



Robinwood



Forest Planning



Forest Planning Principles

Summary

From its roots in the Roman Empire, Forest Planning in Europe has slowly evolved into the multi-purpose and cross sectorial system it is today. The aim is to produce a forest that incorporates water management, tourism, recreation, biodiversity, and yet still produces an economic output of timber and non-timber products.

Today's forest planning systems must operate at several levels - EU, national, regional, local and site specific - and to different time scales, both long and short term.

They must be strategic and cross cutting in their approach as well as linked to - and taking account of - other plans such as landscape, agriculture and rural development.

Forest management should be based on periodically updated plans or programmes at local, regional, national level as well as for ownership units.

Helsinki guideline 1993

Traditionally the main driver for forest planning has been to comply with national and regional laws. However because, a forest plan enabled forest owners to apply for grants and subsidies, this too has become a driver, along with advent of forest certification in the 1990's.

Generally planning within the public sector is better than in the private sector. All partner regions have used grants/subsidies/incentives to promote planning within the private sector.



With the exception of Slovakia where there is a compulsory system of planning in both public and private sector forestry, there is no obligation for privately owned forests to prepare a management plan.

Planning must be at an appropriate level. Robinwood partner regions - except Slovakia - identified areas where planning could be improved, primarily for private woodland owners.

However Slovakia with its very high level of state control sees a reduction in this level of state control as one of its key challenges, to ensure effective (competitive) SFM.

But above all we must be realistic in what is achievable, and accept that you cannot plan for every eventuality. The planning process must be efficient because planning that is not implemented is unnecessary planning.

Dr Gernod Bilke Brandenburg

Planning at EU, national, regional and local level

Across the EU, forest policies are implemented by member states within a clearly defined framework of national and regional laws and regulations based on long term planning.

Sustainable Forestry and the European Union

There are an increasingly large number of EU legislation and policy initiatives, which influence the forest policy of member states.

The recent EU Forest Action Plan, 2006, sets out a “road map” on how EU forests can achieve their multifunctional objectives, in line with the many EU regulations. For example - Special Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments (EU council directive 97/11/EC)

Biodiversity Action Plans and Habitat Action Plans, we need these in full if we use them on the PEC’s (Pan European Criteria) adopted in Helsinki 1993.

These EU policies are mirrored in the partner regions national strategies including the UK Forestry Standard.

National/regional plans must: “Constitute the basic instrument for territorial planning in the forestry sector for its integration with and adaptation into the territories management tools, the town councils urban development plans and other sectorial policies, as the subsidiary regulations for planning in the regime on woodland uses.”

Robinwood planning report for Murcia

Robinwood Planning Study

Robinwood undertook a study into planning within partner regions. Its findings included the following

Effects of good planning

The creation and implementation of forest plans will maximise;

- The functionality and complexity of forest systems
- The ability of the forest to meet appropriate functions attributed to it
- The ability of forests to mitigate against disruptive factors
- Land protection
- Biodiversity
- Water resource management
- Production of forest and non-forest products.
- CO2 sequestration
- Historic and cultural value of the Forest.
- Economic output



Negative effects

The commonest barriers to effective forest planning are the cost and time implications of preparing and submitting a plan.

As plans become more sophisticated and cross sectoral - with the need for special surveys and greater consultation - the planning process requires not only more resources but also well trained, experienced forest planners.

Private owners must see a financial return on this cost to enable them to pay for the planning process. At present grant aid generally only provides partial reimbursement of these costs, and then only usually in special circumstances.

Size and scale of woodlands is another major barrier, across the partner regions there are many small woodland owners often of less than 1 ha. The planning process for these woodland owners is grossly out of proportion to potential economic output of their woodland.

Further reading:

- Robinwood Forest Planning report - www.robinwood.it
- UK Forest Standard - publications@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
- European Union - www.europa.eu.int
- Forestry Commission Wales - www.forestry.gov.uk

The Impacts of Certification on UK Forests, M. Garforth and K. Thornber 2002.
Sustainable Forestry and the European Union - ISBN 92-894-6092-X

Common issues and key challenges

- Increased forest planning within the private sector
- Increased uptake of forest certification
- More training for planners
- Simplified systems for small woodlands
- Development of plans for non-economic woodlands
- Integration of forest plans with other regional local plans
- Valuation of the non-market value of woodlands - recreation, health, CO2 sequestration
- Lack of consistency in forest plans
- Monitoring of planning systems and implementation
- Synchronisation and standardisation of planning regulation and systems from EU to local level

Recommendations

- Create links to EU/state/regional/local level - top down and bottom up.
- Target grants and subsidies at planning and implementation.
- Improve certification uptake.
- Develop markets for forest and non-forest products to increase the economic value of forests.
- Professional training for owners and forest planners.
- Development of good evaluation and monitoring systems post implementation.

It is interesting to note that Slovakia wishes to see a reduction in state control, whilst the rest of partners want to see an increase. The answer seems to be somewhere in the middle.

This report has been produced as a result of the Robinwood Project, a 45 month European Interreg 111c Regional Framework Operation project – a first for Wales and delivered by Forestry Commission Wales on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. It looked at how we should manage our trees and forests to provide solutions to hydrological issues, increase the amount of wood used in heat and energy and the key role they play in helping to regenerate rural communities across Europe.

The Italian project leaders named the project after Robin Hood – a deliberate play on the UK folk hero best known for taking from the rich and giving to the poor. Research carried out by the project now provides valuable new information on how forests can provide all kinds of opportunities for the future.