

The long-term role of the Forestry Commission England Public Forest Estate:

South East England consultation event.

The aim of the event was to stimulate discussion on the issues raised by the consultation, allow people to hear the views of others and to encourage people to submit a written response to the consultation.

Details

Date of meeting: 9 July 2009

Location: Alice Holt Surrey

Number attending: 45

Chair: Alan Betts, Forestry Commission

Forestry Commission England National Committee attendee(s): Laura Jones

Study Working Group attendee(s):

Key points raised during whole meeting discussion

- What existing guidance was there available to explain the present way in which the Public Forest Estate sets its priorities? This would help inform comments about the future. Answer was to refer to the England Trees, Woods and Forests Delivery Plan, references in the consultation document.
- Some concern about the accuracy of the carbon storage figures given for woodland. Some concern that this might be a back door route to ensure the prominence of conifers in the future estate.
- Questions were posed on the use of funds raised from land sales.
- The role of the Public Forest Estate in the mitigation of development within protected land was raised
- Concern that horse riding was not given special consideration as a use of woodland.
- Opinion that Local Access Forums should have been especially targeted for the consultation.
- Considerable interest in figures that show that many more people live within 10km of the Public Forest Estate as a result of comparatively small land acquisitions.
- Fairly widespread view that the overall cost of running the Estate provided exceptional value for money, some expressing the view that the estate should be increased.

Public Forest Estate consultation

Comment from Chair

The level of debate was high. Many attendees were unaware of the range of responsibilities and activities on the Public Forest Estate. Although people accept that the study is about the whole Public Forest Estate, it is clearly difficult for many to relate to this scale and thus quite local issues were understandably raised.

Note taker: Alan Betts

Date notes finalised: 15 July 2009

To find out more go to www.forestry.gov.uk/england-estatestudy or contact:

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