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Co-operation and Liaison between the Nature Conservancy, the
Forestry Commission, and other Woodland Owners

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1. The Organisations Currently Concerned with Forest and Woodland Management

The organisations directly concerned with forest and woodland management in Britain currently include the Forestry Commission, the Scottish Woodland Owners Association, the Timber Growers' Organisation, the Nature Conservancy, the National Trust, and the Countryside Commission. In addition, there are a number of large woodland owners and consultants, for example, the Economic Forestry Group, who have a considerable interest in and influence on forest and woodland management in certain areas. The objectives of these organisations are summarised briefly below. In addition, there are a number of societies and federations with an interest in forestry problems. These include the Society of Foresters of Great Britain, The Royal English Forestry Society, The Scottish Forestry Society, and the Country Landowners Association.

(a) Forestry Commission

Of these organisations, the Forestry Commission is by far the most important and the most influential. In 1967, the Forestry Commission owned 2,800,000 acres of land. Of this area, 1,650,000 acres were under tree crops, and 840,000 acres consisted of land unsuitable for afforestation, mainly mountain tops in Scotland and in Wales. Each year, about 55,000 acres of the residual area is planted up, and a similar area of new land acquired. Clearly, the creation of new national forests on this scale has a vital influence on the conservation of rural Britain, and on the protection and conservation of wildlife.

The Forestry Commission has summarised its national policy in its Annual Report for 1963 as follows:-

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- (i) To increase the production of wood as a raw material for industry by extending the area of forests at a steady rate, in accordance with sound land use, and by making each forest as productive as possible.
 - (ii) Within the limits set by the other objectives, to manage the forest estate as profitably as possible.
 - (iii) To provide employment in rural areas, especially those most affected by depopulation, and in so doing to maintain a skilled labour force.
 - (iv) To help in maintaining an efficient home timber trade.
 - (v) To give due attention to the aesthetic and protective roles of the forest and to encourage open-air recreation.
 - (vi) To foster industrial and social development ancillary to forestry.
 - (vii) To encourage the orderly development of private forestry, and, specifically, to assist in creating conditions in which produce from private as well as Commission forests can be marketed to best advantage.
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The Forestry Commission also has the important function of acting as the Forest Authority, administering the planting grants, advising private woodland owners, and is also responsible for administering felling licences, under which licences have to be obtained for the felling of all timber, and by which the owner may be, and in practice usually is, required to replant felled woodland. In each of the three countries, England, Scotland, and Wales, a National Forestry Committee assists the Forestry Commission in the application of policy, while each Forestry Commission Conservancy has a Regional Advisory Committee representative of local interests, particularly as regards the private estates. Special Committees advise on research and on timber utilisation.

(b) Woodland Owners Associations

Woodlands under private ownership in 1967 covered approximately 2,800,000 acres, but this figure includes many very small and scattered areas. It is estimated that, by the end of the century, private owners will retain some 2,000,000 acres of managed and productive forest, excluding very small woods and shelterbelts, and they currently plant 32,000 acres annually. Private woodland owners have their own associations, the Scottish Woodland Owners Association in Scotland, and the Timber Growers' Organisation in England and Wales, which enable owners to obtain some of the benefits of large organisations, especially in representing the views of the small owner in consultations with the Forest Authority. The associations are also frequently able to obtain improved marketing and management conditions by collective bargaining, and it is clear that they will have increasing influence on many aspects of forestry and woodland management. The two organisations differ markedly in the strength of their central organisation, but both associations have well-developed regional organisations.

(c) Large Woodland Owners and Consultants

During the last twenty years, several private forestry enterprises have been established, in which large holdings of land in various regions have been combined with extensive consultant and contracting services. The largest of these enterprises is the Economic Forestry Group, but there are several other groups of importance. The impact of such enterprises in terms of their direct land ownership and their advisory and consultant capacity has been considerable in certain parts of the country, and the ability of such enterprises to operate economically and independently of other organisations puts them into rather a special position from the point of view of woodland conservation.

(d) National Trust

The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty was founded in 1895 and was set up to act as trustees for the Nation in the acquisition and ownership of land and buildings worthy of permanent preservation. The Trust now owns, for the permanent enjoyment of the public, about 355,000 acres in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and some 200 houses of outstanding architectural or historic importance. It has also accepted covenants which protect a further 62,000 acres of land and buildings against development. The properties of the Trust include many areas of woodland, and, as landlord, the Trust has an obligation to control the planting and felling of trees and otherwise to manage its woodlands, subject to the requirements of farming, forestry, and the protection of wildlife. The National Trust for Scotland is an independent body founded in 1935, and has under its care some 70 properties, covering in all about 70,000 acres.

(e) Countryside Commission

Under the Countryside Acts of 1967 (Scotland) and 1968 (England and Wales) Countryside Commissions have been set up to replace and extend the work of the National Parks Commission, because of the need for additional facilities for leisure-time activities for a rising and increasingly mobile population. The Commissions will encourage the provision and development of opportunities for open-air recreation in the countryside to relieve pressure on the national parks. The Commissions will also ensure that the natural beauty of the countryside is conserved, working in consultation with such bodies as the Nature Conservancy and the Forestry Commission.

(f) Nature Conservancy

National Nature Reserves, which are established under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949, may be owned or leased by the Nature Conservancy and they may also be established by agreement with landowners. By July, 1969, 127 National Nature Reserves have been declared, covering a total area of 262,557 acres, and including 10,799 acres of woodland. County and county boroughs may declare land in their areas as Local Nature Reserves, and, like National Nature Reserves, such areas can be established by purchase, lease or agreement with owners. 17 such reserves have so far been established, covering an area of 9,722 acres. In addition, many non-statutory nature reserves have been set up in Britain. Organisations which have set up and which manage such reserves include the National Trust, the National Trust for Scotland, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, and the Field Studies Council. The County Naturalists and Conservation Trusts, including the Scottish Wildlife Trust, also manage more than 400 nature reserves, many of which exist as a result of informal agreements. Administrative arrangements between the Natural Environment Research Council and another Crown body such as the Forestry Commission also result in the establishment of Forest Nature Reserves which are managed in accordance with a scheme agreed by the Conservancy.

While the Nature Conservancy has a vital interest in woodland and forest management by virtue of its need to manage the woodland reserves which it controls directly or indirectly, the area of woodland concerned represents less than one half of one per cent of the total woodland area in Britain. For this reason, it is necessary to emphasise the other main interests of the Conservancy in forest and woodland management. First, that many organisations, including those that have set up nature reserves, look to the Nature Conservancy for advice on the management of woodland areas for purposes other than commercial forestry, or the combination of commercial forestry with such objectives as wildlife protection, amenity, recreation, etc. Second, that the Nature Conservancy is concerned to monitor the changes taking place in woodland ecosystems, and to advise the responsible authorities if it appears that undesirable changes are taking place. The policy of the Nature Conservancy with regard to forestry and woodlands is at present being formulated, and will be placed before the main committees of the Nature Conservancy for approval. The present paper seeks, as a preliminary to the discussion of the woodland policy of the Conservancy, to establish the essential features of the co-operation between the Nature Conservancy and the organisations mentioned above.

(g) Forestry Societies and Federations

Many aspects of forestry research and management are discussed at meetings of such societies, and active participation in their programmes by members of the Nature Conservancy's staff is essential if awareness of current ideas is to be maintained.

2. The Present Liaison between the Nature Conservancy and other Bodies

There have been meetings between the Director and Chairman of the Nature Conservancy with the Chairman and Commissioners of the Forestry Commission, and with the Director (Research) of the Forestry Commission. Such meetings, while not frequent, provide the essential contact at the top of the two organisations, and the authorisation for even closer contact at lower levels.

Regular meetings have also taken place between members of the Woodland Habitat Team and the Headquarters Conservator for Forest Management in the Forestry Commission. At these meetings, changes in management policy in the Forestry Commission and various aspects of the work of the Nature Conservancy in the woodland habitat have been discussed frankly and constructively. Perhaps the most interesting outcome of these discussions has been the advance information we have been given about the regional working plans which are currently being drawn up by the individual Conservators of the Forestry Commission, and we have been promised an opportunity to discuss these working plans during the early stages of their implementation and to contribute proposals for conservation within the regions covered by the plans. Active discussion at this level of the two organisations will be invaluable in the formulation of the Conservancy's policy towards forestry and woodlands.

Co-operation at the regional level depends to a large extent on personal relationships. In many regions, the level of co-operation is extremely good, and it is to be hoped can be improved in other areas.

In research, the level of practical co-operation and communication has never been better. The staff of the research sections of the Woodland Habitat Team and of the Forestry Commission Research Division attend each others' annual programme conferences, as well as many other meetings each year, and all aspects of the research carried out by the two organisations are freely and frankly discussed. In addition, there are now many informal contacts between the staff at all levels, so that techniques and ideas are discussed as well as research policy and the allocation of resources. It is intended to create similar links with the Director and staff of the new Natural Environment Research Council Forest Research Institute, when it is formed.

Formal and informal contacts have been made with the headquarters organisations of the Scottish Woodland Owners Association and the Timber Growers' Organisation, and the research policies of the Woodland Habitat Team have been discussed with both of these organisations. Discussions on conservation policy in relation to forestry will be continued with these organisations.

As a result of a short note which appeared in the main forestry journals in Britain, we have had a marked response from private woodland owners who are willing to collaborate in our research programme and who have written to us directly for advice on the management of woodlands for purposes other than commercial timber production. These requests and contacts are currently being followed up. Some of the requests originate from influential landowners, and, if we can satisfy their requests, we will clearly improve the Conservancy's image with private woodland owners, who own by far the biggest proportion of the natural and semi-natural woodlands in which we have special interests.

There have already been several opportunities of providing advice on the management of woodlands owned by the National Trust and similar organisations. Such opportunities have been taken, whenever they have occurred.

3. Strategies for Conservation in Future Collaboration

(a) Forestry Commission

Future collaboration with the Forestry Commission will continue at several levels e.g. between Forestry Commission Conservators, Conservancy Conservation Officers and senior members of the Woodlands Habitat Team; and between Regional Officers and Forestry Commission Conservancy staff. The main points of contact will inevitably be in the negotiation of Forest Nature Reserve Agreements, and with other agreements for the conservation of natural and semi-natural woodlands and the conservation of fauna and flora on Forestry Commission areas. Discussion of the conservation policies of the Forestry Commission and the Nature Conservancy should lead to better understanding of the problems of the two organisations, so that the difficulties can be met with understanding rather than irritation. In research, the already close collaboration between the two organisations will probably lead to the undertaking of joint research projects, for example, in the field of site classification, the monitoring of the effects of different forms of forest and woodland management and the variation and plasticity of woodland plant and animal species.

(b) National Trust

Further opportunities to provide services and advice to the National Trust, and similar organisations, are likely to occur in the future and will be used to increase the understanding between the Nature Conservancy and such organisations. The increasing emphasis on woodland management of the new research policy for the Woodland Habitat Team greatly strengthens the possible influence of the Conservancy in the management of estates in which woodland forms a fair proportion of the total land area. That our research should be seen to be relevant to practical and financial problems in estate management is perhaps the best advertisement to organisations who may have felt that, in the past, our role was too academic.

(c) Private Woodland Owners

Similarly, opportunities to provide advice and services to private woodland owners, either directly or through the Scottish Woodland Owners Association and the Timber Growers' Organisation, can be used to improve the image of the Nature Conservancy with such owners and to influence their views and practices for the conservation of woodlands and their wildlife. One important aspect of the management advice that we should provide is the financial effect of adopting methods of woodland management which favour the conservation of woodlands. Modifications in woodland management which are essential for the conservation of some important feature of the woodland ecosystem may reduce the profitability of the owner's enterprise, and the Conservancy may be asked at a future date to consider whether action is required to secure better incentives e.g. by way of compensation payments of improved grants or tax concessions for owners who are prepared to adapt methods favourable to conservation. Again, the change in the emphasis of the research programme of the Woodland Habitat Team towards an increasing emphasis on resource management has provided us with a firmer foundation for discussion with private woodland owners.

While it may be assumed that the various strategies outlined above will result in a steady improvement in the understanding of the problems of woodland management, and of the differing objectives of owners and managers, even better co-operation would be achieved if all of the woodland-owning organisations could be persuaded to take part in a single project, and preferably in a project which works towards a national policy for woodland research and management. To this end, it is proposed that a project for the forecasting of the economic, social, and technological environment in which forestry and woodland management will have to operate during the next ten to twenty years will be started in 1970. The initiative for this project will stem from the Nature Conservancy, but, by deliberately involving other organisations and owners in such a way that their contribution to the project is made as painless as possible, through the use of the methods of technological forecasting developed during the last few years in the United States, a general feeling of community and co-operation can be built up. The end result of the project, an assessment of the changes which are likely to take place in the economic, social, and technological environment, will be invaluable in the planning of the future research and development of the Nature Conservancy, the Forestry Commission, the Natural Environment Research Council, the private woodland owners' associations, and the universities. It will also provide an opportunity for close co-operation with the Council of Europe, which is currently planning a similar project on a wider scale.

4. Relation to National and Regional Planning

As has been emphasised several times in this paper, the research strategies of the Woodland Habitat Team have been deliberately planned to contribute to the improvement of national and regional planning. The projects on site classification are designed to provide the necessary information for the more rigorous selection of future sites for conservation and research, and for the review of policies with regard to existing reserves. The project on monitoring is designed to provide the information by which Government agencies, and other organisations, can be given adequate warning of effects which are likely to be contrary to national or regional interests, or, alternatively, provided with the information with which to counter allegations that current policies are leading to lasting damage to the woodland ecosystem. The projects on woodland management will provide practical assistance in the choice of effective management practices for defined objectives, and the projects on plant and animal variation will provide the basis for a more rational discussion of the effects of current influences on individual species. All of these topics are directly related to national and regional interests.

In addition, the proposed project on technological forecasting should have an important effect on the national and regional planning of the Countryside Commission and the regional planning authorities. Knowledge of the general trends in economic, social, and technological factors, supplemented by the local variations, should greatly improve the quality of the decisions that have to be made in, for example, the selection of areas of outstanding natural beauty, the assessment of land capability, and the avoidance of urban development in areas of important wildlife potential. Advance information of this kind would, however, need to be supplemented by ad hoc advice by members of the Woodland Habitat Team, and the increasing pressure of urban and industrial development, as well as the increasing demand for recreation, will inevitably lead to requests from local planning authorities and others for advice and special surveys, particularly when such bodies realise that advice of this kind is available. It is proposed, therefore, to anticipate much of the ad hoc advice for which the Woodland Habitat Team may be asked by initiating regional surveys of the ownership, composition, wildlife potential, and land capability. This project overlaps to some extent with the work of other branches of the Nature Conservancy, and it will be necessary to avoid

duplication of effort in the planning and execution of the project. The role of the Woodland Management Section in this type of regional survey will probably be in the integration of techniques of aerial and satellite survey with computer-based cartography, in collaboration with the Natural Environment Research Council's Experimental Cartography Unit, but discussions on this project are only in the preliminary stages at present, and more detailed proposals will be laid before Committees in the near future.

5. Conservancy Tactics

In considering the tactical aspects of the strategies for conservation in future collaboration, it is appropriate to set down the roles of the various branches of the Conservancy in this collaboration. Only in this way can duplication of effort be avoided and communication within the Nature Conservancy maintained at the high level necessary for effective action.

(a) Role of the Conservation and Operations Branch, London

The Conservation and Operations Branch has, in the past, acted as the centre of the communication network between the Research and Conservation Branches of the Nature Conservancy, and it is proposed that it should continue in this role in the future. The Branch should also co-ordinate the liaison between the Nature Conservancy and other organisations concerned with woodland and forestry management with strategies for liaison in other habitats.

(b) Role of the Woodland Habitat Team

It is clear that much of the initiative for liaison with other organisations will necessarily come from the members of the Woodland Habitat Team. The development of the research programme in woodlands will mainly be the responsibility of the Woodland Research Section, while advice on woodland conservation and management, as well as regional surveys, will be the main responsibility of the Woodland Management Section, working in close association with the Conservation Branch. The Conservation Branch members of the Woodland Habitat Team will provide the necessary contact with practical problems in woodland management, as well as acting as assessors of the results of the investigations carried out by the Woodland Research and the Woodland Management Sections. The contribution of Regional Officers to the discussion of the problems of acquisition and management of reserves, and the relevance of the research strategies will be invaluable.

(c) The Role of Regional Officers

In the local liaison with private woodland owners, the Forestry Commission, managers of National Trust properties, local planning authorities, etc., the key man in the Nature Conservancy is the Regional Officer. Normally, we will expect that requests for advice on woodland management will be channelled through the appropriate Regional Officer, and the Woodland Habitat Team will continue with its present practice of reporting back through the Regional Officer. In this way, we can ensure that the dangers and difficulties of multiple communications can be avoided, and our local representatives kept fully informed of all developments in their region.