

**Debating the Public Benefits of Community Woodlands on  
Degraded Land: Claims, Aspirations, and Experiences at  
Reclamation Sites in the Northwest of England**

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*To Elizabeth for all you have done and all that you did not*

*“Some men go through a forest and see no firewood”*

*- English proverb*

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Debating the public benefits of community woodlands on degraded land:  
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England

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**Abstract**

British forestry policy has made a rapid adjustment in recent years, away from an emphasis on intensive production of non-native softwoods towards 'sustainable' forestry aimed at delivering a wide range of 'public goods'. A particular focus for this policy shift has been England's twelve community forests, most of which are in densely populated areas where, it is hoped, public benefits can most readily be secured. Urbanised areas of North West England contain a substantial legacy of degraded land, for which forestry has been suggested to be a multi-benefit and cost-effective after-use. UK forestry policy is being realigned in relation to (largely untested) claims about the delivery of public benefits. The research addresses the notion that claims made by the Forestry Commission, raise the hopes and expectations of local stakeholders, and may be exaggerated (or under-estimated) and that benefits may be differently construed by expert communities. The Mersey and Red Rose community forests were selected as case study areas due to the concentration of industrial dereliction and range of sites where forest restorations are underway.

The research focuses on aspirations regarding claims for social, economic and environmental benefits for the North West. Empirical data consisted of interviews with Forestry Commission practitioners and their key partners, combined with a desk-study of published forestry policy material and FC programmes and strategies. By adapting a model for the rhetorical analysis of arguments, the research sought to systematically analyse the nature of both

the published, and the experienced, aspirations for realising benefits in the North West.

The findings of the research show that there are both implicit and explicit aspirations for public benefits and that different types of claims rhetoric can exist within an environmental organisation. Suggestions are made regarding future application of the approach, such as for exploring the validity of claims rather than just their nature.



## **Authors Declaration**

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University

Signed..... Date.....

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

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### Debating the public benefits of community woodlands on degraded land: claims, aspirations, and experiences at reclamation sites in the North-West of England

British forestry policy has made a rapid adjustment in recent years away from an emphasis on intensive production of non-native softwoods towards 'sustainable' forestry aimed at delivering a wide range of 'public goods'. These goods are principally related to environment, recreation and access, rural development and economic/social regeneration (Agyeman 1996, Forestry Commission 1998<sup>b</sup>, Hislop 2001). A particular focus for this policy shift has been England's twelve 'community forests', which started in 1989 as a Forestry Commission (FC) / Countryside Agency collaboration. The majority of these are in densely populated areas where, it is hoped, public benefits can most readily be secured.

In many of the urbanised areas of the North West there is a substantial legacy of degraded land for which forestry has been shown as a cost-effective after-use (Perry and Handley 2000). Many claims have been made for the benefits i.e. the public goods attainable from 'accessible' woodlands established on degraded land, yet many of these benefits are intractable to measure due to their non-market nature and critical evaluation into their nature at the local level is only just emerging as sites begin to mature.

Acceptance of community styles of forestry in the U.K illustrates commitment to sustainable forest management evolved from post- Rio and Helsinki interpretations of sustainable development (Forestry Commission 1998<sup>a</sup>, 2001). These attributes reflect the model of the post-industrial forest, which it is said to be a feature of post-productivist 'countryside' of

consumption and emblematic of the modern British forestry paradigm (Mather, 1991, 2001).

This research explores the aspirations -the intellectual desire or aim for delivery- of professional practitioners and key policy documents regarding the realisation of public benefits within a setting of industrial land reclamation in a community forest. It has focused on systematically describing the rhetorical nature of the claims for benefits within these two dimensions as a way of exploring their wider meaning. The process of environmental claims-making has been identified as a means of legitimating policy shifts (Hannigan, 1995; Morris and Wragg, 2002).

Currently, UK forestry policy is being realigned in relation to (largely untested) claims about the delivery of public benefits. In the Northwest Community Forestry is being actively developed on brownfield sites which are typified by poor ground conditions resulting from former industrial use. Such degraded sites have traditionally been desirable for ‘hard’ end-uses (e.g. housing, industry), but ‘soft’ end-uses can also deliver public benefits at far lower cost, especially in urban fringe settings accessible to socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods Successful tree growth requires substantial technical expertise which the FC has in abundance (Perry and Handley, 2000; Kerr and Williams 1999).

This research proposes that the Forestry Commission, as the key agency in the delivery of public benefits through woodland, facilitates the construction and promotion of claims for public benefits. By exploring the aspirations for benefit delivery from the experiences of those on the ground there maybe scope to discover wider aspirations for these benefits than when compared with the published versions. The Mersey and Red Rose Community forests were selected as case study areas by virtue of their concentration of industrial dereliction and range of sites where forest restoration had recently been

completed or, is underway. The research enquiry has not been exclusive to community forest personnel or Forestry Commission practitioners but also includes other members of the FC's partnership fraternity.

This research proposal addresses the notion that an organisation makes 'claims' to the public, business and political arenas about the anticipated benefits (perhaps implicit) of a particular initiative. In this instance, the initiative is tree-planting in the landscape of the Mersey and Greater Manchester, and the claimed benefits relate to the effects of increased woodland cover in the landscape. The theoretical approach of the research comes from environmental-sociological origins- about the nature of environmental issues, and in particular from claims theory.

Claims-theory essentially explores the way in which social, and, more recently, environmental problems are brought to the attention of wider audiences by interest groups to gain awareness, canvass support, and hopefully secure measures leading to the mitigation of the initial problem. The party raising the issue is referred to as the 'claims maker', and their 'claim' is the vehicle or argument through which they raise the profile of the 'problem'. Thus in essence:

*“Claims-makers hope to persuade. Typically they want to convince others that X is a problem, that Y offers a solution to that problem, or that a policy of Z should be adopted to bring that solution to bear ... Claims making then is a rhetorical activity” (Best 1987:102).*

A social constructionist approach to studying 'problems' is not to focus on the 'problem' itself- which in this context is large expanses of dereliction in the Northwest of England compounded by low tree cover - but to analyse the rhetorical nature of the claims made to construct the problem/solution (Best 1987, 1989; Hannigan 1995). The research aims to utilise this framework by examining the claims-maker, principally by focusing on their claims for

social, economic and environmental benefits for community forestry in the Northwest. It also explores the rhetorical nature of the aspirations for these benefits may offer an alternative insight into the institutional discourse around community forestry.

Previous use of the claims-making approach is limited. One key proponent of the approach is Joel Best who used the theory to explore the construction of social problems. Best raises several questions when analysing the content of a claim, which this research adopts to the environmental context one of which is, to query the rhetoric of claims - how is an argument constructed to convince the audience(s) (see Best 1987; 1989).

Best separates rhetorical statements into, 'grounds', 'warrants' and 'conclusions', an approach adapted from Toulmin's work on *The Uses of Argument* (1958) to analyse the rhetoric of social problems (Best 1987). In this research the model is used to examine the rhetorical nature of the Forestry Commission's claims for public benefit woodlands. Such woodlands are promoted as a 'soft' end-use for the restoration of derelict land, with desirable implications for social, economic and environmental conditions associated with areas containing severe dereliction.

'The claims' currently under investigation in this analysis are being from two distinct sources: First, the UK and English forest policy literature (e.g. The UK Forestry Standard, The England Forestry Strategy, U.K indicators of Sustainable Forestry; and Forestry Commission project material) and second, from interviews conducted with professionals working in the delivery of community Forestry in the North West of England. Through these complementary sources, the first research question explores claims made for the benefits of restoring degraded land with woodland. The interviews serve to explore the second and third research questions in conjunction with documentary evidence gleaned during that element of the methodology.

The objectives for this research are:

- o To ascertain what claims are made by professional (lead) agencies as to the public benefits of restoring degraded land with community woodland;
- o To adapt Best's model of Grounds, Warrants and Conclusions to explore the rhetorical nature of policy material regarding aspirations with respect to claims for woodland restorations.
- o To develop Best's model to demonstrate the rhetorical nature of claims for public benefits within the discourse of FC practitioners involved in woodland restorations; and offer a wider understanding of the importance of social and political priorities to land management agencies.

The interviews function to ink the theory of claims-making to processes on the ground, securing funding and justifying work. Perhaps more importantly, evidence has emerged to show that application of claims analysis (grounds, warrants and conclusions) is an effective way to explore these issues with organisations. When done on a personal level this framework allowed the respondents to convey their own experiences and opinions behind claims and potential benefits as well as expressing a range of reservations. The 'rhetoric in practice', which developed from this exercise, demonstrates an innovative approach to claims theory, particularly as it develops on the analysis of the policy version of rhetoric- the 'published rhetoric'.

Chapter 2: Sites the distinctiveness of contemporary forestry priorities, operations and policy in the UK and England in terms of paradigm 'shifts' from the early twentieth century until present. The role of the Forestry

Commission, the organisation at the focus of this research, is introduced within this context.

The community forests concept, which epitomises present expectations for sustainable forestry, is introduced with particular emphasis on their significance to the North west of England. The claimed ‘benefits’ of this form of forestry are outlined and considered as the basis for rhetorical analysis.

Chapter 3: Introduces the ‘claims-making’ approach, which forms the theoretical underpinning of the analysis. The approach is positioned within a social constructionist perspective and its origins in the analysis of social problems claims are recognised. Claims-making is a tool for the rhetorical analysis of social problems that has had limited application in the analysis of environmental problems; however the key components of the theory are explained and references to their application to the study of environmental problems are acknowledged. The particular relevance of ‘the rhetorical nature of claims’ as part of the theory is explained in more detail, with particular emphasis on the work of American sociologist, Joel Best; and is inimitably adopted for the analysis within this research.

Chapter 4: The research methodology. The methods are discussed in terms of their suitability to the research, regarding the information required for analysis in relation to claims-making, and engaging with the research questions. Constraints and advantage of certain methods are commented on in relation to experiences in the field and the nature of the information they helped to obtain.

Chapter 5: Reports on the findings of the initial content analysis used to explore the interview transcripts of Forestry Commission practitioners and their professional partners. The interviewees are all

involved in the reclamation of derelict, underused and neglected land in the North West for community woodland. The discussion provides an initial overview of the main themes in the interviews and suggests linkages between them. The overall impression generated from this process is used to substantiate the viability of an approach that firstly, compares aspirations of those on the ground separately from their published agenda. And second, that focuses on the implicit nature of why claims are made by certain organisations.

Chapter 6: Argues that with adaptation to the sub-categories of Best's 'grounds', 'warrants' and 'conclusions', the rhetorical nature of the Forestry Commission's published policy and project material can be deconstructed; this is referred to as the 'published rhetoric'. Its subcomponents have strong associations with the principles of sustainable forest management and in delivering forestry for a wider social interest in the North West.

Chapter 7: Returns to the interview transcripts of FC practitioners in particular, this time from the perspective of claims-making. As with the previous chapter Best's model of 'grounds', 'warrants' and 'conclusions' is used as an analytical framework with adaptation to the sub-categories to best reflect the rhetorical nature of the data. Once is achieved, the data revealed striking similarities with the findings of Chapter 6; one aspect, namely 'institutional survival' is unique the 'rhetoric in practice' and substantiates the innovative value of this analytical approach.

Chapter 8: Draws the findings of the content and rhetorical analysis' then argues a case for the appropriateness of the rhetorical analysis approach n the context of this research. Following this are three observations regarding development of the theory according to the outcomes of its application in this research context. Final comments refer to the potential for future applications of the 'grounds', 'warrants' and 'conclusions' model.

## **Chapter 2: Background to the Forestry Commission**

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### **Introduction**

Throughout the history of the British cultural landscape trees and woodland have been considered a valued natural resource. The tradition of exploiting planted and existing trees inevitably evolved into an early commercial practice which still exists today expressed as the term ‘forestry’ (See Allaby 1998 and Rackham 1990). Definitions for forestry, however, are varied (Price 2001). Unless otherwise stated, forestry in the context of this research refers to the general practice of growing and managing trees for the production of various benefits and wood products. Definitions of forestry imply a mostly economic activity concerned with the production of timber as a crop. Due to the changing nature of the demands placed on forests and the responses from the forestry agencies, more recent definitions include non-market, i.e. social and environmental, benefits.

The purpose of this chapter is two fold. First, it will contextualise the nature of contemporary forestry by outlining its characteristics and the way in which it has developed and remained important. Second it will describe the Forestry Commission (FC), the government department responsible for woodland and forestry matters in England and the rest of Great Britain. This section summarises the FC’s role throughout recent history and its present status and responsibilities.

### **Productivism to Post-Productivism**

The practice of forestry is not static and neither are the discourses that underpin it.

In the last two decades as a result of economics, patterns of social change, regional awareness and global politics and planning, forestry and other primary rural land uses have undergone a shift in their role and focus. This change has been described in the literature as a paradigm shift, reflecting the profundity of re-assessment of purposes and practices. Researchers have alleged that traditional activities in the countryside (e.g. agriculture and forestry) have undergone change from Productivism to a Post-Productivism (see Lowe *et al* 1993; Wilson and Wilson 1997). What follows is not a discussion of the implications that this has had for environmental research, nor of the mechanisms that drove the shift. Instead it is an explanation of the significance of the shift for forestry in England. By highlighting the main distinction between the productivist and the post-productivist ethos and the traits of each, the origins of this research topic will be better understood and the relevance of modern forestry development more apparent.

### *Productivism*

Productivism as a way of operating is typical of post-1945 rural policy which had food and resource production as a paramount objective<sup>1</sup>. Productivism has been defined by Lowe *et al* (1997:221) in the context of agriculture as:

‘... a commitment to an intensive, industrially driven and expansionist agriculture with state support based primarily on output and increased productivity’

The intensive and industrial nature of productivism within agriculture has been explored structurally and empirically by Ilbery and Bowler (1998 and 1999). Together they describe three key elements that typify productivism in this context. *Intensification*, where purchase and application of farm inputs (e.g. fertilizers, capital and agrochemicals) are high and encouraged by state and market. *Concentration*- increasing the total proportion of a farm’s

production resources on a reduced variety of outputs. This has the effect of concentrating production to fewer, albeit larger, farms. Lastly there is *Specialisation*, which typically involves a larger part of farm output being accounted for by one particular product. This is essentially typical of a monoculture. Specialisation is generally reflected in the resources of a farm for example the expertise of the machinery and labour and the result this has on the landscape.

Intensification, concentration and specialisation helped to construct what is commonly referred to as ‘industrialised agriculture’. Using the example of agriculture helps to explain the prevailing discourse for forestry during the same era. Alexander Mather, who was arguably the leading author on British forestry in the context of productivism/post-productivism describes forestry during that time as maintaining the ‘industrial forest’ (Mather 1991).

Traits of the industrial forest echo the observations about the nature of industrial agriculture and Mather drew attention to these similarities.

Industrial forests specialise, almost exclusively, in producing timber or other wood products. Consequently they characteristically exclude the recognition or investment in other functions of trees which are often referred to in this case in point as ‘minor forest products (for example wildlife habitat, or recreation opportunities). The natural structure and appearance of woodland in terms of age and species diversity is lost, as the imported German concept of ‘forestry’ as a science, means concentrating on species suited to plantation and market-driven harvesting methods. The ideal situation is the massed, standardized, even-age plantation made entirely of one species per regular-shaped stand, i.e. monoculture in forestry.

Intensive ground preparation, establishment, maintenance and harvesting techniques are required throughout and entail significant investment. The approach requires large areas of land and resources i.e. machinery, seedlings,

fertilizer and expertise. The focus is on maximising timber quantity and minimising resource inputs.

### *Post-productivism*

Following the emergence of overproduction and widespread environmental problems, a post-productivist paradigm developed whereby intensification, concentration and specialisation became diluted by integration of new policies and markets. In the UK empirical evidence shows how opportunities increased for farm diversification, farm enterprises, alternative crops, and inclusion in agri-environment schemes. A good example of the latter is where farmers were encouraged to explore the potential of new and existing woodlands on their land. Since 1988 the FC has been overseeing a government commitment of grant aid for farmers converting land to woodland cover and maintaining existing woodland (See Bell 1998 and Crabtree *et al* 2001). Importantly the state encourages a more decentralised approach to facilitate the shift from quantity to quality outputs. Thus policy that not only regulates activities within wider interests, such as the environment and rural communities, but promotes them (see Evan *et al* 2002; Murdoch *et al* 1994, Whitby 2000 and Lowe *et al* 1993).

Forestry policy has also undergone a paradigm shift leading to different emphasis in resource management. To demonstrate the distinction between productivism and post-productivism table **II.I** illustrates the typical characteristics of the industrial and the post-industrial forest, and then different values and objectives.

**Table II.I** Typical characteristics of the industrial and post-industrial forest  
(After Mather 1996 and 2001)

Characteristic	Industrial forest	Post-industrial forest
Management Objective	Timber production	Environmental services
Typical composition	Even-aged monoculture (Primarily coniferous)	Mixed age and structure (Diverse species assemblage; mostly broadleaves)
Typical location	Peripheral/ remote/ upland	Peri-urban/ lowland
Size	Large	Small
Values	Instrumental	Intrinsic
Ethos	Rational	Emotional
Management style	Authoritarian	Environmental
Management approach	Mechanistic/ reductionist	Organic/ holistic

The impact of the first world war on the nation's forest resource and the associated dependence on imports necessitated the introduction of a productivist forestry ethos in England. The government priority was for a strategic supply of timber. To do so it established a state forestry department, the Forestry Commission in 1919. Since that time the government remained committed to expanding the area of forestry (Gasson and Hill 1990; Rackham 1998). The timber objective was renewed in 1943 when the conditions of the time encouraged the FC's productive role. The FC was expected to produce at least another two million hectares of productive timber forest; a task that was accepted to take fifty years. The FC came in at just over capacity by 1984, nine years earlier than expected (Mather 1990, 1991).

Despite meeting its requirement, the FC maintained timber as its primary focus up until the early 1980's when the transition to post-productive means

of regarding land-use came into play. However, up until that point the FC remained what Mather described as ‘remarkably consistent’ towards the industrial forest. Up until the 1960s the only social objective perceived as relevant was employment. There was some mention of recreation and conservation made in the 1970s with forest parks yet the primacy of timber production was still very much evident. (Personal communication 2004) A policy statement from 1974 asserts that: ‘the production of timber continues to be the prime objective of the commission’ and alludes to other objectives as naturally subsidiary (cited in Mather 1991).

A notable example of productivist policy was of the tax relief system whereby high earners were encouraged to offset their taxable income against expenditure in establishing plantation styles of forestry. Well-publicised cases included the planting of flow country of Scotland where the tax relief process was regarded as subsidised environmental damage. By the mid 1980’s the post-productivist shift had begun. It started with rising environmental awareness and changing social patterns (e.g. increased leisure recreation), which began to challenge the Forestry Commissions activities.

A challenge from the House of Lords Select Committee made in the 1980s is regarded as a symbol of the challenge to the industrial forest: namely that ‘the objectives of British Forestry should not be confined exclusively to the production of timber’ (2001:254). This first major milestone had called for a broadening of forestry role in Britain; evidence of action came in the shape of policy to encourage planting broadleaves through grant aid. Mather (2001) argues that the FC began to regulate forestry for recreational and environmental interests in addition to timber.

An important reflection of multipurpose/sustainable forestry is in the way that the FC is now structured. Forestry used to be a top-down exercise and centralised, however this changed in 1992. The FC underwent a restructuring exercise meaning that the typically productivist, strong national policy and weak local strategy facilitated in it’s reversal. In order to develop the existing situation where there is more emphasis on the appropriateness of woodland expansion and the protection of existing stock through integration and participation, the FC underwent devolution of its delivery agency (Forest Enterprise) into

three bodies, charged with managing separately the public forests in England, Scotland and Wales. In England this structure means that the FC is able to deliver the England Forest Strategy to more than 200, 000 ha of public woodlands or 20 percent of England's total woodland cover ([www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)).

### **Post-productivism in practice**

The Forestry Standard (FC 1998<sup>a</sup>) epitomises the promotion of a discourse surrounding the post-industrial forest, most particularly in terms of multifunctionality. This entails a multiple role for woodlands in terms of function (social, economic and environmental) location, integration with other land-uses and importantly types of outputs or benefits. The ideal for achieving the multipurpose woodland concept is embedded in the sustainability literature (Mather 1991, 2001).

Sustainable forestry has developed out of the move towards sustainable development among some developed countries. The Bruntland report (1987) developed the definition of sustainability and drew global attention to the state of the world's forest health amongst other issues. The relevance of the concept of sustainable development to forests was confirmed with a protocol at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. The following year at the Ministerial Conference for the protection of European Forests held in Helsinki, European governments created a set of guidelines for the sustainable management of European forests. This developed in to what is now known as the 'Pan-European Criteria' for sustainable forest management (FC 1998<sup>a</sup>). Sustainable forest management represents a clear expression of post-productivism and its criteria are:

- 'Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles;
- Maintenance of forest ecosystem health and vitality;

- Maintenance and encouragement of productive functions of forests (wood and non-wood);
- Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity in forest ecosystems;
- Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of protective functions in forest management (notably soil and water);
- Maintenance of other socio-economic functions and conditions’ (FC 1998<sup>a</sup>: 9)

The UK forestry standard was developed in response to the UK’s commitment to the pan-European adoption of sustainable forest management and outlines the government’s aspirations and approach for sustainable criteria in the UK. For the local level (i.e. England and the regions) the Forestry Standard has been translated and published as the England Forestry Strategy (FC199<sup>b</sup>).

Within the latter forestry’s multifunctionality is expressed through the scope for public benefits under four programmes of delivery intended to reflect England’s priorities. These are expressed in (Box **II.I**) below:

## Box II.I: Multifunctionality- Delivery programmes of the England Forestry Strategy

*Forestry for Rural Development-* Concerned with forestry's contributions to the wider countryside, rural economy, timber production and processing of wood products. Opportunities for woodlands in this context include: Provide a sustainable and locally reflective resource; combat social exclusion and poverty and well as add to conservation aims in rural areas; provide a source of employment; provide timber for specialist needs/ maximise opportunities to use home-grown timber and new markets; contribute to wider rural economies.

*Forestry for Economic Regeneration-* Provides a basis for a strategic woodland role in economic regeneration and greenspace provision on vacant development land. The main benefits purported for this opportunity are: Improving environment close to centres of population; offer a cost-effective after-use to former industrial land; increase the rate of land reclamation; improve land damaged by industrial retreat; reduce the association between damaged and disturbed land with social deprivation, high unemployment and typically low quality of life (i.e. improve quality of life in such areas); contribute to development plans; provide a green setting to encourage inward investment and future development in areas currently requiring restoration.

*Forestry for Recreation, Access and Tourism-* Set to concentrate on providing more and better quality access to woodlands. Woodlands capacity in this context are recognised as: a major source for recreation; as being robust and better able to absorb high numbers of users than open countryside; can be brought to people in urban areas or where access is already poor; offer a wide range of recreational pursuits; complement other leisure interests and tourist trade; provide equal opportunities access.

*Forestry for the Environment and Conservation*- covers the role that woodlands maintain in sustaining the environment. Also takes account of the impact that woodlands and their management have on other environmental resources and land uses.

Benefits considered: Capacity to absorb atmospheric carbon and produce oxygen; filter airborne pollution and noise; provide shelter and shade; provide wildlife habitats; create distinctive landscapes and provide a renewable resource; balance water cycles; intercept waterborne pollution; increase bank stability; reduce agricultural drift; form and protect soil resources; enhance rural character and cultural heritage; contribute towards biodiversity action plan objectives.

The National Forest is cited in the England Forestry Strategy (FC 1998<sup>b</sup>) as an example of how multifunctionality and sustainability work in practice.

Established by Government in 1995, the National Forest occupies 200 square miles of Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire. In keeping with the post-industrial forest concept, the National Forest is more of a wooded landscape than an area under continuous canopy cover. Since the project's foundation in 1995 the region's woodland cover has risen ten percent having established more than six million new trees. The objective is for a third of the area to be under woodland cover, this is now well under way. Woodland cover has increased from around 6 % in 1991 to exceed 17% in 2006 ([www.nationalforest.org.uk](http://www.nationalforest.org.uk)).

Besides increasing woodland cover, the National Forest programme seeks to deliver benefits akin to the objectives of national policy. For example it is hoped that landscape and environment will benefit through farm diversification and regeneration of coalfield areas. This in turn is being

linked to aspirations for inward investment- economic enterprises, employment opportunities and new opportunities for recreation and tourism. A good example of the ‘shift’ of primacy from monoculture and productivity to multifunctionality and holism is in the way that timber is not overlooked: it is hoped that the forest will produce a new supply of quality products for the industry (FC 1998<sup>b</sup>; Morris and Urry 2006)

### **Forests for the community: the community forests programme**

Community forestry is a further example of the post-industrial forest concept. Community forestry is a general term which refers to forestry in a wider context than just its silvicultural dimension. The term has been used internationally for some decades to describe a range of forestry practices (see Pardo 1995).

Its major application to the UK was with the Countryside Commission’s launch in 1989, of England’s twelve community forests. Thought to demonstrate the potential contribution of environmental change to economic and social regeneration with woodland cover being a particularly important focus (Bishop 1992; Anon 2005<sup>b</sup>; Agyeman 1996). Mather described the Community Forest Programme as ‘one of the most striking manifestations’ of the post-productive paradigm.

The CFP is made up of twelve forests each positioned close to an urban centre. Each forest began as a partnership between the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Commission and a total of 58 local authorities besides other local and national organisations. The forests are designed around a government approved thirty-year plan which outlines the delivery of a wide range of agendas that complement the England Forest Strategy; social inclusion, education, health, urban regeneration, education and biodiversity are primary objectives of the CFP (Anon 2005<sup>2</sup>). Community forests seek to create well wooded landscapes and over the last seventeen years have

invested more than £175 million in doing so. The CFP programmes rely on a variety of sources of income not just state support. Although core Government funding has been crucial for the initiation and credibility of the CFP as a national programme, it is heavily dependent on subsidiary sources of public sector funding, private investment, donations and in-kind support, European funding, lottery funding, land-fill tax revenue, charity grants and training awards (anon 2005<sup>b</sup>).

The CFP has seventeen key objectives (Box **II.II**) within which the various benefits can be identified and categorised. The objectives were agreed by the Department of Environment and the Treasury at the beginning of the CFP and formally approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in 1995. Designed to compliment existing policies through emphasis on promotion, expansion and protection according to local priorities, these objectives help define post-industrial forestry characteristic of the principles and values which Mather argued.

**Box II.II: Objectives for the Community Forest Programme**

(Cited in Anon 2005<sup>b</sup>: 18-19)

1. To regenerate the environment of the Green Belt and equivalent area where it is public policy to keep it open, and help to ensure that it is permanently green and open.
2. To improve the landscape of the area, including reclamation of derelict land, to create a visually exciting and functionally diverse environment.
3. To increase opportunities for sport and recreation, including artistic

and cultural event, and access.

4. To protect areas of high quality landscape or archaeological interest.
5. To protect sites of nature conservation value and create new opportunities for nature conservation.
6. To provide new opportunities for educational use of the area, and ensure the mosaic of habitats in the forest can be used for the full range of environmental education needs of the surrounding schools. Also to ensure that urban schools are not disadvantaged in meeting the needs of the National Curriculum.
7. To protect the best agricultural land and increase opportunities for farm diversification elsewhere in accordance with Government agricultural and local planning policies.
8. To establish a supply of timber and other woodland products.
9. To achieve a high level of community commitment to the concept and involvement in its implementation.
10. To give public and private sector confidence in the long-term prospects for the area and to provide a proper base for investment.
11. To improve the environment near housing and local industry and to increase the value of properties and businesses.
12. To seek private sector support to implement the forest and to invest in the leisure and other relevant service sectors.

13. To create jobs in the new woodland industries, both management of the woodland and the use of the raw materials.
14. To create jobs in the leisure industry developed in and around the Community Forest.
15. To sustain other local jobs by providing an outstanding environment as a comparative to economic disadvantage over competitor areas.
16. To compliment the Governments priorities for inner cities, by providing for associated leisure and open space needs at the physically closest locations.
17. To remain flexible in the light of changes, such as the leisure market.

This research is not concerned with validating the purported benefits for post-productive forestry policy or in the programmes of delivering post-industrial forests. Instead it develops a means of exploring the rhetorical nature of the case made for them. The area of focus is in the North West of England where two Community Forests are located, the Mersey Forest and The Red Rose Forest. Table **II.II** provides a summary of their nature, whilst figure II.I over the page illustrates their location and proximity to one another.

Table II.II: Contextual features of the Red rose and Mersey Community Forests

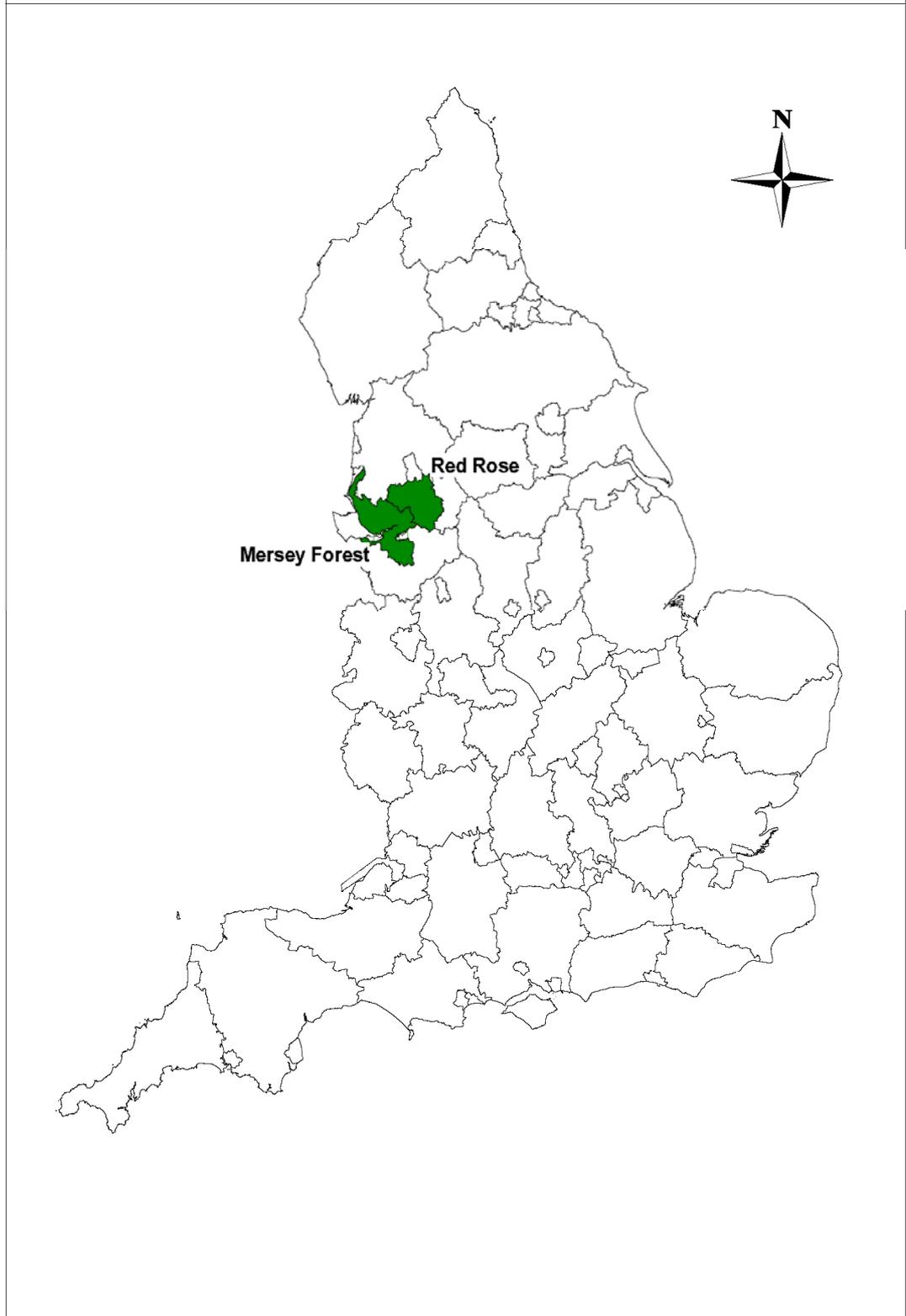
Characteristic	Red Rose Forest	Community Forest
Location:	Greater Manchester	Merseyside and North Cheshire
Operational area:	756 km <sup>2</sup>	1101 km <sup>2</sup>
Context:	Predominantly urban, densely populated (1.5 million people within forest boundary), industrial dereliction, Mersey flood plain	Excessive and extreme urban-fringe dereliction, Mersey Estuary
Approx new woodland areas (to date):	1183 ha	2900 ha

(Sources: Mersey forest 2001; [www.Redroseforest.co.uk](http://www.Redroseforest.co.uk))

Between them the Red Rose and Mersey forests have over three million people within their operational boundaries, moreover they seek to reclaim large areas of damaged land, e.g. spoil heaps, ex-colleries and old industrial premises. The Mersey Forest alone is said to contain an estimated 4000ha of disturbed, derelict and underused land. Restoring such land as this to community woodland is seen as mechanism for improving the overall social, economic and environmental conditions for the population and the area in general. (Perry and Handley 2000; Countryside Agency 1999)

Of particular interest to this research are the aspirations for public benefits anticipated from the restoration of industrial wasteland to community woodlands. Mersey and Red Rose offer opportunities for insight into the context of claims in the restoration of this particular type of land than agricultural or semi-improved land where site conditions are generally better and potentially better suited to community involvement

Figure II.I: Location of Red Rose and Mersey Community Forests



## **Summary**

The Forestry Commission was established as part of a productivist commitment to ensuring a strategic reserve of timber in the UK. The industrial nature of productivist operations meant that forest policy deliberately overlooked the wider environmental relevance (e.g. towards habitats, biodiversity and natural processes/health) of its' activates. The industrial plantation culture that typifies this era also failed to take into account the contributions that trees make to society (e.g. in terms of access opportunities, health, and general quality of life), instead favouring direct economic returns from intense, specialised, and concentrated inputs (of finance, labour and technology), in order achieving a harvestable 'crop'. Social and political expectations of the role of forestry (and similarly agriculture), as a major land-use, initiated a change in paradigm. In the last two decades forestry has undergone a revision in its priorities. Timber is no longer paramount. Social and environmental goods and services are actively sought through policy and the activities of the Forestry Commission which centre on partnership, integration and participation in delivery. Many new and existing woodlands are now typical of the post-industrial forest model. A particular example of this is in England's twelve Community Forests, two of which are in the North West of England. The Red Rose and Mersey forests' seek to deliver a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits to predominantly urban communities and landscapes, by restoring former industrial sites to community woodlands.

## Chapter 3: Claims-making theory

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### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical underpinning of this research. The first section will describe the theory of claims making, its epistemological origins and applications. Following this, the analytical components of the theory will be identified and discussed. Before summarising the chapter, a final section will offer a case for appropriateness of the claims-making approach to this research. This will draw on the use of claims-making within existing environmental research as well as its role within this study.

### **Epistemological origins and applications of claims making**

Claims-making is a sociological approach that focuses on the way in which groups in society construct social problems. The origins of claims-making can be traced to the 1970s when traditional explanations for social problems were challenged by a paradigm shift from functionalism to social constructionism (Hannigan 1995).

According to Hannigan, functionalism had offered sociologists the basic assumption that social problems were the direct result of ‘readily identifiable, distinctive and visible objective conditions’. The challenge emerged with the publication papers from Spector and Kitsuse which offered an alternative perspective where social problems, instead of being accepted as static conditions were proposed to be the product of much more complex processes. Spector and Kitsuse’s alternative definition assumed that social conditions were in fact: “The activities of groups making assertions of grievances and claims to organisations, agencies and instructions about some putative

conditions” (1973:146) Spector and Kitsuse offered a theoretical approach whereby social problems could be seen as socially constructed and therefore subjective in their nature (Hannigan 1995; Spector and Kitsuse 1973).

More recent literature argues that to accept social problems as social constructions requires adoption of four basic assumptions, (Burr 1995 and Shotter1995). First, researching from a constructionist approach requires a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge. When investigating social problems there should be a basic assumption that conditions are perceived realities, therefore the subjective nature of a problem is more important than the issue itself. This echoes the argument put forward by Spector and Kitsuse, placing more importance on the claims-making process (i.e. how a problem is generated and sustained), than on the validity of the issue itself.

A second assumption is that the way in which the world is perceived and understood is a product of cultural and historical framing. The timing of events and social attitudes towards what is considered preferable or objectionable influences perception. Cultural influences are a secondary factor in shaping these perceptions. The important point here is that problems may be argued to exist but that does not mean that they are perceived by all of society (e.g. a problem may be regarded differently by different groups). Third, is Spector and Kitsuse’s proposal that knowledge is sustained by social processes, and that the everyday lives of people and the way people engage with one another determines the construction of knowledge. Social problems are therefore produced by social processes, language, opinions, culture and history.

The fourth element to consider is that social action and knowledge are not separate developments. The way in which a condition is perceived differs because there are different constructions of the world and therefore different types of action exist. For example consider the differences in action taken

towards alcoholism. Alcoholism can be perceived as a victim needing support or as a self-abuser.

Joel Best is a key supporter of constructionism and supported the shift to constructionism as a result of dissatisfaction with the objective stance of functionalism. He argued that defining social problems by objective conditions was a flawed perspective as objective, i.e. empirically and experimentally grounded perspectives overlook the subjective judgment required to identify a social condition as a social problem to begin with (Best 1989b). Best promotes constructionism as way of defining social problems by focusing on the claims made for social problems, and argues that claims-making approach is an example of how constructionism can be useful as an analytical tool for understanding the world around us. He used the following example as a way of highlighting the relevance of subjective information to constructionist understandings of social problems:

“a traditional objectivist approach to homelessness might focus on measuring the size of the homeless population, learning why some people become homeless, or otherwise exploring homelessness as a social condition, while a social constructionist analysis would ask whose claims brought homelessness to public attention, how those claims typified the homeless, how the public and policymakers responded to the claims, and so on” (Best 1989b:244)

Regardless of whether claims are historical or contemporary, Best has argued that there are three primary areas for the analysis of a social problem from the constructionist perspective. These focus on: the nature of the claims themselves; the actions of claims-makers; and the claims-making process (Best 1989<sup>b</sup>).

## **The claims**

Best views claims as the complaints about a social condition which individuals or groups in society consider undesirable (i.e. a problem). Claims generally seek to do something about a problem. A natural starting point for the use of the claims-making approach is with identification of the claims (Best 1989b). Claims may be represented in a range of formats and styles, from professional articles, pamphlets and other materials, to public broadcasts and interviews with claims-makers. Sources of the claims will vary according to credentials of the claims maker.

In this research, claims regarding public benefits typical of those for community woodlands have been sought in two areas: the endorsement of strategy in published forestry policy material; and the views and intentions of those engaged in policy implementation. This reflects the statutory nature of the Forestry Commission and its influence at the local level through projects such as Newlands and the Community Forests.

## **Claims-makers**

‘Claims cannot exist without claims-makers. Claims-makers both create claims and promote them’ (Best 1989:75)

The basic assumption behind the concept of a claims-maker is that, as the preceding quote suggests, there has to be a complainant. Some person or group needs to perceive a problem condition and then seek to raise awareness regarding it. Naturally the claims-maker tends to be an interested party and may expect to gain if their claims are successful.

The identity of the claims-maker will have an influence on the claims made. This may depend on the experience of the claims-maker in constructing claims or on the nature of their field of expertise. For example, a rights activist (e.g. environmental or human) will almost certainly have a different approach to that of a government official. The latter is likely to make

‘unheard’ claims in influencing a bureaucratic dispute whilst the former is likely to be publicly active and motivated by an explicit ideology, both will reflect the type of publicity required (Best 1989).

The authority of the claims-maker is another of Best’s significant considerations regarding the identity of claims-makers. Claims may be styled to reflect the professional capacity of the claims-maker or the authority of their discipline. For example the claims of scientists and doctors may authenticate an issue framing it as a medical problem or a scientific issue, etc. Professionals are said to use their influence to shape claims- to bring them into a new area of work; redefine their existing problems already in their field /control; or even to prevent encroachment of their interest by other threatening or conflicting interests (Best 1989).

This research subjectively identifies the Forestry Commission as fulfilling the role of claims-maker by default. The FC is the statutory agency responsible for woodland matters in the UK, i.e. the protection and appropriate expansion of woodland and the delivery of forest policy.

The FC is therefore in a position of authority and is able to promote and legitimize claims for public benefits through its involvement in delivering policy, and in shaping claims for public benefits in relation to woodland.

Above all, the FC is a natural vehicle for linking public benefits to ‘trees in the landscape’- being an authority on all forestry matters. A key objective of this research to look beyond the statutory role of the FC using the theory of claims-making to explore an alternative explanation behind the FC’s aspirations to deliver public benefits.

### **The process of claims-making**

The last of Best’s foci in the claims-making approach; He argues that since organizations or individuals seek to legitimize a social condition as a problem, the manner in which the claims are constructed and presented will reflect this.

The process normally involves a degree of characterization of the problem in order to seek attention from audiences potentially sympathetic to the cause (Best 1989c). The primary focus of the process of claims-making is to establish support for an issue or what Wiener describes as an 'arena' (See Wiener 1981 and Hannigan 1995).

The claims-making process is less central to the current research. Claims made for public benefit woodlands are historical in the sense that the issues they drew attention to are already being legitimized through the Community forests and Sustainable forest management. Other research could for example, seek to explore the way in which public benefits became legitimate solutions to the North West's issues and the way in which partnerships came to support the concept of public benefit delivery. This is however outside of the remit of this research. Which is more interested in the nature of the claims and the aspirations behind them from the perspective of the claims maker.

### **Using the claims-making approach to explore community forestry**

The constructionist approach has been applied outside of the field of strictly social problems analysis and used as a tool for exploring environmental problems. From the constructionist perspective the global environment and the problems concerning it are no different to social problems if considered as socially constructed i.e. both are products of social interpretation. There are already many authors making a case for the social construction of environmental problems. For example Wynne (1994:169) describes global environmental problems as products of 'complex and conflicting anxieties and commitments'. Other authors comment on the variety of constructions that exist for environmental problem, or even of what defines the environment per se. The perceptions of science and politics are primary examples of the former; wilderness and nature are two of the latter (see Bertolas 1998;

Burgess 1994; Cronon 1996; Hannigan 1995; Shove 1994 and Goldblatt 1996).

In terms of what constitutes an environmental problem, Sloep *et al* (1995:42) make a straightforward case for the way in which constructionist thinking has shaped the way in which environmental problems can now be defined:

‘An environmental problem is any change of state in the physical environment which is brought about by human interference with the physical environment, and has effects which society deems unacceptable in the light of its shared ‘norms’.

The main relevance of this quote here is the importance placed on social ‘norms’ i.e. historical and cultural framing, when accepting a physical concept as a problem. This quote demonstrates the interplay between social tolerance and awareness with the physical environment in constructing a problem in addition to the actual interference that may otherwise define it.

Claims-making has been used by researchers making a case for the social construction of environmental problems. For instance case study research on the Rainham Marshes SSSI in East London by Burgess and Harrison (1994) drew on Best’s principles of exploring social constructions of nature employed in disputed discourses. In this instance between developers proposing to create a commercial and entertainment centre on the marshes and the conservationists opposed to the development. This and subsequent work explored the way in which these rival interests employed different social constructions of nature to justify their positions and how local audiences ‘made-sense’ of the competing claims about the worth of the marshes. The work made a case for environmental claims being socially constructed (Burgess and Harrison 1994; Burgess 1999). In this instance Burgess defined social constructionism in the same way as it might appear for the study of social problems:

Rather than working from the belief that objective reality exists, waiting to be faithfully recorded by science or media, social constructionists assert that different ‘realities’ are constructed through discourses which embody the ideas, beliefs, languages power relations and institutional practices of different social groups’ (Burgess 1999:195).

This translation of constructionism does not depart from original the assumptions behind Spector and Kitsuse’s reformulated version. Likewise, Burgess was able to define claims-making in an environmental context, adding that even these scientific issues are socially constructed:

‘Environmental claims are discursive statements made by social groups which seek to persuade others of the veracity and legitimacy of the claim and its sponsors, and to stimulate action of some kind’ (1999:196)

A more recent example of the use of claims-making is in the work of Miendl *et al* (2002). Whereas Burgess and Harrison had looked at the process of claims-making in a case of conflicting interests, Miendl and colleagues conceptualised applied scientists as environmental claims-makers capable of shaping public perceptions and interaction with the environment. Their work demonstrates how scientific knowledge was rightly or wrongly changed into social ‘facts’ that shaped public understandings of the Florida Everglades in the early twentieth century.

This particular work considered claims-making as a useful analytical tool. Using the terms claims and claims-maker, the research was able to look beyond the issues surrounding the Everglades (their partial drainage) and focus on the construction, management and consumption of environmental knowledge.

A final example of the use of claims-making in environmental problem construction is that relating to Biodiversity. Hannigan has looked at global biodiversity loss as a successfully constructed problem (and the ‘problem’ of

acid rain in that they are both issues in the public domain) Morris and Wragg's paper is concerned with biodiversity loss in the local context. Their paper sought to examine the way in which biodiversity loss had become a legitimate concern for policy-makers in statutory, private and non-government organisations as well as for landowners and the public. The empirical evidence explored the legitimisation of biodiversity claims at the local scale. The vehicle through which to explore claims took the form of the Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and the Farm Biodiversity Action Plans for England and Scotland. The paper demonstrates the acceptance of social constructionism and in particular claims-making as a way of exploring the elevation of an issue to wider audiences until it becomes a recognised environmental problem (Morris and Wragg 2002).

The current research is primarily concerned with the claims that are made for public benefits as a result of restoring derelict land to public benefit woodlands- as per the community forests established in the NW of England. The examples above have concentrated on the process of claims-making with a certain amount of focus on the claims and the claims-maker. The focus here however, is more concerned with the actual claims that are made rather than the process.

One of Best's observations in this light refers to the rhetoric of claims-making. He explores the rhetorical nature of the claims and how are they designed to construct a persuasive case (Best 1989b). Rhetoric has been accepted as a key consideration in work including that of Burgess but rhetoric has so far only been regarded in the literature as part of the wider context of environmental claims-analysis rather than the primary focus itself. The importance of the rhetorical nature of claims is demonstrated in the two following quotes, one from Best's this quote from some of Best's earlier works that focused on the constructed rhetoric in claims-making, one from Burgesses work on Environmental problems:

‘Claims-makers inevitably hope to persuade. Typically, they want to convince others that X is a problem, that Y offers a solution to that problem, or that a policy of Z should be adopted to bring that solution to bear’ (Best 1987:102)

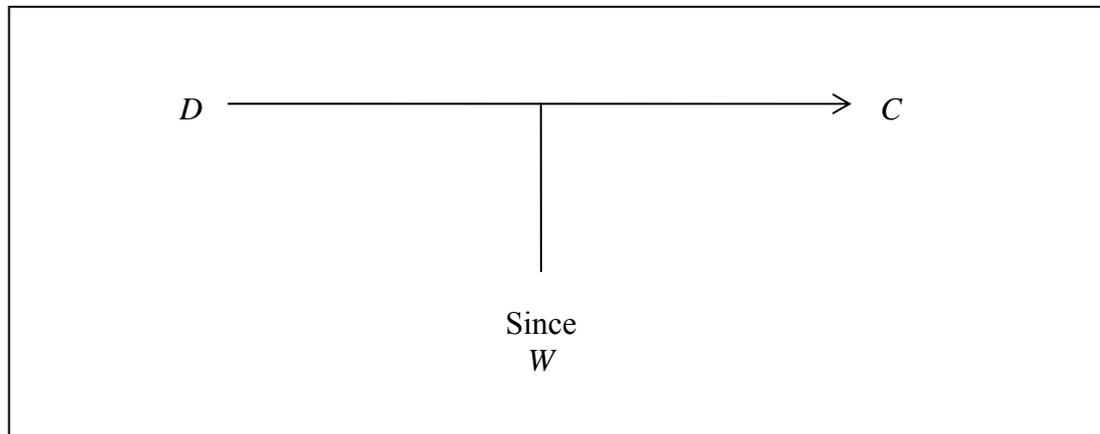
‘Claims-makers seek to persuade others, whether institutions or members of the public, of the veracity of their position and to encourage a particular course of action. Claims-making thus encompasses the tactics of an organization seeking coverage, the definition and launch of campaigns, staged events and other media management strategies’ (Burgess 1999:296)

In both quotes claims-making is described a rhetorical activity, where persuasion is a key part of constructing claims for a problem. Based on Spector and Kitsuse’s constructionist definition of social problems, Best argued that social problem analysis should focus on the claims in addition to the claims-makers and the process of claims-making regarding a social problem. Claims, he argues are important foci and should not be regarded as ‘given’ thus to focus on the rhetorical nature of claims is one way of gaining insight concerning the values and motivations of the claims-makers i.e. part of the claims-makers effort to persuade (Best 1987).

Best built on the work of Stephen Toulmin’s examination of the structure of arguments as a contribution to logical theory, in order to develop a systematic model for the analysis of rhetoric in claims (Toulmin 1958). His research developed a model in which there are three principle components i.e. ‘*D*’ the foundation of the argument and ‘*C*’ the conclusion that the argument seeks to establish. The link between the foundation and the conclusion is ‘*W*’, the warrants. Toulmin described warrants as the linkage that ‘authorises’ the step to which a particular argument is committed. Although it had been designed to analyse short-argument literally only a few sentences in length; Best

adapted Toulmin's model to suit much larger, more complex arguments (figure **III.I**)

Figure **III.I**: Toulmin's model for the structure of arguments cited in Best 1987.



Best developed this principle of foundation, warrants and conclusions although substituted foundation with the term 'Grounds'.

Using Grounds, Warrants and Conclusions as a model Best, analysed the rhetoric of claims made for the social problem of 'missing children in the US'. His most important observation was that the model could describe the rhetorical structure of claims in the context of a social problem.

The current research seeks to apply Best's technique of using grounds, warrants and conclusions as a way of exploring the rhetorical nature of claims for public benefits on restored community woodlands in the North West of England.

The following paragraphs describe this structure in more detail with the assumption that it will be able to explore the aspirations behind claims in more detail i.e. in terms of motivations and values of the claims-maker.

### *Grounds statements*

These form the foundation of the argument. Statements that include grounds are those that seek to assert the facts upon which the subsequent claims-making discourse is based. Constructionism accepts that the facts are themselves a form of socially constructed knowledge. An important argument from Best is that claims-makers may accept grounds without question having already been 'converted' to this frame of reference (Hannigan 1995; Best 1997).

In the case of missing children, Best found three recurring types of grounds statement: those that centred on the use of definitions, examples and numeric estimates. Definitions help the audience of the claims to understand the domain of the problem in terms of its boundaries and orientation. Examples naturally help the claims' audience relate to the problem from their own experiences. In the context of social problems, examples identify who is affected by the problem i.e. children, the elderly etc. Numeric estimates are particularly useful for expressing the potential growth of a problem, its range and its magnitude. Numeric estimates help the claims' audience gauge the importance of a problem by estimates of its scale. i.e. whether it is acceptable or not based on the frequency or rate at which it (the condition) occurs. Numeric estimate were particularly effective in constructing a case for missing children. Estimates that make a condition appear to be big make a case for a big problem.

### *Warrants statements*

Statements that seek to justify the argument for why X is a problem provide the link between grounds and conclusions; these are the warrants. Best argues that in order to accept that something must be done about a social problem, one must accept the warrants. Warrants in the case of missing children centred around six themes including: the value of children- priceless and

therefore irreplaceable; children as blames victims; associated evils- once abducted children became vulnerable to other threats i.e. child abusers, sex offenders, pornographers etc; deficient policies- arguments that existing policies and resources were inappropriate in dealing with the problem of child abduction; historical continuity- continued failure of institutions and agencies to react to a problem condition; and justifying action on the basis that rights and freedoms were in some way infringed upon (Best 1997; Hannigan 1995)

### *Conclusions*

Claims aim to present conclusions, i.e. suggestions for the action required to tackle or overcome a social problem. Best was able to demonstrate that there may be more than one single objective in the conclusions; in the case of the missing children problem claims-maker were seeking to affect not just attitudes within parenting but also official policy regarding child welfare etc.

### **Application of the claims-making approach**

Using Toulmin's structure of arguments model as a basis, Best was able to describe the rhetorical nature of claims for missing children. The focus on claims -including their rhetoric, the claims-makers and the process of claims-making- has been adapted as an investigative tool for the constructionist exploration of environmental problems. Building on environmental applications of claims-theory, this research focuses primarily on the rhetoric of claims and investigates these originally, in the context of a particular government institution.

This research accepts the FC as a promoter and authority regarding claims for public benefit forestry. It does not however seek to legitimise those claims in terms of how they construct a problem or indeed a solution. What this research does is use Bests' Grounds, Warrants and Conclusions for the rhetorical analysis of those claims. From the perspectives of the published

claims and the lived realities concerning them, this research adds a constructionist perspective to the aspirations and experiences regarding the topic of the claims- public benefit forestry.

## Chapter 4: Research methodology

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### **Introduction**

Using claims theory this research seeks to explore the aspirations within constructed claims for new public benefit woodlands in the Mersey Basin and Manchester from the perspective of Forestry Commission practitioners and their operational partners.

The methodological objectives are as follows: to identify areas, groups and individuals likely to have experienced the style of forestry relevant to the research objectives:

- To access such areas and groups in order to establish the relevancy of their work to this research.
- To identify specific types of information as sources and examples of claims.
- To identify individuals relevant to the research topic from the region and explore their aspirations and experiences regarding the claims.

The following paragraphs present a brief overview of the theoretical approach to the analysis of ‘environmental problem’ claims, followed by a discussion on the experiences of using specific tools for data collection, and the requirements for data analysis.

### **Claims-making as a tool for undertaking environmental enquiries**

In the context of this research, the theory of claims-making has been chosen as a theoretical stance for exploring the aspirations behind the Forestry Commission’s commitment to public benefit styles of forestry in the urban Northwest of England. It expected that aspirations will relate to the FC’s

statutory culture and its responsibilities for forest management and forestry policy in England and the regions. Claims-theory offers a distinctive insight since it is designed to consider the processes and politics behind the production of putative problems and their solution.

Meindl *et al* (2002) argued that producers of environmental knowledge play a crucial role in determining how society perceives and interacts with the environment. In this research, the Forestry Commission is considered responsible for producing and representing the relevant environmental knowledge. Its aspirations for the way in which trees are understood, utilised and administered in the English landscape are expressed in its operations, publications, policy contributions and research. By default, as the department responsible for forestry matters in the UK, the FC fulfils the role of claims-maker. This is similar to the way in which applied scientists were identified as claims-makers in the Florida Everglades (Meindl *et al*, 2002). Through their understanding of issues and the knowledge claims they made, they were able to shape society's understanding of the Everglades ecosystem.

Meindl *et al* (2002) support the idea that knowledge is socially negotiated and constructed. It is solely applied scientists that shape environmental understanding since there are also interactions of policy-makers and policy demands. Identifying the importance of science, politics, and the public sphere helps substantiate the potential applicability of claims theory to the FC. It is through these that they have the capacity to produce environmental knowledge claims.

Claims are used to shape problem conditions through identifying a risk to be managed. Environmental problems often need to be understood in social terms so environmental problems are similar to social problems as they are often shaped on the basis of perceived risk (Libertore 1995). The social constructionist literature argues that risk is a social construct and not an objective reality; therefore what is, or what is not, considered a risk is the

product of perception, it is influenced by an individuals' or an institutions' position (cognitive framing) and by prevalent cultural, economic and environmental conditions. The sociology of risk is seen as one of the significant reasons behind the development of social constructionist perspectives on the environment (Hannigan 1995).

Hannigan comments that success in constructing environmental knowledge and risk depends on existing structures of economic and political power, since these will constrain and channel perceptions. Benton and Redclift (1994) add that the process used to form and transform environmental knowledge and conflict should be considered. From the constructionist perspective therefore claims-theory is well suited to the task of exploring the FC's aspirations since it acknowledges their political and economic influence, and anticipates that influence in the constructed problems regarding trees in the landscape. As suggested by Redclift and Benton above, such claims are likely to be expressed in communications- i.e. the policy literature and publications for strategic programmes.

### **Aspirations for environmental claims**

According to Hannigan (1995) an important point for the researcher is understanding who owns or manages claims (once they have been identified) in order to secure legitimisation by different audiences. Hannigan comments that legitimisation is more likely to occur if the sponsors of the claims are seen as authoritative sources of knowledge on the issue.

With the FC as the UK's long-established and sole statutory authority on public spending for trees in the landscape and their managements, it can be argued that the FC has the capacity to be accepted as a legitimate source and the owner/producer/manager of the claims.

Due to the theoretical orientation of the research the units for analysis in this research are first the nature of the claims (i.e. problem and solution) and

second, the structure of the claims (rhetorical construction) as a way of exploring the aspirations of the claims-maker. Using Joel Best's concept of Grounds, Warrants and Conclusions from his model for analysis of social problems claims, this research seeks to identify the rhetorical nature of claims for public benefit styles of forestry. Rhetorical statements are designed to persuade their audience of the claims-maker's case and aid verification of the message within them. This research adapted Best's model to explore the objectives of the research, which are:

- To identify the claims made for public benefits for new woodlands on previously derelict land in North West England
- To define the constructed problems and solution about which claims are constructed
- To identify and deconstruct the rhetoric embedded within published aspirations regarding the claims
- To access the personal rhetoric regarding the aspirations belonging to professionals charged with their delivery
- To analyse and present the rhetoric behind aspiration for benefits by adapting Best's model of Grounds, Warrants and Conclusions

The following paragraphs discuss the methods employed in meeting the objectives of the research and is structured to represent the research design. The methodology sought to locate the claims as they occur in the literature, analyse them in terms of their nature, and then explore these on the ground through the experiences and aspirations of practitioners. The primary methods to achieve this were documentary analysis and the use of semi-structured interviews.

Documentary analysis was a two-stage process. Firstly, this research uses the assumption that the Forestry Commission is responsible for promoting claims for the potential benefits of woodland cover, particularly in areas like the Northwest where a lack of tree cover and quality green space provision is claimed to accentuate existing social, economic and environmental conditions. Documentary analysis was used to identify the claims as well as the FC's position in relation to them. The analysis included current FC publications regarding the benefits of reclaiming derelict land with new woodland, especially where in relation to the North West of England. The wider policy agenda behind this, where specific policies, programmes and statements could be identified as representing such claims, was also explored. Since the FC is a statutory body there is a great deal of historical policy which was explored in order to recognise the changes the FC and its agenda have undergone, and to contextualise the origins of current objectives. Since much of the policy relates back to the early sustainability pledges of the late nineteen eighties and early nineteen nineties, care had to be taken to avoid being sidelined into the broader aspirations found in the sustainable development and sustainable forestry literature.

Secondly, a more local search for claims and contextual material for the Northwest took place through a placement period in the FC North West region, where it was hoped specific claims could be located for individual sites and communities. To some extent this was successful, albeit not as straightforward as originally hoped. The intention was that the FC's local area offices and programme head quarters could yield a great deal of generic information for target areas, with roots in the national series of policy and programmes such as the England Forest Strategy and UK Principles of Sustainable Forestry. It was anticipated that the Community Forest offices in the region (Mersey and Red Rose) would also furnish useful information.

There were several fundamental problems that had to be dealt with during the local documentary analysis. For example, as part of the methodology a case-study site approach was thought practical, however it became clear that since the available sites were not in the same stages of reclamation there would be difficulties in finding dependable site material. Second, the evolution of delivery methods and the creation and expiry of funding streams and delivery programmes over the last decade meant much of the information that was available for one site was not necessarily available for another. For example, initial reclamation of Colliers Moss Common near St. Helens began in an *ad hoc* fashion where benefits were stumbled upon rather than targeted (personal communication Groundwork Trust Practitioner). Furthermore benefits were assumed to be distant and so the range of benefits available once the site had matured are to be defined through future monitoring. Another example is the continuity of surveys to highlight potential benefits and site constraints in the early stages of reclamation. These are common for sites under the Newlands scheme but they do not exist for Capital Modernisation Fund sites.

The fact that multiple partners were involved in the restoration of sites meant records and objectives would frequently be spread across separate offices, and in one instance were lost. However, the local documentary analysis produced an unexpected contribution from the minutes of meetings and correspondence between partners and local interests within the community. It is here that benefit aspirations were discussed in detail and to some extent aspirations were also represented, albeit not as claims. It became clear that there were richer sources of data than the policy literature and published programme objectives but it was much more difficult to access. A potential drawback of this, however, is that it is easy to become sidelined into the unpublished ‘background’ documentation, which might not necessarily represent what is formally aspired to by the organisation. The advantage is that it does offer some insight into the day-to-day issues concerning stakeholders and FC personnel.

The types of documents used in the local document analysis were typically unpublished, such as, environmental consultancy reports regarding site conditions, species and habitats', physical site assessments, site ownership plans, planning proposals, utility and services maps, bills of quantities, minutes of meetings with communities of both interest and place, minutes of meetings with other restoration professionals and partners, letter drafts and receipts, and occasional reports.

### **The case study area**

Sites included in the process of restoration to public benefit woodland were sought as a way of highlighting the issues about which claims are made and as examples of the problem and solution. It was also hoped that the specific aspirations for benefits per site could be identified, literally through documentation, and subsequently from the professionals identified as relevant to sites through their involvement in the restoration process.

Case-study selection was based on four criteria. Sites needed to be of a technically challenging nature (e.g. classified as derelict underused or neglected). Sites were required to be underway or at least earmarked for restoration for public benefit woodland under the Community Forests Programme. Sites needed to have the involvement of the Forestry Commission in their restoration, either through Newlands, the Capital Modernisation Fund, or within the Community Forests programme. Lastly, sites would need to be in a predominantly urban location i.e., no more than 1km from accessible communities. If these criteria were met it meant that a site would be relevant to the claims for public benefits as purported by the FC.

It was decided that case study sites should ideally represent a general picture concerning aspirations for public benefits on the ground, rather than for a specific delivery programme. Due to the limited lifetime of programmes and

funding and the uptake of meaningful reclamation over the years, sites would ultimately be in different stages of reclamation. This also made selection easier as it meant that sites would not need to match one another in terms of features such as hectarage, planted capacity, percentage tree cover, range of benefits targeted/identified, proximity to services, access and communities etc. Due to the way in which sites had been reclaimed by various groups and in various ways over time, the actual identification of sites was particularly difficult as the records and contacts for potential sites were fragmented and varied.

A major benefit of any research that has a contact with the industry is the use of that contact as a gatekeeper. Initially the Forestry Commission’s Paul Tabbush (Forest Research) fulfilled this role and introduced Chris Robinson (Land Regeneration Unit). Between them, and contacts within the partnership, a range of sites were suggested along with contact addresses to follow up.

One the basis of the above principles these case-study sites were eventually selected- see box **IV.I** below. Their use for revealing claims was however different to that originally anticipated; they mainly proved relevant in identifying professionals involved in restoration. Professionals included in the semi-structured interviews that follow were associated with these sites.

Box **IV.I** Outline of case study community forest sites:

Higher Folds, North Manchester	Approximately 130 ha in area. Has experienced extensive mining and tipping of colliery spoils; since incorporated into the Red Rose Community Forest (Anon 2000, 2001 and Lee-Gallon 2001)
Colliers Moss Common, St.	Included in the Mersey Forest; created on the spoil and waste from Bold Colliery and Bold Power Station.

Helens	Approximately 130 ha in area (GWT undated <sup>1 and 2</sup> ; 1987)
Moston Vale, North Manchester	Smallest at 19 ha, part of the Newlands Project and Red Rose Community Forest. Had a long mining history until becoming a landfill in the 1970's. (Anon 2003 <sup>1 and 2</sup> )

Due to the way in which the claims are presented the case studies did not present any specific aspirations for their own restoration to woodland beyond the general aspirations typical for the majority of operational programmes in the region, and the partners in general. The sites helped to conceptualise the delivery process and environment more generally. They also however formed an important role in introducing potential interviewees and shaping the issues relevant to the interviews that were to follow. Moreover, they helped confirm the relevance of the policy to the region, and the potential of the theoretical approach to the research topic. Going through the process of locating and visiting sites and analysing site related material gave some insight into the experiences and aspirations behind the restoration of damaged land.

### **Identifying individuals**

It was decided early on that interviews would be required for exploring the experiences and aspirations of those delivering public benefits via woodlands in the North West. Interviews would allow exploration of issues in depth with key FC personnel and partner bodies. The task of identifying individuals in the region to interview was complex, especially since the idea was to involve not just FC personnel but also a sample of their project partners. Access to FC personnel at different levels was crucial since knowledge produced by the FC

is at the core of the research, while work on the ground is delivered through partnership, integration and governance.

It was decided that the interview respondents would be a purposive sample from the Forestry Commission and their partners. Individuals would be selected in terms of the knowledge they represented vis-à-vis their relevance to the research focus. Morse (1998) considers this to be a requirement beneficial to qualitative research, especially in the case of interviews.

Furthermore, sourcing interviewees was made less restrictive in that there was the freedom to look beyond the limited community of FC employees in the region.

The process was aided by the FC's involvement in the setting-up of the research. It was logical to use the relationship with Paul Tabbush at Forest Research (Alice Holt, Farnham) as a means of accessing key FC personnel and partners in the NW. Paul Tabbush acted as a 'gatekeeper' and provided a series of FC contact names and addresses along with an outline of their role. Use of Paul in this capacity provided credibility with those that were approached and helped in building a rapport. The result was an increased awareness of those involved in the NW, the key individuals in each organisation and the location of documentary sources of information. When approaching individuals on the recommendation of a gatekeeper such as Paul Tabbush, it was possible to approach, meet and consider a comprehensive range of potential interviewees in a range of roles suitable to the needs of interview and the desk study. Within the relatively small community of professionals in the NW, introduction via the gatekeeper reduced the risk of being declined for interviews.

## **Placements**

Being based in Cheltenham meant a geographical separation from the North West and the case-study areas within it. Successful requests for information

on the case studies were entirely dependent on the trust and rapport developed in postal, telephone and email communications with helpful contacts. Furthermore, the researchers' own constructions of the sites earmarked for, and currently developing as, public benefit woodlands required experience of the area. Without the sites, the communities and the issues surrounding around them were a product of images, opinions, reports and other 'filtered' media. It was decided that a placement and/or a series of visits would be appropriate in order to provide a more accurate picture of the situation.

The FC's Delamere area office was selected as an ideal location from which to undertake a placement. Chris Waterfield (Forestry Commission) arranged for desk space in the building, which sits within the 950 hectares of mixed deciduous and evergreen forest, open grassland and wetlands of Delamere Forest Park on the Cheshire plain. The office proved ideal for three main reasons. Firstly it presented access to the FC's Newlands programme in the form of Chris Waterfield who was on hand for plenty of advice and knowledge on partnership structures and other various, site-specific sources of information. The FE office for the area was also based at Delamere and ideally located for contacts and access to both the Mersey Forest and Red Rose Community Forest Offices within a short car journey as well as those of numerous local partners such as the Groundwork Trusts and local authorities. Staying in the area meant that sites could be visited and put into context within the conditions and pressures visible within their surrounds; visiting the sites also meant that the objectives, progress and barriers encountered could be experienced, whilst the opportunity to discuss issues 'in the field' meant that relationships became less formal and helped greatly in developing a rapport with key players (site managers etc) with interests in this research. This latter point developed on both sides: firstly as individuals who normally needed to be asked for assistance became interested and began to offer it; and secondly from a personal point of view experiencing the reality of the area not

only provided insight and materials with which to develop the research but sparked motivation for exploring alternative explanations.

As well as experiencing the Northwest, becoming familiar with the sites, and meeting the people behind the names, the placement revealed the issues constraining and assisting public benefit woodland delivery. Actually 'being there' went a long way in terms of building a more complete set of knowledge about programmes and sites.

Prior to the placement, telephone and written requests for information about sites and programmes and the people they involved had been difficult and often incomplete when received. Shortly before visiting the NW, courtesy letters were sent out to potential sources of information with a provisional request for a visit to their libraries and files etc, and a notice of the impending visit to their area. Once there, letters were followed up with a short phone call for the purpose of confirming a date and time. The letters were sent to specific individuals, who had been suggested, or uncovered as being relevant. It was with almost one hundred percent success that a meeting could be made, and more often than not once the research was explained fully and assurances given, access to unpublished and often sensitive information was given as well as the opportunity to sit in on various partnership meetings and informal conversations. Many repeat visits were made to offices and their files afterwards until a complete picture was established. In return, many individuals were either simply happy to assist or would like to know the outcome of the research.

In all there were two placement visits made to Delamere both of which lasted for approximately two working weeks. The first took place in July 2003 and the second in October of the same year. In-between and afterwards there were several day visits made to individual offices and other sources of information. During these visits it was useful to have a one-off meeting with a supervisor. This meant that the objectives of the visit discussed beforehand

could be discussed, checked or even altered with a degree of assurance. Being there in person meant an opportunity to present information and demonstrate the gains made as well as seek advice on issues such as validity or relevance of the information sought. It is easy to become overwhelmed by a wealth of knowledge as held by some of the sources and gleaning the right information when under time constraint can be a difficult process. It was therefore valuable to check that things were being done appropriately and that best use of time was being made.

The most significant contribution to the research was the chance to identify individuals and names as potential interviewees for the semi-structured interviews that were planned for the second stage of the research.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

The nature of this research as a social enquiry made use of interviews. Interviews are regarded as useful tools for the study of social actions, beliefs and behaviours and about the way in which the environment is constructed and managed (Hessler 1992; Mason 2002).

There are several types of interview structure and technique thus definitions vary accordingly. In the case of this research interviews refer to face-to face “conversations” actively engaged in-between two persons during which observations are made on the social knowledge’s and behaviours of the respondent on relevant topics and experiences. The basic assumption behind the interviews is expressed by Mason (2002) as a case where it is possible to investigate the elements of the social by asking people to talk and to gather or construct knowledge by listening to and interpreting what they say and how they say it.

The particular style of interview used in this research is the semi-structured interview. Neither structured nor unstructured<sup>2</sup> approaches were considered suitable for this research. The former limits the type of subjective information sought from being disclosed, (e.g. personal aspirations and experiences). The latter was considered harder to control from the interviewer stance considering the extent of the researcher's interview experience, the range of potential respondents' interests and the need to focus on rhetoric and aspirations specific to the research topic, as opposed to the misinterpreted or preferred topics of the respondent.

Semi-structured interviews typically have a set of predefined questions or prompts for discussion that are based on the topic of research (Hessler 1992, Sarantakos 1993 and Robson 2002). A key feature is that the order in which questions are put to the respondent is not fixed and may be applied when they are best suited in the conversation. Moreover due to the potential range of interests and roles among the respondents it means that with the semi-structured approach there is the capacity to develop some discussion with new questions and prompt or probe in other areas where perhaps there is some misunderstanding. Furthermore, there is the capacity to leave out questions where they are irrelevant.

Part of the rationale behind choosing a (semi-structured) interview schedule as a tool for enquiry came partly from suggestions made by King (1994). King's suggestions are cited in Robson's book and describe the case for when an interview of a qualitative nature should be considered most appropriate. The suggestions are as follows in the context of this research:

1. Where a study focuses on the meaning of a particular phenomenon to the participants.

2. Where individual perceptions of processes within a social unit- such as a work group, department or whole organisation – are to be studied prospectively, using a series of interviews
3. Where individual historical accounts are required of how a particular phenomenon developed
4. Where exploratory work is required before a quantitative study can be carried out.
5. Where a quantitative study has been carried out, and qualitative data are required to validate particular messages or to clarify and illustrate the meaning of the findings.

Other tasks to be considered included the interview length, questions (and their rationale) approaching potential respondents, negotiating a rendezvous and ensuring a means of recording the conversation. The researcher also needs to seek a rapport with the respondent, control the conversation and finally understand the answers and non-verbal communications of the respondent, all in a professional and confident manner. Eighteen interviews were conducted during the period January – October 2004. Twelve interviews were with Forestry Commissions personnel and six with partners. These included Groundwork Trust, local academic institutions, community forests and local authorities.

Interviews were designed to last for one hour, any longer and it may have been difficult to fit the interview in the busy schedule of the respondents. Keeping the interest of the interviewee for longer than one hour was anticipated to be a risk. Less than an hour long was considered as too short to cover the topics, especially where the respondents might have got really engaged with the conversation and where some guidance or summary was

required. A similar rationale for interview length is suggested by Robson (1995) who believes that anything under half an hour is probably of little analytical value, whilst anything over an hour is asking too much of someone's time and effort.

The style and approximate structure for the interviews was developed through a series of drafts. Pilot versions were practised on friends and colleagues in an attempt to gain a feel for the duration and flexibility in the questions. It was decided that in the final version (see appendix I) there would need to be a brief introduction as suggested by Robson (1993, 2002) in which the purpose of the interview, the nature of the research and a statement of confidentiality were made. Following this, the interview began by asking short contextual questions about the position, role and responsibilities of the respondent- it was hoped this would serve to build a rapport, ease the nerves of interviewee and interviewer. Moreover due to the diverse potential of the respondent in this context, it was deemed essential for identifying groups and observations within them.

The remainder of the interview sought to explore aspirations for public benefits from woodlands created specifically to generate public benefits. Respondents were encouraged to express their personal aspirations (if they had any), as well as those for the institution to which they belonged. One of the main methodological reasons for this is the risk that when discussing 'work' objectives interviewees frame their answers within the institutional discourse. May (2002) argues this results in a lack of descriptive content, unless the institution itself is the focus. It was felt therefore that it would be better to have a personal version, and the institutional account if both were available, especially since some of the respondents would not belong to the Forestry Commission but to operational partners.

Apart from the contextual demographic questions at the beginning, the remaining questions were all open-ended used in conjunction with a set of probes and prompts. These were organised as three central questions relating to the theoretical orientation of the research. The questions centred on:

1. Locating the issue (Grounds) – Grounding the problem and solution in the NW
2. Justifications (Warrants) – Appropriateness of forestry and forestry policy to the NW agenda
3. Outputs/conclusions (Conclusions) – Evidence for public benefits, threats to the agenda, future projections

### **Focus Groups**

Part of the original intention had been to use focus groups (or group interviews as Morgan (1998<sup>a and b</sup>) describes them) as a primary method alongside the interviews. It was hoped that focus groups could be assembled from the research area, specifically from the communities nearest to the case-study sites. The plan involved inviting small groups of 8-12 participants relevant to each site and encouraging them to interact with one another through discussion of their own experiences of restored sites and the way in which they, as stakeholders, saw their own aspirations for public benefits represented in the claims for the sites.

Focus groups were chosen as Morgan (1997) identifies them as having a supplementary role, where the knowledge collected would be used to supplement the observations from the interviews. This was especially true for the delivery partners who, like the public, were able to comment from outside the FC's institutional discourse and reflect on the FC's role. It was predicted

as unlikely that the focus group would be as informative as individual interviews when it came to controversy over claims or aspirations or compete with the intimacy in which it is easier to reveal personal opinions and points (Kaplowitz and Hoehn, 2001). The primary function of the focus groups was to generate an understanding of public experiences and attitudes concerning the aspirations for claims for the sites, a role which Fern (1982) sees the focus group as well suited to do.

Respondents needed to be recruited on the basis that their contribution promised to be relevant to the research topic. Participants were to be recruited on the basis that they would have been aware of the regeneration process of derelict, underused and neglected land, had direct experience of the new woodlands established, and were willing to share their opinions, feelings and attitudes formed from those experiences.

There is much published material concerning the composition of groups; however, the rationale behind this factor had to remain simple as it was forewarned by professionals operating in the area that access to and responses from the target communities would be difficult. Added to this were the experiences of Burgess (1996) who found that trying to access and recruit participants of a different type within geographical boundaries, specific to the research was extremely difficult. Compromise therefore had to be an option. Focus group composition was influenced by the experiences of practitioners plus suggestions by Krueger (1994:74) that respondents simply needed to be “the right people”- they simply had to be relevant to the study area. This meant that social differences were accepted and that social homogeneity was not necessary. Critics of this approach believe social differences would influence the dynamics of the group’s discussion and compromise individual contributions and willingness to participate (see Stycos 1981).

Communities selected for recruitment were identified by their proximity to the woodland sites and the age of the housing, suggesting it had been there

long enough for the residents to have potentially experienced the regeneration of nearby areas. Originally it was hoped that contacts in the area would provide access to communities. However this was declined as an option when suggested. Practitioners in the area were protective over the fragility of the relationships they had established with local communities. There was repeated concern that respondents would interpret this research as a form of consultation seeking input into the sites amenities and provisions.

A second attempt to access communities and offer invitations to attend a focus group involved a personal door-to-door approach in the area, where it was hoped at least one resident per street would be confirmed until the capacity of 12 was met. Despite a brief explanation on the doorstep and a leaflet to read afterwards containing contact details; no-one was recruited.

A revised approach used local churches as a potential access point to the local communities. Churches were identified from maps on the basis to their proximity within or to the target communities. These were then contacted and the research explained with the hope that members of the community could be approached with an invite through a local and trusted figure. This resulted in one focus group in Burtonwood. Due to time constraints Burtonwood was the only focus group created.

The Burtonwood focus group took place on the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2005 in the St. Michael's parish hall. The group consisted of 12 mixed parishioners, all residents of Burtonwood and frequent users of Colliers Moss Common community woodland site nearby. Participants had been approached by a local person who delivered a personal invitation explaining the research and the topic for discussion on headed paper (see appendix II). At the end of the evening an incentive of £10 per respondent was paid, this combined with free food and drinks in familiar surroundings may have contributed to the successful turnout. The incentive is a method used by

Burgess (1993) in securing a turn out after similar difficulties in initiating access to communities. Added to this the incentive was also a way of compensating participants for their time.

The discussion lasted just over 90 minutes, as anticipated, and centred on the issues listed below:

- Experiences of the site prior to its restoration
- Opinions on, and aspirations for, benefits through restoration
- Experience of contributing to the benefits sought from restoration
- Knowledge of who is involved in the restoration

Useful insights were gained but costs in terms of time, effort and money made focus groups intractable to pursue. By the time Burtonwood was established, there was little time to make further progress with seeking alternative means of accessing other communities in the remaining area. The amount of effort required was underestimated. As anticipated by Morgan (1998<sup>b</sup>) costs were incurred in planning, visiting the area and approaching a range of community gatekeepers.

As a facilitator a Research Assistant, was used who helped with recording the discussion and laying-on refreshments. Added to this was the cost of hiring the venue, the travel costs and the financial incentives for attendees. The total cost of the Burtonwood discussion was in the region of £300.

The role of the moderator is crucial to the productivity of the discussion group through attention given to the points made by the informants and a belief that the informants are valid sources of information and that it is their insight that is being sought. (Krueger 1998a; Fern 2001; Webb 2002). Despite this, it was difficult to control certain individuals who saw the discussion for either staging their own agenda, which swayed the discussion as others contested or agreed with it or, as happened, used their own mannerism to virtually intimidate others into minimal contributions. Perhaps this is a problem when

respondents are composed from the same area, having undergone the same personal hardships regarding the derelict nature of their surroundings etc, and members of the same social interests group- the parish congregations. Added to this are the social influences of age and gender.

In trying to moderate conversation it may have seemed that respondents' (unrelated) issues were not as interesting as those scheduled for the evening- as such many of the scheduled topics became rather abstract and needed repeated explanations when returned to in the middle of an unrelated discussion (e.g. bus timetables and childhood stories regarding the site) The 90 minutes of transcript demonstrated a remarkable divide between the efforts of the moderator and the intentions of the local voices and highlighted the inexperienced nature of the researcher. Due to lack of time, financial resources and the quality of the information gained the focus group was subsequently dropped from the analysis.

## **Overview**

Semi-structured interviews are the primary method of empirical enquiry. Interviews with key Forestry Commission personnel and professional partners totalled 18 out of 22 approached. Interview transcriptions were analysed in two stages: By content analysis 'what is there?' and then in terms of rhetorical arguments i.e. grounds, warrants and conclusions.

Documentary analysis: also proved an effective method of exploring published claims constructing the case for woodland cover, particularly in relation to restoration of damaged derelict and underused sites land to public benefit woodland in the NW. Claims were also analysed in terms of rhetorical structure i.e. grounds, warrants and conclusions.

Case-study sites to identify key issues and process taking place on the ground and to gauge the scope of locally aspired benefits were identified. The primary role of the sites is not in terms of validation of benefits but rather to facilitate the identification of key individuals for interviews.

Placements in and visits to the North West to identify key individuals and familiarise the researcher were also crucial. Within the context of day-to-day operational issues and the realities of public benefit aspirations in practitioner mindsets, this research aided the construction of the interview schedule and informal absorption of attitudes and issues.

The focus group with local communities-of-place for their perspective as stakeholders was, however, subsequently dropped from the study due to poor quality information and cost.

<sup>2</sup> Structured interviews are based on strict procedures and highly structured interview guide, prescribed by the researcher to the respondent, there is no capacity within the structure to make adjustments to any of it's components such as content, wording or order of the questions. Many of the answers may be predetermined.

Unstructured interviews are the opposite. There is no restriction on the wording or order of the interview schedule, instead of being prescriptive; the interviewer delivers questions as reactions to answers and the basis behind the line of questioning. Unstructured interviews are theoretically inconceivable, as all interviews will have a loose structure in the form of the topic or duration. (See Sarantakos 1993 and 1998)

## **Chapter 5: Initial Data Analysis and Identification of Themes**

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This chapter analyses themes from the transcribed interviews identified through content analysis. This initial analysis has identified six recurring themes and offers an insight into the issues that relate to the day-to-day delivery of community woodlands. Moreover it highlights the potential for the application of the claims-making approach as a way of exploring patterns within these themes.

### **The Forestry Commission as risk-takers**

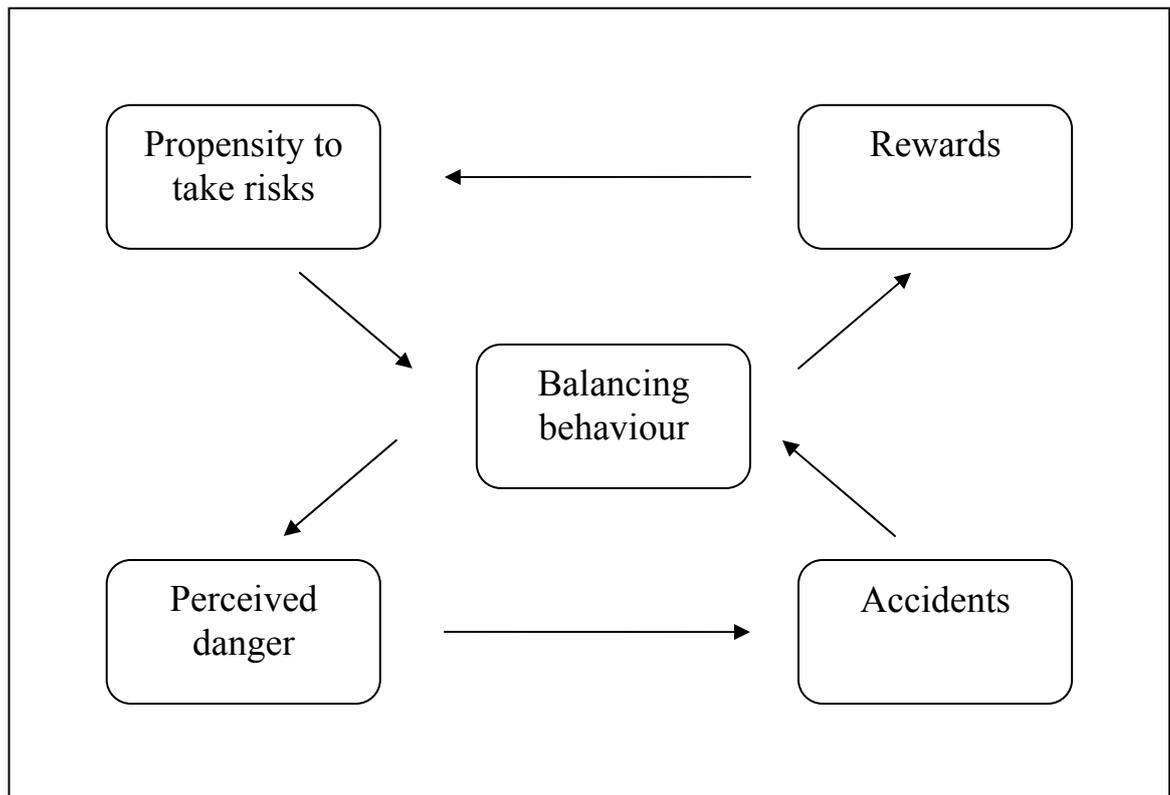
The first theme concerns the willingness to take risks. Risks by definition do not take place unless there is a reward for exposing oneself to an adverse consequence of having taken the decision to act. For the Forestry Commission, the resolution was (and still is) about operating in a new environment on a new forestry agenda for a strikingly new set of forestry objectives in ways that were not traditionally associated with their image, attempting this on unproductive sites. Further, the FC are doing this with an audience of government officials, the Treasury, potential partners and some of the poorest communities in England, and all with public money.

The FC had set out to deliver the England Forestry Strategy in the Northwest. The reward for doing so was (is) to demonstrate contemporary integrated English forest policy and uphold the UK's global commitment to the principles of sustainable forest management.

Adams (1995) argues that Risk as a concept is very difficult to measure objectively since perceptions of reward and failure whilst making risk decisions vary over time and place; risk, he argues, is a construct.

Adams uses the ‘Risk thermostat’ to demonstrate that risk taking is a balance between reward and adversity under constructed realities. The risk thermostat is shown in figure V.I and is included as a way of demonstrating risk as a construct and as demonstrating how risk decisions are made.

Figure V.I: The risk thermostat after Adams, 1995



There are factors within Adam’s thermostat model to consider and which inform the basis of the following analysis was approached. Firstly, everyone has a tendency to take risks of one kind or another, and this is an individual trait; some will have a greater propensity than others for their own reasons but it is generally under the influence of potential rewards from risk-taking and from experience (own and others) of losses.

Risk-taking decisions at the individual level are said to represent a balancing act where, perceptions of risk are set against inclination to take risk. Losses and rewards are the consequences of taking risks, and the more risks that an individual takes the greater, on average, will be both the rewards and the losses incurred (Adams 1995). The same applies to the organisational level

although organisations are reluctant to take risks unless compelled by external circumstances.

Within the professional discourse there is a recurring element of concern for a number of issues relevant to the community forests programme in the Northwest; concerns that can be interpreted as risk since these matters are generally related to uncertainties in the future with regard to the success of community woodland sites and its implications for those involved.

Risk in the context of community woodland is a major theme made up of five sub-types of risk, which represent five different types of concern apparent in FC personnel and their partners; these ‘types’ of risk are identified in relation to the risk thermostat (Figure **V.II**).

Figure V.II: Themes from of risk from the empirical data in the context of the risk thermostat

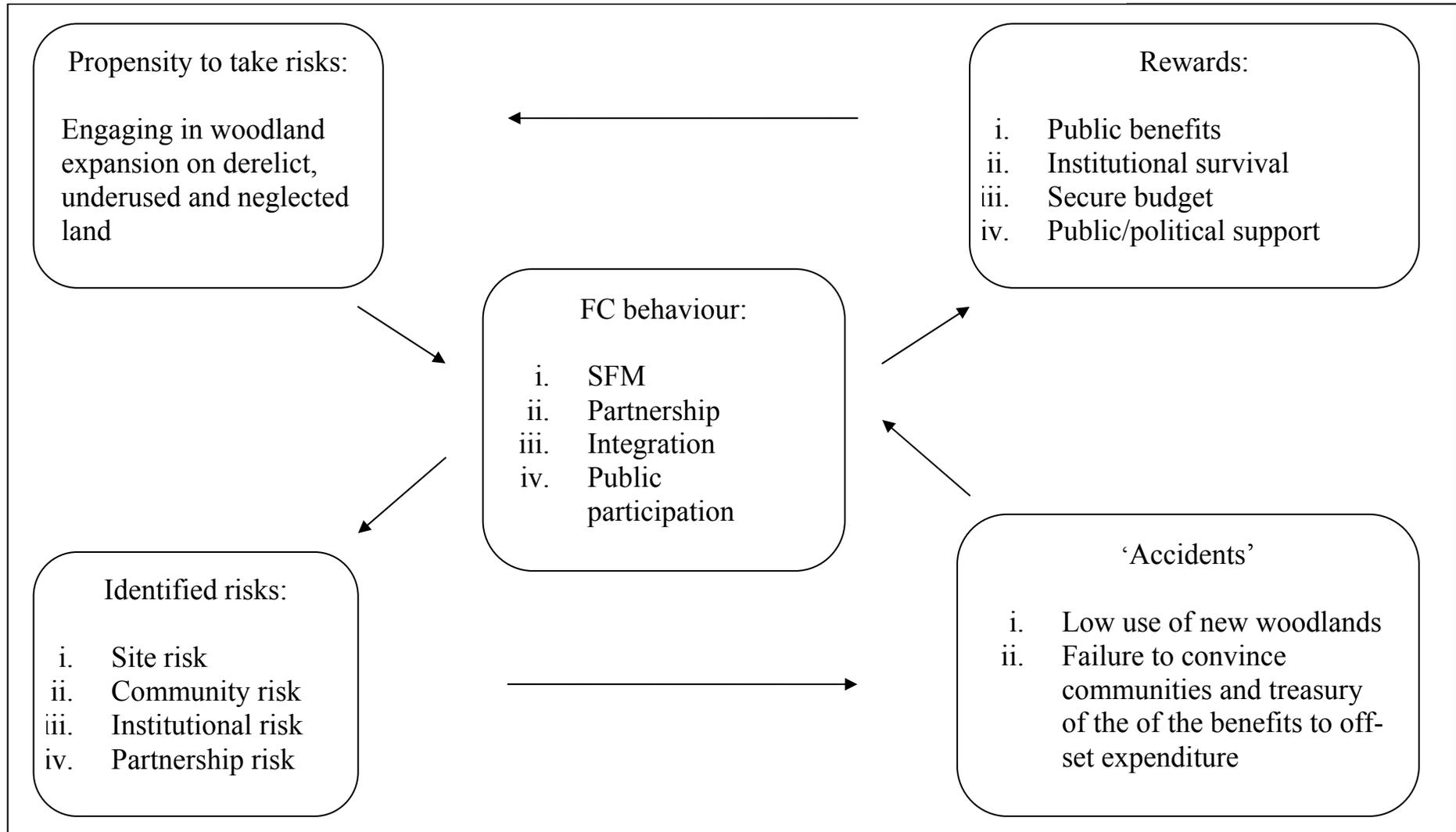


Figure V.II illustrates the structure of risk in this instance. It argues that FC practitioners have revealed several good reasons (rewards) for delivering forest policy in the region. They express the need to adopt the principle of delivery that the England Forest Strategy expects, despite unfamiliarity with the territory and conditions on the ground.

The types of risk shown in Figure V.II are outlined in the first half of this section with supporting quotes. Besides simply representing types of risk, the following subcategories prove to have linkages between one another, serving to argue that *Risk* as a construct is a coherent concept and not a loosely arranged list of ideas. The latter half of this section will argue this case; Figure V.II demonstrates the linkages within risk and identifies the nature of the links and will form the basis for discussion.

### **The types of risk**

#### *Site risk*

Facing different types of risk is a theme that pervaded the Forestry Commission's objectives of previous decades and one which evidently still persists today. At the very simplest level the success and reputation of the community forests programme balances on the ability of trees to take and mature on sites, which, in terms of soil conditions are unfavourable:

*“The baseline of the soil and the site conditions is that bad that nobody expects you to be able to plant anything on there, and to actually plant trees on there means a lot more...that's what the challenge is on these sites, to plant trees on these sites which don't look like they could harbour any kind of vegetation”.* (FC Practitioner)

This statement from an FC practitioner at the sharp-end of the management of a community woodland site typified the opinion of others in that there is a

perceived risk of failure, this forms a challenge to be met. There is an underlying air of confidence about the ability of the FC to get trees to grow there and it is apparent in the comments of their partners.

Drawing on their past experiences, FC personnel often compare these sites to those with more preferable growing conditions in more familiar environments where the risks are smaller, and expressed concern that growth will be at an unsatisfactory rate to convince audiences. Many respondents aired this concern over growth rates with comments such as “*Woodland doesn’t grow overnight*” and “*to expect 15 to 20 years of appreciable debt*” in terms of realising some benefits (FC practitioners). Another practitioner has noted:

*“You know, the time to deliver it from programme development to trees going into the ground could be significantly longer in brownfield site development and I think we have got to get our heads around that in a way as to the pitfalls and all the problems that you face in developing sites to the point of actually getting trees on the ground and getting an infrastructure there that people can actually start to use. Compare this to woodland on an improved grassland site in the countryside!”*

An undertone of uncertainty exists within the Community Forests Programme with regard to the future of their work. Uncertainty exists both in the FC and its partners with regard to the future of CW sites once restoration is complete, particularly in concerns over maintenance and ownership. For instance in relation to communities it was noted:

*“It’s been my experience that the first thing that anybody asks is ‘who’s going to look after it?’”* (FC Partner)

In most of the partner’s responses it appears that the FC is seen as key reducing the risk of future neglect:

*“It could all come apart but maybe it won’t and it will become self-supporting and then it won’t matter. There is optimism that the FC will look after it in the long term...but will there be support after that?” (FC partner)*

### *Community risk*

A second source of risk is from the communities themselves. The very people who form the community after which Community Woodland (CW) takes its name cause considerable concern to the FC and its partners. There are a number of reasons for this and some of them are well documented, others less so.

As the name suggests, communities form an essential audience in the community forests programme serving as a partner in the design, the benefactor from the restoration and also through their level of use as a measure of its success. The risk is that if communities are seen to be unconvinced of the potential value of the community forests programme from the outset and throughout the restoration then many of the sites will ultimately be seen as not delivering the benefits that justified their endorsement in the beginning, let alone the costs to the tax payer. Foresters and their partners see several threats that may contribute to a poor uptake and use by the communities adjacent to CW sites. Outlined here, these threats centre around perception and drive.

Perception focuses on how communities perceive the FC and what they think it stands for as an organisation. In turn, this reflects on what wooded landscapes mean in terms of the communities’ access and behaviour, both are seen as potential threats. To some the FC is perceived as an organisation that restricts access. One FC employee having worked with communities in the NW commented that the FC gives an unwelcoming impression with regard to access

*“(The) people there were quite certain that if there was a Forestry Commission sign there it meant that it was owned by the government and therefore you were not allowed in”*

This is obviously a negative factor when intending to work on the doorsteps of communities with this impression; Supporting Chestnut is Sycamore who works in coordinating community involvement on CW sites.

Another FC community forester comments as to how images of the FC is synonymous with industrial forestry:

*“These are areas that aren’t traditionally associated with large scale forestry and the FC which was seen as an organisation involved with that image”*

And ‘that image’, he goes on to say, is not something with which urban communities appear to be comfortable with relating to access:

*“People by and large are very scared of woodlands; they see them as harbouring anti-social elements.... It’s primeval instinct and comes from genetic memory- we like to see what’s going on... in medieval times these places were places you didn’t go and has been passed on in folklore. Woodlands were a place for thieves... and landowners!”*

Thus despite community woodlands being developed in partnership there is a perceived risk of low use levels. This statement rings with that of an FC project coordinator who comments on strategies for entering community woodland sites:

*“...production forestry was not going to be the main driver, I don’t think it was very high up on the list at all- and it’s a good job too as people wouldn’t take to kindly to seeing production taking place around their everyday lives”*  
(Senior FC Practitioner)

A further risk at community level is lack of ‘drive’: Drive can be looked upon as what needs to be developed within communities’ in order to encourage the use of woodlands i.e. the social capital that needs to be developed to counter the disillusionment, low interest and negative behaviour seen on the sites. Disillusionment is a key factor that has to be overcome in the communities adjacent to CW sites, Several respondents commented that the Community Woodlands programme is not the first ‘greening’ initiative for some of these sites and through the demise of previous schemes, community interest and trust has been lost. FC personnel and partners commented from experience on sites tackled by the former National Coal Board.

*“These sites in the old days were previously restored but ad hoc and when finished they were just left without any maintenance and just turned into areas that nobody wants to go onto- they have fly-tipping and abandoned cars- anti-social activities, they are just hell-holes really”* (FC Partner);

*“There are challenges...The worst thing in my experience that you can do in some of these deprived communities is to raise expectations...we weren’t the first group of people, the first organisation to go in to plant a woodland to transform a derelict site- others had tried and failed so when we got there was a degree of people saying, ‘oh here we go again’”* (FC Practitioner).

The communities have been let down. Generating their involvement is paramount but is not helped by the social context and lack of trust and interest in developing woodlands, something which the FC and its partners see as a major factor.

*“The areas around Moston Vale are in a very deprived area... Many of the streets are empty, you can go down some of the streets and fifty-seven percent of the houses are vacant, a lot of the houses that are occupied are on the*

*short-term. A lot of them are rented and you can get a quite high tenant turn-over so people don't stay there long-enough for a sense of ownership, sense of drive, which is why they don't care if the tipping goes on because they won't be there in three months, six months or whatever, this is a source of problems between the long-term residents and the short-term, trying to get them involved is a challenge” (FC Partner);*

*“Some of them have pretty poor standards of living, probably more interested in where they can get their next packet of fags rather than E putting in a fence around some woodland” (FC Practitioner).*

### *Partnership risk*

A third source of risk is that which comes with working from other interest groups and was voiced by both FC and partner respondents. There are of course many positives to partnership working and these are mentioned elsewhere.

Due to the nature of the respondents there was more opportunity for FC to voice concern but that doesn't detract from the importance of the issues raised by partner voices. The latter will be outlined first.

A representative from the one of the Groundwork trusts in the NW displayed some chagrin about the way in which he saw involvement by the FC threatened as over-shadowing the work of his own organisation:

*“... in some ways it's like they nicked the idea off us. You know it's like everyone is talking about community involvement, community forest spaces, the environment, but it was our aim to create these areas but everyone seems to have cottoned onto the idea that what's the point in having something unless people use it, something like a sitka spruce plantation or what ever you know, it's a little like they all got on the band-wagon”.*

He also saw partnership working with the FC as a means of actually slowing down processes on the ground through bureaucratic processes in the office:

*“We applied for seven grand to plant standards; they said we can have the money but the department does not have the time to fill in forms, it’s too bureaucratic and they shoot themselves in the foot that way.”*

With the FC, more than one interviewee commented on the risk that partners’ level of financial interest for their own agenda may adversely affect action on the ground. For example one commented:

*“Re partnerships for sites: the priorities are different is because everyone has their own strategies...we’ve got try and hit our objectives but we’re trying to please the partners all the time.... whereas the other people because they are trying to get funding, external funding all the time, I think... more often than not, they hinder us that help us. I don’t think, partnership works, it sounds really good, but practically, it’s very different”*

Another noted:

*“I suppose the deal with partners has been dealt with before now, its always going to be an issue because different partners have different objectives”*

Despite these differences, partnerships are seen almost as a ‘necessary evil’, the balance of which is crucial to delivery. Equally, they pose risk of failure and rely on building capacity with others:

*“We are a bit prisoner to our partners in that our partners might be wanting one thing but the real world might be going in another direction. We have to take the partners perspective. If we take off on the wrong foot then we could find ourselves in a few problems, putting public money into the wrong places,*

*but being a public department you don't set off on policy without having consulted widely we don't just listen to one group E the FC although principally being about trees and woodland is, has many different agendas”*  
(Senior FC Practitioner)

### *Institutional risk*

The way in which the FC is perceived by others, including local communities and politicians is a significant concern as both have a part to play in terms of keeping the FC practising in the North West. This was aptly conveyed by one respondent:

*“we've discovered that British timber quality isn't that great and as the bottom has fallen out of the market we've got to look at other ways of staying ahead of the game, to stay alive really...to .maintain popularity”* (FC Practitioner)

The respondent has outlined the FC's realisation that it needed to change, both in terms of its image and in terms how and where it operates. This ? fundamental ? and change, as the FC's traditional image and operations are the opposite of what the FC is trying to project at the moment.

The ability to convince their audiences that they are able to provide and deliver solutions to the North West's problems is only one institutional concern; at the simplest level this is new territory for an organisation and has led to an element of internal self-reflection. The FC's involvement was seen as a controversial move amongst its own ranks from the outset.

Along with the challenge of changing 'who we are', a further risk to success has been the FC's need to 'gamble' with new practices for which there was often little procedure. In particular the way in which communities and external agencies were involved with site design and restoration appear to be

negotiated less smoothly than mat have been the case with a larger body of experience to draw upon.

Beside this is the concern that sites may not yield public benefits in the way the partnership expects:

*“Nothings been proved anywhere, all the sorts of outcomes, the things that we’ve been suggesting are going to happen because of what we do are all untested because the forests haven’t been going long enough yet to be tested....”* (Senior FC Practitioner)

*“There is a lot of anecdotal evidence for these restored areas...but what I’d like is to reassured that what we are doing is something that the public want...I don’t think our evidence is as strong as I would like it to be...It’s very difficult to put your hands on evidence – it’s almost become an act of faith”* (FC Partner)

#### *Political risk:*

Political risk is essentially the threat that the political audience, and in particular the Treasury, will not be convinced of the new woodlands ability to deliver their claimed benefits. The significance here is that, without government support the FC could no longer operate as it does in the North West. One project manager highlighted the potential loss of government backing as being important for, without it, the FC could not operate as it does in the North West. The FC relies on government funds to operate; naturally it then also acts as a vehicle for upholding its new role; something which is seen as crucial for its own survival in the present climate of land management agency reform.

This degree of uncertainty regarding policy outcomes was reflected by one forester: “ *It is, dramatically different, you know, and I very much welcome that, the biggest problem is of course financing because the, much of what we produce, you cannot actually quantify in cost terms. You can actually sit there and say that you have huge numbers of non-market benefits but you try and put a financial equation that will stand up and satisfy treasury*” (Senior FC Practitioner)

FC practitioners feel as if they are constantly under the scrutiny of government economists, and constantly having to provide figures that satisfy. One FC practitioner described this as ‘a hard nut to crack’- the problem of justifying the costs in getting community woodland sites up, growing and delivering benefits in the short-term, as future funding for the sites is entirely on the back of the benefits claimed for them. This is inevitably associated with a sense of caution within the FC:

*“It’s pretty high aspirations... they are very broad brushstrokes... we are going to succeed, we’re going to do some really good work out there, we are going to spend significant amounts of public funds.... No beating about the bush.. Where we’re spending very very hard earned public funds, and there’s a hell of a lot of responsibility in that-, we can all take a swipe at the health service or the education in this country, but you know, its going to be a damn sight easier taking a swipe at us”* (FC Practitioner).

Since evidence for the benefits generated from planting community woodlands at these sites is generally conceded as anecdotal, the gaze of the Treasury looms especially large. This is exaggerated by the high costs associated with site conditions, especially when in comparison to the sites more traditionally dealt with by the FC. Those with experience notice that in the short term these sites may not actually make financial sense; they do,

however, gamble on the strategic location of the sites as being able to yield social and environmental benefits in the long-term.

Being able to satisfy the Treasury with claims for the benefits of community woodlands offsetting the costs in establishing them adds risk which is compounded by time; however there are added dimensions to this form or risk.

The FC fully acknowledges that Sustainable Development stems from social demands that have been interpreted within politics. Being a political department the FC is naturally trying to meet the aspirations of Sustainable Development and sees itself as doing so through its involvement in the Northwest. In seizing this opportunity the FC has found a tension between the rhetoric and reality of sustainable development, for example:

*“... there is a big tension I think between the aspirations of sustainable development and the things that the government actually is able to do; so the treasury is probably challenged as well”* (Senior FC Practitioner)

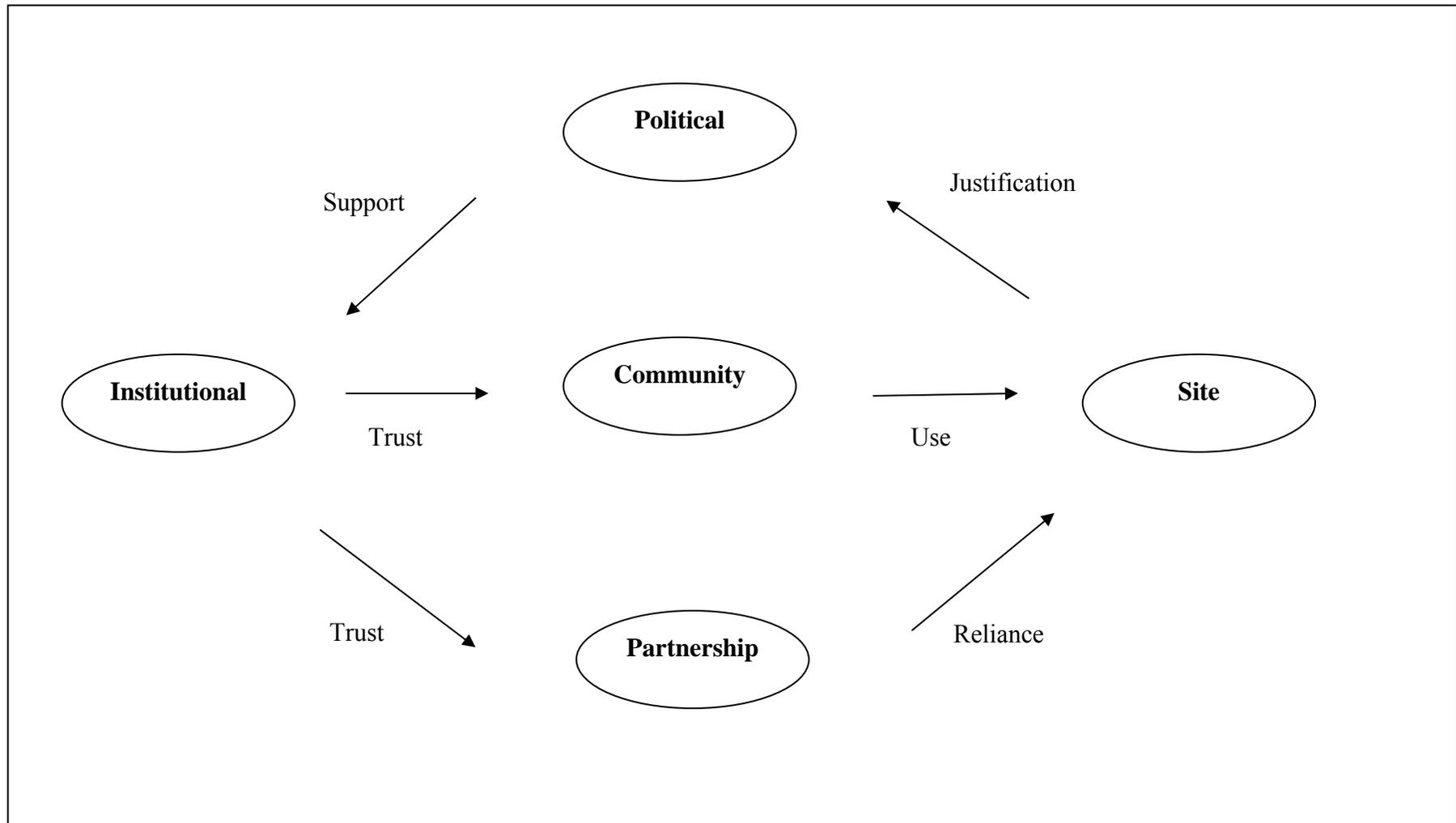
*“We’ve got to very much rely on public support and public pressure to keep us in the game because I think the economists would otherwise close us down very quickly”* (FC Practitioner)

### **Interpretation of the Risk Themes**

The five separate risk themes converge in ways that make them more than the sum of their component apprehensions. This section, first identifies the linkages between the themes and second, tries to explain the overall nature of risk.

Figure **V.III** depicts a conceptual plan of risk from the practitioner-FC and partner- standpoint. The links have been labelled in order to describe the type of linkage between the sub-categories. A notable feature is that all the terms are positive, but the breakdown of any of them can demonstrate risk.

Figure V.III: 'Forestry Commission' balancing behaviour' to minimise risks



For example, in relation to trust, a decision maker representing social forestry within the Forestry Commission commented:

*“ (The) Forestry Commission... it is a government department, it has to do what the government wants it to do and the government has to do what society wants it to do or it gets voted out- I know it’s not that simple but that’s really the origin in changes in the way we do things.... the Forestry Commission is no longer trusted to carry on and operate as though it knew what it was doing and could impose it’s view on other people.”*

Minimising institutional risks depends on building trusts, and failure to do so represents an ‘accident’ as described by Adams (1995).

Trust is also a good narrative for describing the linkage between Institutional risk and Community risk. Communities affected by operations in the North West are an essential audience to be convinced of the returns and value of Community woodlands- especially where restoration is on their doorstep. Instead of gaining trust in order to secure funding, trust in this case is perhaps more personal. It means convincing communities of the FC’s commitment to actually deliver a local, green resource. The challenge here is that communities adjacent to DUN land feel as if they have been let down by other organisations making similar claims which for one reason or another have never come to fruition. The importance of regaining community confidence and trust in projects such as the CW initiative is something which both the Forestry Commission and its partners are aware of through experience:

*“...people have been promised a lot in the past and nothing happened so they are getting cynical, they say, ‘yea, yea, yea... you’re going to plant some trees and put a path in, yea, go away’. But this time they have a feel that that isn’t*

*happening this time and so there is a bit of public support for it”*

(FC partner)

*“The worst thing in my experience that you can do in some of these deprived communities is to raise expectations beyond you...we weren’t the first group of people, the first organisation to go in to see a woodland to transform a derelict site- others had tried and failed so when we got there was a degree of people saying, ‘oh here we go again’ (FC senior practitioner)*

The notion of trust also extends between Institutional risk and Partnership risk- unsurprising since partners form a third audience group from a claims-making stance. There has to be trust between partners, but the FC feel an especial need to secure partners’ trust in themselves since they are aware that they cannot work independently in a new working/policy environment.

From the ‘hindrance’ and ‘prisoner to our partners’ comments made by FC personnel, the FC can be said to be making compromises in how it does things in order to satisfy its partners and generate their trust. To some extent this is also happening in capturing community trust.

On another level the FC can be said to be using their enormous bank of prior expertise to elicit trust from their partners despite the associated compromises.

Trust and use describe how institutional risk and site risk are linked. There are inherent risks with the FC undertaking work in an urban context with less than favourable ground conditions, as have been discussed earlier. In terms of linkage, the sites on which restoration is taking place actually act as canvases on which the FC have to demonstrate their ability to deliver and support their image of a doer to their three audiences. If survival of trees on site is poor and ongoing then this will reflect badly on the FC; if audiences are convinced then returns will be rapid.

‘Justification’ describes the concept that links political risk to site risk since this relationship is exclusively about validating the claims and aspirations for community woodland sites to Government. The linkage is obvious- without government support, the future for CW sites in the NW would be negligible. Justification then, is normally discussed in terms of expenditure and measurable returns from the sites; the effect of restoration on house-prices being one such example. For example:

*“...the biggest problem is of course financing...much of what we produce, you cannot actually quantify that in cost terms you can actually sit there and say that you have huge numbers of non-market benefits but you try and put a financial equation to that, what will stand up to satisfy Treasury... the economists are working on us all the time, the sooner we come up with figures that satisfy the treasury, the better. Whether we will ever crack that hard nut, I don’t know!!!”* (Senior FC Practitioner)

When asked about concerns for the future of CW programmes in the NW, one respondent summed up this linkage:

*“E no there are none (worries regarding) because of the FC backing, I think if we were relying on, the whole long-term of the woodland and we didn’t have a government department backstopping this whole venture I think it would be very, very difficult...”* (FC Senior practitioner)

Where lack of support equates with future uncertainty, this counts as a clear linkage as it is expressed on the ground. However there is a second element to this which has been touched on in the above quote: one where the FC needs to justify costs and time rather than simply get money to spend on the ground for its own futurity. The availability of funding affirms a basis for representing a new (Social) Forestry Commission. Treasury money means not only work on

the ground which means being seen as a doer, but also demonstrates government favour for its new role.

A further key requirement is to minimise community risk by ensuring community use and belief in the benefits on offer. 'Use', referring to the uptake of Community Woodland sites in the North West by the target communities, aptly describes the relationship between community and site risks. 'Use' is seen as a measure of success. In one respect it means that the FC and its partners have delivered what they set out to do in the policy. In another way, 'Use' also means communities actually use the site and hopefully develop a sense of pride and appreciate it as a green asset.

Both of these measures link to the risks associated with the site if they are considered from reverse. '*The Holy Grail*' is how one FC employee referred to the scenario whereby communities felt so embedded with their local site that they seek to maintain and take custodianship of it with minimal FC intervention or cost. This is seen as encapsulating the sustainable ethos within the FC's policy literature whilst proving cost effective to the Treasury. Although the winners in the scenario are the communities, the FC also stands to gain since the principles behind S social forestry (championed by the FC) will have been proven worthwhile. Any form of positive use of CW sites therefore is seen as a small measure of success; on the ground this is largely from the, 'delivering a green asset' point of view, but to some it also answers the implicit 'what is in it for me' question.

Some FC personnel appear to believe that no matter what the cost, it is justified, if only those who need it most capture the smallest benefit. Others argue that if the 'use' is anti-social and goes against the grain of what is being sought on CW sites then the costs will continue to rise, offsetting short-term

successes. In normative terms some would see this as failure of the programme.

Community and site are linked by ‘Reliance’. Reliance comes from an acute sense of dependency within the partnership framework through which Community woodlands are delivered in the NW. This is perhaps unsurprising since the whole point of partnerships is for the pooling of knowledges’ and skills in order to achieve a common aim, usually out of reach of one acting independently; partners depend on one another to help deliver. For the FC, there is a logical understanding that if they were to try and ‘go it alone’ in the NW with Community Forestry they would encounter serious difficulties; this is a new agenda and a new operational environment. The consequences of ‘going it alone’ would be detrimental to their new-sought image as doers and solution providers giving best return for public money, in keeping with modern forestry policy. Yet, despite this, there are those amongst the FC that feel they are constrained by their partners when on the ground; this has been discussed in partnership risk as a sub-theme yet recurs here to demonstrate that partnerships from the FC perspective are sometimes perceived as a ‘necessary evil’ in overcoming the risks inherent with the future.

Despite the variety of perceptions among the FC ranks, the view from the partners really captures more strongly the notion of reliance. Rather than seeing the FC as holding them back, the partners are relying on the Commission to secure some sort of future for community woodland projects and the sites they represent through the enormous budget and knowledge they can claim to bring into the partnership. Partners talk of the way in which the FC’s involvement allows them to develop sites in ways they previously could not, as one FC partner explains:

*“Community forests have very limited funds; they don’t have someone down the road to do the tree planting. And it has worked really well in that the two*

*organisations complement each other, the Forestry Commission has the knowledge, the expertise and the funding to actually go out there and implement big projects, plant trees and do all the work necessary” (FC Partner)*

### **(A missing) Culture of Forestry for the North West**

Forestry is a cultural practice, both in the growing and the use of forests. A very striking feature of the areas in this study is that a culture of forestry appears to be absent. In many parts of the world, there is a long tradition of caring for woodland and being culturally accomplished in using them.

An example is in the northern Mayenne region of France.

This region is almost entirely rural and mostly under cultivation, be it agriculturally or arboriculturally; there are large expanses of well-managed multipurpose, mixed forest (such as at Bagnoles de L’Orne) and an entire landscape where nearly every tree has been managed in some way. The hedges are well established and represent generations’ worth of careful coppicing, pollarding and thinning; the pastures and orchards all have well maintained standard trees fenced in by home-grown posts. Everywhere, there is natural regeneration and continual use of trees in the landscape.

Significantly, though, there is no government agency or contractor deliberately intervening in generating this culture, it is undertaken by the communities themselves. In the forests there are professional foresters; in the scattered villages, farms and hamlets within a landscape of traditional smallholdings, which makes up the region’s rural, there are only individuals and small communities...and nearly everyone has a stack of fuel wood. What makes this significant is that people build their own stacks with locally gathered wood, which they mainly gather themselves. There are almost certainly economic, time-honoured and practical reasons for this behaviour but the fact that the trees are still growing, and continually being managed, demonstrates that trees are part of the embedded culture. Harvesting timber

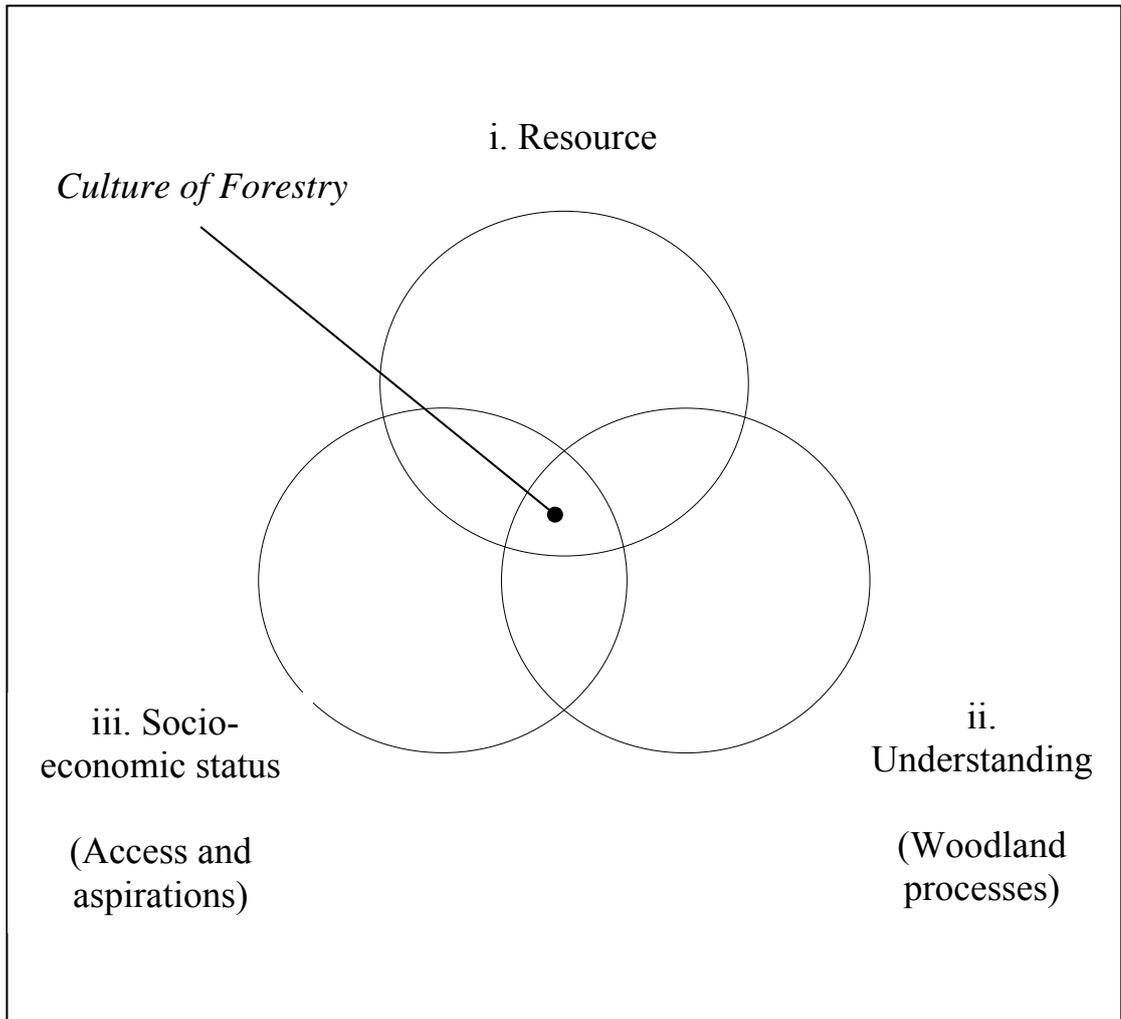
from a field boundary made of centuries old beech and ash is as ‘normal’ as buying a fresh baguette every morning. These people have a culture of forestry in that they understand trees as a sustainable resource and understand the processes involved in maintaining trees in the landscape. In the UK there are some examples of local cultures for which trees one way or another form an important factor in shaping daily life: the New Forest, Forest of Dean and West Argyll all display this to some extent.

According to practitioners in North West England this culture of forestry is missing in some of the former industrialised areas. Perhaps this is not a surprising feature considering its urbanised nature, but in terms of how it impacts on the lived experiences of professionals trying to encourage a culture that embraces community woodland, it is significant.

*“Forestry and deprived areas don’t go hand in hand since there is no culture of forestry in these areas”* (FC Partner)

A culture of forestry is made up of three elements as illustrated in Figure V.IV and occurs where these three elements overlap:

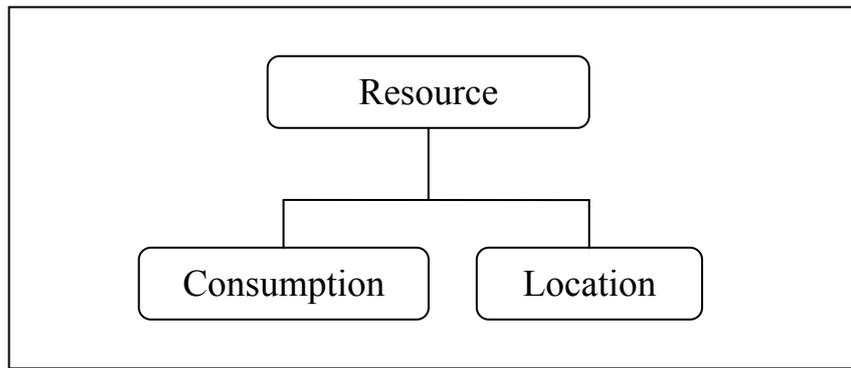
Figure V.IV: The components of a Culture of Forestry



**The three elements of a culture of forestry: ‘Resource’**

Figure two demonstrates the fundamentals of ‘Resource’ as component of a culture of forestry. Resource is concerned with how woodland is used and where this use it is likely to take place.

Figure V.V: Components of ‘resource’ in a culture of forestry



Resources, by definition are consumed. Consumption may be industrial in the typical sense of the plantation monocultures associated with the productivist forestry model or may be non-industrial, such as provision of supplementary wood-products. Where woodlands are being represented as post-industrial resources in the urban northwest, it is perhaps significant that, the local communities have a problem connecting and thus consuming them.

Consumption of woodlands as a resource can be influenced by the location of woodlands in relation to the target communities as well as the location of the communities themselves. The following quote from a civil servant illustrates the resource issue in the context of a missing forestry culture.

*“Areas of woodland creation previously were certainly not in urban/ urban fringe locations, they were out in the countryside“...we do have to have to look at ways of encouraging people to use them because for people of St. Helens its not part of their tradition to have these sorts of resources in their areas”* (FC Partner)

Thus, at the heart of the problem is the historical industrialisation the North West at the cost of its wooded estate. The people in the worst affected areas today are divorced from associations to woodland assets and therefore need encouraging to consume or *“have their hand held and taken to them”* as another respondent put it, as it is not part of their culture to have them. This also highlights a second prominent feature of resource, the logic of ‘urban-

rural’. Several interviewees referred to the ‘fact’ that trees occur more ‘naturally’ in the countryside- trees are part of the constructed rural landscape. This was often used to explain why the consumption of community woodlands needed promotion- because it was about urban perceptions of how woodlands are used as much as it was about having poor access opportunities. Typically the urban perception is that woodlands created in urban environments are used/taken over as haunts for anti-social behaviour, so then people are put off using them until they can be convinced otherwise. Interestingly, there is also a fear factor implicit in woodlands themselves; one respondent described it as a natural fear made all the more significant by a traditional divorce from woodlands.

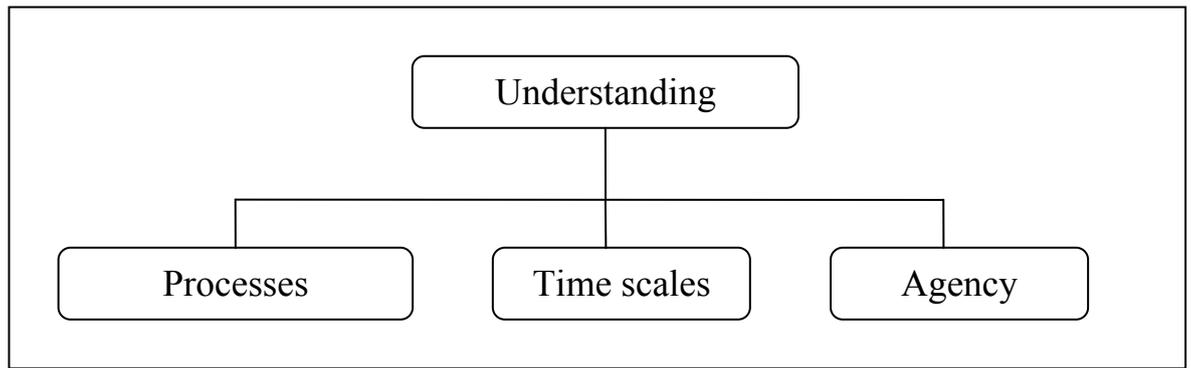
The ‘resource’ issue thus confines two aspects: the way in which woodlands are seen as rural resources and the way in which the urban perception of woodlands leads to a weakened understanding on how to consume them.

### *The problem of ‘Understanding’*

*“I don’t come from a rural background, I’ve always lived in a city and us city people when you ask about forest have a very different idea of what a forest is”* (FC Practitioner).

Drawing on what has been said about location, the preceding quote (actually from a community forester) introduces the problem of ‘understanding’ well. Understanding, or the lack of it, describes another set of features apparent in a missing culture of forestry and is primarily concerned with the way in which forestry, as a landuse is understood by people in the Northwest’s blighted areas. There are three main features to understanding (Figure V.VI).

Figure V.VI: Components of ‘understanding’ in a culture of forestry



The first concerns the ‘processes’ of forestry. Forestry professionals working in the North West have realised that since target communities are divorced from woodlands they are also somewhat alienated from the processes of managing wooded environments.

It is reported that communities in the Northwest see forestry as operating on scales inappropriate for the sites proposed in community woodland projects. They imagine wooded sites to be fundamentally on a large scale and with continuous canopy closure. Images of conifer plantations abound and consequently are at variance with expectations of the sites. Plantation scale forestry is seen as a rural activity, divorced from the areas being targeted.

Community consultations have demonstrated that by not being familiar with woodland as the Community Forest Programmes’ portrays it the people in target areas were unfamiliar with the process of establishing new woodland. Rather than pay attention to species assemblages and maintenance regimes, their concerns were generally for urban ‘reminders’, such as tarmac paths and street lighting; things familiar to them rather than things not so. One respondent believed that to overcome this, community consultation has to have a stronger top-down aspect, teaching communities the processes required to plant and maintain trees through to the infrastructure required to enjoy a site.

This is not to suggest that people in the target areas of the Northwest are totally ignorant of trees in the landscape nor incapable of enjoying trees. However, many communities in the Northwest are to some extent divorced, traditionally, from woodland and woodland processes through lack of activity in their lived space. One community forester believes that this is partly due to the way in which trees have been traditionally maintained in urban areas by local authorities; from his perspective, trees have been taken for granted because of their large scale in urban areas.

Closely related to processes is the concept of ‘timescales’. Timescales are important as they constrain the attainment of community forestry benefits. For example it was reported that:

*“ in traditional areas forestry is accepted and understood but in the areas we are focussing on now there are going to be harder questions being asked by communities that don’t understand- ‘why aren’t these trees being established, why aren’t they growing?’ ...Through a loss of understanding about the natural processes that are involved in establishing woodland*

(FC Practitioner)

This is a challenge for the FC, since these questions need to be explained if the benefits of social forestry are to be taken on board by the community (and political-partner audiences), a fact that the FC in the North West is acutely aware of.

One FC respondent described forests as generally conjuring up images of mature expanses of woodland, well embedded in the culture of the place where they exist. By comparison, he saw that creating new woodlands in the North West would take a “*long, long time*”, although the biggest issue he saw in the North West’s case was conveying the word ‘forest’ itself. This leads on the issue of ‘Agency’.

The images that are conjured up by the word forest are synonymous with the image of what the Forestry Commission might mean to people in urban areas- or at least this is the general belief of FC practitioners that work there. There are accounts where Forestry Commission personnel have had to explain their presence to people in the North West, as they are “*not supposed to be there*”. The Forestry Commission that people have heard of is supposed to be “*up on the hill*”, in plantations or even mature broadleaf woodlands, instead of contaminated land in St Helens. The following FC practitioners commented:

*“Now generating a new forest is going to take a long, long time and the biggest thing you’ve got to get through there is the bloody word itself”*  
(FC Practitioner).

*“we’re talking about urban areas here and these are areas that aren’t traditionally associated with large scale F and the FC which was seen as an organisation involved with that image”* (FC Practitioner)

This resonates with previous comments about ‘resources’, where woodlands are portrayed by urban dwellers as rural resources; this also demonstrates that the Forestry Commission is unsurprisingly seen as a rural agency.

In describing their experience working in the Northwest, FC personnel have argued that where communities are unfamiliar with the opportunities that woodlands can provide, they are alas unfamiliar with the FC as an agency. Interestingly this is seen as an opportunity rather than a set back:

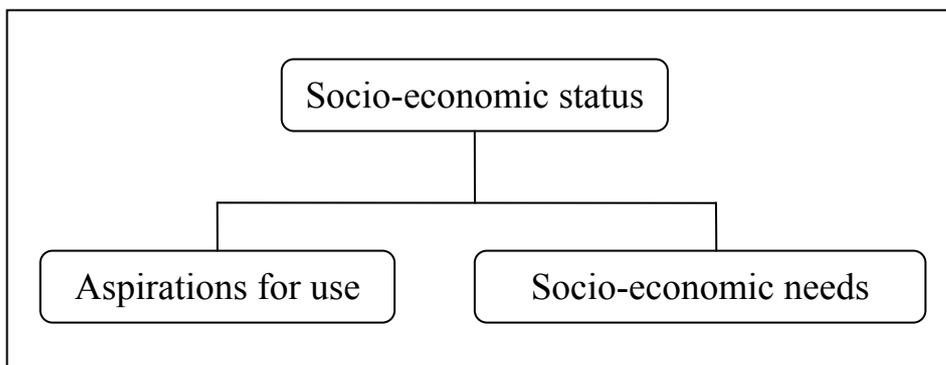
*“The significance of the North West is because it is promoting the Forestry Commission since a lot of people in Moston Vale and Higher Folds have never heard of the FC before. I till go up there and they say, ‘are you with the Forestry Commission; what are you doing here?’”* (FC Practitioner)

Personnel within the FC evidently see this as a means of gaining connections with the public; they have in the North West, an opportunity to engage with communities at the site level as a modern organisation rather than as the outdated image that urban communities hold. By engaging with the North West's blighted estate and provide something that will feature in the lived realities of people, the FC have the potential to improve it perception and acceptance.

### **Socio-economic status and culture of forestry**

Issues surrounding divisions in society form the third factor which contributes to a missing culture of forestry; these divisions are discussed by respondents as being a product of social and economic status. There are three prominent elements under this concept, both of which are shown in figure V.VII below:

Figure V.VII: Components of 'socio-economic status' in a culture of forestry



'Aspirations for use' forms the sub-theme for a series of observations held by professionals regarding what they had anticipated, about who uses a site and how they do so. Professionals have come to realise that the difference between their initial aspirations and lived experiences were perhaps products of class. An example is where one community forester has since reassessed use of the site and concluded that people using for a shortcut to work is perhaps just as good as the picnicking families he had once expected.

Interestingly a view of a class difference is not blamed entirely on their own origins and respondents suggested more often that the Forestry Commission as an organisation was responsible for imposing a ‘middle class’ filter on the way its personnel work. FC practitioners commented:

*“you could come from the slums, or the aristocracy, with this type of job you will automatically have a middle class perspective”*

And, *“the majority of FC personnel are middle-class so do we actually understand the workings of the ‘lower classes’ “*

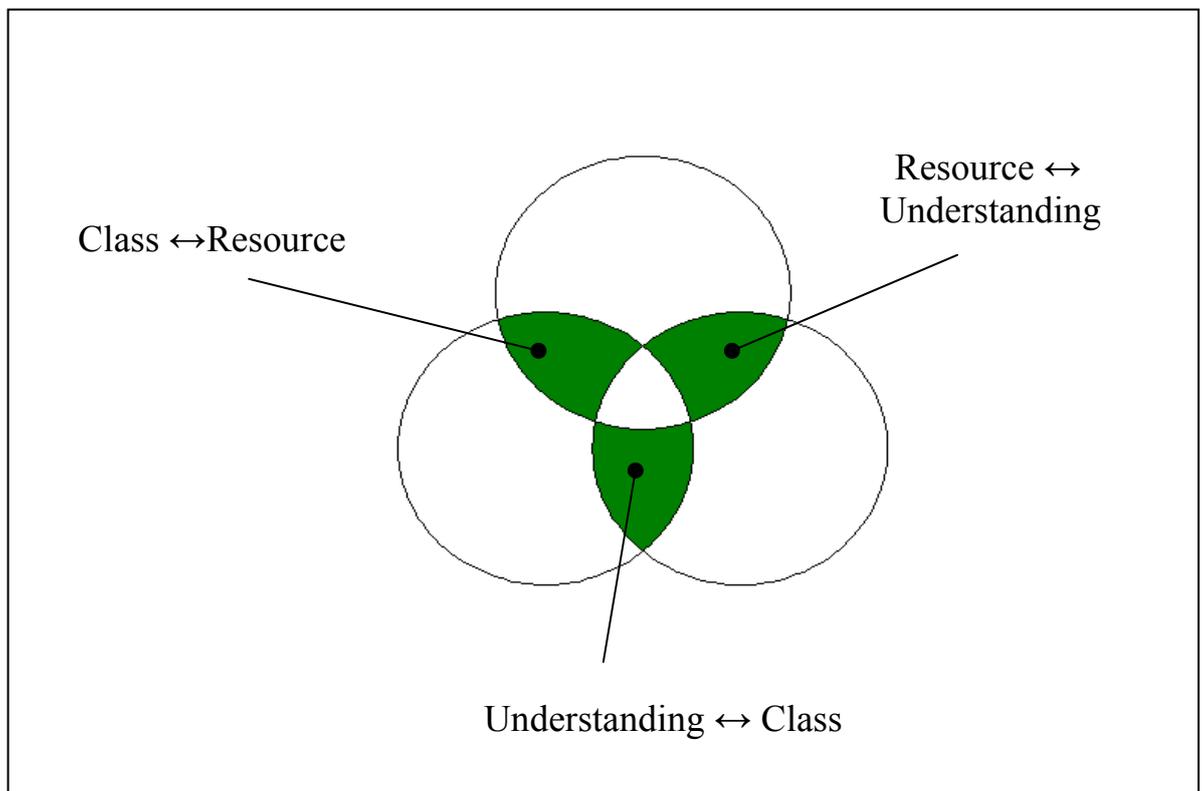
Comments also exist where there are comparisons drawn to the use of rural sites, Delamere forest in particular. Delamere is seen as middle-class resource in a predominantly middle-class area, which is why it ‘works’. However, with initial aspirations of professionals changing as they become more familiar with the realities of the blighted areas of the Northwest, they have since asked questions about themselves. A product of this self-reflection has been the realisation that the use of sites by the target communities is actively helping address the problem of a missing culture of forestry. However, in the circumstances surrounding the communities of the blighted areas of the North West, there are social needs that simply take priority over ‘woodland’ needs. This has been recognised as a clash of cultures. There is the middle-class culture of the Forestry Commission trying to provide environmental needs; then there is the culture where the needs are different:

*“They are more interested in whether they have got food on the table, whether they have work, if they can feed the kids, get nappies, fags and booze.....we might make an arty-farty Moston Vale, but they still have to go home to their house with shutters on the windows”* (FC Practitioner)

## The Creation of a Culture of Forestry

We have so far noted that a (missing) culture of forestry is at the centre of an overlap of three elements: Resource, Understanding, and Class. The aim of the following section is to discuss a second layer of information in the same model. In figure V.VIII; the areas of overlap represent causal associations that strengthen a culture of forestry. Where community forestry is practised, the FC practitioners believe a culture of forestry will eventually develop through their integration and partnership approach. Figure V.VIII indicates a two way flow of knowledge depicting the types of observation/ information which professionals involved in these programmes believe communities are likely to share as a forestry culture develops.

Figure V.VIII: Association between elements in developing a missing culture of Forestry



### *'Resource' and 'Understanding'*

The way in which woodlands and trees are viewed as being a resource divorced from the urban milieu is reinforced by a lack of understanding of trees in the landscape, this in turn promotes a perception that trees belong elsewhere, in the rural. Further, the consumption of trees as resources, and not just their recognition as being such, is arguably affected by a lack of understanding, in terms of how to consume them- this may also be a product of Urban living. There is evidence that community woodland sites are targeted by those seeking to partake in antisocial behaviour (and there are many reasons given for why this is so). It appears that this is seen as a typical way of consuming woodland resources, an urban way of using them, especially so considering the wider issues of the host areas.

### *'Understanding and social-economic status'*

Many of the target communities for the North West's community forests are from socially, economically and environmentally deprived areas, historically low in tree numbers. Whereas Delamere forest is often cited by practitioners as a outstanding example of what 'proper' woodland should represent, it seen as out-of-reach to people struggling with little income to meet more basic and urgent needs. The perception of FC professionals is that communities in the NW's blighted areas believe 'proper' woodlands to be middle class resources. As such, their contact with them is minimal and accordingly their understanding is low. For example:

*"Opportunity, I really must stress opportunity. One of the reasons that many of the people in urban situations don't recognise or haven't seen the benefits is because they haven't had their hand held and taken to these places"*

(FC Practitioner)

Helping communities', presenting them with an opportunity to access woodlands, by bringing woodlands to them is seen as a way of overcoming this issue. Practitioners also feel that in FC operating in the North West's urban areas is a significant issue: practitioners feel the FC is perceived as a middle-class organisation and perhaps out of place in the community forests.

*'Class' and 'resource'*

Effectively a self-perpetuating trend, this image of woodlands being a middle-class experience serves to reinforce the belief that woodlands belong in the rural to be consumed by those that have the freedoms to do so. It also suggests that people will have to be encouraged to see the FC as an organisation that they can begin to relate to in order for its association with socio-economic status to change. For example, two practitioners commented that:

*"People get in touch with us about, saying they want dog litter bins and things like that, but it's not really FC policy to have those sort of things, but I think the FC is in Delamere forest right in the middle class area, miles away from nowhere, those issues aren't quite big, but some issues need addressing in the Commission because of what we're dealing with"* (FC Practitioner)

*"...a walk round Delamere is a bit more middle class rather than going for a walk round Colliers wood in a very deprived area where people aren't used to recreation, going out and taking exercise, walk round the site"*  
(FC Practitioner)

## **The Importance of Image:**

*“It’s the Forestry Commission...Honest”* (FC Practitioner)

When the Volkswagen group acquired the Skoda brand in 1991 it knew it had taken on a trade name with a stigma attached to its products. Skoda had been the butt of jokes for more than thirty years and even had websites devoted to mocking it. For example, Giles Smith, writing for the Guardian in 2003 classically described the way in which Skoda cars were seen as *“Communist crates held together purely by nails and the collective will of the people”*. To overcome such negative perceptions vast sums of money were to be invested, yet despite doing so and receiving many awards for design and performance, Volkswagen’s Skoda cars failed to gain anything close to full sales potential.

In 2000, Volkswagen decided to launch a marketing campaign aimed at dealing with the inherited reputation of its acquisition, which was seemingly a good basis for poor sales. The operation was managed by marketing agency, Fallon London, who sought to capitalise on the slapstick imagery associated with the Skoda brand. Doing so enabled the target audience to compare it with the redeveloped product. This succeeded; it turned consumer disbelief in the product into a huge increase in sales as Smith vividly goes on to depict:

*“People who had used the term Skoda to mean ‘partially reinforced shoebox with badly fitting windows’ now found they were using it to mean ‘really clever choice if your in the market for a well-built, crisp-to-drive, hatchback which appears to be German in all but price’ ”*

(Smith 2003).

Fallon London had rebranded Skoda cars and the campaign through which the transformation took place was hailed an award-winning success being immortalised through a quip in one of its advertisements as the, *“It’s a Skoda. Honest”* campaign.

The significance of Skoda's rebranding story to this research is that it was used by a Forestry Commission operations manager, to describe the importance of imagery in doing justice to a brand or product. He was making a comparison to the way in which he saw the need for the Commission to advertise its own work under today's policy direction; he sensed a need to challenge outdated and poorly informed perceptions of the FC and its operations. This view was expressed by nearly all of the FC professionals interviewed for this research and a majority of the partners.

The importance of image with respect to the FC is to reveal the importance of representing certain standards to those working in the NW's community forestry partnership. Two aspects of 'image' emerge from the data.

The first of these aspects can be termed 'Institutional'. According to both FC employees and their professional partners there are certain standards upheld by the Commission as an institution; many of these are implicit. Nearly everyone interviewed had an 'image' of the Forestry Commission as an organisation. Everyone therefore has an idea of what the FC represents and what they believe it means to communities in the North West.

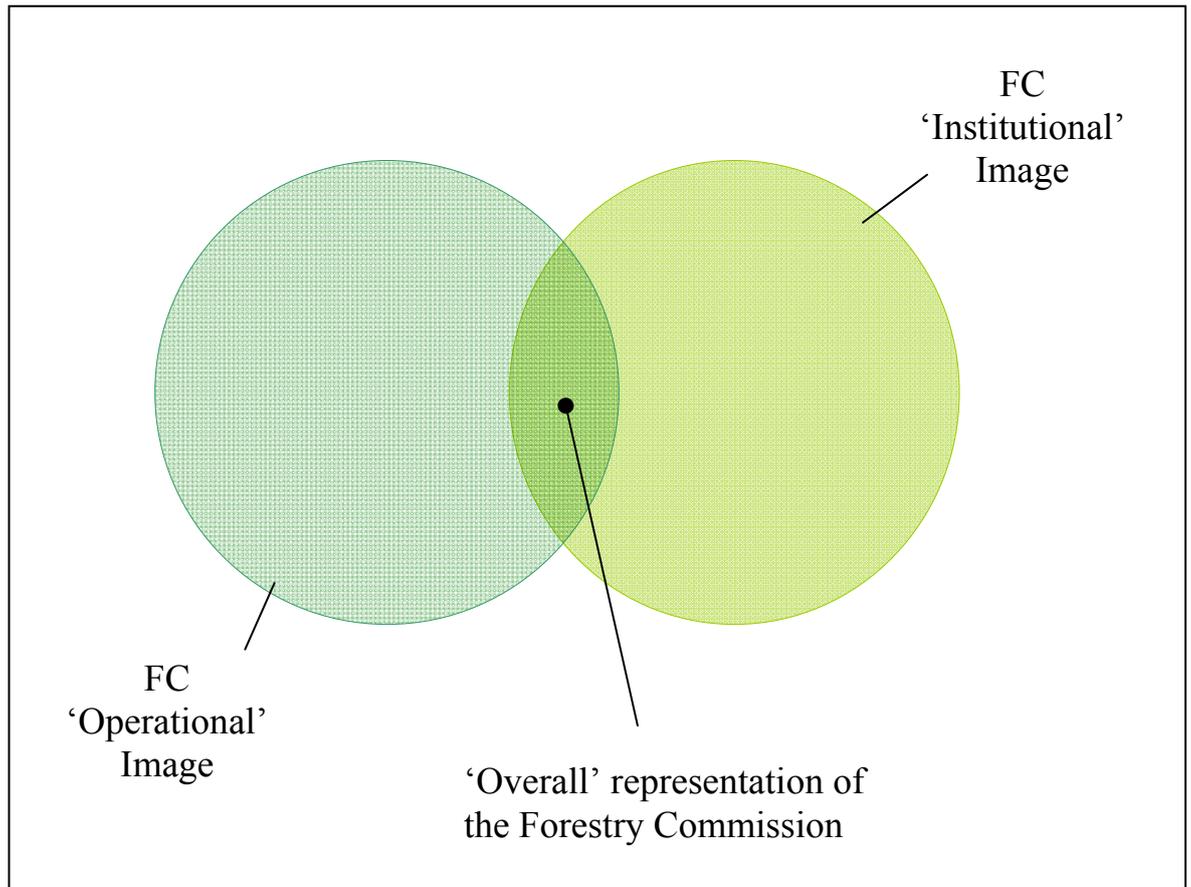
The second aspect of image again concerns the FC but is not about its perception as an organisation; rather about what is represented on the ground, namely, the 'Operational' image.

To have an image of the FC's role from what one sees on the ground does not necessarily require any knowledge of the standards represented in the organisation; conversely, an institutional image cannot adequately represent what happens on the ground though both are inexorably important.

Figure **V.IX** sites a simple depiction of institutional and operational image, where the area of overlap represents the perception of the FC in the study area. This area of overlap is constructed by the FC through concerns for how

it is perceived by its audiences through its actions on the ground and in terms of how it presents itself as an institution elsewhere, notably in policy and day-to-day interactions. This suggests scope for rhetorical reasoning behind aspirations for public benefits.

Figure V.IX: Types of image construct related to the Forestry Commission (GB)



The next part of this discussion seeks to develop notions of operational and institutional image by presenting evidence from the interviews for a) their existence as important constructed types of representation and, b) the elements and activities actually implicated in their construction. Conclusions afterwards will draw on this section to demonstrate the importance of 'image' in the strategic restoration of derelict, underused and neglected land in the North West.

## **Institutional Image**

Institutional image has at its core a sense of ‘necessity’ as is introduced in quote from two FC practitioners:

*“The biggest barrier to overcome is that of forestry being seen as not relevant or important. I think that is always the case as it is not always that relevant or that important.”* (FC Practitioner)

*“... it (the FC) needs to adopt a new identity in doing that”* (i.e. in being seen as relevant) (Senior FC Practitioner)

These comments make it clear that as the key organisation representing forestry (as a concept under threat) it is necessary for the FC to demonstrate its worth in a post-industrial era. Convincing audiences that the FC presents a relevance to modern society and its needs is partly achievable if the organisation projects this image.

Many respondents identified a problem with the FC’s image. Firstly there is a geographical issue, with the FC being thought of as representing rural interests- far from the interests of the urban in general, and from urban areas with severe socio-economic and environmental disadvantage in particular. This ingredient emerged as a contributing factor in what has been termed a missing culture of forestry.

In the mindset of those who have held long careers in the FC lie memories from when industrial forestry began to experience demise. The events that marked it have been described as “*what nearly killed us*” and a “*severe kicking*” by those in the organisation at the time (FC Practitioners). The Commission represented the industrial forest for nearly sixty years, which came under criticism in the late eighties and early nineties, not just by the public but also from government, the media and environmental organizations. Interviewees described how that era sent out an image that stuck to the FC; whilst the commission used the experience to learn lessons, others used it to

construct an image. Both the geographical and the historical trends are examples of the fine line between the image of an organisation and the image of its operations.

Image has, for the FC, been a barrier to success in operating in the North West. The fact that the FC is actively pushing Community Forestry and that it is doing so in the 'alien' environment of the North West has already been discussed as a risk worth taking if it demonstrates the relevance of forestry and the Forestry Commission; but this move has significant implications for institutional image. As an FC community forester put it, community forestry and delivery projects such as Newlands are opportunities to "*help bring the FC into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*" and change peoples perceptions.

Another practitioner recognised the scope in post-industrial forestry in terms of restructuring the image of the FC. He commented that already people should be able to look back at previous forestry policy and recognise its now "questionable nature" and recall the "confrontational environment" it generated, and make a comparison with today's forestry policy which he describes as, "*extremely positive*" and "*completely different*".

The FC practitioners feel the need to create a positive image since they feel vulnerable relative to the risks involved in spending large sums of public money in the North West. One practitioner stated that FC work in the NW was creating a positive political image for the organisation, an observation based on the attention that their work in the North West has allegedly received from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

In being aware that there is an importance in the image of the organisation, employees and partners of the FC have alluded to both 'external' route and the 'internal' image constructions. Image is created internally through the culture of the organisation and its stated goals. Image is created externally through the opinions of others about the quality of their work.

One way to construct an image about an organisation is by looking at what is said about it from the experiences of others and by interpreting what ‘it’ says about ‘itself’ and in some circumstances using ‘it’ can be sufficient; but on the whole, it is the way in which a product or brand is marketed that speaks the loudest (as has been seen in the example of Skoda at the start of this section of the analysis).

It's a natural tendency to convince others that something is relevant or needed in their own lives for one reason or another, but especially if it ensures a continued existence - be it a product, a brand, or an industry. The FC realises that in order to overcome an image that is not doing it justice, there is the need to market itself.

The Forestry Commission recognises the need to make a new image for itself via those that consume its commodities; the FC is in the process of re-branding itself as a brand of social forestry; the work in the NW is one way of advertising its new wares.

Forestry Commission professionals in the NW have claimed that their work is without doubt reflecting on the values of the FC as an organisation. What is important, however, is the way in which the work that is being undertaken in the NW is seen as a vehicle for improving the image of the FC as a whole:

*“Newlands will get the FC closer to people ...mainly in the urban areas and in the North West especially it will get the FC a higher profile”*

(Senior FC Practitioner)

Other FC practitioners make similar assertions about how their work is contributing to a better image of the FC. Of course they see it as important for the FC as an organisation, but they also see it as advantageous for their brand of forestry, both of which help to ensure some continuity and buffering against the risks involved.

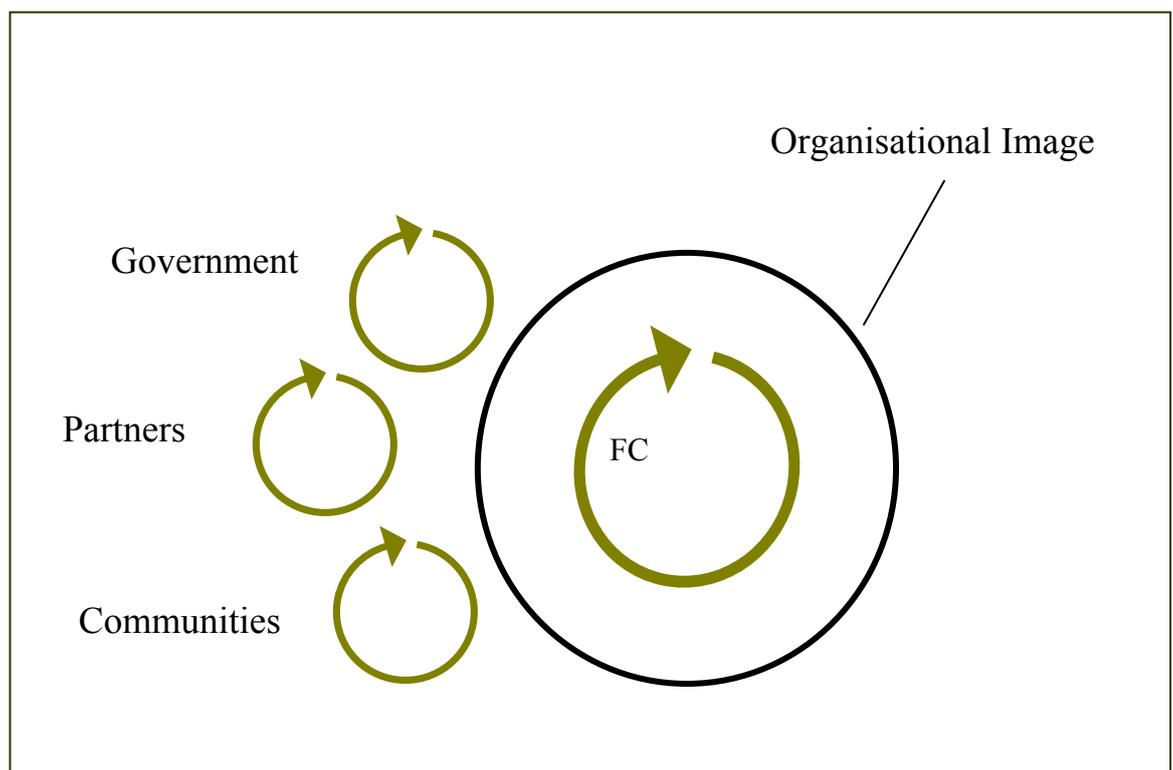
Internal pathways also alter organisational image as one FC employee, who has made significant reflections on the Commission during his service there, suggests. He believes the FC is seen externally as a more positive light since its involvement in the NW. This is an opportunity to reflect on internal organisational change:

*“We have changed. Boy-oh-boy, I mean a lot of people would acknowledge that it (the FC) has changed its attitude and changed who it has been.”*

(FC Practitioner)

Figure V.X demonstrates the proposal of the FC’s organisational image being constructed externally by the FC’s audiences through a perpetual cycle of ‘image→ experience→ image’. It also shows a slightly different continual process of ‘image→ necessity→ image’ taking place within the FC in harmony to the external processes.

Figure V.X Internal and External routes in generating organisational image



As is apparent in figure two, the internal route of representation takes place within the Forestry Commission itself; moreover it is not the constructed image of external consumers and so it is not projected as visibly. Unlike the external route through which the FC organisational image has been encouraged, there is no underlying sense of necessity driving the process; on the contrary, the internal mechanisms that drive an internal organisational image appear to be intrinsic to the point of being hidden. This is the most noticeable aspect of the internal route- its implicit nature.

The internal route is essentially about the way in which the FC has evolved as an organisation to meet its challenge/commitment in the NW through a change in personnel and job description. Between those that have been in the FC long enough to look back at how policy has changed affected their own opinions and departments in the workplace, there is a recognition that this process has brought about changes in personnel. Mutually some practitioners comment on how they have seen jobs emerge that require little or no technical training in forestry, something which has actually made a visible change on morale and ways of looking at operations.

With a slow injection of ‘new blood’, the way the organisation goes about its business off-site has changed to the point where established personnel are recognising an endogenous process of changing identity:

*“More and more people are changing over, but you know, there are many people who have lived and died by producing timber of the highest quality and best quality - that is not always so important these days”.*

(FC Practitioner)

*“The very fact that new jobs are pulling in new areas of expertise and types of person has helped the FC’s image”* (Senior FC Practitioner)

To summarise, image is important internally as it motivates employees and reinforces an internal culture receptive to change. External perceptions are important, especially in terms of how these are constructed on the ground as it helps the FC achieve its objectives.

### **Political factors**

Within the NW's fraternity of community woodland professionals there is an underlying sense of legitimation which activates the conversion of derelict estate to community woodland. This is perhaps unsurprising since England's community forests have been operating across the country since 1990 with the backing of two statutory organisations alongside more than fifty local authorities. Between the twelve community forests more than 175 million pounds has been invested in reaching the objectives set out in policy documents that authorise their operation.

The Forestry Commission, as one of the statutory partners in the community woodlands programme (CFP), has been involved in the establishment and operations of the community forests; as such the FC has played an important role in drawing up policy to which the partnership must adhere.

Whilst having a policy input to the CFP, the Forestry Commission has also a national commitment to policy development and implementation that complements the international pledge to the sustainable forestry agenda; something which is significant in the mindsets of the FC personnel working within the North West.

The following discussion sets out to demonstrate two things. First, it will show how policy has been seen to gift the FC a freedom to work in an environment as challenging as the Northwest based on the statements of both partners and the FC. Second, interview is then used to explore how tangible links to the way in which the FC is seen as an operational partner and

statutory organisation. To close this section, conclusions will be made as to the significance of policy aspirations; the conclusions will also serve to introduce aspects of claims-making analysis and the importance of image for the FC. Both of these foci are to be explored further in subsequent sections of the analysis.

### **The political context of the Forestry Commission**

One forester summed up the political context when he noted: “*the light is on and we [the FC] are not in the shadow anymore*”.

What he alludes to is that the FC has moved into a wider political arena, operating within a general consensus, which has enabled them to be less constrained in the way they operate. Moving into a new area such as the Northwest has meant that new ways of operating have needed to be developed: this has involved not only silvicultural techniques but also consultation and role-playing within an urban partnership.

Above all he and other FC practitioners believed that they were now, “*free to develop*”, meaning that new policy had given the FC the flexibility to maximise opportunities that came within its broad policy remit.

This is significant, it reflects on the effect that policy has on the mood of the organisation; with a broad policy comes a reason to function as best they can, which means that problems and solutions can be tackled holistically. This not only makes great sense, it also capitalises on contemporary policy where principles of sustainability are key.

Being able to work across boundaries on common problems has been at the centre of community woodlands from the outset. The issues that have been presented as problems in order to justify community forestry in the Northwest are multifaceted (environmental, economic and social) so it is fitting that solutions are able to take this into account- with a move away from productivism, today’s FC is able to take a multi-purpose approach to dealing

with problems; not only is this evident in the mood of their employees, but clearly in their policy.

Aspirations for being able to tackle problems appropriately stem from the community forest policy context. As one FC project leader put it, *“we don’t need to reinvent the objectives for Community Forestry for the FC to look at taking any more active interest in community forestry as the community forests have already got them”*. The policies of the Forestry Commission are written so as to embrace the sustainable forestry agenda, which means they compliment the objectives of the CFP.

### **The EFS as a political factor**

*“Changing practice through the England Forestry Strategy’s demands for multi-purpose use have provided the FC with a wealth of opportunities to develop forestry policy where the technically challenging lessons from the North West have been learnt”* (FC Practitioner)

Amid all forestry policy published in the last decade or so, there is one document that has received more mention within interviews than any other; the English Forestry Strategy- a product of devolution in 1998. The production of the England Forestry Strategy was overseen by the Forestry commission and reflected the needs of the country; one FC respondent suggested this as being a key opportunity for the FC to deliver in areas like the NW. He suggests that having as many statutory and other major land use agencies in agreement to the EFS as the FC achieved, meant that it became an integrated operational tool for delivery and not just another, isolated, FC document.

It may be fair to say that the EFS acts as a political driver. One FC practitioner made a clear link between policy and the way in which the FC operate. He firmly believes from his experience in the Forestry Commission over many years that the FC has been through more than one period of change. The interesting point is that changes have never been instigated from within, yet they have been accepted into the culture of the FC. He believes that the FC has a “*culture of ‘doing’*”. Regardless of the task, the FC will gain credit by adapting to the task in hand and realising it on the ground. He, and others recognise at least four phases in the FC’s history, with each bringing a change in the way the organisation operates (Table V.I outlines these changes). On each occasion the organisation has delivered.

A further noteworthy point refers to the origins of change. Several FC professionals change as originating from shifts in social demand (from their environment) and from political demand, which then gets incorporated into policy guidelines. During a period of change to policy direction, the FC has been described as to go through a period of ‘soul searching’ (*Chestnut, willow*) which is said to represent a phase where adjustment takes place, targets are identified, boundaries set and so on; indeed this is said to have occurred with the arrival of community forestry. Once this has been overcome, the FC is described as operational once more.

Complementing what has been said about changes in policy direction, the Forestry Commission is described by all the senior FC personnel interviewed as being an *adaptive* organisation and not an instigative body (said to make it unique among government departments).

The significance of this is said to be seen in the way the FC operates. The FC is described as not readily pushing into new policy areas or environments; in this sense the FC is not an innovative organisation with operational autonomy. However, observations suggest that during and after including a ‘soul searching’ phase the FC can be rather innovative in the way it works within new parameters. One FC officer described the FC’s creativity and

innovation as taking place within parameters that it has either *“been given or which it has built for itself”*; this he asserted to the product of an organisation which has a strong, traditional culture of doing (FC Practitioner).

In conclusion, it appears that a pattern emerges whereby the FC is policy driven, the policy acts as a justification to operate, and without it the organisation lacks drive and rhetorical power to get work done. Moreover, if claims can be interpreted from policy, as is argued in this research, then indubitably claims become implicit in the day to day operations of the Forestry Commission as a ‘doing’ organisation. The claims for public benefits from community woodlands are implicit in the FC as they are acting on policy, and using policy rhetoric to gain audiences in the Northwest. One of the FC partners comments:

*“Over the last 8 years the FC changed its direction with the EFS. Before then from 1989 onwards with the establishment of the Wasteland to Woodland steering group to target the derelict land, the FC was a member of that group as well, but at that stage it was really an input as a shortcut to the Woodland Grant Scheme side of things. It was only with the EFS that there was a seen change really in terms of how the FC was engaging with an area like St Helens and they became much more positive to the linkages and opportunities which became much more substantial”* (FC Partner).

### **Rediscovered and Codified: Practice into Policy**

Current forestry policy has at its centre the provision of value-for-money forestry; in the NW this has been translated as public benefit forestry and epitomised in its two Community Forests. This work has interpreted the many public benefits and non-market goods as ‘claims’ since many of these benefits are untried or difficult to measure by their very nature.

The reason for investigating these, claims has been to apply theory to the Forestry Commission in order to demonstrate the risk and strategy involved in undertaking something as radical as public benefit forestry for a conservative organisation in a new political era.

FC personnel in the upper echelons of the organisation support this view; they have confirmed their opinions on the origins of many of the public benefits claimed for in policy and linked their current importance to the present political agenda.

This is noteworthy insofar as it shows that the FC has more awareness of the benefits that its claiming, despite having never explicitly focused on demonstrating them earlier. What is more, their views prove how policy presents freedoms to reveal buried knowledge; knowledge that has been hidden through the constraints of previous policies.

Key here is the confirmation of the way in which the FC operates as an adaptive; doing organisation, using policy to bring forth appropriate knowledges' to justify operations. A strategy for survival both politically and institutionally as embedded knowledge becomes a rhetorical tool for gaining audiences.

When asked if the benefits claimed for in policy documents (namely the England Forestry Strategy; Sustainable Forestry Agenda; and Community Forestry Objectives) are, through their novelty, more difficult to deliver than previous agendas, the reply is unanimous:

*“Not public benefits- we’ve been banging on about that for years. If you asked the foresters that were around when the Forestry Commission was founded what the benefits of trees were, they would have been able to list, a very long list, and it wouldn’t have been just things like timber”*

(Senior FC Practitioner)

It seems that the benefits being claimed are nothing new, but that they have long been buried under other priorities. When the EFS in particular came along; public benefits became the front-runners in the FC's policy programme where sustainability and value for money are central.

As well as its implications for the benefits, the EFS has become a reason for operating in the NW as an organisation; it has been remarked that the FC would never be operating in the NW, especially in the urban NW, if it were not for the England Forestry Strategy (FC Practitioner). The freedoms to capitalise on what appear to be traditional values inherent in forestry under the EFS is regarded as a "*landmark*" for the Forestry Commission, marking its ability to operate in the NW (Senior FC Practitioner).

Accepting that many of the 'claims' in modern English forestry policy are actually implicit values being presented differently to take account of policy opportunities is the view of a further FC Practitioner. This person suggests that having the opportunity to think across the board, as has been presented to the FC with the sustainability agenda, has brought about the rediscovery of what are now called public benefits. Further, this respondent considered that the FC has been in a position to 'codify' the benefits into policy. He makes the point that this is an essential part of operating in British society. Values need to be codified in order to hold status and this he argues is how FC values become FC policy. The FC requires clear mandates in order to operate as a 'doing organisation' with optimum operational approaches once values have been codified; the implicit is made explicit and the mandate set, so that the mandate becomes a justification to operate and to convince audiences.

### **Financial factors**

Attempting to afforest some of the most environmentally blighted areas of the Northwest has cost many millions of pounds, most of it from the public purse. Justifying the expenditure of vast amounts of money has preoccupied some of

those involved in the North West's woodland development; this has, on the whole, been expressed as a 'risk' due to the nature of the investment, the sums involved, and the consequences for those involved in administering these monies -depending on how well or badly they are seen to have done so.

Besides the risk element in financing the NW's Community Woodlands, analysis of interviews with various forestry professionals revealed how money both enables work on the ground, and shapes future agendas for the community woodlands programme. A second theme will explore how money is also equal with 'leverage', or institutional ability to actuate results in the NW, placing finance within a Claims-making scenario.

The final part of the following discussion emphasises how differences and similarities between partnership players and the FC highlight the importance of financing the CW programme from a Claims-making point of view.

Finance in this discussion refers to money awarded to the FC and its partners to establish community woodlands in the NW. Some of this financing is delivered through the FC directly, whilst some is through partners. Finance has been sourced from the FC, some from the English Treasury, and significant amounts have been sourced from European funds.

### **A two-edged sword**

*"It's a frustration that all I could do was put fences and gates in and not concentrate on other needs for the site"* (FC Partner)

Before the Forestry Commission became enmeshed in getting trees to grow under the headline of community forestry, others were already trying to encourage communities to engage with trees and achieve woodland

establishment on derelict, underused and neglected sites. Some of these were sites that the FC would later tackle.

For the pioneers such as the Wasteland to Woodland partnership and the Groundwork Trusts many of the social, environmental, and economic issues that frustrate community woodland professionals today, had to be overcome in the late 1980s. For example vandalism of site furniture, fencing, and the uprooting of struggling trees are regular examples of such frustrations.

Besides problems of this nature, there were the limitations of actually being unable to afford to undertake work where and when it was necessary.

Between formalisation of the Community Woodlands Programme (1989) and more meaningful involvement of the Forestry Commission (post-England Forest Strategy, 1998), many of the community woodland sites were managed on tightly stretched budgets. With renewed attention of the FC this pressure was lessened. All of the Community Foresters who were interviewed still complain of being financially stretched, but to those who were operating pre-FC, things have improved. There is more money to be spent on developing a site than hitherto.

From the standpoint of the Groundwork Trusts and local authorities in terms of finances, the involvement of the FC has been a positive event. Site budgets have increased ten-fold (according to one partner) and this freed staff and monies for other tasks. Another commented that the FC was a “god send” as with more money being spent the beneficial outcomes are more likely to be realised and this is seen as progress.

However it also has disadvantages. In being well placed to deliver large sums of money to the community woodlands programme some partners have seen the FC as ‘coming in running’ with the financial muscle to effectively take control of sites.

From the position of the FC’s professionals, there is no mention of having bought the right to say what goes on and when on site; instead, the FC are

busy justifying the way in which they spend. This is a significant difference as will be discussed shortly.

Thus from the perspective of the partners, the Forestry Commission has been a two-edged sword. With the formalisation of the community forests programme and its partnerships came the FC, its funds and the ability to act as financial stabiliser. By those already experienced in the field, this was seen as a great opportunity for funding work on sites which were previously cash-strapped as well as for on new sites that were previously unaffordable. Further down the line, the same partners felt that the FC had used its financial role to control what work was being done on site perhaps taking away some of their authority, but certainly affecting their professional aspirations for the sites.

From the position of the Forestry Commission, creating a partnership tension was never intentional, and indeed, they are quick to acknowledge the need for partners despite the differences they have encountered. They are simply trying to make sure that they are seen to be spending public money appropriately, under the surveillance of multiple funding sources.

There is one signal that must be addressed (“THE big issue” as one local authority representative put it): making sure that community woodland sites are maintained properly once they have been established in both the community and in the woodland sense.

People like to know that their investments and causes are going to endure; however in terms of community woodland, it will not deliver the promised benefits if it is not able to mature and this will incur time and expenditure. If money isn't available for the proper maintenance of community woodlands, then they will instead join the list of failed greening initiatives that preceded them. They will not endure. The issue for the partnership is to ensure that financial support is in place to enable the sites to establish and mature into the future and, of course, deliver benefits.

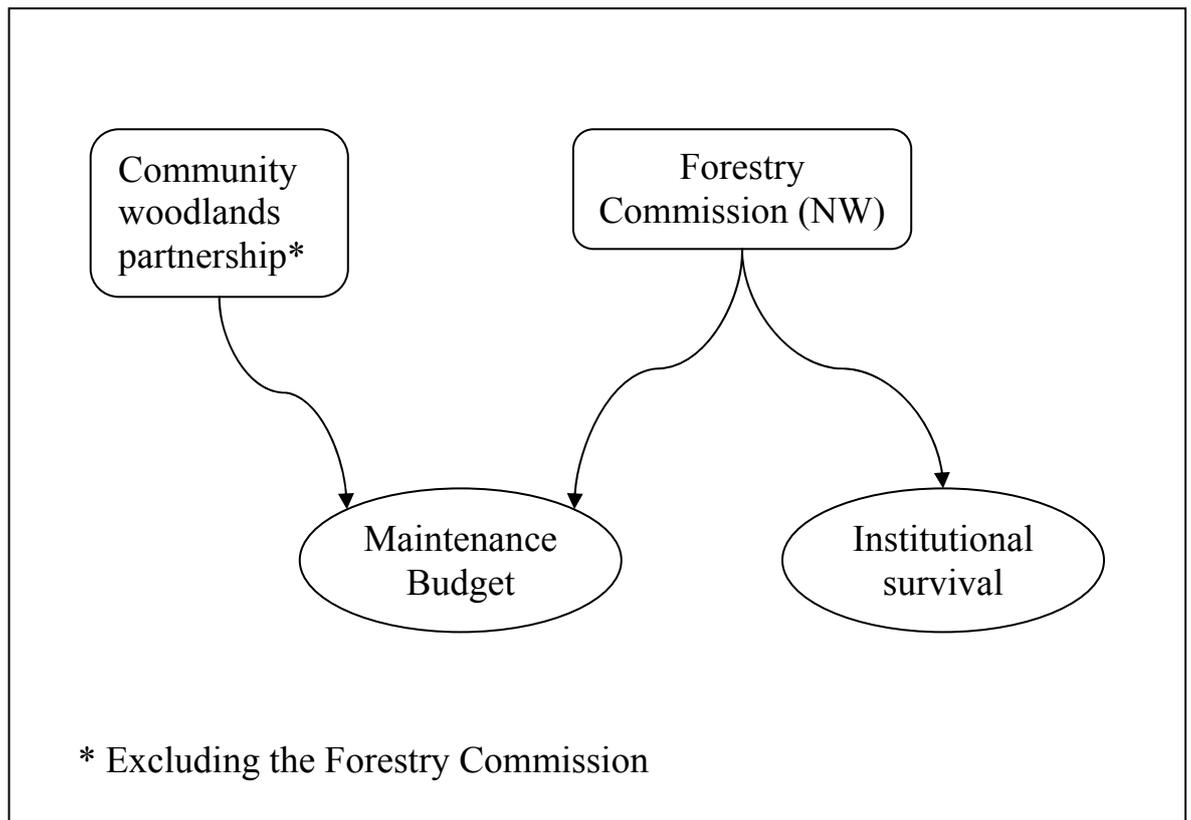
The Forestry Commission are a key part of the community woodlands partnership, and with that they are aware of the importance in maintaining the established sites- they have made financial commitments to ensure this is viable in the future.

There is a secondary issue of concern to FC staff. Without maintenance there will be a cost to the failure of the Community Woodlands Programme in the Northwest: not just because it has been there that community forestry has been championed, not solely to the tax payer, nor the disappointment of people whose vision has been betrayed, nor just to the regions socio-economic or ecological prospects. There will, it seems, be a cost to the Forestry Commission being seen as a viable, contemporary, land management agency. In the worst case scenario, if there is no money to make sure of proper maintenance it will reflect very badly on the FC.

Whilst sharing the maintenance issue and making sure funds are there as concerns the rest of the partnership, there is also a concern for making sure that money currently secured is spent appropriately.

Firstly that there has been a lot of thought in respect of securing a budget for community woodland maintenance to reduce the risk of failure; this is an issue shared by the Forestry Commission and the remaining partners within the Community Woodlands Programme. Second, in the case of the FC, there is an issue of institutional survival. This is an issue constructed within the Forestry Commission and reflects the way in which the FC makes decisions about allocating funds. Whereas the broader partnership's concern is for the future, the FC has issues, which relate equally to the present (depicted in figure **V.XI**).

Figure V.XI: Economically grounded issues for the North West’s community woodlands partnership



### **Big Issues, Finance and Claims-Making: A partner’s angle**

From the responses of those working within the community woodlands partnership, the commitment of the FC has been generally regarded as a positive, if only from the point of view of having more money to spend in the short-term.

Also from the stand-point of the partnership, is the ‘Big Issue’ concerning financial security for CW sites in the future; again, the FC has been able to provide reassurance with regard to it’s involvement through its twenty year maintenance commitment to sites under the Newlands scheme.

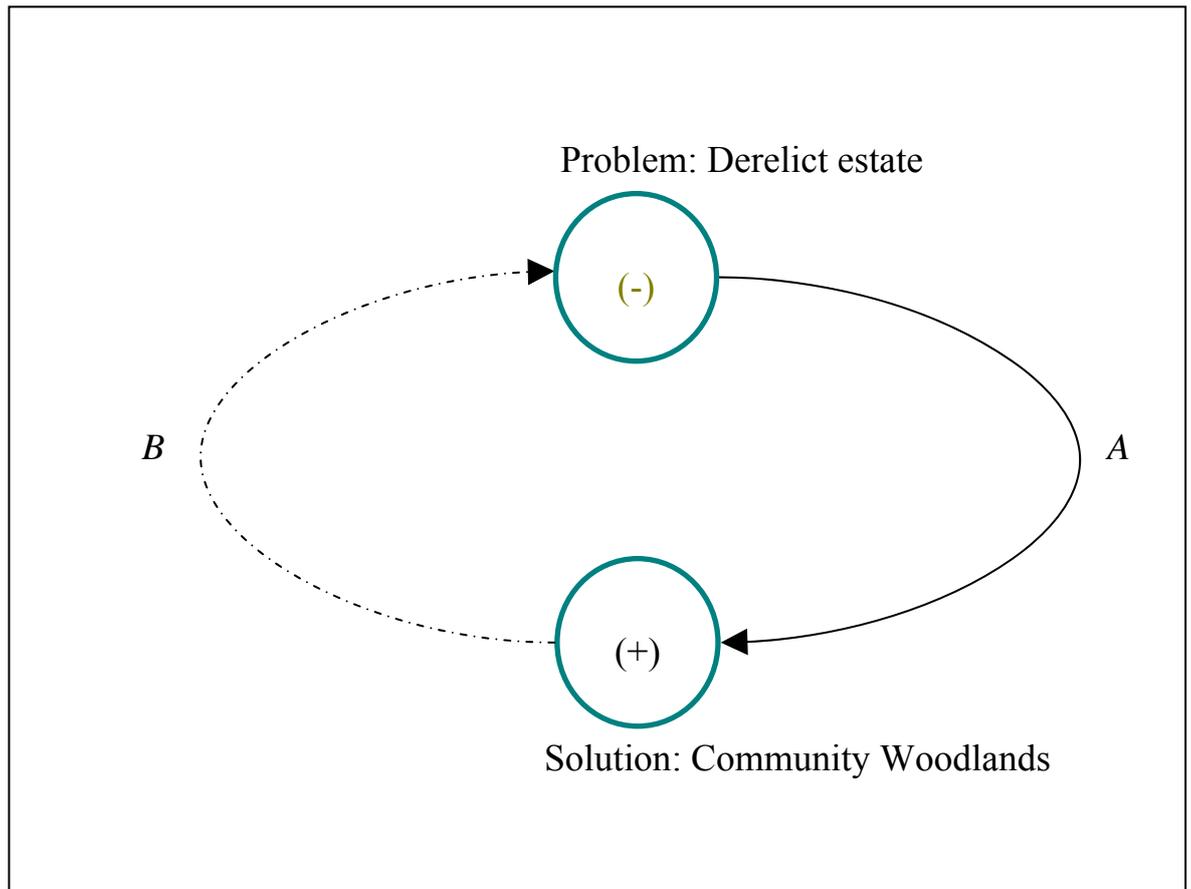
However the issues are more deep-seated.

The situation discussed thus far is shown in figure two below; showing a two-phase progression of partner perceptions. To begin with, in lay terms, there is a problem with the North West’s significant tracts of derelict, underused, and

neglected land. This land is seen as a blight on the image of the NW, and a loss of environmental capital. It also symbolises the social and economic deficit in the communities that live alongside it. For many years, the green restoration of these tracts has been seen as a means of tackling a multi-faceted problem; however, there have been numerous setbacks and failures that add to the quandary. In many cases it has been a lack of money that has hampered progress in these areas. In figure **V.XII**, this set of circumstances is shown as a way of thinking that has been revealed in the interviews with partners. The ‘solution’- the answer to the dereliction and what it stands for- has been seen to take form in community woodlands. It is significant that the solution is not original; what is original here is that the solution now involves the Forestry Commission and in particular, from the standpoint of the current discussion, it’s financial support.

Both Problem and Solution exist, and have been defined by respondents. The linkage between them- labelled as ‘A’- however, is much more implicit. What ‘A’ represents is the ‘support’ of the partners within the Community Woodlands Partnership for the involvement of an agency such as the Forestry Commission. With the formalisation of the Community Woodlands Programme, the FC helped to formalise and construct a solution, which, they could help to deliver, and an ingredient of the success was the flexing of financial muscle. The partnership was convinced of the FC’s ability to deliver because, in part, it could draw on the funds to get the trees in, and the initiatives off, the ground. Through financial rhetoric, the solution became more convincing. ‘A’ is seen as the implicit progression of thought from a negative scenario to a positive one; it also describes the process to date.

Figure V.XII: Significance of finance from a partner perspective



At present, work has been done and money spent. At this point the ‘big issue’ for the partnership of course arises. Interviewees have identified their concerns for the future of CW sites now that they have been able to spend money on getting them formalised.

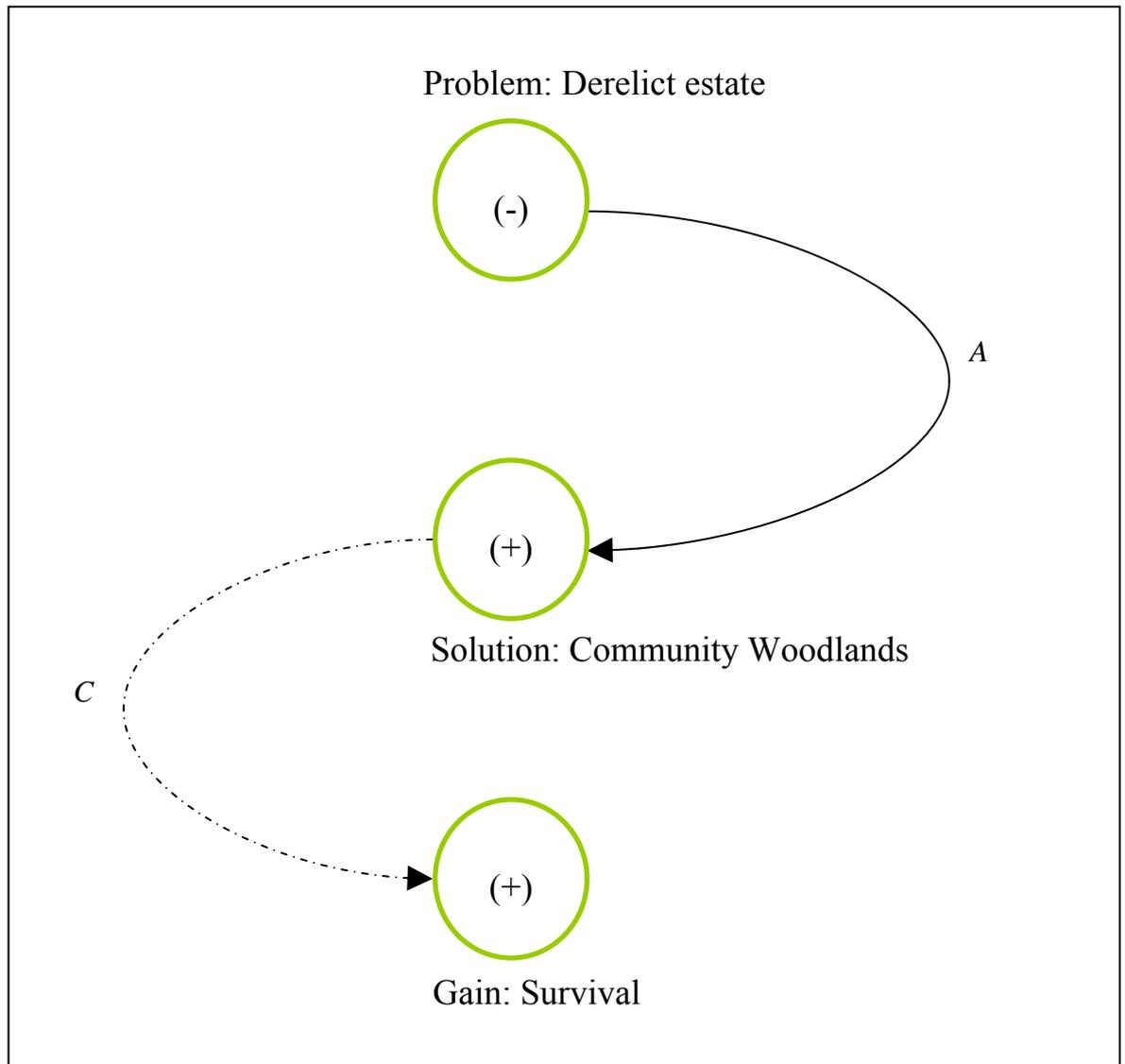
The big issue of future financing is shown as ‘*B*’, and is represented differently from *A* as it has not actually happened, implicitly or otherwise. What *B* shows though is clear. Without future funding, the sites will, from experience, go against the grain of their aspirations and return to a less desirable condition. The partners require an FC funding presence to prevent *B* from occurring in this way.

## **Big Issues, Finance and Claims-Making: The Forestry Commission Angle**

Figure **V.XIII** depicts a situation displaying greater self-interest than figure **V.XII** but this is not intended as an adverse observation about the FC. What it shows in essence is the FC committing to community forestry financially, and it shows this in the same positive vein as the previous figure.

Before describing differences between figures **V.XII** and **V.XIII**, it is worth mentioning the similarities. Just as with figure **two**, the derelict estate of the North West is seen as a problem and, as before, community woodlands have been formally accepted as the viable solution, 'A' still represents the point at which the FC was embraced into the partnership. This time though, the diagram shows A 'winning' the support of the rest of the CW partnership by the claims put forward by the FC. In this case, the winning rhetorical tool was economically grounded. Being involved is one thing, but being shared in confidence in is better. This is significant in terms of the Forestry Commission seeking to be accepted according to a new image, and as a claims maker as will be discussed later on. At the point where finance had gained positive support for the FC and Community Woodlands in figure **V.XII**, there is a significant difference when compared to figure **V.XIII**. The key difference is in point 'C', reflecting the particular importance of the programme to the FC in terms of institutional survival and conviction in providing future support for the sites with their influence.

### V.XIII: Significance of finance from a Forestry Commission perspective



In the context of international timber markets the value of British timber was repeatedly referred to by non-FC respondents as a contributing factor in the Forestry Commission's involvement in the community Forests Programme. They have suggested that a declining income from a flooded market has made the FC look elsewhere to keep 'afloat'. Some have even suggested that timber prices have been the main driver for the FC's involvement. When questioned about this perception, FC personnel have commented that timber income has been poor in recent years and to some extent has encouraged the FC to look at alternative activities; they also agreed that the North West presented itself as an opportunity to engage in more

contemporary work. The main argument from the FC, however, is that they are abreast with policy.

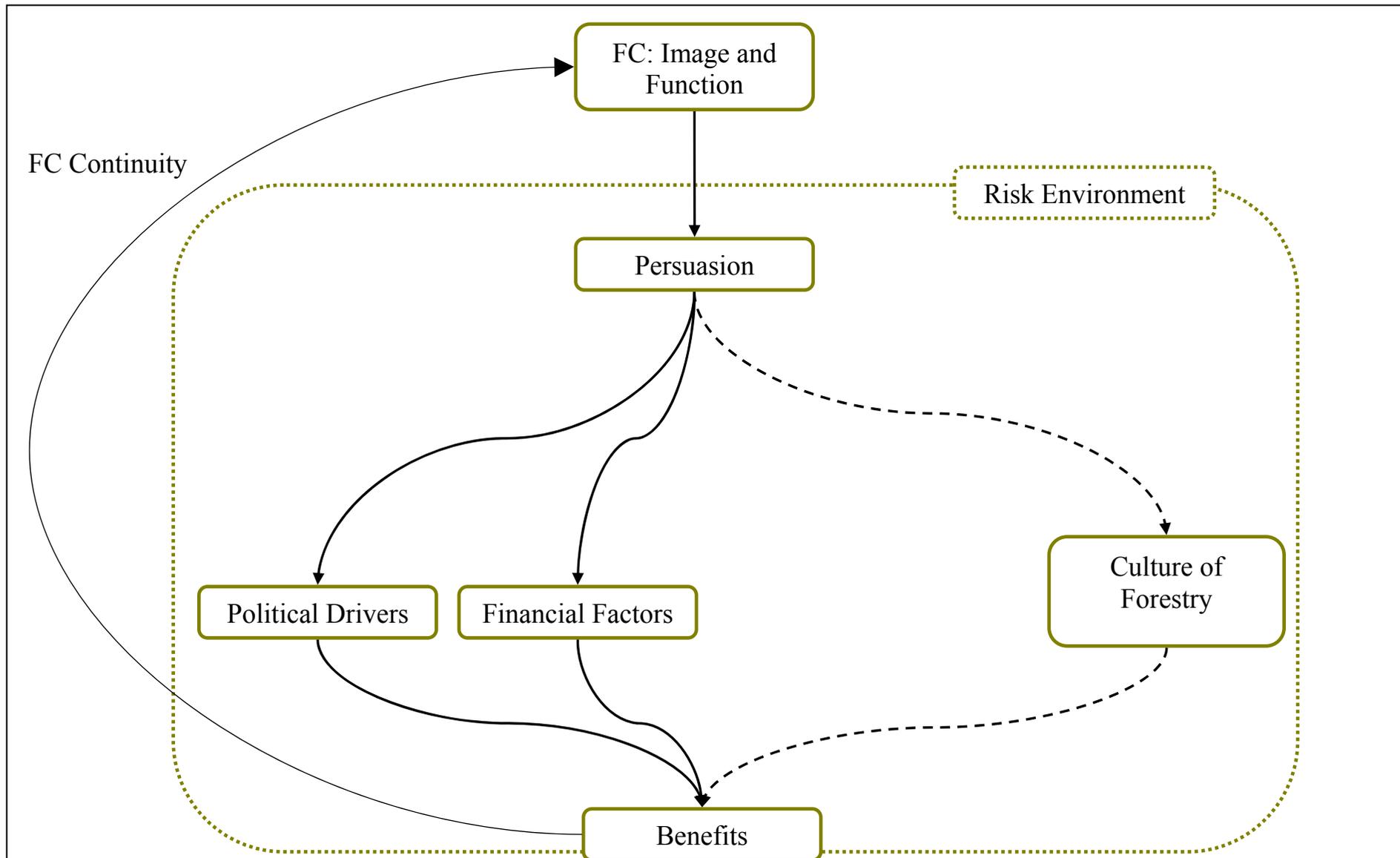
However, what concerns the broader partnership most about the influence of timber prices- and this relates to their 'big issue'- is that if whether an improvement in British timber values would mean the FC losing touch with community woodlands? Interestingly, neither the FC nor their partners suggested that the two might complement one another. There remains an underlying concern that the sheer fragmentation of the community woodlands estate may make it difficult for the FC to justify maintaining small sites for the future given the expected non-return of direct market income? This may have consequences for future strategies.

## **Summary**

Figure V.XIV illustrates the themes from the content analysis. The analysis has identified five main themes in the empirical data: Image, political drivers, financial factors, culture of forestry and risk. Figure X also suggests the potential for exploring the empirical data further using the perspective offered by the Claims-making approach

The FC perceives a problem regarding its image; it sees the Northwest as a proving ground to demonstrate its post-industrial capacity and relevance to social and political priorities; if aims are to deliver community forestry in the North West and prove to the government and Treasury that benefits are generated on the ground. In doing this they are operating in an uncertain (high risk) environment since public benefits are not guaranteed and lessons in partnership and integration are still being learnt. Part of integrating and operating within a partnership relies on the FC aiding the development of a culture of woodland use and understanding at community level. This is in addition to being able to secure the trust of partners and support from the state. There is thus the potential to explore the aspirations for public benefits

from the perspective of the FC practitioners; the rhetorical importance of public benefits might not be in terms of their validity or commitment to them but more in terms of minimising institutional risks.



## Chapter 6: Claims Analysis: Published rhetoric

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### Introduction

Once a claims-maker has identified a putative condition; he/she may seek its legitimization from other fields so as to draw attention to the issue and its need for improvement. These fields may be similar or different to the claims-maker's own. Thus a problem concerning trees in the landscape is theoretically capable of being promoted to a diverse range of audiences; from conservation trusts and environmental restoration groups to audiences with interests in social welfare and economic prosperity.

The 'claims' through which problems are constructed and promoted are a critical means of convincing wider audiences and securing their legitimization of the concern in hand. This was covered in more detail in chapter III, which gave examples of existing work that focused on the construction of environmental problems. This stage of the research now aims to evaluate the claims promoted by FC sources in terms of their persuasive nature.

Using published FC policy documents and programme material endorsed by the FC, this section seeks to identify the rhetorical nature of claims made (for trees in the landscape), especially in the NW. The tool for doing so is Best's model of Grounds, Warrants and Conclusions which was originally developed for the rhetorical analysis of social problems claims (Hannigan 1995).

The aim of using this approach is to identify the rhetorical nature of the claims, identify conclusions regarding the aspirations embedded in the claims and explore what this means regarding the problem and the solution they purport.

There are three elements to Best's model for rhetorical analysis. The first, Grounds statements, are meant to demonstrate the extent of problems by using numeric estimates and orientate them by the use of definitions and examples. Grounds statements therefore tend to assert basic 'facts' assembled by the claims-maker as a way of orientating the problem and defining its boundaries for the audiences. Likewise the grounds will shape the assimilation of the solution if it is included within the claims.

Second, there are the Warrants. Warrants tend to occur as justifying statements to simultaneously persuade the audiences of the validity of the problem once it has been identified, and the possibility or need to do something about it. Finally there are Conclusions, the role of which is to offer or describe the solution in the form of what should be done about the problem presented and supported by grounds and conclusion.

The Forestry Commission is responsible for developing, delivering and overseeing forestry policy across the UK. It fulfils the role of claims-maker as the producer and authority regarding claims for public benefit styles of forestry including that relevant to the North West of England. This position means that there must be evidence of a problem on which the claims are based.

Using UK, English and regional policy literature published and endorsed by the Forestry Commission, the problem is summarised below.

There are three main problems concerning trees in the landscape:

- o In the past throughout England there have been many missed opportunities for trees in the landscape. The potential of trees to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits has not been recognised fully; their management within both public and private sectors has not been holistic in these terms.

- o There is a shortfall in tree-cover for the UK when compared to other European countries reflecting the monocultural trends until recently; The distribution of trees within the UK varies significantly and is said to have implications for regional prosperity.
- o The Northwest of England has a severe shortage of trees in its landscape, which exacerbates the region's environmental, social and economic issues.

The following sections attempt to describe these problems through the analytical perspective offered by Grounds, Warrants and Conclusions to the claims. Beginning with Grounds, Table **VI.I** provides an outline description of the rhetorical components that are present and a straightforward overview of the evidence for each. The discussion for the Grounds explains the content of table **VI.I** by drawing on evidence from published FC policy documents as well as published FC endorsed programme material.

## **Grounds**

Table **VI.I** reveals that there are three types of Grounds statements- those expressed through definitions, those that draw on examples and finally statements that seek to be sanctioned by their quantitative element (termed 'numeric estimates').

The following discussion centres on each of these in turn.

Table VI.I: Key components pertaining to FC published Grounds statements

<p>Definitions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Hidden definitions of the audience exist in the titles of documents delivering problems and solutions; for example: UK Forestry Standard, UK Indicators of Sustainable Forestry; England Forestry Strategy.</li> <li>o Definitions of audience in geographical terms identify the scale of the issues in terms of problems and solutions.</li> <li>o Documents with definitions for woodland i.e. by ownership, use and classification orientate their issues by highlighting their audiences by field of interest</li> <li>o Lists claim various benefits for trees in the landscape and serve to define what is at stake when there are too few trees, or what is to be gained when they are encouraged. These are very important in setting orientation and scope of both problem and solution.</li> </ul>
<p>Examples</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Within the national policy literature there are examples whereby trees in the landscape are shown to be relevant to social, economic and environmental causes, issues and agendas. This helps seeks to project the domain according to function.</li> <li>o Examples also draw on urban and rural experiences; these seek to demonstrate the potential for trees to impact and appear relevant to audiences of both spatial domains.</li> </ul>

<p>Numeric estimates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Papers outlining Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) highlight scope for the social, economic, and environmental functions of trees; relevance of these functions is shown through scale by using percentages for tree cover over the world's landmass.</li> <li>o Percentages are used to highlight UK dependence on wood products</li> <li>o Percentages are used to show the extent to which trees have been lost from the UK's landscapes. Similarly percentages are used to show the scale of recovery to tree stocks under government measures.</li> <li>o Estimations are made in hectares for types of woodland in terms of ownership, management and classification- this identifies audiences in terms of the <u>significance</u> of their field of interest</li> <li>o The market value of woodlands in terms of employment and financial investments is shown by way of numeric estimation</li> <li>o Estimations are made on a temporal basis: a shortfall of trees in the landscape can be shown to have historical contributions whilst benefits from new woodlands are expected to develop over time as the trees mature.</li> <li>o Numeric estimates are used to highlight target areas in terms of hectares</li> <li>o The extent of degradation to the quality of the NW's existing tree stock is represented as a percentage, whilst rankings are used to show the regions social and economic deprivation</li> </ul>
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### *Definitions: Defining the issue*

The emphasis on sustainable forest management within contemporary forestry policy means, that having passed through a productivist era, there are relearned benefits to having trees in the landscape. In keeping with the structural nature of SFM these benefits span environmental, social and economic domains.

An important global definition of SFM is the H1 definition that originated from the 1993 Helsinki ministerial conference on forestry:

“...The stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems.” (Forestry Commission 1998<sup>a</sup>, 2002)

In accepting the H1 resolution the audience also accepts that wherever the resolution is compromised there exists the unsustainable use of trees, creating a potential problem condition.

Furthermore the Resolution specifically recognises the multiple functions of trees, which in turn this allows problem orientation to be related to the social, economic and environmental implications that trees might have, just as much as their stewardship and use may have.

The Forestry Commission has accepted the H1 resolution and uses it as a definition of SFM. The FC’s UK Forestry Standard (1998) is an example where a list is used to define the scope of benefits, for example:

“New woodlands can provide many benefits, including:  
expanding timber and other woodland resources;  
enhancing the beauty and character of the countryside, and contributing to the diversity and distinctiveness of rural and urban landscapes;  
enhancing and conserving wildlife habitats;  
helping to revitalise derelict and degraded land;  
creating jobs and providing opportunities for economic diversification in rural areas;  
improving the quality of life, especially in and around town and cities by creating opportunities for recreation, education and local community involvement ;  
contributing to the reduction of the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.”

(Forestry Commission 1998<sup>a</sup>)

The example above is by no means exhaustive of the benefits that have been claimed in forestry policy, but it does serve as an example of a grounds statement. It reinforces the environmental, economic and social orientation of problems concerning trees in the landscape. This is done by suggesting that a problem condition occurs wherever the scope for benefits is not being recognised- through the unsustainable management or consumption of trees in the landscape.

Definitions of SFM and benefits are effective at orientating the issues that the claims-maker seeks to develop, reinforcing a particular perception of trees in the landscape. Definitions created by the FC serve to delineate and describe the nature of the problem.

Whilst policy documents help orientate the nature of issues through definitions they also define the boundaries for the issues. The FC defines the boundaries for the case they make in the titles of documents: for example, the

UK Forestry Standard and the English Forestry Strategy both clearly define the scale of the FC's ensuing agenda.

At the national scale the FC are then also able to define specific types of area most likely to be relevant to their purpose, for example rural and urban areas. The England Forest Strategy (FC 1998<sup>b</sup>), for example makes a distinction between the rural and the urban in the titles and contents of its four strategic programmes. 'Forestry for rural development' defines the opportunities for trees in the countryside whilst urban opportunities are subsumed under its remaining three strategies. 'Forestry for economic regeneration', for example, draws on dereliction as an issue surrounding towns and cities which may be overcome with urban forestry measures.

The UK Forestry Standard makes a distinction between the rural and urban in terms of landscape. The growing significance of the 'urban discourse' within the FC is central to the current thesis.

There is a substantial amount of urban context involved with the NW and issues are certainly not presented as only rural in orientation. Besides making assertions on the regions low tree cover and high population, the case for the Northwest also draws on urban industrial dereliction and the effects this has on urban communities. These issues are seen as opportunities for new woodlands. In doing so, the FC is able to define a location, an affected population and the wide-reaching social-economic-environmental impacts for the NW.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the grounds, developed by the FC attract attention from audiences by interest and not just by location (e.g. from conservationists and timber factors as well as rural and urban audiences). This is done through definitions made for the type of woodland in policy documents. In the UK Forestry Standard, SFM guidance is separated by woodland status (i.e. new, native, semi-natural and planted) and the primary roles of such woodlands (i.e. conservation, recreation, game, and timber).

There is also recognition that the agenda concerning trees in the landscape orientates in the direction of private ownership as well as for woodlands under state management.

The diversity is important in that it reveals the extent to which woodlands differ but remain relevant to the principles sought in SFM and also makes the FC appear relevant to a wide base of social groups. Under SFM the FC is free to reiterate its relevance to private woodlands and their managers by including them under SFM-based policy.

### *Examples of problems*

In addition to definitions, examples are also often used within grounds statements by claims-makers seeking to orientate their claims within basic boundaries. In the English forestry policy literature (e.g. England Forestry Strategy) the Forestry Commission have used examples to demonstrate sustainable forest management in order to orientate the problems and opportunities that exist regarding trees in the landscape; in the Northwest the FC have also endorsed the use of examples through the Community Forests programme.

In claims-making terms examples within the EFS offer a way of considering how these policy agendas translate on the ground. They illustrate the potential extent and diversity of issues to which trees in the landscape can be associated. Examples within the EFS are presented under the headings: Forestry for rural development; Forestry for economic regeneration; Forestry for recreation, access and tourism; and Forestry for the environment and conservation.

The diversity of the examples acts as evidence for the way in which trees impact on the landscape impact on the national environment, society and

economy. Appendix **III** provides illustrations of the use of examples under its four major programmes of delivery.

The main concern of the EFS in problem terms is the recognition of missed opportunities for trees in the landscape; through examples under each of the EFS's four strategies the FC is able to orientate the range and type of missed opportunities by advocating ways to make the most out of trees through SFM. In essence the FC uses examples of SFM to show how increasing tree cover and promoting new ways of using trees, is a means of overcoming missed opportunities. Examples in the EFS are used to claim for problems as much as they are designed to claim for solutions.

Besides using examples to orientate their claims into social, environmental and economic categories, claims-makers can use examples to compare what they are presenting with similar circumstances elsewhere. In the case for the Northwest, the FC has endorsed an example whereby "The scope and need for environmental change in the forest area can be compared with achievements in the Ruhr in western Germany", this being particularly useful in that there is a strait comparison to follow based on previously low tree cover as well as a legacy of heavy industry and dereliction in both areas

Comparisons such as the Ruhr are deliberate in terms of similarities to the conditions within the NW, which are seen as opportunities for SFM in the English context. Moreover the Ruhr is regarded as a successful example of restoration, having received over 40 years of investment and 29 million trees, and is now classified as a forested area (at 17 percent tree cover) and a green setting for industry, housing and recreation. The FC uses the Ruhr example to frame its argument for the North West, and show that the desired outcomes are achievable at an ambitious scale.

For the Northwest, derelict land is a major problem and the FC identifies derelict land as a missed opportunity for forestry. This is why under SFM the Forestry Commission draws attention to the potential for derelict land estate to be converted into new woodland sites (FC 1999). Examples that show the effective restoration of derelict land with the use of trees are important to the Forestry Commission's position on championing SFM- thus programmes such as Newlands and the Community Forests, which are partnered by the FC, provide good examples for the Forestry Commission to draw on to orientate their cause through examples on the ground:

“The community forests have demonstrated how the combination of a strategic vision, an integrated environmental planning approach and partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors can deliver significant benefits...” (FC 1999)

“Newlands is aiming to reclaim 435 hectares of derelict, brownfield land for community woodland use...phase one of the scheme will cover the Mersey Belt...” (FC, 2003<sup>b</sup>)

The community forests and Newlands among other programmes act as examples since they are part of a national programme but they also help define regional opportunities for trees. In the case of the Northwest, the FC portrays the NW's dereliction as a putative condition and the main opportunity for new woodlands. In the NW, opportunities arise from dereliction, and so in this region the FC creates claims for benefits of overcoming dereliction.

In constructing opportunities for Sustainable Forest Management the Forestry Commission employ numerical estimations to 'prove' the importance of trees. Besides their intrinsic importance, these values define the extent of the issues

that the FC draw attention to the importance of trees in terms of their social, economic and environmental attributes.

The extent to which trees actually occur within landscapes is expressed as percentage tree cover. The Forestry Commission's sustainability literature demonstrates the extent to which trees and forestry are relevant to environment and society through expressions of tree cover:

“Forest cover 30 percent of the world's land area, fulfilling a wide range of economic, ecological and social functions” (FC 2002)

Whilst percentage values are used demonstrate the extent to which trees are a landscape feature, they are more often used to show the extent to which trees have been lost from landscapes- a representation for the scale of the problem and the scope for opportunity. Both the UK Forestry Standard and the England Forestry Strategy, published by the FC, use figures to this effect:

The UK forestry standard uses numeric comparisons of tree cover to show the reduction of trees within the UK's landscapes. An example in the opening paragraphs the UKFS declares that with the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ninety-five out of every one hundred trees in the UK's landscape had disappeared. Similarly examples from other FC policy sources include:

“The first millennium closed with the doomsday record of 15% woodland cover across England. We approach the second millennium, with just 7% woodland cover...” (FC 1999)

“In perspective, England last has 15% woodland cover during the time the Domesday Book was being compiled” (FC 1996)

The FC makes comparisons using England between UK countries and with other European countries on the basis of percentage woodland cover. In a paper that led to the development of the England Forestry Strategy (1996), the FC compared England to a selection of six European countries in terms of woodland cover. England was shown as the only country to support less than 10 percent – thus demonstrating a shortfall in occurrence within English landscapes. Similarly in 2002, the FC was able to highlight England’s respective shortfall in woodland cover by comparison to Scotland (16.9%), Wales (13.9%) and Northern Ireland (6.2%).

Besides demonstrating the extent of loss England as a country has undergone, the FC have endorsed the use of percentages for woodland cover so as to show regional differences in tree cover across England. Forestry Commission maps which show percentage tree cover produced in 1987 and 2001 show that the Northwest has always had less than 6%, making it one of the least wooded of the English regions (Forestry Commission 1987, 2001). The Mersey Forest agrees:

“The Woodland cover in the Mersey forest extends to 5%...this remains low however, when compared to the average woodland cover of 7% for England as a whole” (Mersey Forest 2001)

Likewise Red Rose Forest (1994 ) asserts that since the end of the Second World War, the Northwest’s tree cover has expanded *by* “only 2000ha, less than any other region in England”.

By publishing numerical estimations of the degree to which trees have been lost from England the Forestry Commission is able to suggest the extent to which this is a problem that needs to be addressed. Numeric estimates also allow for a regional representation of the extent to which trees are lost from

landscapes. In the case of the Northwest this has been further supported by numeric representations regarding the quality of tree stock in the region.

The Mersey Forest states that as much as eighty percent of the existing woodland in its administrative area is mature or over mature; Red Rose forest also claims that maybe more than 50 % of its own woodland is in the same state, meaning that the majority of the existing tree resource in the NW is of declining quality. To emphasise this point further, both Community Forests claim that what is left is under poor or non-existent management and suffering from neglect.

Trees which are situated within the Mersey Forest's project area, within urban settings and not within woodland boundaries are called Urban trees- these are estimated to represent "fifty percent of the total tree cover in the Mersey Forest" however they are considered a poor quality resource: "Of the estimated five million individual trees which are situated throughout the Mersey forest, an alarmingly high proportion are fully mature or over-mature... the trees will inevitably have to be felled during the next fifty years" (Mersey Forest 2001).

In a similar way, Red Rose community forest uses values to represent the typical size of existing woodland stock within its domain. Having already shown existing woodlands as typically mature and neglected, it also uses hectareage to show them as small with "few larger than 20ha".

In demonstrating the extent to which trees and woodlands are lost from England's landscapes and specifically, those of the urban Northwest the FC have been able to assert the scale on which opportunities for new woodlands exist. Extent of loss provides a basis for the scale of delivery of new woodlands.

Evidence that recovery is quantifiable and happening, may be interpreted as a grounds statement that shows the extent to which the FC and its partners are capable of delivering SFM in terms of rate and scales.

Having asserted a shortfall in tree-cover within England's landscapes, both the UK forestry Standard and the English Forestry Strategy underline with figures, the extents to which trees need 'putting back' as a government priority:

“For the U.K by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century woodland cover was around 5%...today this figure has risen to 10% (2.5 million hectares) as the result of commitment to a steady programme of planning...it is the current policy to increase the woodland area” (Forestry Commission 1998<sup>a</sup>)

“With just 7% woodland cover (England), the Government is committed to achieving a re-expansion of England's woodlands” (Forestry Commission 1998<sup>b</sup>)

“The Governments target is ambitious. Doubling England's Woodland Cover to 15% would require the creation of approximately one million hectares of new woodlands” (Forestry Commission 1996)

For the Northwest, with a particularly low percentage tree cover the potential for new woodlands, as for England, is expressed as a numerical target. Both of the NW's community forests, Mersey and Red Rose, seek to raise the percentage woodland cover within their operational boundaries to 12 and 30 percent respectively (MF 2001, RRF 1994).

In addition to numeric estimations of the potential for improved tree cover expressed as percentages, the FC makes use of measures of area to demonstrate the scale at which they are claiming.

In the national instance, the FC is suggesting the need for additional woodland area totalling 2.5 million hectares in order to realise 15 percent cover. Likewise Red Rose is declaring that a planting area of 13000 ha within its 76 000 ha project area is required to achieve its aspirations.

Mersey Forest however is less precise in terms of the available planting area available. It estimates that 43% of its available 115 000 ha is “available for tree planting” with “woodland cover in the Mersey Forest area extending to 5% having risen from 4% since the inception of the Forest”.

(At the time there were more than 6000 ha planted across the twelve community forests at an average of 6.9% tree cover)

The national guidelines use numeric estimations in order to orientate the types of location likely to be targeted for new woodlands; typically this is through numeric evidence for the extent to which trees are missing from certain areas and the scope for future planting. However, additional reasoning is evident through the capacity provided by the SFM approach.

Three functions- social, economic and environmental- are embedded within the principles of SFM. The FC is able to use numeric estimations that draw on this holistic approach rather than rely purely on the basis of percentage tree cover to establish targets for planting.

Much of the woodland establishment being undertaken in the Northwest of England is occurring on land suffering from urban dereliction. Derelict land is said to exacerbate economic, social and environmental deprivation and the Northwest has more derelict land than any other region (for example see NWLRRSG 2001). Through the extent to which locales are suffering dereliction in terms of area or in terms of impact by association, dereliction is currently grounded as a putative condition embedded within SFM forestry policy and forestry related operational strategies. Numerical estimations are used to draft the extent of derelict land as a SFM opportunity in the England

Forest Strategy: “There are some 175 000 hectares of former industrial land in England” (Forestry Commission 1998<sup>a</sup>).

Likewise, within a report undertaken with FC support on the restoration opportunities in the Northwest, the extent to which the region suffers dereliction is expressed with values. In this case the NW is compared that for the rest of England;

“The Northwest contained 9900 hectares of derelict land representing 25% of all derelict land in England” (NWLRRSG 2001). In the grounds for Community forestry in the Northwest, the problem of dereliction is expressed through numerical estimations of its extent within CF boundaries and its association with disadvantaged communities.

The Northwest is shown to have a quarter of England’s derelict land, whilst the extent to which this land features in the Community forests is relatively low in terms of how it compares to other land uses; despite this, DUN land is grounded as an opportunity for new woodlands in the NW.

The estimations do show that the differences between percentage DUN land and Tree cover are minimal- 1% for the Mersey or 957 ha for Red Rose in the favour of woodland cover. DUN land offers a potential to double of the existing woodland.

However, what is perhaps significant, is the way in which derelict land is shown through numeric estimate to be an opportunity for trees in the landscape in ways other than land availability. Tracts of derelict land are shown to have social, economic and environmental consequences through numeric evidence. Figures that show the extent of the problem in this light are used to construct a convincing case for SFM intervention in the form of community woodlands as a restoration solution.

Of the two community forests in the Northwest, it is the Mersey Forest that makes the most explicit use of numeric estimates when relating derelict land to social and economic conditions; perhaps this is because Mersey hosts more derelict land and tree cover than Red rose. In orientating their case, the Mersey Forest, with the support of the FC, has used values from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (DETR 2000) which demonstrate the extent to which certain communities are disadvantaged:

“Knowsley and Liverpool ranked second and third for multiple deprivation respectively out of 355 districts across the country” (Mersey Forest 2001)

Although there appear to be no absolute figures for the relationship between social and economic deprivation with derelict land, quotes such as the above are used to suggest a link.

For example the Red Rose Forest plan (1994) discusses urban degradation as being associated with inadequate (percentage) tree cover and social infrastructure.

An explicit tool in linking derelict land with social and economic deprivation to woodland cover is the Public Benefit Recording System produced on behalf of the Forestry Commission, The Environment Partnership and the North West Development Agency (TEP undated).

The PBRS uses numeric estimates to construct a data set of c.3100 DUN sites and rank them in terms of potential to yield public benefits. The scale to which the PBRS is applied serves to expose the extent of dereliction in the Northwest. The ranking serves to prioritise sites for investment, and ground numerically the priority cases.

The PBRS makes a clear linkage between derelict land and public benefits in order to claim the gains that could be achieved if sites were to receive environmental improvement and/or restoration to community woodlands.

Besides the PBRS, an influential report, ‘Reclaim the Northwest’, undertaken on behalf of the FC and others actually uses GIS alongside values for social

deprivation and intensity of derelict land in order that a correlation be grounded (NWLRRSG 2001).

*Estimations of temporal basis*

The long-term nature of forest management is a considerable element within the sustainability ethos driving contemporary forestry policy; drawing on SFM and the versatile functionality of trees, the Forestry Commission promotes trees in the landscape as inherited, present-day and future assets:

“The planting of trees is a sign of our confidence in the future. It is a compliment paid by our generation to its successors and marks our gratitude to those who paid us that compliment in the past” (Forestry Commission 1996)

The FC has endorsed numerical grounds to orientate the dilemma that exists in the Northwest, where there are fewer trees, by drawing on the concept of an ‘asset-through-time’.

There are many statements on how new woodlands will be a legacy for successor generations, something that is perceived as desirable; meanwhile there is an explicit appreciation that ‘our’ inheritance of trees in the NW has been diluted through poor management and industrial growth. It is today’s inheritance that is a problem in both its quality and in principle. Through new woodlands this condition may be reversed so that the present day’s needs and expectations may be met alongside those of the future.

There are few definite figures to estimate scale and orientation over time apart from references to ‘generations’. However, the Red Rose Forest states that it’s own objectives may need to operate over “40 years” in order to “meet the needs and expectations of society in the 1990’s and the decades to come”.

Likewise the Mersey forest informs its audiences that in order to be “a legacy to future generations...community forests will take 30 years to mature and perhaps 30 years to reach their full potential”.

The use of ‘lifetimes’ to ground the timeframes relevant to trees is more apparent in the way that the FC and its partners stress the scope for public benefit delivery- in this way they assert that public benefits are a long a term investment. This is particularly useful in laying down the long-term nature for community woodlands:

“The Process of Forest development will be gradual...thus many of the benefits of the forest will not be fully realised in a single lifetime” (Red Rose Forest 1994)

“We will not reap all the advantages in one lifetime” (Mersey Forest 2001)

#### *Dependence on wood products*

“We are a heavily populated industrialised society...we continue to use enormous quantities of timber and wood products, importing more than 80% of our requirements” (Forestry Commission 1998<sup>a</sup>)

Quotes similar to the above are typical of the way in which numeric estimates are made to establish the degree to which British society is still dependent on wood products. In the context of what Sustainable Forest Management has to offer in terms of ‘new opportunities for woodland’, our dependence on imports is seen as undesirable. For example at the national scale, the UK capacity to produce timber from existing UK forests is said by the FC to be realistic at “15 million cubic meters by 2020”- which the FC compares to the “8 million cubic meters in 1997” (ref).

Within the England Forestry Strategy, there is a similar acceptance of our lack of self-sufficiency and again a suggestion that our own timber opportunities can be maximised. To compound the situation further, there is an open admission that despite investment in the timber-processing sector, there is still a shortfall. The EFS, which admits our dependency acknowledges this despite stating that around “£1 billion of new investment” has been committed.

It not only the extent of our dependence in terms of wood products that is stressed as significant in terms of missed opportunities, but also the consumption of wooded landscapes too. Both of the above documents draw attention to the way in which society still requires access to woods and forests. Numeric estimates are made for the number of visits made to wooded sites (1 million per annum in the Forest of Dean according to the EFS); whilst others are made for the revenue this brings to surrounding trade (£30 million for local businesses in and around the FoD). The notion behind such details is clear- to highlight the opportunities that have been overlooked and that may be taken to encourage a more prudent use of trees and new woodlands.

In the case of the Northwest, estimates of our dependency on wooded environments are expressed by statistics. The Mersey Forest uses data to claim, “at least 70% of trips to the countryside are made by car. Inner-city residents, 40% of whom do not have access to their own car, are poorly represented”.

### *A summary of the Grounds*

Grounds statements can be subdivided into three categories based on their rhetorical nature, namely Definitions, Examples and Numeric estimates. The purpose of ground statements has been to orientate claims for the opportunities afforded by trees in the landscape in terms of where they can

have an impact i.e. England and the NW in particular where tree cover is regarded as low, or the quality poor.

Grounds also outline the scope to which the trees and their benefits can be relevant to an area through emphasis on the social, economic and environmental capacity of the claims. Where trees are missing from landscapes the opportunities to maximise these benefits are claimed to be a missed opportunity.

The problem is therefore grounded in terms of too few trees and missed opportunities, and a region identified as vulnerable to this problem is the urban North West.

Part of the role of grounds statements in the published material has been to offer an opportunity to address this problem. To reverse the issues, grounds imply increased numbers of trees with multiple values. Moreover programmes with SFM at their core such as the Community woodlands projects are used as examples of the solution.

### **Warrants**

The FC have used what can be interpreted as grounds statement to raise awareness of low tree cover and missed opportunities regarding trees in the landscape. These opportunities can be considered as ‘problems’ in claims-making language- some putative condition in need of attention.

From the perspective of claims theory the next stage in the analysis of the FC’s rhetoric is to identify the existence of rhetorical justifications regarding these issues. Warrants are statements focused on justifying situations established in the grounds statements.

In the case of this research it is necessary to demonstrate that the Forestry Commission, in the role of claims-maker, is making and accepting justifications for overcoming missed opportunities of trees and woodlands.

Previous research using claims-theory developed a set of six warrants. Attempts were made to apply these to the topic of research. It was found that some of the types of warrants applied to the subject matter of this study, and these have been used as a template from which a new set of warrants have been sought and identified for this research. Table **VI.II** below presents an overview of the warrants identified for the FC's published rhetoric. The sub headings represent the nature of the warrants; the following discussion seeks to substantiate this categorisation.

<p>The value of trees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The value of trees in the landscape in Sustainable Forest Management terms; broad social, environmental and economic factors used to justify planting new woodlands- often refers to quality and market values</li> </ul>
<p>Quality of life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The non-market effects of trees in the landscape on communities that live and work amongst them in terms of health, recreation and wellbeing</li> <li>o The positive consequential effects of economic and environmental improvement on quality of life factors</li> </ul>
<p>Deficient Policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Historical lack of meaningful holistic approaches to regional issues- reduced tree cover, dereliction, social deprivation are examples</li> </ul>
<p>Bureaucratic opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Perception that under previous conditions partner agencies have been unable to reclaim derelict land at the rate at which it is produced</li> <li>o Belief that under previous priorities cost-effective land reclamation has not been realised by agencies charged with achieving this</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Suggestions that under previous conditions partner agencies have not been able to fund meaningful public benefit delivery in land restoration- poor public consultation is an illustration; insufficient emphasis on soft-end use is another</li> </ul>
Inherited environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Establishing a sense of injustice by way of emphasising the legacy of environmental degradation inherited by today's communities- specially in the case of the Northwest</li> <li>o Using principles of sustainable forest management to leave a quality green environment to future communities so as not to create future injustice</li> <li>o Recognition of negative knock-on effects of inherited environmental degradation on quality of life factors, creating a sense of social injustice – by means of positive feedback in putative social, economic and environmental circumstances.</li> </ul>
Historical continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Appreciation of the Forestry Commissions ongoing technical ability to undertake work and act as regulatory authority</li> <li>o Accepting the Forestry Commission's ongoing responsibility to deliver forestry policy</li> </ul>

### *The value of trees*

“What is certain is that, without trees, England would be a poorer place” (Forestry Commission 1998<sup>b</sup>)

In order to justify overcoming England’s shortfall in tree cover, its dependence on tree products and the benefits lost to environment, society and the economy, the FC place great emphasis on the ‘value’ of trees in the landscape. It is also perhaps the most controversial warrant since many of the values it purports are difficult to gauge quantitatively.

The FC is explicit in championing trees in the landscape as valuable asset. They openly promote trees and woodlands as a marketable, value-adding resource of importance to the national economy, whilst simultaneously highlighting their values to environment and society that are essentially intangible and non-monetary: trees are intrinsically valued by their basic market and non-market attributes.

The manner in which the Forestry Commission justifies what it constructs as opportunities for trees and woodlands, and the market and non-market values it promotes, is a product of the sustainability ethos to which the UK is committed. Sustainable forest management allows the FC to measure value in more than one dimension.

It is argued here that the tangible elements to which value is assigned are the actual benefits claimed to come from trees in the landscape. The value can be organised into basic social, economic and environmental divisions in keeping with the basic structure of SFM.

The most concise example in the literature of the way in which benefits are translated into values comes from the definition of ‘forest values’ in the UK Forestry Standard’s glossary of terms (FC 1998<sup>a</sup>):

“Forest Values: The marketable (cash) resource and the environmental and social benefits such as landscape enrichment and conservation”

There are several other verifications occurring within other major UK and English policy documents to portray the asset nature of trees through their benefits delivered to society, economy and the environment. These are usually expressed as benefits, for example, timber, economic regeneration, access and tourism as well as conservation and biodiversity roles (FC 1998).

The UK indicators of sustainable forestry (FC 2002) describe forests as providing a ‘variety of goods and services’; they also refer to these as being benefits (expressed elsewhere as factors of economic, environmental and social value). For example, having asserted both wildlife and income as goods and services, these also have a ‘social and environmental value’ - as a landscape feature or opportunity for recreation.

‘Economic values’ are also expressed through direct economic benefits adopt a neo-classical valuation of timber, wood processing, income and employment. All of these demonstrate the way in which benefits are expressed as economic values, indeed the English Forestry Standard even has a subheading entitled, the ‘benefits and values of woodland’ in which benefits are discussed as assets.

Box **VI.I** attributes a comprehensive list of the various benefits claimed for trees in the landscape from FC policy material. It also shows the way in which these are arranged into social, economic and environmental cohorts, or types of value.

Box VI.I: Benefits claimed for trees in the landscape reflected in social, economic and environmental capacities:

- o Improves the appearance of landscapes- greening element, screens/frames development;
- o Economic resource- timber, woodland products, attracts inward investment, positive impacts on property value, encourages local entrepreneurship;
- o Provides recreational opportunities- both active and passive pursuits and absorbs numbers of people Important to wildlife- conservation, biodiversity and habitat diversity;
- o Employment opportunities- establishment, maintenance, harvesting and development;
- o Educational- resource, environment and subject;
- o Local and global atmospheric benefits- carbon sequestration, noise reduction, oxygen production;
- o Opportunities for healthy living and health based initiatives;
- o Tourist attraction;
- o Cost effective- as an after use or remedial solution;
- o Sustainable resource- woodland products;
- o Venue for arts and traditional crafts;
- o Added protection to archaeological interests.

It is these benefits that are used to justify the FC's claims for problems, since benefits represent implicit values; with the problem of missed opportunities for trees through low tree cover, many of these benefits/values that have been missing and generally unacknowledged. To further justify action, the situation can be reversed if something were to be done about it:

“An expansion of the area of woodland can increase the extent of these multiple benefits” (FC 2002).

The significance of values to justify overcoming a shortfall in trees is simple. Values translate from benefits- thus benefits are lost when trees are lost, without trees England is a poorer place; however, more trees means more benefits which means additional values and before long, England is richer place economically, socially and environmentally. According to the FC, an increase in tree cover will bring a wide range of benefits.

### *Market and non-market values*

Under the sustainability ethos, the FC are able to draw on two strengths in terms of constructing warrants; first. there is the triple-bottom-line which covers the social, the economic and the environmental benefits of having more trees in the UK and England. These make a sound and holistic approach to constructing an issue and in making reasonable justifications for something to be done.

Second, the Forestry Commission is able to assign weight to the non-market benefits (NMBs) of trees in the landscape.

NMBs are described as “benefits that are not marketed” and “difficult to assign accurate values too” or “difficult to quantify in cash terms”; such benefits are generally headed under environment and society, the main NMBs are recreation, landscape, amenity, biodiversity and carbon sequestration<sup>1</sup> (FC 1998b, 2002; Willis *et al* 2000).

A good example from the UK indicators of sustainable forestry is ‘wildlife’, which is described as “valued for its own sake”, due to its integral role in our surroundings; likewise the England Forestry Standard (1998) describes the value of woodlands in the landscape as “highly valuable” due in part to its visibility.

Many of the non-market benefits are valued because of their role in ‘our quality of life’- improved access, healthy environment, existence values, seeing trees in the landscape etc. They are not however seen to be independent of neo-classical economic values from forestry activities; they are recognised as being diffuse economic benefits, the result of multiplier effects from improving landscapes to encourage inward investment for example (Selman and Powell 2003)

Non-market benefits are an effective warrant despite the difficulty in assigning any definite worth to them; however there have been many attempts to use economic models to represent their worth. Research undertaken on behalf of the Forestry Commission argues that by including approximations of worth for NMBs the total value of trees in the landscape is probably more valuable to ‘us’ than if it were based on neo-classical economic benefits alone. This is something that the FC uses to justify the value of trees in a post-industrial era:

“Adding the value of these benefits to revenues from timber and other forest-related products and services demonstrates the total economic value of forestry” (Forestry Commission 2002)

### *Priorities*

Using NMB and market values strengthens FC’s argument for trees. Equally, with the FC charged with delivering multifunctional forests, it is important that they are able to justify provision of public benefits. NMBs demonstrate that public expenditure on the FC represents value for money for the nation and thus with woodland expansion this will continue to the benefit of more of society as a whole (Willis et al 2000).

Values are also represented by a sense of precedence for where woodland benefits are most required, suggesting that certain areas within the UK are in need of certain values over others:

“These benefits will reflect England’s environmental, economic, social and cultural priorities” (FC 1998b)

More specifically in the case of social justification: “There may be a higher social value in providing benefits in areas of high deprivation”. This notion should lend itself to environmental and economic conditions. This belief in woodland benefits as fundamental elements in strategic resource allocation may represent the rationalization of the FC’s involvement in the Northwest of England.

In the Northwest of England, it is the combination of NMBs and economic benefits that justify work on the ground; in general the bulk of their values echo the national ideal. Similarly the Forestry Commission’s own Public Benefit Recording System and Newlands projects use the same values.

In terms of priorities, both the community forests and the Newlands approach use the issue of lost value to justify replacing value; where urban dereliction is seen to blight the region’s social and environmental value it is seen to detract from the potential of the regions economic potential. Both seek to overcome this by restoring the regions social and environmental values through attention to its image, and so improving the region’s image is seen to encourage inward investment.

### *Quality of life concept*

“...Landscapes with trees and small woods can play an important part in enhancing the quality of life in and around our towns and cities...”

(Forestry Commission 1998b)

The overlapping values to society, economy and environment embedded within trees are given further rhetorical justification, when they are considered as indicators of quality of life. There is an underlying assumption in the policy of the FC, that the market and non-market benefits of trees in the landscape can be argued as inherently desirable contributors towards an improved quality of life (QOL).

The principal way in which trees are seen to contribute towards QOL is through the provision of social, economic and environmental benefits. Logically this means that trees need to be significant element of the landscape and in positions where their benefits can be reaped.

As such much emphasis is placed on the role of trees and woodlands as features of attractive landscapes that encourage inward investment and settlement: the UK forestry literature asserts that the QOL in urban areas will be especially improved by contributions to recreational opportunities, healthy exercise, environmental education and local community involvement, and wildlife and biodiversity (Forestry Commission 1998, 2002, DETR 1999).

The FC is also able to recognise regional opportunities to improve quality of life using trees: for example within the UK indicators of sustainable forestry there is an explicit recognition of the potential for regional opportunity. Of relevance to this study is the overt scope for forestry's contribution to improving the QOL in areas of social deprivation and industrial dereliction (Forestry Commission 2002)

According to the England Forestry Strategy, industrial dereliction land goes hand in hand with social deprivation and the consequentially poor environment. Typically the QOL for people confined to such conditions is perceived as very low (Forestry Commission 1998b).

In the North West of England, which boasts high levels of social deprivation and population, it is significant that the FC are able to justify working there on the basis of improving QOL.

Red Rose Forest and the Mersey Forest (endorsed by the FC) both argue a case for improving the quality of life for the NW's population.

They argue that overcoming the region's negative environmental image will make important social and economic contributions to QOL (Mersey Forest 2002, Red Rose Forest 1994).

In the favour of QOL contributions as a warrant, is the simple conviction that with improved management and encouraged planting of trees and woodlands, the benefits will be forthcoming.

The FC has suggested in publications that contributions towards QOL are dependent on the total area of woodland and its management (Forestry Commission 2002) In the northwest where percentage tree cover is low, this is a significant justification for the 'need' to increase woodland cover.

#### *Inherited environment*

“Dereliction damages the regions image, deters investment and blights already disadvantaged communities...who find themselves with a legacy of poor health, educational under attainment, and continuing unemployment” (NWLRRSG 2001)

Central to the core objectives of forestry operations in the Northwest is the recovery of the region's environmental image. In its present state, high levels of dereliction and low levels of percentage tree cover are seen as arresting factors in the region's social and economic development. It is claimed that the region's image deters inward investment and acts as a negative contribution towards the quality of life values for communities.

In the case of the Northwest there is a strong element of injustice based on the notion that much of the environmental neglect to date is inherited by today's communities from their industrial forbears. From the Industrial Revolution, through both World Wars until the 1960's much of the Northwest underwent massive industrial and population expansion. With hindsight, development was unplanned and landscape quality suffered under the weight of industrial facilities. Since then the region has undergone a steady decline in industrial activities (manufacturing and mineral extraction being major examples) and population:

“The massive increase in industry and population and subsequent retrenchment has left a legacy of pollution, dereliction, damaged landscapes and abandoned or underused infrastructure...other parts of the country are not saddled to the same extent with the legacy of the nineteenth century industrial revolution...” (Mersey Forest 2001).

According to the EFS, a landscape blighted by derelict land and low tree cover is a symptom of unsustainable development, which compromises the social and economic development/needs of current and future generations (also see the World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

The FC recognise the legacy left to the NW as unsustainable, therefore they see it as their role to improve conditions for the present and the future populations. The Mersey Forest (2001) for example is justified as a “legacy to future generations” whilst the FC asserts trees and woodlands as being a ‘major investment’ for our future.

### *Deficient Policies and Historical Continuity*

The FC have identified a national shortfall in tree cover across England. They have been keen to promote through their own policy, the ways in which forestry priorities for management, policy and delivery are redeveloped and seek to overcome circumstances. In promoting new approaches and priorities, the FC are alluding to deficiencies in the previous policies for not having taken certain issues into account.

Issues that appear to have been less developed, or out of the FC's operational reach in the past, come to light in two discussion papers, firstly 'Woodland creation: Needs and opportunities in the English countryside' then, 'Woodland creation: Needs and opportunities in the English countryside-responses to a discussion paper (1996 and 1997 respectively). At the time when the state of national tree cover became apparent, with the Government Rural White Paper (1995), the FC circulated a discussion paper which sought to "stimulate fresh thinking about the needs and opportunities for new woodland creation. Within this study, which informed the England Forest Strategy, several new needs and opportunities emerged and became acknowledged by the Commission. First is the early recognition of the way in which different types of woodland would relate to different types of benefit and that this partly influenced where new woodlands were established; both urban locations and degraded land emerged as new opportunities for greater attention (FC 1996, 1997)

Other themes emerged which focused on the way in which the FC operated other than location and were incorporated into the English Forestry Strategy. Suggestions centred on quality, integration, partnership and public support (FC 1998b).

Under 'quality', there is recognition that more should be sought in regard to benefits; for example the EFS suggests that benefits which relate to the objectives of adjacent land-uses or stakeholders should be prioritised over

those that might exist in isolation or as trouble to others, implying that not enough had been done to maximise benefits in this way in the past. Integration, again appears to be an area where the FC has been unable to previously maximise its input: “The government wants to see woodland expansion and management adopted as aims by a more wider constituency than we have achieved to date”- it would appear that the FC in the past has been unable to tie in the benefits of woodlands with the agendas of others (FC 1998<sup>b</sup>).

Partnership follows logically from integration since the former can only really be reached through the latter. Importantly the FC recognise that it is imperative that this operate at all levels, though there is no suggestion as to how this was anticipated previously, except that it is hoped that this can occur in government and between government, landowners, the public and private and voluntary sectors.

Public support gives a better impression of being a recent addition to the FC’s agenda- there is an explicit desire that the EFS becomes a ‘vehicle’ for gaining public confidence in the benefits attainable through well managed woodlands. The regional and the local are explicit here, which suggests that a more top-down centralised approach is in keeping with past operations; clearly at the time of writing, the FC felt a need for renewed public support in the forestry sector and its agency.

Sue Weldon of the Forestry Commission has written about another dimension concerning the FC’s ability to justify involvement in the Northwest. She suggests that, having undergone political and administrative devolution the FC is in a position whereby it is able to develop new ways of thinking. It has moved from ‘government to governance’ and is now able to concentrate on quality of benefits, integration, partnerships and public support (Weldon

2005). The FC is now more fully aware of the needs outside of timber when it comes to trees in the landscape and their impact- this in itself suggests that their traditional operations never maximised the potential for benefits in the past, compared to the present where they are under the sustainability requirements of the EFS. Naturally there have been changing demands placed on Forestry in recent years: “timber has become a means to an end rather than an end in itself” (FC 2005). As such the policies in which the FC currently invests are in keeping with the aspirations of the EFS and its consultation.

It has been asserted that the FC has responded positively to today’s demands in the Northwest more so than in any other English region (FC 2005). Weldon (2005) also suggests that the change in forest policy is reflects a response to cultural change and as such the FC cannot operate in isolation as it did previously. With a move from a productive to a post-productive ethos, the FC cannot afford to overlook opportunities. New operational locations have emerged since the rationale for woodland establishment has shifted from timber to broader public benefits. Derelict land and urban areas have become new grounds for operations.

It is perhaps worth considering that there have been other institutions that have missed opportunities or responsibilities, which is why there is such a stock of derelict land in the Northwest, and why the social, environmental and economic condition is so adverse. The FC is proposing to go some way to correct this situation by contributing forestry into a partnership framework aimed at reversing the wider problems of the NW. The wide scope of benefits allows them to access and integrate with wider interests than their own. Community woodlands are their vehicles in this sense.

Historical continuity draws on the FC's ability to adapt to changing cultural climate- its inception in 1919 was essentially to provide a strategic supply of timber in the case of war; today it is about the FC's ability to continue to evolve and deliver today's priorities and public benefits.

### *Bureaucratic Opportunities*

In contrast to policy reflection, this type of warrant implies failure on the part of 'other' partners. It is not widely represented in the forestry policy material, but a partnership report between North West stakeholders includes several interesting observations (NWLRRSG 2001). The North West Development Agency (NWDA) is the leading body for the promotion and funding of land reclamation in the NW, investing around £10 million per annum on land reclamation exclusively. However reclamation has struggled to keep with the pace at which new dereliction is produced:

“...despite five decades of land reclamation programmes...the northwest Region is still blighted by derelict, neglected, under-used and contaminated land” (NWLRRSG 2001)

Desirable outcomes for overcoming this scenario appear to favour the Forestry Commission's agenda since benefits and costs associated with effective reclamation are key feature in overcoming the situation. The report asserts that multi-functional benefits are most desirable, especially if they are relevant to communities.

Also in favour of the FC is the partnership's desire for 'soft' end-use to reclamation since its cost is around 10 percent of that of 'hard' end-use;

moreover this is an opportunity to budget for more sites and speed the rate of reclamation. Forestry again is seen to offer an option.

In association with the cost of establishment there is the cost of maintenance of reclaimed sites. The report considers the FC interest in the following manner: “land reclamation for woodland is particularly cost-effective; with low capital and revenue costs”.

The FC is further able to justify its involvement in the North West through its commitment to partnership delivery, and it has already demonstrated this already. Integration is evident too; using the opportunities presented by the NWDA’s position on reclamation the FC is able to offer public benefit woodlands as an alternative end-use. It is in keeping with both the NWDA agenda on reclamation and benefit delivery as well as, the potential for public participation. Seeking to maximise on benefits means that the FC is able to align itself to the benefits sought by other stakeholders involved in the construction of the report, the Groundwork Trust and local authority.

## **Conclusions**

The last rhetorical element within the FC’s published rhetoric is the ‘Conclusions’. Statements of this type are ones that advocate the action required to overcome a problem. The problem in this research has been identified as the low tree cover and missed opportunities for trees in the landscape as alleged in the FC’s policy material so far.

Table **VI.III** presents an overview of the conclusions in the FC published rhetoric.

Table VI.III Core components pertaining to FC published Warrants statements

<p>Resource: quantity and quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Overcoming the national shortage of woodland cover</li> <li>o Overcoming regional shortages of woodland cover</li>   <li>o Establishing new multi-purpose woodlands relevant to local social, economic and environmental priorities</li> <li>o Improving the quality and expanding the values of existing woodland cover through principles of sustainable forest management</li> </ul>
<p>Institutional responsibilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The FC is authoritative in setting the standards of best practice SFM</li> <li>o Legitimate FC responsibilities outside traditional operational areas and boundaries</li> </ul>
<p>Raising awareness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Of the potential for trees in the landscape to deliver benefits (social, economic and environmental) in both new and established woodland cover and to a range of locations and ownerships.</li> <li>o Of the relevance of forestry</li> </ul>

The main interest of this research remains the claims for public benefits; as such it is the nature of the conclusions in relation to the case for public benefits that forms the focus of this section and not so much the politically motivated processes and programmes that complement them as part of the

action. The following discussion will substantiate the existence of each of the three components listed within table **VI.III** which show the conclusions in this context.

### *Resource quantity and quality*

The White Paper, Rural England: A Nation Committed to Living Countryside initially drew attention to England's low woodland cover (DoE and MAFF 1995). The following year the FC was already promoting the action required to overcome the issue in a discussion paper by revealing the ambitions. Thus emerged the aspiration for one million hectares of new woodlands and the target of fifteen percent woodland cover for England, which was comparable at the time to a doubling of existing woodland cover (Forestry Commission 1996).

The FC's discussion paper was essentially promoting the problem and a logical solution, i.e. more trees. However, part of the rhetorical appeal for the apparent need to increase the number of trees in the landscape, besides merely overcoming the shortfall, came from the early claims of additional benefits. These benefits were replicated versions of what occurred in the White Paper, it quoted:

“A significant expansion of woodland would help to improve the appearance of the countryside, create jobs, enrich wildlife habitats and open up new opportunities for recreation” (FC 1996)

In a response to the discussion paper the FC asked the question of its audiences', 'why do we need more woodland?' The results compiled by the FC were published in 1997 and included a wider set of benefits than hitherto, including:

“Recreation and access; nature conservation and biodiversity; landscape character / local distinctiveness; rural diversification / employment; encouraged management of the existing recourse; timber production; education; renewable resource; CO<sub>2</sub> absorption; self-sufficiency in woodland products; factors relating to quality of life and health” (FC 1997)

Whilst claiming a case for new woodlands based on an expanded range of benefits there were also local shortfalls in tree cover to consider. The FC therefore supported an enquiry into what types of new woodlands were desirable and where they should be.

The outcome from the discussion on these issues resulted in multipurpose forestry -which could be made appropriate to local priorities being the most desired type of forestry. Furthermore, areas close to centres of population where landscape improvement was needed also appeared desirable as likely areas where new woodlands should be sited.

Asserting an opportunity for multipurpose woodland close to urban communities was supported by a return to the notion of benefits. The paper argues that the types of benefits listed (above) would have a “strong role to play” in urban areas in need of restoration; particularly if trees could be considered as a low-cost, low-maintenance solution to restoring unproductive land and likely to improve the site conditions and area appearance, and consequently land values and economic return through inward investment.

From 1997 establishing more woodlands is a ‘given’ conclusion for the FC in overcoming a national shortage of tree cover. More woodland on a large scale became easier to comprehend when the FC was able to publish a case for where and why new woodlands should occur.

Increasing tree cover is still the conclusion in some of the more recent policy material as has been shown when discussing numerical estimations of tree

loss in the earlier section on Grounds statements. For example the UK Forestry Standard has a foreword by the Prime Minister who declared that the UK has a special responsibility regarding ‘our’ woodland cover since there is so little of it in comparison to other European countries; this is a message carried into the first section of the document which summarises forestry in the UK and the Government’s wish to expand the area of woodland in the UK. The rest of the document is then concerned with how to do this appropriately (FC 1998<sup>a</sup>).

Similarly the England Forestry Strategy which delivers the UKFS according to English priorities expresses the need for new woodlands (FC 1998<sup>b</sup>) as one of the aims of English Forestry Policy, i.e.: “...a continued steady expansion of our woodland area to provide more benefits for society and our environment” (FC 1998<sup>b</sup>).

The focus on putting on putting trees back in the landscape highlighted the potential for trees to be made relevant via the scope of benefits they may bring to that area. This is particularly evident in the NW where new woodlands are designed to improve the socio-economic status of the region and the tracts of derelict land that have few viable end-uses other than that offered by woodland.

For example, in the England Forest Strategy, the Red Rose and Mersey community forests are referred to as rhetorical archetypes of the way in which new woodlands are viable as well as relevant to the priorities of the region. This is advocated by the community forests, for example the Mersey Forest (2001) describes itself as “...*a major delivery mechanism for delivering large-scale, multi-purpose forestry where it is most required*”.

The concept of sustainable forest management has helped legitimise claims regarding public benefits. It does this by making the social, economic and environmental capacities of trees in the landscape appear as important as the numbers of trees themselves and not just incidental. This recognition

therefore takes action beyond putting trees back in the landscape, albeit appropriately. Expanding it to include the deliberate focus on the delivery of benefits as an output. Trees therefore are seen as having a crucial role in constructing social, economic and environmental capital.

John Burns, director of the Mersey Forest (1994-1999) describes the Mersey forest concept (as an exemplar delivery mechanism of modern forestry that includes the principles embedded in SFM) as: "...a good idea, simple in concept. By creating a new extensively wooded landscape in and around our towns and cities, we can create opportunities for public enjoyment, nature conservation and education. Equally important, we can provide one of the building blocks for the future economic success of the NW- a better more attractive environment" (Mersey Forest 2001).

It can be argued that incorporating SFM into English forestry policy not only facilitates the appropriate expansion of woodland cover in the regions but allows the benefits from having trees in the landscape to become a solution in itself- i.e. where there is low tree cover then there has been a failure to maximise the delivery of SFM. Since the Government has made a commitment to SFM the FC is required to promote benefits as part of its conclusions, especially in the context of where the opportunities to maximise on benefits have been overlooked in the past or where there is a case for establishing new woodlands. Adopting SFM is not only a major opportunity for legitimising appropriate expansion and maximising the opportunities for trees in the landscape, it is also a tool for improving the quality of existing woodland cover.

Examples of the benefits aspired to in the Community Forests Programme, the England Forestry Strategy and by the broader SFM model are shown below in the appendix; they demonstrate the varied nature of both the benefits, the way in which they are presented and the rhetorical reach to varied audiences as a conclusion.

### *Institutional responsibilities*

In addition to delivering benefits and raising tree cover, other conclusive action centres on institutional responsibility. This is relevant for two reasons. Firstly it describes another part of the action required to overcome the issue of missed opportunities and low tree cover. Secondly it offers an insight into one of the observations within the content analysis of the empirical data; one of the themes described how it might be important that the FC attains some association with public benefit delivery, partly to integrate policy in areas opened up to receiving new woodlands but also to overcome public misunderstandings of the FC and forestry. In the England Forestry Strategy the requirements and principles of SFM are written into a series of programmes that guide woodland management in a way that makes the best use of benefits depending on local priorities (FC 1998b)). These Programmes have been discussed as part of the rhetorical nature of claims for public benefits earlier on in this chapter; the responsibility that the policy sets out for the FC in delivering these programmes is also relevant.

According to the EFS woodland expansion and benefit delivery can be delivered in the public interest if the FC is able to adopt, demonstrate and promote the following principles:

- o Quality- which has already been shown to mean quality of woodlands in terms of their capacity to deliver benefits through SFM;
- o Integration- making woodlands appropriate to the aims of a wider constituency than achieved to date;
- o Partnership- for effective links between policy and delivery; woodlands sought as all inclusive i.e. landowners, government, and the public, private and voluntary sectors as audiences for and voices in woodland expansion and benefits.

- o Public support, which the EFS argues is important, “...for gaining public confidence and support for the benefits of well managed woods and forests...”

These principles do not develop the content analysis but do confirm the importance of delivering new woodlands and benefits. This is especially the case for developing public support which the content analysis related to notions of community risk and culture of forestry.

However, the main observation regarding these principles is they could be said to construct a politically persuasive case for the FC to access territories such as the derelict sites of the urban North West, and furthermore to establish an image with those already operating there, such as the Groundwork Trusts and local authorities.

So far, the conclusions attest a role for the FC as an authoritative partner in delivering woodland expansion and woodland benefits were they are most needed and with those that already are in new territory or those who have the potential to help them. This is rhetorically significant in that this conclusion will appeal to an audience with links to woodland and for whom the benefits of woodlands can be made.

### *Raising awareness*

The final type of published conclusion relevant to this study is about raising awareness; that is, awareness of the potential of trees in the landscape in terms of benefits and of the relevance of forestry to wider territories and audiences. Raising the awareness of benefits is quite explicit as benefit in it's own right .

It can also be argued that claims for public benefits are likely to be legitimised by wider audiences if they can be persuaded that their interest or location is relevant to the case for action. Further, the England Forestry Standard seeks to

achieve a raised awareness by using SFM to make woodland opportunities legitimate across the country to a range of interests through its four programmes. Besides this broader notion, the EFS seek to raise public awareness through its guiding principles of delivery:

“ a key part of our approach is to increase the awareness of the relevance of woodlands to all parts of society...to promote the value of woodland at the national, regional and local level” (FC 1998b)

Raised awareness of the benefits concerning trees in the landscape and the means of managing them is a requirement for sustainable forest management and therefore appears as a rhetorically legitimate platform for promoting the case for more trees and the case for benefits and who is likely to receive them.

## Chapter 7: Claims analysis: Rhetoric in Practice

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### Introduction

Earlier parts of the thesis have argued a case for the rhetorical nature of the FC's policy and policy related material, with specific attention to their references to the Northwest of England. This was realised through the identification of what claims-making theory asserts as 'grounds, warrants and conclusions' - structures that reveal the rhetorical nature of claims. Claims in this case are for public benefits sought from the restoration of damaged land via community styles of woodland.

The findings of this earlier analysis are referred to as the, FC's 'published rhetoric (PuR).

This section describes where findings that are apparent when Best's principles of grounds, warrants and conclusions are applied to the experiences and aspirations of those actually practicing policy delivery in the North West. Using empirical data in the form of interview transcripts, the research hopes demonstrate a Rhetoric in Practice (RiP).

In broad terms there are two different groups of respondent within the empirical data. First of all there are Forestry Commission employees with responsibilities in the Northwest and then there are representatives from the FC's partners in the North West. Previously the empirical data has been analysed in order to establish the themes that exist within it through a process of content analysis. According to the content analysis, patterns within the empirical data suggested that differences between the published rhetoric and practice were a possibility.

Beginning with a reiterate on the problem/solution about which claims for public benefits are made in the published rhetoric, the following sections will explore the grounds, warrants and conclusions for the FC's 'rhetoric in practice' as a means of exploring the rhetorical nature of claims regarding public benefit forestry.

As a prerequisite for claims-theory it is necessary that both problem and or solution can be seen to be claimed for, otherwise there will be no grounds, warrants or conclusions for their substantiation. According to the FC's published rhetoric the problems in need of attention in the Northwest of England are partly unique to the region due to its historical land use, but also representative of a condition affecting the rest of England. Low percentage tree cover is a national issue seen as undesirable in an era of sustainable forest management and the North West yields the lowest tree cover of all the English regions with the majority of its standing stock being of poor quality.

Within the PuR, missed opportunities for the role of trees in the landscape arose as a problem that has affected not just England, but the individual regions. Until the concept of sustainable forest management the social and environmental functions of trees were largely secondary or irrelevant to the neoclassical economic priorities associated with timber production. One of the main consequences for England and the Northwest is that many of the downstream economic benefits and non-market benefits that are now at the heart of sustainable forestry were overlooked and allowed to deteriorate into neglected assets.

Hypothetically the opportunities for trees to deliver benefits to the NW are reduced because the amount of tree cover in the region is so low; this is said to be especially the case for the urban fringes where vast tracts of damaged land have lain barren and void of meaningful tree cover for decades and where social and economic deprivation is already pervasive.

The action required in the FC's published rhetoric regarding this problem situation is as follows:

- o Overcoming the natural shortfall in tree cover in the NW and England generally; improving the quality of the existing tree stock.
- o Greater awareness of the values of trees and the beneficial linkages forestry has to social, economic and environmental interests; using education on such opportunities to improve social, economic and environmental condition in the region;
- o Support for the FC as an authority figure in delivering public benefits styles of forestry in the UK given its historical ability to deliver forestry policy objectives and its willingness to operate in partnership networks;
- o Interpret the national strategy into regional needs through new ways of delivering forestry, i.e. via new partnerships in unconventional locations and by demonstrating commitment through projects such as Newlands.
- o To legitimise new standards in practice through application of sustainable indicators; innovative means of site assessment, i.e. considering non-market benefits in decision making, site design and appraisals.

The following discussion adds another dimension to the rhetorical nature of those claims as identified in the FC's published rhetoric.

## **Rhetoric in practice: Grounds statements**

The ground statements in the published rhetoric are present in the rhetoric of the FC practitioner mindset. However there is a major difference in how the grounds are expressed in the empirical data; how the grounds develop the problem/solution in relation to the claims and the rhetorical nature of the claims for the problem/solution.

Using Best's model revealed that the key claims manifested themselves in: the use of numerical estimates i.e. expressions for the extent to which the NW has low and poor quality tree cover; the size of the damaged land estate and rates of reclamation; and of the degree of social deprivation around sites or the period for which the region has suffered economic decline.

In the empirical data, perhaps because interviewees considered the researcher 'onboard or already familiar' with the case for the NW there was only a single use of a numeric estimate to make a case for public benefit forestry there. One senior FC practitioner described the region as having: "*a bizarrely small amount of woodland, around 96,000 hectares*".

Thus, although the interviewees did not produce numeric estimates of the scope, orientation, size and extent of issues as claims theory might have suggested, there were still some references concerning the low tree cover and the regions poor quality stock. The exploration of rhetoric in practice suggested that the issue is perhaps not as prominent as the published rhetoric implies, or is simply accepted by practitioners to the point of being overlooked.

### *Definitions*

Loose definitions are an accompanying form of grounds statement building on the theme of image. FC practitioners in the NW often refer to the words 'Forest', 'Forestry' and the title 'Forestry Commission' in terms of what they may stand for outside of the institution. Practitioners feel that society's construction of what these words connote, eventually impacts on the image of what they, as practitioners, seek to represent. The importance of these grounds is that they may not always do justice to the cause and act as a barrier to delivery.

There is more than one meaning of forest: According to a Forestry Commission training manual, forest is defined as: A large area dominated by trees, both conifers and broad-leaved either planted or natural. Usually taken to include a complex landscape comprising of woodland, open space, water and settlements" (Ford and Price 2001).

In keeping with the FC definition the original word describes forest as a dynamic landscape other than just woodland (see Rackham for other explanations for the term forest including, 'physical Forest' and 'legal Forest').

The Forest in Community Forest is true to the original meaning of the word- it refers to the patchwork nature of the wooded sites that it is composed of. Indeed the Mersey Forest even promotes its own forest as "breathing new life into this ancient meaning of the word 'Forest'".

What the Mersey Forest comments on is indicative of what FC practitioners have also remarked in terms of what forest represents. The Mersey forest draws on the 'ancient meaning' and 'new life' element to the word Forest

because it is aware of the risk that to many, the notion of ‘forest’ conjures “*images of dense, closely grown trees stretching as far as the eye can see*”. Indeed it seeks to overcome this image at the very beginning of its strategic plan.

This is perhaps justified in view of the experiences of FC practitioners. For example, one respondent felt that, for many, ‘plantation’ equates with forestry and recalled a member of the public saying:

“*Why do we want forests here, we don’t want those conifer plantations’...this was at a community forest site!*”

The significance of the way in which forest invokes the plantation image is apparent in the way in which it is seen as not helping the FC’s cause of substantiating their role in the NW. Many of the FC practitioners refer to the plantations as bad public relations. They openly see them as representing a Forestry Commission from a different operational era, the product of a different style of practice and agenda and of when government and economy overshadowed governance and socio-environmental value. One FC practitioner accepted that, “*that’s the way we did things then...but not anymore*”.

The elements that define a ‘forest’ in the traditional sense recur in the empirical data from FC practitioners. Many refer to the fact that sites are not ‘*dominated*’ by trees and that tree cover is ‘*surprisingly low*’ on some sites. There is a great sense of importance based on getting the balance right in terms of landscaping and features on sites. The dynamic landscape opportunity, as presented by the traditional definitions of forest lends itself to operating with partners; other interests will want to be represented on site. Grassy rides, heathland and biodiversity and open water all form part of the forest. Practitioners are keen to define community forests according to their multi-purpose elements, and often do so with definitions representing the ancient concept: “*We can’t expect harvestable timber, it is more the*

*traditional definition of Forest; we've got trees, open grassland, wetland...its health, access and wildlife benefits- that's more what we're trying to create rather than the more traditional Scottish forestry” (FC practitioner).*

The above quote suggests something further, as forest is associated with plantation, so to is the industry of ‘Forestry’. Rackham describes it as the “*practice of growing trees in plantations*” (and uses a lower case ‘f’); the FC however appears to have two main definitions of forestry which have developed with the post-industrial and sustainable thinking:

“Sustainable Forestry: *forests that are sensitively managed and harvested so that they will be around for generations to come*

...And...

Multi-purpose forestry: *forest management that delivers multiple benefits e.g. social, economic, environmental”*

Blending the principles behind these produced the opportunity for Community Forestry- defined by its nature in that it seeks to establish a patchwork of sustainable and multipurpose woodlands within a landscape for community gain. From this and other urban-based forestry practices emerged Social Forestry; defined through the themes of development, recreation/access, quality of life, and participation/awareness. Social forestry therefore is concerned with the exploration of social values in forests and forest management and of how forests can deliver social benefits (see Hislop 2001).

The principles that define modern forestry are compliant with the way in which FC practitioners define their own objectives and styles of forestry. It is clear that in the Northwest practitioners have an embedded knowledge of the themes which set community forestry apart from the styles of forestry

practised elsewhere where public benefits are less tangible (the Highlands for example). Many of the FC respondents define their style of forestry in which they are involved by drawing on the England Forestry Strategy as a definition and an example; others do so by contrasting their work to different styles of forestry. For example:

*“We’re part of the England Forest Strategy rather than trying to establish a coalesced working forest - we are talking about urban forestry, social benefit”* (Senior FC Practitioner)

*“There was a retired forester working down here...I was working for a period as a mediator between the LA and the forester because he came from a traditional background where you establish trees and forest in this way...he couldn’t relate at all.”* (FC Practitioner)

Having substantiated the role of forestry in the NW by grounding definitions of the styles of forestry from within their new culture, some FC practitioners fear that forestry is not understood as being diverse in principle and practice by wider society. The following statement is from an FC project manager, and is a typical example of this observation:

*“We’re only really making steps in convincing people...winning the war on social forestry, if we can just change the perception of what people think the FC is, as long as people think it is all about big conifer plantations people won’t realise, won’t ever think its about social forestry”*

Many of the FC practitioners interviewed used definitions of plantation type practice as grounds to substantiate the need for a up-to-date image since the FC need to be associated with their objectives in the NW. What the quote above highlights well is the way in which it is the FC as a representative of

forestry that is misunderstood rather than the styles of forestry they seek to deliver.

On this note one even suggested that the title 'Forestry Commission' is obsolete: "*I'm not sure it helps anymore...(because) it might mean something different*", against the grain of the aspirations for the FC in the NW (Senior FC practitioner).

### *Examples*

'Grounds' examples demonstrate the way in which FC personnel have experienced a suspicious society; in such cases the Commission is typically regarded by third parties as being 'out of place' in the theatre of the urban North West. One particular forestry officer uses an example to demonstrate the difficulty in establishing partnerships with other agencies when their image of the FC is out of line with internal FC aspirations for integration:

*"The first reaction I get from the developer and the arboriculture group was 'this isn't your territory...its not countryside'. They were completely flabbergasted that the Forestry Commission would be interested, they were sure that I should be out in the Pennine fringes or somewhere and not in the urban... This is what we are up against!"* (FC Practitioner)

The same person later reveals that whilst this is typical of where a preconceived image of the FC contradicts what the FC are trying to represent it is often the case that the old image is rarely overcome by such encounters; this is largely due to the "*same old faces at meetings*" and the limited extent to which the FC's message is "*cascaded down*" through wider partnership audiences and their departments.

Similarly other FC practitioners involved with the delivery of community woodlands in the North West point to examples where newly trained foresters

have arrived in the NW and sought posts elsewhere since they “*wouldn’t want my job*” because they have ideas of “*producing timber and getting away from people... typical of what goes on elsewhere*” (FC Practitioner)

Part of the ‘image’ issue relates to being seen to be an authority in delivering trees within such technically challenging conditions. Again, examples are used to ground the significance of image in this light. Such grounds generally occur as examples of other agencies’ ineptitude in dealing with trees and how the FC’s practices demonstrate public responsibility and best practice under SFM.

The examples normally seek to deride the local authorities, which are often blamed with sponsoring a “*green desert syndrome*” and “*not having a very good track record*” (Senior FC Practitioner). A second FC official in particular revealed two further examples:

*“When it comes to managing trees they (LA) are willing to spend thirty thousand pounds a hectare establishing trees, even if they are 10ft tall with more timber around them than they will ever produce in their lives to hold them up, with bits of old tyre and a 6ft fence around it...and then they walk away... when in 10 years when there is nothing left they do it all over again!”*

*“Trees, when they (LA) draw them on plans have to be, ‘that size’...so they go and buy this damn great standard which costs hundreds of more time more than a healthy young sapling- it’s out of bounds for it’s roots. Its’ got enormous problems and it dies back in the top or all together...how many times do you see this? I can’t count the number of times!”*

The use of examples helps to ground the need for an experienced/professional approach to getting trees in the landscape for public benefits. In using examples that construct images of failure the FC practitioners are not

purporting a justification for this doing this more efficiently, they are merely asserting the extent to which things could be improved; Their justifications for such grounds follow under ‘warrants’.

### **Rhetoric in Practice: Warrants statements**

This section will describe the justifications revealed in the empirical data for the grounds identified in the preceding part of this chapter.

In the practitioner mindset the FC’s published grounds were frequently referred to unchallenged, and consequently appeared as an accepted set of operational parameters that had been legitimised through the opportunities presented in policy.

The empirical data did, however, offer an added insight into the claims for why public benefits are important. It revealed that besides dealing with missed opportunities regarding trees and low tree cover, public benefits are also seen as a way of highlighting the outdated perception of forests, forestry and the FC itself.

In addition to yielding new insights into these ‘grounds’, the empirical data has also exposed ‘warrants’ based on market forces and institutional survival, neither of which were evident from the analysis of published material.

Generally, the empirical data replicated the themes in the publications, and perhaps the most striking similarity was with historical continuity, which will be re-visited shortly.

## *Justifications*

*“The government has turned round and said rightly, ‘you’re not making any profit, so what can you give us?’”* (FC Practitioner)

The FC practitioner who was the source for the above quote used it to explain the way in which he that felt that FC was under some form of scrutiny to make sure it was able to deliver value for public money and remain relevant in the absence of a market-based role (timber production). This forms a ‘bottom line’ shared among all of the FC personnel interviewed and is developed below to justify issues concerning out-dated perceptions of forestry practices, the concept of forest and the bearings these have on the constructed relevance of the Forestry Commission to delivering community and public benefit forestry in the North West.

A recurring justification for why the FC’s image should be grounded as relevant to public benefit delivery is from the threat of being associated with an ailing industry.

This point is commonly made with references to the timber market. Although ‘grounds’ are not used to describe the state of the timber market, the practitioners still use it to justify a role for the FC in delivering alternative produce, namely, benefits. An FC practitioner makes the clearest case using this approach:

*“The bottom has fallen out of the market so we’ve got to look at other ways of staying ahead of the game, to stay alive really...there’s no point in trying to keep all your eggs in one basket as they say.”*

The FC’s published rhetoric has already grounded England’s dependence on wood products, but to put the FC practitioner’s concerns into context it is

worth considering that Britain consumes around 50 million cubic metres of timber annually as paper, timber, board and other wood products, of which around 85 percent has to be imported at a cost of about £8 billion (This is similar to the figures expressed in the Grounds of the FC's policy rhetoric). Despite a national reliance on imports and commitments to a post-productive forestry philosophy, the Forestry Commission still has a significant role in sustaining home-grown timber- based chiefly upon coniferous species it currently harvests and markets over 5 million m<sup>3</sup> of round timber per year, which represents over 60% of Britain's softwood production (Forestry Commission 2006a).

Under the FC's strategic priorities, timber production features for the most part under rural development. However FC practitioners in the North West's public benefit/ community forest division see their work very much connected to the timber element, despite its seemingly detached situation. They almost suggest, as in the previous quote, that timber represents the FC main responsibility and any downturn in this field means a need to look elsewhere to remain relevant.

The state of the timber market has been a cause for concern non-the-less; warrants relating to it are therefore very difficult to counter-claim. For example: Throughout the early-eighties timber prices steadily rose from £5.37 (per cubic meter) to more than three times that by the mid-nineties (sales prices attained a high of £17.74 per cubic meter in September 1995); there was a depression between late 1990 and early March 1994, however prices still remained above £11.06 per m<sup>3</sup> (Forestry Commission 2006a).

At the time of the interviews, practitioners were describing timber prices as having "collapsed", "gone through the floor" and the market as having its "bottom fallen out", and they were not far wrong:

Timber prices had been falling since a high of the mid-nineties; for example in 2003 the average price reached £5.08 per cubic meter which is less than fifty percent of what it was five years previously (at £10.32); such concerns were therefore altogether grounded by references to these prices<sup>1</sup> (See Forestry Commission 1996a for further price overview).

It is perhaps also relevant that many of those interviewed represented, either at the time or at some other point, Forest Enterprise, the FC's arm directly involved with the management and harvesting of timber. Forest Enterprise (FE) have overseen the harvesting of between 1.4 and 1.6 million cubic meters of timber (coniferous and hardwood combined) annually between 1999 and 2006; during that time they have also seen the revenue to the FC from the harvest alone suffer the effects of what has been described in the annual report for 2003- 2004 as 'extremely difficult market conditions'.

The income from the sales of timber within the FE operational accounts echoes the concerns of those interviewed. In 1999 FE England received c. £24.6 million for 1.6 million m<sup>3</sup> of timber; with dwindling prices this shrunk to 22.4 million for 1.4 million m<sup>3</sup> the year after; two million less came in for a similar volume the year after. By 2005, for 1.5 million m<sup>3</sup>, FE's income from sales came in at only c. £17 million. The reduction in volume is clearly not proportional to the reduction in return; the effect of reduced timber value is however marked.

Within the empirical data, it is the understanding that money was being lost "*hand over fist with timber*" as one practitioner put it, that many other practitioners feel the FC as needs to justify its relevance to the tax-paying public and Treasury.

One FC practitioner related how market trends had influenced the objectives for the North West:

*“When FE first started thinking about expansion into the community forest areas and buying land they were looking for a return for their investment...at the probability of a 80/20 conifer-broadleaf split for the future...obviously things have changed, not least the timber prices falling.”*

It is interesting that the income generated by timber in England (which the FC people refer to more than the number of people employed, or the economy associated with production, harvesting and processing etc) is of similar magnitude to the funding drawn on for post-industrial projects. Newlands for example is a £23 million scheme unique to the NW (FC undated).

Practitioners’ perceptions about the future of the FC being based on public benefits, is evidently related to the availability of money for such projects.

Warrants based on the “need to look elsewhere” due to trends in the timber market are used to justify the FC operations in the NW; similarly they substantiate claims for the FC having moved into an era where they are concerned with more than just timber. A subordinate warrant amplifying this notion is the warrant for illustrating grounds based on ‘image’ itself. ‘Need’ is the core argument within this warrant as the following FC practitioner explains:

*“Things have already happened...all we’ve got to do now is prove that we are capable of delivering and we have to be ahead of the game there, because if we are not we just will not get the funding and we will not survive”*

The ‘things’ that are referred to are the changes within policy that have allowed the FC the freedom to access and operate within areas such as the urban NW and to focus on outputs other than timber, NMB’s etc.

According to another respondent, part of proving delivery capability is demonstrating continuity with public benefit forestry and the community woodlands schemes, which others have already argued as being achieved

through the FC's involvement. Accordingly it is also about projecting an image that associates the FC with the kind of work it is currently undertaking in the North West and elsewhere, much in the same way as the FC became synonymous with plantation forestry. There is a suggestion within the data about organisational awareness of the need to market this image, partly to overcome out-dated images, and certainly to demonstrate the FC's relevance. The main way is through the benefits on offer:

*"...when promoting forestry for the urban fringe and within towns you wouldn't talk about forestry in terms of trees you would talk about forestry in terms of benefits, -you would try and match up what you could deliver with what they wanted. It was straightforward, standard, sales talk". You don't sell them a can of beans, you sell them a meal"* (FC Practitioner).

Many practitioners echoed the comment made by FC practitioner when he asserted: *"The FC is well ahead of the field in many areas because it has changed its attitude and who it has been"*, adding that in doing so it has been imperative for the FC to adopt a new identity to show so.

In order to stay ahead of the game, this practitioner was referring again to the ability to deliver, echoing the earlier comment about 'staying ahead of the game' being a means of demonstrating an ability to deliver. Demonstration of the ability to deliver modern forestry aspirations and an image to express this are grounds, but the justification relates to the need to do so in order to remain relevant to society's requirements. The Forestry Commission's practitioners see themselves, as being able to fulfil society's needs for trees in the landscape, be it through social, economic or environmental capacities. The FC know that they need to promote their ability through delivery and image

since they need the funding sources that come with new territory and the government's trust in order to survive.

### **Rhetoric in Practice: Conclusions**

Using evidence from interviews with FC practitioners the two previous sections have explored the grounds and then the warrants regarding claims for public benefits from their perspective. Doing so has shaped an alternative interpretation of the aspirations behind public benefit woodlands in the North West. There are three key points concerning the 'action' that the practitioners purport. Firstly, the issues of low tree cover and missed opportunities are less apparent than might have been expected; secondly, there is a strong belief that public benefit woodland are attainable as end-products from site restoration. And lastly there is a unanimous conviction regarding public benefit delivery as a way of ensuring the Forestry Commission's relevance to contemporary social needs. These will be discussed in more detail below using evidence from the transcripts.

#### *Low tree cover and missed opportunities*

It has been the case so far that the grounds and the warrants of the published rhetoric appear to exist as operational parameters- accepted and unquestioned in the discourse of the practitioners. References to these are typically very simple i.e. a casual reference to a policy document as a reasoning for working in the North West or simply describing benefits as social, economic or environmental outcomes, or commonsense.

This is much the same in the case for how the practitioners describe the action required for the NW, in that they echo the policy conclusions which are concerned with establishing more trees in the landscape and a focus on the

benefits that trees can offer when delivered appropriately (i.e. when undertaken via the principles of SFM).

For example there are plenty of cases where practitioners allude to the strategic need for woodlands but there is only one instance where a practitioner refers to increasing woodland cover as a conclusion. Typically was expressed in a matter of fact way suggesting that it is a potentially assumed point that: *“In the end it’s just about getting trees in the ground”* (FC community forester) when referring to the policy where the North West has a case for more woodland cover.

Besides the lack of any meaningful observation regarding woodland cover, the way in which opportunities for trees in the landscape are regarded as a rhetorical conclusion is more interesting; for two reasons. First, a level of continuity exists with earlier observations as they replicated versions of the conclusions in the FC policy. Second, benefits can be seen to be the crucial element in the conclusions for the rhetoric in practice’s unique grounds and warrants regarding the image of the FC.

### *Public benefits as action*

The final section of the interview covered ‘conclusions’ by asking the interviewees about the outcomes, i.e. what is required to be done about the issues under discussion.

The main point is that practitioners had constructed during the course of the conversation the case for public benefit forestry as a way of making the FC, woodlands and woodland management relevant to social needs. They referred to the delivery of public benefits as the main solution, doing so in two ways:

First of all, when discussing the conclusions as outcomes, comments such as the following four FC practitioners’ are common:

*“In 20 years from now, it will all be established- people will be going out and getting the benefits from it then”*

“We’re looking for long-term benefits here...we’re looking to really invest in the gain of this area”

*“It’s all about public benefits- its’ happening at all levels in the FC...at grass roots all the way to the top...it’s what we do now”*

*“Oh, gosh...for public benefits...it’s simple, as simple as that”.*

The quotes above demonstrate the conviction that after all the policy rationale and perceived risks, the outcome is simple, namely, to get public benefits into areas like the NW. Practitioners understand that this is an institutional ambition driven by policy, pervading all levels within the organisation. And that it is a realistic ambition regardless of the timeframes- practitioners across the board felt that in the near future there would be some benefit to come from their involvement.

Believing in delivery of benefits as a ‘conclusion’ is most relevant to an additional aspect of action- that of constructing a ‘relevant image’.

Demonstrating public benefit delivery is regarded as an opportunity to show the relevance of the FC to modern expectations about woodland.

The emphasis is on the FC being seen as central to the delivery of sites and maintaining them in the long term. In the words of one practitioner, this will ensure a degree of “*FC branding*”.

Another practitioner added that once the public and the FC’s critics understand the FC’s involvement on sites and the benefits that the sites deliver, the FC will be understood in light more true to its present-day standing.

The process of branding is said to require an FC presence on the sites after restoration in order to be associated with their benefits in the long-term; a maintenance capacity is the means through which practitioners would like to see the FC retain a presence.

Maintenance has been described as more desirable than ownership, as the latter would be community based. FC involvement with the public in long-term site management is seen as a means of ensuring that, “...*the FC is better understood by the public*” (FC Practitioner).

Practitioners also expressed concerns over the viability of sites to continue delivering benefits where maintenance was not practiced. Thus it could be seen as a desirable element of action if the FC were to retain a role as “*maintenance figurehead*”, which one forester also described as “*our ultimate aim*”.

Nearly all of the FC practitioners interviewed saw public benefits a means of ensuring a function for the FC besides timber production- in their ‘warrants’, the, situation with timber prices had created a need to look elsewhere in order to remain relevant to post-industrial needs and tax-payers funds.

Drawing on this, one particular FC practitioner made a coherent case for action based on promoting a brand of forestry in the North West to overcome the issue regarding low timber prices. He suggested that the FC should be funded on the basis of what it can deliver i.e.:

*“We ought to be funded as a public service delivering public benefits...the fact that we are dependent on timber income is actually impeding us from what the government wants us to deliver in terms of these public benefits”*

He concludes by suggesting that if the government were to fund the FC on the basis of what it is presently doing, i.e. putting more into public benefits, then there would be security for the sites in the form of a maintenance budget and

arguably more benefits on the ground. This would also demonstrate recognition of a relevant and trusted FC, something that the FC practitioners would therefore like to see as a conclusion in their claims an aspirations for public benefits.

The only remaining observation from the analysis of FC practitioner's grounds is perhaps the most obvious from the implications of the content analysis and the grounds and warrants of the practitioners this far: survival of the FC. Evidence of this form of action can be seen in the following quotes from three separate FC practitioners:

*“If we can get people understanding what the FC are about, we’ll have a much better chance of survival...especially in theses areas...”*

*“The biggest thing of course is securing more funding...to keep the Commission going...it comes down to survival”*

*“These sites show what we are capable of doing, so it is important that we’re involved...we need to be”*

A role for the FC is a role that practitioners would like to see and perhaps the most basic of aspiration for a rhetorical conclusion.

<sup>1</sup>Average price received per cubic meter of standing sales timber from Forestry commission sales

## Chapter 8: Conclusions

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### Introduction

The ongoing, far-reaching consequences of industrial decline on the North West's communities, landscapes and financial prosperity have offered an opportunity for a new style of forestry. The conditions of the Northwest are particularly vivid illustrations of many of the conditions occurring elsewhere in the UK and, as such, offer an opportunity for the FC to demonstrate its relevance to critics of its role in a post-productive era. The Northwest is by no means a national demonstration ground; instead it is simply no longer being overlooked as a casualty of market-failure within the forestry sector. Forestry, in particular public benefit forestry has a great deal to offer the NW region. It has not been the purpose of this research to validate the benefits claimed for in the Forestry Commission's policies and the programmes it supports; instead this research sought to learn more about the conviction behind the benefits. The North West offers particular challenges due to the extreme nature of the dereliction it has inherited; yet it is in such areas that the FC is focussing its attention.

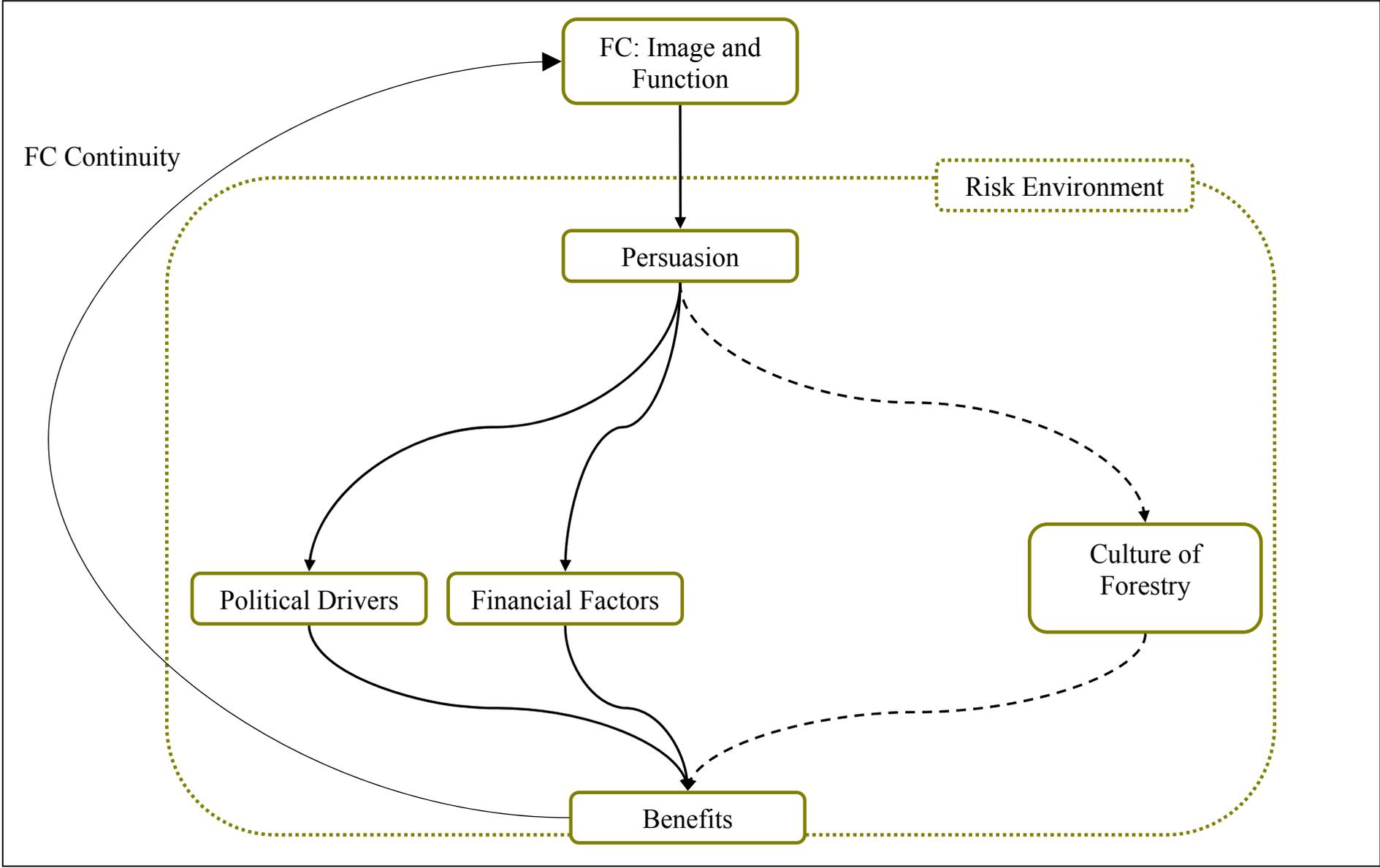
In order to understand the aspirations behind the decisions, this research has taken the social constructionist stance of claims-making. The intention from the beginning has been to use claims-theory as a way of uncovering aspirations by identifying the rhetoric used to justify public expenditure. This has involved the identification of constructed problem conditions and solutions justifying expenditure on 'trees' and an analysis of the claims made to endorse them.

The remainder of this chapter summarises the findings of the research in this context; drawing conclusions from the findings and appraising the validity of this approach in addressing the topic.

## **Précis of the Content Analysis**

Semi-structured interviews with Forestry Commission personnel and their professional delivery partners were the primary technique for exploring aspirations on the ground. Before filtering the transcripts within a claims-theory framework, a routine content analysis was used to simply identify the major themes within, and general nature of, the disclosed knowledge. Figure **V.XIV** from Chapter 5 demonstrated the findings from the content analysis.

Figure V.XIV: Empirical data themes and theme linkages (originally cited in chapter 5)



Analysis revealed a series of themes common to both FC personnel and their professional partners. Neither group produced a theme independently of the other, nor there were inter-linkages set in a wider institutional environment.

Primarily, as shown in Figure **V.XIV**: the following key themes emerged as fundamental to the institutional context:

- o FC image: defined as what the FC projects as an institution and what it does on the ground. Collectively, practitioners see the FC's image as a crucial tool for demonstrating their relevance to government and society. There have been negative associations with the FC based on previous policy agendas and ways of operating; these are sought to be overcome now that demands on forestry and its arenas of action have changed. In accessing new territories there is new urban audience whose trust needs to be gained.
- o Persuasion: this features as a requirement for the delivery of benefits. Stakeholders- landowners', communities of place, delivery partners, funding agencies and government all need to be convinced of the justifications for having new woodlands on sites of a DUN nature. Problems of achieving this are compounded by the failure of previous attempts by other agencies to meaningfully overcome the issues in the region with the greening approach. The need for persuasion is also apparent in terms of substantiating the role of the FC in the region by associating its image with the delivery of public benefit styles of forestry.
- o Political and Financial factors: These add authority to the work being undertaken in the region, especially since the FC is responsible for producing the policies and accountable for public spending in delivery.

It is through these channels that the FC is seen to be crucial in the successful delivery of public benefit woodlands.

- o Benefits: the reasoning behind the restoration of DUN land to public benefit woodland is the promise of realising market and non-market benefits in social, economic and environmental terms for the region. These benefits are claimed to be associated with trees in the landscape and compromised when trees are too few or of poor quality. Benefits are the undisputed end objective to which the FC and their partners aspire. These are accomplished through financial and political ‘licences’.

Overcoming what was termed by a respondent as “a missing culture of forestry” is also seen as crucial to the realisation of public benefits . This is constructed by the ways in which woodlands are perceived by communities in the North West as a ‘resource’ i.e. how they can be used and valued. It requires understandings of woodland processes, timeframes and management. Currently such understandings are constructed with socio-economic status- the FC is seen as a middle class organisation and woodlands seen as privileged countryside assets. Unless overcome, delivery will be hampered by inappropriate use of sites, little faith in the FC and poor understanding of the benefits. Subsequent realisation of the benefits purported through trees in the landscape will be limited if the targeted communities are not committed.

The threat of failing to meet community aspirations is one example of the risk environment in within which, according to practitioners, the themes transpire. Other risk elements being emerged as:

- o Community risk: The added potential for a lack of community confidence in public benefit forestry and in the FC as an unfamiliar organisation and key partner; community uptake is crucial in delivering benefits and the longevity of the programme.

- o Site risk: Due to the technical nature of community woodland sites there is a constrained potential for community involvement in site design. Added to this there is the potential for high tree mortality rates and antisocial use of the sites which occur to the detriment of the programme
- o Political risk: The chance of the FC being seen as not relevant in a post-industrial era and unable to deliver public benefit benefits by both society and government, especially the Treasury.
- o Partnership risk: Tensions in working in partnership, notably in agreeing appropriate expenditure and that the FC can justify it; and in sharing credit between partners. Significantly, partners need to be assured that the FC is able to operate in unfamiliar territory.
- o Institutional risk: demonstrating to the satisfaction of various audiences that the FC as an organisation can deliver in an unusual territory, and that it can adapt to the challenges presented by the North West. The FC is taking a risk in delivering objectives that have traditionally been regarded as by-products of its operations and staking its reputation and image on the attainment of these benefits to improve its image.

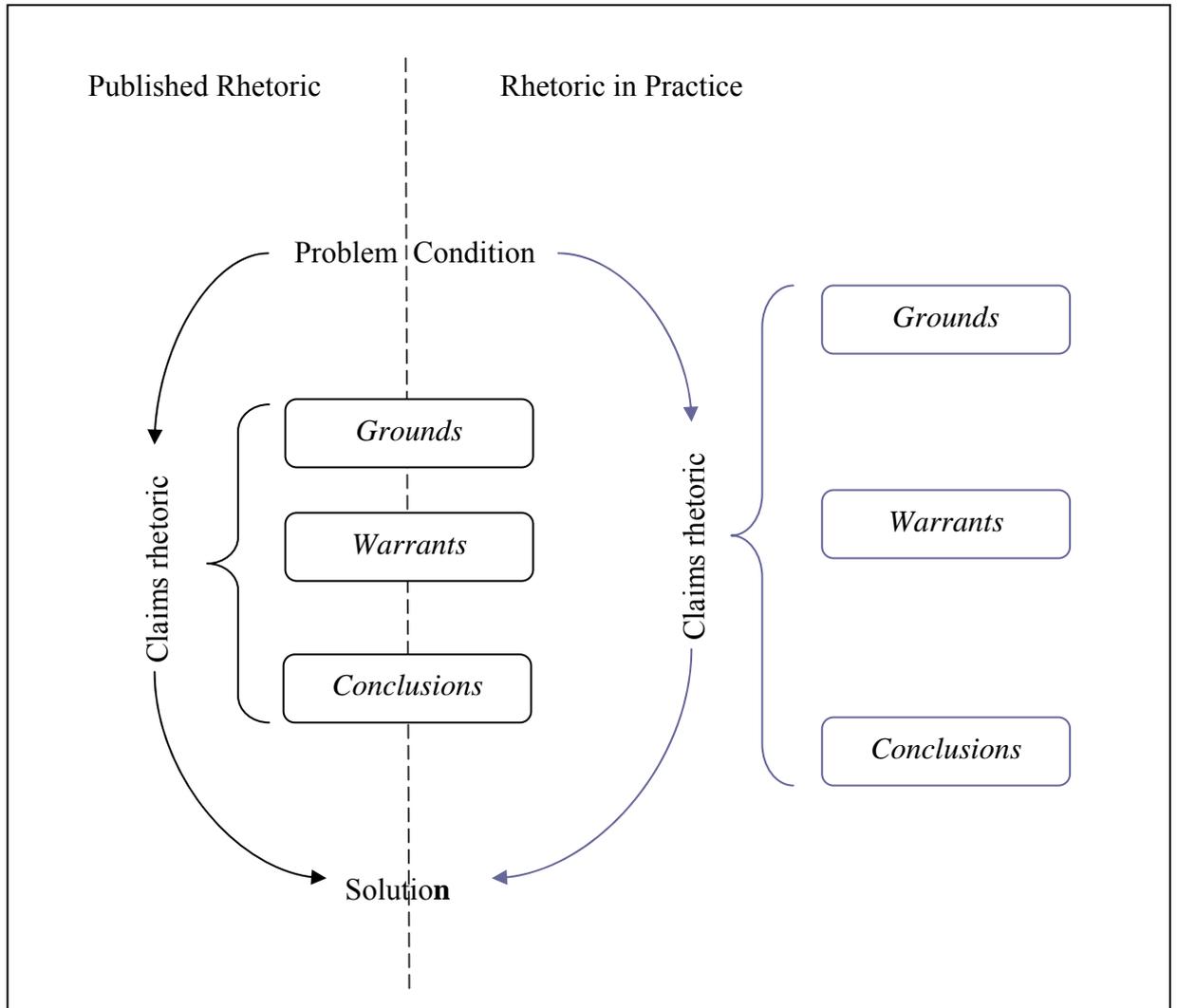
Continuity represents a feedback mechanism in Figure **ix.i**. There are repeated references from both sides that if the sites can be set up, maintained and funded after the FC has endorsed and demonstrated partnership restoration as feasible with early tangible benefits then there will be positive outcomes for the FC. It will more strongly be able to justify its common purpose in an era where there is uncertainty about productivist roles.

## **Précis for Claims analysis**

Having identified the themes within the empirical data, this data suggested the potential for using rhetoric in revealing aspirations. As such, the empirical data was revisited with the intention of applying claims-theory as a feasible way of exploring the aspirations for public benefits. This meant filtering the interview transcripts; seeking constructions for problem conditions in terms of the ways they were asserted through grounds and substantiated with warrants; and identifying proposed solutions, which could be explained as conclusions. The use of Best's Grounds - Warrants - Conclusions model was also used on the Forestry Commission's policy documentation as the published source of claims for public benefits. It was anticipated that the model would be able to establish a rhetorical structure or a 'published rhetoric' that could be used for comparison with its counterpart in the transcripts; if so then there would be an opportunity to compare the rhetoric behind aspirations within each source.

'Rhetoric in practise', as revealed through interview transcripts revealed at least one new theme, besides a striking degree of repetition of the published rhetoric. This suggests the identification of a wider element in the aspirations for public benefits than expressed in the published rhetoric. Figure **VIII.I** demonstrates the relationships of the two rhetorics' and the differences between them.

Figure VIII.I Existence of separate rhetoric's; published rhetoric and rhetoric in practice



In Figure VIII.I the dashed line represents the division between the two types of rhetoric. On the left is a summary of the aspiration of the published rhetoric; it constitutes problem condition and solution constructed by the rhetorically loaded claims. The rhetorical content of the claims are identified with grounds, warrants and conclusions. The fact that the published rhetoric is straddles the dashed line is deliberate, in that it depicts the way in which the published rhetoric (i.e. all of its contents and rhetorical basis) are replicated in the rhetoric in practice (i.e. in the aspirations of practitioners). Beyond this observation, Figure ix.ii also shows that rhetoric in practice is constructed

through an additional set of grounds, warrants and conclusions, as reviewed below.

### *Published rhetoric*

This has been constructed from FC policy literature and strategies for the UK (principally England and the North West). It constructs the putative condition of too few trees in the English landscape and the loss this signifies for society's ability to both appreciate and enjoy the multiple types of values associated with trees. Opportunities to realise putative conditions are presented for the regions through holistic sets of values and policy standards. Through such approaches, the Northwest of England is constructed as having a 'problem' concerning the role of trees in social, economic and environmental terms based on the conditions that exist there, i.e. poor quality woodlands and low tree cover, ailing economic base, high levels of social deprivation and a degraded environment.

Grounds principally develop the problem by outlining the extent to which trees have been lost from both the national landscape and its regions; estimation of loss within the North West is accompanied by grounds based on the degree to which the quality of existing cover has declined.

Definitions are used to outline the potential for trees to benefit people and serve to define what potential benefits are missing when trees are lost from landscapes. In this sense policy presents the audience as a victim of loss, and especially so for the North West's communities.

The use of examples where trees have been actively replaced within landscapes serves to define the types of applicable context and potential rewards, thus laying down the potential for replication in the UK domain.

Warrants shore up the grounds by representing the value of trees in the landscape as both market and non-market benefits in relation to society, economy and environment, thereby justifying tree loss as a problem associated with loss of values. They also make a case for the impact that lost

values may have on quality of life for communities which have endured the most extensive tree loss, compounded by social, economic and environmental deprivation.

As a way of justifying the extent to which a problem has come about in a region such as the North West, bureaucratic potentials are constructed (this is very different to actually asserting blame) to show how opportunities have been missed by agencies in a position to mitigate the poor conditions; this is then put in the context of how the Forestry Commission is in a position to overcome the shortfalls by drawing on historical continuity. This is based on asserting how the cultural mindset within the FC has adapted to meet the changing demands of society and government in the past. The urban North West which was once overlooked by the FC in the context of productivist forestry, is now shown to be pertinent to its agenda for sustainable forms of forestry if it is able to access and deliver SFM objective within new operational territory.

Conclusive action makes the case for a solution. The solution in its simplest form is to put more trees back in the English landscape and particularly in the regions where shortfalls are most apparent. A significant line of reasoning for this is that under the ethos of sustainable forest management, trees and woodlands will be regarded as a sustainable asset and as part of a solution to towards overcoming posited social, economic and environmental conditions once their values are recognised.

Delivery of sustainable forms of forestry (i.e. community woodlands in areas like the urban North West) using an established instrument such as the FC, means that the UK Government is able to demonstrate its pledge for global commitments in Sustainable Forestry Management. Furthermore it will represent a response to public policy concerning interactions between society, environment and economy.

### *Operational rhetoric*

This has been interpreted from the empirical data that represents the views and opinions of Forestry Commission practitioners' operating or relevant to the NW's programme of sustainable forest management.

Grounds are replicated and therefore less comprehensive versions of those within the policy rhetoric. Compared to published rhetoric definitions are looser, numeric estimations less frequent, and examples fewer and based on personal experiences at work. However the basis of the problem is shared in that the NW is understood to have deprived social, economic and environmental conditions, where tree cover is negatively disproportionate to the region's population and is lower than any other English region.

Grounds within the political rhetoric occur as robust operational parameters used to construct the locations and orientation for operations (DUN land in the urban NW), the objectives (social, economic and environmental), and the reasons (too few trees in the landscape, lost appreciation of trees within the landscape).

A distinct feature of the operational mindset is the way in which practitioners have constructed new grounds to help them identify with their operational role. These grounds are almost entirely based on their perception of externally constructed definitions of: a forest, the practice of forestry and the nature of Forestry Commission itself.

Concerns that the Forestry Commission may remain misrepresented by rhetorical images of past activities is coupled with a concern that government may also see the FC as not fully able to deliver amidst new operational conditions. Practitioners have been able to ground a problem whereby the FC's image may be acting as a barrier to promoting the present-day nature of the organisation and its objectives (especially in the North West).

The warrants for the rhetoric in practice's grounds are duplicated versions of the warrants expressed in the published rhetoric. This is theoretically sound, since the grounds of the published (policy) rhetoric are already embedded

within practice, so the justifications would be expected to match. As such, FC practitioners habitually refer to the values of trees and their potential benefits for improving quality of life in communities in the North West, and bureaucratic opportunities are seen as a chance for the FC to confirm its historical ability to deliver the governments objectives. Practitioners regard the FC's ability to deliver public benefits as a reality and see themselves as having always produced many of them, albeit as by-products of earlier productivist policy objectives.

Historical continuity introduces warrants unique to the practice based rhetoric, and furnishes grounds concerning the 'condition' of the FC's image. There is a belief among practitioners that the FC needs to look to public benefit styles of forestry as a way of maintaining its relevance to contemporary society and government agendas. Demonstrating the ability to deliver public benefits is seen as a way of promoting a more relevant image for the FC, and a defence against critics within public and government audiences. To further substantiate the need to appear relevant, practitioners draw on the ailing UK timber market as an example of why it is important to deliver a product other than timber. There is also a need to address unfortunate associations that audiences may make between the FC and a declining product. Warrants based within the practitioner mindset justify why the FC is actually still relevant, despite their declining focus on productivist goals and a fragile market, and serve to show the FC as being under threat from misrepresentation.

Like the grounds and warrants before them, the conclusions within the rhetoric in practice amount to a rehearsed version of their counterpart in the published rhetoric. At its core, conclusive action is about replacing trees within the North West's urban landscape and harvesting public benefits from them. Practitioners claim that public benefit woodlands will become viable local assets and that the benefits will help to mitigate social, economic and environmental adversity within targeted areas. Similarly the Forestry

Commission will be able to demonstrate the government's commitment to sustainable forest management as well as its ability to adapt to themes that go with it, such as governance, integration, partnership, and added-value. Practitioners are keen to see this develop in that it is felt to be beneficial for the Forestry Commission in overcoming conditions regarding its image. Despite, the risks involved delivery is seen as the balancing factor in the aspirations of practitioners: it is a way of promoting the relevance of the Forestry Commission and the continued maintenance and running of public benefit woodlands. Some respondents even suggested reappraisal of the Forestry Commission's name. Ultimately, the desired effect of the conclusions is for continuity of the Forestry Commission's role as the statutory organisation responsible for forestry matters in England and Great Britain.

### **Conclusions from the Content analysis**

Forestry Commission practitioners revealed a concern for the image of their organisation, in terms of what it is deemed to represent by their sceptics (e.g. the Treasury) and by the audiences it seeks to operate with (communities, trusts, NGOs' etc).

Public benefits are regarded as crucial to demonstrating a desirable image for the FC and overcoming the prejudices associated with its former practices. This is supported by partners who see the FC as, 'needing' to be involved; a belief substantiated by the knowledge that many of the partners were attempting similar work ahead of the FC.

Policy and financial freedoms are upheld as fundamental justifications for operating in the NW by FC practitioners, although the new territory has yielded operational barriers such as social attitudes (i.e. culture of forestry) and lessons in partnership delivery (appropriate spending etc). Partners are particularly appreciative of FC involvement through its funding, political legitimisation for spending and the FC's practical proficiency in the form of

Forest Enterprise. All of this equates to increased conversion of damaged land to public benefit woodland.

There are several forms of perceived risk which are balanced with the desirable outcomes of benefit delivery. Analysis of risk suggested a tentative link to desired benefits via the need to reconstruct the FC's image. This observation added support to the application of claims-theory to the analysis process; not only as the FC is responsible for orchestrating its claims, but because it suggested wider aspirations underlying the solution.

### **Conclusions from the Claims analysis**

The FC can be theoretically identified as claims-maker fulfilling the role of promoting and assembling knowledge claims that posit a problem condition and a solution, in this case regarding trees in the NW landscape, low tree numbers and missed opportunities are constructed as compounding the region's existing socio-economic and environmental condition. The solution is to regenerate trees in the landscape along with active promotion of their benefits to social, economic and environmental renewal.

Claims that make these assertions therefore centre on the non-market and market values ascribed to public benefit woodlands.

The published rhetoric behind aspirations for these claims is concerned with the FC delivering and administering forestry in the public's best interest. The origins for this are in the sustainability literature and the ways in which its principles have been incorporated into forestry agendas.

Analysis of the rhetoric behind practitioners' aspirations has again revealed wider meanings. Aspirations go further than public interest. Although public interest is still paramount, it is paralleled by a wider aspiration for public

benefits to improve the security of the FC's position. Public benefits are seen as a way of ensuring the FC remains relevant to society's needs.

### **Theoretical appraisal**

There are three possible revisions to make concerning claims-theory based on the findings and experiences of this research.

- o That the literature accounts for evolution in claims for social and for environmental problems/solutions it doesn't make an explicit reference to more than one form of rhetoric occurring at any one time from an individual claims-maker.
  
- o Best's model of Grounds, Warrants and Conclusions was proposed as a means of investigating the rhetorical nature within claims for social problems. If it is to be adapted for use in deconstructing environmental claims then revisions to sub-components within these three categories need to be made. These must suit the research topic, describing the nature of the issue without deviating from the principle behind what a grounds/ warrants / conclusions statement actually represents.
  
- o Best's model was originally concerned with investigating the nature of claims, vis-à-vis it has been used in this research for just that but not in the interest of describing the claims-making process or validating the claims. In this research the nature of the claims and an understanding the claims-maker has been used in the context of a specific institution, accepting their role as claims-maker by default and not as a theoretical hypothesis.

Using Best's model to uncover wider meaning within aspirations, this research has delved into the nature of actually delivering policy. It has provided insight into how the claims have the potential to influence the

future of environmental management in a particular location, and how this will influence the future role of a major land management agency in its wider context.

This research has taken place during a potentially unsettling time for all of the major land management agencies. The shift to sustainable forestry, new demands for governance, the Haskins review and the creation of Natural England mean that institutions such as the Forestry Commission have been under increasing pressure to justify their role and appropriateness to modern social expectations. It is argued here that the claims-making approach is a useful tool for looking into the broader aspirations for delivery objectives. The significance for future research is that grounds, warrants and conclusions identified now, can be re-visited at a later date to examine whether the claims were justified and their aspirations achievable. There will be important opportunities to appraise community woodland sites to see if they have transformed sites and the neighbourhoods associated with them. This is particularly significant in a political era when so much significance is attached to the evidence base. Politicians increasingly ask not whether claims can be made, but whether they can be substantiated. This research in exposing the explicit and implicit nature of claims, has paved the way for future inquiries into the extent to which images and realities have materialised.

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[www.redreoseforest.co.uk](http://www.redreoseforest.co.uk)

## Appendix I: Interview Schedule

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### **Intro and assurance**

Thanks for agreeing to take part. A few words on the context and the content of the interview:

The research I'm conducting is primarily a social science investigation, although I have already visited other data sources the research is not entirely centred on numbers and facts it is also an exploration of the people-side of the real world. It is doctoral research; although sponsored by the Forestry Commission it is also impartial.

This interview has been designed to explore your thoughts, feelings and opinions on the context, delivery and outlook of restoration of damaged land to woodland. Since our discussion should reflect how you feel and what you think it will be made to be as confidential and as anonymous as you wish.

Unless you object, the interview will be recorded for my personal use only; I can assure you that the tapes will be locked away and destroyed afterwards.

Is there anything you would like to ask before we begin?

Great, let's begin....

## Ice breakers

**Q.1 I'd like to start off by asking you to explain to me your role within this organisation (and how your role has developed over time.....) 5mins.**

- Is this your first role within this organisation?
  
- What was your previous role?
  
- How long have you been in your current position?
  
- What does your role involve?  
*Have there been any recent changes to your role?*  
*Explain what they were*  
*What brought them about?*
  
- Has there been any specific training or experience that encouraged you to attain your present role?
  
- Has your department within (organisation/ division/section/branch) altered in what it aims to represent during your time as Y?
  
- Would you say your answer is typical for the rest of X?

## Locating the issue (Grounds)

**Q.2 I'd now like to talk about English forestry policy and how you see it as having changed in the recent past. If possible I would like not to stray into the reasons for this or for policy successes as these are covered later on.**

*In your opinion what are the key aims of English forestry Policy today, where do you see these goals coming from?*

- Are you aware of any changes in the aims of English Forestry Policy in the last decade
- Are you aware if these caused any changes for your organisation operates
- Could you give me an example?
  
- Would you say that any of these changes have particular significance for the NW?
  
- How close do you see the links between the aims you mentioned with what you experience in the day-to day management/running of site?

*For each*

*Add and ask for what they think*

- **How have you seen the FC change in response to developments in UK forestry policy over the last 10 or so years?**

*In relation to the above*

- Do you see the changes you've just mentioned as bringing about a new direction for the FC? (What do you see as being in it for the FC?)

*Any changes for you?*

*Is it for the better?*

- Has the way in which the FC changed created any new benefits or drawbacks for your organisation?

*What benefit/ drawbacks?*

- Has the role of X changed in response to changes in the FC and with English forest policy in general?

- Could you give me an example?
  
- Do you see the regeneration of sites like X as constituting part of a forest?
  
- Or simply as part of a more general programme of improvement?  
*What is forest?*
  
- How about yourself, do you really get a sense that you're operating as part of a forestry orientated project?
  
- Is woodland being created because it is the most obvious end-use
  
- Is FC involved because of past experience (e.g. WGS) or is it because they have developed new ways of thinking and operating?

### The justification (Warrants)

**Q.3** Moving on now, I'd like to talk about the ways in which you think that forestry is justified as an end-use for these sites- How might you explain to the public that they are getting good value for money?

*What do you see coming out of these sites when restoration is complete?*

*Introduce forestry if not mentioned*

- What do you think justifies forestry as best end-use for sites in the NW?

*For what reasons do you think this – same question (as above?)*

- Is this how the FC would reason for its role in the NW?
- Could other soft land-uses present equivalent opportunities- have they ever been considered

*Much of the forestry practiced in the NW is about provision of public benefits (images of a healthy environment, green recreation spaces, community capacity building) etc...*

- Do you see the benefits being promoted for woodland as being new concepts in forestry
- Or novel since they are being promoted for sites of a DUN nature?
- Is this a typical perspective from your profession/organisation?

**Q3.1 Given that we are referring to partnership driven projects, do you think that some objectives are more important to some partners than to others?**

- Would some of these reasons differ in appeal to certain partners
- Are objectives always discussed (from a forestry perspective or) by their disciplinary perspective?
- Since new outcomes have to be reached through social forestry, have you personally had to develop new expertise?
- Could you give me an example?
- Is this typical for many of your colleagues in X?

**Q3.2 Do you find that some people are more positive about the social forestry agenda, for example how have traditional foresters and urban planners reacted?**

- Have you had to overcome any barriers in adapting the approach of experts to delivering public benefits via woodlands?  
*Do you see yourself as doing this?*
- Can you tell me of any opportunities which have arisen through new approaches?

## Outputs/outcomes (Conclusions)

### **Q.4 Finally I'd like to talk about evidence of outcomes from site regeneration particularly in relation to sites where forestry has been a principle end-use.**

- In relation to the envisaged justifications previously discussed, what evidence do you see of benefits being realised in practice?
- Do you think some will only come to fruition in the long-term?
- Can you identify any areas where objectives are not met or where predicted benefits are over-estimated?
  
- Are there any long term issues, e.g. maintenance and accountability, that give you cause for concern?
  
- Do you see a long-term role for the FC in these sites?  
*Or are they likely to be handed over to other agencies?*
- If the FC is to retain a long-term stake in them will the benefits of this  
*What about the costs?*  
*Outweigh the costs?*
- Will future management under an FC influence be crucial to future success of benefit delivery?
- Will the FC want to be involved in the future  
*Can you see this as ensuring continuity?*
- Do you think that experience of working with these sites has changed your views about the future of forestry in England?

Thanks for your time, these are all the points that I wish to raise with you. Do you think that there are any important issues that haven't been covered?  
Again many thanks for your time.

## **Appendix II: Focus Group Invitation**

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## Greetings

I would like to invite you to take part in an informal group discussion carried out as part of my ongoing research at the University of Gloucestershire's Countryside and Community Research Unit.

The research is exploring the experiences and expectations of communities living close to community woodland areas established on what was once derelict industrial land; the aim of this discussion is to listen to your views with regards to the restoration of one such site known today as Colliers Moss Common (see map on reverse), which is just one of a selection of sites included in the study.



### **So what am I asking from you?**

I am inviting you along with a number of residents from the Burtonwood area to take part in a 90-minute discussion (with refreshments). In a relaxed, informal atmosphere I hope to put to the group, yourself included, three or four questions about which I would like you all to talk from your own experiences and points of view. From your discussion I hope to gain a local perspective on the usage of sites like Colliers Moss Common and how, if at all, these sites have influenced local perceptions of the area more generally.



### **What is in it for you then?**

In return for your time and participation you will receive the opportunity to contribute your own experiences to the final report findings and receive **£10 cash** at the end of the evening. Moreover there will be **free** sandwiches, biscuits, soft drinks, tea and coffee throughout the discussion.



### **Assurances**

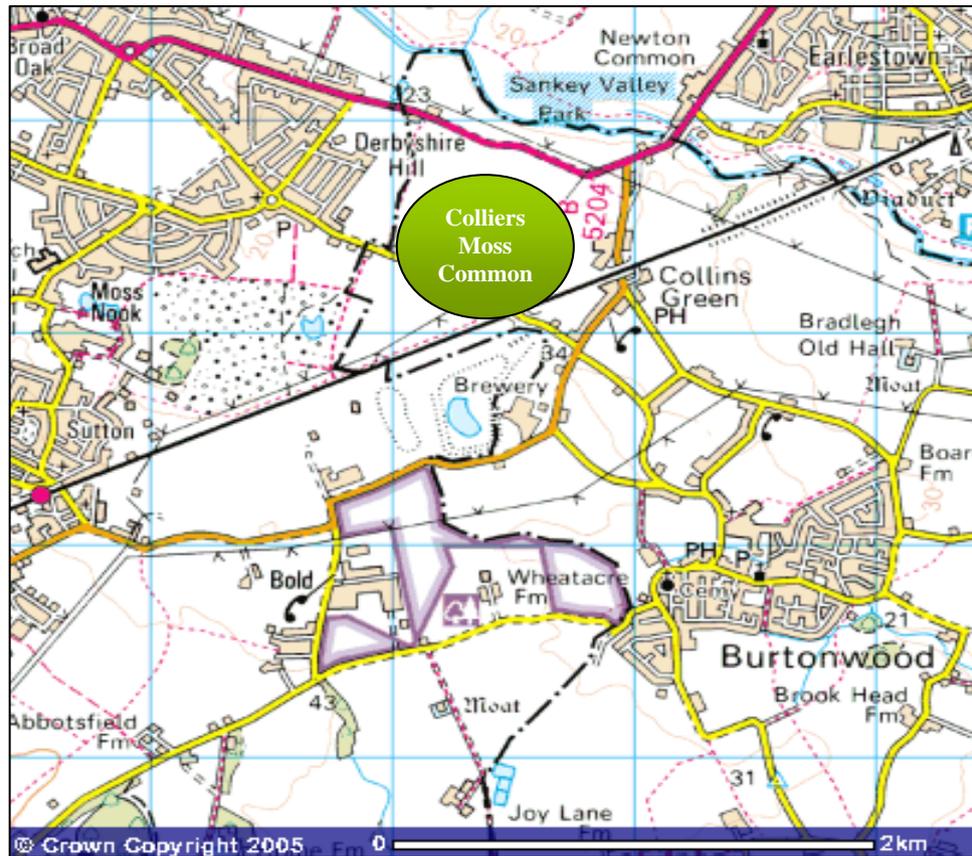
Because it is very important that I fully understand the evening's discussion there will be some note taking and the discussion may be recorded in order that we get an accurate record of the group's experiences and interaction. But let me assure you that *all participants will remain anonymous in the report and all contributions will be in confidence. Under no circumstances will the identities or contributions of individuals be passed on to other parties.* This research is being undertaken for a doctorate at the University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham and is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council; should you have any queries or questions please do not hesitate to contact myself, Richard Curtis, on 07833543862 or 01242 532803.

To ensure your place is booked please respond as soon as possible to either myself, Richard Curtis, on 07833543862 or 01242 532803, alternatively you may contact Mr Albert Scott in person.

*Please note that attendance is by invitation only and will be held at:*

**St. Michaels Parish Hall, Chapel Lane, Burtonwood**  
**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2005**  
**6pm until 7:30pm**

 **General location of Colliers Moss Common in relation to Burtonwood:**



All the very best and I look forward to seeing you soon,  
Yours sincerely,

Richard Curtis

25.02.2005

## **Appendix III: England Forestry Strategy- examples**

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## **Further ‘examples’ from the England Forestry Strategy:**

### *Forestry for rural development:*

“Working Woodlands is a project in the West Country which aims to develop jobs and create wealth from the neglected resources in our small, semi-natural woodlands. Historically these resources were managed on a sustainable basis. However, the traditional markets for products from these sources have been progressively eroded by imported supplies or product substitution. In turn this has led to the almost total collapse of the original wood-producing industries. As a result this potential rural resource has been left essentially moribund. Some 75 landowners are being encouraged to bring more than 500 hectares of the woodland back under sustainable management. Simultaneously, a similar number of small rural and farm-based enterprises are being granted access to these woodlands to harvest timber into a variety of products that match local, regional and national market demands” (FC 1998<sup>b</sup>:10).

### *Forestry for economic regeneration:*

“The 1992 British Coal pit closure programme had a major impact in Nottinghamshire. Deep mining ceased at 9 of the 15 collieries with the loss of over 36,000 jobs. A unique partnership between the County Council and the Forestry Commission is now restoring 760 hectares of colliery spoil to woodland. These new community woodlands will greatly enhance the areas and attract inward investment needed to replace the lost colliery employment. The areas, once restored, will be managed by Forest Enterprise for the full range of benefits available from well-designed woodlands. They will provide valuable wildlife habitats as well as opportunities for a wide range of recreational activities, whilst producing much-needed timber for local industry” (FC 1998<sup>b</sup>:15).

### *Forestry for recreation, access and tourism:*

“The Forest of Dean hosts over 1 million visits per annum. The famous Symonds Yat viewpoint and the Sculpture Trail at Beechenhurst are well-known tourist destinations, whilst local people use the forest’s extensive network of paths. As well as walking, the forest is popular for a host of outdoor activities including cycling, bird watching and orienteering. There are 300,000 camper nights per year on sites managed by Forest enterprise and tourism generates an estimated £30 million each year for local businesses” (FC 1998<sup>b</sup>:18).

Forestry for the environment and conservation:

“Some of England’s forests were planted on habitats like lowland heath before their special value was recognised. A major restoration project in Dorset, launched in 1991, has already restored 150 hectares of heathland, linking Sites of Special Scientific Interest fragmented by forest planting and increasing populations of key endangered species, including the Sand Lizard, the Dartford Warbler, and the Nightjar. The second phase of the project, now under way, targets the Dorset Heath, *Erica Ciliaris*. Both projects have been supported by the European Union’s LIFE fund in a partnership involving the Forestry Commission, English Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds” (FC 1998<sup>b</sup>:24).

