

Agenda Item 6

20th November 2009

WNC 26.09

STRATEGIC VISION FOR THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF FC WALES

Purpose

1. To seek the Committee's initial views and advice on whether we need to develop a new strategic vision for the future direction of FC Wales.

Principles

2. Whilst good work continues across the business to meet our performance targets and find greater efficiencies, I suggest we are likely to face diminishing returns from a delivery model that is essentially unchanged for the last 10 years.
3. The scale of challenge ahead requires us to stand back and revisit our business model from first principles:
 - A commitment to providing added value from FC involvement in delivery and support services;
 - A preparedness to withdraw from existing functions and engage others at the level set by Ministerial tests on value for money, vires and safeguarding public benefits;
 - Minimising the level of capital assets, and net expenditure to achieve the above.

Implications for the Assembly Government Woodland Estate

4. Some of the above principles have been incorporated into the review to determine the size, location and rationale for the public forest estate in Wales.
5. The review should result in a commitment to regularly test alternative delivery models. This discipline would raise standards across the sector, minimise public expenditure and/or enable FC resources to be re-deployed into new more complex policy areas where we can add value.

Implications for Grants and Regulation

6. We have an important role to play in setting standards, such as the UK Forestry Standard and Carbon Projects. Further integration with WAG agri-environment schemes and a greater role for woodlands in a new Rural Development Regulation opens up questions over our relatively intensive processes for purchasing public benefits from woodland owners. We should also be open to exploring ways of

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discharging some of our regulatory functions by seeking assurance from other regulators.

Benefits

7. If new models satisfy Ministerial tests and have a good market response, we would be in a position to re-deploy energy and resources to facilitate the new models necessary to deliver the woodland climate change agenda and other priorities set by WAG.
8. This would represent a positive vision for Ministers, staff and stakeholders about our future role:
 - leading change, not being pushed;
 - pump priming new ways of using the market and other delivery vehicles to deliver policy priorities;
 - moving away from a relatively deep and narrow approach to delivery, to one that is broader and lighter, focussing more on standards, leadership, facilitation and support.

Next Steps

9. Subject to the Committee's views, I plan to engage the FC Wales Management Board and other colleagues to develop our thinking and strategic management.

Recommendation

10. The National Committee is asked to comment on the above proposal.

Trefor Owen
Director Wales
10 November 2009