

If responding on behalf of an organisation please give its name

Valesmoor Farm Livery Yard

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?

More than one way but two are the necessary independence of the new organisation and its ability to engage in innovative enterprises to maximise sustainability objectives involving social, economic and issues involving nature.

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

I think they are suitably expressed and satisfactorily comprehensive.

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

While it is a very contentious issue I feel that, over time, there will be a need to negotiate payment for car parking.

I also feel there are likely to be some woodland areas that can be at least partially developed to provide specifically targeted recreational opportunities, such as adventure courses involving challenging physical activities. These could be hired by individuals or groups.

Create a range of recreational/educational opportunities that can be sold to local or holidaying groups as part of their woodland experience, e.g. count and name the variety of plants growing in a specific area, name a variety of trees and do simple drawings of how their barks vary.

Where 'logable' wood could be made available this should be advertised and sold to members of the public.

'Woodland nurseries' developed by the new organisation should produce a surplus of stock that can be sold to landowners, both as new or replacement planting.

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

I am not confident there is sufficient protection to guard against publicly unwelcome decisions being made and acted upon before the Guardians can fulfil their role. It is not appropriate that their role should only be focused on outcomes. - For this reason more than one Guardian representative should be on the Board, and it should be obligatory for the Guardians and Defra to ensure this happens. - It may be that more than one of those Board members appointed by Defra can assume this representative role, but the Guardians will need to be reassured of this.

There is, therefore, a clear need to specify what 'the right skills and experience' means and to ensure that there are no opposing and partisan distinctions that lead to the Board becoming a dictatorship posing as a body of experts. This is a clear problem in the New Forest National Park in terms of what the NP Authority follows its own rigid interpretation of conservation and makes no genuine allowance for the opinions of the general public.

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? - Suitable new name or organisation?

'Public Forests England' is probably the best brief name.

What are your views on the arrangements proposed for the new organisation's accountability to Parliament? - Views on organisation's accountability to parliament?

The 'tiering' process, as written, is unsatisfactory. This whole reorganisation has come about because of public concern about governmental economic decision-making. It is, therefore, important

that the Board is accountable to the Guardians who represent the general public, and the Secretary of State because of the investment of public funding. - The judgement to 'sell-off' the public forest estate indicates that no government appointee should assess the accountability of another group of government appointees without direct consultation with the Guardians.

What are your views on the proposed Board's remit, size and composition? - Views on Board's remit, size and composition?

I believe I have largely covered this.

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

I believe I have largely covered this. - What is proposed is inadequate. - It means the Guardians will forever be forced to play a reactionary role, which means they will be fighting against decisions already reached without them being consulted, or or involved, in any way.

It is absolutely essential that the Guardians are represented on the Board and that any significant decisions are reached through discussion with them. Decisions made by Defra appointees cannot be trusted to meet the 'statutory remit and publicly stated objectives' to the satisfaction of the general public.

What are the most important things to put in a public charter for the new organisation? - Most important things for public charter?

The Board and the Guardians are responsible to the general public and, in meeting any sustainability aims relating to social, economic or nature objectives in relation to the Public Forest Estate, this responsibility takes precedence. - (It should always be remembered that Members of Parliament and civil servants are employed through the investment of public funds.)

Do you have any general comments that you believe would be of assistance in creating the new organisation? - General comments on new organisation?

Transparency should not relate to just financial matters. - Minutes of Board meetings should be publicly available, and it should be possible for the Guardians or other individuals or groups to present

their concerns to or cross-question the Board about any matters being discussed or decisions reached.

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?

As I am not part of the organisation it is difficult to make really constructive comments, but the following may help.

The FC is an 'evolved' organisation; not having started from 'scratch' it may be necessary to re-evaluate issues such as

the range of commitments that must be met asking 'What could more satisfactorily be outsourced?'

the range of roles for which staff are necessary asking 'Could fewer top management and more middle-management staff prove more effective in both strategy thinking and 'grass roots' level working?' and 'Should there be less overlapping of responsibility roles - clearer delineation, including roles responsible for ensuring delivery of policy.'

What more do you think should be done to improve the efficiency with which government's forestry functions are delivered? - What can be done to improve efficiency?

Provided the new organisation is given the autonomy that is suggested then it is likely to continue the process of becoming more business-like.

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? - Other comments?

If the Board is solely, or almost entirely, made-up of Defra appointees then this is just another way of ensuring government control, which is not what the changes are intended to accomplish. Continued government interference is likely to perpetuate inefficiency as the new body endeavours to meet an overwhelming weight of governmental and public demands.

The FC, given the opportunity of refining its management, is quite capable of doing this and should be allowed to get on with it, while

identifying changes and providing explanations. - It is an organisation that increasingly communicates well with members of the public and is respected..

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? - General comments?

Only to reinforce the fact that when the forests' sell-off was presented to us as a foregone conclusion on the basis of a government decision, we did not want a cynical return to this position through the formation of a government 'Board' given the licence to make the same decision albeit on a piece-meal basis and, again, without the consent of the general public who, in essence, own the Public Forest Estate.- Ideally, the newly formed organisation needs to become self-sustaining as quickly as possible so that such interference can be avoided.

Response ID

ANON-69TR-9X6K-7