

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

Hampshire Countryside Access 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?**

Not Answered

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

Not Answered

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

The Social Objectives set out in Annex A are strongly supported by the Forum. Concern has been expressed however by the statement "Government investment in the new organisation would be predicated on the achievement of public benefits in areas such as access, ..." (paragraph 27). The Forum does not feel this sits alongside the overriding flavour that the organisation is to be primarily commercial.

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

Not Answered

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

Not Answered

**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?**

Not Answered

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

It is accepted by the Forum that this is not the right time to envisage new public expenditure, however concern was expressed that the protection of the public interest is left principally in the hands of a board of Guardians who are to give their time freely. The Forum does not believe this will be an effective mechanism in ensuring that public benefits such as access are sufficiently delivered.

**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 Forum welcomes the remit to "maintain the integrity" of the public forest estate (paragraph 17), but expressed concern that these words carry a flavour of fossilisation, and are so general as, in practice, to allow the new body to act largely as it wishes.

In the detailed proposals the Forum would wish this concept to be spelt out – for example, by a remit to maintain or increase year on year the area under ownership, both overall and in each district; to ensure that the area dedicated to public access on foot, by cycle, on horse, and by other means, increases year on year, both overall and in each district; and to ensure the integrity of paths used by the public is secured through regular maintenance.

**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?**

This response is submitted on behalf of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum, the statutory Local Access Forum for Hampshire (excluding the New Forest and South Downs), Southampton and Portsmouth. It comprises members of the public representing those who manage access (e.g. farmers, estate managers, 'public' landowners), those who use that access (e.g. walkers, cyclists, horse riders), or have related interests (e.g. conservation, transport). The role of the Forum is to provide balanced advice on countryside recreation matters to the County Council, District Councils and other organisations.

**Response ID**