

3 February 2014

TOP 10 BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR ENGLAND 2014-15**Purpose**

1. To set out the Director's indicative top business priorities for 2014-15 and invite EEB's comments.

Recommendations

2. That the Board discusses the priorities set out in the paper, proposes any adjustments for an agreed version, and agrees to revisit these priorities throughout the year to take stock of progress and agree changes as necessary.

Background

3. This paper is not intended to duplicate either the Corporate Plan or detailed business plans, nor does it represent a comprehensive list of priority activities in FCE. It puts forward at a high level the Director's preliminary view of the top ten business priorities on which senior management's efforts should be focused for the year ahead – over and above business as usual. It is intended to form a key component of briefing for the incoming permanent Chair of the Commission.

The Top Ten

4. These proposed business priorities are not in order of importance:
 - 4.1. *Forestry legislation*. We must get this right – for PFEMO, for the rest of FC, for 25 years. Focus on: quality of instructions, resolution of policy issues, detailed scrutiny of the draft Bill, hands-on support to Ministers in the parliamentary process, continuous stakeholder management, and wider political dialogue at the appropriate time.
 - 4.2. *Staged development of FEE*. We must plan for a quiet day when PFEMO launches in April 2017 or 2018. We need a multi-year transition plan, which (without anticipating the will of Parliament) develops FEE into a more autonomous body. Focus on: a new framework document, a free-standing business plan, a new name, agreed corporate support requirements and transition processes, and staff buy-in and mobilisation.
 - 4.3. *Excellence in commercial and ecosystem services*. We must drive the PFEMO business case through Defra and HMT, and use it to win broad support for the legislation. This will require both a robust and adequately funded agreement on payments for ecosystem services, and a gainshare-based contract, grounded in

a well-evidenced commitment to enhanced commerciality and business performance. Focus on: the numbers and structure in the PES contract, a robust gainshare contract which both protects and incentivises the new organisation, improved commercial scenario planning, credible proposals for investing for long-run self-sufficiency, and marketing the business case externally.

- 4.4. *Redesigning Forest Services.* We must re-envision and redesign Forest Services to build a strong future on the foundations of the forestry functions review, the CAPD programme and the EU payments decision, and the government's prioritisation of tree health. Focus on: delivering the EU payments decision sensitively, promptly, and without net loss of budget, and on a new design for FS as government's forestry experts in England which is organisationally robust and motivates and attracts staff.
- 4.5. *Joint programme of policy development.* We must capitalise on the agreement to a joint FC-Defra policy programme to develop policy and drive change in a number of critical substantive areas over 2014-15. Focus on: forestry skills, squirrel management, deer management, open habitats policy, broadleaved policy, wildlife law and EPS, and see 4.6 and 4.7.
- 4.6. *Tree health alignment and focus.* We must optimise the increased resources and ministerial priority of tree health, and get ourselves really well organised and joined up. Focus on: making joint governance work, seamless working with the new CPHO, demonstrating operational results and vfm in specific management and prevention/eradication interventions, sorting out Observatree and public messaging, and connecting effectively across Britain (see 4.8).
- 4.7. *Natural England and NELMS.* We must broaden and deepen our engagement with Natural England (especially – but also RPA and EA) to create a stronger framework for local alignment and to make NELMS work for forests and woodlands. Focus on: strengthening management and local NE-FC networks, getting NELMS policy and operations right and firmly part of the FS toolbox, and building a catalogue of local collaborative network achievements.
- 4.8. *Supporting cross-border change.* We must play a constructive part as FCE in the WPEP cross-border project, ensuring that FCXB expertise is appropriately valued and tied into the future evolution of the Defra commissioning HQ. Focus on: participating actively in the XB project, and engaging with the Walport-Boyd review, the Defra Science Agencies Review, and the One Business Evidence and HQ workstreams to achieve a coherent business outcome.
- 4.9. *Supporting strategic change in shared services.* We must play a constructive part as FCE in shaping the future of FC shared services. Focus on: active participation in the Business Strategy Working Group, on clear articulation and open and detailed discussion of changing business requirements, and in particular on engaging with the development of a new IS Strategy.

4.10. *Living within the 15/16 settlement.* We must ensure that we can live within the 15/16 settlement – with a contingency for further centrally imposed cuts – without resorting to asset sales, redundancies, or abandonment of priority programmes. Focus on: early budget-holder led outline planning, finance-led scrutiny to avoid further unwelcome surprises, active headcount management, and income monitoring and maximisation.

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31st January 2014