991, p.9)

This chapter has illustrated in some detail the changing nature of forestry policy in Britain in both the rural and urban setting. Notwithstanding the rural/urban production paradox, it is true to say that the forces which have conspired to change the attitudes of practitioners, legislators and the British public alike have given rise to one thing - an evolving perception that forestry is not simply about trees rather, as Westoby (1987) puts it, "it is about trees only insofar as trees can serve the needs of people". People, in a modern post industrial nation such as Britain nurture a wide and complex variety of needs and expectations. Forestry as a consumer of the scarce land resource must, if it is to survive and flourish, cater for at least some of these needs. The problem which exists, and which forms the basis of this thesis, is that intellectual and philosophical ambition is in danger of outrunning the realities of tradition, land ownership, market forces and fiscal policy.
CHAPTER 3

SHIFTING VIEWS ON AGRICULTURE AND THE PROSPECT OF MORE LAND FOR COMMUNITY FORESTRY

Forestry and agriculture, as primary productive practices, have travelled into the late 20th Century very much in parallel. Both have been viewed as essential vertebrae in the backbone of a first order industrial nation who, in the course of its dealings with the rest of the world, may need to rely at some point on internally available supplies of food and timber. Thus the State in Britain has, over a number of years, developed the mentality and machinery to support these activities.

"The introduction of the Town and Country planning system present today and the economic support mechanism for forestry and agriculture are all predicted on the notion that agriculture and forestry should be given free reign to develop".

(Blunden and Curry, 1988, p.1)

Chapter 2 examined some of the major changes which have occurred in the sphere of forestry but what of agriculture? Will a changing attitude towards forestry be accommodated by the requisite amount of land and, more crucially, enough willing farmers? This chapter explores this aspect in readiness for a detailed look at the central issue of land use planning (Chapter 4) and those currently involved with determining the form of the implementation process (Chapters 5 and 6).

Forces for Change on the Farm

Changes in the nature of agricultural practice and support are well documented (see Blunden and Curry, 1988). Years of unquestioned subsidy are now materialising in the form of huge surpluses and the steadily growing phenomena which is the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) budget. While this thesis will not investigate in detail the factors influencing a re-think of agricultural policy, it might be helpful to review some of the main forces for change.

- Agricultural over-production (surpluses)
- Rural re-population
- A broadening rural economic base despite restrictive planning legislation (see Chapter 4)
- Declining employment in agriculture due to new technology and greater investment in capital machinery
- Pressure for more development associated with the re-population of rural areas
Changing the system of support however is not simple. Agriculture, the leviathan which has been created by many years of preferential treatment, is complex and resistant to change. The withdrawal of fiscal support will inevitably involve hardship for some given that the system has been allowed to grow virtually unchecked. The central question, in relation to this thesis, is whether or not the range of options for change currently available are compatible with the expansion of multi-purpose forestry - after all, significant afforestation in lowland areas will inevitably need to involve the co-operation of many landowners who are currently using their land for an agricultural purpose.

One of the main problems with creating an artificial market place (which is effectively what price support for agricultural produce amounts to) is that it creates with it an artificial economy. Throughout Europe this economy is vast. With approximately 70% of the EC budget spent every year on agriculture (and most of this on subsidies) one quickly appreciates the size of the problem. Withdraw this level of support and hardship is inevitable especially amongst those operating at the margins of economic viability. Alternative approaches to simply 'turning off' the tap involve price restraint, production taxes and quotas. Most of these will work in certain circumstances but none are particularly relevant techniques if multi-purpose forestry is the ultimate objective. Given that both the Countryside and Forestry Commissions are promoting a scheme of national community forests on a voluntary basis land, currently used for intensive agriculture, must come out of this use altogether. Furthermore, the deeply ingrained attitudes of Farmers themselves must undergo a radical transformation before any grand vision of widespread lowland forestry can emerge. In 1987/88 the direct cost of supporting agriculture in the U.K. was £1.73 billion (MAFF, 1989). If this huge figure is superimposed on the fact that, in real terms, farm incomes have halved between 1977 and 1987 (Byrne and Ravenscroft, 1989) one soon appreciates the enormity of the problem of withdrawing price support. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) budget has been under a great deal of scrutiny since a meeting of Agriculture Ministers in Fontainbleu in 1984 at which it was officially recognised that expenditure on price support must not be allowed to continue unchecked. At home, the 1986 Agriculture Act, Section 17, reinforced the Government's intention to push for change by promoting a stable efficient agriculture industry which harmonised with the aims of conservation and enjoyment of the countryside. However, it remains to be seen whether or not all of this scrutiny will actually result in radical changes to the national and supra-national systems of agricultural prices support because unless the basic assumptions underlying the prevailing EC mentality are adjusted wider environmental and social objectives will continue to be secondary to the average farmer.
"...it is clearly unrealistic to suppose that CAP is going to be reformed in response to environmental considerations in Britain. Some members, like Greece, have as their primary interest in EEC the extraction of the maximum possible subsidy for their farmers."

(Shoard, 1987, p.498)

Farmers themselves are acutely aware that the forces for change are gathering especially when research shows that millions of hectares of agricultural land could actually be taken out of production without detriment to food supplies (see North, J, 1988) they will not however move in other directions out of altruism alone.

Trees on Farms

The present extent of tree cover on farms in England and Wales is poor. In a sample survey conducted by MAFF, (1985) an extrapolated figure of between 1% and 2% was quoted as the tree cover on farm holdings. Only 1 in 5 farms had any woodland at all and the bigger farms had the disproportionate share. These kind of statistics make a telling statement about farmers and forestry - they suggest that farmers are not concerned about increasing or indeed preserving woodland coverage on farms rather that they are still pre-occupied by agricultural production.

"It appears that restoration and management of existing woodlands may be perceived as both costly and time consuming"

(Bishop, 1990, p.62)

There may then be an attitudinal gulf in attitudes towards forestry across which British farmers have to be transported if they are to be part of the great community forest vision. This preoccupation with agriculture to the exclusion of all else is not, however, universally prevalent throughout Europe. Farm forestry abroad is established and well developed. In Finland for example the average farm has 3 times more forest than arable land owing to a tax system and legislature which are organised to facilitate the continuance of forestry. Indeed, 44% of total farm incomes in the country are derived from forestry (Varjo, 1984). In Sweden, Austria and Denmark a similar attitude to forestry on farms is also well established with Governments encouraging forestry practice through incentives, legal constraints, tradition and social pressure (Bishop, 1990). In the Scandinavian nations there is, of course, a strong sense of tradition where forestry is concerned and there can be no doubt that this plays a significant role in ensuring its continuance as an integral part of agricultural, rural, and to some extent urban life. In this country, as is outlined in Chapter 1, the industrial age severed the general population from strong forest traditions the result of which is an ill informed urban population and a small agricultural fraternity with little interest in the development of forest cover on their
holdings. The 'corporatisation' of forestry which took place in the early part of this Century reflected an idea prevalent in British society that big was beautiful. If forestry was needed then it was best provided by one organisation in a strictly utilitarian manner with no thought for aesthetic or multi-purpose objectives. Agricultural production could be taken care of in a similar way. Chapter 2 has marked the progress of forestry practice in realising that there any many benefits to be gained by broadening the angle of view. With farming, however, change is proving harder to effect both in a practical and ideological sense. The State gained a significant managerial interest in forestry practice through the Forestry Commission, with agriculture however, the State has never been directly involved - it only supplies the supporting framework. The Forestry Commission is a facilitator in its own right whereas the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF) is a overseeing body which administers a myriad of private individuals. Ideas pertaining to multi-purpose forestry have thus a more complicated and problematic path to travel when it comes to farmers. In theory the idea of exchanging the production of food, as a commodity in over supply, with forestry is a sound one. Indeed MAFF, in 1984, established a working group to develop policies to encourage the production of timber and wood products as an integral part of farming practice. The group suggested some 200,000 hectares of upland and lowland could be brought into farm forestry within 25 years providing considerable programmes of support were introduced - the obstacles to realising such an ambition where identified by the group as being:

- the relatively low level of income available
- the long timescales involved
- the absence of any tradition in farm forestry in the UK

The need for a long term commitment to forestry on farms was also identified by the National Farmers Union (NFU, 1986). An idea they came up with was the reverse mortgage system. The farmer or landowner would legally assign all timber, in say the 50th year, to an organisation who, in the intervening years, would pay an income based on the use of the land if it had been in livestock or crop production. The formulation of such schemes encapsulate the essential economic problem of farm forestry - the paying of an income during long term periods of no output for an eventual product with dubious commercial value. While many organisations and bodies, including the Countryside Review Panel (1987) and the National Economic Development Office (NEDO, 1987) have made the case for more woodland on farms and forestry as the principle alternative to agriculture none have been able to suggest an income support system capable of achieving the widespread change envisaged. Those who are sceptical about the conversion of the present agricultural land ownership system to one which encompasses forestry would also argue that any
forestry practice likely to prove attractive enough in commercial terms would be wholly alien to the aims of multi-purpose objectives. Their arguments centre on the assumption that commercial forestry inevitably involves the cultivation of close ranks of fast growing conifers which are totally incompatible with aesthetic or ecological improvements in the countryside or the encouragement of recreational activities (Bolton, 1987). While sceptics abound there are a number of more novel ideas which may have some mileage in certain circumstances. The production of an annual crop from forestry is one such solution providing a market for the products can be developed. Such 'products' might include those traditionally obtained by the practice of coppicing or 'energy' forestry (MAFF, 1985) - the production of short rotation timber for domestic heating and industrial processes.

Changing Agricultural Land Use Policy

Such was the Government's concern about viable activities in the countryside during the late 1980's that an inter-departmental working group was set up to investigate the alternatives to agriculture. Known as ALURE (alternative land use and the rural economy, 1987) the group put forward two principle proposals - a £25 million farm diversification package from MAFF and the removal by the DoE of the presumption in favour of agricultural land when determining planning applications. In respect of the change in a basic planning principles the Government came under heavy fire. Many accused them of ditching farmers and Green Belt principles with traditionally orientated groups like the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) accusing the Government of attempting to create a free for all for speculators and developers. In their own defence the Government accused the press of misrepresentation, stating that all proposed alternatives would be carefully evaluated in terms of their environmental and ecological impact. Furthermore, William Waldergrave dismissed suggestions that there would be a rural building 'bonanza' - his comments embodied in Circular 16/87 'Development Involving Agricultural Land' (DoE, 1987). The less controversial element of the ALURE proposals, the availability of £25 million from MAFF, did not raise too many eyebrows. The proportion of this diversification grant for farm woodland amounted to £10 million. The Farm and Rural Development Act 1988 consolidated the proposal by allowing the Minister of Agriculture for England, Wales and Scotland to grant aid certain diversified farm business activities, MAFF accordingly introduced the Farm Diversification Grant Scheme and the Farm Woodland Scheme (FWS). The Farm Woodland Scheme, introduced for an experimental period of 3 years, stated its aims as being to divert land from agricultural production thereby assisting in the reduction of agricultural surpluses; the enhancement of the landscape and the creation of new wildlife habitats; to encourage recreational use, including sport and the expansion of
tourism; to contribute to the support of farm incomes and rural employment; to encourage greater interest in timber production from farmers and, in the longer term, to contribute to the U.K.'s timber requirements. To qualify, a minimum of 3 hectares per unit must be planted with a ceiling maximum of 40 hectares. Critics of the new scheme pointed to the lack of a unified system of advice. The NFU while acknowledging its introduction as positive, suggested a number of improvements:

- the removal of one application per agricultural holding or individual stipulation
- simpler forms
- increase grants for conifers
- indexation of payments over the 10 - 40 provided in the scheme
- reduction of minimum area from 3 hectares to 1 hectare
- exemption from income tax for annual payments

On 1st April 1992 the Farm Woodland Scheme was replaced with the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS, MAFF, 1992). The new scheme does embody the changes suggested for the FWS. The FWPS stipulates a minimum area of 1 hectare per agricultural unit and farmers can make more than one application per unit providing the area to which the application pertains does not exceed 50% of the total area of that unit. The ceiling limit is still 40 hectares.
There are other schemes available to farmers for diversification purposes which do not directly facilitate the planting of trees. The Farm Diversification Scheme, introduced in January 1988, was designed to help farmers away from agriculture and while it does not allow for tree planting it does cover timber processing. Another scheme, Set-Aside carries dual edged policy intentions, from an E.C. perspective the scheme aims to reduce surpluses and the CAP budget, from a U.K. viewpoint its desired effects include the improvement of former agricultural land for recreation, conservation and general amenity. The planting of woodland is allowed on land designated as Set-Aside as long as it has Woodland Grant Scheme approval and the area in question exceeds 0.25 hectare. The Countryside Premium Scheme, introduced by the Countryside Commission, provides incentives to farmers for "positive management of land entered into the set-aside scheme for the benefit of wildlife, the landscape and the local community". (C.C. 1989, P1).
The Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme, which replaced the Agriculture Improvement Scheme in 1989, focuses more on pollution reduction and conservation rather than increased food yields. Within the scheme certain tree based activities qualify for payments - these being the planting of shelter belts with at least 50% broad-leaved species and the replacement of apple and pear orchards.

Forestry has thus been seen as the next best thing to agriculture by many of the agencies involved in rural land use. To this end a plethora of schemes have come and gone. Some have evolved as the realities of converting from farming forestry come to light, others have simply collected dust because they are, while well intentioned, inadequate for the purpose. The attractiveness of forestry, as the understudy to lowland agriculture, is largely to do with a perception, in the mind of the productivist mentality, that it is similar in enough respects to preserve the rural status quo. For many in legislative authority there is little material difference between growing trees or wheat. Farmers themselves however are less enthusiastic about the transition for a number of deeply rooted practical and ideologically institutionalised reasons. Research appears to confirm a general apathy amongst landowners and farmers in lowland areas towards the planting of trees on fertile soils.
"Research at Cambridge University, spanning the 1960's and mid 1980's, has concluded that the recent impact of grants and taxation on the management of lowland woodlands has been fairly marginal for most landowners. If an owner were inclined towards positive woodland management, whether for reasons of estate profitability from timber production, for one or more indirect benefits (from shelter to shooting) or out of sheer love of trees, then the chances are that he or she would go ahead with the management taking advantage of any fiscal incentives as a bonus to be picked up along the way. Tax and grant benefits were seen as encouragement, but were far less likely to be seen as a critical determinant of management policy".

(Blunden and Curry, 1988, p. 69)

Tax concessions have been instrumental in achieving large amounts of planting in upland Britain but let no one be fooled that this phenomenon was brought about for any other reason that the accumulation of capital. Trees are incidental to the issue, the investment potential is the only guiding principle for people who have no spiritual or emotional investment in the land or crop. So where exactly are the available grant schemes for lowland afforestation weak and what incentives, if any, do they provide for farmers to switch to forestry? The ideological inertia to changing practice is beyond the scope of a simple analysis and is thus the subject of a rolling examination throughout the Chapters of this thesis. But what of the financial incentives? Obviously, both the Forestry and Countryside Commissions are investing a lot of hope in the ability of available grant mechanisms to persuade farmers to come out of agriculture and move into forestry in order to realise their community forest vision. In this regard therefore the existing grant mechanisms require a more detailed analysis in order that their ability to secure implementation may be assessed. The remainder of this Chapter is devoted to this aim.

The Economics of Current Grant Schemes

Before any analysis of the suitability of existing grant mechanisms for afforestation can begin a number of assumptions must be made. In a worked example, Lorraine-Smith (1992) assumes an agricultural holding in the area currently earmarked for the community forest known as "The Great North Forest". He works through a scenario based on a 'mix and match' of 3 broad-leaved and 3 conifer nurse species (a conifer nurse is a species planted to protect the slower growing broad-leaved trees during the early part of their growing cycle).
By tabulating the permutations of a number of both broad-leaved and coniferous species the most profitable combinations can be identified (assuming a 60% conifer nurse progressively removed to leave only broad-leaved after 60 years) on the basis of (a) taking advantage of the Woodland Grant Scheme plus the Better Land Supplement and Community Forest Supplement or (b) those mentioned in (a) plus the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme. All calculations are based on the assumption that there are no land costs (i.e. land is already owned). As can be seen from Fig 2 the Japanese larch/sycamore combination appears the most profitable. However, no model should be operated without taking into account the effect of varying profitability's. These profitability’s are markedly eroded by environmental concerns - (varying on the conifer proportions), scale of planting or potential for earning extra income. The conifer nurse level assumed is 60% however increasing this figure can increase profitability in the short term. The scale of planting is also an important consideration, for the purpose of this example an area of 2.5 hectares is assumed but should too small an area be selected the cost of fencing may wipe out any profits. The quality of timber is also very important. Lorraine-Smith adds a profit reduction factor of -20% for poor quality timber and a +25% factor for good quality. Additional income earned is also a very important variable - the use to which the new tree cover is put can affect profitability significantly. After ten years or so some income may be derived from using the woodland for shooting cover or for other recreational purposes. In Fig. 3 this is accounted for by adding £25/hectare after year ten.
Fig. 3 - Varying the Basic Assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Productivities</th>
<th>WGS Grants</th>
<th>FWPS Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic assumptions (1)</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conifer nurse 25%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conifer nurse 75%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting area 0.9 ha</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting area 6.0 ha</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber poor (-20%)</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber good (+25%)</td>
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<td>5.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra income £25/yr (2)</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1. 60% conifer nurse; 2.5 ha; no extra income.
2. Extra income assumed from Year 10 onwards.
WGS: Woodland Grant Scheme (plus supplements).
FWPS: Farm Woodland Premium Scheme payments.
(-) Internal Rate of Return negative.
** No Internal Rate of Return can be calculated.

Source: Lorraine-Smith, 1992

Farmers on declining incomes are less likely to have money to spare for forestry (unless grants cover all the costs which may be possible in some cases). Forestry's pattern of cash flow may, therefore, be as important as profit levels on the distant day of final cropping.
Fig. 4 - Forestry Options with WGS and FWPS Payments

(a) FORESTRY OPTIONS WITH WGS GRANTS ONLY

CUMULATIVE CASH FLOW (£/HA)

- High productivity Sycamore with Japanese larch
- Low productivity Oak with Scots pine

(b) FORESTRY OPTIONS WITH FWPS PAYMENTS

CUMULATIVE CASH FLOW (£/HA)

- High productivity Sycamore with Japanese larch
- Low productivity Oak with Scots pine

Source: Lorraine-Smith, 1992
As can be seen from Fig. 4, cumulative cash flows between high and low combinations are marked in contrast from about year 20 when an income from thinning begins. The lines drawn for each are the likely limits to be expected in an area such as the Great North Forest. The difference between Fig 4-(a) and(b) is the extra Farm Woodland Premium (FWPS) received for the first ten years.

Forestry profit/cash flow patterns only convey part of the story. Once forestry is embarked upon the farmer must calculate the effect on total farm incomes and capital value. In each case there are likely pluses and minuses which are certain to effect the decision whether or not to entertain forestry as a viable practice. Planting trees on a farm would mean that the selected land would no longer yield an agricultural income (i.e. the grants do not allow for an 'undercrop'). Into the bargain woodland may have any one of the following consequences - some good some bad.

- enrich the sporting potential of a holding
- provide shelter for adjacent farmland
- shade crops and slow ripening fields nearby
- improve conservation potential over a wider area
- harbour agricultural pests
- in urban fringe areas they may be subject to vandalism. However, in such areas forestry may prove a cheaper option in this respect once trees are established.

In terms of the capital effects of forestry on farms, afforestation reduces the land under agricultural production with the result that expensive capital machinery is used on a smaller area with higher resultant costs. Forestry is a long term land use and changes in town planning law may preclude a return to agriculture or any other use in the future (see Chapter 4). Hope values may be degraded for the reasons mentioned, alternatively they may be increased especially where land was in a poor state and of little intrinsic agricultural value (urban fringe land may fit this scenario).

What is clear from the model approach adopted by Lorraine-Smith is that there are many financial implications associated with farm forestry and consequently the transition from agriculture to forestry. It is clear that the existing grant schemes alone are in no way lucrative enough to compensate for fluctuations in soil quality, locational attributes, climatic conditions and farming attitudes and anxieties. Sure enough, given a favourable combination of these factors, the schemes do appear to yield a profit for the dedicated investor. However, given the apparent commercial sensitivity of the whole concept it must, at present, be only those with enough alternative sources of financial security who are willing to experiment with the possibility of farmland forestry.
"whether forestry may be a welcome addition to the farm business depends on circumstances of site and climate and on the trend of agricultural prosperity in the future, not to mention the particular likes and dislikes of each farmer with land to plant".

(Lorraine-Smith, 1992, p.6)

Farmers may take advantage of grant schemes where they find themselves with small parcels of land which are awkward to farm or unsuitable for other reasons. While most tree planting is to be encouraged farmers will not be planting their land in accordance with any great plan or vision they will be simply making a bit of extra cash from land which would otherwise be redundant.

IL. 5 - Grant Aided Tree Planting at Ayot St Lawrence, Herts

This Chapter has charted the forces for change acting on the British and Indeed European agricultural systems. It has traced the rise of forestry as an alternative rural land use and explored the mechanisms which have evolved in an attempt to achieve the policy aims held by a wide range of protagonists. The relevance of this discourse to the subject of community forestry is clear. If the vision of voluntary implementation held so dear by the Forestry and Countryside Commissions, is to be
seen as realistic then the means of converting farmers must, in substance, be such that it overcomes a number of fundamental stumbling blocks not least the issue of farm incomes. This Chapter has explored in some detail the economic realities of conversion, other areas of concern need also to be probed. Can farmers attitudes be re-aligned with the objectives of community forestry and, crucially, will the land use planning system dovetail with the grander aims of the vision? Chapter 4 takes a closer look at the nature and development of the planning system in this respect as both a controller and a facilitator of land use change.
CHAPTER 4

PLANNING: POLICIES AND POLITICS

In order to evaluate whether or not the planning system can influence to any degree the success of afforestation programmes in lowland Britain one must first understand its philosophical basis - its reason for being. In this regard a definition of planning constitutes a useful starting point.

"Planning is, I think, the attempt to achieve a consensus by which there is some interference in the matrix of market and political decision to give a wider spectrum of choice".

(Chadwick, 1971)

Chadwick neatly conceptualises the ideals held for land use planning in this country but what he does not say is why this level of control was considered desirable. In other words were the primary forces for its creation proactive or reactive? The answer must be, without doubt, reactive, as can be deduced from the sentiment expressed in one of the planning systems foundation documents - The Barlow Report;

"....the disadvantages in many, if not, most of the great industrial concentrations, alike on the strategical, the social and the academic side, do constitute serious handicaps and even in some respects changes to the nation's life and development, and we are of the opinion that definitive action should be taken by the Government towards remedying them".

(Barlow Report, 1940)

The Barlow Report expressed a concern that the expanding cities and towns would swallow up the precious land resources which provided the necessary raw material for agriculture and 'those amenities' such as 'hills and dales, forests and moors and headlands - precious possessions for fostering and enriching the nation's well being and vitality'. The Barlow Report, together with the report of Lord Justice Scott (The Scott Report, 1942) recommended the establishment of a central planning authority and the immediate extension of planning control to all parts of the country. In 1947 the Town and Country Planning Act was passed coming into effect on 1st July, 1948. The Act's emphasis and philosophy had been largely determined by the Scott and Barlow reports and while it is not within the scope of this study to detail the features of the Act itself, it is important to note the fundamental shift in land use thinking which it embodied. Prior to 1947 planning activity had been primarily focused on amenity provision and urban convenience. With the emergence of the Planning Act, the emphasis shifted towards providing a framework within which to
secure 'proper' control of the use of all land, albeit in the spirit of reaction rather than proaction. It was envisaged that this could be achieved by surveying and producing land use maps which, while they did not convey the right to develop themselves, did provide a benchmark against which to evaluate planning applications. The applications would be determined at the local level by Local Authorities. Agriculture and forestry were, of course, given more leeway within the system because of the 'productive' presumption in their favour outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. Various consolidating acts have been implemented since 1947, the latest being the 1990 Planning Act and the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act. While subtle changes to the emphasis and basis of planning law have been embodied through this legislation the basic planning framework remains the same.

**Planning Policy, Rural Diversification and the Implications for Afforestation**

So how does this system of land use control, based as it is on the principle of a land use plan, tie in with multi-purpose afforestation programmes such as those epitomised by the community forest movement? The keystone document in planning law is the General Development Order (GDO). This Order sets out exactly what types of development are allowed without the need for planning permission. Forestry and agriculture both command separate classes within the GDO. They do so historically because of their special treatment as primary industries of strategic importance (see Chapters 1, 2 and 3) and even though there has been a shift away from the myopic productivist perspective of the immediate post war years the GDO has remained relatively unaltered.

**Permitted Development**

The carrying out on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more in area of:

a) works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building, or

b) any excavation or engineering operations reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit.

(The GDO 1988 as amended by SI 2805, 1991)

Agriculture is defined under Section 336 of the 1990 Act as including:

"...horticulture, fruit growing, seed growing, dairy farming, the breeding and keeping of livestock (including any creature kept for the production of food, wool, skins or for the purpose of its use in the farming of land), the use of land as grazing land, meadow land, ..., land, market gardens and nursery grounds and the use of land for woodlands where that use is ancillary to the farming of land for other agricultural purposes, and "agricultural" shall be continued accordingly".

(The 1990 Planning Act, Section 336)
Similarly, Part 7 of the GDO, dealing with forestry buildings and operations, exempts many associated activities from planning control:

**Permitted Development**

The carrying out on land used for the purpose of forestry, including afforestation of development reasonably necessary for those purposes consisting of:

a) works for the erection, extension of alteration of a building;
b) the formation, alteration or maintenance of private ways;
c) operations on that land, or on land held or occupied with that land to obtain the materials required for the formation alteration or maintenance of such ways,
d) other operations

(GDO 1988 as amended by SI 2268, 1991)

Curiously, 'forestry' is not defined by Section 336 of the 1990 Act, an indication perhaps of its established status as a unitary activity. This productivist view is underlined in Schedule 3 paragraph 2 (9) of the Act dealing with aftercare conditions where forestry is rather vaguely described as 'the growing of a utilisable crop of timber'. The GDO then clearly establishes agriculture and forestry as uses which, in themselves, merit a generous degree of freedom from planning control. This is not to say that the aims of diversification and alternative use are strangled at birth by the GDO because it does not allow for them by right, rather it requires of the developer of a potentially diverse use on agricultural or forestry land to submit a planning application - a hurdle which can inject uncertainty into the development process. The important point to note here is that any development associated with a use which is not embraced by the traditional definition of agriculture or forestry, as set out in the Act, is subject to examination by the local planning authority in the light of its land use plan. While all plans will be guided by Government advice in the form of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's) and Circulars, the outcome of the application is by no means guaranteed. This procedural 'fact' of the British planning system as it now stands begs a number of questions in relation to the subject of this thesis. If the Government is sincere about its commitment to the development of multi-purpose forestry vis-à-vis the community forest programme why has the legislation not been overhauled to reflect a broader view? If the answer to this question relates to the potentially vast range of alternative uses possible, has the Government endorsed the concept via its policy guidance framework? Assuming it would be impractical for the range of alternative uses of agricultural land to be given fair treatment within the present GDO it must be concluded that the Government's commitment to radical land use change in the form of multi-purpose forestry is to be found in the words of official policy guidance, for it is this material which guides the
determination of planning applications, via land use plans, at the local level.

The Government's key planning advice document on change in the countryside is currently Planning Policy Guidance 7 (PPG7). This guidance note, while not dealing with community forestry as a mixed land use concept specifically, does offer Local Planning Authorities guidance on policy formulation with respect to 'alternative uses'. How then does this advice square with the objectives held for community forests? In essence PPG7 is an acknowledgement of the changing face of rural land use in Britain - of rural re-population, agricultural over-production, intensification and the resultant need to take land out of this use. In true planning fashion the document contrasts this tide of change with the need to balance new uses with the need to protect the countryside for its own sake. The Government sees the planning system as the key to integrating new uses 'safely'. It asserts that 'maintaining a healthy economy is one of the best ways of protecting important countryside' (PPG7, Para 1.6) and that new uses may legitimately include small scale non-polluting commercial activities. Fine though this bold statement is, the PPG makes no mention of exactly how the existing extensive areas of countryside can be maintained in their present aesthetic state by electronics companies and small engineering firms. What will the farmers do? Obviously the Government falls back on the assumption that the available grant structures will be enough to maintain farming interest in low level countryside management schemes rather than directly in farming. As forestry is considered one of the more suitable alternative uses because of its agricultural nature, PPG7 may be seen as an endorsement of community forest principles albeit to be implemented via the grant scheme framework. Where the PPG7 may be at odds with the objectives of the community forest programme is over the scale of related or enabling development. This however is predictable given the Government's blind faith in voluntary participation and grant schemes as the appropriate market elements to achieve implementation.

Within PPG7 there is a broad emphasis placed on the role of the development plan in line with the primacy now afforded by the introduction of Section 54A to the 1990 Act by the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act. While forestry is addressed more specifically in Circular 29/92, the PPG usefully outlines the role of development plans in steering development into the holes left by diminishing agricultural practices. Landscape assessment, the recording and plotting of worst and best land according to soil quality and physical attributes and the identification of existing infrastructure elements such as buildings and roads, are usefully suggested as being part of the development plan process. Nothing within the body of PPG7 is anti the principles of multi-purpose forestry in as much as the document is a sensible, if somewhat naive, pointer to the way in which planning authorities should approach the problem of
integrating complimentary diversified activities within the traditional agricultural environment.

The general approach then to policy formulation, set out in the PPG, is not inconsistent with aims of multi-purpose forestry given the assumption that implementation will not rely on anything but 'small scale' development. Circular 29/92 sharpens the focus on forestry specifically by emphasising the desirability of 'Indicative Forestry Strategies' to guide development.

"The purpose of this Circular is to provide guidance to County Councils, Metropolitan Districts, Outer London Boroughs and National Park Authorities which may be considering the preparation of indicative strategies".

(Circular 29/92, p.1)

Again, as in the Government's statement on forestry policy in 1991 (F.C., 1991) Circular 29/92 recognises the newly constituted Woodland Grant Schemes as the main vehicles for implementation. Fleshing out the words of PPG7, the Circular asserts that there would 'appear to be significant opportunities for expansion'. It suggests that there may be great merit in developing 'an indicative strategy to identify opportunities and possible contravening factors'. This advice then, is the Government's blueprint for forestry diversification outside of areas for which there are specific community forest plans. It emphasises the relationship between such strategies and the planning process at both the strategic and local plan level.

"Since the creation of new woodlands on a significant scale may have implications for other land uses, Planning Authorities should take indicative forestry strategies - where they have been prepared - into account in formulating their general policies and proposals as the context for detailed development control policies and proposals for specific sites in local plans. Through this process the principles of indicative forestry strategies will be reflected in planning decisions or related development proposals".

(Circular 29/92, p.4)

Realism, Naivety or Deception?

The Circular, as does the PPG, stresses the need to identify areas of suitable land and co-ordinate forestry development appropriately. However, as with the PPG, the Government appears to be naive in its assumption that forestry developers are queuing up to implement afforestation schemes. Incredibly, for an administration supposedly in tune with market mechanisms, there seems to be a lack of acknowledgement for the fact that there is no 'engine' behind what is, on the surface, a Rolls Royce concept. Local authorities are not being this naive. Those such as Hertfordshire County Council appear to realise that all the strategies and fine
plans are of little value if there is no likelihood that anyone will be interested in investing in the forestry development process. They appear to acknowledge that, in the absence of direct public sector intervention significant land use change will only be likely from the mainstream development industry and any afforestation which can be extracted through the vehicle of planning agreements. In its stated belief that multi-purpose forestry has a significant part to play in the development of land uses in the southern and eastern parts of Hertfordshire, the County Council introduced Policy 15A to the Structure Plan as part of its 1991 Alterations.

"The County Council will support the establishment of a Community Forest in the south-east of the County, in the general location indicated on the key diagram, for the purposes of landscape conservation, recreation, wildlife conservation and timber production.

Development which would not normally be permitted within the Green Belt may be allowed within the Community Forest, but only where:

1) The development itself is acceptable in terms of the objectives of the Community Forest or other policies of this plan; and

2) It is associated with significant proposals for tree planting, nature conservation or improved public access; and

3) Involves re-use or redevelopment on a similar scale of existing redundant buildings or sites, or restoration of damaged land; and it does not lead to unacceptably high levels of traffic on the Highway network; and

4) It is designed, constructed and operated so as to minimise its environmental impact.

(H.C.C., 1990)

(see Appendix A for Key Diagram)

Secure in the conviction that the Planning Authority was rightly placed to carefully define Green Belt developments which could properly carry community forest obligations, the County Council went to the Government with its bold policy. In his modifications to the Alterations the Secretary of State for the environment proposed the deletion of the criteria which defined conditions under which enabling development might be acceptable in the Green Belt. The County Council were understandably bemused.

"His proposal that reliance placed solely on the wording of PPG2 which requires 'very special circumstances' to be established in order to justify such development on a case by case basis gives rise to two concerns. Firstly, it is inconsistent with the Secretary of State's acceptance of the need for enabling development to fund the Community Forest, since it introduces uncertainty into the
process. The policy as it is proposed to be modified, could encourage 'planning by appeal' and implementation of the forest may become dependent on appeal decisions. Secondly the criteria proposed by the Council Country were extremely restrictive in terms of the scale and nature of development which might be permitted. Without such safeguards, land owners and developers may be able to argue for more extensive development in the Green Belt than would be consistent with the principles of a Community Forest."

(H.C.C., 1992)

Clearly, the nature of the Secretary of State's response to the County Council's policy intentions indicates that their (the Government's) motives are somewhat at odds with their message. Policy 15A seemed to be a progressive attempt to enliven the role of development plans - to prioritise rational decision making and raise the hopes of community forest implementation by accepting the need for some enabling development while controlling against environmental degradation by limiting those developments which would be acceptable facilitators. The Government do not agree.

The advice given in Circular 29/92 accepts the principle of identifying land which would benefit from the implementation of afforestation schemes. By its very existence the Circular endorses the notion that the planning system should play the co-ordinating role. The Government is quite rightly setting out the rules of play - the guidelines within which well balanced and sensible planning decisions can be made. The problem, however, as Hertfordshire County Council anticipate, is that there is unlikely to be enough players given the present nature of the game and the rewards for taking part. The Local Authority, realising that it is possibly over ambitious to expect the current battery of centrally funded inducements to stimulate sufficient planting, have sought to exercise their powers in a more creative manner. Not only have they identified appropriate areas (as recommended by 29/92) they have sought to introduce a degree of compulsion which will not deter but which will require. The County Council also attempted to weaken the traditionally restrictive nature of Green Belt policy in an attempt to stimulate interest in development which might yield community forest dividends. While there may by some fundamental environmental dysfunctions with this approach (see Chapter 5 and McKibben, 1990) there can be no doubt that it has some merit. The community forest concept is, after all, based upon the notion of mixed land use. If the 'hard' uses, namely those which will attract market interest, can be put into place first, dedicated agreements to plant 'significant' areas of forest can then follow to complete the vision of a multi-use landscape. So what of planning gain as a vehicle to secure implementation? Putting aside the Government's reluctance to allow Local Authorities a freer reign in this sphere for a moment, it may be useful to explore, in greater detail, the realities of
planning agreements and enabling development as catalysts for community forest expansion.

Enabling Development and Green Belt Issues

In 1991 Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council's sought to buy 205 acres of agricultural Green Belt land known as Colesdale Farm. Their objective was a bold one for such a small organisation - to create a traditional landscape of grazed heathland and broad-leaved woodland and legally safeguard it for the enjoyment of the general public. The area, to be known as Colesdale Common, would also fit into the jigsaw of community forest projects planned for the northern fringes of the capital. One of the main problems the Council's faced was that the land in question was the subject of successful golf course application. Given the urban fringe location the market value of land far exceeded any monies which might be available from Countryside and Forestry Commission grants and land management income. Some alternative source was required, a source capable of injecting a substantial cash sum into the project. The solution was, of course, enabling development. The idea was to submit a planning application for a courtyard style residential scheme of between 2100 and 2400 square metres within the 3000 square metre footprint occupied by the existing farm buildings (similar to the principle used in DoE guidelines for redundant hospital sites in the Green Belt). The idea of raising the market value of community forest schemes indirectly through the attachment of commercially lucrative development is a sound one in as much as it raises the interest of those with the kind of money needed for implementation while at the same time paying the farmer enough money to turn his land over completely to multi-purpose forestry. While the logic of this approach is undeniable the planning concern for this type of deal is obvious. If a precedent is set it may open the floodgates for speculative development anywhere there are a collection of suitable buildings. In the Green Belt the avalanche effect could be potentially ruinous in terms of preserving the functions of that designation. Fred Pound, a planning consultant acting on behalf of Northaw and Cuffley Parish Councils' summarises the problem:

".....the crucial issue, therefore is whether an outstanding proposal to improve the countryside can be secured through enabling redevelopment without jeopardising the integrity of Green Belt policy".

(Pound, 1991)

Not surprisingly, Pound asserts that the answer is yes providing the policy framework is in place and the most appropriate locations and types of development have been identified. In the case of Northaw and Cuffley the relevant local plan
(Welwyn and Hatfield) did not contain a policy which addressed the issue of community forests but the County Council Structure Plan Alterations 1991 did. The discussion has thus turned full circle. Policy 15A of the Hertfordshire County Council Structure Plan did seek to protect against avalanche or speculative development by appeal by defining those areas within which redundant buildings and despoiled landscapes would be taken out of the traditionally strict Green Belt policy framework. However, as has already been pointed out, the Secretary of State in his modifications chose to dilute the Council's policy to such an extent that the Council themselves feel that proper planning objectives have been prejudiced. Not because they fear that reactive planning control has been eroded but because the Secretary of State for the Environment has effectively sterilised or 'blighted' areas of Green Belt which have the potential to be put to better use as part of a strategic forest network. The County Council, through Policy 15A as it stood, were advancing the idea that Green Belt policy should be varied subtly to accommodate environmental objectives such as community forestry. The Government are obviously not of a similar mind.

The Northaw and Cuffley case, as well as highlighting the potential problem area surrounding the proper involvement of development plans, also serves to illustrate the finer planning detail which results from the need to control untoward development activity in the Green Belt and the countryside generally. Policy 15A, as it stood before the Secretary of State's modifications, insisted, not unreasonably, that redevelopment of existing buildings should 'only be permitted if directly related to the community forest, or, if not, deemed absolutely necessary on economic grounds to secure significant community forest proposals'. While what constitutes 'significant' may be the subject of a thesis in itself, the crux issue here is determining, at the development control level, the truth behind a developer's assertion that a proposal is absolutely essential to securing community forest objectives. Local authorities may, in this situation, be forced to employ consultants who specialise in evaluating the financial realities of a development project - a time consuming as well as an expensive activity. Another problem which presents itself in a Green Belt scenario, where redundant farm buildings form the 'golden egg' of the proposal, concerns permitted development rights for agricultural operations. Developers can, quite lawfully, extend farm building during the time in which they are legitimately being used for agricultural purposes. When the time comes to submit a community forest proposal on the back of an 'essential' commercial development the applicant has effectively increased his or her developable footprint by knowingly adding to the buildings, which already exist under permitted development rights.
Enabling development then is not without problems. At the top of the planning hierarchy the Government appears, while espousing the merits of comprehensive planning for lowland forestry through PPG7 and Circular 29/92, to be clipping the heels of Authorities who are genuine in their endeavours to ensure that this is done with proper planning principles in mind. Weak policy will develop an insecurity amongst those trying to administer effective planning control. Furthermore it will curtail their ability to secure sound objectives. If the Government is at all serious about community forests coming about it will need to demonstrate through the Department of the Environment's involvement with the statutory and non-statutory development plan processes, it's understanding that enabling development is important enough in the overall picture of things to allow Local Authorities to preside over appropriateness. If this does not happen proper planning control may be replaced by either fire fighting or stagnation in the Green Belt and beyond. Developers may begin using the glimmer of hope provided by policies promoting a worthwhile concept to lever open land hitherto protected by strong agricultural and Green Belt presumptions against development. Alternatively, land which could be put to better use will be blighted because of inflexibly applied national policies.

This Chapter has hopefully illuminated some of the problems the planning system faces if it is to be the guiding light in the community forest implementation process. It has again raised questions about the Government's duality in the community forest sphere, especially in areas where the pressures for commercial development are most intense and, arguably, the need for multi-purpose forestry is the greatest. It has demonstrated the problems facing the policy makers and facilitators. But planning is not just about the relationship between developer and the system. As a concept it is, as Chadwick (1971) puts it, "an attempt to achieve a consensus by which there is some interference in the matrix of market and political decisions.....". Any examination of the planning system's role, therefore, in achieving a particular goal (in this case the implementation of multi-purpose forestry in lowland areas) must include a detailed evaluation of organisations, political or otherwise, with a vested interest in the decisions issued by the system. Chapter 5 is based on a comprehensive survey of Local Authorities, conservation bodies and pressure groups. Many of the planning issues raised in this Chapter are the shared concerns of these organisations. Their views and opinions will enrich the discussion by broadening its basis and, more importantly, assist in the process of identifying the critical implementation factors.
CHAPTER 5

A WIDER VIEW

In a thesis consisting of seven chapters it is entirely apposite that planning should be in the middle. As Chadwick (1971) suggested, planning's role is to interfere in the 'matrix' of market and political decisions in order to secure a wider gain. In other words the planning system is the pivotal structure, the forum in which an attempt is made to mediate and resolve the conflicts inherent in the process of land use change. Like the judge presiding over a complicated case, the planning system must, within its powers, give fair hearing to all those with an argument to make before passing sentence - the development control and development plan systems are predicted on this democratic principle. As has been outlined in Chapter 4 the systems ability to actually instigate change may be limited. There may, however, be some scope to embody the views of a wider audience via the vehicle of development plans and consequently through individual development control decisions.

Chapters 2 and 3 focused on the main pre-community forest land uses exploring the forces for change which have dominated in the post-war period largely as a result of adjustments in the market for agricultural products. The planning system, as the balancing mechanism, has to accept these changes and the economic and political realities they force onto former users and in many cases this will mean accepting the need for alternative uses in the countryside. If forestry forms part of this pattern of alternative use it will happen at a number of levels all of which may be influenced by the planning system. As discussed in Chapter 4, development plans or indicative forest strategies may serve as guides for woodland planting with development policy forming the basis on which enabling schemes are judged and authorised. Whatever the level of involvement a wider 'gain' will only be achieved if the system of land use control takes on board the expectations, ambitions and perceptions held by the many groups with a vested interest in the concept of community forestry and that these views are somehow reflected in any implemented outcomes. This Chapter is devoted to examining some of these views, aspirations and perceptions based on a survey of voluntary and statutory bodies with an interest in land use change in the countryside. This includes Local Authorities in the areas designated for the Thames Chase Community Forest and the Great North Forest.
Located to the east of London in the Romford/Hornchurch area, the Thames Chase Community Forest is an ambitious project aimed at improving the environment in what is one of the country’s most densely populated regions. The Thames Chase Draft Plan (1992) examines in detail existing land uses and sketches, also in some detail, a vision for the future with trees as a central feature. The Plan identifies one quarter of the land in the forest area as belonging to Local Authorities and concludes, quite logically, that this represents a major ‘potential resource’. The land use and ownership analysis for the area is given in the Plan as follows.
As can be seen, Local Authorities and farmers form a sizeable group in the Forest area. The problems facing the farming community are well known. In the Thames Chase area diversified activities are already well established and it is obvious that there is potential to achieve many of the plans goals if the economic needs of the farming community can be married with the plan objectives and planning criteria in this Green Belt area. But what of the Local Authorities - how do they see the community forest on their doorstep and what do they consider are the main barriers to implementation? Two Authorities in the area where questioned on these points the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and the London Borough of Havering. (see Appendix C for questionnaire). Fig. 7 summarises their responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use/Ownership</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Productive Agriculture</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlands</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerals</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby Farms/'horsiculture'</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerals</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Companies</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Thames Chase Draft Plan (1992)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING</th>
<th>LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING &amp; DAGENHAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you consider the most critical implementation issues?</td>
<td>Changing farm practices/profitability, availability of resources.</td>
<td>Co-operation between partner authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have broad political consensus?</td>
<td>Yes, cross party consensus.</td>
<td>Yes, although some do not understand the concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you see the Countryside Commissions role?</td>
<td>Funding, enthusiasm, lobbying Central Government.</td>
<td>Overseeing partner authorities, advice and guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you see Forestry Commission's role?</td>
<td>Technical advice, maintenance of economic forestry, grant aid (concern over species selection, i.e. conifers over broad-leaved).</td>
<td>Technical advice on planting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank most important functions of a community forest.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial forestry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure and Recreation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO2 Absorption</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Containment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Enhancement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other comments?</td>
<td>Positive mechanism for environment improvement in Green Belt across boundaries</td>
<td>Excellent idea Important urban fringe/countryside interface.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even from a comparison of just two Local Authorities in an area which has been exposed to the community forest phenomena it is obvious that there are different levels of corporate perception and understanding. The London Borough of Havering appear to be more aware of the fundamental issues, their response to the question concerning the critical implementation issues demonstrated a deeper understanding of the economic framework which will have to be in place before the vision is realised. In terms of ranking the factors which they considered most important both authorities were within one rank point on each factor. Both saw landscape enhancement as the primary function of the initiative, which, in an area which suffers the sort of urban fringe problems found on the edge of Britain's largest conurbation is not surprising.

The Great North Forest

Fig. 8 - The Great North Forest Area
Located in the south Tyne and Wear and north-east Durham area the Great North Forest like Thames Chase is one of the lead community forest projects. Like the other community forest initiatives the Great North Forest covers an area which can be called urban fringe in the truest sense. Bounded as it is by large conurbation's the enhancement and protection of the designated area for a mixture of low density uses based on a framework of trees is seen as essential to the environmental well being of the area. The context for land use decisions is to be set by the development plans currently being prepared by the 'partner' authorities. These are a UDP for Gateshead, Sunderland and South Tyneside, a revised structure plan for Durham and a district plan for Chester-le-Street. The Great North Forest Plan (Executive Summary, 1992) sets out the policy objectives for the Forest based on an established inventory of uses from agriculture and forestry to conservation and recreation. Aside this bold vision the plan contains a reference which casts some doubts on the ability of the available grant systems to deliver the concept.

"It remains to be seen whether new grants will attract substantial areas of land from agriculture into forestry."

(Executive Summary, 1992)

Three Local Authorities in the area responded to the same questionnaire sent to Authorities in the Thames Chase area (Appendix C). The respondents were Durham County Council, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council and Sunderland Borough Council. Their responses are summarised in Fig. 9.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL</th>
<th>GATESHEAD</th>
<th>SUNDERLAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you consider the most critical implementation issues?</td>
<td>Land ownership - many with no interest in planting trees.</td>
<td>Land ownership - economics relative to other uses.</td>
<td>Money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a broad political consensus?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you see the Countryside Commission's role?</td>
<td>Major political bearing and grant aid.</td>
<td>Prime mover in implementing the concept.</td>
<td>Money/publicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank most important functions of a community forest.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Forestry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure and Recreation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Containment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Enhancement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Added question) Community</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other comments?</td>
<td>Applaud concept but would like to have seen more groundwork before 'diving in'.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Magnificent concept but until Government is prepared to forget 'hype' and make significant financial commitment for hundreds of years sceptical of success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most noticeable thing about the Great North Forest Local Authority responses is the degree of scepticism about the chances of implementation. This is reflected in the nature of responses to the questions regarding critical issues, the absence of '1' and '2' ranking scores by two authorities and responses under the heading 'Any other comments', notably by the Borough of Sunderland. The latter authority appear to have very little confidence in the prospect of implementation unless the Government intervenes directly with financial support. This apathy contrasts with the optimism of the Thames Chase authorities, perhaps a reflection of deeply felt sense of economic isolation relative to southern areas of the country.

Outside Interests

The survey of attitudes to the community forest initiative, conducted as part of this study, extended to a number of other organisations with a vested interest in the concept. The farming communities collective standpoint was embodied in the response from the National Farmers Union. The NFU clearly reiterate the findings of Lorraine-Smith set out in Chapter 3. In their general policy statement on community forests (1990) the Union pledges its support to one of the key principles of the community forest movement.

"The NFU fully supports one key objective of community forests - providing opportunities for diversification of agricultural management and alternative uses for land taken out of farming."

(NFU, 1990)

In the next sentence however, the Union is not as positive.

"NFU is sympathetic to other objectives of the Forests, although noting that they have no direct benefits to agriculture and may have an adverse affect on farming operations."

(NFU, 1990)

So much for general principles. If the NFU appear lukewarm over the concept here they become positively cool further on when the statement deals with more detailed issues. They state categorically that they are against any form of compulsory purchase (CPO) and that participation should be strictly voluntary. While this latter view accords with the Countryside Commission's its statement, in such unequivocal terms, gives the impression of a warning rather than a policy. This most damming indictment from the NFU is embodied in the following comments regarding the
economic viability of woodland planting for its members.

"The NFU will assist in efforts to ensure that farmers obtain real benefits from community forest schemes. Only if there are real benefits to be obtained will there be the level of participation needed to make each scheme a success. At present, opportunities are limited because:

- direct financial incentives for establishing woodlands are too low to cover the real costs (real costs include planting and management costs, income foregone, loss of flexibility of operations and impacts on speculative land values);
- participation may give rise to additional burdens of public access which cannot be compensated for."

(NFU, 1990)

Clearly the NFU stance is at odds with the "vision". The Commission's (Forestry and Countryside) assert that implementation will come about primarily through the available grant schemes - the NFU refute this assertion as do the Great North Forest local authorities.

The negative view from the private land owning fraternity is reinforced by the Country Landowners Association (CLA). In a letter from the CLA to the Forestry Commission's Marcus Sangster dated 18th September 1991 regarding the new Community Woodland Supplement to the Woodland Grant and Farm Woodland Schemes, the CLA are overtly sceptical. While welcoming the principle they express grave doubts over the conditions for its issue stating that "they seem unduly onerous and are unlikely to encourage landowners to apply for it" (CLA, 1991). One of the principle criteria for issuing grants is that the relevant local authority have a strategic forest plan in place. The CLA are sceptical that these will be put into place in anywhere near significant numbers. Of greater importance to the organisation one suspects is the perception or fear held by the CLA that entry into the community forest arena will precipitate unacceptable levels of public access to private land. Indeed they go so far as to suggest that the perceived "freedom to roam" policy enshrined in community forest grant mechanisms will "greatly limit up-take". (CLA, 1991).

It would appear then that the land owning private sector are far from being enlightened by or in tune with the idea of community forestry. Entrenched in years of tradition they are bound to have accumulated significant inertia to the sort of changes necessary to implement the community forestry concept but they are not alone in their cynicism. On the opposite side of the table the Ramblers' Association (RA) hold equally sceptical views. Again they support the principle of community
forests but, for different reasons, find it hard to conceive that the vision is realisable within the current implementation framework. In a response paper to the proposed National Forest in the Midlands (1992) the RA cast doubt on the ability of any system of support aimed at providing an income for private landowners to be simultaneously beneficial to the countryside enjoying public.

"Public backing for the project will quickly wither if it is seen - like payments for set-aside land - as no more than another scheme for boosting the incomes of farmers and landowners at the taxpayers expense, while providing little in the way of public benefit."

(RA, 1992)

While their tone is predominantly scathing the RA do make some constructive suggestions as to how systems of inducement may be geared to improve their acceptability in the eyes of the public. All schemes, they propose, should carry a standard set of access provisions which would have to be agreed to by landowners before any financial support was forthcoming. If individual cases warranted a change in these conditions then these should only be altered by public notice and a public inquiry. In addition the RA argue strongly for a more flexible approach to grant levels the rationale being that increased financial incentives in designated forest areas help to secure implementation. Even organisations who claim to bridge the gap between the entrenched land owning and public access groups are openly sceptical about the community forestry vision as presented by glossy Countryside Commission literature. The Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) in their "Community Forest Charter" (1991) clearly set out their reasons for doubt. As with the other organisations mentioned in this chapter, the CPRE declare their support for the principle of multi-purpose woodland but find it difficult to envisage the circumstances in which acceptable implementation could take place, especially in the urban fringe. The logic of the CPRE's critique in irresistibly simple yet, after examination, so obviously valid. Planning uncertainty is at its greatest in the urban fringe. Here, like no where else, the forces for radical land use change are at their greatest. The close proximity of a market, transport links and a wide spectrum of other services and economic activities make fringe areas around busy conurbation's highly desirable for development whether it be for new housing, leisure facilities or business development. Desirability equates to increased value and increased value dictates a polarisation of use. In other words in a market economy strong controls are needed to prevent open urban fringe areas from gravitating to the most profitable use rather than the most environmentally acceptable. The CPRE maintain that none of the grant schemes make afforestation a viable economic prospect especially in the urban fringe. They conclude therefore that this leaves planning gain as the only viable implementation vehicle on the outskirts of towns and cities. In fact they go so
far as to suggest that the mere prospect of a planning gain deal effectively kills off voluntary planting or participation within the community forest framework because landowners will be reluctant to do anything which will 'lock up' their land and prejudice the likelihood of such a deal. Where deals do occur they may well lead to a forest 'gain' however, the price will always be the development of a high value land use - the nature of this use not being decided by some grand plan but by whatever commands the highest price in the market at the time. The twelve point Charter set out by the CPRE does suggest fiscal and planning mechanisms which might offset this market determinism. County and district development plans should identify areas where forestry is desirable and, reading in some of their criticism, these should include a shopping lists of acceptable 'gain' developments. They call for 'significant' afforestation schemes to require the submission of a planning application and for such schemes to be accompanied by a statutory environmental assessment (EA). Presumably this means that 'significant' would need to be defined by the Department of the Environment and such afforestation schemes listed as Schedule 2 developments under the 1988 Town and Country Planning (Environmental Effects) Regulations. The CPRE, like most of the other bodies with an indirect interest in community forests, consider proper and permanent funding an essential pre-requisite to implementation.

One of the largest voluntary sector conservation groups in Europe, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), also has something to say on the issue of community forests and forestry policy generally. From a conservation perspective their motives are predictably cautious in as much as they are fearful that trees could be planted on lowland sites which are already valuable as wildlife habitats. In their published paper on forestry policy (1991) they stress the need direct lowland afforestation to areas without valuable habitats such as farmland and despoiled or problem areas in the urban fringe. For the RSPB 'location' rather than 'design' is the key issue.

Another large voluntary body The National Trust responded to the questionnaire. Rather like the CLA their response was short and cautious. The Trust were sceptical about the value of community forests to landowners. They doubted the long term benefits of such projects and were convinced that management arrangements would be problematic.

Planning Gain - Environmental Loss

No analysis of a vision with such wide ranging environmental implications would be complete without considering the views of the politically maturing environmental
lobby. More people than ever before in the western world are awake to the environmental ramifications of our modern way of life. Pressure groups have been instrumental in raising this awareness and their influence and opinions cannot be taken for granted. As part of this study Friends of the Earth (FoE) were asked for their opinions on the idea of multi-purpose forestry in lowland Britain and, more specifically, the community forest vision. To start with FoE set out their bottom line, which, considering some of the popularist stereo-typical views of environmental groups, might be seen by some as surprising. They realise first and foremost that community forests will need to yield an economic return or, in other words, 'pay their way'. They are also keen to dispel some of the myths about the community forest vision principally its potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gasses and in this regard FoE warn against seeing community forests as a counter balance to the loss of primary forests in temperate and tropical areas. In planning terms their ideas are not as well developed as the CPRE or RSPB yet they espouse the same basic principles - that forestry should come 'down the hill' and be directed towards areas with little or no environmental value. It may be pertinent here to expand the FoE's point about global warming and the 'quick fix' mentality adopted by western industrial nations. Whoever sells the community forest vision, whether it be local authorities, planning agencies, the Commission's or private individuals it is foolish to cultivate the illusion that they can in any significant way ameliorate the wanton destruction of natural global resources. In this respect it may be apposite to cast some doubt on the intrinsic environmental value of planning 'gain' deals. If one imagines a development proposal in the urban fringe which is likely to be lucrative enough to afford some afforestation it is also likely that the development will be responsible for generating pollutants. The development of say a golf complex may generate many car trips and these in turn may outweigh any environmental benefits which the trees produce, in other words a planning gain may occur but it may at the same time be an environmental loss. This point is graphically made by McKibben (1990) in his book 'The End of Nature'. McKibben, referring to a coal fired electricity station, illustrates the problem with perceiving new development as 'gain'.

"Take for argument's sake, a new coal fired generating station that produces a thousand megawatts and operates at 38% efficiency and 70% availability. To counteract the carbon dioxide generated by that one plant you would need to cover a radius of 24.7 Km (about 15 miles) around it with American sycamore trees (a fast growing species) planted out at four-foot intervals and 'harvested' every four years."

(McKibben, 1990, p.62)

Any planning policy or development control outcome should reflect an appreciation for the widest possible audience but this is just the reactive aspect of the process.
The system at all levels should seek to actively promote land use changes which sit comfortably with the principles of sustainability. In the same way that an individual cannot possibly hope to make a balanced judgement on a complicated issue without considering a wide range of view points nor can the planning system, at any level, formulate appropriate community forest strategies without a wider view. This Chapter has attempted to frame this wider view. It may on first reading appear that most of the remarks by the various organisations are negative and pessimistic in tone. However, to use an appropriate analogy, it is always preferable to see the icebergs coming in order to save the ship rather sail on in blissful ignorance until all is lost without trace. But do the fears of the organisations mentioned in this Chapter and, indeed, the problems raised else where in this study, have any basis in fact? Chapter 6 attempts to shed the light of reality on these issues and questions by looking more closely at a community forest project which is currently up and running - the Marston Vale Community Forest in Bedfordshire.
CHAPTER 6

GREENING THE VALE

So far this study has dealt with the various elements in the Community Forest concept in a relatively autonomous manner. How have changing trends in agriculture conspired to support a move towards forestry? What does evolving Forestry policy mean for the concept of multi-purpose woodland? How can the planning system interface with the "matrix of market and political forces" to achieve Community Forest objectives and who do the planners have to consider when drawing up their land use plans and indicative strategies? As planners in the past have learnt to their cost, and indeed the cost of those poor souls who have had to endure their solutions, abstract theorising and analysis, to be of any value, needs to be placed in the context of reality. In so far as it is not possible to point, at present, to a 'completed' Community Forest, the nearest substitute must be an infant project currently experiencing the wide range of growing pains alluded to in previous chapters. For reasons of geographical convenience the project area for the purpose of this thesis is the Marston Vale Community Forest in Bedfordshire.

The Marston Vale Community Forest

Over a year after the announcement of the three lead Community Forest projects came the release of the names of the nine 'second tier' schemes. On the 14th February 1991, Bedfordshire's Marston Vale nomination appeared on the list. Like all of the other nominated forest areas, Marston Vale shared a number of common characteristics. The designated envelope of land contained areas of urban fringe, at least part of the area had suffered landscape degradation through some industrial process and the area had significant potential for recreation. The area identified as the Marston Vale comprises 61.5 square miles (16,000 hectares) of land predominantly under private ownership. The Vale is bounded to the north by the urban fringes of Bedford and Kempston and the River Great Ouse. To the south the boundary is the M1, to the east the Greensand Ridge and to the west the County Boundary and the western clay ridge. The target area is what is locally known as 'The Brickfields'; an area of clay vale which has been systematically exploited for its large deposits of brick making clay and the consequent holes used as landfill sites.
The land ownership breakdown for the area is shown in Fig. 11. As with Thames Chase, agricultural interests are significant alongside those concerned with clay extraction and landfill.

There can be little doubt as to the potential for landscape and environmental improvement in the designated area. A drive from Bedford south towards the Greensand Ridge and Ampthill, along the A418, is enough to convince anyone that the Vale is in need of attention. The looming towers of the brickwork's at Stewartry and the gaping holes hacked into the once pastoral landscape conspire to conjure a powerful image of despoliation and dereliction. A drive west from Bedford past the village of Marston Moretaine towards junction 13 of the M1 is equally illuminating. As with the journey to Ampthill, the towers of the brickwork's dominate, this time against the backdrop of the Greensand Ridge. Just before the rising ground near the tatty former London Brick village of Brogborough, a large lake can be seen occupying an old extraction pit. Although it boasts some trees and is used for watersports in the summer the lake nevertheless adds to the sense of abandonment in the area as does the village of Brogborough itself, built exclusively to house brick workers during the days when demand for building materials outstripped supply. Even from this brief pencil tour it is possible to comprehend the compelling arguments for promoting the community forest concept in the Vale. Years of mineral extraction and neglect have created a landscape which in the eyes of many, has been exhausted and devalued to such an extent that it is ripe for improvement. Not only would it appear that large parts of the Vale are of such little intrinsic value, but it is possible to see

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**Fig. 11 - Land Use and Ownership: Marston Vale Project Area**

- Agriculture: 55%
- Estate-owned Land London Brick/Henson Properties: 21%
- Other Industries: 15%
- Local Authorities: 6%
- Built up land, roads, railways: 3%

Source: Niles, 1992
the abundance of water as a potential jewel in the crown. In theory at least, a new multi-purpose landscape stitched together with a patchwork of trees and lakes would seem an eminently achievable goal given the redundancy of the existing landscape.

IL. 6 - View across the Vale

Following the inclusion of Marston Vale on the list of twelve Community Forest areas a project team was assembled. Funded jointly by the Bedfordshire County Council and Mid Bedfordshire District Council (50%), and the Countryside Commission (50%) the team comprises of Project Director, a Project Officer and Community Liaison Officer and an Administrative Assistant. Additional specialist staffing is provided through the County Council’s Trees and Woodlands Section. As this thesis is being written, the team are, some two years on, putting the final touches to the first draft of the forest plan (see Appendix D for Summary of Draft Plan proposals). The plan is intended to constitute a politically solidified consensus for environmental improvements in the Vale. It is not intended, like a development plan, to be an exact prescription of what will take place and where, rather it is envisaged that it will broadly define areas which have potential for new woodlands, natural regeneration, new hedgerows, better footpaths, formal recreation and wildlife and community involvement. This Chapter examines the prospect of realising these "potentials" in an area where many complex political and land use issues are at play. The
investigation focuses on a number of the principle actors including the Local Planning Authority - Mid Bedfordshire District Council, the Marston Vale Community Forest Team and Bedfordshire County Council. Meetings with planning officers and team members, supported by documentary records and studies, form the basis of the following discussion.

Agriculture: A Potential Resource?

As can be seen from Fig. 12 there are two principle groups of land owners in the Vale - Farmers and the multi-national Hanson Properties (formerly London Brick). It is the actions of these groups, past, present and future and their relationships with the planning authorities which will have the most significant bearing on favourable planning outcomes in relation to the Marston Vale Community Forest. The newly assembled Vale project team quickly identified the farming community as the custodians of a potentially significant resource. Such was this perceived potential that the team put together an Agricultural Working Group (Niles, 1992), whose brief covered the following:

- establishing dialogue relating to farmers perceived ideas of Community Forest
- consultation on objectives
- identify and stimulate short term opportunities for planting and other environmental improvements
- establish groundwork for planting and other environmental improvements
- provide information
- establish a 'one-stop-shop' approach to contact with farmers.

The audience at which the group was aiming varied considerably in terms of the size of farming operations in the Vale.
A large proportion of this farming group (67%) expressed support for the principle of the Community Forest but most admitted to a poor knowledge of tree planting. As was to be expected, money was seen to be the main barrier by the farming community especially by the larger landowners (the top 26% or so) who were, at the time of asking, obtaining good financial returns from their land. When asked to prioritise reasons for advancing the Community Forest concept, the Vale Farmers responded as shown in Fig. 13.

**Fig. 13 - Marston Vale Farm Survey: Reasons for the Concept**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Landscape Improvement</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of Game</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Conservation</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber Production</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners Personal Amenity</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Capital Value of Farm</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Gain</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock Proofing (hedges)</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Niles, 1992
Clearly, the farming community’s perception of the economic value of participating in the scheme is very low, so low in fact that planting for personal amenity is seen as more realistic than revenue from tree planting. This attitude is reinforced by a farmers answers to the opposite question. When asked to give a reason why they should not plant trees they responded as shown in Fig. 14.

Fig. 14 - Marston Vale Farm Survey: Reasons for Not Planting Trees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economics (loss of income)</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No space (reducing crop yields)</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure restrictions</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflexibility of trees (long term nature of forestry)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty of CAP reform</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears over access</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retiring and selling up</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Niles, 1992

The responses shown in Figs. 13 and 14 do not indicate that the Vale farmers are against diversification - on the contrary, the survey identified many who are actively involved in non-agricultural activities from haulage, angling and shooting to caravan sites and light manufacturing - rather the responses suggest that there is a common perception that trees are a poor investment, yielding a low return for the amount of land space occupied. This trend to look away from farming towards more profitable uses is also mirrored by current planning applications. The survey identified a number of valid applications on farmland for uses such as housing and light industries to an equestrian centre and dry ski slope. Farmers are, after all, business people and the land is their working capital. Common sense dictates that the majority of them will be seeking to maximise their return on each available hectare and as Lorraine-Smith (1992) has demonstrated, the viability if trees as an investment may be at best tenuous under current grant mechanisms. The experience of the Working Group in the Vale not only bears witness to this diagnosis but underlines a lack of empathy with forestry practice amongst lowland farmers, perhaps if lowland farming had not been such a lucrative activity (on the larger scale farms) in the past, forestry may have been received with more willing attitudes. Sadly this is not the case and with doubtful profits available it would appear that significant planting on farmland in the Vale will not take place in the foreseeable future unless funding mechanisms change and, importantly, attitudes are changed in line with those prevalent in countries like Finland.
"There is no doubt that loss of land to trees on the average 100 ha Marston Vale Farm will not be regarded as a safe and viable alternative to farming except on a small scale".

(Niles, 1992)

More Problems with Planning and Vested Interests

If implementation by farmers in the near future is problematic, what of the other major interests in the Vale - the clay extraction and landfilling companies? Here the picture gets exceedingly complicated owing to the involvement of many parties some of whom have left an historical legacy of considerable complexity. Essentially, the Marston Vale area was chosen for a community forest because of its despoiled nature - large areas of land badly scarred by years of mineral extraction. The former owners of the 'Brickfields', London Brick, expanded to become a major regional employer as well as a major landscape destroyer during the 1950's. Since then decline has been steady with present operations in the area supporting only a fraction of the people once employed. The legacy of expansion and contraction is not only confined to areas of despoiled land, work sites and communities have also become redundant features in the landscape. One of these redundant sites serves very usefully to highlight the complex nature of land use issues in the area and how this tangled web can be seen in relation to the promotion and implementation of Community Forest objectives. The former Ridgmont Brickwork's Site, near junction 13 of the M1 has been derelict since the early 1980's. At about this time a planning permission was granted for a new brickwork's and further clay extraction at the site. To keep their options open the London Brick Company carried out limited extraction to commence the permission but the development of the site in earnest never took place, instead the old buildings fell further into dereliction. It was obvious to many that the Company was no longer interested in the site for its original purpose but was working towards some other commercial use. An attractive site, right next to Junction 13 of the M1 and Ridgmont railway station, it became London Brick's intention to seek approval from the local planning authority, Mid Bedfordshire District Council, for a smaller, more lucrative, commercial site. Against a background of policy objection, notably from the County Council, the site won planning approval in principle at the Public Local Inquiry into Mid Bedfordshire's emerging local plan. The new owner Hanson Properties, in partnership with the Local Authority, were to come up with a planning/development brief for the site. At some point during this complicated and drawn out saga (grossly over simplified in this study to avoid confusion) the Community Forest initiative appeared on the scene. Unfortunately it appeared at a stage when the local plan was fast approaching adoption and Mid Bedfordshire Distinct Council were politically, legally
and administratively committed. The emergence of the community forest proposal confronted the Authority with a professionally committed and well funded team who wanted to see their objectives incorporated into the statutory planning framework for the area. While the Council implicitly and explicitly agreed with the motives and objectives of the project team they were, to a large extent, shackled by circumstance and the chain of events which had occurred over a period of many years. The problem for the Authority has now become one of diplomacy in as much as they can only persuade Hanson Properties to take account of community forest objectives when re-developing the Ridgmont Site given that certain principles have already been established and the advanced state of the Local Plan. As David Bowles, Head of Mid Bedfordshire's Policy Group, explained, the only way to force the issue of forest gain in the case of such an important site, given the stage and status of the local plan, was to use the 'objection' procedure creatively. That is incorporate change favouring community forest objectives and the objectives of other environmental strategies in the area at the eleventh hour by stretching the scope of objections to the local plan to give greater materiality to the concept. This 'creative' use of the system in relation to the Ridgmont site can be seen expressed in the wording of the Council's (post inquiry) written statement following the inspector's Report:

"Thus, we will accept development of 20 hectares of land within the plan period and a further 9 hectares beyond, provided that the scheme incorporates considerable environmental benefits. A detailed development brief will be prepared to guide development. Although concentrating on the brickwork's site the brief must address the wider implications and issues and in particular must demonstrate how the proposals can be satisfactorily accommodated within the emerging initiatives and objectives for the Marston Vale as a whole."

(Mid Bedfordshire District Council, June 1992)

The phrase 'emerging initiatives' is carefully chosen to avoid reference to the community forest simply because it would be premature to use such a label. At the time of the local plan inquiry, and indeed the time at which this thesis is being written, all that exists of the Marston Vale community forest is the project team and a few hundred trees. The Council felt that the local plan could not in any substantive way support a project by name which had not progressed past the experimental stages of its development. It is the Council's hope, as a joint funder, that future reviews of the plan can cite the community forest in a more material sense. This they see happening when a fully adopted forest plan is available and when government gives full planning policy support to Community Forest objectives. Thus, once again, the Government's role in the development of Community Forests is called into question. Without their backing the crucial linchpin is missing; namely
the ability of an adopted plan to raise community forest issues to a sufficiently high level of materiality. As can be seen from the Department of the Environment's modifications to the Hertfordshire Structure Plan (Chapter 4) Central Government appear reluctant to raise the stakes by allowing local authorities to be more prescriptive. The Secretary of State's response to the Bedfordshire's County Structure Plan Alterations No. 3 (1992) Policy 17, relating to Marston Vale, was couched in a predictably similar tone to his response in the case of Hertfordshire.

"The Panel concluded that the Marston Vale is a significant land resource for the county and will remain so well into the next century. The extraction of clay for brick making and the subsequent use of the voids created for waste disposal are long term activities of regional if not wider significance, and these activities are likely to influence the environment of the Vale beyond the period of the Plan. Although improvements in technology and operation will reduce unsatisfactory impacts, a considerable legacy remains to be dealt with. The Panel considered that the complexity of the problems and the potential within the Vale requires a comprehensive and long term view to be taken. They considered that Policy 17 as submitted was too narrow in its approach to provide the necessary impetus for ensuring the restoration and improvement of the Vale within a reasonable timescale. In particular, they did not consider that the County Council would be able to secure the necessary funds to carry out the improvements required, or that the framework exists to secure the co-operation of other interests in the Vale without whose active involvement the Council's aims could not be achieved."

(DoE, 1992)

The Department of the Environment's response clearly establishes the priority the Government affords to brick making and landfill activities in the Vale. The first paragraph underlines the importance attached to these activities as being of 'regional' and wider significance'. While espousing the need to take a comprehensive and long term view in respect of improvements in the Vale, the DoE may be seen as being contradictory when they criticise the County Council for framing a policy for the area which, in their view, will not ensure restoration within a 'reasonable' timescale - the word reasonable alluding to urgency and 'short termism'. This sense that the DoE 'want their cake and eat it' is further reinforced by its pronouncements on planning gain as a vehicle for securing environmental and landscape improvement especially in the context of the community forest.

"The Panel reached this conclusion in the full knowledge of the Countryside Commission's proposal to establish a community forest in Bedfordshire which was announced on 12th February 1991. Whilst welcoming this initiative, the Panel expressed the view that these proposals would need to be considerably augmented to deal with the environmental issues posed by the Vale. They did not consider that the reliance for improvements on agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 would provide a satisfactory basis for the overall
It is wholly understandable that the DoE should criticise an approach to environmental improvements founded on the principles of planning gain. It must however, be obvious to the DoE that most responsible planning authorities feel the same way in as much as they realise it is publicly irresponsible to rely on market mechanisms alone to secure community benefits. If the DoE realise this why does it labour the point? It does so, one suspects, because a strand of basic Tory political ideology permeates the fabric of policy guidance. In other words the Secretary of State for the Environment is protecting the rights of some individuals to go about their lawful business without the 'dead hand' of the State on their shoulder by protecting them against the expense of providing community benefits. Accordingly, he, and the prevalent ideology, see planning agreements taking place on a predominantly voluntary basis. Mechanisms introduced under the present Tory administration such as unilateral agreements, confirm this approach. It is the State's responsibility, they contend, to establish the general negotiating framework for agreements but not to overstep the mark by prescribing what and where certain developments will require to make some contribution. Authorities who, in the opinion of the Secretary of State for the Environment, overstep the mark in respect of the community forest policies they produce will be reigned in as can be seen in the cases of both Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire County Council's. As one continues to read the Department of the Environment's response to the County Council's policy on Marston Vale there is an expectation that it will reveal exactly how the community forest objectives will be achieved in the absence of an albeit imperfect mechanism such as planning gain. The question is never answered. Instead the response stumbles on with fine words to the final paragraph.

"The Secretary of State for the Environment agrees with the Panel that the environmental improvement of Marston Vale will be inextricably linked for the foreseeable future with the continuing clay extraction, brick making and landfill operations in the area and that these are of importance beyond the region. He also agrees that the key to achieving the long term improvement of the Vale and the unlocking of its potential would be for the involvement of all the interests concerned, including County and District Councils, the Countryside Commission, land owners, operational interests and amenity groups in a body which might be chaired by a neutral party such as the Regional Office of the Department of the Environment".

(DoE, 1992)

In relation then to Mid Bedfordshire District Council's problem of incorporating Community Forest objectives into its local plan regarding sites such as the former
Ridgmont Brick Works, it is apparent that the Government, as well as history are conspiring to make life difficult.

**Profits Before Principles**

The theory that planning in Britain is an essentially negative activity (see Chapter 4) apart from its ability to extract benefits from lucrative development, can be seen operating in Marston Vale. If the systems ability to secure gain from high value development in a designated area is neutered by Central Government then all that is left is persuasion. The head of Mid Bedfordshire’s Policy Group, David Bowles, stressed that he and he fellow public servants were going to great lengths to build bridges with companies like Hanson Properties and the landfill giant Shanks and McEwan in the hope that they might be persuaded to give serious consideration to a wide range of environmental initiatives including the community forest. However, in the final analysis private companies are responsible first and foremost to their shareholders. If laudable but expensive environmental schemes conflict with the profit motive then attitudes quickly change. As Bowles points out, relations between planning authorities and companies such as Hanson are often good until matters approach the stage of an Examination in Public (EIP) or a Public Local Inquiry (PLI). During the recent EIP on the Bedfordshire Structure Plan, Hanson Properties actually employed a lawyer to state their case such was the antipathy between the company and the County Council. Bowles also highlights the problems inherent in assuming that private land owners, aside from farmers and large companies, will contribute toward the furtherance of community forest objectives. A sizeable area within the area designated as the Marston Vale community forest forms part of the Whitbread Estate. Run on traditional lines the estate has stated that it sees no role for itself in the forest arena. Bowles ascribes this reluctance to two principle anxieties; a fear that participation will prejudice the rights of the estate owners to do with the land as they wish (and this may well include a faint hope of some development in the future) and worries concerning public access and trespass. In 1982 Samuel Whitbread, the owner of the estate, had the following to say.

"Possession is nine-tenths of the law. I am in possession here. I control what I have got here. In fact, in my case, it happens to be 11,000 acres of farmland and forestry and in your case, if I may say so, is may be a flat in South London. The actual ethics of possession are the same. I think one should be at liberty to do what one likes with one's own."

*(in Shoard, 1987, p.473)*
Such is the complexity of issues surrounding the Marston Vale community forest that it would take considerably more than one chapter to give the reader a detailed insight into the forces at work in the area. What this Chapter has attempted to do is focus on the salient issues in relation to the prospect of concept implementation. Marston Vale may not be an exact microcosm for the sort of problems which will be common to community forest initiatives up and down the country but what is certain is that it constitutes a reasonably representative model. The Vale has large areas of despoiled land, polluting industries, busy roads and an urban fringe. It has widely varying ownership patterns and supports a broad range of business activities and land uses including a high quota of agricultural land. As a consequence of all these interests it has a complex past and an unpredictable future. On the surface the area appears ripe for change - a contracting brick industry and a diminishing demand for agricultural products superimposed on a tired and over-used landscape. A look beneath the surface however reveals a picture of politics, vested interest, greed, suspicion, legal obstructions and old fashioned intransigence. The Vale Community Forest Team have been hard at work for over two years and they, like no one else, comprehend the enormity of the task. When interviewed a member of the team could not help but express a growing despair about the progress being made and, more importantly, the increasingly difficult task of keeping the 'community' interested. Aside from the technical issues the concept must carry the public. After two years of fairly high profile promotion there is little to show save a few hundred trees and the acquisition of a few small pieces of land. The problem will increasingly become one of maintaining the profile of the forest both in the eyes of the public and local politicians. As in many County authorities of late the race for unitary status has yielded some unexpected windfalls for 'high profile' projects. Unfortunately, however, the purse strings are tightening with 'essential' services like education and policing are commanding poll position for diminishing financial resources - the Forest Team are only certain of County funds from the end of one financial year to the next. The complexities of creating a new multi-purpose environment might well escape the understanding of the public but, as is likely, if they escape the comprehension of the elected body of that public support may eventually wither on the vine. In some respects the initial 'hype' surrounding the community forest concept has now also become something of a mill stone around the neck of the Team. The Draft Plan (1993) sets out a proposal for twelve 'key' elements for the forest. Element i) talks of the area becoming a unique 'Green Phoenix' destination a showpiece for 'green ecological innovation, sustainable development and environmental education'. (see Appendix D). This kind of marketing image, promoted by the local media, borders on Utopian given the land use realities already discussed. Two years into the project and reality is disillusioning an expectant public to the point where cynicism is growing. The Team member interviewed as part of this study reported that most
members of the public she came into contact with thought the concept a 'nice' idea but now doubted that it would ever happen. This cynicism was apparently more widespread amongst the male population.

IL. 7 - 'Making it Happen' Publicity Leaflet

GET INVOLVED!

Making Marston Vale Happen!

Marston Vale is fast becoming Bedford's most exciting environmental project.

Key ideas and objectives include...

- Create large networks of woodland areas
- Major new recreational facilities
- Better places for wildlife & conservation
- More interesting & less derelict landscapes
- Greening road & rail corridors through the area
- Increasing farm woodland
- Ensuring building development is in a well wooded landscape
- Become an excellent educational resource

THE Marston Vale Community Forest

Together we can make Marston Vale Happen!

There is the Marston Vale Community Forest Project, a major opportunity to turn an area of derelict land and present day hazards into a major new community woodland and nature reserve. The project is being funded by the Countryside Service and will be under the management of the Council's works department.

For the local community, the project provides a major source of recreation and education. For the wider public, it will be of great interest to see how nature can be restored on the site. It represents the future of our countryside and is a major educational opportunity for all age groups. The site will provide opportunities for a wide range of conservation activities, including rare species outreach and visitor education events.

Tim Cutts
Manager, Bedfordshire Council

Roy Ball
Chairman of Marston Vale Advisory Committee
CHAPTER 7

SEEING THE WOOD FOR THE TREES

One might be forgiven for believing that this thesis is about trees and the problems of planting them in order to secure 'proper' planning or land use outcomes. If only life were this simple. Underpinning the technical issues relating to the community forest phenomena and indeed all land use planning processes their lies a deeply routed cultural framework known as 'tradition' which carries the embryo of every contemporary idea or concept. Tradition in this context is a continuous amalgam of human land use and time and to understand a concept like community forestry one must understand the tradition which stretches behind it, only then will it be possible to examine the nature of the conflicts which bedevil implementation and only then will it be within our grasp to suggest ways forward.

Chapter 1 suggested that the community forest concept was not a new one and broadly speaking this must be true. The idea of a multi-purpose landscape valued by a broad cross section of society is one with which many pre-industrial historians will identify. From pre-historic times until the dramatic events associated with industrialisation, much of lowland Britain resembled one large community forest the essential characteristics being a patchwork of small fields and mixed woodlands farmed by a predominantly agrarian population. The term 'forest' did not denote an area of dense unyielding woodland rather it signified a living space which provided for the needs of the feudal community ranging from the sporting pleasure of the powerful to the meagre fuel needs of the rural poor. No one would pretend for a minute that life was anything but hard for the majority of those living off the land but live off the land they did. Much of the land around a community may have belonged in title to the local feudal Lord but it was widely accepted that it should provide for the needs of the whole community. Forests thus embodied the concept of multi-purpose use and were sustainable in as much as each and every member of the community recognised their value and hence the need to utilise them in a manner compatible with their continued well being. The intimate nexus between human society and forest landscape was shattered with the cataclysmic arrival of the industrial revolution.

"In the late Middle Ages landowners accepted that they must share their rights over their land with the rest of the community. That principle was forgotten in the 10th Century."

(Shoard, 1987, P518)
With the new order it served the purposes of the industrial barons and the old land owning elite to disinvest the rural population of their land rights. The landed gentry acquired the size of holdings which made the new agricultural technologies eminently more effective and therefore profitable while the industrialists were gifted with a plentiful supply of cheap labour close to the point of manufacture. Life began to revolve around the fast growing towns and the 'dark satanic mills'. Community became the urban slum and livelihood the factory floor and while living conditions improved apace during Victorian times, generations of Britons lost sight of their once intimate dependence on the natural environment. Karl Marx talked about the proletariat and their separation from the means of production and the same analysis can be applied to the way in which the rural poor were dislocated from their long established dependence on and affinity with the land. Industrial efficiency demanded a polarisation of the population and encouraged the tendency for more to be owned by a decreasing number in both countryside and town.

An emerging interest in forest policy at the turn of the Century was stimulated predictably by nationalistic utilitarianism. The powerful few began to realise that perhaps Britain's strength as an international power was prejudiced by a diminishing stock of timber. The economic mentality which fuelled the industrial revolution inspired the nationalisation of Forestry and the creation of an organisation which would promote the interests of commercial forestry in the euphemistically termed 'national' interest. In the wider, 'private' countryside, the rural land owning elite continued to alienate themselves from the urban working class by developing further the philosophy that their ownership of the land was absolute (see Shoard, 1987 for example).

In terms of Governmental attitudes, the World Wars were to have something cathartic effect on public policy making. All of a sudden a state which had been looking over the heads of its long suffering working population was forced, by necessity, to address their needs more directly. Both wars had relied heavily on manpower and the welfare and morale of the 'fighting' population could be seen to international prominence to agricultural and timber self sufficiency. An inevitable consequence of this newly emerging welfare culture was a consideration for the emotional well being of the masses in terms of the condition of the built environment. The planning acts, it was felt, took care of these considerations while the creation of National Parks secured isolated islands of natural beauty is what was considered an ocean of essential agricultural land. Being directly linked to the Government and hence the welfare spirit, the Forestry Commission, post-war, did begin to reflect a consideration for wider social aims in the formulation of its strategic objectives. Private landowners including the largest group of all, the
farmers, however only became more entrenched in the view that the land outside
towns and cities was theirs to do with as they saw fit. This attitude was hardened
considerably by the introduction of post war measures aimed at keeping farmers on
the land at all cost.

Thus, post-war, certain token concessions were made to the landless, mostly urban,
population of this country in respect of their rights and the land. The fine threads of
a nexus which had been shattered by the trauma of industrialisation were in some
small way re-connected while, more significantly, the most vital strands of this
umbilical were destroyed seemingly beyond reinstatement.

"The failure of the post-war order to resolve the differences between
landowners and the landless leaves a deep gulf between the two
sides. When we look carefully we find that the issue is not merely
the allocation of a resource which both groups acknowledge must be
shared. Instead, two sets of fundamentally opposed value systems
confront each other."

(Shoard, 1987, P473)

The seemingly shambolic demise of the welfare spirit in the 70's gave rise to a new
order of hard economic determinism in the 80's. The system of political ideas,
characterised by 'Thatcherism', which dictates that the free play of market forces
will, in the end, secure the widest benefits for the greatest number, spread with
alarming rapidity and held sway for over a decade. The landed were reinforced in
the conviction that their land was a capital asset which should, first and foremost,
be put to a use which maximises the flow of revenue. It must be emphasised that
Thatcherism did not 'invent' this mentality, it had existed in an extreme form since
the breakdown of the old feudal order, rather it served to compound its myopic
features and popularise the general philosophy. The 'gulf' as Shoard calls it,
between the have's and the have not's has thus been re-emphasised. In the context
of this study the have's are those who control the land and make their living from it
the have not's are the majority who, while not necessarily poor in economic terms,
have lost their right to enjoy or benefit from the common inheritance. Encouragingly,
the 'green' backlash against the trend for a smaller number to control all exploit most
of the land has permeated society at all levels. Born out of fears that the
environment can not sustain this undemocratic onslaught the green movement has
found many allies amongst a landless class who are becoming increasingly aware of
the dangers presented by a cocktail of market determination and land ownership.
Despite mass protests and the growing militancy of organisations like Friends of the
Earth and Greenpeace however, power still rests with the landed despite an
increasingly active exchange of view.
The philosophy behind the community forest concept is, not surprisingly, a fusion of Thatcheresque ideology and 'green' principles. The Countryside Commission, operating in a political climate perhaps not of its choosing, has decided to promote the idea that both sides of Shoard's polarised population have something to gain from the implementation of such a worthy vision. More importantly, the Commission see the attractions to the landowners as being such that they will, in the spirit of individualism, voluntarily engage in appropriate activities the sum of which will result in 'forest' implementation. For farmers this means taking advantage of grant schemes aimed at encouraging afforestation on land which has hitherto been worked intensively for agriculture while for wider land owning interests it means developing land uses which would be compatible with the multiple objectives set out in the vision such as leisure and small scale commercial activities. Turning to the farmers first, it is clear from the evidence presented in this study that current incentives to change are small when compared with the alternatives. The worked examples given by Lorraine-Smith in Chapter 3 and his subsequent comments, cast doubt on the economic viability of the schemes currently available. As Lorraine-Smith suggests certain combinations of factors might result in conditions favourable enough to make forestry on farms lucrative but then only for the dedicated farmer/forester. Evidence from the Hertfordshire Countryside and the Marston Vale suggest that not only are the grants perceived to be inadequate but forestry represents too much of a cultural jump to be contemplated. Even if the available grant mechanisms were such that they attracted farmers to plant trees there is always the 'community' element. As has already been discussed the concept of absolute ownership is one which is firmly implemented in the consciousness of the land owning classes. Farmers who might be willing to attempt lowland forestry on a scale commensurate with community forest objectives would surely be reluctant if they thought that the public interest in terms of access and aesthetic considerations, would in any way prejudice their ability to operate exactly as they wished. These fears are echoed by the farming industry's representative body the NFU and bodies representing the wider interests of private landowners such as the CLA (see Chapter 5). In areas where farming is a more problematic activity such as the urban fringe, a number of other factors come into play. Here the pressures for development are more intense and the farmer finds himself the owner of land which, while difficult to farm because of the associated problems of urban activity, has considerable 'hope' value. It is these areas which have been targeted specifically for community forests and it is these areas where the disincentives to farming may actually combine with other factors, such as developable land values, to present some opportunities for community forest implementation.
Also present in the community forest equation are the myriad of private landowners who have been using the land for commercial reasons other than farming. This study focused on the private land owning interests in Bedfordshire's Marston Vale, principally Hanson Properties (formerly The London Brick Company) and the waste disposal giant Shanks and McEwan (Chapter 6). To suggest that these organisations have significantly different motives for working the land from those of the farmers would be to indulge in self deception. In fact, in some respects, 'company' land may be less likely to be given up to uses compatible with community forest objectives simply because it represents the asset of a group of remote shareholders interested in optimising their investment. In the case of Marston Vale the interests of the private companies are also being watched over by a higher authority with an interest in maintaining the status quo. The Secretary of State for the Environment, in his comments on the Bedfordshire Structure Plan Alterations No. 3 was keen to warn against policy making which would jeopardise the wealth generating activities which have largely been responsible for causing the despoliation.

"The Panel concluded that new Policy 17 should be replaced by one which, while recognising the high priority to be given to the improvement of Marston Vale, also recognised the long term significance of clay extraction, brick making and landfill and the fact that the Vale is a major land resource whose potential should not be vitiating by short term measures."

(DoE, 1992)

Given that the primary reasons for working land in an advanced market economy like Britain's are overwhelmingly economic it is clearly the case that those with a vested interest will be pre-disposed to seek out the most lucrative activities rather than tie their asset up under low yield woodland.

There can be no doubt that the planning profession is alive to the problems of implementing an ambitious multi-purpose and use concept solely via the vehicle of a voluntary grant system. The profession realises, as one suspects does the Countryside Commission, that ambitions to improve the environment and secure a wider gains may rest in the end on the planning systems ability to extract such 'gains' from the development industry and this in turn means using the provisions of Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to secure significant community forest objectives on the back of lucrative development. The Government agree with this approach to a point - the point where the Local Planning Authority, through the policies in its land use plan, attempts to alter in any significant way national policy intentions in the pursuit of community forest objectives. National policy dictates that the operation of Section 106 of the Act should be applied only where it is reasonable to do so in planning terms. As the Secretary of State's
responses to both Hertfordshire County Council (Chapter 4) and Bedfordshire County Council (Chapter 6) clearly demonstrate the Government do not see the need to make exceptions to this general principle and have accordingly deemed attempts to make community forest objectives more material for the purposes of achieving localised agreements, out of bounds. This stance has a number of important implications for implementing future policy making at the structure and local plan levels. Firstly, it curtails the ability of a planning authority to relax restrictive policy presumptions locally be they Green Belt or otherwise, in an attempt to stimulate development which could then be used to further community forest objectives. Secondly, it undermines an authority's ability to ask for a community forest contribution from a given development by right thus creating a situation where implementation may rely on appeal decisions. Thirdly, and related to the previous observation, the judgement that authorities cannot be prescriptive dictates that when community forest agreements are acceptable the level or contribution can be negotiated down through the appeal process and the ability of an applicant to bypass the authority's wishes in the form of a unilateral undertaking. Where there is a Forest plant in place (produced by a co-sponsored team not the Local Planning Authority) and the plan's objectives are embodied in the relevant local plan to afford them materiality, these will also be watered down by the broader brush of undiscriminating national planning policy. In short the Government has ensured that the mechanism for operating planning agreements for community forest gains exists and that statutory development plans have the ability to give the concept some materiality. Local planning authorities can not however, 'go the extra mile' by creating locally favourable market conditions through the exercise of their statutory powers in order to utilise economic forces to secure wider social benefits. The reasons for this one suspects are rooted in the Governments basic ideological philosophy and, quite naturally, in a belief that such an important concept should not reply upon the gamble of securing Section 106 agreements. The latter view would be quite laudable if the prospect of implementation lay elsewhere but as this study has highlighted neither landowners or local authorities have any faith that the existing grant schemes will do any more than encourage small scale sporadic planting.

To summarise, modern Britain is a country where post-industrial traditions of land ownership compounded by the post-war presumption for intensive agriculture have conspired to create a countryside around towns and beyond which in exclusive and inhospitable. The masses have lost direct contact with the land and the few who farm do so in a highly mechanised and intensive manner. Farming and wider environmental objectives have steadily drifted apart with economics ruling the decision of the farming sector as they do most others.
The community forest movement is coming face to face with these 'traditional' obstacles. To be an effective antidote to the despoiled urban fringe and the chaos of urban living the concept requires the full participation of a wide spectrum of land owning interests. In the Marston Vale for example, the relatively small area of land (16,000 ha) comprised no less than 96 separate landowners (Niles, 1992). A similar pattern is evident in the case of Thames Chase and The Great North Forest. Grant inducements will draw a relatively small number of these interests into the forest arena and while CAP exists in its current form many of these will only be planting 'scraps' of land for some extra cash. Those who do take advantage of the grant schemes will need to be educated on how to look after the trees and accept the rights of others to enjoy the landscape in which they are planted, if their main livelihood is still derived from agriculture it is doubtful whether they will be so public spirited (see NFU, Chapter 5). Underpinning the problems of ownership diversity there lies the considerable problem of landowner attitudes. As has already been mentioned, even if planting can be achieved the fundamental element of the community forest concept has to be taken on board namely that what is being planted is more than a means of deriving income from the land - it is something to be shared and enjoyed by the landless. If this quantum change in landowner attitudes is to be achieved it will require unravelling many years of ingrained tradition, for while the idea of stewardship is not uncommon amongst the landed classes it is invariably tied up with protecting what is theirs for the material benefit of their own and not for the spiritual benefit of the wider public.

"Many landowners who talk of themselves as stewards see no contradiction between such a role and the destruction of many of the attractions of their property in the pursuit of profit. Nor do they feel that as stewards they are required to allow their fellow citizens to share with them in enjoying the benefits that their land can bestow."

(Shoard, 1987, P481)

This material attitude is not confined to the landowner. Samuel Whitbread was right when he compared the ethics of owning a flat with those of owning 11,000 acres (Chapter 6). Modern life has divorced most of us from the notion that the land belongs to us all. We are possessive of our cars and houses because they represent material success in the same way we would find it difficult to allow people to share our houses and gardens they, the owners of large amounts of land, find it difficult to conceive of a countryside where we the masses are free to enjoy its benefits. Putting aside the technical issues of implementing the community forest concept this single ideological barrier may prove the hardest to overcome.
At present the planning system can only offer a way forward which accepts the profit motive. As a system of control rather than one of comprehensive intervention it can only channel the forces at play in society in such a way that multi-purpose woodland and community objectives are achieved as a by-product of other activities. Of course it is within the system's remit to 'plan' or set out on proposals maps areas until which it might be desirable to achieve certain objectives but in the final analysis this only amounts to a wish list. Implementation relies on landowners seeing enough of an incentive to fund the forest and this may necessitate giving planning permissions for high return uses on the back of which 'community' objectives can be funded. This approach has its problems. Not only do the Government see it as an inappropriate way of securing forest implementation but such schemes may actually result in environmental losses given that each new section of community forest will require an enabling development whose net impact may far outweigh the gains afforded by the former.

The Way Forward

It is clear from the evidence presented in this study that the approach currently being adopted by community forest protagonists will struggle to achieve the kind of implementation success promoted by the vision. Market mechanisms and landowner attitudes are too deeply rooted to be significantly disturbed by an essentially voluntary approach - one or both of these realities will need to be adjusted to secure an appropriate level of success. Some would agree that the planning system falls short of a proper system of land use control because it has only nationalised the right to develop rather than the right to the land itself. If all land was under state control then farmers and the present myriad of landowners would simply become tenants. Given this scenario land use practices would be controlled more rigidly by the state. Unlike the operation of the planning system, tenants could actually be required to operate their holdings in a manner commensurate with 'community' objectives. In the case of farmers this would mean farming in a way which recognised the rights of the landless classes to have access and enjoy their countryside. Popular counter arguments to state land ownership include the idea that farm productivity would fall drastically because of the lack of incentive created by what many would perceive as an overly socialist approach. However, evidence exists to suggest that there is no clear relationship between farm productivity and tenure (see NEDO, 1973 and Gasson and Hill, 1984 for example). The problem of operating such a system may have more to do with the size of the bureaucracy which would be required to administer land holdings and the practices of tenants. Although in theory such a system would be totally democratic, ordinary people may be frustrated in their attempts to influence the tenant operators. Added to this, such
a system would be inordinately expensive. Not only would the state, to justify the approach politically, be required to purchase all land at market values, the cost of the civil service operating machines would be prohibitive. An alternative approach to a widespread purchase policy may be the selective acquisition of land in community forest areas by the Forestry Authority. These areas could then be turned over to mixed forestry and tenant farming under the supervision of the Authority. Such an approach, although initially expensive, would allow a consideration for wider land use issues such as conservation, public access, leisure and recreation. Areas in Britain which currently mirror this style of land management include the New Forest, the Forest of Dean and Grizedale Forest in the Lake District National Park. While land values would be high in urban fringe areas it may be possible to combine state land acquisitions with private and Local Authority leisure functions by allowing the development of lucrative schemes like municipal golf courses which, if designed properly, could be accommodated within the forest landscape. It may even be desirable for the state authority (notionally the Forestry Authority) to incorporate business development within these new 'forest fringes' in areas nearest the conurbation and close to major transport routes. Rental income would assist in the maintenance of the deeper forest areas for public enjoyment and help with a rolling programme of continued afforestation. Forest fringes could be seen as being as desirable as an adequate highway infrastructure, not only as 3-dimensional Green Belts but to provide the urban population with accessible green space for leisure, recreation and 'natural' relaxation. Fig. 15 illustrates the principle.
Fig. 15 - The Forest Fringe Model

Mixed Amenity Woodland
Productive Woodland, Mainly Conifer
Agricultural Forest
Interpretative Centre
Wood Processing
Commercial Development
Rail Shuttle Station
State Owned Land
Cycle Route
Local planning authorities working with the Forest Authority would play a key role in identifying the physical layout and structure of these 'new' Green Belts using their knowledge of land use mixes and the public participation process. For areas which have been badly despoiled, such as old mineral extraction sites, it may be appropriate for the Local Planning Authority to identify 'incentive' zones in their local plan. In such zones the presumption against built development may be relaxed in favour of developments which are lucrative enough to ensure the improvement of the landscape while appropriate in terms of their overall impact. The Local Planning Authority may also apply this positive planning principle to other features of the urban fringe such as old farm buildings and industrial sites. (Brogborough Brick Works site in the Marston Vale for example). These features may be identified specifically in the relevant local plan or UDP and carry a planning or development brief with material consequence. Opponents of this approach to planning in the urban fringe may argue that by creating locally favourable conditions i.e. around an old mined extraction site, local authorities are interfering in the market process to an unacceptable degree. This argument however, cannot be sustained. The concept of planning itself dictates that development should occur with a view to the wider community. A new town centre office block may quite rightly be required to pay for car parking spaces elsewhere in the town because its physical implications go beyond the mere footprint of the building. If a planning authority consider site 'A' in the urban fringe to be acceptable for developments X, Y or Z then they are justly placed to decide what the implication will be for the wider community and are thus entitled to secure some contribution from the developer. Unwise authorities will, of course, run the risk to blighting land if they are able to embody overly onerous contributions in their development plans. The answer may be to draw up a list of developments which will in themselves be compatible with the planning objectives being pursued without the need for unwieldy obligations. (see Hertfordshire County Council, Chapter 4 for example). Such land uses might include those with a strong landscape element such as golf courses, boating lakes and the like.

There is of course a less radical approach and one which is, to a limited extent, being relied on currently to achieve community forest objectives - grants for trees. The problems with the present system have been outlined by this study (see Lorraine-Smith, Chapter 3 for example) and it may be that a more comprehensive, better funded and wider ranging system of grants would achieve where the present myriad of schemes fail. It is fairly obvious however that such a system of grants would be expensive to run on a scale and complexity commensurate with multi-purpose objectives. Farmers, or farmer/foresters as they would be, would need to be educated and administered by the state in order to practice in ways compatible with the aims of public access, recreation, conservation and landscape enhancement.
In the final analysis it may actually be more cost effective to buy out the relatively small number of farmers affected by community forest designation rather than attempt to support them with forest subsidies and grants.

In conclusion, it is clear that there may be many ways to achieve the community forest vision - a vision which is universally held to be desirable. However, what is also clear is that while the vision may be seen as desirable by many it is not a priority for the same number most notably those who’s contribution and participation is essential to implementation. Attitudes, political climate and an unerring faith in the market all militate against a vision of trees and low density land uses in the countryside encircling on major towns and cities. Not only do the practical and technical issues oppose such a dream so does the disposition of landowners in respect of public access and common rights to roam. Studies suggest that farmers and landowners will continue to do as they please with the countryside despite the efforts of bodies like Countryside Commission to encourage a different view. In 1977 the Commission launched a massive publicity campaign with the aim of persuading those involved in farming to change their ways. In 1982 consultants were asked to see how effective this campaign had been.

"What they found, though doubtless unwelcome to the Countryside Commission’s optimists, came as no surprise to more realistic students of the rural scene .... the second survey showed the degradation of the English countryside they had identified in 1974 continuing uninterrupted in spite of all the efforts that had been made to educate farmers into changing their ways."

(Shoard, 1987, p.515)

It may be cynical but nonetheless accurate to conclude that the community forest movement has thus far been used by many to cultivate the illusion that environmental issues are being taken seriously. Local authorities and pressure groups understand the realities of land use in this country and realise that beneath this veneer of common purpose there lies an intricate web of conflicting aims and interests which will not be aligned with the common dream without a number of radical structural changes.

The historical examination in Chapter 1 highlights the way in which our lives and lifestyles have changed. Community Forests in times past were sustainable because they were valued as life itself depended on their existence. To be successful the modern concept has to embody the same principles if not the same level of dependency. Unlike the urban park the forest must exist by necessity rather than solely for aesthetic convenience. It must give something to everyone in the community and be seen by everyone to be doing so. In other words it must be seen
as an investment in which all are able to make a deposit. This frame of mind will entail a shift in cultural attitudes which is unlikely to come about overnight given the present course of tradition. If we must accept a market economy then we must find a way of making the market demand a change in the way we live and view the landscape. Artificial markets have been sustained for many years in an attempt to preserve one kind of landscape and land use practice and there can be no reason in principle why the same should not happen again for the greater good. Community forests can be created but it will take time and the greatest endeavours of all in society, including planners and politicians, who nurture a vision of communities where everyone not only the privileged few, have access to our common inheritance.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Institution</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location/Reference</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fitz Nigel, R., (1179)</td>
<td>Dialogus de Scaccario In 'English Historical Documents', Vol. 2 edited by Douglas and Greenway in 1953, p. 528</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Forestry Commission., (1988/91)</td>
<td>Woodland Grant Scheme, Edinburgh, Forestry Commission</td>
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</table>
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**Bedfordshire Structure Plan**

**Alterations No. 3 - Key Diagram**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOTATION</th>
<th>Policy Numbers</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agricultural Priority Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Area of Great Landscape Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Green Belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,84</td>
<td></td>
<td>Countryside Priority Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Housing Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
<td>Technology Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Highway Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improvements to Strategic Highway Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td>New Roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td>Settlements to be by-passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other Main Roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Existing Railways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71,72,73</td>
<td>New or Improved Rail or Light Rail Links</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Luton Airport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. In order to implement the Community Forest concept a number of complicated implementation issues need to be resolved. What do you see is the most crucial to the success of the implementation process?

2. If you are a Local Authority, do you have a broad political consensus for the Community Forest programme in your area? (If you do not, please explain the basis for dissent)

3. What do you perceive as the Countryside Commission's role in the development of the Community Forest programme?
4. What do you perceive as the Forestry Commission's role in the development of the Community Forest programme?

5. Please rank, on a scale of 1 - 7 (or more if you add extra headings) what you consider to be the most important aspects of a successful Community Forest (if equal weight rank with the same number)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Forestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure and Recreation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO₂ Absorption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Containment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Enhancement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. What are you doing to publicly promote Community Forests both in your area and to a wider audience?

7. Are there any further comments you would wish to make?
A summary of the policies and proposals.

MARSTON VALE COMMUNITY FOREST

1.1 The proposed Marston Vale Community Forest is more than 60 square miles (16,000 hectares) between the M1 (near Milton Keynes), Ampthill, Woburn and Bedford. It is centred on the 'Brickfields', an area of existing and former clay pits stretching ten miles from Ridgmont Brickworks at the M1 to South Bedford, see Figure 1. It could be the site of an attractive mosaic of woods, lakes, open areas and farm land. Local people could become highly involved in creating a rich and varied landscape and a more successful image. The desolation around its derelict land, abandoned brickworks and depots could be reduced. The area could provide a better context for the 150,000 residents of the Bedford Sub-Region to live and work. New opportunities to walk, fish, picnic and watch birds as well as improved water and land facilities for active sports could be provided.

1.2 A good environment will also be good economics. An attractive setting could be very important if jobs in farming and brick making continue to decline to be replaced by jobs in tourism, recreation and other services. We could help landowners and farmers with their business prospects and stem the decline in land values. We could substantially improve Bedford’s image to investors.

1.3 The area is however vulnerable and in dire need of environmental improvement. Our 1992 Community Survey suggests that many perceive it as polluted. The past record is not entirely a proud one. Coordination problems between three local authorities and the major corporate landowners exist. The situation is not eased by financial pressures on them. There seems to be little confidence to market the area in comparison with Milton Keynes, Peterborough, Stevenage or Northampton. Without a bold initiative the area could decline. Economic pressures on brickmaking, waste disposal, local government and farming could lead to more dereliction. Unattractive development schemes are likely. The ‘setting aside’ of about 1,500 hectares of farm land is now inevitable. This area of countryside could become more urban as new and widened roads, commercial and residential developments, new clay winning and landfill sites proliferated. Residents could continue to feel powerless in relation to the environment of their area. Neglect and dilapidation could increase.

1.4 This document provides a framework to achieve an upward spiral towards our vision. It has implications for the present and the next ten to thirty years. The focus is on the next ten years (1994-2004). There will be opportunities to review the plan in the late nineties. This plan has been costed. The Draft Business Plan indicates it is within the partner organisations’ resources but needs a somewhat higher priority and better targeting. The recreation benefits, landscape improvements and resulting increase in land values would outweigh the additional costs. We are convinced it is needed. This Plan, and the Business Plan, require local people and community leaders to back the Vision in this document with all the ‘will’ and resources at their disposal. The Community Forest may not be feasible without substantial resources, determination and a number of ‘heroic’ decisions by the local authorities and in particular the major corporate organisations in the Vale. This applies particularly to minerals and development matters, which are not central to this project’s remit.

1.5 This is a summary of the Plan. It is aimed at the main partner organisations, parish councils, local groups and societies, businesses, landowners and those particularly interested in the future of the Vale. A two page leaflet will also be available to the general public. The full justification of the Plan is contained in a Technical Appendix which can be inspected on request.
1.6 For those reading this document who want a very rapid flavour of the most important proposals there are five key proposals which are part of a unified strategy and programme of action. They form a coherent and mutually reinforcing 'mission'. They are:

* Providing a new marketing image for the Bedford Sub Region as an experimental testing ground for a national strategy on environmental conservation and ecological technology (the so called 'Green Phoenix');

* Turning the Vale's perceived environmental 'weaknesses' such as air pollution, landfill brickmaking and clay winning and the loss of trees and hedgerows into 'strengths'.

* Making Marston Vale Happen with a firm 10 year programme and targets to increase tree cover by 1,500 - 2,000 hectares focussed on the Brickfields and South Bedford Urban Fringe.

* Decentralisation of responsibility for local environmental enhancements, countryside management, community development and fund raising.

* Establishment of a new independent Community Forest trust supported by both public and private bodies.

1.7 The preparation of this plan would not have been possible without the assistance and advice of many people in the partner organisations. The preparation of 'A Strategy for the Marston Vale' by London Brick Company, Shanks & McEwan and Hanson in 1990 was particularly useful to an understanding of the relationship between the forest, minerals, landfill and development issues. The Work of the Agriculture, Natural Environment and Rights of Way Groups has also been invaluable as has the work of several firms of landscape, ecological and survey consultants. A list of the more important source documents is included (1).

2 A VISION FOR THE MID 21ST CENTURY.

2.1 A vision for a Community Forest in Bedfordshire and the Vale could have twelve key elements:

i) A major lift in the image of the area for it to become a unique 'Green Phoenix' destination for the 21st century (see footnote). A showpiece for 'green' ecological innovation, sustainable development and environmental education. The highest level technology could be demonstrated in such fields as waste management, air pollution control, water management, nature conservation, wood burning and wind energy power generation, recycling, forestry with a high priority on ecological objectives, agricultural diversification, countryside management and community development.

ii) Residents, business people and workers working closely and energetically together with real influence on the future of the project and the Vale. Empowerment of active residents in the programmes will be of paramount importance.

iii) Magnificent areas of woodland, copses and hedgerows could cover up to a third of the area. Increases in the area under broadleaved trees would replace derelict land, unproductive/unprofitable agricultural land and blighted development sites, as indicated in Figure 2 (The Proposals Map) and Table 1.

The phoenix was a unique mythical bird which burnt itself on a funeral pile after 4-500 years and rose from the ashes with renewed youth to live through another cycle.
iv) The development of a well wooded and more interesting landform in the Brickfields. This might respect a restored drainage system based on the Marston and Elstow Brooks. A wider range of restoration techniques associated with the ongoing clay winning, sand and gravel and landfill processes could be sought than in the past.

v) Conservation of cultural, historical and ecological features including ancient woodlands, hedgerows and meadows, waterbodies and ponds and the creation of major new conservation and interpretation facilities.

vi) Reinstatement of hedgerows particularly on the ridges and shallow slopes, the southern Brickfields, Cranfield and parts of Wistead and Cotton End.

vii) ‘One stop shop’ services to support farmers in their attempts to respond to agricultural policy reforms, establish farm woodlands and consolidate the rights of way system.

viii) Enhancement of road and rail corridors including ‘gateway’ woodlands, lay by enhancements and strong woodland frameworks with gaps to allow good views of the surrounding countryside.

ix) A much better place to live and work in. This would involve environmental enhancement of the edges of 10 out of the area's 17 major villages where the interface between village and countryside is 'raw'; environmental enhancements within 5 villages and around Kempston and Stewartby Brickworks; major improvements at several commercial estates such as Elstow Power Depot.

x) Many more havens for wildlife and nature conservation; the creation of a system of continuous and expanded woodland, meadow and heath on the ridges; the development of water bodies, open wetland and ditches based on the natural stream drainage system between Brogborough Lake and the Ouse Valley.

xi) Greater accessibility on foot, by bicycle and public transport through improved rail access, new car parks and cycle centres. It will also involve a rights of way network better suited to today's demands. Gateway sites and a strategic route on the Greensand and Clay ridges would link three radial strategic routes into Bedford. Circular local walks and rides, implemented through the Parish Paths initiative, will be important.

xii) No major new leisure schemes are considered either feasible or desirable except possibly in the Brickfields at Ridgmont Brickworks and Brogborough Lake. The emphasis would be on passive informal activities for at least 10-15 years until the forest framework was becoming established. Some improvements to existing facilities at Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby Lake and Brogborough Lake could enhance watersport and nature conservation objectives.

3 Proposals by Area

3.1 The main proposals in the 3, 10 Year Action Programmes to move towards this vision are listed in Table 2. A programme of action for the five principal subdivisions of the area could be as follows:
Table I. Broad long term (30 year) control totals for tree planting and woodland by major subdivisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area District</th>
<th>Total area (ha)</th>
<th>Proposed Woodland (ha)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brickfields</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>950</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Fringe</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brogborough/Gateway</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Beds Clay Ridge</td>
<td>4,250</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensand</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Total**               | **15,750**     | **4,950**              | **%**
### Table 2: Principal Targets for 3 and 10 Year Programmes

The principal targets for the 3 year programme 1994-7 will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Description</th>
<th>Hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advance Planting/off site planting with M1 widening</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brogborough Manor</td>
<td>30-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranfield TP and associated road schemes</td>
<td>30-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salford Restoration Scheme</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brogborough Lake backland woodland at East end</td>
<td>30-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millbrook Proving Ground</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxhill Manor/Rectory Farm</td>
<td>10-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry Farm</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsh Leys/Bell Farm</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Willington/disturbed land</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southill Estate reinstatement of field structure</td>
<td>10-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance planting Camel Field, Houghton Conquest</td>
<td>10-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewartby Lake Enhancement</td>
<td>10-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lidlington Brickworks</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Schemes</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total for 1994-2004</strong></td>
<td>1500-2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principal additional targets for the 10 year programme will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Description</th>
<th>Hectares</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ridgmont Brickworks</td>
<td>30-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boughton End</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranfield Plateau</td>
<td>50-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Millbrook</td>
<td>50-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry Farm</td>
<td>100-120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell Farm/Marsh Leys/Kempston Pits</td>
<td>100-120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Lidlington Brickworks</td>
<td>30-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L'Field</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brogborough 2</td>
<td>30-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term clayworking sites/advance planting</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance planting etc Rookery and other 'pit margins'</td>
<td>350-400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off site planting South of Southern Bedford by-pass</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smaller schemes</td>
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<tr>
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