

**If responding on behalf of an organisation please give its name**

THE ALICE HOLT COMMUNITY FORUM

**Does the draft document 'Towards a New Public Forest Estate management body' adequately reflect the conclusions of the government 'Government Forestry & Woodlands Policy Statement'? - If so in what way?**

We are concerned that the current proposals still retain excessive powers to Ministers to intervene in the PFE and that the degree of independence

contemplated in the Independent Panel's Report would not be achieved

We do not consider adequate powers are given to the Guardians to safeguard the PFE from Ministers. Guardians should be independently appointed and should not serve on the board of the new body (paragraphs 39-43).

We disagree with the focus proposed to be given to the new body to increase its commercial or trading income from the PFE, otherwise than through forestry operations. It is not clear what commercial activities are contemplated. Property and building development should not be a focus for the new body, including holiday village type ventures. Such operations are not, in our view, consistent with the proper maintenance of our forests.

**What further development is needed for the Management organisation?**

Each of the above issues needs to be re-addressed

**If not, what are your views on the proposed mission and objectives for the new organisation (see Annex A of the draft document)?**

We disagree with the focus proposed to be given to the new body to increase its commercial or trading income from the PFE, otherwise than through forestry operations.

**What are your views on how the new organisation could improve the financial sustainability of the Estate?**

We disagree with the focus proposed to be given to the new body to increase its commercial or trading income from the PFE, otherwise than through forestry operations. It is not clear what commercial activities are contemplated. Property and building development

should not be a focus for the new body, including holiday village type ventures. Such operations are not, in our view, consistent with the proper maintenance of our forests. We disagree with the proposal that the body should be expected to increase over time the proportion of its income raised through trading and other commercial activities (paragraph 26). We cannot see how the body could be expected to return to government dividends on trading income. (paragraph 28)

**What are your views on the significant assets and disposals arrangements set out in the document?**

We do not agree with the proposals for disposals of parts of the PFE (paragraphs 16-19, 47-52). We consider that all disposals including leases and licenses should require the consent of the Guardians and, in the case of significant disposals, the Secretary of State. We support the concept in the National Trust Acts that significant disposals would need a majority resolution in both Houses of Parliament.

**It will be necessary to give the new body a new name because Forestry Commission is established in law as a cross-border body. Do you have any ideas on a suitable name?**

Not answered

**What are your views on the arrangements proposed for the new organisation's accountability to Parliament?**

Not answered

**What are your views on the proposed Board's remit, size and composition?**

We dislike the proposal that the non- executive board members should be appointed by DEFRA ministers (paragraph 35).

**What are your views on the Guardians' remit, role, numbers and composition?**

We do not consider adequate powers are given to the Guardians to safeguard the PFE from Ministers. Guardians should be independently appointed and should not serve on the board of the new body (paragraphs 39-43).

We consider that all disposals including leases and licenses should require the consent of the Guardians

**What are the most important things to put in a public charter for the new organisation?**

Not answered

**Do you have any general comments that you believe would be of assistance in creating the new organisation?**

The Alice Holt Community Forum consists of representatives from each of the seven parish councils, communities and villages that surround Alice Holt Forest. Its members have considerable cumulative knowledge of Alice Holt Forest and the surrounding area. The objective of the Forum is to provide an efficient means whereby the Forestry Commission and the local community can exchange views on matters relating to Alice Holt Forest, both through regular meetings and informally, thereby informing the management of the Forest.

We are concerned that the current proposals still retain excessive powers to Ministers to intervene in the PFE and that the degree of independence

contemplated in the Independent Panel's Report would not be achieved.

We dislike the proposal that the non- executive board members should be appointed by DEFRA ministers (paragraph 35).

We dislike the proposed controls over government funding of the new body (paragraphs 26-28 and 33).

We do not consider adequate powers are given to the Guardians to safeguard the PFE from Ministers. Guardians should be independently appointed and should not serve on the board of the new body (paragraphs 39-43).

We disagree with the focus proposed to be given to the new body to increase its commercial or trading income from the PFE, otherwise than through forestry operations. It is not clear what commercial activities are contemplated. Property and building development should not be a focus for the new body, including holiday village type ventures. Such operations are not, in our view, consistent with

the proper maintenance of our forests. We disagree with the proposal that the body should be expected to increase over time the proportion of its income raised through trading and other commercial activities (paragraph 26). We cannot see how the body could be expected to return to government dividends on trading income. (paragraph 28)

We do not agree with the proposals for disposals of parts of the PFE (paragraphs 16-19, 47-52). We consider that all disposals including leases and licenses should require the consent of the Guardians and, in the case of significant disposals, the Secretary of State. We support the concept in the National Trust Acts that significant disposals would need a majority resolution in both Houses of Parliament.

The appointment of the Independent Panel was as a result of the huge public concern about the direction proposed for our forests by DEFRA. The current proposals do little to reduce that concern.

**The forestry functions review concluded that the current arrangements 'complicate governance and obscure a clearer "line of sight" between forestry and woodland policy and delivery'. What do you think should be done to address this?**

Not answered

**What more do you think should be done to improve the efficiency with which government's forestry functions are delivered?**

Not answered

**Would you like to make any other comments about the conclusions of the review of forestry functions in England, including on any impacts of the creation of the Public Forest Estate management body?**

Not answered

**Would you like to make any other comments at this early stage about how setting up the Public Forest Estate management body and advancing the conclusions of the review of forestry functions in England might affect: - Cross-boarder functions?**

Not answered

**Would you like to make any other comments at this early stage about how setting up the Public Forest Estate management body and advancing the conclusions of the review of forestry functions in England might affect: - Shared services?**

Not answered

**Would you like to make any other comments at this early stage about how setting up the Public Forest Estate management body and advancing the conclusions of the review of forestry functions in England might affect: - England's National Office**

Not answered

**Would you like to make any other comments about any aspect of this work?**

The appointment of the Independent Panel was as a result of the huge public concern about the direction proposed for our forests by DEFRA. The current proposals do little to reduce that concern.

**Response ID**

ANON-69TR-9X5S-E