

FORESTRY REGULATION TASK FORCE

Background

- In January 2011 MoS Jim Paice MP commissioned the Forestry Regulation Task Force's report into the Regulatory Landscape for the Forestry Sector in England.
- The Task Force consists of Chair Chris Starr, Stuart Goodall (Confor), Mike Seville (CLA), Gordon Pfetscher (Woodland Trust), George McRobbie (Till Hill), John Wilding (Clinton Devon Estates), John Morris (Small Woods Association).
- This report containing the Task Force's recommendations was published on 27 October 2011.

Key messages

- Please note that this early thinking is being shared with you in your capacity as Applicants Focus Group members and should not be disseminated wider as it gives an insight to ongoing discussions and certainly should not be taken as Government's final position.
- There are a number of significant recommendations where the Government will communicate that it can make early progress, for example:
 - **Earned Recognition.** This is consistent with the approach taken by Better Regulation Executive and in the Macdonald review of Farming Regulation.
 - **Long term management plans and using the UK Forestry Standard to inform these.** A revised UKFS will be launched on 3 November 2011 this year and FC and Defra are glad the Task Force was able to recognise its importance.
 - **End to end process review of grants.** Forestry Commission will undertake this, subject to future direction of the existing grants scheme.
 - **Make forms available electronically.** Forestry Commission will do this.
 - **Survey of owners of unmanaged woodland so as to understand their aspirations.**
 - **Civil Sanctions.** Forestry Commission will explore the feasibility of adopting civil sanctions (eg a Monetary Penalty or Restoration Notice).
 - The Forestry Commission will elevate the **prominence of how to report illegal felling** on its website.
- The Government will respond to all recommendations more fully early in the New Year.
- Defra are concerned that the recommendation to remove Forestry Sector from the remit of the Gangmasters Licensing Act falls within the remit of other Reviews (the red tape challenge focus on employment law and BIS's employment law review). This may mean a delay in looking at this recommendation until the outcome of those reviews. The Forestry Regulation Task Force's report may be used as evidence for those reviews.

- As a result of recent debates on the draft National Planning Policy Framework's 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', there are sensitivities around the recommendation concerning planning policy.

Facts and Figures

- 72 written responses received from Forestry stakeholders
- Over 500 individual ideas considered by the Task Force
- 15 Key Recommendations
- 26 Recommendations
- 14 Process recommendations
- 10 Recommendations which the Government (Defra and FC) agree to progress early after the day of publication

Timetable

- Report publication on 27 October 2011 – the report now appears on FC website together with press release from Task Force Chair
- 28 October – MoS wrote to Ministerial colleagues in Scotland and Wales alerting them to the report in order that they may consider if they wish any recommendations which are devolved matters and alerting them to recommendations which are reserved matters.
- Meeting between Minister, Chair of Task Force and Chair of Panel on 1 November 2011 where decision was taken that all recommendations will be responded to by end January 2012. At that meeting MoS commissioned a further piece of work from Chris Starr to give further detail on the Woodland Partnership concept.
- After three-way meeting between MoS, Chair of Task Force and Chair of Panel, Defra will make a further statement on which recommendations can be taken forward immediately and which will be responded to within the standard 12 week timeframe.
- RAC Chairs and Commissioners meeting on 1 November communicated Task Force recommendations and findings

Next Steps

- Ensure FC England Resource is briefed and applied to influencing the Government's response which will be led by Defra.
- Work with Defra to assess impact and benefits of accepting recommendations
- Contribute to Government's response which will be due early 2012.

Sources of Further information

- For further information on Earned Recognition: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/better-regulation/docs/t/11-989-transforming-regulatory-enforcement-consultation.pdf>
- For further information on Civil Sanctions: <http://bis.gov.uk/Consultations/civil-sanctions-pilot>

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