



Confor
Promoting forestry and wood

Woodland Policy Enabling Programme – consultation on: “Towards a new public forest estate management body” and, “Review of Forestry Functions”.

Confor: Promoting forestry and wood welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on: *Towards a new public forest estate management body* and, the final report of the *Review of Forestry Functions*.

Confor is a membership organisation that promotes sustainable forestry and low-carbon businesses. Its strength is that it represents the whole supply chain, including nurseries, contractors, growers and professionals, sawmills, panel-board producers and wood supply businesses. Confor focuses on the core strategic issues that are vital to the success and sustainable future of individuals and businesses, but which they cannot tackle alone.

Confor has had sight of the response from the Institute of Chartered Foresters and supports the comments made.

Confor also has the support of the Timber Trade Federation in this response.

The following are Confor’s views on the papers:

“Towards a new public forest estate management body”:

- We welcome statements in Para 5 about ‘independent, entrepreneurial’ body operating ‘within a clear long-term remit’ – this reflects Confor’s position and we believe that it is vital if the body is to operate in line with the recommendations of the Panel;
- The new body will own and manage a vital resource for an important low-carbon forestry industry (x000 ha of commercial forestry). This is relevant for all parts of the sector – the grower who needs this to exist to help maintain the processing sector, the harvesting and transport businesses and the processors. It is vital that this resource is not eroded as it is required to support the sector for the future. If parts of that resource are not seen as compatible with the future direction of the PFE then they should be sold to the private sector, not destroyed. We need a safeguard for that built into any remit for the new body;
- It is vital that Confor is represented at least on the Guardians, if not also the PFE Board, to promote the breadth of industry interests;
- The Board should have as much operational independence as is possible. It must be able to plan long-term. There is a worry that a large number of Guardians from a wide-range of interests could stifle this operational freedom and enterprise.
- Care is required about Para 16 and the sentence that the new body would be a land-management body rather than just a forestry body. Forestry is its resource and where it has its strengths and what it is valued for. It is vitally important that forestry is seen as primary to its purpose.
- Under Para 33 and accountability, it is vital that the new body is subject to the same regulation by the regulatory arm of the FC as the private sector.
- In Annex A under Social Objectives, there should be an addition, “To inform and educate members of society as to the content and economic benefits of forests and to cultivate informed opinion”.

“Review of Forestry Functions”:

- We welcome 1.4.2 as strongly reflecting what Confor has lobbied for – we are glad that the Government is listening!



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- Care is required before making any changes accompanying the separation with the PFE – it is good that the need for further analysis is highlighted in 1.4.4. A future structure could be one where FS is a discrete function within the departmental structure (similar to the situation of FC Scotland). Confor can see real benefits in retaining a cross-border function with UKFS, statistics, plant health and Forest Research: effectively, Option 5 without the legislative change.

Caroline Harrison
Confor
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John White
Timber Trade Federation
22 September 2013