

19 June 2014

## Business Sustainability

### 1. Purpose

To provide an update on the Forestry Commission's Environmental Management System and explain forthcoming changes.

### 2. Background/Introduction

In early 2007 the Forestry Commissioners received a presentation on the Greenerways Project, which was the starting point for the development of our Environmental Management System (EMS). Work on Greenerways had been ongoing since 2005 following the preparation of a sustainable development action plan by external consultants. Between 2007 and 2010 the EMS was fully developed and implemented by a small team across England, Scotland and Wales and was managed by Corporate and Forestry Support staff. In mid 2010, the first steps towards external accreditation of the EMS to ISO 14001:2004 were taken and by 2013 the whole of the EMS covering all FC buildings and sites was complete. It should be noted that Forest Research sites are within scope of the EMS and the external accreditation. With ISO 14001 accreditation sitting alongside Forest Certification this meant that the Forestry Commission became the first public forest management body in the world to achieve a total package of environmental certification for all of its business activities. This short paper explains how the EMS will be taken forward in the future.

### 3. Details

The development of an EMS has sat alongside work to improve the quality of data on environmental performance, relating to energy and water consumption; travel and waste management. Environmental performance has improved greatly over the years and with it our performance in other areas such as legal compliance. Two of the key areas where the EMS highlighted deficiencies were in waste and effluent management. Managing an effective EMS requires staff to understand the law insofar as it relates to environmental compliance; ensure staff are properly trained and carry out the legal responsibilities of the Forestry Commission. Internal audits monitor performance and where deficiencies arise these can be addressed. We have now ensured that all of our arrangements for waste management are legally compliant;

and that effluent disposal, for example from vehicle washing and foul water drainage are both permitted (where not exempted) and that discharges are monitored to ensure that they meet conditions. Prior to this the commission was not legally compliant at many sites, and one of the benefits of implementation of EMS has been to bring our estate management into full legal compliance, thus reducing risk of pollution and potential subsequent prosecution.

In 2013 the ISO 14001 accreditation was renewed, and at that point the requirements for centralised management input reduced. Once the EMS was fully implemented it required less developmental input, and it became easier to manage at country level, particularly once sites in Wales had ceased to be within scope. Early in 2014 it was agreed that the countries would take responsibility for ongoing management of the EMS, and that central support will cease in November 2014. The countries have further decided that they will manage their own EMS, and seek external accreditation independently of one another after that date.

#### 4. Resource Implications

A transition planning group has been established to support the change from a single EMS to two. Resources have been allocated in each country to effect the change, which will need to take place between June and October 2014, so that external assessors can change the status of the ISO 14001 accreditation in November. After that, each country will need to provide sufficient skilled resource to maintain the EMS to meet the standard requirements. Discussion is still ongoing as to how the two main Forest Research sites at Alice Holt and Northern Research Station fit into this process. Silvan House will be part of the Scottish accreditation.

#### 5. Risk Assessment

The main risk is associated with the lack of sufficiently skilled staff with experience of ISO 14001 assuming responsibility for the EMS after November 2014. The Transition Planning Group is addressing this. Loss of external accreditation would be a reputational matter, while failure to effectively maintain the EMS, with its emphasis on continual improvement and checks on legal compliance further risks slippage back towards situations where consents for effluent disposal and waste management issues become problematical, particularly as legislation changes.

#### 6. Communications Issues

Communications associated with the changing status of the EMS will be routinely managed by operational guidance and use of country intranet sites to ensure staff are aware of the management changes.

## 7. Implementation and Evaluation Proposals

Implementation is being handled at country level, managed by the Transition Planning Group.

## 8. Recommendation

Commissioners are invited to note the progress made with the EMS and external accreditation, and the changes which are being made to take EMS to its next phase.