

FORESTRY COMMISSION 2008 ANNUAL REPORT ON STATISTICAL SURVEYS IN WALES

PURPOSE

1. This report provides details of the statistical surveys carried out or authorised by the Forestry Commission in 2007-08, sets out the programme of surveys proposed for 2008-09, and presents outline plans for the following two years. Approval is now sought for the survey programme for 2008-09 to proceed in Wales.

BACKGROUND

2. UK Government Departments are required to provide Ministers with an annual report on all the statistical surveys of businesses and local authorities carried out in the previous year and plans for future years. This report covers regular and ad hoc statistical surveys of businesses and local authorities in Wales. Some of these surveys run at the same time in Scotland and England, so summary information for the three countries and GB totals are presented in an Annex.

ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN COST - SUMMARY

3. The administrative burden cost, previously called 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 burdens, account is taken of expected response rates, with a nominal cost estimated for each non-respondent. The number of ad hoc surveys and their total burden vary from year to year, depending on the requirements for research related to policy development and monitoring.

4. For surveys in 2007-08, the total administrative burden cost was around £6,000. This was higher than in the previous 3 years, because of planned ad hoc surveys - two in Wales and one GB-wide. The total outturn was below the plan, mainly because of the reduced size of the Schools Education Service survey

5. Approval is now sought for the programme of surveys to start in 2008-09, with an estimated administrative burden cost in Wales of £4,000, of which £2,800 for businesses and £1,200 for local authorities (schools). Outline plans have an estimated administrative burden cost for businesses of £3,700 for 2009-10 and £3,800 for 2010-11.

INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE CO-ORDINATION AND REDUCE BURDEN

6. During the review of the Forestry Commission's survey plans in 2007, it was agreed that we would aim to improve co-ordination between ad hoc and regular

surveys, and aim to reduce the extent to which businesses (particularly small businesses) receive more than one Forestry Commission survey. In 2007-08, this was implemented for an ad hoc survey in Scotland. However, in the GB-wide survey of Forest Business Health, in order to ensure adequate coverage of businesses using home-grown timber, it was necessary for the sample to include larger businesses that are also covered by our regular surveys.

7. None of the ad hoc surveys in the 2008-09 plans or outline plans for the following years will involve approaches to businesses in Wales covered by the regular surveys. At present, the outline plans do not include any repeat of the Forest Business Health survey.

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 "Forestry Facts & Figures", "Forestry Statistics" and other statistical publications available on the Forestry Commission Internet site, and are also used in compiling UK statistical returns for international organisations. 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. The surveys are reviewed each year with the Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics.

9. In 2007/08, a total of 38 businesses in Wales were approached, with an estimated burden of £460. It is planned that the three surveys will continue to run each year with little change. A GB-wide survey of forest nurseries, which was started as an ad hoc survey in 2007, will become annual; it only includes two businesses in Wales. In total, the burden for these regular surveys will be around £500 each year.

AD HOC SURVEYS OF BUSINESS IN 2007-08

10. In 2007-08, as part of Cyd Coed evaluation, there was a survey of 163 community groups in the Objective One area (West Wales and the Valleys), with a 77% response, giving a burden of around £2,700. A GB-wide survey of forest business health, following similar surveys in 2004 and 2000, was carried out to monitor trends in turnover, profitability and employment in forest sector businesses. It went to 169 businesses in Wales, with a burden of around £1,500. A planned GB-wide survey to assess the construction timber market did not go ahead.

11. The only additional ad hoc survey, covered by the provision in last year's plans for other miscellaneous business surveys in Wales, was a survey of sawmills for Woodknowledge Wales, which went to 35 sawmills, with a burden of around £800.

AD HOC SURVEYS OF BUSINESS – PLANS

12. A survey of community woodland groups is planned for 2008-09, to approach 75 groups with a burden of £800. One GB-wide survey will have little impact on Wales, with only 3 businesses expected to be included. As in previous years, we propose to make a provision for ad hoc surveys not yet identified to approach up to 200

businesses with a burden of up to £1,500.

13. There are no identified ad hoc surveys in the outline plans. Another GB-wide survey is expected to include 3 businesses in Wales in 2009-10. We propose to make provision for other miscellaneous business surveys in Wales to cover up to 250 businesses in each year, with a burden up to £2,000 a year.

SURVEYS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

14. The Schools Education Service of FC Wales (previously in Forest Enterprise Wales) started a customer satisfaction survey around 2002, for school visits to forests and for the service's visits to schools. This was brought within the scope of survey control reporting from 2005-06, when around 500 questionnaires were distributed, with around 100 responses, giving a burden of over £1,800 a year. Last year's survey control report assumed a similar level continuing into future years, but there were actually few responses in 2006-07 and 2007-08. The estimated burden in 2007-08 was around £600, and the total response for 2006-07 has been revised downward to reflect the actual outturn. It is planned to revive the survey in 2008-09, aiming for at least 80 responses a year, giving a burden of £1,200 in 2008-09, and around £1,300 a year in the outline plans.

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