

# Artistic Licence

**A review of the Forestry Commission's involvements  
in the arts, and options for the future**

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Cover: "Strings"; installation by Sam Hopkins at Cowleaze Wood (Chiltern Sculpture Trail) 2006; courtesy of the artist

## **Contents**

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Background to the review</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2. The policy context for FC involvement in the arts</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3. The range of involvements to date</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4. Benefits and outcomes</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>5. Practical management issues</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>6. Needs, opportunities, and options for the future</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>7. Summary of recommendations</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>8. References</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Annex: General list of initiatives</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>92</b>

## **Executive summary**

### **Background to the review**

- S.1 The emphasis of UK forestry policy has widened from timber production to the provision of social and environmental benefits. At the same time, many of the personal and cultural meanings that go with a deeper and more everyday connectedness to trees and woodland have been lost. Some of the most positive potential for addressing these issues lies with the arts.
- S.2 Arts initiatives undertaken in partnership with, or under the auspices of the Forestry Commission are making significant contributions to objectives relating to education, awareness, social inclusion, sense of place/identity, creative enterprise, cultural expression, physical and mental well-being, environmental valuation, recreation and amenity, community cohesion, and local economies; in addition to producing art that is of intrinsic value for its own sake.
- S.3 This report presents the first national overview of these activities. It also discusses the role of the state forestry sector in this field, develops an expanded rationale for FC engagement, and provides a basis (including recommendations) for defining agendas in future.
- S.4 Individual sections of the report focus on: the policy context for FC involvement in the arts; the range of involvements to date; benefits and outcomes; practical management issues; and needs, opportunities, and options for the future. Recommendations are summarised in the final section; and a list of over 125 past and present initiatives is provided in an annex.

### **The policy context for FC involvement in the arts**

- S.5 The Forestry Commission has never promoted a specific policy on art, nor has it had any real overall strategic orientation on the subject at Great Britain (GB) level. Nonetheless, a range of other FC policies provide some context and mandates both for what is being done and what might be done in future; and these are reviewed in section 2 of the report.
- S.6 In primary legislation, authority for FC activities in tourism, amenity and recreation derives from amendments made to the 1967 Forestry Act by the 1968 Countryside Act, which also conferred a duty on Ministers to have regard to the social needs of rural areas.
- S.7 The FC is responsible for the largest single landholding in the UK, and this landholding is also the largest single destination for countryside visits. Public statements by the Commission refer to the modern “multi-purpose” approach to forestry, which is “based not just on commercial success, but on a much wider appreciation of the many values that people attach to the nation’s forests and woodlands”, and involves “provision of social and environmental benefits arising from planting and managing attractive as well as productive woodlands”. The

Commission also refers to use of forests for healthy pursuits, not just in a physical sense but also in a spiritual sense.

- S.8 Behind these generalities an apparent paradox remains; namely that this broadening of the dimensions of public forestry coincides with a trend of declining everyday personal and cultural connections with the meanings associated with trees and woodland. There is thus a distinction between provision of recreational opportunities that merely happen to be in a forest, and activities that deepen people’s knowledge, awareness or experience of the ecological, ethical and spiritual dimensions of the environment.
- S.9 Section 2 presents a sift through the FC’s national corporate strategies, planning documents and statutory reports that were in effect at the time of writing, for each of England, Wales and Scotland, citing the provisions they each contain that enable arts-related involvements. These citations probably represent close to the sum total of references to or mandates for art that exist in all such sources for the three countries.
- S.10 Issues highlighted in these documents include: the cultural importance of forestry (ie not just of forests); the importance of engaging all parts of society; local distinctiveness and sense of place; identity; inspiration; spiritual needs; interpretation; “reconnecting people with their forests”; and objectives concerning local economies, cultural heritage, public health and well-being (including mental health) and quality of life. A few policy and planning documents at regional and local levels were also examined, and some comments are made in relation to the international level too.
- S.11 There is a marked tendency in nearly all of these policy materials for “culture” to be considered in relation to “heritage”, but generally not to be considered in relation to contemporary cultural life (to which, nonetheless, the FC is making a big contribution). Valuing the meanings of trees, woodlands and forests is usually described in terms of valuing their history, rather than in terms of present-day/evolving meanings, or of timeless imagination. The one exception is Forestry Commission Scotland, which in more recent times has begun to make reference to “living culture”.
- S.12 In general, the Commission’s policy approach is to support the use of art as a tool for delivery of various outcomes, rather than for its own intrinsic worth; and resourcing decisions are based on this “instrumental” yardstick of effectiveness. Nonetheless, the “artistic” outcomes can often be significant in their own right. This report’s review of mandates and policies, and of the programmes and projects themselves, suggests among other things that (whether as a by-product or otherwise) the Forestry Commission should be counted as a meaningful contributor to national public support for the arts.

### **The range of involvements to date**

- S.13 Section 3 summarises the survey of past and present arts-related initiatives which have involved or have been promoted by the Forestry Commission; and a list of the initiatives recorded (over 125) is presented in an annex.

- S.14 In order to be as all-embracing as possible at this stage, a pragmatic approach has been taken, combining qualitative information from a variety of sources, including literature, face-to-face interviews, websites, correspondence, site-visits and a staff workshop. More structured and quantitative studies, perhaps focused on a sample of the total picture, may be undertaken in future. Because of time constraints and the variable responsiveness of consultees, there are still significant gaps in this first inventory, including an acknowledged under-representation of information from Scotland and Wales. It is hoped that this may be corrected in further phases of work; and a general invitation remains open for information to be submitted from any quarter at any time.
- S.15 While the imposition of any fixed typology of activities has been resisted at this stage, some indicative tables are given which present potential ways in which activities might be categorised, in relation to: art forms; activity types; “positioning” on various spectra; purposes; benefits and outcomes; audiences/beneficiaries; and partnerships.
- S.16 While being at pains to avoid constructing a treatise on definitions of “culture” and “art”, some comments are made on the understanding of the scope of these terms, essentially to emphasise the pragmatic breadth of what has been included in this study.
- S.17 The remainder of section 3 explores the variety of what is being done. As well as the diversity of art forms and activity types, the range of approaches is also discussed, in terms of whether work is challenging or populist, on-site, off-site or multi-site, what its purposes are, who delivers it, how related it is to the specifics of a given location or to the specifics of trees/woodlands/forests/forestry, whether it is the primary focus of a programme or an adjunct to some other endeavour, what its themes are, and so on.
- S.18 Along with a question about the degree of “ease” or “difficulty” involved in experiencing any given work of art, another question of approach which causes frequent debate is the level of interpretation or structure (eg trail routes) that is provided for the experience. The advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to these questions are discussed.
- S.19 Drivers of initiative are also examined. Much of the impetus for FC arts activities has tended to be “bottom-up” and “grass roots” in nature. While this means that the totality is somewhat lacking in institutional cohesiveness, at the same time there is vital and positive strength in this approach. Hence, although the present review sets out to contribute to the development of a strengthened and filled-out national perspective, this needs to be done with great sensitivity. Many initiatives have come about because of the personal enthusiasm of individual staff, and the flexibility and delegated authority which enables this deserves to be safeguarded. This means however that arts activities are not strongly integrated as an institutional driver which would persist in a given area if a key individual with personal enthusiasm were to move on; and it may also result in an under-appreciation of the FC’s corporate recognition of the importance of associated social agendas.

- S.20 A further part of section 3 sketches out the variety of partnership models, framing agreements, governance arrangements, divisions of responsibility, cost-sharing protocols and other institutional arrangements that have underpinned many of the FC's arts involvements. This leads in turn to some comments on sources of funding.
- S.21 The variety of purposes and objectives for Forestry Commission arts activities is also discussed. Some art may be situated in the forest simply because the forest provides it with a convenient or thematically-linked backdrop. Other art can only be generated by particular conditions produced by areas which the FC happens to control. Art in or about forests is capable of acting as an "instrument of consciousness" rather than simply an "object of attention"; and arts initiatives are well suited to dealing with the role of trees and woodlands as metaphors for a range of wider human values. While these may still be "instrumental" purposes in a sense, they perhaps represent an expansion of the way in which that concept is usually perceived by managers.
- S.22 This element of "values", both in terms of the value of forests, and in terms of other human value-sets, may be the common thread underlying the wide variety of approaches exhibited by the FC's arts involvements to date. There could be no higher expression of the importance of this realm of endeavour, and no more compelling reason for it to be better appreciated.

### **Benefits and outcomes**

- S.23 There are considerable challenges in defining outcomes and evaluating success, performance and effectiveness in this area. A research evidence-base for the impacts is, however, beginning to develop, including through the FC's own work in the social sciences.
- S.24 Section 4 examines this issue, under headings of: social and cultural values of woods; social inclusion and community engagement; communication and education; health and well-being; perceptions of risk; attracting visitors; economic impact; forest design and aesthetics; and artistic achievements.
- S.25 It seems clear that the Forestry Commission's arts activities add in unique ways to people's awareness, understanding and valuing of trees, forests and woodland. They can be effective in addressing intangible values such as "sense of place", cultural history and identity; and they help with reassessing the relationship between nature and society, and in rebuilding some of the lost connections.
- S.26 People primarily engaged by the art, who may not have had much contact with forest environments, can have their experience of the natural world expanded. Conversely, people who are already motivated to visit woods and who happen thereby become exposed to high-quality art, can have their cultural (and sometimes spiritual) experience expanded.
- S.27 Art projects that give people greater respect for forest values have helped in reducing problems of litter, fire and vandalism; and they probably also support a wider social sense of care for the natural environment.

- S.28 Some initiatives are making important contributions to objectives for empowerment of the disadvantaged, catering for people with special needs, gender and ethnic balance issues, making new channels of connection with local people, and giving them new reasons for the forest to be relevant to their lives and well-being.
- S.29 A single poem or sculpture can bridge the gap of access and understanding between a community and its next-door forest; and it can sum up a set of social aspirations and heritage values for the nation as a whole.
- S.30 Some art projects are focused on health, and on the physical and psycho-social benefits that occur when people are encouraged to become active in forests, or the benefits that flow from developing creative expression.
- S.31 Another dimension concerns the ways in which people's perceptions of landscape are bound up with imagination and cultural narratives. Perceptions of safety, fear of crime, whether a forest is seen as threatening or problematic and so on, are all heavily influenced by artistic representations. Society may have some distorted risk-aversions concerning the outdoors, at present; but at the same time, proximity to trees has (for example) a positive effect on house-prices; so this is a complex area.
- S.32 Art is used in a variety of ways for achieving the FC's mainstream public communication objectives. It also features in a variety of education activities. As an example of the latter, more than 150 sites in the "Forest Schools" programme use the forest as a classroom for creativity-based play and curriculum studies on art and music, and also use art in teaching numeracy and literacy. This can be an especially helpful approach with children who have difficulties in a normal classroom setting.
- S.33 An obvious impact of Forestry Commission art relates to attracting visitors to forests, and adding value to what the Commission increasingly does as a provider of recreational amenity and tourism development. The economic and employment impacts of this can be measured in various ways.
- S.34 For many visitors, individual artworks may be valued as a point of reference or a destination for a walk or cycle ride. For some, this offers a mental or emotional structure for their experience of a landscape which they may otherwise find to be "boring" or lacking in familiar cues.
- S.35 There is an important technical role for art in forest planning and design. In addition, community arts projects can sometimes be an effective way of enfranchising people and consulting them about change.
- S.36 Finally, of course, there is the intrinsic creative merit of the art itself. This study has confirmed that the *artistic* achievements of the FC's involvements - the meanings, effects, and quality of the content of the work - add up to a hugely significant contribution to the contemporary cultural life of the nation.



## Practical management issues

- S.37 Several practical management issues are addressed in section 5 of this report. Responsibility for art in the Forestry Commission is not always simple to analyse. As well as the informality of the circumstances in which relevant initiatives have often flourished, trends towards devolution, outsourcing and broadening of FC functions have made the formal authorising, coordinating and accountability structures somewhat diverse and complex.
- S.38 Given that FC arts activities are frequently delivered in partnerships, arrangements for ownership, branding and marketing can often require particularly careful handling and internal clarity.
- S.39 Risk management and health & safety issues attend most arts projects. Tensions can arise between the needs of the FC and the needs of artists who may find this aspect frustratingly bureaucratic and creatively constraining. In the case of creative processes that are evolutionary, exploratory or experimental, the end result may differ from the proposal that was the basis for risk assessments. Special approaches may be needed in such cases, such as serial assessments, or defining health & safety “tolerance limits” within which the artist has creative freedom.
- S.40 A range of other commissioning, curatorial and governance issues is discussed; including liability, intellectual property and other legal responsibilities, partnership arrangements, commissioning and decommissioning processes, and care of artworks.
- S.41 In some cases, the FC has an enduring responsibility for works created by an initiative, not only in the sense of practical management, but also in the role of curator of the artistic expressions concerned. The meaning, significance and popularity of these expressions may over time affect or be affected by a range of externalities, and this can require careful thought.
- S.42 Examples of maintenance and decommissioning arrangements are cited, including some which aim to resolve tensions between forestry operations (such as felling cycles, or an intention for the art to feature in opening up of access and provision of interpretation), and the curatorial needs of the artwork (relating for example to the creation of mystery and intrigue). At some sites, specific agreements have been drawn up concerning the management regime to be applied to the approach route and viewing area around sculptures or other fixed installations.
- S.43 The parameters of project management and cost-effectiveness can differ between forestry and creative art-making in more general ways, in terms of “mind-set”. Creative makers may not respond well to hierarchical systems of direction; and an institutional project-management ethos of “efficiency” may not sufficiently take into account the factors that can impact on the professional reputation of an artist. Good practice tends to consist of negotiating and working out such things by explicit agreement; and there are many positive examples of

this challenge being relished as a stimulus to creative solution-finding, towards the shared goal of facilitating cultural activity in a working forest.

- S.44 The final parts of section 5 discuss approaches to staff capacity-building, advice, guidance and methods for exchange of experience. Aspects of underlying motivation are also mentioned. Although the Forestry Commission generally has a scientific and managerial culture, and is effectively a government bureaucracy, many staff are motivated by a deep human affinity with the outdoors and with trees. One consultee even observed that foresters are artists in the medium of forestry, which is an inherently creative nurturing process. There is now an increased readiness to speak in the language of aesthetics, and to view even engineering operations in creative terms. These present-day attitudes are in marked contrast to the “industrial forestry” values that prevailed in the past; and this should bode well for the prospects of any corporate arts policy becoming genuinely embraced and embedded across the organisation.

### **Needs, opportunities, and options for the future**

- S.45 Section 6 begins by looking at how lessons learned from experiences reviewed so far illuminate “what works best” in a Forestry Commission context, both in terms of types of art and types of involvement. The discussion then moves to the question of how this might be reflected in an updated and more explicit corporate rationale and purpose for such involvement. Some considerations relating to enabling action and delivery of this are then addressed, and finally some selected topics are identified for further research.
- S.46 Most of the organisation’s experience thus far is based on a few particular domains of arts activity, and there may be good scope for exploring a range of other approaches in future: some of these are discussed. The FC’s best focus overall may lie with art which is linked to themes, locations or materials that are relevant to trees or woodlands, to the particularities of sites controlled by the Forestry Commission (meaning, usually, a forest setting), or which in some other way can best be generated in the particular conditions produced by the FC’s business or by the areas which it happens to control. A list of 21 factors is given which flesh out a possible view of these “niche strengths” for the Commission’s arts involvements.
- S.47 A recurrent question concerns the relative merits of, on one hand, initiatives involving art that may provide a popular amenity and be intellectually and emotionally “safe” (with the risk that it may be superficial, or repetitive, and create less interest); and on the other hand, initiatives involving art that may be more adventurous and challenging, pursuing deeper angles of inquiry and of understanding and new added value (with the risk that it may be shocking, obscure, elitist, or produce other negative responses).
- S.48 Section 6 discusses several of these “balance” or “position on a spectrum” questions. Another one concerns the extent to which the FC can or should take a proactive role in an arts partnership, or should instead be more reactive or passive. Another concerns emphasis on product versus emphasis on process. Another relates to the choice of an appropriate level of explanation or interpretation to provide to those who will experience the art. A further one

compares the benefits of initiatives that are “grass-roots”, “bottom-up”, devolved, *ad hoc* and dependent on individual enterprise, with the value of having a programme that is strategically coordinated, consistent and “joined-up” at national level, and which includes some central support infrastructure.

- S.49 The terms used in these questions, and the “extreme” positions they characterise, are of course introduced for discussion purposes only, and in reality none of them need be mutually exclusive. They were tested with numerous staff and others to tease out views on what should work best for the FC’s involvements in art. The commonest conclusion was that the best strategy is probably not to seek to select one supposedly “optimal” attitude in relation to any of these “balance” issues, but rather to embrace examples from the whole of any given spectrum, across the national totality of the organisation’s involvements. The key determinant would not be some notion of an “ideal” type of involvement that is the “best fit” for the FC in a generic sense, but rather an assessment of how best to tailor what might be done in a given case to the particularities of its context; and overall perhaps to achieve a “layering” effect. It is likely that the plurality itself is a valuable thing to retain.
- S.50 Offering something of new interest at each site will still allow consistency of the “FC brand” to be applied to aspects such as quality, awareness and support services, but will help to avoid imposing any “identikit” franchise-style homogeneity on to the content. Indeed the Commission could expressly aim to excel at facilitating and presenting “sensitive creative responses to individual places”.
- S.51 Section 6 concludes that the case is powerfully made in principle, and on several counts, for the Forestry Commission to be actively and extensively involved in the arts; and goes on to discuss what should be the rationale and purpose for this in the future, building on the “niche strengths” discussed in the report, and following the “spectrum”, “layered” and “horses for courses” philosophy that is outlined.
- S.52 This study has verified that there is a sufficient basis in existing policy for the Forestry Commission to be confident in investing significantly in arts activities. The review has also shown that much of this policy basis is indirect, incidental or fragmentary. Even those who are most acutely conscious of the benefits of devolved responsibility and local freedom of action acknowledge that there appears to be a strong case now for pulling together a fully “joined-up” and explicit FC agenda for the arts.
- S.53 It is possible to imagine a clear and more proactive corporate direction (vision, mission, niche and principles) adopted as policy; some kind of goal-setting implementation strategy; a body of internal guidance on operational issues; and some infrastructure for support and coordination. Rather than imposing constraints, such a development should be viewed as an enabling mechanism.
- S.54 One aspect to be agreed would be a consolidated and enhanced expression of corporate purposes for engagement in the arts. Beyond merely the generation of products or facilities, this should define what contribution the Commission wishes

to make to relevant cultural and social agendas. A list of 20 potential ingredients of such a definition of purposes is given in section 6.

- S.55 A number of strategic questions concerning the delivery of arts activities by the FC are also flagged, in addition to the “practical management” issues discussed in section 5. These include questions of programming, resourcing and prioritisation, and the institutional and management structures required to maximise effectiveness.
- S.56 Other avenues to consider could include the role the Commission might wish to play as an important enabler of support for relevant emerging artistic talent and enterprise; and the ways in which the expertise of arts professionals can be used in operational areas such as landscape evaluation, forest planning and design, architectural needs, communications and public consultation. Strategic aims in respect of key external relationships are also referred to, including situations where the FC may wish to offer leadership among a group of organisations with shared interests. The potential for capitalising to best effect on those individual ventures that may have wider significance as good practice models, pilot projects, platforms for international linkage, or in other ways, is also referred to. The FC’s role in respect of grant-aiding activities in private woodlands is also mentioned.
- S.57 The final part of the section highlights a list of around ten potential priority areas for future research. These largely relate to three main areas: (i) profiling what is being done, (ii) assessing impacts, and (iii) exploring the illumination of values, and the consequent application of this to policy.

### **Summary of recommendations**

- S.58 Section 7 gives a non-exhaustive list of some of the main recommendations and ideas for desirable action that emerge from the review. These are grouped according to: collation of information on FC arts initiatives (4 recommendations); other research and assessment (the 10 recommendations from section 6); awareness and exchange of experience (10 recommendations); policy and strategy (9 recommendations); and management and operations (5 recommendations).



## 1. Background to the review

*“Art teaches nothing - except the significance of life” – Henry Miller*

- 1.1 Many arts initiatives have taken place in partnership with, or under the auspices of, the Forestry Commission. This report presents the first national overview of these activities, and develops an expanded rationale for engagement in future.
- 1.2 The review was undertaken on a *pro bono* basis during 2007-2008 by an independent adviser, Dave Pritchard, in association with the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World ([www.ccanw.co.uk](http://www.ccanw.co.uk)). Methods included interviews, site visits, correspondence, literature reviews and web-searches (see Acknowledgements section for those who provided input).
- 1.3 People value forests for myriad reasons, and the emphasis of UK forestry policy has widened from timber production to the provision of social and environmental benefits. At the same time, many of the personal and cultural meanings that go with a deeper and more everyday connectedness to trees and woodland have been lost.
- 1.4 There are major opportunities for addressing these issues in synergy with the expansion of public participation in art, and the growth of arts practices which focus on nature and the environment.
- 1.5 FC arts projects already make significant contributions to objectives relating to education, awareness, social inclusion, sense of place/identity, creative enterprise, cultural expression, physical and mental well-being, environmental valuation, recreation and amenity, community cohesion, and local economies; in addition to producing art that is of intrinsic value for its own sake. A full overview of this, however, has never been compiled.
- 1.6 This report provides an audit of activities to date, discusses the role of the state forestry sector in this field, and provides a basis (including recommendations) for defining agendas in future.



## 2. The policy context for FC involvement in the arts

*“A culture is no better than its woods” – W H Auden*

### Introduction

- 2.1 The Forestry Commission has never promoted a specific policy on art, nor any real overall strategic orientation on the subject at GB level. Nonetheless, a range of other FC policies provide a reasonable context and mandate both for what is being done and what might be done in future; and these are reviewed in this section. (For recommendations for the future, see section 7 below).
- 2.2 The wider public policy context for arts, culture and heritage is also relevant, but has not been covered in any depth by this review project. This section of the report therefore concentrates on the Commission's own policies.
- 2.3 As well as noting the relevance of the wider agendas referred to above, it should also be noted that they offer opportunities in other sectors to profile some of what the FC is already achieving: for example the Department of Health and the Arts Council produced a series of reports in 2007 combined into “A Prospectus on Arts and Health” (Department of Health and Arts Council England, 2007), in which the FC's health-related arts activities at Cannock Forest (see sections 3 and 4 below) are given as a case study. Similarly, Forestry Commission Scotland has made an input to Arts Council Scotland's development of a policy on public art. Work by the FC in Wales on film and TV liaison has contributed to the Welsh Assembly's goals for raising the marketing profile of Wales.

### Multi-purpose forestry

- 2.4 In terms of statutory *vires*, the general duty of the Forestry Commissioners to “promote the interests of forestry” (Forestry Act 1967 S.1(2)), although capable of broad interpretation, may not be sufficient in itself to mandate the types of activities described in this report. Support in primary statute therefore probably comes instead from amendments made to the 1967 Act by the Countryside Act 1968, which added functions “to provide, or arrange for or assist in the provision of, tourist, recreational or sporting facilities or works ancillary thereto” (S.23(2)) and to “manage trees in the interests of amenity” (S.24(1)). Section 37 of the 1968 Act also conferred a general duty on Ministers to have due regard to the “economic and social needs of rural areas”.
- 2.5 Nowadays, as the Forest Research website puts it, “The Forestry Commission leads the way in encouraging a strong forestry industry in Britain based not just on commercial success, but on a much wider appreciation of the many values that people attach to the nation's forests and woodlands. Broadly, the Forestry Commission is concerned with the formation and management of national forests, the encouragement of forestry on private estates, and research development and education. Multi-purpose use is an important aspect of forestry policy. The emphasis has widened from encouraging timber production to the

provision of social and environmental benefits arising from planting and managing attractive as well as productive woodlands.”

- 2.6 The Director-General’s Foreword to the England and Great Britain Annual Report for 2005-2006 (Forestry Commission, 2006b) emphasised that “The single objective of growing forests and woods as a strategic timber reserve is well behind us”; and the Report later refers to using forests for healthy pursuits, not just in a physical sense but also in a spiritual sense.
- 2.7 The greater priority being given to public amenity purposes is one significant platform for arts activity. The FC is responsible for the largest single landholding, either public or private, in the UK (over 1 million hectares), and this landholding is also the largest single destination for countryside visits, with over 50 million day-visit equivalents per annum (Forestry Commission, 2006b). When private woodland areas are included, this latter figure rises to around 250 million; and around two-thirds of British adults have visited the country’s woodlands in the last few years (Martin, 2007).
- 2.8 Behind these generalities an apparent paradox remains; namely that this broadening of the dimensions of public forestry coincides nonetheless with a trend of declining personal and cultural connections with trees and woodlands, as mentioned in section 1 above. A distinction should therefore be borne in mind, throughout this report, between (for example) provision of new recreational opportunities that merely happen to be in a forest, and (for example) activities that, either by overt interpretation or by the creation of suitable enabling conditions, deepen people’s knowledge, awareness or experience of the ecological, ethical and spiritual dimensions of the environment.

### **Country strategies, corporate plans and policy statements**

- 2.9 National Forestry Strategies contain a number of key provisions. These are the respective Governments’ strategies for forestry, prepared in England for example with the involvement of different parts of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Natural England and others, and published by FC: in other words they are not just the FC’s own policy. (Within each country there are of course distinct regional priorities and differences of emphasis, both in terms of forestry and in terms of cultural issues in general. It has not been possible within the scope of the present project to address these, apart from a brief mention of one or two examples).

### **England**

- 2.10 The England Forestry Strategy published in 1998 (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998 - now superseded, but aspects are noted here for context) set out the breadth of the FC’s agenda in terms of the general aim being to integrate “benefits for society in social, environmental and economic terms” (and the England/GB Corporate Plan 2006-2008 emphasises links between these three). It also referred to the fact that the EU Lisbon Declaration of July 1998 recognises the social and cultural importance of forestry.

- 2.11 The Strategy emphasised that generating an economic return “will usually sit alongside other objectives”, included the comment that “it is hard to put a price on the trees we see from our windows” and referred to an aim of “increas[ing] awareness of the relevance of woodlands to all parts of society”. Other passages included statements that “maintaining and enhancing regional and local countryside character and distinctiveness are important”.
- 2.12 It was noted that the evolving multi-purpose agenda for the national forest estate will require Forest Enterprise in particular to acquire new skills and expertise. In respect of private sector woodland owners, the Corporate Plan recognises that non-timber income streams are becoming more important to them too.
- 2.13 The strong tourism policy basis for some arts initiatives is clear in the Corporate Plan’s reference to developing the public forest estate as a major resource for tourism, “particularly in areas with vulnerable local economies such as Kielder, the Lake District and the Forest of Dean”.
- 2.14 Corporate Plan targets for health and well-being (in the section on recreation, access and tourism) include reference to mental health (see section 4 below for comments on the links between art and mental health).
- 2.15 There is an objective for Forest Enterprise concerning development of new activities that increase the public enjoyment and value of the public forest, although the key tasks listed seem to miss the opportunity to specify anything of particular relevance to arts activities.
- 2.16 “Conserving the distinctiveness of particular landscapes, localities or individual woods” is cited as a priority in the section on environment and conservation. There are perceptual, cultural and imaginative dimensions to this, and it is an issue with which artists can probably be very helpful. (The NGO “Common Ground” claims to have been the first to coin the term “local distinctiveness” in the early 1980s, and it has been a pre-eminent champion of the ecological, cultural and artistic aspects of this issue in England since then). The Corporate Plan also includes a target for appreciation of the cultural heritage; although there is nothing equivalent concerning contemporary cultural values of woodland.
- 2.17 The new Strategy for England, published in June 2007 (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2007), is couched in terms of a vision for national quality of life, and has a strong emphasis throughout on approaches based on partnership. The Delivery Plan which will accompany it is being developed together with Natural England. Themes put forward in the new Strategy include “sense of place” and “cultural heritage”, although a section on how things are expected to be in the year 2050 makes no reference to contemporary culture. There is reference to a contribution to the Government’s health agenda, and “synergy with other Government policies” is one of four “principles” (though it is not described in any depth). An important statement is made about “focusing Government investment ... where the market does not provide the range and quality of public benefits identified by this Strategy”; although at the same time investment has to represent “value for money”.



- 2.18 Other passages refer to trees, woodlands and associated green space being “appreciated for the feelings they inspire”, and to making woodlands more accessible for (among other things) social inclusion and health purposes. References to cultural value once again are limited to a context of heritage; and there is no reference to art in any of these sections of the Strategy. The one place where it is mentioned is in a featured case study of the Neroche Project in Somerset, where art is being used for imaginative and sensitive interpretation in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 2.19 Forest Enterprise England has an “Estate Delivery Plan” for 2007-08 (Forestry Commission England, 2007), which reflects the new England Strategy’s emphasis on partnership working; and also reflects increased pressure to make improved financial returns from commercial investment, with recreation activities being reviewed to ensure that expenditure is concentrated in areas of greatest priority (meaning, it seems, where they have the greatest impact and deliver greatest value for money). References to “increas[ing] the diversity of people who enjoy the benefits of the public estate”, “improv[ing] people’s health and quality of life” should probably be seen at least partly in this context. There is reference to “using public forests to improve people’s understanding of the environment”, though in keeping with the emphasis on partnership, it seems that direct delivery of education work may reduce, in favour of relying more on others to do it. These sections make no reference to art. The Neroche Project is referred to again, but under a heading of “heritage” and with no mention of its arts element.

### **Wales**

- 2.20 The Forestry Strategy for Wales dates from 2001 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2001). In this Strategy there is an emphasis on social inclusion objectives, with “us[ing] woodlands as a social and cultural asset for some of our most disadvantaged communities” cited as a priority. Reference is also made to the ways in which “trees can provide an important link between local people and their landscape and heritage”; although contemporary culture is not mentioned. In the context of the programme on tourism, recreation and health, however, there is a commitment to supporting the development of wood-using crafts; and “artistic pursuits” are mentioned as something which will be promoted as one type of “specialist recreation”. (Although development of wood-using crafts is cited in this context of tourism, it is not linked in a wider context to the use of wood in design and architecture). “Emotional wellbeing” is mentioned among the objectives for “us[ing] trees and woodlands in urban settings”.
- 2.21 The report on consultation for the Strategy records that “There was a widespread desire to see the character of the Welsh landscape reflected in the woodland strategy, with woodlands reinforcing local distinctiveness”.

### **Scotland**

- 2.22 The Scottish Forestry Strategy published in 2000 (Scottish Executive, 2000 - now superseded, but aspects are noted here for context) had a similar overarching purpose to England’s, namely that woodlands and forests should contribute to the well-being of people in social, economic and environmental terms. The

- importance of recognising non-market outputs is highlighted; but the strategic direction spelt out for “creat[ing] opportunities for more people to enjoy trees, woods and forests” nonetheless describes this rather narrowly in terms of recreation, information and the contribution to tourism. Community engagement is described only by reference to consultation and employment.
- 2.23 There is a reference to the Statement of Forest Principles agreed internationally at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, including the quotation of a passage citing people’s cultural and spiritual needs, as part of what sustainable management seeks to address.
- 2.24 The new Strategy for Scotland, published in October 2006 (Scottish Executive, 2006), has a reference (in its Minister’s Foreword) to a vision of “forestry that touches everyone’s life”. The three main outcome areas of economic, environmental and social are now expressed as business, environment and people’s well-being; with stress in the sections on social aspects being given to the closing of inequality gaps.
- 2.25 Objectives include “remov[ing] the cultural and perceptual barriers to woodland access for all sectors of society, and (in a section on environment) “encourag[ing] the development of living heritage and the arts in woodlands”. There is the further comment that “Our concept of cultural heritage need not be constrained by age. ‘Living culture’, such as the performing arts or woodland sculpture, enhances visitor experiences as well as creating a link between communities and their local woodlands. This can help to develop familiarity with forestry, with woodlands becoming an even greater source of local pride and income.” (One might add, provided that some attention to the woodlands/trees themselves is assisted, rather than their simply being the unremarked receptacle for the art).
- 2.26 These are the first national strategy references in any of the three countries to the “living heritage”; although the heading under which they appear (“protect and promote the historic environment and cultural heritage”) has not similarly evolved beyond the previous implied limitation to historic aspects. A passage on “valu[ing] the cultural history and meaning of forests, woodlands, trees and their historic environment” similarly seems to miss an opportunity to address “meanings” in a present-day sense.
- 2.27 Reasons given for the “quality of life” purpose include the statement that “Woodlands and trees, and their local and historic associations, contribute to providing a strong sense of place and cultural identity”. Among the identified actions is one to “help communities develop their local identity through the cultural setting and historic environment in woodlands and through living culture, including the Gaelic language and the performing arts”; and later, “encourage the use of woodlands for living heritage, including the performing arts”.
- 2.28 The Strategy’s glossary separates “cultural heritage”, “cultural landscapes” and “living heritage”, defining the latter as including “oral traditions and expressions including languages; performing arts (such as traditional music, dance and theatre); social practices; rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship”. A comment is also made in another section that “Living culture, such as the performing arts

or woodland sculpture, enhances visitor experiences as well as creating a link between communities and their local woodlands”; and in a section on access there is reference to “reconnecting people with their forests”.

- 2.29 An Implementation Plan for the Scottish Strategy has been published for 2007-08 (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2007b), which includes provision for “helping communities develop their local identity through their cultural setting”, and includes commitments to activities in Highland Year of Culture, among which is the FC’s “Touchwood” arts programme (note in this connection the comment made earlier about areas of regional emphasis).
- 2.30 FC Scotland (FCS) has an Education Strategy (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2005b), and at the time of writing (early 2008) it is developing an Interpretation Strategy. Forestry in Scotland is also notable for some distinctive delivery frameworks such as Indicative Forestry Strategies and local Forestry and Woodland Frameworks. These have not been reviewed in the course of the current project, but they would be worth some attention as part of the potential cascade of policy objectives that are relevant to art.
- 2.31 FCS has produced two policy documents on working in partnership with local communities – one in 1999 (revised in 2000) and one in 2005 (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2000; and Forestry Commission Scotland, 2005a). These cover a variety of types of stakeholder groups and types of beneficial interaction, but express nothing very directly as a platform for arts activities (although indirectly they may do so through agendas such as health).
- 2.32 More recently, FC Scotland has undertaken considerable policy activity on cultural aspects. Cooperation between FCS and Historic Scotland is good, and at the time of writing, a new FCS Policy Statement on Scotland’s Woodlands and the Historic Environment is in development (Forestry Commission Scotland, in press). This makes reference to the continuum between historic heritage values and contemporary cultural expressions.
- 2.33 Concerning the arts specifically, much of FCS’ involvement in arts is geared to interpretation of or responses to the historic environment. However a new (September 2007) FCS policy statement on “The arts in, about or using woodland” (an internal document only, at the time of writing) now states more broadly that “The arts in, about, or using woodland are used to help communities develop their local identity through the cultural setting and historic environment in woodlands and through living culture, including the Gaelic language and the performing arts” (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2007c - unpublished).
- 2.34 The policy statement also makes clear that “Delivery will proceed via commitments to regional or national artistic events and projects led by organisations other than Forestry Commission Scotland rather than a national artistic programme for forestry. Commitments to action will be made in the context of delivery of relevant objectives including ‘assist community participation’, ‘enhance opportunities for health and enjoyment’, and ‘increase the contribution of forestry to tourism’ and will be embedded in wider strategies.” This is a fully understandable caveat for this emerging area, but one which it would be good to imagine might give way to an even more proactive stance at

some future time, if continued evolution in this generally very encouraging direction continues.

- 2.35 Overall the FCS policy is to use the arts as a tool for delivery of relevant outcomes rather than for their own intrinsic worth, and resourcing decisions are based on this “instrumental” yardstick of effectiveness. The Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006 (see above) nonetheless recognises that forestry contributes to contemporary arts as well as art being a means, for example, of engaging with the historic environment.

### **Regional and local levels**

- 2.36 There is obviously a range of policy and planning documents at regional and local levels in addition to the country-level ones mentioned above; but they have not been analysed in this study. To the extent that they take their policy cue from the national sources, they would be expected to reflect a similar set of orientations on the subject.
- 2.37 One or two local examples were examined, however. These included the ten-year Regional Woodland and Forestry Framework for south-west England (Durk, 2005). This refers to the way in which woods and forests help to define the south-west, touch people on a personal level, and shape our culture: “Their longevity is mirrored in fables, folklore, place-names, legend and history. Culturally and socially, trees and woods can affect us deeply. They provide us with a sense of place, of permanence and stability, and provide inspiration and focus to the work of many artists, playwrights and craftspeople”. (This theme featured strongly in “Forest Dreaming”, the first year’s programme of the Centre for Contemporary Arts and the Natural World in Haldon Forest, Devon).
- 2.38 The Framework continues: “Woods and ancient trees [it is not clear why this should be limited to ancient ones! - DEP] provide the inspiration for much of our artistic and cultural life. ... At the local scale, woods and individual trees can have great cultural and spiritual importance. ... Many elements of our history, art and culture are inextricably linked with trees. Many people gain inspiration from our trees, woods and forests to fulfil their creative instincts. We need to recognise the cultural and spiritual dimension of trees and woods and create opportunities for people to further understand, experience and explore relationships with trees, wood and wood products”.
- 2.39 These are very useful points for the Framework to express, hence their quoting here as an example at some length. One additional specific potential platform for involving artists appears in the listed actions for communicating effective messages about the role of woods and forests in the region, which include: “develop a resource of ... quality images for use by the forestry and woodlands sectors and critically by others”.
- 2.40 Sections citing organisations and source documents that are relevant to these issues include bodies dealing with health and culture, but strangely do not mention key arts ones such as the Arts Council.

- 2.41 Within the south-west England region, the Peninsula Forest District Strategic Plan 2004-2014 (Forestry Commission England, 2004) is an example of a plan at the District level. In this Plan, the national strategic shift towards securing wider public benefits from woodland is underlined. There is one objective that refers to making woodlands a cultural and social resource, and it commits to the development of three arts projects.
- 2.42 There are examples too of what amounts to policy at even more local levels of FC administration. The national arboreta are one kind of special case, and Westonbirt Arboretum for example has its own mission statement (“To connect people with trees, to improve the quality of life”). This is seen by the staff there as part of their basis for arts activity and as a key advantage, in giving an explicit yardstick against which any question of the scope and purpose of activities can be gauged and justified.

### **International level**

- 2.43 At international level, some FC staff have professional interactions with international networks or counterparts, but this is largely in a context of research rather than policymaking. There are a number of intergovernmental fora and agreements under which cultural and artistic aspects of forestry could be an agenda item (such as the European Landscapes Convention, and UNESCO’s programmes on culture and education), but there has to date been little official FC engagement in these as far as the issues addressed by this report are concerned.
- 2.44 Cultural aspects of sustainable forest management were addressed at a workshop in 2005 organised as a contribution to implementation of the work programme of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) (Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Experts Network to Implement Sustainable Forest Management, 2005).

### **Conclusion**

- 2.45 In terms of the national level, the information in this section above appears to be close to the sum total of references to or mandates for art in FC national corporate strategies, planning documents and statutory reports in the three countries. (A range of such sources were reviewed, but only those containing relevant references have been cited above).
- 2.46 It will be seen that there is a tendency, in the documents reviewed, for “culture” to be considered in relation to “heritage”, but generally not to be considered in relation to contemporary cultural life (to which, nonetheless, the FC is making a huge contribution through its arts involvements in particular). Indeed the UK Forestry Standard (Forestry Commission, 2004b) contains a key word index in which the entry for “cultural value” reads simply: “see heritage”! (A series of guidelines supporting the UK Forestry Standard are due in the near future to be augmented by one on “Forests and People”). The recent developments in Scotland discussed above, however, are now reflecting a more complete approach; and elsewhere the cultural and other policy references in existence provide at least some useful basis of positive support.

- 2.47 One general point illuminated by the mandates and policies reviewed above, and by the programmes and projects described in section 3 which follows, is that the Forestry Commission should be counted as part of the totality of national public funding and other support for the arts. Debates on public arts funding naturally tend to focus on bodies set up for that purpose in the culture sector; but the fact that a key contribution is made from other quarters like the FC should not be overlooked, and the Commission would perhaps be entitled, if it wished, to assert its relevance more strongly in those contexts in future.
- 2.48 The next section describes the range of activities and involvements that have taken place to date, against the background set out above.



### **3. The range of involvements to date**

#### **The approach taken to this survey**

- 3.1 In addition to reviewing policies, principles and the theoretical background, the current project has also surveyed the wide range of individual past and present arts-related initiatives which have involved or have been promoted by the Forestry Commission. This is the first time that a national overview of such activities has been compiled.
- 3.2 In order to be as all-embracing as possible at this stage, a rigorously systematic process has not been used. Instead a pragmatic approach has been taken to combine qualitative information from a variety of sources, including literature, face-to-face interviews, websites, correspondence, and site visits. Discussions were held with FC staff and also with relevant artists, community collaborators, curators and arts commentators; and the reviewer's own perspective has also been added.
- 3.3 In the time available, and given the opportunistic and voluntary nature of this project, it has proved impossible to achieve the levels of site visits, in-person meetings and coverage that would ideally have been desired. Time for following up non-responding consultees has also been limited. For both of these reasons, significant reliance has had to be placed on literature and internet sources. The main consequence of this is an acknowledged imbalance of representation across the GB countries. The majority of first-hand case examples that are referred to in the text of this report relate to England. This intends no discourtesy to the many operators of equally noteworthy examples elsewhere; and it is earnestly hoped that future opportunities will exist to continue development of an overview which comes to reflect more fully the depth of experiences from Wales and Scotland and from other parts of England.
- 3.4 The process of data-gathering is continuing further into 2008, and organisation of the material into a more structured form will be addressed once patterns and purposes have been further elaborated. Collating information in a comparable way across the range of variety is one of the challenges of this work.
- 3.5 While later in this report there is a discussion of how different purposes for FC arts involvements might be categorised, no other systematic typology of activities is offered at this stage. It will however be valuable to address this in the near future, and to explore the most useful ways of classifying activities according to art medium, objective, relationship to the forest environment, type of proponent, type of beneficiary and so on. This will be important for the design of any further survey work that uses structured interviews or questionnaires (although at the same time such surveys may reveal factors that aid in devising the right classification scheme, so to some extent this may need to be iterative). Some working decisions concerning category titles have been incorporated into the tables in the Annex, and further comments on this issue are made there.

- 3.6 In the meantime, by way of introduction, the following two tables present an unofficial and merely indicative list of the kinds of categories that feature in various parts of this report, and which could be a starting-point for a more rigorous consideration of typologies. The columns in tables of this kind could also be cross-related to one another in a matrix format, as required.

Potential ways of categorising arts involvements - Part (i)		
<i>(The items in each column of this table are not necessarily mutually exclusive with other items in the same column. They are indicative only; and are not listed in any order of priority.)</i>		
Art forms	Activities	Positioning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sculpture (including with leaves, living plants, ice, or other natural materials)</li> <li>• land art and earthworks</li> <li>• photography</li> <li>• drawing</li> <li>• painting</li> <li>• printmaking</li> <li>• film, video and tv</li> <li>• digital (computer-based and “new media”) art forms</li> <li>• architecture</li> <li>• design</li> <li>• crafts</li> <li>• installation</li> <li>• writing</li> <li>• poetry</li> <li>• drama</li> <li>• dance</li> <li>• storytelling</li> <li>• music</li> <li>• other performance, including walks, rituals etc</li> <li>• sonic art</li> <li>• light art</li> <li>• ephemeral art</li> <li>• experience-based practices</li> <li>• other intangible conceptual work</li> </ul>	<p><i>(Many of these can take place either “on site” or “off-site”)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workshops</li> <li>• residencies</li> <li>• exhibitions</li> <li>• permanent trails</li> <li>• guided walks</li> <li>• community projects and events</li> <li>• festivals</li> <li>• performances</li> <li>• education activities</li> <li>• outreach activities</li> <li>• courses</li> <li>• other training</li> <li>• “have-a-go” events</li> <li>• demonstration events</li> <li>• talks</li> <li>• conferences, seminars and discussion events</li> <li>• research</li> </ul>	<p><i>(Examples only) (discussed further in section 6)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “high concept” vs “populist”</li> <li>• “proactive” vs “reactive”/“passive”</li> <li>• “product” vs “process”</li> <li>• “highly interpreted” vs “discovery”</li> <li>• “structured” vs “ad hoc”</li> </ul>



Potential ways of categorising arts involvements - Part (ii)			
<i>(The items in each column of this table are not necessarily mutually exclusive with other items in the same column. They are indicative only; and are not listed in any order of priority.)</i>			
Purposes	Benefits and outcomes	Audiences/beneficiaries	Partnerships
<p><i>(The items in this column are shorthand versions of those in the list given in section 6)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attracting visitors</li> <li>• interpretation</li> <li>• meeting expectations where FC arts reputation is already strong</li> <li>• revenue and employment</li> <li>• sale of art</li> <li>• making of functional products and structures</li> <li>• formal and informal education</li> <li>• achieving target inclusion and diversity profiles</li> <li>• awareness</li> <li>• public health</li> <li>• appreciation of local distinctiveness</li> <li>• appreciation of nature</li> <li>• understanding</li> <li>• expressing and exploring meanings (of forests, trees, the landscape)</li> <li>• contribution to the creative and cultural life of the nation</li> <li>• art for its own sake</li> </ul>	<p><i>(The “purposes” column on the left could also be read as a list of benefits and outcomes; but for convenience the list below refers to the higher-level categories which act as the headings for the discussion in section 4 of this report)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social and cultural values of woods</li> <li>• social inclusion and community engagement</li> <li>• communication and education</li> <li>• health and well-being</li> <li>• perceptions of risk</li> <li>• attracting visitors</li> <li>• economic impact</li> <li>• forest design and aesthetics</li> <li>• artistic achievements</li> </ul>	<p><i>(Apart from reference to visitors, all of these categories can in principle include both those who experience the art/activity “at first hand” or in person, and those who experience it at a distance, indirectly, or at the level of ideas and feelings)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• neighbouring residents</li> <li>• local communities</li> <li>• regional populations</li> <li>• the national interest (UK, GB, E/S/W)</li> <li>• tourists (domestic, foreign)</li> <li>• forest visitors coming primarily for the art/art-related activity</li> <li>• forest visitors coming primarily for some other reason</li> <li>• volunteers and “friends of” groups</li> <li>• service provider businesses and employees</li> <li>• FC staff and corporate interests</li> <li>• amateur</li> </ul>	<p><i>(Examples only)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• artists groups, societies and collectives</li> <li>• charitable foundations</li> <li>• the Arts Council</li> <li>• private sector sponsors</li> <li>• other funding organisations</li> <li>• arts incubator, mentoring and training bodies</li> <li>• local government</li> <li>• landowners</li> <li>• land/natural resource management and heritage agencies</li> <li>• tourism promoters</li> <li>• journalists and media</li> <li>• consultants</li> <li>• publishers</li> <li>• retail outlets</li> <li>• exhibition venues</li> <li>• community woodland groups</li> <li>• other community groups</li> <li>• “friends of” and similar volunteer groups</li> <li>• other non-governmental organisations</li> <li>• commissioning agencies</li> <li>• research bodies</li> <li>• schools, colleges and universities</li> <li>• other education bodies</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sense of cultural identity</li> <li>• building support for trees and woodland</li> <li>• building support for forestry</li> <li>• contributing to forest design and aesthetics</li> <li>• contributing to development of uses of wood products</li> <li>• nurturing creative talent</li> </ul>		<p>enthusiasts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• art clubs and special interest networks</li> <li>• professional artists</li> <li>• art critics and the art press</li> <li>• popular press/media</li> <li>• schoolchildren</li> <li>• students</li> <li>• trainees</li> <li>• health service users</li> <li>• special needs groups</li> <li>• community service/rehabilitation categories</li> <li>• researchers, analysts, academics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• other public service agencies (health, environment, justice etc)</li> <li>• curators</li> <li>• archivists</li> <li>• international networks</li> <li>• FC “internal customers”/stakeholder groups</li> <li>• central government departments</li> </ul>
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3.7 The text below gives only interim selected examples of some of the variety which exists, together with some observations on the niche role for the FC in different cases; trends which are apparent; and other comments.

3.8 A fuller list of initiatives from which these examples are drawn, and which are the basis for many of the perspectives gained so far from the exercise overall, is given in the Annex. Preliminary discussions have been held on the possibilities for a more structured and quantitative analysis of a sub-set of the whole, and it is hoped that this may be addressed at a future date.

3.9 Although a certain amount of informal interchange takes place, there are few existing systems in the FC for collecting information of this kind or for pooling experience specifically on arts projects. At England level, one internal review meeting of relevant District staff took place in July 2006; and some collated intelligence (unpublished) arising from that meeting has been used here. The author then led a workshop at the Staff Development Network Conference in October 2007, and some outcomes from that are reported in sections 4, 5 and 6 below.

**The scope of “culture” and “art”**

3.10 Some of the major “flagship” fixed sculpture trails and one-off public art commissions are relatively well-known; as may also be the FC’s occasional performance art events. More unsung perhaps are the range of smaller-scale community outreach and education activities involving art, where the FC may also be a “field-leader”. A “classification of types of involvement” along these lines however could be misleading; since quite a few initiatives are “hybrid” in nature and involve elements of all these things. For example, the two past and

- one current proposed collaborations with the Society of Wildlife Artists/Artists for Nature Foundation (New Forest, Scottish Atlantic oakwoods, and lowland heathlands), and one or two of the main sculpture trails, involve central “significant” art productions plus a range of associated smaller-scale educational or similar engagement activities that reach out to communities (or visitors) from that base. (In fact this sort of “synergistic” approach may be a developing trend).
- 3.11 The review project has been at pains to avoid becoming mired in potentially sterile and unhelpful debates about defining what does or does not constitute “art”. The approach has been to err on the side of being inclusive, at least in this early “stock-taking” phase.
- 3.12 In terms of positioning in the policy context discussed in section 2 above, however, it may be appropriate to note at least that "culture" can be thought of as embracing shared history, shared traditions, shared social norms (such as language and other communication norms), communal identity, world-views, belief-systems, behavioural and lifestyle aspirations, meanings and significances; any of which may attach to trees, woodlands and the natural world. “The arts” as a sub-set of this would embody the means of expressing the various components of culture, and potentially the means of expressing an individual’s “personhood”. The arts may also be regarded as the activities which people engage in (a sector of the economy, indeed) which depend on skills of personal expression, imagination and creative craft.
- 3.13 At a strategic level in Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland’s engagement in Highland Year of Culture 2007 (with the “Touchwood” Festival) was a response to a call from the then Scottish Executive to all public bodies (Scottish Executive, 2004) to incorporate creativity and culture as an integral part of their daily work and their ethos and legacy, on the basis that it helps them do their job better in general.
- 3.14 FC locations are increasingly being used (and actively promoted) for sound and light events, storytelling, moving image projects, “making” workshops for children and families, creative writing events, film and TV locations, concerts, drama, workshops on photography, sculpture, drawing and painting, and art-related conferences. All of these are regarded as within the scope of the present research.

### **Types of variety**

- 3.15 At the level of overview, some trends and generalisations are apparent. It is often said for example that FC arts programmes from the 1970s to the mid 1990s foregrounded a generation of land artists or environmental artists such as David Nash, Andy Goldsworthy and Sally Matthews, who worked outdoors with natural and found materials and with aesthetic concerns rooted in the natural environment itself. The vogue for such “lyrical” work in more recent times has waned somewhat however, at least in the critical art world; although it remains important and much is still being produced. Current “environmental” work includes interactivity, informality, highly abstract conceptualism, active investigation, and cross-sectoral sociocultural and political themes of all kinds, as

- well as the aesthetics of nature and landscape. It can be critically engaged, as well as comprising an amenity for visitors and others who value forests.
- 3.16 Some works and initiatives are site-specific, while others may be multi-location in nature, such as the SWLA/AfN lowland heathland collaboration already mentioned above, the plan for which involves a UK-wide series of ten artist residencies.
  - 3.17 Some of what is covered is work which may be realised away from the forest location but where the forest is the subject-matter or the inspiration, featuring in images, poetry, literature or music. Examples include a music album which was inspired by a glade at Westonbirt Arboretum, and off-site exhibitions of paintings or photographs associated with the Red Rose Community Forest, Chopwell Wood, the Aig an Oir project (Scottish Atlantic oakwoods), the New Forest and the Forest of Dean. In the Forest of Ae, FC with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the Scottish Arts Council undertook a project with poets, producing poetry about the forest on cards and posters.
  - 3.18 One key axis of the spread of variety, discussed further in section 6 below, is from what may be perceived as “low-level” or “decorative” activity on the one hand, to what may be perceived as “cutting edge” contemporary, critically-engaged art on the other. Strategic choices often face the FC and its partners as to whether a project is to offer something intellectually and emotionally “safe” and conceptually “easy” (with the risk that it may create less interest), or whether it should be more adventurous and challenging (with the risk that it may be shocking, gory, obscure, elitist, perceived as a publicity stunt, or produce other negative responses). None of this necessarily suggests anything one way or the other about the separate issue of quality, which arises irrespective of whether the art is “easy” or challenging, and about which additional judgements and choices (with their own attendant risks) also need to be made. (This is discussed further in section 6 below).
  - 3.19 In many cases, perhaps increasingly as performance is assessed against targets for visitor numbers and income-generation, the priority will be to attract or engage with the maximum number of people, so anything of minority niche interest may not be so favoured. Many field staff tend to characterise this as a difference between art for its own sake and art as a means to some other end. That said, nearly all acknowledge the merit of the intrinsic artistic values represented by operations such as those at Grizedale, Kielder, Forest of Dean, Stour Valley and Tyrebagger; although seeing them in some way as exceptions to the general rule.
  - 3.20 Another way in which this kind of question manifests itself is in relation to employment and other community benefits of arts activity. These may relate to the employment generated by associated visitor/tourist service provision; but they may also relate, of course, to employment of the artists themselves. There could be tradeoff choices to make between either maximising benefits to the immediate local economy (by preferring to employ local artists), or maximising the creative quality of the work (by casting the net wider).

- 3.21 In the case of the Forest of Dean, the Sculpture Trust's policy there is to adopt the second of these approaches (by generally selecting artists through a process of open competition); while making its contribution to local engagement through the outreach side of its work. At Kielder, the art and architecture programme expressly relies on an international reputation earned by the creative quality of the work, and there is also seen to be a need for it to be of sufficiently high quality to be a worthwhile focus of interest for overnight staying visitors, ie more than it would need to be for passing/day visitors. In that case also therefore, finding the best artists is more of a priority than placing commissions locally. This is however complemented by an effort to target the local community when it comes to offering employment in ancillary support functions. (Clearly the worthwhileness of paying more to commission artists of repute, in the expectation of creating a stronger visitor draw, may need testing by some kind of cost-benefit analysis in any given case).
- 3.22 In an organisational culture that is largely scientific and managerial, the tendency is to seek certainty and to find an optimal "solution" to balance questions such as these. There is therefore some tension in being subject to a spread of subjective external opinion which, from different viewpoints, can be strongly positive or strongly negative about the same piece of work. Overall, however, this appears to have been overcome by the Commission adopting a degree of open-mindedness, and solving the "high art"/"populist" balance question by offering examples from all points on this spectrum across the national totality of its involvements. Some individual sites adopt the same "spectrum" approach for the site's own programme (this was cited for example in the case of the Forest of Dean).
- 3.23 Other instances focus on developing a niche specialism; for example the Chiltern Sculpture Trust has made a decision to include in its programme an element of challenge to typical ideas of "art in the landscape", by including content that would not normally be associated with an outdoor environment.
- 3.24 It is one thing for a location to offer a range of types of art works or arts activity; but it is an additional step for this to be unified around a distinctive thematic specialism or identity of the place. Stour Valley Arts, at King's Wood in Kent, is one example where the fixed works on the site, the education programme, the off-site exhibition and conference activities and the publishing operation are successfully integrated into a common agenda. The greatest potential for such an approach to succeed lies probably with those cases where (as with Stour Valley Arts) a dedicated curatorial staff capacity of some kind exists. (This last point may be worth more in-depth review in future, having regard to the recent first appointment of a full-time curator/arts development officer on the FC's own staff, at Grizedale).
- 3.25 Arts activity at some sites has developed as one added-value ingredient in a wider programme or project (examples include a project funded by the Capital Modernisation Fund in the Red Rose Community Forest, and several initiatives in the New Forest, including an EU LIFE-funded project on wetlands). In others it may be the primary basis for a dedicated programme of work (for example at Kielder Forest).

- 3.26 At Kielder, the funding and infrastructure (the Kielder Partnership – see section 5 below) was motivated by tourism objectives, and by the particular challenges of dealing with a tourism offer where the landscape scale is large (presenting questions about the distribution of points of interest) and where travel distances from centres of population are significant. Around 40% of the local economy is linked to tourism, following the decline of jobs in farming and forestry; so the driver is effectively a rural development one, and the Partnership’s art programme is explicitly part of a sustainable development and regeneration agenda. In addition to the tourism dimension, artist residencies at Kielder have included film and publications as outputs, as part of a community regeneration element.
- 3.27 Many arts activities occur in the context of the FC’s education work. The “Forest Schools” programme, much of which is supported by the Forest Education Initiative, contributes directly by using the forest as a classroom for curriculum studies on art and music; and also indirectly, in cases where art is a medium for teaching numeracy and literacy. There are now over 100 Forest Schools in England, over 30 in Wales and over 20 in Scotland. Much is also achieved by more basic methods for supporting teachers to use woodland for learning as part of normal education, without the significant training overheads that are required for those working in the Forest School system.
- 3.28 Westonbirt Arboretum offers arts activities for children to download, as a way of encouraging engagement by a different means with the arboretum collection.
- 3.29 Education programmes may engage professional artists to help facilitate activities such as these. This is extremely positive; although caution was expressed by more than one consultee about a risk of presenting “the working artist” as an “exhibit”, creating potentially unfortunate impressions about the nature of arts practice.
- 3.30 Without opening up the “what is art?” question referred to above, it is worth noting that in some cases what is addressed is as much in the realms of “design” and “architecture” as the art forms already mentioned.
- 3.31 The scope of the works at Kielder has been consciously decided as a mix of art and architecture, following recommendations in a review by ArtOffice consultants in 1999 (unpublished). This was in order to differentiate Kielder from other offers in the same sector, such as Grizedale Forest in particular. There is an aim nowadays in the Kielder programme overall of reflecting something of the interface and dialogue between art and architecture, and to achieve a particular balance across these disciplines; so the objective in this sense has become a more sophisticated one than simply using both dimensions.
- 3.32 For three successive years at Westonbirt (2002-2004), a three-month long international “Festival of the Garden” was held, central to which was the linking of art with contemporary design. Objectives in the commissioning briefs included the development of a wider appreciation of the arts within the forest/rural context, and the creation of works that could stimulate debate and reconsideration of the arboretum collection.

- 3.33 More unsung, perhaps, but with increasing potential, is the role of art and design, especially related to the use of timber as a material, in the architecture of the buildings and other functional infrastructure for which the Commission is responsible. The new visitor centre at Dalby Forest in Yorkshire, for example, commissioned from White Design, is regarded as a showcase of environmentally sustainable building techniques, and won the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award in 2007. This issue in a broader sense has been a focus of the 2007-08 programme of the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World, called "Wood Culture".
- 3.34 Aspects relating to the aesthetics of forest design are referred to in section 4 below.
- 3.35 In the case of Westonbirt, being a national arboretum rather than a production plantation, the attraction for many visitors is primarily an aesthetic one (be it landscape design, autumn colours, or photographing individual specimen trees); and in terms of the visitor attraction, in a sense the site itself is a work of art.
- 3.36 This is also true perhaps of the use of the forest as a location for film and television work, which can offer income generation possibilities. The FC in this regard is able usefully to emphasise among other things the sound-insulation qualities of woodlands. In 2004, the Welsh Assembly asked the FC to help promote woodland locations to the film industry, because of the benefits to local economies and for the marketing profile for Wales. One example was the BBC "Torchwood" series, which used Fforest Fawr as a shooting location.
- 3.37 The same issue has been examined in Scotland, in a context of efforts to attract the film and TV industry to locations further from its typical limited orbit around London. Promotional collaborations with Scottish Screen and the Highlands and Islands Film Commission have helped to secure forest locations for films such as "Braveheart", and TV series such as "Monarch of the Glen" and "Sea of Souls". FC Scotland at one stage had a dedicated contact person for film enquiries, and produced a brochure to promote forests as shooting locations; but following a reorganisation this resource has not been continued.
- 3.38 In England, a dedicated Filming Liaison Officer is employed, and is based at the South East England forest district office in order to capitalise on the concentration of the industry in the London area. Part of this officer's role has been to advise colleagues in Wales and Scotland.

### **The interpretation dilemma**

- 3.39 One of the "balance" choices which perhaps causes most frequent debate among arts providers and other stakeholders in the FC context, is the choice of an appropriate level of explanation or interpretation to provide to those who will experience a work of art.
- 3.40 In many circumstances, such additional material risks diluting, distracting from or often even working against the whole purpose, value and impact of the work. On the other hand, if the enterprise is at least on some level supposed to be in the public interest (a test which the FC might need to meet, whereas a commercial

gallery for example would not), then causing confusion, or frustration, or creating an impression of elitism or obscurity could also be a risk.

- 3.41 This is not simple. Puzzlement, intrigue, challenge, multiple possibilities, effort, ineffability, even indignation, may be among the responses to a work of art that are central to the artist's intention. They may equally be among the aspects most highly prized by the viewer/experiencer.
- 3.42 The merits and demerits of the concept of the "sculpture trail" is one version of this debate. Managers and curators consulted during this project at the Forest of Dean, Kielder Forest and Stour Valley/King's Wood were all keen for their sculpture installation programmes not to be regarded simplistically in this way. Notwithstanding that "sculpture trail" may be the popular shorthand, the practitioners worry that this model is too limited, or too hackneyed, or too outdated to reflect the true nature of what is on offer.
- 3.43 In the case of the Forest of Dean, the sculpture collection drew some of its initial inspiration from Jamie McCullough's "Beginner's Way", made at Haldon in the 1980s, which was never merely a set of works linked by a trail, but rather a holistic and un-signposted piece evoking a journey through life. The Forest of Dean collection evolved into a "trail" partly at the request of visitors who wanted to find the works more easily. There will always be a tension in seeking to address this, since operations such as these are at pains to be something other than a gallery (otherwise they lose the point of not being a gallery, and being in a forest instead) (Spray, 2007). There are of course also visitors who set great store by experiencing works such as those at the Forest of Dean as part of an experience which, of its essence, involves distance, effort and discovery.
- 3.44 Other visitors, however, would find such aspects a barrier to appreciating what the art might offer; either for physical or for psychological reasons. The "Route to Health" sculpture site in Cannock Forest positively encourages the "trail" concept, as the ideal structure for producing the particular benefits being sought there (such as encouraging special-needs groups into the forest).
- 3.45 As well as layout questions concerning "trails", this issue also concerns the nature and extent of signage or interpretative material provided for any individual work. This is not as simple as a divide between "populist" and "specialist" agendas. In the archetypal "grass-roots" context of the Red Rose Community Forest in north-west England, the decision was made to provide sculptures with no interpretation, since it was perceived that there was greater value to be had from the work's effect in posing a question, starting a conversation, and inviting the viewer to bring something to the encounter that makes it more than just a passive experience of "receiving" the work.
- 3.46 There are other considerations too: in many cases the context will be a site where other issues are being interpreted in addition to the art, and questions of coherence and integration with signage and interpretation provided for nature trails or cycling routes may arise.
- 3.47 The ideal at some sites could be for the location of an artwork itself to be unencumbered by any interpretation, but for this to be provided instead at the



start of a trail or in a visitor centre or car park. In larger, open-access contexts however, there will not necessarily be a common start-point for everyone who visits, and hence such material would not be seen by everyone. Clearly there are tradeoffs to weigh up, in all these different situations.

### **Drivers of initiative**

- 3.48 Although this review sets out to contribute to the development of a strengthened and filled-out national perspective on the FC's involvements in the arts, this needs to be approached with sensitivity. While it is true that initiatives to date have been somewhat disparate and separate, this has had the considerable advantage that they have tended to be "bottom-up" in their origins and "grass roots" in nature. The community relevance and enfranchisement that goes with this, and the delegated relative freedom each project has had for developing creatively in its local context, are positive aspects that deserve to be protected.
- 3.49 Many initiatives have come about because of the personal enthusiasm of individual operational staff who have the scope, in relevant circumstances, to choose art as a favoured means of delivering programme objectives on visitor amenity, recreation, education, community engagement and so on. This is a strength, in that these individuals have such a degree of flexibility of action. It is however also a potential weakness, in that arts activities are not strongly integrated as an institutional driver which would persist in a given area if a key individual with personal enthusiasm were to move on; and in that it probably under-sells the FC's corporate recognition of the importance of social agendas.
- 3.50 The relative freedom and autonomy of local staff to innovate is reinforced by their feeling nowadays that they will be less likely than before to meet internal scepticism and political obstacles to arts-related activities. The expanding policy mandates referred to in section 2 above must be helping with this. Some imaginative perspectives are also evident at senior levels in the organisation. The greatest institutional inertia may in fact lie at levels of middle management, where the practical stresses of balancing multiple agendas (and budgets) may be greatest, and where it would not be surprising to find more conservative attitudes to risk management.
- 3.51 Generally speaking, there are no FC budget-lines for speculative promotion of arts opportunities outside of specific commissions. Some individual offices would be likely to be quite welcoming if artists took the initiative and approached them with ideas. The scope for the FC to be an enabler of art in ways other than by simply funding it could perhaps be made more widely known. It is unproductive however for artists to approach with poorly conceived ideas and projects, since most forest managers will not have the training to evaluate their (artistic) merit. This reinforces the point made earlier in the present section concerning the use of professional arts advisers. Promotion of opportunities could relate to profiling and marketing of work as well as its creation.
- 3.52 This section is focused on the "drivers" side of the equation, and is not an assessment or commentary on the extent of possibilities. Any such assessment would of course need to evaluate the constraints side of the equation in a full way

too, and recognise risks such as adding to staff work burdens, land management liabilities and so on.

- 3.53 The question of the source of initiative for arts activities, and the role of the Commission vis-à-vis other stakeholders, is another of the “balance” questions posed about the strategic position which the organisation could take in this field. Again, the answer may be a “horses for courses” approach; but this still begs a question about what criteria would be used for deciding what is appropriate in a given case (whether for example to play a proactive leadership role, or a more passive role by acting only as landowner or host for initiatives led by others). This leads to a consideration of the variety of partnership and support arrangements that are enabling the FC’s arts activities.

### **Partnership arrangements**

- 3.54 The range of partnership models, framing agreements, governance arrangements, organisations (eg local Trusts), divisions of responsibility, cost-sharing protocols and other institutional arrangements that have underpinned many of the FC’s arts involvements, and their relative effectiveness, would merit deeper study than has been possible within the scope of the current review. Some knowledge-exchange via internal FC networks (the intranet, or the Development Group network) could also be worth developing. Only a flavour of the variety can be given here.
- 3.55 As has been hinted above, most projects have not been initiated by the Forestry Commission itself, and so the development of wisdom about effective partnership approaches is crucial. Under the Regulatory Reform (Forestry) Order 2006 there is now scope for the Commission (in England and Wales) to consider new types of delivery mechanism, such as joint venture companies and charitable trusts.
- 3.56 A common type of case would be where partners’ roles are defined so that they can play to their respective strengths. In the “Wild Ennerdale” partnership in Cumbria, FC arts activities are undertaken jointly with the National Trust, which in that area has education and community staff which the Commission does not. In the community woodland projects in the Mersey/Red Rose area, it is the FC which has the community ranger capacity to undertake arts-related activity.
- 3.57 Some arts activities take place at sites that are jointly managed, such as the local art society exhibitions hosted by the FC and East Dorset District Council at Moors Valley Country Park in Ringwood Forest.
- 3.58 “Sculpture at Tyrebagger” near Aberdeen arose initially from a project led by Forest Enterprise. It then became managed by the Tyrebagger Trust, and has been supported by the Scottish Arts Council National Lottery Fund, Forest Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise, the local authority and others (although some of this support is now coming to an end).
- 3.59 At the Forest of Dean, a key FC individual collaborated on his own personal initiative with the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol in relation to the commissioning of initial artists. The Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust was subsequently set up, originally as an advisory group focused on the maintenance of the sculptures,

and now an independent Trust which periodically also functions as a commissioning agency, with funding support from Arts Council England (ACE) and others. The Trust employs a part-time Project Director and an Outreach Officer, and two FC staff serve as Trustees (in an individual capacity).

- 3.60 In Chopwell Wood (Durham), artworks have arisen from a festival run (and funded) by the Friends of Chopwell Wood group.
- 3.61 The Chiltern Sculpture Trust operates in Cowleaze Wood (Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire) under a lease arrangement with FC, and with funding support from ACE and others. The Trust is responsible for commissioning, manages the trail and the sculptures, and has one part-time staff member.
- 3.62 Stour Valley Arts (SVA), at King's Wood in Kent, also has a lease arrangement. This initiative began as a partnership arts project with the FC, local councils, South East Arts and others. Later, SVA became a separate company, and then a registered charity, (with a Director, an Education Manager and an Administrator); and is now mostly independent of FC decision-making.
- 3.63 The Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World, which operates from its custom-designed project space facility in a converted building on FC land at Haldon Forest in Devon, also has an agreement with the Commission, which provides for rental of the building and the land occupied by the project space. This is specific to the CCANW operation, and is not the profit-sharing, franchise type of agreement under which a typical more commercial outlet on FC land would operate.
- 3.64 The Neroche Project is a £3M scheme including art, funded by the Heritage Lottery and others, in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Somerset. In this case, it is the FC that takes the lead.
- 3.65 In Scotland, several initiatives have been led by community woodland groups.
- 3.66 Collaboration between the Forestry Commission and the Society of Wildlife Artists has been the mechanism for two separate major initiatives, in the New Forest ("Drawn to the Forest") and the Scottish Atlantic oakwoods ("Aig an Oir", meaning "At the Edge"), and a third is under development for multiple sites throughout Great Britain on a lowland heathland theme.
- 3.67 The Cannock Forest "Route to Health" sculpture trail is partnership of the FC, Cannock Chase District Council, South Staffordshire/Cannock Chase Primary Care Trust and community groups. The "arts and health" angle came initially from a strong interest in that dimension on the part of the District Council.
- 3.68 Perhaps the most large-scale/long-term formalised partnership is the Kielder Partnership, consisting of the Forestry Commission, Northumbrian Water, Northumbria National Park, District and County Councils, the Tourist Board and others, under which all but a few elements of the art and architecture programme at Kielder have been run. A curator is employed (by Northumbrian Water and the District Council, since the Partnership is not yet a legal entity, although that is

expected to change in the near future), with funding from the Arts Council and support in kind from the Partnership. (There is however no funding from ACE for the art projects themselves). The curator deals with commissioning of works, and has also been instrumental in gaining profile for the programme in the arts press, which the individual partners would have been unlikely to be able to do themselves. The Kielder Partnership originally came about as a way of achieving “joined-up” marketing of the area as a visitor destination in general. (The concept of this destination is partly forest-based and partly water-based).

### **Sources of funding**

- 3.69 The whole question of how FC-related arts initiatives are financed is obviously fundamental - the present review has not attempted to study this aspect, but it could clearly be a useful area for further research, and for internal knowledge-sharing, perhaps especially through the Development Group. One or two examples of sources and methods of funding can however be mentioned here, as part of this section’s general overview of variety.
- 3.70 In many cases, funding has been part of the package of institutional partnership and collaboration agreements of the kind referred to in the preceding section, involving tourism providers, rural regeneration budgets, the FC’s own education programmes and others.
- 3.71 There are also instances of private sector sponsorship – for example the SWLA/AfN “Wild Art/Drawn to the Forest” collaboration in the New Forest (already referred to above) received sponsorship from Esso; Barclays Bank sponsored a post-painting initiative in the Red Rose Community Forest; and Tilhill Forestry sponsored sculptural work at Westonbirt Arboretum.
- 3.72 The Arts Council have been important (and logical) contributors in many cases, part-funding programmes (such as residencies) as well as individual works of art. The role of the Council and its relationship with the Forestry Commission would be worth further specific analysis and discussion in future, as this is relevant not only to funding but also to methods of enablement more widely, and to defining agendas, objectives and benefits.
- 3.73 Like the Commission, the work of the Arts Council is significantly devolved (including at regional level in England). Ideas and experience concerning collaboration between the two organisations is spread around a range of work centres, and perhaps particularly in relation to questions of funding, some enhanced pooling and exchange of this experience nationwide would be beneficial.
- 3.74 It is likely that Arts Council support is most successfully engaged when dealings with them are handled by an arts specialist. While it may only be exceptional cases where the necessary catalytic investment for this can be made, examples where a professional curator/arts administrator is employed, either directly (as with the Kielder Partnership) or via the setting up of a separate arts Trust or equivalent (as with the Forest of Dean and Stour Valley/King’s Wood) show the dividends that can be achieved.

- 3.75 An alternative model which can also be effective is to make case-by-case use of consultants or commissioning agencies. A successful sculpture at High Lodge Forest Centre, Thetford, was commissioned by the FC, developed by Commissions East (a regional commissioning agency) and secured funding from the Arts Council in that way. "Outsourcing" aspects of the process in this way however raises additional questions about the handling of on-going management, maintenance and (where relevant) decommissioning of works.
- 3.76 Experience of dealings with local authority arts development officers would also be worth examining for potential lessons regarding funding opportunities.

### **A "taxonomy of purposes"**

- 3.77 Some of the range of variety of arts activities undertaken by or in association with the FC has grown organically, and has become tailored to the contexts in which it finds itself, by a process of "bottom-up" trial and error. Other examples have arisen from more proactively decided purposes, or an advance specification of niche strengths.
- 3.78 It may be premature at this juncture to attempt a complete classification of reasons for arts activities, although that would probably be useful at some stage (see the indicative tables earlier in the present section above, as one potential starting-point).
- 3.79 In the meantime the brief review above has at least identified the essence of difference between some types of involvements, and some of the axes along which "positioning" choices may be made. This is discussed more fully in section 6 of this report below.
- 3.80 Some art may be situated in the forest simply because the forest provides it with a convenient or thematically-linked backdrop. Other art can only be generated by particular conditions produced by areas which the Forestry Commission happens to control. In some cases, such as Kielder and Stour Valley, one of the criteria explicitly applied when commissioning work is that it should be a response to the particularities of the place.
- 3.81 The FC and its partners/collaborators may have objectives of attracting numbers of people into the forest, achieving particular inclusion and diversity profiles among those so attracted, achieving awareness/education outcomes once they are there, contributing to public health objectives, contributing to the cultural life of the nation (in terms both of heritage values and contemporary creative expression), enhancing a sense of cultural identity, appreciation of the natural world, and appreciation of local distinctiveness. There may also be objectives concerned with building support and empathy for the state forestry sector as such, on the basis that public engagement, enfranchisement and confidence in the running of the forest estate is desirable in itself, and also that this may assist in improving forestry practice.
- 3.82 Art in or about forests is capable of acting as an "instrument of consciousness" (Sacks, 2006, and see also [www.universityofthetrees.org](http://www.universityofthetrees.org)) in relation to trees, woodlands, forests, landscapes and their environments (without necessarily

having to be physically located there). Moreover, arts initiatives, more than other forms of reflection on the theme, are well suited to dealing with the role of trees and woodlands (linked to their form, life-history and symbolism) as metaphors for a range of wider human values.

- 3.83 Perhaps this element of “values”, both in terms of the value of forests, and in terms of other human value-sets, is the common thread underlying the wide variety of approaches exhibited by the FC’s arts involvements to date. There could be no higher expression of the importance of this realm of endeavour, and no more compelling reason for it to be better appreciated.



## 4. Benefits and outcomes

### Evaluation of impacts

- 4.1 The benefits that result from FC engagement in the arts come in several forms. There are considerable challenges, but also some evolving wisdom, concerning the definition of outcomes and the evaluation of success, performance and effectiveness in this area.
- 4.2 Visitor numbers and direct economic impacts can be quantified; and to some extent, effects in relation to social inclusion, awareness, education, community engagement and public health can also be objectively assessed and attributed. The relationship of arts activities to trends in opinions and political support for forestry and woodland conservation are also, in theory, capable of analysis. Outcomes that relate to other social and cultural values, perceptions of ownership, identity, belonging, risk, aesthetics, psycho-social well-being, people's changed feelings and the intrinsic merits of artistic quality are perhaps harder to evidence in conventionally familiar ways, although parameters for all of these are becoming more established as time goes on.
- 4.3 There is a small degree of frustration on the part of involved staff concerning the relative underdevelopment of evidence-based substantiation of the impact which they themselves perceive to be happening (although where arts impacts are concerned, this issue is by no means unique to the Forestry Commission!). A research evidence-base for this impact is, however, beginning to develop, including through the FC's own social research programme, and through the growing role of the social sciences in its work more generally. In addition, in Scotland, a framework for evaluation of social forestry initiatives is being developed.
- 4.4 The observations on benefits summarised below are derived partly from the literature emerging from this research, and partly from the examples studied and the discussions undertaken during the present study.
- 4.5 The question includes the issue of how (and by whom) involvements are reviewed and audited. At one extreme, initiatives which receive regular funding from the Arts Council are required to produce a thorough annual evaluation report (according to established "arts-driven" priorities); and these reports should in theory be a rich potential source of learning for the Commission.
- 4.6 In the Forest of Dean, an evaluation and review of "lessons learned" was commissioned from a consultant in 1996 (Greene, 1996), and the Sculpture Trust on one occasion brought an initial group of contributing artists back to the area for a seminar on what had been learned from the operation's experiences. The Chair of the Trust also produced a specific evaluation report of the "Lightshift" event in 2002 (Greene, 2002).
- 4.7 The "Route to Health" sculpture trail and arts activities at Cannock Forest have been evaluated from the public health perspective, and met the strict criteria for

inclusion in a review by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) of evidence linking physical activity and the environment (NICE, 2006). This project has also undergone thorough evaluations in the context of Arts Council funding, plus annual evaluations by project partners, and visitor surveys (see for example Reality Check Partnership, in press).

- 4.8 These are just two cases from among a range of approaches to evaluation of the Commission's arts involvements. The processes in use for this may be almost as varied as the involvements themselves. In the context of the present section, this relates to evaluation of impact, and this report refers only in general terms (see later in the present section below) to evaluation of intrinsic artistic quality. The latter may be a more difficult area for objective assessment than impact is; but of course the two are linked, and the issue of evaluating artistic quality (including the question of which sources of expert professional opinion the FC can trust and make use of) would merit further attention in future.

### **Social and cultural values of woods**

- 4.9 The articulation of the values that people associate with trees and woodlands, as argued in earlier sections of this report above, is often central to the purposes and outcomes of arts initiatives. Art can add in unique ways to people's relationship with, awareness of, understanding and valuing of trees, forests and woodland.
- 4.10 Art may be one of the best ways in which to explore the range of reasons why people value forests, and especially to address aspects such as "sense of place" and other intangible value-sets, in addition to the tangible ones. Cultural history and identity are often very effectively explored and expressed through iconography and through artistic treatments of landscape and nature.
- 4.11 Art projects which help people towards greater valuing and respect for the forest can also act as a medium for promoting public awareness and support in relation to issues such as litter, fire and vandalism.
- 4.12 Through its arts involvements, the FC can make a significant contribution to the connections between people and the natural world, which has major beneficial effects ranging from the socioeconomic and cultural to the psychological and spiritual.
- 4.13 Trees offer metaphors for many aspects of existence, and are anthropomorphised in terms of their structures, cycles, vulnerabilities and strengths. They are one of our most accessible links to "bigger things"; and the range of social, sacred and mythological significances of trees around the world is no surprise.
- 4.14 Trees represent probably one of the most manageable scales of attention in the natural world for humankind's notions of durability, heritage, memorial and change. The growth of an individual specimen can be witnessed at first hand, and people can easily relate to its lifespan as of a similar order to a human lifespan, and may even mourn its death. At the same time, older ones may span many human generations, representing living history. It is commonplace for



trees to be planted as memorials for grandparents and legacies for grandchildren. An individual tree's ability to touch three or four human family generations in succession also resonates strongly with the time-frames typically involved in conceptions of conservation and "sustainability". In many ways we continue to see trees and forests as "part of ourselves".

- 4.15 Having said this, in recent decades in the UK a major loss of personal and cultural connections with the everyday actuality of contact with trees and woodland has occurred. In the public at large, shared local knowledge about forest management has been widely lost; and a separation between use of timber products and knowledge of their origins parallels the loss of knowledge about the agricultural origins of supermarket food. Many people intuitively recognise contemporary shifts in our view of forests from one of a primarily "nurturing" and "husbandry" role to one of primarily being "consumers".
- 4.16 Other societal and demographic trends have changed our relationship to trees and the natural environment in general in other ways; including a shifting basis for recreation (shopping and computer pursuits competing with the outdoor "experience economy"), increased urbanisation of population distributions, increasing export of urban values to the countryside (through those who move to live there, as well as those who commute to recreate there), trends in working hours, trends in perceptions about risk and safety, and so on.
- 4.17 Encounters with art objects (or processes) in an outdoor setting can cause people to pause and notice; and can have the effect of "sharpening the senses" and stimulating people to look in fresh ways at the nature around them (Morris and Cant, 2004). Art offers evocations and associations, insights into the nature of experience and of reality, and an expansion of sensibilities, including moral ones. Arts activities offer strong opportunities to reassess the relationship between nature and society, and to effect re-connections in some of these areas.
- 4.18 Something of this kind was indeed the original motive for siting sculptures in the Forest of Dean, where a study had shown that although people enjoyed walking in the forest, they had little inclination to know more about it, or to appreciate its deeper wonders. The sculpture project "Stand and Stare" was conceived 1983 in the hope that artworks related to the forest would encourage visitors to become more involved (Ross, 1996).
- 4.19 One of the eight research themes of the Forest Research Agency is "People, trees and woodlands", which is concerned with "developing a greater understanding of the ways in which trees benefit society, and improving delivery of those benefits". Its objectives include researching "the ways in which people value trees and woodlands". Part of the rationale for the theme overall is that "social issues are a fundamental part of sustainable forest management". A need is also expressed to understand better the "post-productionist values" of today's social context for forestry.
- 4.20 Among the fifteen programme areas under this theme is one on "Social and cultural values of woods", which was completed in 2004. The research looked at north-west and south-east England, both urban and rural situations, and made links to work in inner London and Vermont. It highlighted the link between

people's view of trees and woodlands and wider issues of environmental concern, covering what woodlands mean to people at a personal as well as a community level. Objectives included exploring the implications for FC of public values associated with woodland, to provide future policy and management guidance. One approach to categorising the values concerned has been to refer to values associated with (i) sites and features - those of the forest and those in the forest; (ii) activities, practices, skills and events; and (iii) meanings, identities and representations (L O'Brien, *in litt*, citing work by D Edwards for Forest Research). Other approaches make a primary distinction based on tangible and intangible values.

- 4.21 The FC England and GB Annual Report for 2005-06 (Forestry Commission, 2006b) states that "Our research continues to highlight the importance of woodlands in defining place, and as a point of reference in personal and community identity". Research on valuation of the benefits of forestry for people is also being undertaken at the time of writing, by Forest Research for Forestry Commission Scotland (Hislop *et al*, 2006).
- 4.22 The premise in this area of work has been that sustainable forest management depends on decision-making and debate by and with stakeholders, and this in turn depends on people's conditioning by values, beliefs and attitudes, which it is therefore important to understand. Key values revealed by the research included contact with nature and escape from stress. Mental and emotional benefits appeared even greater than physical ones. Views of trees and woods were related to wider issues of changes in society, environment, cultural expression and heritage. Imagination, childhood memories, and symbolic values of trees in relation to cycles of life, continuity between past and future, change and health (all of which are frequently the focus of artistic treatments) came through strongly. Woods were referred to as offering a chance for spiritual renewal and to think about what life "is actually all about"; which again is a facet of much relevant art in this sphere. Several publications have resulted (see principally O'Brien, 2004) and a literature review (O'Brien, 2003).
- 4.23 A 2003 research report on "Health and well-being" (Tabbush and O'Brien, 2003 – discussed further below) also reports on a campaign run by the Small Woods Association to revive links between people and their local woods. This included a theatre group who worked with communities to explore people's relationship to woods using a variety of arts media. A distinction is offered between "communities of place", who may be drawn to express their sense of belonging to a geographical area; and "communities of interest", where, as one example, the FC's music concerts, touring a range of venues and drawing audiences from a wide and amorphous catchment, are cited as a common focus for one such "community". Obviously, catering for the needs of each of these will demand different strategies.
- 4.24 Artistic means of expressing values (in the form of local people using photography and storytelling) have even been acknowledged as a useful tool for this kind of research itself.
- 4.25 Other work by Forest Research has looked at how the tangible and intangible values associated with woods and forests are portrayed in art, culture and the

media (O'Brien and Claridge, 2002). This indicates that while most recreation and consumption in recent times has been becoming more individualistic and exclusive, forest-based social values remain more universal and collective.

- 4.26 Research in north Wales found that people related to woodlands differently according to the scale at which they were discussed: at a local scale they were important in the formation of personal and community identity, while at a national level they were seen as a strategic resource (Henwood and Pidgeon, 2001). Findings from the FC's periodic surveys of public opinion about forestry show similar scale-effects in other categories of opinion (D Driver, *in litt*). A full understanding of the reasons for this will require deeper research, which might for example reveal that people's imaginings and creative conceptions of woodland are affected by increasing distance and abstraction. Equally, it would be interesting to consider individual artwork encounters in terms of what scale of context they illuminate, whether for example they draw attention down to the micro-scale and the local, or broaden the field of awareness.
- 4.27 To date most research has focused on meanings attached to woodlands and forests, but the need to develop greater understanding of the meanings attached to individual trees has been acknowledged as an area for future research. Recent times have seen a noteworthy upsurge of popular interest in ancient and veteran trees in particular.

### **Social inclusion and community engagement**

- 4.28 Some of the Commission's arts initiatives appear to have created additional channels of connection with local communities, and to have enabled added relevance for them of the presence of the forest. This supports important FC policy objectives for education and awareness (see below), and for combating social exclusion. The England and Great Britain Annual Report for 2005-06 (Forestry Commission, 2006b) highlights research exploring how forestry can contribute to Government priorities on social inclusion.
- 4.29 Art projects can be important contributors to objectives concerning empowerment of the disadvantaged, catering for people with special needs, gender and ethnic balance issues, and diversity in general in the FC's community engagement. Art projects can also help to reach beyond any tendency to view "provision for the disabled" in unduly narrow terms (for example as simply concerning physical access; bearing in mind that only five per cent of disabled people use a wheelchair).
- 4.30 Community Forests, and the National Forest in England, have been described as a "social construction of the forest", arising from changes in views of why forests are important (O'Brien and Claridge, 2002). Significant examples of community outreach arts activity take place in these areas.
- 4.31 Community consultation and participatory planning processes can also make good use of arts-based methods, including for the aesthetic and cultural dimensions of forest design. Research suggests that there is a need for more consistent application by the Commission of landscape design principles, especially if it wishes corporately to make landscape-scale thematic linkages

among its products and services (Martin, 2007). (Consistency in respect of approaches to provision of facilities however is strong, and is known to be valued by the public: it may thus be an under-appreciated advantage that the FC has as a host for arts initiatives).

- 4.32 Artists worked with a community group on the design of the Borgie Millennium Forest in Sutherland, which opened in 2000. The process relied heavily on metaphors relating to belonging and to cultural recovery, and the design incorporated references to aspects such as standing stones and the ancient Gaelic alphabet. This project is said to have broken down the barriers between “the artist” and “the community” (Mackenzie, 2002).

### **Communication and education**

- 4.33 Art is used in a variety of ways for achieving the FC’s mainstream public communication objectives. Many of these feature in the other areas of benefit described in this section, including tourism/attraction of visitors and community engagement.
- 4.34 Much of the FC’s local community engagement (see above) concerns education, both in the context of school curricula and beyond. The Commission can be a significant contributor to life-long learning, perhaps particularly through the promotion of sense of place and understanding of local landscape history that is supported so well by its arts activities.
- 4.35 The FC is a collaborator in the “Forest Schools” programme, referred to in section 3 above. Forest Schools were reviewed in a Forest Research report published in 2006 (O’Brien and Murray, 2006). This discusses the benefits of creativity-based play (among other elements) in helping the development of children, especially those who do not learn well in classroom situations (in relation for example to tailoring learning to the individual’s own style and pace); and in recovering the individual’s abilities (which have been eroded by modern life) to feel “comfortable in nature”. Arts-based activities have been shown to improve skills in mark-making, other physical skills, observation, attention to aesthetic features, positive concentration abilities and communication, among children with special needs and emotional or behavioural difficulties as well as others.

### **Health and well-being**

- 4.36 The contribution made by activities in (and interpretation of) forests to individual and community well-being includes a significant element of benefits to health. There is now a good body of evidence of the links between health and contact with wildlife and greenspace; and a parallel body of evidence of the links between health and exposure to or engagement in art. The triangle of links between all three, however, (ie art-nature-health), has not yet been so explicitly developed, and it would seem that excellent opportunities could exist in future to explore this in the context of the Forestry Commission’s activities. Dialogue with the National Health Service could be an important aspect of this; and there appears to be much still to do in general to engage health professionals in fully appreciating these links.

- 4.37 A growing strand of FC research focuses on health and well-being. Parts of Forest Research's programme of work on this have been completed, with several publications resulting; and parts are still underway. The FC is a partner in the EU COST research programme's Action E39 on "forests, trees and human health and well-being". A UK country report on Action E39 (Jepson, 2005) reviews some of the UK research and evidence for links between contact with forests and health and well-being. The FC has also been running a GB-wide "Active Woods: naturally good for you" campaign since 2005.
- 4.38 A Forest Research report in 2003 (Tabbush and O'Brien, 2003) picks up on the role of art in promoting the use of woodlands for health (as for example at Chopwell Wood and the "Route to Health" project at Cannock Forest, both of which are examples of partnerships with Primary Care Trusts and National Health Service providers).
- 4.39 The Cannock project was conceived from the start as a health-related initiative. At Chopwell, the sculpture trail became a basis for health walks as part of a health project, even though that was not among the original reasons for the sculpture trail – hence these kinds of benefit can sometimes occur in a secondary or even unintended way.
- 4.40 This work points out that characterisation of places occurs not just in terms of their physical or biological properties, but also in terms of cultural values, meanings and symbolism, and that these in turn can reinforce self-esteem, empowerment and mental health of the individual. Art projects are a way of helping people to repair fractured links with the natural world, to engage with natural spaces, and (among children, especially) to facilitate development of creative adventurousness. They may do this among other things by serving to apply a "humanised" dimension to an outdoor environment which would otherwise be characterised in terms of the unknown, and hence could be feared (see comments below on perceptions of risk).
- 4.41 Other research has shown that contact with trees improves patient recovery rates (see for example work by Ulrich and others, cited in O'Brien, 2005). In the context of the use of forests helping to promote health-related objectives, Tabbush and O'Brien (2003) observe that "art and artists can stop people in their tracks and interest them in a new idea". O'Brien (2005) also notes that activities such as conservation or art can allow promotional material to be couched in terms other than an overt agenda on exercise or public health.

### **Perceptions of risk**

- 4.42 There has also been research on negative perceptions of forests in respect of crime and safety issues (O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005). This draws attention to the way in which perceptions of landscape have a significant imaginary component, and are in effect a "story", influenced by everything from fairy-tales to the media, and of course by artistic representations. In addition to an individual's own experience, therefore, imagery and portrayal by others are fundamental to the degree to which any individual may see a forest as threatening or problematic.

- 4.43 Present-day British society is more risk-averse and litigious than before, and much of the population has distorted views of the risk of accident or attack (compared to the statistical likelihood of these). Meanwhile, influences ranging from the “Lord of the Rings” to computer games have continued developing new imaginings of magic and mystery associated with woods. Negative views may arise from a possibly widening gap between these virtual “stories” and the perceived “real” one. At the same time, property prices are positively affected where houses are associated with trees and greenery. There is clearly a complex mix of forces at work here.

### **Attracting visitors**

- 4.44 One of the most obviously assumed benefits of art in FC forests is that of attracting visitors; both residents in a local or regional catchment, and tourists from further afield. This may produce significant economic benefits (dealt with separately below), but as discussed earlier in this report, expanded provision of amenity attractions for people is also a key corporate aim in its own right.
- 4.45 The Commission’s arts involvements offer an added dimension of value to the visitor experience, including added reasons to visit in the first place. This in turn should be able both to increase the frequency or duration of some people’s visits, and to expand the visitor profile by attracting additional people who otherwise may not have had a reason to visit.
- 4.46 In some instances, the value of individual artworks lies as much with their constituting a point of reference or an objective/destination for a walk or cycle ride. For some people this may provide a mental or emotional structure for their experience of a landscape which they may otherwise perceive as “boring” or lacking in familiar or manageable cues.
- 4.47 As mentioned in the discussion on the spectrum of “challenging” to “easy” art in section 3 above, not all art in the forest will necessarily act as an attractant to all visitors, and some of it may have a negative impact on some audiences. This obviously needs judging in the particular circumstances of any given situation, and there may be complex trade-offs to weigh up. Distant visitors and local residents will often have different perspectives and priorities, for example.
- 4.48 There are also ways in which wise planning and consultation can optimise benefits and minimise adverse effects even where a project is potentially controversial; or perhaps can remove the controversy altogether where it is based on misconception. At Stour Valley/King’s Wood, local residents had concerns about what one early art project there would be likely to “do to” “their forest”; but on being invited to engage with the planning of it, and discovering that it consisted of a Hamish Fulton walk event that had no visible or enduring impact on the wood, their concerns were alleviated and a more constructive basis was built for future relationships.
- 4.49 As well as simply being attracted to see an artwork or attend an arts event, there are also indirect ways in which artistic aspects influence visiting. Research on tourism indicates that imagery associated with woodlands and forests, which

- relates to explicit landscape aesthetics but also to implicit values such as the identity of an area, influences the perceived attractiveness of a place and the length of time for which visitors stay there (Martin, 2007). In addition, growing interest in activities such as photography of autumn tree colours, often stimulated by the work of artists, can, in some cases, extend the tourist season.
- 4.50 Quantifying these effects is challenging, since the arts-related drivers that may operate in a given location are often hard to distinguish from other drivers. More visitor/audience opinion surveys and similar research would help here. At the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail there is a research project underway during 2007-2008 that will shed light on these questions, in respect of that site as one case example. Research at Cannock Forest has shown how visitor numbers have increased specifically on the “Route to Health” art trail since it was established; and it is also shedding light on patterns of return visits in respect of particular social groups.
- 4.51 Around 100,000 people visit at least part of the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail each year (out of a figure of 250,000 who visit the general visitor centre from which the trail begins). 40,000 visited in one week for the “Lightshift” event in 2001. The overall annual figure at Westonbirt Arboretum is 300,000 – this is the potential audience for exposure to the art that is there; but what proportion of those people experience the art, or are motivated to visit because of it, is not known. At Grizedale Forest, 250,000 people visit the visitor centre each year: an unknown number of these explore the sculpture trail, while over 5,000 take part in the organised art and environment education programme.
- 4.52 Of the 240,000 people who visit the Kielder Water and Forest Park each year, it is estimated (by extrapolation from sample visitor surveys) that a primary motive for 10-20,000 of them is visiting the artworks. Numbers automatically counted at one individual piece (Skyspace) reach 12-13,000 per year, and at others (eg the Minotaur maze) the figures are certain to be higher than this.
- 4.53 In the first year after the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World was launched at Haldon Forest (April 2006 - April 2007), 30,000 people visited its Project Space, with many more taking part in CCANW’s outdoor events. Over twenty years earlier, Jamie McCulloch’s “Beginner’s Way” sculpture walk at Haldon attracted 60,000 visitors in its first year, despite being neither advertised nor signposted.
- 4.54 Some of these figures are not absolute measures of the attractiveness of what is on offer, since in some cases they will be limited by other constraints. Travel distance to the more remote locations may have a variable effect over time, for example as petrol prices fluctuate. In locations where arts events are held, capacity may be limited by car parking capacity (this was cited in relation to the New Forest and Stour Valley/King’s Wood, and is undoubtedly the case elsewhere too).
- 4.55 In some cases the objective may relate more to the quality of the visitor experience than the quantity of visitors attracted. The current Grizedale visitor centre redevelopment project is a case in point, where increasing the duration of stay, and the range of activities with which each visitor engages, are more

important aims than increasing the total number of visitors. The same project also has an aim of creating a more broadly-spread visit pattern across the seasons, rather than the current single predominant mid-summer peak (when again, factors such as parking capacity become constraints).

### **Economic impact**

- 4.56 Tourism, visiting and entertainment events related to the FC's arts activities can all contribute an economic impact, which can be quantified by well-established methods. Although it is beyond the scope of the present study, it would be possible to research this and produce an aggregated national picture of the overall undoubtedly significant effects produced, both to FC revenue and to local economies. It would be valuable to have such a picture, both to support the case for this sphere of activity and as a baseline for tracking trends and performance.
- 4.57 Economic studies of individual programmes would also be useful, for example to examine the relative cost-effectiveness of arts initiatives compared with other visitor amenity and community education and participation activities.
- 4.58 Direct impacts arise for example from car parking and event ticketing receipts, overnight accommodation, merchandising, catering, and other retail activity (including sale of art), both at FC outlets and in surrounding local economies. Some of these, in terms of their association with the arts offer in certain locations, may as yet be underdeveloped (for example sale of cards, books, posters and limited edition prints associated with events and exhibitions). On the other hand the overt commercialisation of some creative processes would run directly counter to their ethos and purpose; so this whole dimension needs extremely careful handling.
- 4.59 The picture is however not as straightforward as it may appear. Some activities, such as the "Forest Tour" concert programme, and the film liaison officer's work in England, are run on a clearly profit-making basis. Other operations (such as sculpture trail sites), although perceived by the public in some cases as earning significant revenue from car-parking and catering etc, do not do so to the extent of making a profit. As mentioned earlier in the present report, there are new pressures to move visitor centres towards at least a break-even financial outturn and ideally to become profitable; but this shift will take some years to achieve.
- 4.60 Since much of the arts activity undertaken by or in association with the Forestry Commission takes place through partnership structures of one kind or another (see section 3 above), there are also complexities and sensitivities to take into account concerning issues such as equitable sharing of costs and of revenues, and copyright.
- 4.61 Any of the aspects above, plus the actual production or performance of artwork itself, may contribute economically by creating or supporting employment, either directly or indirectly through visitor spending. Here too there are balances to be struck. In some contexts, for example at the Forest of Dean or Kielder, the international quality of the art is a priority, and employment of local artists is not an objective. In other contexts it might be central to the programme. In all cases however there may be potential local employment spin-offs in relation to printing



and other support functions, and in construction of works – at Kielder in particular (as already mentioned above), and doubtless elsewhere too, there is an effort to offer employment locally in respect of the construction aspect of the installations.

### **Forest design and aesthetics**

- 4.62 The role of arts-based perspectives in forest design and aesthetics has already been referred to in relation to community engagement, earlier in this section above. These perspectives have received greater attention internally too in recent years, including the engagement of qualified landscape architects on the staff.
- 4.63 In addition, one of the action points recommended in the 2003 “Health and well-being” report (Tabbush and O’Brien, 2003) is to make use of art and design in making forests more accessible.
- 4.64 Also of potential relevance is an EU-funded project known as “VisuLands”, which aims to support public involvement in the assessment and management of landscape change through development of visualisation tools.
- 4.65 The aesthetic impact of a natural scene derives not only from its physical and spatial qualities, but also from aspects such as the extent of naturalness that is perceived, the “functional affordability” offered to the observer, and other emotional, experiential and cultural factors. People clearly feel a sense of nature on levels other than the physical (O’Brien and Claridge, 2002). Also, as noted in the research on health (see for example O’Brien, 2005), the appeal of a place may have as much to do with the social interactions that happen there as with its visual aesthetics; and it can often be the socialisation aspect of an arts activity that produces its health benefit.

### **Artistic achievements**

- 4.66 Obviously one fundamental area of outcomes to consider is that of the artistic agenda itself, and the content of the work - its meanings, effects, significance and quality - including the artists’ perspectives, and views from the art world. The question of what are the main *artistic* achievements of the FC’s involvements in the arts has never been assessed in any systematic or overarching way. This report can not offer such an assessment either; but it is clearly an important issue for future review; and among other things it will be key to enhancing links with mainstream arts funders and supporters.
- 4.67 Art can be the vehicle for people to expand their experience of the natural world, as discussed above. This includes encouraging the engagement of people who have not previously had much contact with forest environments. The converse is equally true, that for people who are already motivated to visit woods for whatever reason, and are then in addition exposed to high-quality sculpture or other art experiences there, the woodland visit can be the vehicle for them to expand their cultural (and sometimes spiritual) experience too. As mentioned in the policy discussion in section 2 above, through its arts activities the Forestry Commission makes a considerable contribution to the contemporary cultural life

of the nation. This is every bit as important a benefit of such activities as the other outcome areas discussed above.

### **Staff workshop - sample of views on successful aspects of arts activities**

4.68 At the FC Staff Development Network Conference in October 2007, a fringe workshop on art was led by the author. It examined a number of issues covered by the present review, including views from those attending (mostly education, recreation, community and ranger staff, but also including some others) on what had been some of the most positive and effective aspects of FC arts activities with which they had been personally involved. The (anonymised) examples cited are listed below.

- Artworks in the forest providing landmarks or reference-points which help in guiding people around the area
- Providing a reason for potential visitors to stop, look and spend time
- Providing a focal point for activity
- Providing a topic of interest and conversation
- Art featuring in grant-aided projects with children, adding extra dimensions of meaning for those involved
- Active participation in the finished work (as distinct from involvement in its making) rather than mere spectating
- Community activities where art provided a means for engaging teenagers who previously had attitude problems and were hard to engage
- Benches funded by the grants & licences side in a Community Forest, to replace some which had been vandalised: a more positive sense of ownership was created by inviting community participants to feature their own identifying “marks” in each bench
- Providing a focus of interest that helps define the identity for a site, especially new sites or existing ones that need a new “image”
- Leaving a legacy in the community, of a particular narrative about heritage
- Artworks creating an additional kind of positive reputation for the Commission and drawing in an additional visitor constituency from a wider area
- Very large numbers of visitors attracted (to an event); and offering a novel type of experience
- Providing additional profile for the Commission and bringing in new audiences
- Bringing a different type of activity into the forest
- New education, residency and exhibiting ventures
- Innovative methods of communication
- Web-pages on art & architecture
- Relevance to commissioning work from the landscape architecture side
- Providing an additional aspect of professional inspiration for staff in the Commission



## 5. Practical management issues

### Responsibility for art in the FC

- 5.1 Devolution, outsourcing and broadening of functions have added in recent times to the complexity of the FC's structure. Responsibility for arts-related policy, funding and implementation is likewise complex.
- 5.2 Concerning policy (see discussion in section 2 above), the remaining GB services in Edinburgh and the national headquarters in England, Scotland and Wales all have a role in policy development. Furthermore, in England, the government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs takes on much of this role. FC England's Programmes Group, formed in 2005, acts as an interface with the Department, and also between Forest Enterprise and the National Office/Conservancies. It consequently forms a key "bridge" between policy and delivery.
- 5.3 The England Forestry Forum, comprised of representatives of a wide range of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors, was set up in 1999 to share ideas and proposals for implementing the Government's Forestry Strategy for England, and it monitors and reviews progress in implementation of the Strategy.
- 5.4 In taking forward the strategic perspectives presented in this report, it would be helpful for lead Departments, individuals and budget lines in each of England, Scotland and Wales to be clearly identified. At GB level, Corporate and Forestry Support Division in Edinburgh has responsibility for standards and for overseeing research and policy advice. The role of the International section could also be considered. Much relevant research is commissioned from the Forest Research agency.
- 5.5 In Forest Enterprise England, oversight of arts initiatives rests with the Recreation and Public Affairs section in Bristol. In Wales, Recreation and Public Affairs sits within the Operations section and includes a Social Team. For Forest Enterprise Scotland, arts initiatives involving the National Forest Estate are led by the Communities, Recreation and Tourism Manager. FC Scotland also has a strong national office social policy team, which has been active on cultural policy issues.
- 5.6 Relationships (in terms of policy development) with those parts of central government responsible in each country for arts and cultural affairs, and related statutory agencies, will be another interesting area to examine further in future. Some comments on this in relation to Scotland are given in section 2 above.
- 5.7 The issue of responsibilities also includes decision-making processes for approving involvements, and approving relevant budget-lines and allocations. There are differing degrees of delegation depending on scale of expenditure, and it would be helpful to elaborate details of this, and of the criteria applied in making funding decisions for arts initiatives. The extent and nature of local

community involvement in planning and decision-making may also be worth exploring.

- 5.8 Reporting-lines and monitoring and evaluation processes also vary depending on the circumstances, and of course at District level, arts involvements may occur under several strands of FC work (tourism, education, community outreach etc). An understanding of accountability and coordination mechanisms across these different divisions (geographical, hierarchical and sectoral) is therefore important.

### **Branding and marketing**

- 5.9 Comments have been made in section 4 above concerning the fact that much of the FC's arts activity takes place through partnership arrangements, and that issues of cost-sharing, profit-sharing and copyright therefore need careful handling. The same applies to branding of joint efforts. There may be scope for development of model agreements or other frameworks in this area.
- 5.10 Publicity and marketing in general appears to be decentralised to a fair degree, and to be flexible enough to accommodate a range of joint or individual approaches to arts activities. There is relevant publicity material on different parts of FC websites, although no content category or single portal is identified for "art" as such. This may be worth attention in future.
- 5.11 In the Red Rose Community Forest, the Commission has sought to identify "community ambassadors" to help in promoting its arts projects. Children involved in the projects have, through this mechanism, been seen to develop a strong sense of ownership and pride in what they have produced.
- 5.12 FC's interest in marketing associated with arts activities is generally small-scale. There are cases where independent entrepreneurs have capitalised on market opportunities for merchandise (photographs, t-shirts) based on FC art works, with no formal arrangements with FC or its collaborators concerning consent or royalties.
- 5.13 Whether to charge for entry to events, or for explanatory brochures and other materials, also seems largely to be a matter that is delegated to local offices to decide. This certainly allows for modulation to the range of individual circumstances that may apply; though some central advice on principles and good practice might also be appropriate.

### **Risk management, health and safety**

- 5.14 A range of issues concerning health and safety frequently come up in discussions on FC arts projects. Tensions can exist, between FC hosts who may find that the artists concerned do not factor in health and safety sufficiently when projects are being designed or amended, and artists who may find this aspect frustratingly bureaucratic and creatively constraining.
- 5.15 In the case of those creative processes that are evolutionary, exploratory or experimental in character, the end result may be different from the proposal that was the basis for risk assessments. Special approaches may need to be

explored for such assessments and agreements (for example serial assessments, or defining an “outer envelope” of health and safety “tolerance limits” for given project, within which the artist has creative freedom).

- 5.16 In the specific case of ephemeral works where the artist’s intention is for them to decay, initially safe structures may become unsafe in the course of their life, and yet “maintenance” in the normal sense would not be a relevant response. Solutions again may lie with greater consideration of such issues at the planning stage, and perhaps agreements in advance about how decay might need to be “assisted” if new risks arise.

### **Other commissioning, curatorial and governance issues**

- 5.17 This cluster of issues includes legal responsibilities, partnership arrangements, commissioning and decommissioning processes, and care of artworks.
- 5.18 There are several aspects that concern legal liability and insurance. These relate not only to health and safety (damage caused by the work), discussed above; but also to damage caused to the work, and potentially also damage caused (for example by project failure or adverse publicity) to the reputations of either the artist or the Forestry Commission. Reputation is an element of risk management, and can be affected by things as simple as whether artworks are available to visit in exactly the way advertised in promotional literature, without for example the disappearance of “ephemeral” pieces resulting in failure to deliver an advertised visitor experience.
- 5.19 In some cases the FC has an enduring responsibility for works created by an initiative, not only in the sense of the practical management issues mentioned below, but also in the role of curator of the artistic expressions concerned. The meaning, significance and popularity of these expressions may over time affect or be affected by a range of externalities, and it will be useful to give thought to this.
- 5.20 Direct contractual arrangements between the FC and an artist, arts agency or commissioning body will need to consider issues of ownership of the work; rights to intellectual property and copyright of images of the work; valuation of assets; insurance and other liabilities (see above); responsibilities for maintenance; whether the work is to be decommissioned and if so how and when; and exit strategies.
- 5.21 All relevant issues of this kind should as far as possible be anticipated and addressed at the outset, by way of commissioning agreements or similar instruments. There may be a need for additional central guidance on this, and for the development of tools such as model “decision-trees” and model/framework artist agreements.
- 5.22 Similar issues, and several others, will arise in the case of arts activities that are partnership arrangements between the FC and others. Initiatives vary between those (perhaps the majority) where the FC is in a “passive hosting” role (for example where an agreement is drawn up for the placing of work on FC land, but the Commission has little or no further involvement); and those where there is

more active joint development of work with artists or arts institutions. (See section 3 above for further comments on types of partnership).

- 5.23 Governance arrangements for decision-making, responsibility and ownership issues are key; and ideally these should be formalised in partnership agreements.
- 5.24 Stour Valley Arts, with professional legal advice, drew up an agreement on the approach to be taken to commissioning, between themselves and the FC. This specifies that SVA owns the works and has responsibility for their maintenance.
- 5.25 At Kielder, some of the works created under the multi-partner Kielder Partnership are on FC land and owned/maintained by FC, and some on Northumbrian Water land and maintained and regarded as owned by them; but in both cases this occurs within the context of a single shared programme.
- 5.26 At the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail, ownership of the artworks rests with the FC, even though it will normally have been the independent Sculpture Trust which raised the funding to commission and install them.
- 5.27 At Grizedale, in late 2007 the Commission appointed a full-time arts development officer to take over responsibility for the works produced under previous partnership arrangements with Grizedale Arts. This staff member (the only full-time Commission employee working as an arts specialist) will also curate an archive and develop and launch a reinvigorated sculpture-based visual arts programme.
- 5.28 In some instances there can be tensions between forestry operations and the curatorial needs of the artwork. A forester may perceive that certain proposed works are likely to damage trees and hence the value of a commercial timber resource. An artist may perceive certain forestry operations as changing the intended viewing experience related to a sculpture. An artist may intend for her/his work to change or decay naturally, while this may be problematic for a forester's perception of health and safety risks (see above), or even aesthetic concerns. There can be more strategic tensions, for example between an FC motive to open up an area to maximum ease of visitor access, with prominent interpretation, and a given artist's motive to create mystery, suspense, discovery or challenge.
- 5.29 The parameters of project management and cost-effectiveness can differ hugely in more general ways between forestry operations and creative art-making. Efforts need to be made on both sides to appreciate the differences in "mind-set" that may exist. Creative makers may not respond well to hierarchical systems of direction; and an institutional project-management ethos of "efficiency" may not sufficiently take into account the factors that can impact on the professional reputation of an artist. Time is perhaps one of the parameters for which these things are most true. The cumulative, often non-linear conditioning processes that prepare the ground for good artwork (for example allowing perspectives on a place to develop over a range of seasonal, climatic and socio-cultural conditions) rarely operate in the same way as, for example, the research phase of an engineering or silviculture project.

- 5.30 These are all examples of issues which good practice suggests should be worked out and negotiated by explicit agreement. Viewed positively, this is a stimulating challenge to creative solution-finding for the inspiring idea of offering cultural activity in a working forest. Artists and forestry professionals each learn something new in striving to make this succeed (and although the discussion in this section relates to situations where arts activities are being pursued, the point holds more generally that there could be great benefits to be had from artists and foresters working together on mainstream forestry operations too, such as planting and felling schemes (see also the comments on the role of landscape architects later in the present section and in section 4 above).
- 5.31 At the Cannock Forest “Route to Health” sculpture trail, ease of maintenance has been one of the criteria for deciding the nature of the various artworks.
- 5.32 At the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail, a maintenance programme is agreed jointly between the Forestry Commission and the Sculpture Trust for each artwork. As well as the needs of the work itself, this includes in effect a mini “management plan” for the viewing area around each artwork. At the Chiltern Sculpture Trail, many of the sculptures have a felling and planting exclusion zone around them. There are similar arrangements at Stour Valley/King’s Wood in respect of FC operations more generally.
- 5.33 As well as maintenance and management of an artwork and its immediate viewing area, similar considerations may need to extend to the way in which it is approached by the viewer, for example to safeguard the experience of winding along a path in particular conditions for some distance before the work itself is encountered. Maintenance may also include upkeep of interpretative material and replenishment of literature outlets.
- 5.34 The division of labour in partnerships for maintenance, surveys of sites, marshalling at events, press promotion and so on, also needs to be explicitly agreed. Sometimes this can be arranged creatively, for example by forestry labour “lending a hand” when working in the same area on other operations.
- 5.35 Arts partners may often be small voluntary or charitable organisations, or self-employed individuals, without the capacity to achieve desired standards on these aspects by themselves. Indeed the standards achieved for things such as keeping works well-maintained, keeping websites up to date, replenishing literature outlets and so on, can influence public perceptions of the FC itself. Assistance for such things may involve relatively tiny expenditures in FC terms but can make a significant difference to the currency, relevance and impact of the partner, with knock-on benefits for the FC’s own image.
- 5.36 The valuation of assets represented by artworks has been mentioned above. The Arts Council has called in general for valuations of this kind; and new processes to enable the FC to assess the asset value of works in its ownership, including internal guidance, may be required. The commissioning agreement process may need ways of anticipating scenarios such as that where an artist becomes significantly popular subsequent to an FC project, with the consequence that the works they produced for the project increase significantly

in value (with possible associated increases in insurance liabilities, risk of theft and so on).

- 5.37 This links to issues of intellectual property and copyright, already mentioned above – both in relation to agreements between artists, partners and the FC, and to the risk of infringement of controls by third-party entrepreneurs (as in the merchandising example described under “branding and marketing” earlier in this section).
- 5.38 A research project underway in 2007-2008 will offer an in-depth examination of curating and commissioning issues at the Forest of Dean, and this should provide a valuable case study when it is completed.
- 5.39 A further set of commissioning issues concerns project review and evaluation processes, and some comments have been made on this under the heading of “Evaluation of impacts” in section 4 above.

### **FC staff capacity-building: advice, guidance, and exchange of experience**

- 5.40 The decentralised nature of much of what is done by the Forestry Commission in the arts field has already been mentioned above. At the same time it is clear that, in addition to the strategic policy orientations discussed in section 2, there is a range of practical operational matters on which advice, guidance, assistance (and perhaps coordination) from the centre to the Districts is required, including all of the issues discussed so far in this present section.
- 5.41 Assessment of needs in new or specialised or fast-evolving areas can be challenging, in that those who have a need may not be able to identify or articulate it until it can begin to be met. The possibility should also be considered that autonomy and space/time for self-learning may part of what Districts and others require to be “given” to them by the centre.
- 5.42 While it may take time to work out the best approach to this, efforts can always be made in the meantime constantly to improve access to whatever materials and support may already exist. Guidance on a number of the operational and managerial issues mentioned above exists in internal systems such as the FC intranet, but its “findability” and usage levels are probably not yet optimal, and its status vis-à-vis former “codes” could perhaps be clarified.
- 5.43 Processes for mutual support, exchange of experience, distilling of lessons and organisational learning of course may happen “horizontally” or “upwards” in the organisation as well as from the top down, as it were. New enhancements of these processes can always be sought. It is valuable also to find ways in which evolving wisdom on everyday “housekeeping” issues can best inform more strategic processes of planning and policy development.
- 5.44 Transfer of inspirations and exchange of experience will always also happen in an informal way, and in the beginning this was the primary method: the early pioneering activities at Grizedale, Forest of Dean and Haldon informed each other in this way. Artists will take ideas and experience from one place of work to



another; and the enthusiasts on the FC staff do likewise when they move from one job to another.

- 5.45 During the course of this review, a number of staff expressed an interest in learning from what is happening in areas other than their own. Local managers also report that they find it important to see their locality or a given project in its wider context, for example against a national overview. The present report should help with this to some degree, at least at the level of signposting; and some of the recommendations made in various sections (and summarised in section 7 below) highlight ways in which these aspects could be developed further.
- 5.46 Some years ago, two or three meetings took place informally among individuals involved in curating arts activities on Forestry Commission sites, or who had other relevant connections (including for example Artsway, the arts organisation based in the New Forest). The question has been raised as to whether a forum of this kind could be usefully be re-animated and brought together again. A similar suggestion has been mooted (in at least two separate contexts) in respect of a potential network or forum for those involved in relevant research. A consideration of possibilities on this front will form part of the follow-up to the present review.
- 5.47 FC national Staff Development Network (SDN) meetings at Grizedale and in the New Forest in recent years have addressed arts issues (in the Grizedale case, as the main focus of the meeting, in a context of education work; and in the New Forest case, as one session on a wider agenda). District Managers and others in England met at Forest Enterprise HQ in July 2006 to review experiences of arts involvements; and information from that meeting has been incorporated into relevant sections of this report.
- 5.48 As mentioned in section 4 above, the author led a workshop on art at the SDN conference held in Cheshire in October 2007. Among the questions which participants were invited to address was one which asked: "What are your personal priority needs for support, information, guidance, advice (or anything else, other than funding) in relation to arts activities?"; and another which asked: "What main method would you recommend for keeping in touch with colleagues on arts activity?". The responses given are shown in the table below.

Main support needs	Preferred communication/ networking methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of art networks – who are the players, how does one reach them and engage with them</li> <li>• Contacts in the arts world; both for funding and for access to artists</li> <li>• Key contacts to go to for help and advice</li> <li>• Local contacts and information on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email for day-to-day exchanges; kept concise and with a clear purpose (ie not merely streaming information)</li> <li>• Email newsletters or updates</li> <li>• An email forum or chat room</li> <li>• Teleconferencing/net meetings</li> <li>• The intranet; including perhaps a group page with information on key contacts, references, example</li> </ul>

<p>local arts networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A central or local information base regarding local artists</li> <li>• Better awareness of arts projects in the District so they can be promoted in media/PR work</li> <li>• Knowing what is fashionable in art</li> <li>• Information on what has been done in the past (as is being done at Grizedale, for example, through its archive work)</li> <li>• Information on what is happening elsewhere, to avoid reinventing the wheel</li> <li>• Information on “who is doing what” collated centrally</li> <li>• Guidance on how to develop arts projects</li> <li>• Guidance on aesthetic aspects</li> <li>• Advice on use of “subtle” forms of art in sensitive locations</li> <li>• Advice on interpretation using art</li> <li>• Best practice guidance drawn together in one place</li> <li>• Guidance on the extent to which site developments can/should mirror the style of national parks/country parks</li> <li>• Networking to help enhance coherent style of approach and pattern of management</li> <li>• Guidance, case studies, specialist advice</li> <li>• Information sheets and an image-bank</li> <li>• Establish an FC arts website</li> <li>• Help with setting up partnerships</li> <li>• Checklists of things to cover when working with arts partners, based on pooled experience and lessons learned from FC’s history of such work</li> <li>• Example documentation such as contracts, risk assessments etc</li> <li>• Including relevant activities in Forward Job Plans</li> <li>• (Specifically for Grizedale) a new strategy for Grizedale’s art, updating its role in the contemporary art world and clarifying its future direction</li> <li>• Site visits, for inspiration and for learning about best practice</li> </ul>	<p>documents, case studies, links to press releases and websites of funders and other art projects etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on where to go/who to contact organised on the intranet, or communicated by email (ie a “clearing-house” or “portal” function)</li> <li>• The SDN noticeboard, with email alerts when there are new postings</li> <li>• An interactive web site, akin to a “Facebook” group page</li> <li>• Establish an FC arts website/page</li> <li>• A central database</li> <li>• Meetings such as the present fringe meeting, for more in-depth discussion</li> <li>• Themed workshops at specific project sites</li> <li>• An annual arts meeting, perhaps at a different location each time to look at a case study, with input from the local artists etc involved</li> <li>• A (one-off?) conference at GB level</li> <li>• Site visits/tours/exchanges (including “virtual tours”)</li> <li>• Establish a working group?</li> <li>• Appointing an arts champion within the organisation</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More formal and regular networking between Districts</li> <li>• Giving responsibility to a central individual for advising and assisting with funding bids, commissioning, communicating with artists and funders etc</li> </ul>	
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5.49 A comment offered from another staff quarter was that there was a need, and currently no real provision, for training on working in partnerships, including how to learn and apply the lessons that emerge.

5.50 There are few formal mechanisms that facilitate dialogue between the arms of the Forestry Commission in England, Scotland and Wales on the issues covered in this report, although some key individuals have good contacts more informally or in the margins of other processes, and there are suggestions that closer joint working on social policy and programme issues may be gradually developing. Perhaps the most structured context in which arts issues are raised at Great Britain level at present is in relation to research, for example through the Social and Economic Research Programme Advisory Group.

### **Motivation**

5.51 Finally it is worth registering a point on staff motivation, to complement the dimension of formal responsibilities which introduced this section. Although the Forestry Commission generally has a scientific and managerial culture, and is effectively a government bureaucracy, many staff are motivated by a deep human affinity with the outdoors and with trees, and often have well-developed aesthetic sensibilities too. Hence not only is the organisation well set up to deliver the kind of benefits discussed in section 4 of this report above, but also many of the individuals involved may be particularly predisposed to champion some of the agendas concerned.

5.52 In the course of the present review, a number of staff commented on this vocational pre-disposition. One even observed that foresters are artists in the medium of forestry, which is an inherently creative nurturing process. Especially where the ethos of landscape architecture has made itself felt, there tends to be an increased readiness to speak in the language of aesthetics, and to view even engineering operations in creative terms. Landscape training has reinforced this approach (although perhaps less strongly at present than some years ago; and hence there are plans to revitalise it). These present-day attitudes are in striking contrast to the “industrial forestry” values that prevailed as recently as the 1970s and into the 1980s. This all suggests that there should be a good basis for any corporate arts policy to become genuinely embraced and embedded across the organisation, rather than remaining merely the province of a few specialists.



## 6. Needs, opportunities, and options for the future

### Introduction

- 6.1 This section draws together some of the strands emerging from earlier sections, and begins by looking at how lessons learned from experiences reviewed so far illuminate “what works best” in a Forestry Commission context. The picture presented by the review strongly reinforces the merits of the general idea of the FC’s involvement in the arts, and the discussion then moves to the question of how this might be reflected in an updated and more explicit corporate rationale and purpose for such involvement.
- 6.2 Some considerations relating to enabling action and delivery of this are then addressed, and finally some selected topics are identified for further research. An overall summary of recommendations is presented in section 7 which follows.

### Types of art – what works best?

- 6.3 In relation to types of art, the “what works best?” assessment would start from a question about which types seem to be the most promising or most problematic in the FC’s particular context, and why. The strategic considerations could be whether and how the scope of “relevant” and/or “preferred” types of art might be defined, and then perhaps (in relation to purposes, discussed below) whether there should be an objective either to broaden or to focus this scope.
- 6.4 Choices may arise between opportunities for process-based art, ephemera, poetry, literature, film, discourse and so on as well as sculpture and other forms which have featured more prominently to date. Most of the organisation’s experience thus far is based on a few particular domains of arts activity, and there may be great scope for exploring a range of other approaches in future. Some of the more conceptual or ephemeral forms, although generally perhaps less familiar, may in some cases have advantages in terms of the issues of health and safety, insurance, decommissioning and so on that are discussed in section 5 above. Talks, workshops and education activities are also part of the mix, and where these use creative writing, music, or materials such as leaves, they can have less physical impact and legacy of maintenance than fixed installations would do.
- 6.5 Reference has been made in section 3 above to the fact that art in a forest need not necessarily be art about the forest. There may often be a place for art or arts activities that are located on FC land simply because the opportunity arises or a facility is available. The content in such instances might be equally capable of being delivered elsewhere (for example in an art gallery), or on a theme (for example musical composition) that has no intrinsic relationship to trees, woodland, forestry, or any specific location in the landscape.
- 6.6 However, especially in a context of finding niche strengths for the FC in this field, it seems that the case is strongest when the art concerned is linked to themes or locations that are relevant to trees or woodlands, or to the particularities of sites

controlled by the FC (meaning, usually, a forest setting), or which in some other way can best (or only) be generated in the particular conditions produced by the Forestry Commission's business or by the areas which it happens to control.

- 6.7 As a further thought, there would be an opportunity for the Commission to consider itself potentially as a champion of the use of wood as a material in making works of art (as well as in sustainable design and architecture, as discussed elsewhere in this report). Views on this could be sought in future.
- 6.8 A number of questions of "balance" or "positioning along a spectrum" are discussed in section 3 above. One of these concerns the relative merits of, on one hand, initiatives involving art that may provide a popular amenity and be intellectually and emotionally "safe" (with the risk that it may be superficial, or repetitive, and create less interest); and on the other hand, initiatives involving art that may be more adventurous and challenging, pursuing deeper angles of inquiry and of understanding and new added value (with the risk that it may be shocking, gory, obscure, elitist, or produce other negative responses).
- 6.9 It can often be the least immediately understood piece which constitutes the most powerful interpretative experience and which goes on working in people's minds long after the initial encounter (Etchell, 1995 and 1996). If the work is challenging in some way, this is best supported when there is at least some coherence in the nature of the challenge, and some basis for understanding it in the context of a given location or initiative. The more successful cases allow people to be challenged to think; but do not expose them unexpectedly to being horrified or bewildered.
- 6.10 Moreover, as researcher Elizabeth Rankin has pointed out: "...works exploring contemporary artistic concerns, which might be found alienating in a 'fine art' context, seem to become objects of delighted discovery, intriguing and worth seeking out, when placed in a natural 'user-friendly' environment. The sculpture walks of Britain demonstrate that it is not necessary to demean art to democratise it" (Rankin, 1996).
- 6.11 At present, it seems that no absolute positions on this operate in the FC system. There is, for example, no attitude particularly against "high-concept"/"cutting edge" art (and the Commission has been responsible for some successful examples of it); but equally there is no particular corporate policy impetus driving it either. Some believe that this may be because FC managers do not see addressing these questions as part of their role, relying instead on a steer from audiences, artists or other arts professionals. There may be an opportunity here for empowering such managers with new skills and confidence to serve defined goals in this area more actively.
- 6.12 The question can clearly be complicated by requirements set by external funders. Internally too, many FC operations are increasingly having to meet targets for financial profitability, which will influence the choice of events and attractions to be offered (in other words potentially favouring large audience draws and the more commercial end of the spectrum). This may create tension with project aims that are based predominantly on the quality of artistic creativity, or which

explore more minority niche interests. There are also tradeoffs to be made with “social benefit” objectives.

- 6.13 As mentioned in section 3, staff generally acknowledge the merit of the intrinsic artistic values represented by operations such as those at Grizedale, Kielder, Forest of Dean, Stour Valley and Tyrebagger; although they tend to see these as exceptions to the general rule.
- 6.14 All this being said, in principle it may often be possible to take a synergistic “optimal multi-outcome” approach where an arts endeavour is undertaken in association with some other offer that satisfies the commercial imperative, so that the arts endeavour itself does not have to bear the whole burden of that imperative, but adds a different kind of value to it (and reaps its own audience at the same time).
- 6.15 More generally, there can be tensions between what the artist believes is dictated by her/his notion of artistic integrity, and the adaptations or compromises that the commissioner, manager, landowner, funder or audience might prefer to be made. This question can cut across any of the others mentioned here, and is not a feature only of “high concept” projects. (It may relate, for example, to the health and safety dimensions discussed in section 5 above).
- 6.16 At the arts workshop conducted for the present review at the FC Staff Development Network conference in October 2007, participants were invited to indicate, on the basis of a rapid instinctive feeling (and accepting that each individual case will be different), where they felt the “average” FC position should be on a spectrum characterised as being from:
- at one extreme, a Forestry Commission policy of engaging in/promoting/using art that is as simple, accessible, popular and non-challenging as possible, aiming for mass recreational appeal and large visitor numbers – paraphrased as “*easy art*”; and
  - at the other extreme, a policy of engaging in/promoting/using art that excites the art press, raises profound questions, has a “message”, and stretches the imagination in unusual ways – paraphrased as “*adventurous art*”.
- 6.17 The 22 responses were distributed fairly evenly along this spectrum, displaying a broad and even spread of preferences. Those choosing the “easy art” end spoke about reaching large numbers of people; those at the “adventurous” end about having some depth of content. Most comments, however, brought out factors that were location-specific; and the main conclusion here is that there is probably a role for art of all kinds on this spectrum, and the “correct fit” will be relate more to what is appropriate to a given set of circumstances than to some organisation-wide corporate choice.
- 6.18 Again as mentioned in section 3, the organisation overall appears to be prepared to solve the “high art”/“populist” balance question by offering examples from all points on this spectrum across the national totality of its involvements. Some sites adopt the same “spectrum” approach for the individual site’s own programme. One consultee also referred to the potential for “dynamic interplay across the spectrum of possibilities” as an additional asset in its own right.

- 6.19 It has been noted in section 4 above that art can encourage engagement with the natural world by people who have not had much contact with forest environments before; and conversely, for people who are already motivated to visit woods for whatever reason and are then in addition exposed for example to high-quality sculpture there, the woodland visit can be the vehicle for them to expand their cultural experience too.
- 6.20 In relation to the analysis above, and as a reflection on the policy discussion in other parts of this report, it can be observed that art that is simple, “low-level”, amateur or unchallenging can be effective in achieving the first of these types of outcome. Art that is more developed, professional, spiritually affecting or thought-provoking is however capable of achieving **both** types of outcome.
- 6.21 This does however prompt the observation that the desired outcomes of FC arts involvements do not appear to have been formally debated very much within the organisation, and this could be a valuable focus for some early attention in follow-up to this report. This is picked up later in the present section below, in a discussion of “purposes”.

### **Types of involvement – what works best?**

- 6.22 Turning to the issue of types of involvement; here again a wide variety of approaches exists in practice, and experience may suggest some which are more effective or are higher priorities for the FC than others. Again however it is also likely that the plurality itself is a valuable thing to retain. In terms of future strategy, there may also be additional ways of working that are not generally in place at present, but which could add value to the overall mix.
- 6.23 One aspect of this, discussed in different ways in sections 3, 4 and 5 above, concerns partnership arrangements between the Forestry Commission and others. A question which frequently arose during the present study concerned the extent to which the FC can or should take a proactive role in an arts partnership, or should instead be more reactive or passive.
- 6.24 This question was tested with the participants at the October 2007 FC Staff Development Network conference already mentioned above, by inviting them to indicate, on the basis of a rapid instinctive feeling (and accepting that each individual case will be different), where they felt the “average” FC position should be on a spectrum characterised as being from:
- at one extreme, a Forestry Commission policy of not wanting too much of a reputation or responsibility as an arts provider: the Commission would be happy to be associated with arts activity but someone else should propose it, pay for it, organise it and take the credit – paraphrased as “*reactive involvement*”; and
  - at the other extreme, a policy of being a key player in cultural affairs: setting agendas, initiating projects, commissioning work, supervising residencies, broadening the Commission’s relevance, coordinating partnerships, having ownership and control, and taking the credit – paraphrased as “*proactive involvement*”.
- 6.25 Responses to this were clustered predominantly towards the “proactive” end of the spectrum, and many commented that this reflected what was already

happening. At the same time it was noted that this may be typical of the particular constituency represented at the SDN meeting, while a sample from other parts of the Commission might show a more “reticent” profile. A representative from the minority view at the “reactive” end of the spectrum cautioned against purporting to be more expert in this subject than is warranted. It was also observed that many “proactive” contributions are made in the context of partnerships; and quite often the FC, while proactive in other respects, is not the main funder in such arrangements.

- 6.26 It might be worth considering how to optimise the value (tangible and intangible) of involvements in respect of seeking programmes which have “leverage effect” and catalyse other efforts, or which gain value or produce enrichment over time, and perhaps in due course give back more than was invested; as opposed to those which focus on producing a static object that needs maintenance and inexorably deteriorates. Of course this line of approach may be quite inappropriate in some cases; but if a question of this kind is posed, then at least a rationale can be constructed for whatever choice is made in a given instance.
- 6.27 It has been pointed out in earlier sections that an art activity may simply be a mechanism for delivering some other programme, such as education or community engagement. Sometimes this is seen as another “balance” question, in terms of whether it is the end product, or some aspect of the process, that is the most important thing. Again, however, giving good thought to the rationale in each case can maximise opportunities for making significant achievements on both sides of such an equation.
- 6.28 The same can be true for research. Some arts activities can contribute much to research, and indeed “practice-based” forms of research may be part of the rationale for the artistic endeavour itself, in some cases. Process-based science-art collaborations have been popular with certain funders in recent years. In the part of this spectrum that involves active engagement with audiences, this might include a dimension of creatively-facilitated “citizen science”, on issues such as climate change, sense of place, and so on. In ways such as this, arts involvements can potentially assist established FC research agendas, as well as the converse being true.
- 6.29 There is thus scope to find synergies between different categories of benefit within the same activity. Again, it is worth bearing in mind at design stage the possibility of achieving such multiple benefits (provided in any given case that this is appropriate, of course).

### **Presentation options**

- 6.30 Section 3 above includes a discussion of the frequent talking-points, dilemmas and trade-offs concerning the choice of an appropriate level of explanation, or interpretation, to provide to those who will experience a work of art.
- 6.31 Time has not yet allowed it to be done, but this could be another “balance” question to put to the test among staff and stakeholders, by inviting them to indicate where, instinctively, they might feel the “average” FC position should be, on a spectrum from:



- at one extreme, a Forestry Commission policy whereby every artwork in a forest has a plaque next to it that “explains” what it means, what the artist intended and what a viewer can get from it; there are signs to mark its location, and maps and leaflets with more information – paraphrased as the “*explained approach*”; and
  - at the other extreme, an approach where interpretation is low-key, minimal, or absent; where part of the purpose is mystery, intrigue, personal and subjective reactions – paraphrased as the “*discovery approach*”.
- 6.32 Comments on the advantages and disadvantages of these extremes are given in section 3 above (and the question, as pointed out there, is not as simple as a divide between “populist” and “specialist” agendas: also, on this issue too there is scope for capitalising on dynamic interplay between the different approaches). As with most of the other “balance” questions examined in this report, the appropriate approach in a given case (in the FC context) will usually be determined by factors that are particular to the forest environment, and to the particularities of the individual location. Coherence with signage and interpretation provided for other operations at the same site may also be an issue, hence adding a complexity that would probably not be faced by most dedicated “arts” venues.

### **Support and coordination**

- 6.33 It seems clear that there is scope for the existing range of arts activities undertaken by or in conjunction with the FC in different parts of the country to be integrated, or at least linked, in a more coherent, nationally strategic approach. A more cohesive appreciation of the totality should also assist in achieving greater impact from these efforts overall.
- 6.34 As noted in section 3 above however, although it is undoubtedly desirable to have a national strategic orientation and a more developed body of central policy attitudes on the subject, this will need to avoid over-bureaucratising and damaging the “bottom-up” innovation that has been happening in this area so far. Once again, it is a question of finding an appropriate balance.
- 6.35 Viewed from the centre, this question might be couched in terms of the desired balance for the organisation (and how to achieve it) between:
- on one hand, the value of having initiatives that are “grass-roots”, “bottom-up” and devolved, with space for trial and error, creativity and innovative surprise; and
  - on the other hand, the value of having a programme that is strategically coordinated, consistent and “joined-up” at national level, and is driven (and justified) by defined corporate objectives.
- (These “alternatives” are of course not necessarily mutually exclusive).
- 6.36 Viewed from the perspective of operational staff at field level, the question may be more one of what provides the best facilitating context or “enabling environment” for their activities (which includes enabling them rationally to say “no” to ideas and proposals as well as “yes”). This was explored at the October 2007 FC Staff Development Network conference already mentioned above. Participants were invited to indicate, on the basis of a rapid instinctive feeling

(and accepting that each individual case will be different), where they felt the “average” FC position should be on a spectrum characterised as being from:

- at one extreme, an approach where it is left up to individual local staff what they do, they act on their own, they have freedom, but no wider context or backup – paraphrased as the “*ad hoc model*”; and
- at the other extreme, having a “joined-up” Forestry Commission agenda for arts activity, an adopted policy, some kind of strategy, internal guidelines, and a structured support infrastructure – paraphrased as the “*structured model*”.

- 6.37 In response, the participants’ preferences tended to bunch around a central position. While the scope that undoubtedly exists for decentralised innovation, autonomy and variety was seen as a positive asset, comments were made on the appreciation of practical reasons why a “grown up” organisation needs (and benefits from) at least some structure, policy and guidance; and that, at the present stage of the evolution of the FC’s arts involvements, it is probably increasingly important to have such things.
- 6.38 These findings may represent a shift in thinking from the picture that would have been presented only a decade ago; and this would appear to offer a fertile area for development of future action steps (see the “Recommendations” section below).
- 6.39 Staff perceptions of how they may be assisted by the enabling context, and their needs in relation to capacity-building, advice, guidance, and exchange of experience have been discussed in section 5 above. Although these needs imply coordination, they may not necessarily always imply centralised or “top-down” systems, since at least in respect of capacity-building and knowledge-transfer, much can also occur in more “horizontal” ways across the organisation.

### **What should be the rationale and purpose for FC’s involvements in the arts?**

- 6.40 There is no doubt that the case is powerfully made in principle, and on several counts, for the Forestry Commission to be actively and extensively involved in the arts. The question then becomes one of deciding what are the most valuable and effective ways in which a commitment to this might be defined for the future.
- 6.41 From the brief discussions of “what works best?” above, and more generally, it could be suggested that the FC does best where it capitalises on its inherent strengths and pursues arts involvements which, *inter alia*:
- are linked to themes or locations that are relevant (or indeed central) to trees or woodlands
  - are linked to the particularities of sites controlled by the FC (meaning, usually, a forest setting)
  - unify a narrative thread or thematic resonance across a range of works or activities that have trees/woodlands as a common link
  - explore responses to the particularities of an individual place
  - need time, for example when work is process-based, or gains value/produces enrichment over a period

- feature time as a component, eg natural seasons and life-cycles, including process-based work and temporary work
- help where appropriate to champion the use of wood as a material
- are capable of appealing to large audiences
- benefit from being operated in synergy with other infrastructure (eg visitor facilities) already provided by the FC for other reasons
- benefit from being locatable in extensive outdoor land areas (either in the sense of what is needed for an individual work, or in the sense of the area being sufficient to accommodate activities or collections of works that operate with space, distance and landscape, or require buffering from surrounding areas)
- benefit from an extensive nationwide patchwork of landholdings (meaning, mainly, the ability to construct strategic programmes of activity that feature diversity but also a unified coherence)
- have “leverage effect” and catalyse other efforts
- can be developed conceptually in “free space” and then have a wide variety of possible locations or other delivery options to choose from, so as to optimise realisation of the vision
- draw on the legacy of the FC’s experience in this field (the full richness of which has been revealed by the present report)
- draw on (and in turn contribute to) the FC’s reputation and standing, including its ability to engage with international agendas
- are backed by explicit public policy mandates (and in turn inform the continuing development of relevant policy agendas)
- benefit from being conceived and/or executed in multi-partner collaborations
- address multiple dimensions and activity areas of an issue or a system (eg national policymaking, research, public relations, site management)
- benefit from being situated in an institutional context that can provide a long-term view and stability (eg as banker/landlord, but also as guardian of relevant public social and cultural interests), especially in the case of partnership arrangements
- benefit from being backed in other ways by an institutional “enabling environment”
- in some other way can best (or only) be generated in the particular conditions produced by the Forestry Commission’s business or by the areas which it controls.

6.42 Other discussions in the text above have examined the tradeoffs which arise, and the balances the FC might wish to seek, in choosing where to position its arts activities on various spectra, between poles that (for present purposes) have been loosely defined as, for example:

- “high concept” vs “populist”
- “proactive” vs “reactive”/“passive”
- “product” vs “process”
- “highly interpreted” vs “discovery”
- “structured” vs “ad hoc”.

- 6.43 These terms and ideas of “extremes” have been introduced here for discussion purposes only, and obviously in reality they are none of them mutually exclusive. The recurrent conclusion on these aspects seems to be that the best strategy is probably not to seek to select only one narrow, supposedly “optimal” attitude in relation to any of these “balance” issues, but rather to embrace examples from the whole of any given spectrum, across the national totality of the organisation’s involvements. The key determinant would thus not be some notion of an “ideal” type of involvement that is the “best fit” for the FC in a generic sense, but rather an assessment of how best to tailor what might be done in a given case to the particularities of its context; and overall perhaps to achieve a “layering” effect.
- 6.44 Such an approach would play to site-specific strengths, and accentuate the local/contextual distinctiveness of what is offered in each place. This will also be a sensible way of capitalising to best effect on the scale and variety of opportunities that the FC’s business represents, overall. (Sometimes also, of course, it will be appropriate to undertake a spectrum of different types of initiative within one site; and with good programming, a given thematically linked suite of works or activities can appeal across a range of specialist and non-specialist interests).
- 6.45 Offering something of new interest at each site will still allow consistency of the “FC brand” to be applied to aspects such as quality, awareness and support services, but will help to avoid imposing any “identikit” franchise-style homogeneity on to the content. Indeed the Commission could expressly aim to excel at facilitating and presenting “sensitive creative responses to individual places”. This could contrast very favourably with the approach adopted by some of the well established brands in other parts of the arts sector.
- 6.46 The overall approach would therefore consist of:
- a) a “spectrum”, “layered” or “horses for courses” philosophy as outlined above, which
  - b) in individual cases, as appropriate, takes account of the benefits and risks characterised in this report as being associated with the “extremes” at either end of each spectrum, and
  - c) is overlaid by attention to the generic “special FC advantages/niche strengths” list given above (or some refined version of it).
- 6.47 Section 2 of the present report above has verified that there is a sufficient basis in existing policy for the Forestry Commission to be confident in investing significantly in arts activities. The review has also shown, however, that much of this policy basis is indirect, incidental or fragmentary. Even those most acutely conscious of the benefits of devolved responsibility and local freedom of action acknowledge (see findings from SDN conference discussed in various sections above) that there appears to be an increasingly strong case now for pulling together a fully “joined-up” and explicit FC agenda for the arts.

- 6.48 It is possible to imagine:
- a more complete and cohesive appreciation of the totality of what is done in this area
  - a clear and more proactive corporate direction (vision, mission, niche and principles), adopted as policy
  - some kind of goal-setting implementation strategy (which could also provide a framework for impact evaluation)
  - a body of internal guidance on operational issues
  - some infrastructure for support and coordination.

(It is important that all of these should serve to enable, rather than to prescribe or restrict).

- 6.49 The Commission has never had an arts policy: but there would be benefits now, not only internally, but also for public relations and other external communications, in having an overt expression of corporate purposes in this area. Again, rather than imposing constraints, such a development should be viewed as an enabling mechanism. As mentioned above, there is in particular perhaps a special niche for “art about trees and forests” in the UK which could be filled by the FC.
- 6.50 At the July 2006 meeting of England district staff referred to earlier, a “rationale for why the FC is involved in art” emerged as a perceived need. In Scotland, there have been proposals in the past to adopt a more strategic approach to the arts, most recently in a scoping study completed in March 2004 (Beattie, 2004), although those proposals were not taken up. The view in Forestry Commission Scotland at the time of writing (late 2007/early 2008) is that although there are no plans for a national programme for the arts, there does appear to be a need for guidance on standards and operational issues such as artists’ contracts and obligations for long-term maintenance of artworks (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2007c).
- 6.51 Embedding more explicit mandates (legitimacy and justification) for art in FC policy and guidance would also help to bolster and improve those situations where the activities that are delivered from time to time depend more on the enthusiasms of an individual than on any institutionally supported agenda, and hence can not necessarily be relied upon to be consistently sustained.
- 6.52 Moreover, lack of a policy is said to have resulted in indecision and consequent loss of some good opportunities. One example where this is thought by some to have been the case was Andy Goldsworthy’s “Moonlit Path”, originally planned for the FC’s King’s Wood in Kent, but which ultimately, after delays, was constructed (and became a renowned work) on land owned by the Leconfield Estate at Petworth Park in West Sussex instead.
- 6.53 A policy-led strategic approach, including the “coordination” element mentioned above, would also offer benefits in relation to multiplier and leverage effects, including the ability to identify good experiences from any one place and to

capitalise on them more widely. (There may be analogies here with aspects of the way in which the Commission's "Active Woods" programme is operated in England).

- 6.54 Advocacy has been undertaken in England in recent years (by the Rural Cultural Forum and others) for the government to develop a rural cultural strategy, which would address issues such as the increasing potential role of public art in the diversification and regeneration of rural economies, in response to declines in traditional rural industries and land uses. With research such as the present review, and the FC's experience in general, the Commission should be well placed to contribute to such debates; although it would be in a stronger position to do so were its own arts agenda developed in a more overt way.
- 6.55 The conclusion from the foregoing could be that a potential policy gap has been identified, and that elements of a way forward for filling it are defined in this report.
- 6.56 If a strategic direction as described above is to be developed, one aspect to be agreed would be a consolidated and enhanced expression of corporate **purposes** for engagement in the arts. Beyond merely the generation of products or facilities, this should define what contribution the Commission wishes to make to relevant cultural and social agendas.
- 6.57 The "purposes" question has to some extent been discussed in section 3 of the present report above. Ingredients of this, if not a refined definition (and recognising that many of these items are interrelated), would appear to include (in no particular order):
- attracting numbers of people into the forest, and providing amenity attractions to occupy, focus or punctuate their visits
  - meeting public/visitor expectations in places where an existing FC arts-related reputation is already strong; and maintaining that reputation
  - revenue and employment
  - sale of art
  - making of functional products and structures
  - acting as a vehicle and tool for achieving formal and informal education outcomes
  - achieving target inclusion and diversity profiles among those who visit or take part
  - achieving awareness outcomes, and interpretation
  - contributing to public health objectives
  - enhancing appreciation of local distinctiveness
  - enhancing appreciation of the natural world
  - acting as an "instrument of consciousness" (and understanding) in relation to trees, woodlands, forests, landscapes and their environments
  - expressing and exploring the place of forests (and their products) in culture, and the meanings and values involved in cultural and societal connections between people, trees, woodlands, forest landscapes and the natural world, including the role of trees and woodlands (linked to their form, life-history and symbolism) as metaphors for a range of wider human values

- being a significant enabler of arts activity that makes a notable and enriching contribution to the creative and cultural life of the nation (in terms both of heritage values and contemporary creative expression), including interpretation of forests through the eyes of the artist, reflecting trends and contemporary influences on this, such as professional sectoralisms, the consumer society etc.
- art for its own sake
- enhancing a sense of cultural identity
- building support and empathy in general for trees, woodland and forest landscapes
- building support and empathy for the state forestry sector
- contributing to aesthetic considerations in forest design and related operations
- nurturing creative talent

6.58 A separate question, worth further research and potentially also the elaboration of guidance, concerns standards, and the definition of what would constitute “good practice” in realising any of the roles and purposes suggested in the foregoing paragraphs.

### **Some considerations relating to delivery**

- 6.59 A number of strategic questions concerning the delivery of arts activities by the FC are worth flagging in this section, in addition to the “practical management” issues discussed in section 5 above. These will be important particularly if the Commission adopts a more structured approach to art in future; but many of them are relevant even if things continue as they are now.
- 6.60 The present review is offered as a starting-point; defining the scope of the agenda, a rationale for the FC’s engagement, and some of the strategic choices of orientation which could be made. In addition, one of its aims has been to promote (both internally and externally) awareness of and support for the benefits of the FC’s arts activities, among other things to help motivate and inspire enhanced efforts in future.
- 6.61 Achieving consensus on a policy agenda, and building an enhanced support-base for it, will lead quickly to questions of how in practice to achieve whatever strategic orientation and balance of approaches is chosen. This in turn leads to questions of programming, resourcing and prioritisation, and of the institutional and management structures required to maximise effectiveness.
- 6.62 The existing allocation of responsibilities for the FC’s arts interests has been referred to in section 5 above. It will be important to establish the ownership of any enhanced agenda particularly clearly at national level, since it cuts across several sectors in the organisation (public relations, research, site management and others).
- 6.63 Issues of responsibility and accountability are linked with the need to decide on mechanisms for audit and performance evaluation. Further work may be

required on the definition of outcomes, especially in respect of ephemeral, process-based or conceptual art.

- 6.64 The present review has also aimed to create a legacy of a first national collation of information on the range of the FC's existing and past arts involvements (see summary in the Annex). Among other things, such a collation will be a valuable resource for informing and verifying all of the aspects of strategy delivery mentioned here. Whether the Commission goes forward with an enhanced agenda or not, it will in any event be desirable for initiatives to be documented in some form of database (using that term in a loose sense), and for this to be maintained and kept up to date. Mechanisms for this should be considered.
- 6.65 Making information more widely available is also desirable, and this is discussed further below. Although valuable reference libraries and bookshops exist, including notably the one being built up by the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World at Haldon Forest, outdoor art in rural settings generally tends not to be documented as extensively (in books, for example) as does work in galleries or urban locations (Rankin, 1996); and the FC could make a valuable contribution to redressing this.
- 6.66 It could be worthwhile to some extent at a strategic level to identify situations where opportunities might exist for new initiatives to be added to the existing portfolio, and which might not necessarily be identified at site or local level. The involvement of Forest Enterprise (England)'s National Development Group during 2007 in scoping out the next intended multi-site collaboration with the Society of Wildlife Artists is an example of such an approach. Other possibilities could be explored, for example to link with the "University of the Trees" programme which has been initiated by the Social Sculpture Research Unit based at Oxford Brookes University. Internal authorising processes for such possibilities might need to be made clear more widely in the organisation.
- 6.67 Other avenues to consider could include the role the Commission might wish to have as an important enabler of support for relevant emerging artistic talent and enterprise; and the ways in which the expertise of arts professionals can be used in operational areas such as landscape evaluation, forest planning and design, architectural needs, communications and public consultation; as mentioned in section 4 above. Some arts-based consultancies specialise in these areas and could be helpful: equally, they in their turn may be able to learn much from the FC's experience. In the case of buildings, the drive, as one consultee described it, to "build down to a price, not up to a quality standard" may be denying a type of input that could be very valuable. There is a link here as well to the role of the Commission in helping to promote the use of timber in architectural design and construction.
- 6.68 The present review has been undertaken predominantly from the perspective of the Forestry Commission, and it would be instructive to look further at how the FC's role in art is viewed from the outside, for example from the viewpoint of collaborating artists. It could be important to understand more about the factors that would influence an artist to choose to site work on FC land or to collaborate with the Commission in other ways.



- 6.69 A similar question applies to whatever relationships the Commission wishes to foster with organisations such as the Arts Council, local authorities and other arts funding institutions. It could be a strategic objective where appropriate to strengthen relationships in general with relevant local or national arts organisations. Those organisations focused on environmental art would be key candidates. Similar considerations would apply to universities and other academic institutions with specific research interests in environmental art, cultural values of the natural environment, and related fields.
- 6.70 The Commission's several involvements in sculpture trails (notwithstanding that not all of these were initially conceived as such!) would give it good reason to benefit from and contribute to exchange of perspectives with other operators of such trails and outdoor sculpture parks in general. In addition to interests at the corporate level, individual site managers could benefit considerably from such an interchange. There is at present no network or forum in the UK or Europe dedicated to this topic, and this may be worth further thought.
- 6.71 An opportunity may exist to seek links or synergy with arts initiatives (especially those focused on trees or woodlands) based on other natural environment land area systems, such as National Parks, World Heritage Sites, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Biosphere Reserves, Woodland Trust properties and others. Common interests could undoubtedly be discovered between the FC and the agencies and organisations responsible for these systems, in particular concerning their ability to have nationally integrated approaches to varied arts involvements across their respective networks of areas.
- 6.72 The FC could choose to play a leading role in establishing connections of this kind. In particular it would be an obvious lead agency, if there were sufficient demand, for facilitating any network or forum specifically on issues centred on art and forestry, or art and trees. For this and some of the other issues flagged above, the scope for such linkages might usefully be international rather than being confined to the UK. The Commission could therefore consider whether there would be advantage in offering a lead role at that level too.
- 6.73 In any discussion such as this it is important to characterise and specify target audiences, both for elements of any strategy that may be adopted, and indeed for the findings of the present review. Several of the "purposes" that have been suggested above will be for the benefit of the Commission itself, while others will be for wider publics. When purposes and products come to be elaborated further, distinctions among audiences and target beneficiaries will need to be made clear.
- 6.74 The marketing and promotion of what the FC offers in relation to art, and of what it has achieved, does not seem to have been addressed in any systematic way to date. Given that so many of the initiatives that occur are multi-partner collaborations, there is a question at the outset about how much brand identity and profile the Commission wishes to seek in this area.
- 6.75 Individual initiatives have of course been the subject of press promotion and of publications; but more "big picture" messages on the overall effort tend not to be presented. One interesting example (from 2007), which uses information about

two individual initiatives in a wider context, comes from the National Development Group (already referred to, above). The NDG has compiled case studies/information sheets illustrating the range of FC's activities in all fields (and more broadly, about forestry in general), in the context of the revised England Forestry Strategy. These are designed to be available in a range of formats for different audiences, to support work such as funding bids. Two of the studies in the first suite feature arts projects (the Cannock Forest "Route to Health", and Stour Valley Arts).

- 6.76 In general there would seem to be scope for enhancing communication, education and public awareness activities based on the FC's arts involvements, and for more prominently marketing the benefits which derive from the organisation's interests and credentials in this field. Wider, more proactive or even more competitive promotion of emerging opportunities may also be appropriate.
- 6.77 Another area worth considering lies with the potential for capitalising to best effect on a few individual ventures that may have wider significance, perhaps as good practice models, pilot schemes to test potentially wider application, platforms for international linkage, or "flagship" cases in other ways. Some of these could be allocated a role as champions and specialist centres of excellence in particular themes (such as, perhaps, Kielder for art and architecture, Cannock for art and health, and Haldon for art and sustainability), which could contribute leadership or support for future endeavours in these fields, both internally and externally. Such aims may also influence future directions for the "flagship" initiatives themselves.
- 6.78 Finally, it should be noted that the present review has not yet given any attention to the Forestry Commission's regulatory and grant-aiding functions, and its role in respect of what is done in privately-owned woodlands (which in England account for 75% of the woodland area). Information on arts activities which may be part of a woodland operation that is grant-aided by the FC is unlikely to be easy to access and collate; but this would be an interesting aspect to pursue further.

### **Future research questions**

- 6.79 It is a recommendation from this report that the whole subject area should continue to be researched in general terms, to follow through on the present review. It may however be useful to highlight a few issues that could be priorities for consideration in the formal research programmes of the Forestry Commission/Forest Research, universities and others. (Prioritisation within this list would be useful, both in terms of significance and urgency, but this has not been attempted here, pending further discussion).
- 6.80 One existing PhD study, underway at the time of writing (2007-2008), has already been mentioned above. This is examining in depth the history of the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust, the role it can play in rural regeneration, and an appropriate vision for its work in the future. It is expected that the eventual results of this work will provide helpful additional illumination of several of the issues discussed above; as well as forming a valuable case study to augment the database of initiatives.

- 6.81 At a “meta-level”, it could be valuable for a literature review and synthesis of information on the cultural and spiritual dimensions of trees and woods to be compiled, in a UK context.
- 6.82 There is clearly scope for further incorporating artistic viewpoints in studies on the perceptual, cultural and imaginative dimensions of the distinctiveness of particular landscapes, localities and individual woods, to help enrich policy perspectives on cultivating “sense of place”. (Note that this does not depend on places being already marked out as “special” in some way, and indeed may often be best focused deliberately on those which are not).
- 6.83 The present report has referred to some social research on issues of this kind, which is helping to enrich an understanding of the meanings and values that people place on trees, forests and woodland. This is vital if policymaking, investment and management decisions are to be informed by the full range of tangible and intangible values that are at stake. The role of art in these questions would be an important area on which to base the development of more specific lines of work in future. This would cover not only the illumination through art of these value-sets as they stand (as referred to for example in O’Brien and Claridge, 2002) but also the role of art in influencing the values and their perception.
- 6.84 As mentioned in section 4 above, while there has been research on meanings attached to woodlands and forests, better understanding of the meanings attached to individual trees has been acknowledged as an area for future research. There could be synergies to exploit here with the recent upsurge of popular interest in ancient and veteran trees in particular.
- 6.85 Concerning more operational matters, a key strand of inquiry would be to go more deeply and robustly (for example with quantitative analysis) into the question of “what works best, and why?” for Forestry Commission arts involvements. Value would lie in relating this question to the organisation’s evolving business model, at the same time as situating it in wider public culture agendas.
- 6.86 One obvious area to examine would be the direct and indirect economic impact of FC arts activities, including retail, accommodation, employment and other impacts, affecting the immediate site, the local economy, and beyond. As mentioned in section 4 above, this could also consider the relative cost-effectiveness of arts initiatives compared with other visitor amenity and community education and participation activities. Research would both support the case for arts activities and help to provide baselines for tracking trends and performance.
- 6.87 As also mentioned in section 4, the main *artistic* achievements of the FC’s involvements in the arts have never been assessed in any systematic or overarching way, and this would also be a valuable research question.
- 6.88 In relation both to the instrumental and the intrinsic benefits, good use could be made of visitor surveys and audience surveys, to shed light for example on

- numbers, demographics, preferences and attitudes. Surveys of staff could also be useful in respect of attitudes, motivations, and perceptions concerning success. There may be a need to develop new methodologies for aspects of appropriate audit and evaluation of arts initiatives in general, especially perhaps for those that feature ephemeral or process-based work.
- 6.89 Some dedicated research effort on opportunities and sources of funding for arts initiatives, and on trends in the priorities of potential funders, would undoubtedly pay dividends. A meta-level review and synthesis of information would support central advice to districts and knowledge-exchange across the organisation in general.
- 6.90 As already mentioned in this section above, the current review's overall approach could be extended to cover:
- private sector activities (in a context of FC regulation and grant aid);
  - relevant experience or analogous situations overseas; and
  - natural area networks run by other national organisations.
- 6.91 The last of these relates to the potential for synergy on arts issues (perhaps even led by the FC) among organisations responsible for national systems of natural environment land areas. There could be a role for the Commission, perhaps via an arts forum or network, and drawing on the present report, to offer some leadership and coordination in particular on the "research methods" dimension of this. It might, for example, be possible to conceive of a linked series of reviews of tree- and woodland-related arts activities based on National Parks, Woodland Trust reserves, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Natural England projects, Sustrans routes and others. Such an idea could perhaps be a basis for a joint bid to the Arts Council, a research council or other funding sources. (Note that this idea is not meant to be biased towards "special areas", since often the value of the artistic engagement is in relation to the typical, the unsung, the subtle or the problematic. The FC perhaps offers particular scope for embracing a broad mix of situations in this respect, including both that which is special in the landscape and that which is ordinary).
- 6.92 Finally, while not put forward here as a priority for future research in the scope of the present review, under the "research" heading it may be appropriate simply to note another role of art not mentioned so far, namely the use of old paintings and drawings as an archival source to help in verifying landscape and ecological history questions (such as dates and distribution of woodland cover, and of tree species occurrences).



## 7. Summary of recommendations

The following is a non-exhaustive list of some of the main recommendations and ideas for desirable actions that have emerged from the review so far. This list will continue to evolve as further work and discussions advance. No specific allocation of responsibilities for implementing these items has been suggested here; and that will also require further discussion.

### Concerning collation of information on FC arts initiatives:

- i) A database of past and present initiatives could be constructed. Some working out of issues concerning inclusion criteria, classification of activity types and category definitions (see points made on this in section 3 and the Annex) would need to be done.
- ii) A strategy for continuing to build up information on initiatives could be devised, and a process decided upon for keeping the database up to date. This could involve both new dedicated effort and systems to capture relevant details from existing FC internal reporting mechanisms.
- iii) The database should be constructed in such a way as to record initiative type, scale, ownership, duration, location, contact points, information sources and other attributes as required.
- iv) Analyses using the database and/or other original sources would be useful, for assessments according to issues such as policy drivers, social context, aims, impact, evaluation, frequencies of types of activity/types of organisation, best practice, lessons learned, etc.

### Concerning other research and assessment:

- v) All of the suggested lines of further inquiry described under “future research questions” in section 6 above should be considered for early attention, and opportunities sought to advance them, including by taking them forward into corporate research prioritisation and programming. In some cases this could include potential collaborations with artists undertaking practice-based research. The research questions will not be repeated here, but can be taken to be included *en bloc* in this list of recommendations. They are at present unprioritised; and a first step would be to decide some priorities (in terms of both significance and urgency).

### Concerning awareness and exchange of experience:

- vi) The Forestry Commission could consider devising new internal mechanisms for pooling and exchanging experience specifically on its arts involvements, and for optimising organisational learning in this area. This in turn may suggest some needs for standardising or harmonising certain types of information.

- vii) Building on the present report, the Commission could make specific efforts to develop a more complete and cohesive central appreciation of the totality of what is done in this area, as an updated basis for policy.
- viii) The Commission could further use the understanding gained from research addressing the illumination and influence provided by art on the meanings and values that people place on trees, forests and woodland in ensuring that policymaking, investment and management decisions are informed by the full range of tangible and intangible values at stake.
- ix) Information on the Forestry Commission's arts involvements could be made more widely available and be more actively promoted; both in the interests of more strongly celebrating the organisation's credentials and achievements in this area, and in the interests of helping to document rural outdoor art as fully as it deserves.
- x) Documentation/promotion could include compilation of a series of case studies; publication of (an) illustrated book(s); creation of a single entry-point or portal under a heading of "art" on the FC's family of websites (and populating its search-engines accordingly); and other methods.
- xi) Opportunities could be taken to present the FC's arts-related activities, including the findings of relevant research, at conferences and similar events, both nationally and internationally. The Commission itself could host workshops or conferences specifically to review and develop themes relating to art and forestry.
- xii) The Commission could increase its high-level liaison, outreach and advocacy with relevant non-forestry government policy sectors (such as culture, education and health), Parliamentary committees, and national bodies such as the Arts Council; both in its own corporate interests and as a contributor to the national interest on this subject.
- xiii) Advice on effective ways for artists to approach the FC with new ideas, and the scope for the FC to be an enabler of art in ways other than by simply funding it, could be communicated more widely to the arts community.
- xiv) It would be useful to explore more structured methods for exchange of perspectives among operators of sculpture trails and outdoor sculpture parks in general, both in the UK and beyond.
- xv) A new network or forum could be established, conceivably run by the FC, for exchange of perspectives and development of common agendas among all who have an interest in "art and forestry" or "art and trees". Enhanced networking activities could also be pursued at the level of specific groups such as relevant FC staff, curators, the research community, and others. There may be a need for both internal and external systems of this kind; with links between them.

### Concerning policy and strategy:

- xvi) Whilst the requisite mandates are broadly (if implicitly) in place, a potential “policy gap” has been identified concerning the coherent expression of over-arching corporate attitudes and goals for the Forestry Commission’s interests in the arts. Work to develop such an expression (and to strengthen the mandate) could be undertaken, using the present report as a starting-point.
- xvii) One specific element of updating FC policy in this way would be to adapt interpretations of policy on cultural matters so as to reflect the contribution that the FC makes/seek to make, through its arts involvements, to the contemporary cultural life of the nation (ie not only to matters of cultural heritage). More specific comments on this are made in section 2 of the present report above.
- xviii) Another element would be to crystallise a definition of some strategic purposes for the Commission’s involvements in art, starting perhaps from the suggestions on this given in section 6 of the present report above (which are derived from the analysis in section 4, of benefits to be gained).
- xix) Opportunities could also be taken to integrate and give emphasis to policy aims concerning the arts, in the course of adopting or updating other FC policy instruments; such as rolled-forward Corporate Plans; the Delivery Plan for the new Strategy for England, development of new Key Performance Indicators, and others.
- xx) The Forestry Commission could define for itself a niche (based on the fact of its custodianship of the national forest estate) as a pre-eminent national champion in particular of “art about forests, forestry and trees” in all its forms, on behalf of a wider constituency of stakeholders.
- xxi) Further concerning “niche”, and in relation to the FC’s own projects, the Commission could in particular aim to excel at facilitating and presenting “sensitive creative responses to individual places”.
- xxii) In order to implement the vision defined by the kind of policy expressions suggested above, the Commission could develop and adopt an Arts Strategy, drawing on the present report as appropriate. Such a strategy might also be used as a framework for impact evaluation. National principles, objectives and targets could be carried forward from this and elaborated as appropriate in strategies and plans at regional and district levels too.
- xxiii) The FC’s positioning on the various “spectrum” or “balancing” questions discussed in the present report could be considered further and refined, using the findings of the report in general and section 6 in particular; including the suggested three-part approach based on an overall “horses for courses” philosophy supported by methods for considering case specifics and generic niche strengths.
- xxiv) The role of the Arts Council and its relationship with the Forestry Commission would be worth further specific analysis and discussion in future, in relation to

funding but also in relation to methods of enablement more widely, and to defining agendas, objectives and benefits.

**Concerning management and operations:**

- xxv) A body of internal FC guidance for relevant staff on arts involvements could be developed, covering issues such as policy and strategy (see above), good practice, standards (both artistic and operational), information management, decision aids, agreement templates, sources of support, funding, marketing, legal matters and others.
- xxvi) The allocation of responsibilities, scope for initiative at different levels, reporting lines and other management protocols should be made as clear as possible in respect of the implementation of any strategy adopted pursuant to the recommendations made above.
- xxvii) A dedicated Forestry Commission staff position (part-time or full-time) could be created to champion arts interests in the organisation, and to deliver policy direction, impetus, oversight, coordination, information management, advice, practical internal support and external liaison/advocacy on arts involvements.
- xxviii) Methodologies could be further developed/refined for defining outcomes for arts projects, perhaps especially in respect of artworks of an ephemeral, process-based or conceptual nature, but also in respect of outreach/education work, permanent installation commissions, and other activities. Mechanisms for audit and performance evaluation of arts projects could also be reviewed.
- xxix) A systematic assessment of FC staff needs for staff capacity building, advice, guidance, and exchange of experience in relation to arts involvements could be undertaken.





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(Note: Catalogues and brochures from individual projects or exhibitions are not included).

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## Annex: General list of initiatives

- A.1 This Annex provides a rough list of FC-related arts initiatives, collated from different sources. Some but not all of these initiatives have been the subject of field visits or have otherwise been informally reviewed in the course of the present project.
- A.2 Questions of verification, hearsay and speculation have not been systematically addressed at this stage, since the initial priority has been to invite and collate information of all kinds, to build as complete an initial resource of material as possible. This is one reason why only an informal summary list is offered for circulation at this stage. These aspects will be examined in the course of further work (including decisions in principle concerning the handling of restricted or confidential information); but for now, this is an important caveat on the information in the table below.
- A.3 This part of the project is open-ended and on-going at the time of writing, with material continuing to be added to files opportunistically. Some additional initiatives not listed below have been mentioned anecdotally by consultees, but documentary information on them has not yet been secured. Information to fill gaps, add new items and correct any particulars would be welcomed by the author.
- A.4 The raw information on which this list is based has so far been gathered from site visits, interviews, correspondence, literature reviews and web-searches. This information is held separately; and although synthesised and organised to a degree, it remains, in the main, a compilation of extracts from original sources. A strategy for continuing to build up the material, for organising it systematically and summarising it in other ways, will continue to be developed in parallel with this report during 2008, as a complementary part of the overall “Artistic Licence” project. Responses to the present overview report, and further elaboration of the FC’s potential analysis and data management needs, will be carefully considered before any fixed structure is devised for the dataset.
- A.5 In the meantime, the table below simply presents an unofficial list of initiative titles and types, grouped by geographical area. It includes both current and decommissioned examples. All names and descriptions are the author’s own unofficial shorthand, devised for the sole purpose of the present review.
- A.6 The terminology for types of initiative, in particular, consists simply of paraphrased summaries of the main elements of each initiative, and is not a set of official descriptors. No particularly systematic classification has been devised within the scope of the project so far as the basis for these (see comments under “The approach taken to this survey” in Section 3 of this report above). Reliance has been placed on descriptions offered by consultees, in the literature (including in marketing materials) and from web sources. The term “sculpture” has been used in a broad way to include a variety of more or less fixed works including

benches etc, and including some ephemeral works. What counts as “education” or “outreach” has not been specifically defined.

- A.7 Possibilities for devising a more standard format of information fields for documenting individual initiatives will be examined in subsequent stages of the “Artistic Licence” project. Definitions for the respective categories could be established, and future versions of summary lists could be constructed as tables showing initiative type, scale, ownership, duration, location, or other attributes as required.
- A.8 For similar reasons, no attempt has been made at this stage to devise criteria for deciding which initiatives or activities merit inclusion in an overall Forestry Commission inventory of arts involvements.
- A.9 As mentioned in section 3 above, the review project has deliberately avoided becoming mired in potentially sterile and unhelpful debates about defining what does or does not constitute “art”. At this stage, the approach taken has been to err on the side of inclusion, with a view to uncovering the maximum amount of potentially relevant information. A similarly inclusive approach has been taken to commonsense judgements about whether or not an initiative can be regarded as associated to a meaningful degree with the FC. The data can always be filtered more strictly later if necessary on both of these counts, and corrections/updates are invited.
- A.10 Some consultees sought guidance on the extent to which “off-site” activities were within the scope of the review, and in response it was confirmed that, as well as art on FC land, the scope of the project in principle includes (but is not limited to):
- direct FC involvement in community outreach activities for example in schools, which might relate to specific locations in FC forests (or might not), but where the actual arts activity takes place elsewhere;
  - arts projects on the FC estate but where the FC's involvement extends for example to a resulting photographic exhibition elsewhere;
  - any kind of creative partnership (advice, facilitation etc) in the use of wood from the estate as a material in artwork that could be undertaken in the forest or elsewhere;
- and even:
- literature, music and other cultural expressions of matters which have lodged significantly in cultural consciousness about forests managed by FC, where the manifestation of this occurs elsewhere and may not necessarily have any direct FC engagement (the Commission would have been “involved” in this sense by being in some way implicated as a causative agent of art work rather than a participant in its execution).
- A.11 Future work towards a database, as well as dealing with the definition issues mentioned above, would need also to address these inclusion criteria questions.
- A.12 The degree of subdivision of locations/initiative names in the table below varies in line with that in the source material, and hence the number of entries shown for a given district/area should not be read as an indication of the quantity or significance of arts activity in that area.



<b>Summary list of initiatives logged to date</b>		
<b>FC District*</b>	<b>Initiative name/location</b>	<b>Activity types</b>
<b>ENGLAND</b>		
Kielder	Kielder Water and Forest Park Art & Architecture programme	Sculpture; visual art; architecture; installations; residencies; festival; exhibitions; outreach.
	Chopwell Wood	Sculpture; health walks on sculpture trail; festival; crafts; education.
	Great North Forest "Views of Views" project	Writing; folklore; film animation.
North West England	Grizedale Forest Park arts programme	Land art; sculpture; visual art; installations; interventions; performance; crafts; education and outreach.
	"Wild Ennerdale" Partnership	Education and outreach.
	Red Rose and Mersey Community Forests	Sculpture; photography; exhibitions; education and outreach.
	North West District photo competition	Photo competition.
North York Moors		
Sherwood and Lincolnshire		
West Midlands	Cannock Forest "Route to Health"	Sculpture; health walks on sculpture trail; outreach.
	Wyre Forest	Children's activities; workshops.
Northamptonshire	Fermynwoods	Gallery; sculpture; installations; residencies; education; outreach.
	Bourne Woods (Lincs)	Sculpture.
	Fineshade Woods	Crafts.
	"Art Truck for Truckers" project	Sculpture; poetry.
East Anglia	High Lodge, Thetford Forest	Sculpture.
South East England	Stour Valley Arts, King's Wood	Land art; sculpture; installations; performance/events; residencies; exhibitions; publications; workshops; outreach; education.
	Bedgebury Pinetum	Children's activities; poetry residency.
	Chiltern Sculpture Trust, Cowleaze Wood	Sculpture; education.
	Alice Holt Forest	Local painting group; children's activities; workshops including drawing, drama and music.
	Seven Sisters Country Park	Residency.
Forest of Dean	Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust	Sculpture; exhibitions; residencies; outreach; education; performance/events.
	"Art Attack"	Arts & crafts festival
	Leigh Woods, Bristol	Sculpture.
	Forest of Avon Community Forest "Marking the Ways" project	Sculpture, photography, storytelling, performance etc.

	Westonbirt Arboretum	Sculpture; education; crafts; events; music; workshops; family activities.
	Bishop's Wood Centre	Education; exhibition.
	Newton Coppice	Outreach.
New Forest	New Forest (general)	Residencies; sculpture; exhibitions; storytelling; events; outreach.
	"Drawn to the Forest" project	Painting/drawing; sculpture; printmaking; exhibitions; workshops; outreach.
	Moors Valley Country Park	Local arts group exhibitions.
Peninsula	Centre for Contemporary Art & the Natural World, Haldon Forest	Exhibitions; residencies; performance; workshops; education; outreach; research.
	Haldon Forest (non-CCANW)	Events; performance; family activities.
	Wistlandpound	Creativity in interpretation.
	Neroche project	Outreach; folklore; community consultation, expression and planning using artist in team; installation; workshops.
	West Devon area	Education; outreach.
Multi-District	National Forest	Sculpture.
	"Forest Tour" concert programme	Music events.
	Lowland heathland art project (proposal)	Residencies; exhibitions; outreach; workshops.
	Forest Education Initiative/Forest School	Education.
<b>WALES*</b>		
Blaenau Gwent	Parc Nant y Waun	Artistic gateways; outreach.
	Green Walk	Decorated fence panels; outreach.
	Cwm Celyn Community Woodland	Photography; digital work.
	Beaufort Hill Community Woodland	Residency; outreach; artistic gateways.
	Duffryn Woodland Pathway	Residencies; outreach; poetry; sculpture.
	Hilltop Community Woodland	Residencies; outreach; gateways and benches.
Bridgend	Upper Garw	Outreach; sculpture.
	Ecodysgu	Outreach; sculpture.
Caerphilly	Wern Woodland Park	Residency; sculpture.
	Bargoed Woodland Park	Residencies; gateways; outreach; poetry; photography.
	Coed Craig Ruperra	Residency; outreach; installation.
	Coed Gwernau	Residency; outreach; gateway.
	Parc Cwm Darran	Outreach; video.
	Upper Sirhowy Valley Community Woodland	Residency; outreach; gateways.
	Penybryn Community Woodland	Outreach; markers.
	Penmaen Centenary Woodland Project	Residency; outreach; gateway.
Cardiff	Fforest Fawr	TV film location.
Carmarthenshire	Plant Natur	Woodcarving; sculpture; music.

	PLTRA	Sculpture.
	SEASIDE	Sculpture.
	Gwendreath Environmental Education	Totem pole.
Ceredigion	Llandre	Woodcarving; sculpture.
	Graybeards Wood/Myndiad Agored	Music; sculpture; crafts; drama.
	Coed Tyllwyd	Sculpture; design; green woodworking.
Conwy	Caerdroia - Llanrwst	Sculpture; theatre.
	Chester Avenue – Kinmel Bay	Sculpture.
	Fairy Glen – Colwyn Bay	Sculpture.
Denbighshire	Glan Morfa - Rhyl	Sculpture; outreach; interpretation.
	Bruton Park - Rhyl	Outreach; sculpture.
	Woodland Edge - Llangollen	Outreach; installation.
Flintshire		
Gwynedd	Cam Nesaf - Bangor	Sculpture.
	Coed Abermaw - Barmouth	Residency; outreach; sculpture.
	Lon Cob Bach - Pwllheli	Residency; outreach; sculpture.
	Parc y Mileniwm - Penrhyndeudraeth	Sculpture.
	Ynysymaengwyn - Tywyn	Interpretation as artistic features.
	Rhayader Dolgoch - Bryncrug	Interpretation as artistic features; outreach.
Merthyr Tydfil	Webber's Pond	Sculpture.
	Pontygwaith Nature Reserve	Sculpture.
	Coedwig Sibrwd	Outreach; gateway.
Monmouthshire		
Neath Port Talbot	Afan Forest Park	Theatre.
Newport		
Pembrokeshire	Coed Temple Druid	Sculpture; music; drama.
	Clegyr Boia	Land art; dance; music.
	Mount Wood	Carved interpretation panels
	Clynfyw	Outdoor art gallery.
Powys		
Rhondda Cynon Taff	Coed Cwm Lai	Outreach; gateway.
	Cwmaman	Outreach; sculpture.
Swansea	Underhill Park	Residency; outreach; sculpture.
	Coed Ceirw	Outreach; gateway.
	Coed Clase	Outreach; gateway; sculpture.
	Coed Knelston	Sculpture.
	Mumbles Woodland Project	Video.
Torfaen		
Vale of Glamorgan		
Wrexham		
Ynys Mon/Anglesey	Coed Bach Pencraig - Llangefni	Residency; outreach; sculpture.
	Cae Mwd - Valley	Sculpted benches.
	The Dingle - Llangefni	Residency; outreach; sculpture.
Multi-County	Coed Lleol project	Outreach; festival; art, craft and music demonstrations.
	World Book Day events	Children's activities; storytelling; education.
	External events (agricultural show, Eisteddfod)	Children's events; storytelling.

	Forest Education Initiative/Forest School	Education
<b>SCOTLAND</b>		
Dornoch	Camore Wood	Performance.
Inverness	Abriachan Forest	Education; workshops; installations.
Moray	Roseisle rock concert, Burghead	Music event.
Aberdeenshire	Sculpture at Tyrebagger	Sculpture; education.
	“Homecoming Scotland 2009” project	Residency.
	Story Trail Community Project, Clune Wood, Banchory	Storytelling; children’s activities; drawing.
Fort Augustus	Gaelic Alphabet Trail, Aros, Skye	Installation; education.
Lochaber		
Tay	“Perthshire Big Tree Country” initiative	Sculpture; events; arts in interpretation.
Lorne		
Cowal and Trossachs	Cowal/Dunoon destination promotion project	Education.
	Women’s Timber Corps memorial	Sculpture.
West Argyll	Argyll Forest Park	Sculpture.
	“Half Life” project	Performance, construction, landscape art, sound installations, book, walks.
Scottish Lowlands	“Tree in the Park”, Glasgow	Event; music; crafts.
	Musical Tree Tour, Lanarkshire	Music; education.
	Glasgow and Central Scotland	Storytelling; children’s events.
Scottish Borders	Woodschool	Education; design; crafts.
	Thornilee Forest	Sculpture.
	Glentress Forest	Sculpted markers.
	Tweed Valley Forest Festival	Crafts.
Ae	“Youth Eye” project	Outreach; installations.
	Cairnhead Forest	Sculpture; outreach.
Galloway	Seven Stanes project, Galloway Forest Park	Sculpture.
Multi-District	“Aig an Oir” Atlantic Oakwoods project	Residencies; painting/drawing; sculpture; printmaking; exhibitions; outreach; workshops.
	“Touchwood” Festival, for Highland Year of Culture 2007	Events.
	Treefest Scotland	Festival events; crafts; music; family activities.
	Forest Education Initiative/Forest School	Education.
	“Celebrating Trees – exploring trees through creative activities” project	Workshops; training.
	Collaborations with Highland Birchwoods	Education.
	Various locations.	TV and film locations.

\* In Wales, the information supplied by FC sources is organised according to administrative counties. The boundaries of the FC’s four Welsh Districts (Coed y Gororau, Coed y Mynydd, LLanymddyfri and Coed y Cymoedd) are not coterminous with

county boundaries, and at present it is not possible to display this list according to FC Districts. The possibility of undertaking a conversion at a later date is being investigated, and whether in future it is most useful to present such lists according to regions, conservancies, districts, counties or by some other method will also be discussed further.

Most Wales entries relate to activities forming part of the Cydcoed programme; involving funding for community-related activities in the Objective 1 areas of Wales.

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