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BRITISH  
GOVERNMENT  
PANEL  
ON  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SECOND REPORT

January 1996





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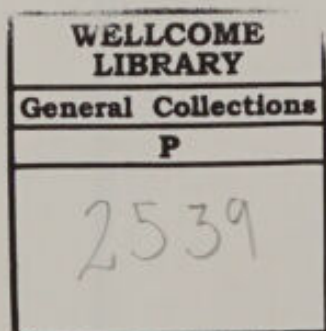
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The Rt Hon John Major MP

No 10 Downing Street

LONDON SW1A 2AA.

*Dear Prime Minister*

I have the honour to submit the second report of the Panel which you appointed exactly two years ago to advise you on key issues relating to sustainable development.

We are grateful for your prompt response to our first report. In this second report we comment briefly on progress on the topics we then raised and draw attention to where, in our view, more work is necessary. We have also identified new topics which we believe require higher priority and Government leadership in coping with them.

There have been important developments in Britain, elsewhere in Europe, and worldwide. For example:

- The new Environment Agencies will bring together responsibilities for the control of industrial pollution and wastes and for the regulation and enhancement of the water environment. A new Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment is being appointed.
- The new European Environment Agency has reviewed the European Environmental Action Programme. The forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference will provide an opportunity to take forward environmental policy within the European Union.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has produced its second comprehensive report.
- International work on such major global issues as ozone depletion and biodiversity is continuing.
- The UN Commission on Sustainable Development has set up a new Intergovernmental Panel on Forests.

Public awareness of environmental issues and their importance has continued to increase. In spite of its ambiguities, the idea of sustainable development has entered the vocabulary of economic policy and thinking for the future.

As before, we are grateful to those in government, whether Ministers or officials, and to those outside government, whether organizations or individuals, who have helped or contributed to the work of the Panel. I also record my warm thanks to my colleagues on the Panel and to our invaluable secretary for their contribution to our enterprise.

*Yours sincerely*

*Crispin Tickell*

CRISPIN TICKELL

Convenor

25 January 1996



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---

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### **The Earl of Selborne KBE FRS.**

Chairman : Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
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## TERMS OF REFERENCE

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The Government Panel on Sustainable Development was appointed by the Prime Minister on 25 January 1994 to advise the Government on strategic issues arising from the Sustainable Development Strategy and the other post-Rio reports on climate change, biodiversity and forestry<sup>1</sup>.

The Panel's remit is:

- to keep in view general sustainability issues at home and abroad;
- to identify major problems or opportunities likely to arise;
- to monitor progress; and
- to consider questions of priority.

The Government consults the Panel on issues of major importance and the Panel has access to all Ministers. It keeps in touch with people in different sectors in Britain, and abreast of developments in other countries. It meets formally at least four times a year.

<sup>1</sup> *Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy*. Cm 2426. HMSO, 1994. ISBN 0-10-124262-X.

*Climate Change: The UK Programme*. Cm 2427. HMSO, 1994. ISBN 0-10-124272-7.

*Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan*. Cm 2428. HMSO, 1994. ISBN 0-10-124282-4.

*Sustainable Forestry: The UK Programme*. Cm 2429. HMSO, 1994. ISBN 0-10-124292-1.

## INTRODUCTION

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1. This report marks the end of the Panel's second year. Appointed by the Prime Minister in January 1994 when he launched the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy, the Panel's first report<sup>2</sup> was submitted to him in January 1995. The Prime Minister's reply and the Government's response were published on 29 March 1995.
2. The Panel formally met five times in 1995. It has kept a watching brief on subjects considered in its first report and this second report contains a brief update on them. The Panel has also selected four further topics for study which it considers warrant higher priority. These are environmental accounting, biotechnology, forestry, and the disposal of radioactive waste. The Panel's views on them are set out below.
3. Through its Convenor and other members, it has been in touch with the Prime Minister, other Ministers and officials on several occasions. The Panel has also kept in touch with the work of some of the many other bodies involved in sustainable development issues in this country, including the UK Round Table on Sustainable Development on which the Convenor is an *ex officio* member, and the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment.
4. The Government has provided support for the Panel through an interdepartmental official group on sustainable development led by the Cabinet Office and the services of a small secretariat. The Panel commissioned papers from Government Departments on several topics and subsequently sought views from outside organizations and individuals. The Annex to this report lists those who supplied written comments.

<sup>2</sup> *British Government Panel on Sustainable Development First Report*. January 1995.  
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Blackhorse Road, London SE99 6TT, or by telephoning 0181 691 9191 or faxing 0181 694 0099.

## REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN FIRST REPORT

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5. In its first report the Panel made recommendations on four main topics: two general issues of long-term significance for sustainable development (environmental pricing and environmental education), and two specific issues where the Panel identified action that should be taken (depletion of fish stocks and atmospheric ozone depletion). On all four topics the Panel records that some progress has been made.
6. The Panel also made recommendations on technology transfer and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, and commented on developments relating to climate change, transport, and environmental indicators and targets. The following paragraphs briefly summarise the Panel's current assessment of these issues.

### Environmental pricing and economic instruments

*"...the Panel recommends that the Government should give higher priority to the definition of its environmental objectives and targets, and to how it intends to meet them." [para.12 of the Panel's First Report]*

*"The Panel ... recommends that the Government enter into discussion with industry to draw up proposals in key sectors for pilot projects involving economic instruments." [para.13]*

7. The Panel welcomes the increased emphasis in the 1995 Environment White Paper<sup>3</sup> and in the Government's response to the House of Lords Select Committee on Sustainable Development<sup>4</sup> on the importance of establishing quantifiable targets and progress, particularly in the fields of waste, air quality and biodiversity. It also looks forward to the publication in 1996 of the Government's preliminary set of indicators of sustainable development.
8. Commitment to setting targets has so far been patchy. The Panel believes that more should be done to define environmental objectives. It recommends that priority should be given to setting targets for agriculture and transport over the coming year.
9. The Panel continues to advocate wider use of economic instruments, and a gradual move away from taxes on labour, income, profits and capital towards taxes on pollution and the use of resources, including energy. In this respect, it welcomes the proposed landfill tax and the creation of environmental trusts. These measures should

<sup>3</sup> *This Common Inheritance, UK Annual Report 1995*. Cm 2822. HMSO, 1995. ISBN 0-10-128222-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Government Response to the Lords Select Committee on Sustainable Development*. Cm 3018. HMSO, 1995. ISBN 0-10-130182-0.



set useful precedents for further action. The Panel also believes that favourable tax treatment should be given to energy saving and conservation devices. It is disappointed that proposals relating to pollution of surface water, sulphur emissions and the use of solvents have so far been delayed.

### Environmental education and training

*"The Panel recommends that the Government should develop a comprehensive strategy for environmental education and training to cover both formal and informal education and to bring in the wide range of related activities by official and voluntary bodies, industry and commerce, and local communities."* [para.19 of the Panel's First Report]

*"The Panel recommends that the Government should establish a comprehensive database, with local applications, to draw attention to the many resources available, including written material, lectures and facilities on offer from official and voluntary bodies, from industry and commerce, and in local communities."* [para.22]

*"The Panel recommends that the Government and institutions concerned should take early action [to implement the Toyne Committee Report]."* [para.23]

*"The Panel recommends that universities and higher education institutions in this country should subscribe to the Talloires Declaration of 1990."* [para.24]

10. The Panel notes some activity. The Government is expected shortly to publish a strategy for environmental education. The Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority is conducting a review of qualifications offered to young people in the 16-19 year-old age range. The Authority has also been asked to identify good practice in delivering environmental materials in (and outside) the classroom and a study has been commissioned into the feasibility of establishing and maintaining a database of materials. Professor Peter Toyne is carrying out a survey of the extent to which the recommendations in his 1993 Report<sup>5</sup> on the environmental responsibility of institutions of Further and Higher Education have been carried out. He will also monitor awareness of, and compliance with, the Talloires Declaration<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> *Environmental Responsibility: An Agenda for Further and Higher Education*. Committee on Environmental Education in Further and Higher Education (Chairman Peter Toyne). Department for Education/Welsh Office. HMSO, 1993. ISBN 0-11-270820-X.

<sup>6</sup> *University Presidents for a Sustainable Future: The Talloires Declaration*. Tufts University European Center, 1990.

## Depletion of fish stocks

*"The Panel recommends that the Government review the scope and procedures, and extend the funding of its decommissioning scheme." [para.29 of the Panel's First Report]*

*"The Panel recommends that the Government take steps to promote the establishment of an Intergovernmental Panel on the Oceans. ... One target would be to formulate and implement by the year 2000 a convention to secure the sustainability of the marine environment." [para.31]*

*"The Panel recommends that the Government act rather than react to events by giving a lead at home, within the European Union, and internationally in promoting long-term policies for conservation of fisheries and protection of the marine environment generally." [para.32]*

11. Over the past year the depletion of fish stocks has generated considerable international tension between certain governments. It remains a combustible issue. There have been one or two positive developments including an Agreement in August 1995 amplifying the Convention on the Law of the Sea with respect to the management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. But fundamental problems remain unchanged. Depletion of fish stocks has continued at an accelerating rate. There is also significant waste. Substantial quantities of fish caught continue to be discarded. Massive subsidies continue to go to fishing fleets. There is still no prospect of a rational and sustainable use of fish resources.
12. The Panel commends the Government for organising a major international workshop on the oceans in November/December 1995 and welcomes its conclusion that existing organizations and mechanisms should be better coordinated. These issues are to be taken forward at the 1996 session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. The Panel continues to support the idea of an Intergovernmental Panel on the Oceans, comparable to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to examine the science, assess the human impact, and suggest a framework for responsible management of the oceans. Such a Panel could draw upon the multiplicity of existing organizations and bring their work more effectively together.

## Ozone depletion

*"The Panel recommends that the Government should seek to ensure that sufficient attention is given internationally to [breaches of the Montreal Protocol]." [para.34 of the Panel's First Report]*

*"The Panel recommends that the Government put more effort into coordination of monitoring, and publish periodic assessments of [the effects of increased UVB radiation at ground level which] could be a major hazard to human health and the environment generally." [para.35]*



*"The Panel recommends that the Government should set targets for phasing out ozone depleting substances and HFCs in each key industrial sector, and should explore the scope for market incentives to encourage the development and introduction of alternative technologies." [para.36]*

13. The Seventh Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol took place in December 1995 with mixed and in some respects disappointing results. The Panel notes that the issue of illegal trade was considered and will be looked at further in 1996 both at the Eighth Meeting and by a special working group of the European Union. There is mounting evidence that the Montreal Protocol is being undermined by a black market in CFCs.
14. The Panel welcomes the establishment of an independent review group, due to report in 1996, on the potential impacts of predicted changes in the levels of UVB radiation in Britain as a result of ozone depletion over the next 20-30 years.
15. The Panel notes that voluntary agreements are being drawn up with some industrial sectors to limit emissions of HFCs. This is a useful step. While HFCs may be a short-term substitute for ozone depleting CFCs and HCFCs, they are also greenhouse gases, and their use contributes to climate change. The development of alternative technologies should be encouraged, and their appraisal should take account of all relevant environmental factors.

### Technology transfer

*"[The Panel] recommends that the Government publish in 1995 a report on the progress and achievements of [the Technology Partnership Initiative] and such other initiatives as the Greenhouse Gas Technology Exchange (GREENTIE), in which it participates." [para.38 of the Panel's First Report]*

*"The Panel recommends that the Government give further encouragement to industry to exploit the market opportunities [for transfer of technology through normal commercial channels]." [para.39]*

*"The Panel recommends that the Government publish guidelines which set out the environmental standards which transfer of technology should meet, and a list of technologies which should not be transferred." [para.40]*

16. The Panel notes that a report on the Technology Partnership Initiative is due to be published shortly and that the GREENTIE project has been extended for a further year.

## Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

*"The Panel recommends that, whatever the attitude of our partners in the European Union, the Government should draw up and publish its own proposals for CAP reform to serve as negotiating targets for the future." [para.45 of the Panel's First Report]*

17. The Panel welcomes the conclusions of the Minister of Agriculture's Review Group on reform of the Common Agricultural Policy<sup>7</sup>. These constitute a case for radical change which the Panel calls on the Government to take forward with our European partners. In particular, the Panel emphasises the need to set standards and targets for the longer term to promote a more sustainable agricultural policy which takes better account of environmental considerations.

## Climate change

18. Sustainable development can be threatened here and elsewhere by climate change. The second comprehensive Assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, published at the end of 1995, brings out with new clarity the effects of human activities on climate, and their social and economic impacts. The Panel welcomes the leadership given by the Government, and in particular by the Environment Secretary, in working for full international respect for the obligations entered into under the Framework Convention on Climate Change to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by the year 2000.
19. For the future the Panel believes that new and more ambitious targets should be set for the period after 2000. For instance, the Environment Secretary has urged all industrial countries to agree on a figure between 5% and 10% below 1990 levels as an aim for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2010. For Britain to meet such targets, the Government will have to use all appropriate means to achieve greater energy efficiency and energy saving by domestic users, in industry and in transport (where energy use is growing most rapidly).

## Transport

20. Last year, the Panel underlined the importance of the report on *Transport and the Environment*<sup>8</sup> by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, and welcomed the Government's wish for a broad national debate on the subject followed by a thorough and measured response. The debate has taken place. The Panel calls on the Government for an early and detailed reply to the Royal Commission's report.

<sup>7</sup> *European Agriculture - The Case for Radical Reform. Conclusions of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's CAP Review Group.* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, July 1995.

<sup>8</sup> *Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution Eighteenth Report: Transport and the Environment.* Cm 2674. HMSO, 1994. ISBN 0-10-126742-8.



## TOPICS

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### Environmental accounting

*"For development to be sustainable, environmental considerations must become a central part of the decision-making process within government and industry. For this to happen, better information is needed on the way in which economic development impacts on the environment. The ultimate goal would be the integration of environmental and economic accounting in national accounts..." [para.34.1]*

Extract from Government White Paper, *Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy*. (Cm 2426), January 1994.

21. The current systems of national accounts have been tools of economic analysis and decision-taking for much of this century. They have generated a range of economic and political indicators - most notably Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) - which have been used worldwide as proxies for a country's progress towards prosperity. The systems have been extended and refined over time to reflect financial and economic changes, but they have not been updated to reflect more recent and growing concerns about sustainable development and the environmental and social consequences of human activity.
22. So only a partial picture can be derived from these accounts. The Panel believes that the current emphasis on GDP and GNP leads to distortions in the decision-making process. It has given support to commonly held misconceptions about economic growth: such growth may provide the means to improve the environment, but it does not necessarily lead to improvement and can be at the expense of the environment.
23. There has been growing international recognition of the need to improve national accounting systems. Some governments and international institutions are making efforts to work out accounting systems which measure economic performance in terms which take account of the use of natural resources, whether renewable or non-renewable, reflect environmental degradation, and establish true costs including expenditure to clean up the environment. The Panel notes that the Government intends to publish in 1996 some pilot environmental accounts for certain sectors and a preliminary set of indicators of sustainable development.
24. But progress in developing new forms of accounting has been slow and little use has so far been made of them. There remain technical difficulties, in particular how values should be assigned to physical environmental assets, to environmental degradation, and to social issues such as individual well-being and quality of life. In some areas, such monetary quantification may not be practical or even desirable and alternative measures are needed. Attempts are being made in several countries to overcome these difficulties.

25. In Britain, most work in this area has been designed to develop satellite or supplementary accounts, which leave the main national accounting aggregates unchanged. While this may be a pragmatic approach in the short term, these methodologies should be part of an evolutionary process in which the long-term objective remains the integration of economic, environmental and social factors into a common accounting framework. Such accounts would not replace GDP or GNP with a single measure of progress but would instead provide a series of key measures of a country's progress towards sustainable development and contribute to a more soundly based system of fiscal policy and regulation.
26. **The Panel recommends that the Government should now give higher priority, both in this country and in the international community, to the promotion and development of new comprehensive systems of national accounts which bring together the three aspects of sustainable development, namely economic, environmental and social change.** An improved system of national accounts would introduce an important new element of openness to knowledge about the economy, the sustainability of the nation's capital of natural resources and the state of the environment. By collecting and publishing the right information, it would be much easier for the Government to give the right signals, provide the right incentives and allocate resources so as to promote greater efficiency throughout the economy. It would help to apply the "polluter pays" and "precautionary" principles and to bring sustainable development issues into decision-making throughout the economy. The Panel believes that the introduction of such accounts would also encourage industry, business and other private and public sector bodies to adapt their accounting methods to provide a more accurate analysis of their activities.

### Biotechnology

*"The Government's aim is to promote a climate that will allow maximum trade in biotechnology products and impose minimum burdens on those investing in and developing the technology whilst, nonetheless, giving due attention to the protection of the environment and to human safety and well being." [para. 21.14]*

Extract from Government White Paper, *Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy*. (Cm 2426). January 1994.

27. In the future, even more than today, our state of health, the food we eat, the products we use, and the quality of our environment will be related to biotechnology. This applies particularly to recent developments involving the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), which could lead to major advances in medicine, agriculture and the good health of the environment.
28. The introduction of GMOs must proceed with caution to ensure that any benefits now are not made at the expense of the safety and well-being of future generations and their environment. Once released into the wider environment, a GMO cannot be recalled: the action is irreversible. More than in other areas, there is uncertainty about the long-term outcome of human actions and of human ability to deal with the



consequences. Introduced genes may over time spread to other organisms with consequences that cannot necessarily be foreseen. Although similar concerns arise in the release of organisms modified through traditional breeding and selection processes, GMO techniques may provide the capability to make greater changes more quickly.

29. Biotechnology is already widely applied for the improvement of public health but medical use of GMOs is just emerging. It requires consideration of environmental implications to be added to traditional regulatory concerns of safety, quality and efficacy. Recent events such as the emergence of new viruses and of bacteria resistant to antibiotics, and the detection of increased hormone levels in food and public water supplies, emphasise how incomplete and insecure is our knowledge and control of our environment. The risks in use of GMOs in medicine are at least equal to those in other applications and it will be as important to ensure consistency in standards governing the release of GMOs for medical purposes as in other fields.
30. International regulation is urgently required to provide common minimum standards to control the handling, transfer and use of GMOs. The Panel welcomes the Government's lead in developing international guidelines for safety in biotechnology. **The Panel urges the Government to take steps to secure international agreement to a comprehensive protocol on GMO handling and use.**
31. In Britain there is a legislative framework implementing European Directives which regulates all activities involved in genetic modification. Independent expert committees advise the Government on the human and environmental safety of contained uses and on releases and marketing of GMOs on a case by case basis.
32. A weakness of this case-based approach is that wider issues surrounding the use of GMOs are often not considered. Adequate consideration is not given to possible interactions following the introduction of GMOs in different fields. Nor has there been effective monitoring of the results of using GMOs. The Panel has found no overall strategy relating to GMOs, or guidelines to show where they should be restricted and what safeguards should apply. Moreover, although the current system of individual controls may be appropriate to regulate experimental releases of GMOs, small-scale trials with monitoring limited to the immediate physical or human environment cannot tell us enough to judge whether it is safe to proceed to commercial releases and what the long-term consequences might be.
33. **The Panel recommends that the Government should bring together interested bodies in the public and private sectors, including industry, the scientific community, the medical community, environmental and medical bodies, non-governmental organizations and consumer representatives, to draw up key principles governing biotechnology and GMOs.** These principles should cover:
  - the areas in which biotechnology would be particularly beneficial;
  - the areas where the use of GMOs should be restricted because of the potential risks to the environment and to human safety;
  - the extension of current systems of risk assessment to take into account the potential consequences of introducing a GMO on the wider environment,



including the potential effects on other species and ecosystems, and changes in land use;

- the development and use of long-term monitoring systems for experimental and commercial releases which would enable the wider human and environmental impacts of GMOs to be better understood and controlled;
- the dissemination of information to the public both on the potential adverse effects of GMOs and on the ways in which careful use of GMOs with appropriate safeguards could bring benefits.

34. Unfortunately there are many recent examples of failure to anticipate problems arising from the use of new technologies (such as CFCs, asbestos, pesticides and thalidomide). Potential consequences are more uncertain where self-replicating organisms are introduced into the environment. **The Panel recommends that before significant commercial releases of GMOs take place, the Government should consider with relevant bodies within the European Union what systems of impact appraisal could be formulated, what the ground rules for liability should be in the event of damage resulting from the release of GMOs, and whether emergency procedures in the event of unforeseen adverse consequences could be developed.**

### Forestry

*"The United Kingdom's forestry policy is based on the ... fundamental tenet that forests and forest lands should be sustainably managed to meet the social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual human needs of present and future generations."*  
[para.5.1]

Extract from Government White Paper, *Sustainable Forestry: The UK Programme*. (Cm 2429). January 1994.

*"The Government is committed to a policy of setting multiple objectives for forestry. This means that the UK's forests are valued not only for their commercial potential but also for recreation, nature conservation and landscape enhancement. Forestry also has a part to play as a significant carbon sink."* [para.16.2]

Extract from Government White Paper, *Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy*. (Cm 2426). January 1994.

35. The Panel welcomes the general recognition that forestry is a vital natural resource significant in economic, environmental and social terms. More clearly than in many other sectors of the economy, forestry can demonstrate what is meant by sustainable development. But these values and the commitment to sustainable development cannot be translated into practice except within a strategic framework.
36. A national strategy would give a geographical dimension to multiple policy objectives and help to integrate forestry with other land uses. In many ways the distinction between forestry and agricultural products is becoming blurred. Just as subsidies for agriculture should take better account of environmental considerations, so also should

grants and other encouragement for forestry. A broad strategy would serve as a framework for, and in turn be informed by, more detailed regional strategies. It would need to take account of international developments and could promote such international initiatives as the introduction of certification for timber products.

37. **The Panel recommends that, in consultation with the many interests involved, the Government should draw up a national forestry strategy, supported by regional strategies, containing targets related to the main economic, environmental and social benefits that forestry could provide and identifying incentives needed to meet those targets.** The formulation of this strategy should include reconsideration of the existing grant system. Points for examination should include how grants should be matched to targets, whether grants should vary according to different circumstances, and how continuity of funding could be maintained over different time horizons. The Panel has some suggestions, outlined below, for particular issues that should be included in the national and regional strategies.
38. The 10% of Britain's land area under forestry is low historically and in comparison with many other countries. The Panel supports the broad aim of the Government stated in the recent Rural White Papers<sup>9</sup> to expand forest cover, possibly leading to a doubling in England over the next century. In view of the diversity of forestry and its multi-purpose role, the Panel favours the development of a series of targets to meet specific policy objectives, rather than a single national planting target.
39. The Panel considers that the national strategy should identify the main areas where forestry expansion could take place, including, for example, the Community and National Forests, set-aside land, and urban areas. Local communities should be as closely associated as possible. The Panel notes the recent proposals of the Scottish Secretary on local community participation at Laggan, which could set an important precedent.
40. Strategies for different regions should contain more precise opportunities for afforestation and the purposes these newly wooded areas would serve. They should also identify those areas where afforestation should be restricted to protect water supplies, biodiversity and valuable wildlife habitats, and some areas such as heathlands where forests should be cleared to restore open habitats, and enhance biodiversity. They could also give a lead on the types of plantation forest suited to each area.
41. While new plantings are important and in the long term may begin to offer a wide range of benefits, they cannot substitute for ancient and semi-natural woodlands which, despite statutory protection, have suffered erosion in quantity, particularly from roads, development and replanting with conifers, and in quality, through unsympathetic practice and pollution. Ancient woodlands are one of the richest habitats in Britain. They deserve full protection because of their scarcity, their biodiversity and their fragility. The Panel considers that the national and regional

<sup>9</sup> *Rural England. A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside.* Department of the Environment/Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. HMSO, 1995. Cm 3016. ISBN 0-10-130162-6.

*Rural Scotland. People, Prosperity and Partnership.* The Scottish Office. HMSO, 1995. Cm 3041. ISBN 0-10-130412-9.



strategies should strengthen the protection afforded to ancient and semi-natural woodlands introducing additional safeguards to minimise their further decline.

42. The Panel notes concern in the forestry industry and in environmental organizations that woodland management is declining, particularly in farm woodland. The national and regional strategies should explore, through the use of targets and incentives, ways in which woodland management could be improved. Specific targets, for example, to increase the annual timber harvest, to increase the structural diversity of woodlands, to promote biodiversity and to improve access for recreation, should be considered.
43. Responsibility for forestry is currently divided between several Government Departments and the Forestry Commission. The strategies proposed would require a greater measure of coordination at central, regional and local levels.

### Disposal of radioactive waste

*"The Government's policy is to ensure that radioactive waste is managed safely and that the present generation, which receives the benefit of nuclear power, meets its responsibilities to future generations." [para.19.18]*

Extract from Government White Paper, *Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy*. (Cm 2426). January 1994.

44. How to dispose of radioactive waste safely in perpetuity is one of the most intractable problems currently facing industrial countries. There are major scientific and technical difficulties with permanent disposal underground which is the most widely favoured solution. Sizeable research programmes are under way in several countries including Britain. But even if the many difficulties could be resolved, it would remain necessary to produce a solution to the problem acceptable to public opinion.
45. In its White Paper on the management of radioactive waste<sup>10</sup>, the Government reformulated current policy in this country. The Panel welcomes the Government's intention to draw up a research strategy for the disposal of high-level waste. But it notes that the Government is leaving to other countries (the United States, France and Japan) and to the European Union's programme, research into such other possibilities as partitioning and transmutation of radioactive materials. **The Panel recommends that the Government's new research strategy should be widely based, including intermediate-level waste, and that all options for disposal should be explored, drawing fully on progress achieved in other countries. It should be updated regularly, and the Government should assume responsibility for ensuring that it is effectively implemented.**
46. Nuclear energy arouses particular concerns in the public mind, partly because of its intrinsic nature and partly because of past attempts to minimize the effects of accidents. The Panel believes that there should be much greater openness and public understanding of the issues if such concerns are to be met. **The Panel recommends that the Government should review the ways in which information is made available and decisions are taken on this highly emotive subject.**

<sup>10</sup> *Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy*. Cm 2919. HMSO, 1995. ISBN 0-10-129192-2.

## ANNEX

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### ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO SUBMITTED WRITTEN PAPERS OR COMMENTS ON TOPICS

#### Government Bodies

Central Statistical Office  
Department of the Environment  
Department of Health  
Forestry Commission  
HM Treasury

#### Other Organizations

AEA Technology  
Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry  
BioIndustry Association  
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council  
British Nuclear Fuels plc  
British Society of Plant Breeders Ltd  
Business in the Environment  
Chartered Association of Certified Accountants (ACCA)  
Confederation of British Industry  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (Northern Ireland)  
Council for the Protection of Rural England  
Country Landowners Association  
Countryside Commission  
Countryside Council for Wales  
English Nature  
Forest of Belfast  
Forestry Industry Committee of Great Britain  
Forestry Trust for Conservation and Education  
Friends of the Earth  
Green Alliance  
Greenpeace  
Institute of Chartered Foresters  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
National Radiological Protection Board  
Natural Environment Research Council  
Nuclear Electric plc  
Nuffield Council on Bioethics  
Plymouth Marine Laboratory

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee  
Royal Society  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
Scottish Natural Heritage  
Timber Trade Federation  
United Kingdom Nirex Limited  
United Kingdom Softwood Sawmillers Association  
United Kingdom Wood Processors Association  
WWF UK (World Wide Fund for Nature)

### Individuals

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Professor D Pearce, Mr G Atkinson, and Dr K Hamilton, Centre for Social and  
Economic Research on the Global Environment (CSERGE), University College London  
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