

16 June 2016

## Forestry Commission Centenary Year 2019 – High Level Planning Proposals

### Purpose

To set out some ideas about how we should mark and celebrate the centenary of the Forestry Commission with a series of events and activities inspired by both past achievements and future ambitions.

### Background/Introduction

The Forestry Commission will have been in existence for 100 years in 2019. This will be a unique opportunity for the organisation, its staff and stakeholders to celebrate the achievements of the last century and look forward to the next 100 years.

1. The Forestry Commission was established by an act of parliament in 1919 with the objective of promoting afforestation and the production and supply of timber as a response to shortages suffered during the 1914/1918 war. The first trees were planted at Eggesford, Devon on 8 December 1919.
2. The creation and development of the public forest estate and the development of private sector forestry has been an enormously exciting and an important element of the landscape. This has impacted on those that have lived and worked in the forests and those that visit our forests and woodlands. We should celebrate this.
3. The centenary is an opportunity to remember the original focus on timber production through to the sustainably managed multi-purpose forests that we have today. This year represents an opportunity for staff current and ex-staff to look across the inspiring history of 100 years of creating and working in the forests and forestry and the depth of contribution and dedication they represent. The educational opportunity this represents for the public and our staff of the FC history and impact is of significant value.
4. This change of purpose and emphasis represents a compelling story of evolution and response to changing needs and expectations for forests and woodlands and the people that have created and maintained them over the last century. It is also an opportunity to look forward to future expectations of what our woods and forests can deliver. Whilst the Forestry Commission has faced unprecedented change since devolution, which will continue beyond 2019, we should bring back together the constituent parts to celebrate 100 years.

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5. Whilst there is also change in England as Forest Services and Forest Enterprise move in different directions, there is nevertheless a huge amount of achievement and activity that we would wish to include in the celebrations.
6. Other opportunities and important dates for forestry exist in 2019 that can be tied into the centenary year, such as 20 years since the founding of both PEFC and UKWAS. Additionally, the Forestry Stewardship Council will have been around for 25 years in 2018. We recognise that there would be partners who would want and be beneficial to work with as a part of the programme of events, which we would explore once the high level proposals have been accepted.

### Details

7. This paper proposes a plan for an entire year of activities culminating in the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Commissioners' Meeting and first tree planting in December 2019. The celebration would focus on key areas of activity- encompassing arts, media, staff programmes, exhibitions, a commemorative church service, tree planting programmes, forestry conferences, and multi-site events across the estate and beyond.
8. The majority of the initial programme ideas and proposals are based in England at this stage. Further discussions taking into account the sensitivities of devolution are being held in Scotland and in the Welsh Government to explore ideas for those respective administrations. Despite these issues, there is a wish for recognition of the importance of the public forest estate by FR and in all three countries, along with the scale of landscape change and forest and woodland creation by, and supported by, the Forestry Commission.
9. The consequence of the change and devolution agenda has an impact for the proposed timing for detailed planning to be delayed for the devolved administrations and Forest Research until 2017/18.
10. This does represent a risk to planning as starting later will create a time pressure, however, this is unavoidable at this stage. As the planning for the programme for England will be well underway and developing, it does mean that potential areas for joint activity will not begin from a cold start. Devolved administrations and Forest Research could choose to contribute to a central resource to have a co-ordinated approach where appropriate for distinct areas that work across borders such as television programming, books, exhibitions, conferences etc.
11. This is very much a celebration of the last 100 years. However, it will be an important spring board for setting out the compelling vision for the importance of forestry and how critical the forestry agenda is to providing solutions to many of the important challenges and issues of the next 100 years. Particular challenges and issues include

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environmental resilience, climate change, water, air quality, soil stability, a low carbon future, the cooling of cities.

See Annex A for further details for England based ideas to explore further.

## Resource Implications

12. In the first stage a 3 year FTA that would run until the end of 2019 at PB4 level is proposed. This role would further define and scope out the programme for the year and act as a co-ordinating resource for activity.

So far this is resourced and focussed on an England based programme of activity, but it is envisaged that as the other countries and FR are more advanced in their considerations, there would be opportunity to encompass a co-ordinating role for any areas of joint activity and overarching programme that may wish to be undertaken.

13. At this early stage, the ideas suggested for further consideration have not used cost as a restricting factor, the range of activities presented in this paper would have varying costs associated with them but they do overall represent a significant cost to deliver them in a worthwhile and impactful way. A fund will be earmarked in Forestry Commission England specifically for centenary activity and we will look to utilising a variety of sources to supplement our contribution through grants and partnership opportunities wherever possible.

A programme will need to be refined that makes a value for money, quality programme. Those areas that can be delivered using external funding sources that may be available and delivered through collaboration and joint projects will also be looked at in more detail at the next stage.

## Risk Assessment

14. There are risks of not taking a proactive and well planned approach to this issue. This leaves us vulnerable to others setting the agenda and taking control of the centenary year. Not taking appropriate action would also represent a significant opportunity missed for engaging with the public on the importance of forestry and awareness of the impact and achievements of the last 100 years. It would also be a disappointment to staff if the Forestry Commission did not take appropriate action to recognise the work of the staff to deliver all the FC has done both on the PFE and for wider forestry issues.

## Communication Issues

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15. This programme proposal and development represents significant communication challenges and opportunities. It will be essential to have a coherent and well thought out approach to this year of centenary celebrations both internally and externally.

## Implementation and Evaluation Proposals

16. It is important, given the opportunity represented by the centenary and the year of wide ranging activities proposed, to understand what is wanted from the centenary programme and who the audiences are.

This will include measuring:

- The impact of this year of activity to understand if it increases engagement and awareness of forestry and woodland issues.
- Whether current and ex Forestry Commission staff have had year of celebration that they feel is appropriate and commensurate with the passion, commitment and dedication they have shown to the Forestry Commission, the PFE and to the wider forestry agenda.
- If wider stakeholders, including Government, feel engaged with the forestry agenda, and we feel that a positive year of activity is delivered that increases stakeholder and public understanding of the importance of forests, woodlands and their strong impact on the environment, ecosystem services, wider societal benefits, conservation etc.

## Recommendations and next steps

- That Commissioners agree the high level proposals for the range and type of activity in 2019.
- Agree the need for scoping, planning and developing in 2016 and 2017 to be ready to deliver in 2019.
- Recognise and accept the slight delay in the planning process for Scotland, Wales and FR as they seek clarity before they get scoping plans underway.
- That Commissioners have collective ownership of the centenary programme of activity for the Forestry Commission and give a steer on how they would like to engage with the governance of this programme.
- Set up a high level steering and working group in England, as well as a set of district/area level centenary groups.
- Appoint the centenary programme manager in England and agree whether this is the right grade at this early stage in defining the programme.
- Further develop the proposal ideas to return with a more detailed scoping, costed centenary programme for consideration at the December 2016 meeting.

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