

FORESTRY COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT ON STATISTICAL SURVEYS IN ENGLAND (COMPLIANCE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN)

PURPOSE

1. This report provides details of the statistical surveys carried out or authorised by the Forestry Commission in 2005-06, sets out the programme of surveys proposed for 2006-07, and presents outline plans for the following two years. **Approval is now sought for the survey programme for 2006-07 to proceed in England.**

BACKGROUND

2. UK Government Departments are required to provide Ministers with an annual “Compliance and Quality Improvement Plan” that reports on all the statistical surveys of businesses and local authorities carried out in the previous year and sets out the plans for the future.

3. This report covers regular and ad hoc statistical surveys of businesses and local authorities in England. Some of these surveys run at the same time in Wales and Scotland, so summary information for the 3 countries and GB totals are presented in an Annex.

RESPONSE BURDEN

4. The response burden is the estimated cost of the staff time required to fill in the survey questionnaires. The hourly rates supplied by the Survey Control Unit of ONS have been used. In calculating compliance costs, account is taken of expected response rates, with a minimal cost estimated for each non-respondent.

Outturn

5. For surveys that started in 2005-06, the total response burden was £23,080 for businesses in England and £0 for local authorities. Although two of the GB-wide ad hoc surveys planned for 2005-06 were postponed, the response burden was marginally higher than expected at the start of the year. The provision made for miscellaneous surveys was lower than required mainly due to the South West Forest and Forest Futures evaluation, which approached 700 businesses with an estimated response burden of £9,480. Also, the response rate for the Forest Industry Mapping Study (68%) was more than double the rate assumed before the study commenced, increasing the response burden for that survey to £10,940.

Plans

6. Approval is now sought for the programme of surveys to start in 2006-07, with an estimated response burden in England of £4,560. Of this £2,100 is for the three regular surveys for National Statistics, £1,080 for one ad hoc survey and £1,390 for miscellaneous surveys not yet identified.

7. Outline plans for England suggest an estimated response burden to businesses of £5,800 for 2007-08 and £6,000 for 2008-09.

REGULAR SURVEYS OF BUSINESSES

8. The Forestry Commission regularly carries out three voluntary postal surveys of businesses in Great Britain to gather information on sawmills, round fencing and private sector removals. Results from these surveys and other enquiries to wood processing industries are published in "UK Timber Statistics", "Forestry Facts & Figures", "Forestry Statistics" and other statistical publications available on the Forestry Commission Internet site. These statistical outputs became part of National Statistics from August 2001 and were included in a National Statistics Quality Review of forestry statistics, which was published in December 2002. Results from the surveys are also used in compiling UK statistical returns for international organisations.

9. In 2005/06, a total of 213 businesses in England were approached, with an estimated response burden of £2,010. It is planned that the three surveys will continue to run each year with little change. The response burden is estimated at £2,100 for 2006-07, £2,200 for 2007-08 and £2,300 for 2008-09.

AD HOC SURVEYS OF BUSINESSES

10. Three ad hoc surveys were run in England in 2005-06. As part of a study on Valuing Forest Recreation, surveys of local businesses were carried out to estimate the extent to which visitor spend remains in the local economy, to give LM3 local multipliers. A total of 78 businesses in England were approached for this survey, with 40 responses received, giving a total compliance cost of around £640. The Forest Industry Mapping Study approached 600 businesses and received responses from 405 of them, producing an estimated response burden of £10,940. Finally, the South West Forest and Forest Futures evaluation contacted 700 businesses, produced a response rate of 75% and an estimated response burden of £9,480. The planned GB surveys of Plant Health customers and National Inventory woodland owners were postponed.

11. Plans for surveys in England in 2006-07 include a GB-wide Plant Health Customer Survey approaching about 140 businesses in England, with a response burden of around £1,080. It is expected that other ad hoc surveys of businesses to run in England in 2006-07 will approach no more than 200 businesses with a total compliance cost of no more than £1,390.

12. The field survey for the next National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (NIWT) is now expected to commence in 2009, so any linked survey of woodland owners is now outside the scope of this 3-year plan. Other miscellaneous business surveys in England in 2007-08 and 2008-09 are expected to approach up to 500 businesses per year with an associated annual compliance cost of up to £3,700 per year.

SURVEYS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

13. No surveys of local authorities were carried out in 2005-06, and none are planned for 2006-07, 2007-08 or 2008-09.

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