



## *Position Statement: The contribution of wood production to UK woods and forests*

- ◆ Background
- ◆ The Woodland Trust's view.

### **Background**

Woodland provides a variety of benefits valued at a local or national level. Most woods provide a number of benefits, but many will have a specific benefit for which they are valued: as habitat for wildlife, places for recreation or sources of sustainable timber production. Some benefits will be specific to a location. For instance, ancient woodland cannot be translocated or re-created and woods for people must be near where people live. Other benefits, such as carbon storage or timber production, may be less dependent on location.

Timber production has dominated policy on support for woodland management in the post war decades. However in recent years government support has broadened towards the many non-timber and non-market benefits which woods can provide.

The current severe problems of the timber market have highlighted the dependence of some woodland owners on the financial returns provided by timber, either as a primary driver for operations or as a way of contributing towards the costs of fulfilling other objectives of management, such as biodiversity and recreation. The contribution that timber revenues make towards the fulfilment of other objectives may be more significant than previously recognised. However for many owners timber production is not the main objective for owning their wood and this is demonstrated by the fact that the market for woodland remains buoyant.

The trends in the global timber market make it unlikely that returns from wood production in the UK will improve in the medium term and it appears that imports will continue to challenge the competitiveness of most home-produced wood, both in terms of price and in many instances quality.<sup>1</sup>

If woods are not seen as a valued asset by woodland owners seeking a financial return there is an increasing likelihood that the contributions they make to society will diminish, either as a result of reduced physical protection or through a lack of appropriate management.

### **The Woodland Trust View**

1. Woods are a long term natural and renewable resource. Man made woods should always be created and managed in keeping with their natural environment.

2. The value of individual woods should serve both the needs and objectives of the owner and of society as a whole. A healthy and expanding national woodland resource will result when and aspirations of both their owners and of wider society are met.
3. This means that the production of wood for industry should be pursued only in the context of its wider social impact, and not as a single object of management.
4. Public benefit should be the main driver for public subsidy. Woodland owners should receive financial recognition for the costs of delivering public benefits to society over and above the private benefits they enjoy such as income from timber sales.
5. We urge that forestry as an industry recognises and takes full advantage of the trend to reward the supply of wider benefits, by demanding financial recognition of these benefits.
6. Where wood production is chosen as an objective the Trust believes the following characteristics give wood a valuable advantage and should always be highlighted.
  - Wood is a sustainable resource and its use should be encouraged. In particular wood could substitute for many products used in house building and construction. Given the expansion of the UK housing stock this is particularly important.
  - The use of wood produced in the UK reduces the negative environmental impacts of long distance transport of a bulky material. UK Government procurement policy should recognise the wider environmental costs of imported wood. Wood production and marketing should be linked to credible certification. Wood production should reflect regional and local demands, since it is this that ensures that many of the unique, locationally dependent benefits are provided.
  - Local wood production has a role in reconnecting people with their woodland environment and can be a valuable contribution to regional and local economies.
  - Projects which increase public awareness and understanding of the importance of wood should be encouraged. Educational initiatives such as Forest Education Initiative may have an important role.

---

## References

<sup>1</sup> WWF International Howard and Stead, March 2001, "*The Forest Industry in the 21st Century*"