



FORESTRY AND WOODLANDS ADVISORY COMMITTEES (FWAC)

Introduction

The Forestry Commission is the non-ministerial government department responsible for forestry in England. The Commission is part of the Defra Group and works with others to protect, improve and expand our nation's forests and woodland, increasing their value to society and the environment. England's trees, woods and forests are a vital national asset providing multiple economic, social and environmental benefits. The Government's objective is to ensure that this asset is protected, managed and enhanced so that these benefits can be both maximised now and realised in the future.

Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee (FWAC) is the working title of the statutory Regional Advisory Committees constituted under the Forestry Act 1967 (as amended). The FWACs advise the Commission, through our Area Directors, on the implementation of Government's forestry and woodlands policy in each Area and its constituent regions. They also maintain links with Forestry England, the managers of the nation's forest.

Membership of the Committees

Each FWAC covers a distinct area of England and consists of an independent Chair and up to eleven members appointed by the Forestry Commissioners. The composition of each FWAC is designed to achieve a spread of interests in the region, including geographical coverage. Members will have expert knowledge and experience in one of three main fields of interest: forestry industry and land owners; social, access and environment expertise; and local community, economy and government.

Members are appointed in a personal capacity, whether or not they are nominated by a representative body. Members are expected to be well informed of the interest they represent, but do not to act as official representatives of their nominating bodies. The Chairs are consulted on all committee appointments. Members, including the Chairs, are normally invited to serve for three years and the service is normally limited to two terms, although a third term may be served in exceptional circumstances, such as unique and valuable expertise or to help ensure continuity.

Chairs receive remuneration in return for about 10 days service per annum. All members are entitled to receive travel and subsistence payments, but are not remunerated for their time. Each Committee normally meets three times a year with a combination of indoor and outdoor meetings, with scope for occasional joint meetings within or between the respective Forest Services' Areas of operations.

The Committees' Remit

Chairs and members are appointed by the Forestry Commissioners under section 37 of the Forestry Act 1967, within the terms for advisory committees. The prescribed title of Regional Advisory Committee was amended in 2013 to a working title of Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committees to better reflect the remit:

1 | * Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee is the working title of the Regional Advisory Committees as constituted under Section 37 of the Forestry Act 1967 (as amended)



- advocate and champion forestry interests and woodlands partnership-working for woodland resilience and sector development at local level, providing independent insight into local needs and priorities
- provide advice, expertise and challenge on the application of national policies into area and local programmes, and assist in aggregating local priorities into national programmes
- support the government's interests by developing strong local connections and networks to enhance synergies across the forest and woodland sector, including the public forest estate
- conciliate in disputed applications for grant aid and felling licences, and the approval of forest plans where there's a sustained objection by a statutory body

Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committees have a crucial role to play in advising the Commission on its delivery of government's forestry policies as well as acting as high profile leaders to encourage wider partnerships to help ensure the delivery of sub-national priorities. In this work FWACs will come into contact with regional bodies as well as local authority and forest industry contacts, thereby broadening their influence.

Communications

This is an important function with FWAC Chairs working to ensure good two-way communication between their Committee and the Commission. Together they ensure that matters of particular concern to forestry interests in their region are made known to the Commission and that the Committee is kept informed of the Commissioners' policies and the work of the Commission. The Chairs' group produce an annual report of FWAC activities and achievements, and twice a year the Chairs meet with the Forest Services Board and senior staff to discuss matters of particular importance.

FWACs also have an informal role in furthering the interests of forestry in their area. However, their role is advisory, not promotional or executive. They therefore need to draw a distinction between their position as the Forestry Commissioners' advisers and their activities in other capacities. The activities of FWAC Chairs and members are covered by a Code of Practice.

**Commissioners' Office
Forestry Commission
May 2019**