

3 February 2014

FORESTRY COMMISSION EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT 2014/15

Purpose

1. To help EEB agree communications external engagement priorities and commitments for 2014-15.

Background

2. Effective advocacy and engagement by the Forestry's Commission's executives and non executives is crucial to our role as the principal source of forestry expertise.
3. With plant health remaining one of Defra's four top priorities and resilient woodlands an important component of a strong rural economy, we have a solid platform to engage from.
4. However we are entering a very sensitive pre-election period when the Government will want to focus its communications on economic recovery. We will therefore need to put extensive effort into our relations with Defra and carefully co-ordinate our external communications with the Government's wider news agenda.

Discussion

5. Looking ahead to 2014/15, we have a number of events already in our sights that we need to finalise our objectives for (see appendix 1). These include Forest Discovery Day on 30 March, the RFS conference in early May and APF 2014 in September.
6. While protection of trees and woodlands remains our number one priority and responsibility, we will need to carefully coordinate all engagement and communications with Defra and Fera, particularly in the run-up to publication of the final plant health strategy in March.
7. Initial proposals for event themes include:
 - 14 Feb Highgrove Forestry Meeting – skills and apprenticeships
 - 30 Mar Forest Discovery Day – increasing visits to woodlands
 - 1 May RFS Conference – tree health and resilience
 - 18-20 Sep APF Show – tree health and resilience

Recommendations

8. EEB is invited to endorse the engagement priorities, nominate exec and non exec leads and confirm or propose their roles for these events.
9. EEB is asked to consider any obvious major gaps in our engagement and agenda-setting, taking into account the sensitivities of a pre-election period. For example, should we convene a high level summit on resilience? Should we celebrate and promote forestry apprenticeships more actively? And is there more we should do to champion rural growth?

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29 January 2014