

FUTURE OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

Purpose

1. Plans for the future of the Forestry Commission after the completion of devolution were published in draft in November 2017 alongside a Written Ministerial Statement. The ENC has been asked to approve a final version of the document at its meeting on 1 February, and discuss implementation planning. EEB is asked to consider the draft implementation plan attached and agree project management arrangements.

Recommendations

2. EEB is asked to:
 - a. provide comment on the draft implementation plan
 - b. agree to constitute an FFC Implementation Project, and consider the project workstreams needed
 - c. agree that Ian Gambles should be SRO for the project, and that EEB should act as the Project Board, and consider options for project management resource

Background

3. The WMS and draft Future Forestry Commission document have been well received. Although the extent of continuity in the plans and thorough work to prepare the ground have meant that media coverage has been limited to the trade press and both external and internal reaction have been somewhat muted, it is important to note that staff and stakeholders alike have responded very positively, and with some sense of relief.
4. Reflecting that level of support, the redrafted document was presented for approval to ENC with only modest amendments. The redraft updates the timetable, provides appropriate flexibility in finalizing future executive leadership arrangements, and in particular takes into account the publication of the 25 Year Environment Plan and the Secretary of State's intention to make significant changes to the Defra Strategy.
5. The draft implementation plan reflects an aspiration to complete as much of the work as possible by the end of 2018. There is a lot to do, and a number of workstreams will be needed, for example:
 - a. Board appointments
 - b. Brand identity implementation
 - c. Working Together protocol
 - d. Scope of future central corporate functions
 - e. Documentation (Framework Documents, SLAs, Board and ARAC ToRs etc)
6. It will be important to balance the need for FE, FS and FR to take appropriate ownership of decisions with the need to avoid duplication of effort or confusion either for ourselves or for third parties (eg if Defra are carrying out non-executive recruitment on behalf of FC, they will quite reasonably ask for a single point of contact rather than having to deal with three separate workstream leads, even if there are different JDs for each board and different people sit on the sifts and panels).

Resource Implications

7. As the financial climate for FC becomes more challenging, it is all the more critical that the resource impact of the FFC changes is that net savings are achieved, and that project delivery costs are kept to a minimum. Monitoring this against a clear baseline will be a key task for the implementation project manager.

Risk Assessment

8. The November 2017 announcement and its successful implementation will assist in closing or mitigating significant corporate risks.

Equality Impact Assessment

9. The Future Forestry Commission proposals will not as such have any equality impacts. Equality duties will be considered – including by way of formal equality impact assessment where appropriate – in the context of the implementation of individual elements of the proposals.

Communications

10. The final Future Forestry Commission document will be published to staff. It is not envisaged that the implementation project itself will have an internal comms identity, but updates on points of importance for staff will be provided through the usual channels. No external comms are planned at this stage, except in support of non-executive recruitment campaigns.

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