

C7 ESTATES

Using the assets of the public forest estate in Dorset to progress sustainable use and public benefit.

7.1. INTRODUCTION

In Dorset and South Wiltshire, our Estates team has a large remit covering the management and maintenance of the Forestry Commission Freehold and Leasehold estate including the:

- ◆ Upkeep and maintenance of all operational buildings including out stations, depots, deer larders, sheds and workshops.
- ◆ Leasing and maintenance of Forestry Commission cottages, houses and farms.
- ◆ Leasing grazing land
- ◆ Managing licences to private properties and access requirements for the network of utility corridors and wayleaves across FC land
- ◆ Permissions & access for County Council highway maintenance along unfenced roads
- ◆ Management and liaison with landlords regarding Forestry Commission leasehold land.
- ◆ Trespass and Byelaw prosecution

[Maps C7.1](#) show the extent of the Dorset & South Wiltshire Estate holding and responsibilities.

As a government organisation, a large part of how the Forestry Commission can manage its land and property is dictated by statute. In Dorset and South Wiltshire the estates management is largely governed by:

- ◆ Forestry Act, 1967 (as amended)
- ◆ Agriculture (Miscellaneous provisions) Act
- ◆ Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)
- ◆ Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- ◆ Forestry Commission Byelaws

7.2. Issues and Proposed Policies & Actions to meet management objectives for Estates

Estates Management Objectives

- ◆ Seek to maximise taxpayer value for money through appropriate management of the Forest Estate.
- ◆ To ensure that utility companies adopt a sensitive and responsible approach when carrying out work along utility corridors and that safety issues are fully considered.
- ◆ To increase the energy efficiency and environmental sustainability of Forestry Commission core and leasehold buildings.

Issue 1 Maintenance of Housing Stock

Policy C7-1: We will seek to improve the condition of FC housing stock where it is retained.

The Forestry Commission has four tenanted properties located across the FC Dorset Estate. These are retained to allow effective delivery of the Estate management. Tenants are selected according to operational need.

There is also the requirement to maintain properties. Many of the properties are ageing and in need of on-going investment to bring facilities and infrastructure up to modern day standards and improve energy efficiency.

Key Actions

- i. Where properties are not linked to the main sewer, ensure septic tanks meet current day standards*
- ii. Rolling programme to upgrade heating systems and windows to modern standards.*
- iii. Explore additional opportunities to improve the environmental sustainability of the housing stock.*

Issue 2 Management of Utility/Infrastructure Corridors

Policy C7-2: We will manage utility and infrastructure corridors in the interests of maintaining, protecting and where possible enhancing the special qualities of our woodlands.

A number of utility and infrastructure corridors and wayleaves run across the FC Estate including gas, oil, water pipelines and electricity cables. Sensitive management is required both during the route planning, installation and maintenance

of utilities infrastructure and a number of restrictions apply which might not be required elsewhere, for example methods for ground reinstatement. Visual impact is also important and initiatives are currently underway in some areas to re-route overhead electricity cables underground.

Key Actions

- i. Negotiate access permissions and prepare specifications for utility companies to take account of environmental sensitivities.***
- ii. Support and encourage the underground re-routing of overhead lines.***
- iii. Maintain accurate record of utilities and safe working margins.***

Issue 3 Travellers

Policy C7-3: We will take measures to prevent and deal with the illegal trespass of travellers onto FC land

The FC is committed to working with local authorities and other statutory agencies to consider the needs of travelling communities in Dorset and South Wiltshire. However, illegal trespass by travellers is an on-going issue on FC land. Illegal encampments can hold up forestry operations, cause issues with other forest users and result in lengthy and costly legal proceedings. Eviction often sees the occupants moving on to another site on FC land where the whole process starts again.

- i. Continue to secure and upgrade access routes and gateways to prevent illegal trespass by vehicles***
- ii. Serve injunction notices against any illegal occupation of FC land***
- iii. Work with local authorities to find appropriate sites for travellers.***

Issue 4 Minerals

Policy C7-4: Where applications for mineral extraction are being made on leasehold land we will work alongside landowners and mineral companies to ensure the appropriate working and reinstatement of land for forestry land management interests.

A number of our woodland leasehold blocks are underlain by significant reserves of sand and gravel. When the leases were originally drawn up our landlords retained the mineral rights. In the last few years, some of these sites, for example Plumley Wood and Pithouse, have had planning applications for the extraction of minerals approved by the relevant Planning Authority. In such instances the FC has an obligation to pass the land back to the Lessor for the duration of the mineral working. Depending upon the terms of the lease, FC will take over management of some of these sites once the mineral working and restoration of the area is complete.

Key Actions

- i. Negotiation of compensation and mitigation measures***

- ii. Set standards for reinstatement plans*
- iii. Work with Planning Authority to ensure that timescales for mineral extraction are built into the Forest Design Plan process.*

Policy C7-5: Where FC freehold land lies within a site allocation for mineral extraction within the Dorset Minerals Core Strategy we may consider the viability of raising revenue from this resource.

The FC is obliged to increase its efficiency and generation of income from the Public Forest Estate and to deliver best value for money. With this in mind the whole of the FC Estate in England was surveyed for mineral reserves. Some of the best reserves were found under the Dorset Forests. The most feasible sites (purely in terms of their mineral working potential¹) have been put forward for consideration in the Dorset Minerals Site Allocation process being carried out by the County to identify areas for future quarrying. The County will assess the suitability of these sites in terms of environmental impacts and other factors before deciding whether to formally allocate these sites.

Key Actions

- i. Work with minerals companies to assess the extent of the mineral resource and viability of working.*
- ii. Set standards for restoration of the sites.*
- iii. Ensure timescales for extraction link into Forest Design Plan process.*

Issue 5 Other development opportunities

Policy C7-6: We will look for appropriate opportunities to maximise income from the Forest Estate in line with FC national policy and local planning frameworks.

A study of the Public Forest Estate is currently being undertaken to consider the future long-term sustainable role for the Public Forest Estate and make recommendations about any necessary changes required to improve its ability to deliver relevant priorities in the Government's Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests and contribute to other Government objectives. The outcomes of this review are likely to influence our future direction and opportunities sought to maximise income.

Key Actions

- i. Work with local authorities to identify potential opportunities via the local planning framework processes.*

¹ Cannonhill/Uddens, Moreton & Great Plantation (Hethfelton)

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- ii. Prioritise strategy in line with recommendations arising from the Study of the Public Forest Estate.*

Issue 6 Acquisitions and Disposals

Policy C7-7: Manage disposals and acquisitions in accordance with the nationally agreed framework

The FC is obliged to obtain best value return and use of the Estate and at times this can be achieved through disposal or acquisition.

The FC national Disposals Policy covers the disposal of tangible fixed assets i.e. land and buildings. As a public department the Forestry Commission England (FCE) must act in accordance with the principles of public accountability and in accordance with the instructions in the Government Accounting Manual. Disposals must be carried out in a publicly acceptable manner and all those who are interested must be given the opportunity to bid and the best possible price established on the open market must be achieved for the public purse. For a sale at other than the best price that can reasonably be obtained, the Chief Executive, England (CEE) must give approval.

The FC acquisitions policy for England is currently under review but at present acquisitions guidance states that "The Forestry Commission will adjust its land portfolio not only through purchasing the freehold of leased land, but also through carefully targeted acquisitions, so as to increase the recreational opportunities on its estate. The Commission will also explore opportunities to play a key role in the development of community forest initiatives and the New National Forest through targeted acquisition of land in such areas."

Actions

- i. We will consult the Regional Advisory Committee on any acquisitions or disposals.*

Map C7_1
Estate Holding

- ✕ Properties
- \$ Depots
- J Deer larder

