

**FOREST HOLIDAYS/CAMPING IN THE FOREST NEW SITE APPROVALS
FOREST HOLIDAYS BOARD APPOINTMENT**

Purpose

1. To clarify the approval process for new site developments by Forest Holidays and Camping in the Forest and update the Committee on the appointment of the Forestry Commission nominated Director on the Board of Forest Holidays.

Background

2. Whilst the National Committee has been appraised of and supported all planned new developments by Forest Holidays, some uncertainty has arisen over the internal conduct of the formal approval process for new developments and redevelopment of existing sites. This paper seeks to clarify the position.
3. The National Committee, on behalf of the Forestry Commissioners, exercises oversight over the relationship between Forestry Commission England and Forest Holidays.
4. The Committee has considered Forest Holidays issues and development plans on a number of recent occasions, and expressed its support for the relationship and the forward development programme:
 - September 2013 – The operation and business relationships between the Forestry Commission and Forest Holidays/Camping in the Forestry Commission
 - April 2014 – A presentation by Forest Holidays, when the Committee was able to question Richard Palmer, Forest Holidays Development Director.
 - June 2014 – Forest Holidays Forward Look where it was confirmed that Delemere, Fineshade and Houghton were continuing to be progressed and a three further sites in England were expected to be brought forward in the coming year.
5. Formal approval for the Forestry Commission to support any particular Forest Holidays or Camping in the Forest site development plan in England is given on behalf of the Commissioners by the Chief Executive Forest Enterprise England, acting in accordance with the Policy Guidance Note (PGN) on the procedures for

Non Forestry Developments. It is noted that the requirement for Defra approval set out in the PGN does not apply to recreational developments, including Forest Holidays and Camping in the Forest, because of the explicit powers given to the Commissioners in the Countryside Act 1968 and the Regulatory Reform (Forestry) Order 2006.

6. It is also noted that the redevelopment of existing sites, including the camping and caravanning sites retained by Forest Holidays when the business was restructured in 2012 to create the separate businesses, was anticipated under the agreements put in place at that time. The full approval process required for new locations does not apply to these cases. In this instance the development plans are reviewed and approved by the Chief Executive Forest Enterprise.
7. Going forward, the National Committee will continue to be advised of potential new major recreation development sites at an early stage in the process so that it has an opportunity to comment. In addition, the creation of the new Forest Enterprise England Strategy Board will provide an appropriate strategic forum for an assessment to be made as to whether or not a proposed new development fits in with the strategic direction for the Public Forest Estate. The Chief Executive will take full account of the views of both boards in discussing any development plans with Forest Holidays or Camping in the Forest and determining, with the advice of Forestry Commission staff as set out in the PGN, whether or not they should be supported.
8. In the interests of transparency, the Chief Executive Forest Enterprise England has directed the Head of Estates to reassess the due diligence process followed by the Commission in relation to Forest Holidays development proposals and provide further advice on any improvements to processes which would support the effective management of the Commission's role as set out in the respective Framework Agreements with Forest Holidays and Camping in the Forest. The findings of this review will be reported to this Committee later in the year.

Forest Holidays Board Member

9. Dr Bob McIntosh the current Forestry Commission nominated Director of Forest Holidays has recently retired from the Forestry Commission. The Commissioners notified Dr McIntosh on 31 March that they would be conducting a formal selection process for the appointment of the Forestry Commission nominated Director. This process, which will be determined by a sub-committee of the Commissioners, is expected to take up to six months and Dr McIntosh's appointment has been formalised for the interim period.

Recommendations

10. The National Committee is invited to note and confirm their agreement to the approval process for major recreation development on the Public Forest Estate, including Forest Holidays/Camping in the Forest as set out above.
11. The National Committee is invited to note the Commissioners' decision to establish a formal selection process for the Forestry Commission nominated Director of Forest Holidays.

Richard Barker
Executive Office
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