



INTRODUCTION TO FORESTRY COMMISSION

The Forestry Commission is seeking to recruit a Non-executive Forestry Commissioner (England).

Background

The Forestry Commission is a statutory body and non-Ministerial Government Department with responsibility for forestry throughout England and Scotland. Forestry Commission England and Forestry Commission Scotland report directly to their appropriate Minister, providing advice on policy and implementing that policy within the relevant country.

The Board of Commissioners consists of a Chair and up to ten other Forestry Commissioners, who are appointed by The Queen on the recommendation of Ministers. The responsibilities and powers of the Forestry Commissioners are derived mainly from the Forestry Act 1967. Their work in the countries is delegated to the National Committees.

In England, the National Committee oversees the work of FC England which is funded by the Westminster Parliament and directed by Defra Ministers. It works with Defra to deliver the England Forestry Strategy, and it also contributes to many aspects of wider Westminster Government policy such as energy, environment and climate change, biodiversity, healthy living, rural transport, tourism and education.

Further Information

Further information about FC England, its organisation, programmes, initiatives, and other activities can be found at: www.forestry.gov.uk/england

Non-Executive Forestry Commissioners – General information about the role

Non-executive Commissioners are expected to participate actively in Board deliberations. Whether at Board meetings or in other forums, Non-executive Commissioners play a very important part, expressed in a number of different roles. As members of a Board of Commissioners, they are charged with making decisions that support the devolved forestry functions in each country. An important duty in this respect is to ensure that policies and practice take account of the relatively long timescale of forestry. Secondly, each Commissioner will bring to bear his or her particular expertise or experience, whether it is sustainable development, forestry and natural resource management, environmental issues such as renewable energy and climate change, business and commercial awareness or funding streams and mechanisms. Most non-executives also contribute their expertise by serving on or chairing other Committees at some point during their appointment, such as the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Thirdly, all Non-executive Commissioners have a responsibility to help ensure that forestry policies meet the particular needs of England and Scotland and, for Wales, through the contracted arrangements with Natural Resources Wales.

Exactly how Non-executive Commissioners can best perform their role will depend on each individual's experience, interests, and availability. However, the following are some pointers as to what is likely to be involved:

Knowledge of issues which are specific to England or Scotland

Non-executive Commissioners should have a good sense of what the Forestry Commission is trying to achieve in their particular country. Non-executives will wish to keep in close touch with the relevant Country Director. This will be achieved formally through membership of the National Committee and informally as appropriate. On taking up office they will wish to have an early discussion on how they might best use their time, contacts and experience to maximise the value of their contribution.

Representation

Non-executive Commissioners will have an important role in representing the Forestry Commission, whether on behalf of their Ministers, the Chair of the Forestry Commission, or in their own right. The Forestry Commission will inform Commissioners of events which they might wish to attend and will, where appropriate, provide briefing material. The Commissioner's role might involve on occasions delivering a speech or chairing seminars/workshops etc. Whilst they will want to bring to bear their own experience and relevant expertise, they will need, in speaking as Commissioners to the Press or non-Government organisations, to observe the rules which apply to Government departments on the public presentation of agreed policies, including the need to avoid comment of a party political nature.

Contacts

Forestry Commission staff will, in the course of their job, have contacts with members of other organisations at a similar, executive level. Non-executive Commissioners can add significantly to this network, bringing in and developing a supplementary layer of good contacts. It will be important for such contacts to be nurtured. Non-executive Commissioners should endeavour to assist Forestry Commission staff in developing the range and quality of their contacts.

Staff

Non-executive Commissioners are encouraged to take an active interest in the concerns and wellbeing of Forestry Commission staff. However, they do not, by definition, have an executive role and need to be wary of stepping over the line between taking an active interest in management's activities and actually getting involved in the management process itself. Country Directors have the formal accounting responsibility to their governments and Parliament, rather than to the Board of Commissioners. And, as with any large organisation, there are line management structures which require a formal reporting process; to cut across this can cause embarrassment and difficulties. Equally, Commissioners should be cautious about any attempts by members of staff to draw them into that process.

Professional Expertise

As well as participating in a formal induction process to the organisation and their role at the beginning of their appointment, Non-executive Commissioners will be expected to participate in training and development opportunities as recommended by central Government. This will involve participation in training courses on board member skills and development and the Non-Executive Development initiative.

Conduct

The Non-executive Commissioner is expected to observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity, and objectivity in relation to stewardship of public funds and management of the Forestry Commission. Appointees should not use information gained in the course of this appointment for personal gain or to promote other interests. The Non-executive Commissioner is expected to demonstrate a commitment to, and an understanding of, the value and importance of the principles of public service (please see Annex A, The Seven Principles of Public Life).

Assessment

Non-executive Commissioners' performance will be formally assessed on an annual basis by the Chair of the Forestry Commission and/or the Chair of the Country National Committee.

Terms and Conditions

Period of appointment

Appointment for this vacancy will be for three years.

Board working methods and procedures

As forestry is a devolved matter, we are accountable to the administrations in England and Scotland and work with them to ensure that forestry contributes to wider Government policies. The Board has delegated its work in each of the countries to National Committees and the country non-executives are members of the relevant National Committee. National Committees currently meet at least six times each year and are chaired by one of the Non-executive Commissioners.

The Board of Commissioners is made up of a Chair and up to ten members. It currently meets four times each year in March, June, September, and December with additional meetings called as necessary. Two of the meetings each year are usually held in Edinburgh and London, with England and Scotland hosting the other two meetings.

The appointee will be expected to spend approximately 28 days per annum on Forestry Commission business; this includes time preparing for meetings and travelling time.

Availability

It is anticipated that the successful candidates will take up post in June 2016.

Qualifications

Candidates may come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences and a variety of age groups. No specific academic or professional qualifications are specified.

Remuneration

The current remuneration is £11,334 with an expected time commitment of approximately 28 days per year. Reasonable travel expenses are also paid.

This appointment is non-pensionable.

Appointments are made on merit, following a fair and open process and these appointments are regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.



THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

These principles apply to all aspects of public life. The Committee has set them out for the benefit of all who serve the public in any way.