

## **The Value of Forestry for People, Review: Executive Summary**

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### **Executive Summary**

In this research CADISPA/CAG were asked to review the role and value of social forestry in Scotland and suggest areas for further work. Valuing social forestry is a task that has been addressed by a number of Research Centres over the recent past. This research reviewed a range of the methodologies they proposed, and, would suggest there is no single methodology that, without adaptation, could be adopted by the Forestry for People initiative that would enable social value to be accurately, and acceptably measured.

This research has therefore been unable to identify evidence of the social value of Scotland's forests partly for the reason stated above but also because the data, on which an analysis could be made, simply does not exist. We have suggested that this data be gathered over a period of perhaps one or two years once an acceptable and comprehensive method of gathering that information has been agreed.

We have used a number of examples to unpack the potentiality of social forestry. Many of these come from the international sector and there is a need to translate these, on reading, into a Western and Scottish context. However, they do provide concrete and costed illustrations of social forestry making a substantial contribution not only to the economic regeneration of a particular place but, perhaps as or more importantly, a contribution to the social capital, recreation, health, learning and asset base of a local community.

This report reviews the social objectives that the Scottish Executive will use to assess the Forestry Commissions potential contribution to the 2005 – 2008 Spending Review. It identifies both vertical and cross-cutting objectives and suggests that this is the framework that the Forestry for People and the Forestry Commission in Scotland should use as a guide to the future. This report places heavy emphasis on the realignment of Forestry activity to meet social objectives. One of the critical issues that has emerged from within the review is the imbalance between timber and non-timber contributions to a forests output. We suggest that this is a Discourse imbalance: one where perceptions inside the

Forestry Commission might need an adjustment in order that the strength of a forest's non-timber contribution could be seen as the prime contributor to output, in both economic and social senses, rather than an occupational by-product.

In the Policy Review section of the report, a broad analysis has extracted information from a Scottish, UK and EU context and places social forestry in Scotland inside a cascading framework. The justification for this was simply to emphasize the need for the Forestry for People initiative to place its own work inside that of Scotland generally, the UK and then the European Union. We have included a section that reviews the tension between classical and ecological economics in the belief that social forestry must contribute to that debate and be able to justify its existence within either.

It is suggested inside the report that the Forestry for People movement should understand better and make a more substantial contribution to the environmental/sustainability, health, quality of life, regeneration and equality debate. Although much has been done to address these areas by the Forestry Commission, it would seem to us that huge potential exists (as yet untapped) for the Forestry Commission to lead, rather than contribute to, this debate.

Lastly, the report suggests that the Forestry Commission, through its Forestry for People initiative (and others), should be leading the Social Change agenda. It holds significant potential to steer the emerging Discourse. This, we suggest, will take an element of re-focusing within the Forestry Commission. A substantial exercise that might involve staff within the agency grasping more adequately the change that is already upon them. If Willis (2003) is correct and the contribution of the UK forests to the national economy is over £100 billion when calculated on a social and shadow value basis, it is these elements that should drive the future. The linking and repeating theme throughout the entirety of this report is that the future of forestry in both Scotland and the UK is social not arboreal.

From the evidence reviewed we would suggest that the balance between timber and non-timber outputs be addressed. A balance, in popular interpretation assumed to be an even match, is never really that. We would suggest that the balance between timber extraction from a forest and the use of the forests as a vehicle for social benefit be addressed. This report re-emphasizes the need for the Scottish forest timber stock to be maintained and improved. However, only as part of a strategy that grasps as its primary focus, the recognition that the massively significant benefits to be derived from forestry, are essentially social and environmental.

This report concludes with the need for the Discourse of social forestry to be given a different, more significant weighting within forest policy debate in Scotland.