Small is Beautiful
Forest Futures 2002-2005
Small is Beautiful
Using woodland and forestry to develop a sustainable competitive edge for Cumbria and the Northwest.

Forest Futures 2002-2005
People, places, their economy and woods.

An essential read if you have a woodland and are looking for ways to turn it into an income stream, or if you’re an agency examining woodlands, forestry or rural development opportunities.
Real Old Fashioned DAIRY ICE-CREAM not the cheapest but The Best
“Tourism? Tourism? Don’t be daft. This is posh camping!”

That’s the short shrift you get if you suggest to Robert Carr that he’s diversified from farming into eco-tourism. Through a sandstone cut leading down to the River Lyne, Robert and his son, also named Robert, have invested in the Shank Wood Log Cabin, a hideaway for anglers looking to take advantage of the sea trout wending their way through the river as it feeds into the Esk.

Constructed from Sitka spruce sourced from Forestry Commission woods just over the border in Dumfries, the cabin boasts some strong environmental credentials, not least a photovoltaic array. The sunlight dapples over a development that is as sensitive as it is potentially lucrative. The cabin, the track leading down to it and the angling stages it provides access to are all in the middle of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). English Nature, the guardians of the site, have pored over the plans and it is arguably only the Carrs’ long-standing record of stewardship and careful approach to developing their fishing business that has ensured that the development could go ahead.

The fishing side of the family business is doing well. “Since we started to focus on it we’ve seen a 50 per cent increase in our fishing income,” says Robert, a struggling dairy farmer with 250 cows and a landholding of 550 acres.
He and his wife Diana, and now his son Robert, have been working the farm since 1972. Through the ups and downs of a business that has seen everything from Foot and Mouth Disease to the globalisation of agri-business, the Carrs’ humble fishing sideline is emerging as something of a lifeline, according to Diana. “The chalet and fishing business makes up around three or four percent of our turnover but importantly that’s all on the bottom line. When you’re in a milk market that can see the price of a pint drop by seven pence overnight, it’s a really important boost to profits,” she says.

As you climb back up the woodland track from the cabin, alongside twelve acres of new broadleaf planting and an enigmatic sandstone outcrop known as the ‘Fairy Castle’, the optimism in Diana Carr’s voice is matched by the sight of a good-sized house beginning to take shape on a plot of land just outside the SSSI. It’s the construction site for the younger Robert Carr’s new family home. “My son is quietly confident that he’ll be one of the survivors,” says Carr Senior, in a comment that at first glance seems bleak but in fact signals a farming family that is forging a viable future for itself.

The Carrs run one of hundreds of firms across Cumbria that have benefited from the Forest Futures rural development scheme. Created by the Forestry Commission and partners, it has funded the track running down to the cabin, at
a cost of £24,000, and helped to unlock further support from Cumbria Tourist Board and Rural Enterprise Agency. The development helped another business too: the cabin, with its eco-loo, solar energy and locally-sourced materials, was constructed by local builder Alex Hampton, himself a beneficiary of Forest Futures.

“It’s good to be able to help people lift their heads up and see what’s possible,” says Neville Elstone of Cumbria Woodlands, the initiative charged with delivering the £700,000-a-year Forest Futures support programme. Alongside agency director Edward Mills, Neville has helped to bring about the development and delivery of the programme from 2002 until the close in 2005 of its woodland planting and management grants (the business support theme continues until April 2007). During that time, more than 200 businesses have been assisted by Cumbria Woodlands with business development support, grants for woodland management or expansion, or assistance with business planning.

The initiative has been judged a success both by those involved and a recent independent audit. It has generated more than 100 jobs, but more importantly delivered a quantifiable boost to Cumbria’s rural economy. For Edward Mills, it was an opportunity not just to offer grant aid to hundreds of businesses, but to bring a new level of ingenuity and vision to woodland owners and forestry-related businesses.
“When we started it was definitely the case that woodland owners had a narrow business culture, based solely around growing timber,” says Edward. “Through Forest Futures, and our wider work programme at Cumbria Woodlands, we’ve been able to help them broaden out their visions and expand their horizons by building a more entrepreneurial culture.”

In fact, over half of all Forest Futures beneficiaries said their horizons had been broadened and some of those supported have shown a level of entrepreneurialism that would have passed muster on reality TV shows such as ‘Dragon’s Den’ or ‘The Apprentice’. A case in point is Danny Frost, a former teacher turned furniture-maker and sawmill operator who, with the help of Forest Futures, has seen his business grow from two to seven employees in just three years.

Danny’s business is based at a former dairy farm (Lowmoor Farm) just outside Wigton, in the north of the county. Standing in his delivery yard, he talks of sustainable business models and boosted confidence as a wagon arrives carrying freshly cut timber from just over the border in Scotland. As the grab of the lorry’s crane struggles with the large trunks (the driver has brought a soft wood crane by mistake), Danny outlines his vision for a business that has seen its turnover treble in six years.
“We’re integrating the value chain, from wood right through to products, so that we’re paying fewer processing premiums at each stage of the supply chain. That’s helped us to survive,” says Danny in a corporate language that wouldn’t be out of place on an MBA programme. A walk around his business paints a clear picture of what he’s describing: an integrated and dynamic business model that clearly works well. The sawmilling operation feeds two kilns and a drying shed, which in turn feed a well-equipped processing area and, finally, Danny’s furniture workshop.

The two businesses – sawmilling and furniture making – run side by side and both are doing well. He’s employing two full-time furniture makers, two sawmillers and three further part-time staff. Last year his turnover reached £107,000. “I couldn’t have expanded this quickly without Forest Futures,” says Danny, who also says that the programme, and Cumbria Woodlands, helped him to get to grips with the true potential in his business. “I’m passionate about what I do, but having my business examined through the Forest Futures programme helped to really boost my confidence, so much so that I’m now investing considerable amounts of my own profits back into the business.”

This growth in confidence, which approximately 50 per cent of all Future Forest recipients have recognised since becoming involved in the programme, is evident.
At one point, Danny leaps up a mound of timber to point out the new planting that he has invested in with the help of Forest Futures - he has planted five hectares of broadleaved woodland and is committed to investing personally in at least one thousand further trees for every year that he’s in business. Danny’s commitment to sustainable development doesn’t end there. He sources his wood locally (one good example is the oak from woodland thinning on the Greystoke Estate which has been processed by Danny and will now be used as roof trusses in a valuable restoration project) and is working to reduce energy use across the business. One of his kilns benefits from solar heating and he has plans for medium-sized wind turbine on the site. “I’m aiming for added value throughout the business, tangible local economic benefits and all achieved with an environmental footprint that’s as small as possible,” he says.

The £20,000 grant from Forest Futures supported more than just planting, it helped to finance a side loader for the drying shed and processing equipment to prepare the dried wood for a DIY and construction market that is taking 250 tonnes of Danny’s timber a year. Even though his furniture making business has a waiting list of up to twelve months, it is the sawmilling operation that is driving growth: “Sometimes I think that side of my business has started to sponsor my furniture hobby.”
According to Edward Mills of Cumbria Woodlands, the points made by Danny about adding value right through the supply chain are what Forest Futures is all about: “We’re about adding value on the ground, with individual businesses; across the landscape, by building on our environmental assets; and at a partnership level through contacts and networks.”

One network established by Cumbria Woodlands and its partners is the Sawmillers group that brings Danny and up to 40 other business people together to share problems, solutions and opportunities. Partially funded by the European Union’s Leader Plus programme, the network is a good example of how a number of business clusters in Cumbria are working collaboratively to help grow the local economy. Other networks take in such diverse offerings as camping barns and tea rooms.

Sarah Chaplin-Brice, at Low Bridge End Farm, is a stalwart of both of these networks and the business she runs with her husband Graham and the rest of the family is a testament to diversification, resourcefulness and the opportunities that a sustainable, accessible environment can bring.

Her farm sits alongside two walking routes that stretch between the High and Low Rigg Fells in St. John’s in the Vale, near Keswick. The shorter walk opens up views of Helvellyn and the Dodds while the longer,
high level route gives you a stunning view of Skiddaw. Both routes are peppered with wildlife from red squirrels and herons to wild goats and even lizards. The views, and the wildlife, bring 8,000 people a year along the two routes and straight past her farm.

“When you see an opportunity you need to be able to grasp it, and that’s where funds like this come in,” says Sarah. With the help of a number of funding programmes, including Forest Futures, she and her family have launched a camping barn that boasts 70 per cent occupancy levels, a woodland interpretation and training centre and a tea garden that serves drinks and homemade cakes to around 7,000 people a year. “Everything we do is little,” she stresses, keen to emphasise that the business is working with the breathtaking environment that brings so many visitors to the area. She paints a picture of a business that is not just working with nature, but that stretches out and weaves into a much wider local economy. Of the £24,000 that the Chaplin-Brice’s have received from Forest Futures, £10,000 was dedicated to the Interpretation Centre while £14,000 helped open up a woodland trail.

Edward Mills of Cumbria Woodlands sees the opening up of woodland areas in a sustainable and well-managed fashion as being a central strand of the Forest Futures scheme. “Some of the woodland areas we’re working
with have never been managed and taken as a whole,” he says, “what is clear is that Cumbria’s woodlands have untold economic leverage and potential.”

Unlocking the economic potential of Cumbria’s woodland areas requires a profound effort to be made in balancing environmental and economic factors in the name of a wider, social benefit to be found in delivering jobs and prosperity to some of the most deprived rural areas in the North of England. It is a balancing act that Cumbria Woodlands and its partners – including the Forestry Commission and Northwest Regional Development Agency – have been able to maintain throughout the three-year Forest Futures programme.

At the Cistern Wood for example, on the Netherby Estate near Longtown, one of the earliest Forest Futures grants was made, totalling £40,000, to open up 496 hectares of woodland through ten kilometres of new woodland trails and the building of two car parks for visitors. The scheme, developed in partnership with the Estate, chartered surveyors Edwin Thompson and the East Cumbria Countryside Project, has brought woodland access and the opportunity for tourism to an area that had virtually no rights of way when Foot and Mouth Disease hit the local economy, and that continues to face considerable economic and social challenges. The new, accessible routes hit the headlines when local celebrity and mountaineer Sir Chris Bonnington attended the official opening and it
is hoped that in a relatively short time the wood will pull to the north a proportion of the lucrative Cumbria tourism market.

An even bolder scheme is to be found at Geltsdale, near Brampton. Here, Forest Futures has funded a total of 58 hectares of new planting across one of the RSPB’s largest birdwatching reserves. Black grouse can be found across the North Pennines moorland along with other upland species such as golden plover and dunlin. Forest Futures stepped in to take over where an earlier funding (grant) regime, named JIGSAW, had already planted just under 100 hectares. The plan for the area is to create a ‘special, wild place’ of national significance that will attract up to 10,000 visitors per year. To help realise the economic possibilities that kind of footfall could generate, two derelict quarry worker cottages on the site are scheduled for renovation, with the RSPB and its partners planning visitor facilities and interpretation. The aspirations are large scale and long range; as Edward Mills says: “In 30 years this will be a real pull, and not just for birdwatchers.”

Standing by the disused cottages on Geltsdale, where the slate from an outbuilding has been cannibalised to repair the roof and with a solitary hill runner making his way past the white threads of hawthorn and hopeful young saplings, it would be all too easy to forget that this essentially environmental development has
an economic foundation for the Forest Futures funding agencies, Forestry Commission and Northwest Regional Development Agency. The RSPB is the United Kingdom’s largest membership organisation – made up of more than a million people with disposable incomes willing to travel significant distances to spot the rare, the beautiful or the unexpected. There is economic opportunity in the sensitive development of this landscape, and forestry has a pivotal role to play.

On a much smaller scale, that’s a sentiment echoed by another beneficiary of Forest Futures, Sue Wrennall of Kingrigg Livery Stables, just outside Carlisle. A Rural Enterprise Grant has helped her to establish a viable livery stables business, but it is an investment that has been matched with £18,000 from Forest Futures to help her develop 700 metres of woodland trail for her riders across the forested area of her farm. “Without the wood, this simply wouldn’t work,” she says. “Our farm is on a main road and so the horse side of the business was seriously limited; our customers need to be able to go hacking, an important activity for horse people, and you have to have an area free from traffic and from other distractions such as motorbikes or cyclists.”

Sue and her husband John have 64 dairy cows in a closed herd and run a farm that stretches across a total of 50 hectares. They’ve been running the farm since 1983 but

Following page: At Geltsdale, 58 hectares of new planting has been supported.
in 2002 they succeeded in buying it from the owner, Cumbria County Council. In the wake of Foot and Mouth Disease they started writing a diversified business plan with the livery as a new, and hopefully lucrative, offering. At a meeting of the Rural Women’s Network, Sue heard Edward Mills give a presentation on the possibilities offered through Forest Futures; she asked him along to the farm to talk through a possible funding bid.

“You have to match the opportunity, the location and the aspirations of the individual to be able to make this work,” says Edward as he stands at the far end of the Kingrigg trail. According to Sue, the grant aid was “the base upon which we could build.” In her business plan she set out to create a stable block with room for 20 horses on average; there are 23 stabled there at present. Her customers range from riders as young as six to older people in their 50s. The sunlight is coming through the canopy where the woodland has been thinned out to make way for the trail; new and younger trees are establishing themselves; it is now a well managed woodland that will, according to Edward, “look after itself” for another 25 or 30 years.

For Sue and John, the Kingrigg Livery Stables now represent half of their business turnover and, like so many of the businesses benefiting from Forest Futures, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) represented a marker point for their decision to diversify. For Keith Jones
of the Forestry Commission, the occurrence of FMD is an important factor regardless of whether beneficiary businesses were hit directly with a cull order.

“Undoubtedly the programme was moulded by the obvious need, agreed by everyone in the grant-giving world, to pull Cumbria’s economy out of a depressed state,” he says. “Foot and Mouth Disease ironically gave many people the time and space needed to construct a programme like Forest Futures. For almost a year you simply couldn’t get on site, and so there was an opportunity to really start to think ahead.”

Rethinking business models, rebuilding confidence and investing in economic potential are all recurrent themes that are cited by those who have been in receipt of Forest Futures funding. Back at Low Bridge End Farm, the Chaplin-Brice’s 22 year-old son William saw his future in forestry, not farming, and after graduating with an HND in Forestry Engineering from Newton Rigg College, got some assistance from Forest Futures to equip himself to do forestry conservation work. Now William spends some of his time working with another Forest Futures business, Derwent Charcoal and Tree Services.

A few miles from the Chaplin-Brices, at the Booths supermarket in Keswick – the barbecue charcoal is doing a brisk trade in spite of the heavy sky hanging over the
county this afternoon and one woman, who is about to run a training session for men who are unsure of what to cook on their grill, decides that ‘local is better’. She puts a bag of Derwent Charcoal into her shopping trolley, charcoal lovingly made by Keswick-based entrepreneur Julian Grave.

Julian Grave started Derwent Charcoal and Tree Services eight years ago when he bought himself a second hand charcoal kiln from a contact he’d made while driving a tourist launch across Derwentwater several days a week. He added his tree surgery business after undergoing forestry training shortly after that. His business now operates a busy tree surgery, two charcoal kilns and is branching out into firewood supplies, too. The business plan he prepared with Cumbria Woodlands and the West Cumbria Development Agency helped him to access Forest Futures funding and pay for a second kiln and firewood processing machinery. The plan set out an expected output of 20 tonnes of charcoal in his first year; in fact he’s ended up doing 50 tonnes.

“I couldn’t have done any of this without the grant aid and now we’re incredibly busy, bagging up charcoal or firewood until nine at night,” he says. “Everything works well together now, and my business is a complete package. I’m looking at investing further in the business shortly and I’ve employed another member of staff to manage the growth.” Julian is justifiably proud when he
sees his product on sale in local garages or on the shelves of a nearby supermarket: “It’s the best feeling in the world when you’re in there doing your shopping and see your own charcoal on the shelves or in people’s shopping trolleys. At the moment we can do up to £300 a week in charcoal sales. It’s amazing!”

Julian Grave describes himself as the “happiest fella alive” and, like Danny Frost, has built a business that pulls together a number of supply chain elements into an integrated business model that is both competitive and environmentally sustainable. Where some charcoal or barbecue products might be sourced from potentially unsustainable overseas plantations or even worse, from depleted areas of rainforest, Julian offers charcoal made from wood that comes from his tree surgery business. It is a green waste stream to which he adds value worth hundreds of pounds each week. He is adamant that he wouldn’t have got to this point without help.

“I’d never gone for a grant before even though I wanted to,” he says. “It all seemed so complicated. But with Forest Futures it was much easier and once we’d done all the paperwork with the West Cumbria Development Agency, including a business plan, it was so much easier.”

The themes of resourcefulness, collaborative networks for small clusters of businesses and the sustainable capitalisation of natural capital (be it wood, wildlife or valued landscapes) occur time and again around the...
Derwent Charcoal
Produced in Keswick
businesses that have benefited from Forest Futures, but this final point made by Julian Graves, concerning the value of sensible guidance and advice in business planning, is every bit as important.

For another business just a few miles outside Keswick, it was guidance around everything from business planning and grant applications to physical planning applications for seemingly immovable local authorities that made a real difference in his business prospects. Matt Jardine – now a highly successful cabinet maker – came out of school with no qualifications but full of the potential that had so far eluded him due to his childhood dyslexia. He got a job in a local joiners helping to sweep up and before too long was taken on as an apprentice. Attracted throughout his seven years at the joiners to “the finer side of the work” he eventually moved on to spend three further years with a cabinet maker. He started out on his own in 2000, on a subsidised business unit near Keswick using second-hand equipment.

Matt quickly outgrew his premises and, when he found himself climbing over equipment and half completed jobs to get into his work unit, he realised he needed more space, and preferably his own space, if he was ever going to grow his furniture making business. He found a hectare of space for sale just outside Braithwaite and started working up plans for a workshop and showroom.
It was at this point that Matt’s dream could have crumbled without help and assistance from Cumbria Woodlands’ Forest Futures scheme, West Cumbria Development Agency and Defra. The consortium of support agencies helped him pull together a business plan, make a number of funding applications and work up the planning application he’d need to turn the derelict buildings on the plot he’d just bought into a viable business unit. For some time it looked as if this final hurdle, planning, would be insurmountable until new rules came in on the heels of FMD to make farm diversification a more viable prospect for hard-hit areas.

With £10,000 from Forest Futures, £28,000 from Defra’s Rural Enterprise Scheme and a worryingly large set of loans from family members, Matt was able to build a workshop, employ a full-time assistant and provide a part-time job for his father in law. So far business is good and in the last year his turnover has doubled to £60,000. Like many businesses just starting up and undergoing considerable growth, his next challenge is to manage the process of registering for VAT.

“I’m really optimistic now and have got the confidence I need to make this business grow. I wouldn’t even have thought of employing someone before but now I’m totally happy to grow,” say Matt.

A final strand that pulls the outcomes of Forest Futures together is the strong sense of community. Most of the
companies supported by Forest Futures believe that the scheme has had a positive impact on the people living in the area in terms of skills and knowledge and the ability to derive more enjoyment from local amenities and improved land. For Matt Jardine, a community of interest pulled together three government agencies to work collectively to make a viable business capable of growth and job creation; for Low Bridge End Farm or Danny Frost, community could just as easily mean knowledge sharing with networks of similar businesses; at Geltsdale or even more pointedly at the Netherby Woods near Longtown, challenged and deprived rural communities are seeing long-term investment; and for many or all of these schemes, each job created or opportunity seized helps to keep a community or family together as a cohesive unit that sees hope in the future.

At the Carr's farm a good deal of the business's diversification was driven from a desire to see the business survive as it was passed down to a future generation. At one of the most engaging Forest Futures businesses, High Head Sculpture Valley, it was similarly a simple desire to keep family, home and business together that helped to build a unique, dynamic and forward looking enterprise.

According to Neville Elstone of Cumbria Woodlands, High Head Sculpture Valley is all about seeing the
potential in the whole family working together; it is as surprising as it is sustainable. Turning into what appears to be a farmyard with a face lift, you hardly suspect to encounter a lovely and popular tea room, a high end art and sculpture gallery, a health and beauty spa and then, finally, a winding and challenging sculpture trail dedicated to large scale work that echoes Hepworth or Moore.

The business is built around the husband and wife team of Bernadette and Jonathan Stamper. Bernadette has a solid background in tourism while Jonathan combines the skills of a farmer and landscape designer with a lifelong passion and undoubted talent for large sculptural works. The Stampers have run their farm near Carlisle for 18 years. With 70 dairy cows and a few hundred sheep, the farm is still a viable part of the business. For a number of years, Jonathan ran a landscaping business with his youngest son in an attempt to diversify their income but found himself farming in the evenings, with little time to spend with his family. Bernadette was working at the tourist board and their other son and daughter were reaching the point at which they’d have to consider their future careers. The pressure was on to grow the business into something big enough to keep the family together.

“I’d been doing sculpture since school, selling through various galleries, but I wanted to find a way for us to
work together as a family,” says Jonathan. “We did think about a farm tourist attraction but that would never have worked. We wanted to create somewhere really different, exhibiting outdoor sculpture.”

At this point an advisor from Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency (CREA), Andrew Humphries, stepped in and took an interest in the family and its plans. He suggested a range of possible support agencies, including Cumbria Woodlands. The team at Cumbria Woodlands pulled together a consortium of funding agencies together and a viable package was assembled with funding from Forest Futures, the Rural Enterprise Scheme, Leader+, Distinctly Cumbrian and the Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency’s Farm Tourism support scheme.

The result is a dynamic visitor attraction that gets 15,000 visitors a year and that offers artists workspace, evening classes, days out for coach tours, gallery space for local artists and activity space that most recently saw a yoga group taking up residence. In the Stampers’ most recent innovation, the family is adding a beauty spa, massage and a hydropool to the complex to extend the duration of people’s stay, generate a greater level of income per visitor, and provide a good part of the business for their daughter to take an interest in. With the major development beginning in 2003, they saw a turnover of £120,000 in year one rising to £150,000 in year two. The business
now has 11 employees, five of whom work part-time, and many of whom are from local farming families that need the support, and the income.

“The grant schemes and advice gave us the confidence we needed to take a chance,” says Jonathan. “Without their [the agencies] help it wouldn’t have been possible to reach the scale and size we needed to make something like this work.

“People are always surprised and delighted when they visit. As long as the food stays good and the service stays friendly and as long as we stay different in artistic terms, this will get better and better as more and more people come back.”

Those return visits that Jonathan expects mark out the enduring impact of Forest Futures as its beneficiary enterprises mature and thrive. The collaborations – be they between sawmillers or tea rooms – will continue. The skills have been learned and the confidence that has been raised will be difficult to counter. The natural capital that has been nurtured, valued and maximised will continue to deliver opportunities to the communities and the economy of Cumbria. The successes flowing from Forest Futures are small, beautiful but most importantly, sustainable. They offer a strong, compelling and immediate example to others.
Launching in 1991 as Cumbria Broadleaves, Cumbria Woodlands (CW) had as its founding goal a reversal of the decline in Cumbria’s broadleaved woodland. In 1995, the project broadened out to include EU-supported woodland skills training and a research programme looking at how value could be added to supplies of low quality timber. Today this mix of woodland management and planting, coupled with training and business development, continues to reap dividends through the core team of three: Edward Mills, Neville Elstone and Julie Whitfield. The team is led by a board, chaired by FTA North England Chair John Harris.

Current support for CW programmes comes from number of sources including the Forestry Commission, Leader+ and the Northwest Regional Development Agency through Rural Regeneration Cumbria. Other support comes from Cumbria County Council, English Nature and the Lake District National Park Authority, while partners in CW projects include the East Cumbria Countryside Project, Friends of the Lake District, Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency, Wood Education Programme, Woodland Trust, Country Land & Business Association, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, University of Central Lancashire’s National School of Forestry and Defra.

Cumbria Woodlands launched Forest Futures at an event with the Chairman of the FC, Lord Clark of Windermere, in July 2002. The programme was funded by the Forestry Commission, the Northwest Regional Development Agency (through Rural Regeneration Cumbria),

Appendix:
Cumbria Woodlands and Forest Futures

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Cumbria County Council and English Nature. With 44 per cent of all confirmed cases of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) falling within Cumbria, the county was particularly badly hit economically and socially by the outbreak. The Forest Futures programme was conceived as the woodland element of the Northwest Regional Rural Recovery Programme, designed to help the county recover from the impact of Foot and Mouth Disease.

With the three key aims of woodland management, woodland creation and business development support, Forest Futures was guided from its outset by the Cumbria Woodland Vision developed by the Cumbria Woodland Forum. The woodland management aspects of the programme covered existing woodlands, community woodlands and business use. The woodland creation strand focused on economic development, rural regeneration, access and tourism and biodiversity and landscape. The third component of Forest Futures, business development support, had a core focus of technical and business advice, supported by a fund offering individual grants.

The total committed funding for Forest Futures came to just over £850,000 per year for three years beginning in 2002. The woodland management dimension of the programme succeeded in giving support to 1,342 hectares of existing woodland and advice was given regarding the creation of thousands more. In total, new plantings covering 584 hectares were supported, and business planning advice and/or grants were given to 144 businesses.

Following page: The Derwent Charcoal produced by Julian Grave
An evaluation of Forest Futures was undertaken for the funding partners by PACEC consultants. The summary findings – which include a survey of direct and indirect beneficiaries – are outlined below.

It is estimated that 100 local jobs were supported, rising to 145 jobs across the UK as a whole. This impact has occurred during a period that has seen employment across Cumbria fall by 1.5 per cent. The gross cost per job supported has been estimated at approx. £11,632. In total, 453 training days were delivered and eight training events were undertaken. An additional 19 other courses were undertaken providing 297 training places.

Out of a total of 279 business development enquiries, 144 received advice and/or a grant. Under business development, 79 per cent of beneficiaries advanced their businesses and 10 per cent started a new business. When surveyed, the beneficiaries of Forest Futures rated the accessibility and quality of the programme highly. More than half said that their expectations had been met and a third of those surveyed said that the programme had a ‘high impact’ on their business.

The woodland creation schemes supported by Forest Futures scored highly against biodiversity criteria, with 70 per cent of the schemes achieving maximum points under the Cumbria Woodlands Habitat Action Plans targets.

During the programme, it is estimated that a total of 3,215 tonnes of carbon was sequestered through woodland schemes. Under woodland management, Forest Futures led to the development of 1,370 hectares of existing woodland. Under woodland creation, 584 hectares was planted of which 87 per cent was broadleaved woodland.
The outcomes and learning that have been gained through the Forest Futures programme could be of pivotal importance in helping to deliver the Northwest Regional Economic Strategy (which was revised in 2006) and in preparing the Regional Implementation Programme (RIP) for the next Rural Development Programme for England, due to start in 2007 and run through to 2013.

The Rural Development Programme for England

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) will be the main delivery route for European Commission funds targeted at rural areas and Defra will be charged with overseeing the programme in partnership with three delivery partners: Natural England, the Forestry Commission and Regional Development Agencies. Importantly, this is the very same partnership that conceived, supported and managed the delivery of the Forest Futures programme and RDPE could represent a future funding stream for landowners and forest businesses.

The timeline for the production of Regional Implementation Plans (RIPs) for the RDP has already started, even though the overall level of funding to be allocated has yet to be confirmed following negotiations between the EU and member states. In summary, the RIP documents will be tasked with identifying regional priorities and how resources will be targeted at these resources, as well as a host of other factors including communications. The RIPs will also identify the lead agencies for a series of ‘Axis’ areas. These are as follows:

**Axis one:** Improving the competitiveness of the farming and forestry sectors

**Lead:** Regional Development Agencies
**Axis two**: Improving the environment and the countryside  
**Lead**: Natural England and the Forestry Commission

**Axis three**: Rural quality of life and diversification of the rural economy  
**Lead**: Regional Development Agencies

A fourth axis - following a ‘Leader’ approach - is also in the programme.

The Forest Futures programme included a significant number of environmental outputs and scored highly in terms of biodiversity, but it is under axis one and axis three above, to be led in the Northwest by the Regional Development Agency, that the outcomes of the Forest Futures programme offer the greatest level of relevance and potential.

Just a few of the factors and themes emerging from Forest Futures make it of relevance in the preparation of the Northwest’s RIP. These include:

**Accessibility**: a recurring theme throughout the Forest Futures programme was providing accessibility to previously inaccessible or unmanaged areas of woodland. In some cases this accessibility was focused in geographical areas of significant social need.

**Sustainability**: as the case studies above show, the programme has resulted in an excellent fusion of economic, social and environmental outcomes that help deliver a better quality of life.

**Networks and additionality**: the programme has stimulated networks of small clusters – e.g. sawmills or tea shops – to exchange good practice and increase profitability.
Value for money: the Forest Futures approach has delivered significant outputs for modest inputs, scoring competitively on cost per hectare planted and per job supported.

Justification: the programme’s intervention points were well judged and placed where there was a market failure or, more importantly, significant economic gain to be won.

Targeting: the programme has succeeded in delivering well-targeted support where it can leverage the greatest economic benefit.

Innovation and added value: the high levels of entrepreneurialism unlocked through Forest Futures offer a first class template for future support and in many cases saw innovation leading to high levels of value added. In particular, the programme saw significant value added to natural capital assets and, in some cases, from waste streams such as woodland thinnings or tree surgery.

Skills and employment: many of the projects supported by Forest Futures managed to achieve the critical mass required to become employment and training opportunities.

The Northwest Regional Economic Strategy

Revised in 2006, the Northwest Regional Economic Strategy (RES) is described as the ‘blueprint’ for the sustainable economic growth of England’s Northwest and, both in spirit and detail, it has a significant level of synergy and strategic ‘fit’ with Forest Futures. The RES sets out three main drivers for improved economic performance: improving productivity and growing the market; growing the size and capability of

Following page: Woodworking tools in the Frost workshop
the workforce; and creating the right conditions for sustainable growth and private sector investment.

Each of these drivers can be seen to be addressed through the Forest Futures programme, whether it be the high value added through a furniture business developing into a fully-fledged sawmilling operation and increasing its employees by over 50 per cent, or a tourism business creating supply chain and employment opportunities in an area of significant deprivation but high landscape value.

The Forest Futures programme could be said to meet a number of other key priorities and ‘transformational actions’ identified in the RES. Just a few are identified here:

- High levels of enterprise and productivity but with a low level of carbon emissions.
- Sectoral leadership and the sharing of excellence.
- The utilisation of key growth assets - i.e. the Lake District and Rural Economy.
- Delivery against action 117: “Implement the Regional Forestry Framework.”
- The regeneration of the West Cumbrian economy.
Developing the economic benefit of the region’s natural environment.

Investing in green space and a high quality environment.

Cluster programmes in priority sectors to develop higher value activity and improve productivity.

The delivery of employability activities and a reduction in the number of people on Incapacity Benefit.

The development and implementation of an integrated economic plan for West Cumbria.

The encouraging of employment creation in or near deprived areas.

Achieving a strategic ‘fit’ with the RES is important, but even more importantly, did the Forest Futures programme help to deliver against the kind of targets set out in the RES? The table overleaf assesses the programme against the headline targets.
## Appendix:
### Summary of strategic regional impact

### England Rural Development Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forest Futures Case Study</th>
<th>Likely ERDP Axis Funding Stream</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carr’s Fishing Cabin</td>
<td>Potentially elements from Axis 1, 2 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny Frost’s Sawmill and furniture making</td>
<td>Axis 1 &amp; Axis 2 for the new woodlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplin Bruce – Low Bridge End Farm</td>
<td>Axis 2 for woodlands element &amp; 3 for tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherby Estate – Longtown</td>
<td>Axis 2 woodland management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSPB Geltsdale</td>
<td>Axis 2 woodland creation possible Axis 3 tourism for houses conversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingrigg Livery Stables</td>
<td>Axis 1 for stables and 2 for woodlands management – rides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplin-Bruce – forestry business</td>
<td>Axis 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dervent Charcoal</td>
<td>Axis 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt Jardine – Cabinet Maker</td>
<td>Axis 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Head Sculpture Valley</td>
<td>Axis 1 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RES Target</td>
<td>Did Forest Futures help to deliver this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve growth in economic output above the average for England.</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create 150,000 new jobs, 80,000 of which should be in knowledge-based occupations.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise the company formation rate to 21,000 per year.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the number of people with no qualifications by 80,000 and ensure that no district has more than 29% of people with no qualifications.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of graduates in the workforce by 120,000.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of people in the workforce by 83,000 and ensure no district has an employment rate lower than 68%.</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the number of areas which are categorised in the worst 5% nationally in terms of deprivation.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce CO$_2$ emissions per £ of economic output.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix:
Further information

p.5 Robert Carr, Shank
Wood Log Cabin (6)
www.fishinghideaway.co.uk

p.7 Alexander Hampton,
Cumbrian Cabins
www.cumbriancabins.com

p.10 Danny Frost,
Lowmoor Farm (1)
www.dannyfrost.co.uk

p.15 Sarah and Graham
Chaplin-Brice (4)
www.campingbarn.com

p.22 Sue Wrennall,
Kingrigg Farm (2)
www.kingrigg.co.uk

p.25 Julian Grave,
Derwent Charcoal
& Tree Services (3)
www.derwentcharcoal.co.uk

p.28 Matthew Jardine,
The View (5)
www.mjcabinetmakers.co.uk

p.33 Jonathan & Bernadette
Stamper, High Head
Sculpture Valley
www.highheadsculpturevalley.co.uk

Cumbria Vision
www.cumbriavision.co.uk

Edward Mills & Neville Elstone
Cumbria Woodlands
www.cumbriawoodlands.co.uk

Forestry Commission
Northwest Regional Office
Peil Wyke, Bassenthwaite
Lake, Cockermouth,
Cumbria CA13 9YG
nwe.peilwyke@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
www.forestry.gov.uk

Northwest Regional
Development Agency
www.nwda.co.uk

West Cumbria
Development Agency
www.wcda.co.uk