

The long-term role of the Forestry Commission England Public Forest Estate: consultation.

East Midlands Regional Stakeholders consultation event

The aim of the event was to stimulate discussion on the issues raised by the consultation, allow people to hear the views of others and to encourage people to submit a written response to the consultation.

Details

Date of meeting: 10th September 09

Location: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Nottingham

Number attending: 44

Chair: Dr Christopher Gill, Regional RAC Chair

Forestry Commission England National Committee attendee(s): Mark Pritchard

Study Working Group attendee(s): Hillary Allison, Joe Watts

Key points raised during whole meeting discussion

- There was general support for the work of Forest Enterprise and the diverse range of benefit derived from the Public Forest Estate.
- The issue of competition with the private sector was discussed, particularly with regard to Forest Holidays who have a unique standpoint to compete with private tourist accommodation.
- There were a few who felt that should not be involved in activity relating to timber production. This included planting, management and research. It was felt that there was always a conflict between the best options for biodiversity and commercial timber production. This was not the view of all however, and the majority of people thought that we should be setting the standard for timber production, investing in new (especially local) markets and technologies and championing the use of forestry and timber products in a low carbon world.
- In several of the break-out groups and in general discussion it was expressed that the Forestry Commission needed to be seen to be leading 'landscape scale' activities and initiatives. That this was a strength of the organisation and its unique position and a responsibility going forward.

Public Forest Estate consultation

- It was felt that stakeholders were not party to financial or economic information in consultations at local or strategic levels, yet the need to meet financial criteria heavily influenced our activity. This was particularly the case with Forest Design Plans.
- It was voiced that the Forestry Commission should be freed up from some of the legislation tying it down. That given greater freedom, the estate could be used more effectively to enact policy.
- **Other points raised:**
 - The need to specialise in quality hardwood production
 - The cost of land use change
 - Concern over ongoing disposals
 - The balance between paying for services or providing them free of charge
 - Apparent lack of linkages with private sector
 - The need to define ecosystem services better
 - Better education of the public etc
 - The fact that 'every bit of land has its day' and that FC needs to embrace change

Comment from Chair

None

Note taker: David Bole, Development Officer

Date notes finalised: 24th September 2009

To find out more go to www.forestry.gov.uk/england-estatestudy or contact:

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