

# Hansel Expectant Forester and Gretel Potential Forester

By The Sisters Grimm

Once upon a time there lived a poor but honest forester with two children called Hansel Expectant Forester and Gretel Potential Forester.

Being an honest man who cared deeply about environmental sustainability, the forester would spend his days cutting biofuel for local villagers who wanted to be carbon neutral (interestingly not as many as said they wanted to be, but that's another story!). All the while, the good forester maintained biodiversity, protecting water quality and providing low carbon intensity building products!

Near the forest lived a less than industrious regulatory witch. The villagers were happy to have her and willingly laboured to keep her in comfort, supposing her to be a white witch. As I am sure you know white witches work industriously on complex spells to protect and enhance the natural world in a timely manner. The witch in our story didn't. As a result of the misguided support of the local villagers the witch was able to afford a fine gingerbread house with a sweet icing roof over her head. With little else to do, she would spend her days at the many local cappuccino carts that sprang up around her in response to her indulgence.

The villagers regularly grumbled that they didn't have the time and money to loiter for hours drinking trendy coffee. "But without a regulatory witch watching over us, the natural inclination will be for individuals to exploit nature to the detriment of us all" the villagers reasoned. "Paying to keep a regulatory witch is hard but necessary for future generations, particularly if we want to attain the nirvana of carbon neutrality".

True mastery of the spells needed to make the real world sustainable requires hard work and regulatory courage, something the witch was only vaguely aware of. Collecting and analysing the information needed to know where and what quantity of pixie dust to apply requires time and diligence and, if truth be told, a sharper intelligence than she possessed. She found it much easier to sit around surrounded by the sweet things in life and with her feet in warm fur-lined Wellingtons. When she did leave home, it was usually to some exotic destination like Prague, Marrakech or Copenhagen. She told the villagers who had to pay for her broom tickets that she was hunting for the secret ingredients needed for sustainability. Mostly she just went to talk with witches from other villages and drink coffee in different places.

The result of her less than industrious ways was that the natural world started to go bad. Unpleasant algae appeared in waterways where they had never been before.

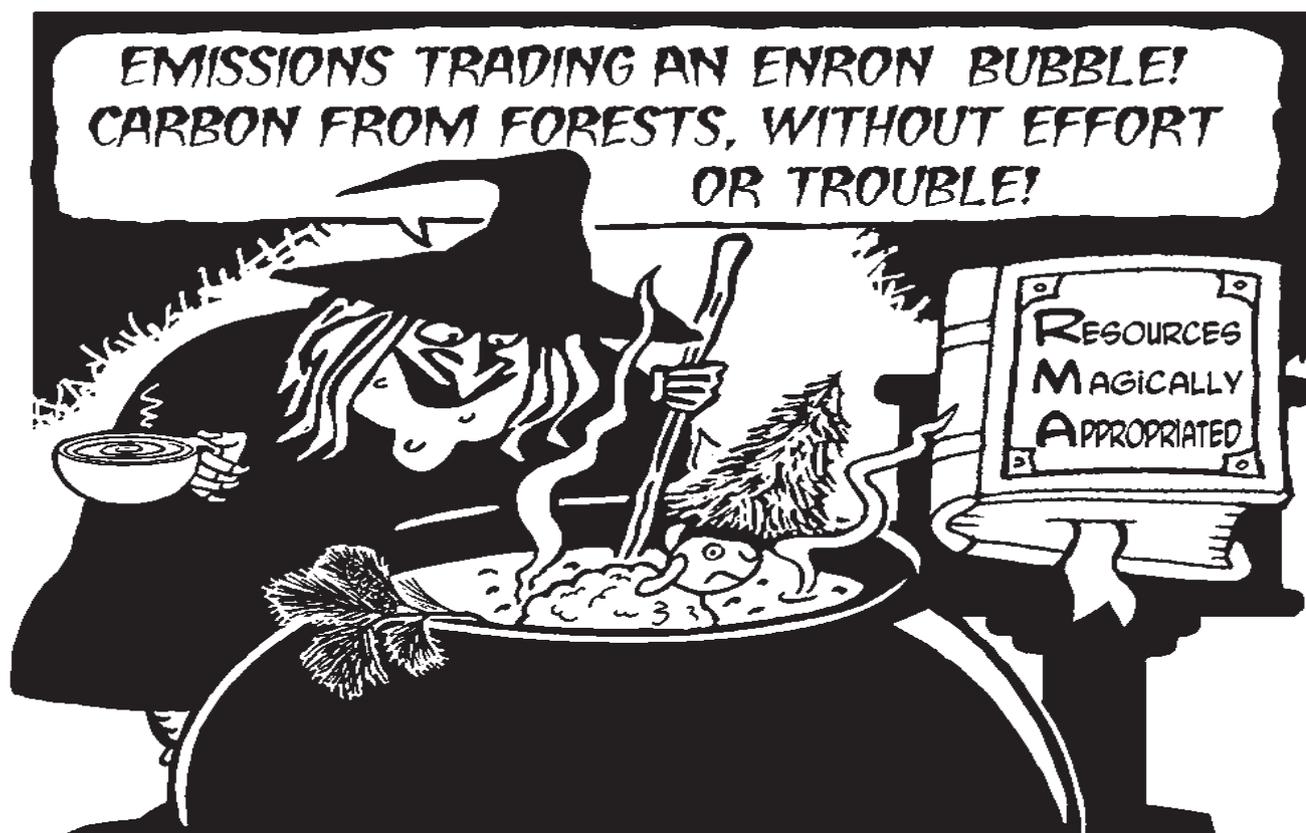
Biodiversity disappeared from the landscape to the point that unicorns and manticores became extinct. Erosion scars appeared in places where once dragons had hunted and rivers became clogged and prone to flooding the nests of phoenixes.

Eventually the regulatory witch decided she couldn't ignore the grumbling of the villagers any longer. She thought to herself "The peasants are angry. It is only a matter of time before they would rise up in anger. I could get burned on an electoral bonfire or face a cut to my supply of gingerbread." It was motivation to do something, but being less than industrious, and being warm and cosy with her feet firmly planted in her prized fur-lined Wellingtons, she looked for the path of least resistance.

"Researching real solutions to the problems of sustainability is too hard, and collecting and spreading pixie dust in the right amounts is too much work" she moaned. "But somehow the forester seems to manage". She had noticed that forest lands weren't half as bad as other places. The water was still clean, there was biofuel aplenty and there were even rumours that a few unicorns remained in the more remote areas. "I should go and spread pixie dust to make the rest of the Kingdom more like a forest" she thought, "but that would require a huge effort and who wants to be poor like a forester even if he is sustainable? Worst of all, I would have to get out of my Wellingtons and into uncomfortable work boots. There must be an easier way".

She looked in her spell book, but most spells that might have addressed the problems were all very costly. "If I impose the actual costs of sustainability and carbon neutrality on the villages, if I make them liable for the adverse effects of their activities such that algae in the water is avoided, if I force them to maintain and enhance their properties for the benefit of dragons, manticores and other natural biodiversity, they may realise that regulatory magic is no substitute for money and hard work! Horror of horrors, they might discover a way to manage things themselves as some sort of generic permitted activity and get rid of me! But what to do...?"

Being less than industrious (have I mentioned that already?), the regulatory witch had on more than one occasion dabbled in black magic. The downsides of regulatory black magic are that often the outcomes can't always be predicted, and there is almost always a price to pay in the form of cost and injury to the innocent. "The last time I did this was when the foreshore was in crisis" the witch said. "A few people screamed about the resulting injustice, but thankfully most of the villagers pretended not to notice so they could keep boating for free; so here goes!"



Checking to make sure no-one was watching, she got her black magic spell book from its hiding place under the bed. And there on the very first page she found what she was looking for. "A Notional Presumption Spell (NPS) followed by a Nasty Expropriation Spell (NES) will do the trick" she thought. "No analysis required, no time consuming explanations, just a few drops of foresters' income, a dash or two of investor uncertainty and a couple of heads of the foresters' children, expectation and potential! Easy!" She got her legislative cauldron out and started to brew.

First she cast an NPS spell that said that the foresters' presumption of future benefits from his forest could not include whatever the regulatory witch decided they didn't. (For those interested in the dark arts, a recipe for this spell can be found in Warlock Heller's seminal work "Catch 22".) There was a bit of screaming and grinding as the spell clashed with an oath [section 3045 (a) (xxxv)] the witch had made under The Treaty of Witches. She quickly threw her commercial-in-confidence cloak over the cauldron suppressing the noise and held her breath. Nobody important noticed.

Then there were a few sparks and some unexpected heat as the spell collided with a spell she had caste a few years earlier determining that forestry rentals be calculated on the basis of a land valuation as if there was no constraint on future uses of the foresters land. She quickly opened a window and fanned the acrid stench of hypocrisy away before villagers (other than the forester and his children) noticed.

Next she cast her NES spell. As set out in the dark magic spell book she cleared her head of all thoughts of a simple carbon tax on fossil fuel as the epitome of logic and polluter pays. Then she repeated over and over and over and over the magic words, "Emissions Trading Scheme". Before you could say 'Governor General's signature', she owned the carbon in the foresters' trees! "All I need now is the heads of Hansel Expectation and Gretel Potential Forester and my work is done! But how to lure them away...? I know! The forester is poor! His children are probably starving. A few crumbs of tasty-sounding carbon should do the trick!"

That night she laid her trap. She sprinkled 39 crumbs of tasty carbon along a path she knew the foresters' children took to a public recreation area the forester had provided as a thoughtful gesture for use by all the villagers children, She made a diversion in the track heading toward her Gingerbread House and put up a sign saying 'this way to endless riches and free gingerbread'. "Aren't I a clever witch" she thought to herself. "Cast a spell to expropriate the forester's wealth from him. Then bait a trap for his children with a few of his own carbon crumbs!!!"

And there we must leave the story!

Will the foresters' children take the bait and so remove the fair Expectation and growing Potential from forestry? Who knows. Anything could happen! This is a fairy story after all!!