Agenda Item 6 | England National Committee 12 July 2017 | Paper 21/17

CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: UPDATE AT 31 MARCH 2017

Purpose

1. This paper is to provide the National Committee with Forestry Commission England's performance **Indicator Report 2017**. This paper is presented for information only.

Background

2. The National Committee and Minister approved our six headline indicators in 2011 and these have been re-confirmed in each of Forestry Commission England's Corporate Plans since then. Quarterly reports on these headline indicators have been sent to the Secretary of State, Defra Board and ExCo. The approval included 34 further key performance indicators for Forestry Commission England, and indicators for monitoring the wider forestry sector in England. The indicators are a key step towards achieving Forest Services' vision of providing a dynamic forestry service relying on strong evidence. They provide vital tools for assessing the sector's progress towards the objectives of Government forestry policy in England; to protect, improve and expand English woodland.

Performance Indicator Report 2017

3. **The sixth annual performance Indicator Report has just been completed and published and this is attached at Annex A (separate document)**. As in previous years, all the outturns have been validated as a true and fair view of the performance of Forest Services and Forest Enterprise, this year by the Government Internal Audit Agency. The narratives accompanying each of the statistics have been approved by Board level Senior Responsible Officers and the Head of Policy and Strategy.

4. **Overall 25 out of the 30 FC England indicators assessed over a period of five years or more are improving or steady, of which 4 out of our 5 headline indicators that can be measured in this way are improving or steady.**

A. FOREST SERVICES

Key Findings: Protecting English woodland

5. The 'protect' objective is reflected in the Forest Services Business Plan 2017-20 in:
   - Programme 1: Tree health: Helping the sector reduce the threat from diseases of forest trees
   - Programme 2: Regulating to protect the woodland resource
   - Programme 3: Woodland resilience incorporating deer, grey squirrels, invasive species and climate change

6. The key indicators are:

7. **Headline indicator: The number of high priority forest pests in the UK Plant Health Risk Register (UKPHRR) is 13 as at 31 March 2017 (page 12).** The most recent addition is shoot blight on cedar (*Siroccus tsugae*) owing to an increase in the rating of its possible impact.

8. **The number of tree pests and diseases 'established' in England in the last 10 years is 3 in the most recent ten year period, 2007-2016 (page 28).** The 3 are Alder rust, *Chalara* dieback of ash and Oriental chestnut gall wasp (considered established in 2016). The first 2 of these also count as 'high priority' in our headline indicator. Our tree health teams continue to work hard with Defra, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and others to monitor and address these and other pests and diseases affecting English woodland.

9. **Headline indicator: The percentage of known tree felling that is carried out with Forestry Commission approval (i.e. the % of felling that is licensable by the Forestry Commission that is not illegal felling. This excludes felling with development approval). This was 99.94% in the year to 31 March 2017 (page 16).** The overall figure for the proportion of all felling that is not illegal felling remained at a very good level in 2016-17. There is good public understanding of the legislation reflecting the high quality of Forestry Commission advice, and our action to enforce the regulations. Overall the forestry sector is overwhelmingly secure from illegal felling.

Key Findings: Improving English woodland

10. The 'improve' objective is reflected in the Forest Services Business Plan 2017-20 in:

    - Programme 4: Growing the forest economy to bring woodlands into sustainable forest management

11. The key indicators are:

12. **Headline indicator: The percentage of woodland in active management (including the Public Forest Estate) is 58% at 31 March 2017 (page 17).** The aspiration is that two thirds of woodland is in management by the end of 2018, and actions have been taken to encourage and secure additional engagement with activities that will bring woodlands into management in the future through Countryside Stewardship.

13. **The area of felling licences issued was 48,583 hectares (ha) of woodland in 2016-17 (page 35),** up 30% compared to 2015-16, and more than double that of 2014-15.

14. **The number of visits to woodland from Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment was 446 million visits to English woodland in the year to February 2016 (page 46),** up 7% compared to the previous year.

15. **The Gross Value Added from domestic forestry was £287 million in 2014 (page 37).** This represents an overall increase of 90% from £151 million in 2008.

16. **The measure of what is happening to the number and variety of species that live in woodland; using Woodland Birds data showed that the all woodland birds index was at 79.3 in 2000 (figure not shown) and 75.5 in 2015 (page 41).** Economic progress seems at face value to have been achieved without prejudicing the health of species that live in the environment. Taking into account the statistical 95% confidence interval of these figures, trends in the populations of woodland birds overall in England show little overall change from 2000 to 2015.

Key Findings: Expanding English woodland

17. The 'improve' objective is reflected in the Forest Services Business Plan 2017-20 in:

    - Programme 5: Woodland creation

18. The key indicators are:

19. **Headline indicator: The area of woodland in England (page 20). This indicator is updated annually. There was 1,307,000 hectares (ha) of woodland in England at 31 March 2017** according to the provisional figures as reported in the Forestry Commission's *'Woodland Area Planting and Publicly Funded Restocking'* (WAPR) National Statistics also published in June. This was an increase of 1,000 ha from last year (rounded). There has been an average increase of 2,400 ha per year in the last 10 years. The aspiration remains to achieve 12% woodland cover by 2060, equating to 1,566,000 hectares.

20. **Hectares of woodland created and approximate corresponding number of trees that represents (page 21).** There was 1,143 ha of new planting in 2016-17 identified in the WAPR publication. The main components of new planting were 525 ha of woodland created with the support of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) equating to approximately 802,000 trees. It also includes new planting by the Woodland Trust (548 ha), National Forest Company (51 ha), and Forest Enterprise (19 ha).

21. **At 31 March 2017 approximately 1,444,000 trees had been planted towards the target of 11 million planted with the support of RDPE (page 21).** We are investigating what records exist for new planting of trees by other government organisations, such as the National Forest Company and Environment Agency, so that future headline indicator updates may include these, where feasible.

22. **The number of hectares of restoration of… open habitats in woodland other than the Public Forest Estate (page 40) and … on the Public Forest Estate (page 61), was 285 ha across England in 2016-17, composed of 85 ha on the PFE plus 200 ha in other woodland;** each in accordance with policies to help nature and the environment. This total figure, compared to the 1,143 ha of new planting, as noted above, means in these terms at least, that England was not 'deforested' in 2016-17.

23. In recent years most woodland creation has required grant support to be achieved. The challenge of the government's Forestry & Woodland Policy Statement target of an increase to 12% in the woodland area by 2060 requires delivery of an average of over 5,000 hectares per annum. Delivery pace is expected to pick up as the forestry sector takes up the opportunities offered by Countryside Stewardship, the Woodland Carbon Fund and other incentives, and as we work to change the afforestation Environment Impact Assessment thresholds to pave the way for more woodland

creation schemes including large ones like that proposed for Doddington North Moor, Northumberland.

24. **The carbon captured by English woodlands (page 49) was 8.562 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent in 2015,** an increase of 0.5% since the previous year.

Key Findings: Customer Service

- Programme 6: Design, deliver and implement Defra-wide and FC change programmes.

25. **The percentage of Forest Services grants and licence customers who report their customer satisfaction as either very satisfied or satisfied was 45% between January and September 2016 (page 51),** a 16% point reduction in this satisfaction measure compared to the July to December 2015 period. We are putting in place an improvement plan in response, and raising elements with the Rural Payments Agency and Natural England where this is more relevant to them.

B. FOREST ENTERPRISE

People

26. **The number of households in the Discovery Pass Scheme for the Public Forest Estate was 27,508 at 31 March 2017 (page 59),** up 15% in a year, in addition to the 15% increase the previous year.

Nature

27. **The percentage of woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (by land area) in desired condition on the Public Forest Estate was 99.5% in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition, and 36.5% in favourable condition at April 2017 (page 62).** Forest Enterprise colleagues continued to maintain the high percentage of SSSI in target condition as a result of good conservation management. The area in favourable condition continues to improve and we remain on track to reach 50% in this condition status by 2020.

Economy

28. **Headline indicator: The number of private sector businesses operating on the Public Forest Estate was 502 at 31 March 2017 (page 24),** down from 2016. This reflects there being a number of contracts in the process of renewal on the reporting date. There has been strong growth in core commercial partners Adventure Forests (who provide Go Ape), Forest Holidays and Camping in the Forest.

29. **The volume of timber brought to market per annum from the Public Forest Estate was 1.2 million tonnes of wood to market in 2016 (page 65),** in line with sales plans.

Organisational

30. Headline indicator: The cost of managing the Public Forest Estate was £72.41 per hectare in 2016-17 (draft outturn) (page 25). We expect the audit-approved

final outturn cost to be better at £70.41 per hectare. Either is comfortably within the target of £91.89 per hectare.

31. **The customer satisfaction rating for visits to the Public Forest Estate from the interactive 'rate my visit' facility was again 'very good' in the year to 31 March 2017 (page 66).** It has remained at this high level since these records began in 2011.

C. PROGRESS ON INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT

Risk Assessment

32. We have collated from Indicator Programme Managers fuller reports of their understanding of the reasons underlying performance and any related risks. Senior Managers are fully aware that the rate of woodland creation and percentage of woodland in active management needs to increase to meet Government's aspirations. These risks are identified and managed through the Forest Services' risk register.

Resource Implications

33. We developed, enhanced and continue to maintain the indicator suite with very little external programme spend because nearly all the indicators were, by design, based on our own administrative data, or statistics and datasets available for re-use freely from the National Forest Inventory, the Forest Research Statistics team, Defra and other government departments. The external cost to deliver our indicators this year is £3,600. Delivery of the quarterly and annual reports relies on in total around 50 respective Data Managers who provide data, Programme Managers who write accompanying narratives, and SROs who review the reports, at appropriate points. Coordination and statistical and geographical analyses from our Evidence team has remained steady in total at about 0.7 of a full-time equivalent role per annum and this cost is included in the budget for Strategic Development in Forest Services.

Communications

34. The Indicators Report 2017 and related quarterly headline performance updates have been published on the indicators page of our website. We have continued to draw on the capabilities of the Defra/FC Communications team to relay the indicator reports to Defra, the sector and other stakeholders.

35. Quarterly updates on the headline 11 million trees planting manifesto commitment and new headline tree health indicator have been submitted in the Defra scorecard to the Defra Board and Executive Committee. Summary findings from the Indicators Report 2017 have been communicated to:

- The Secretary of State in the regular update of statistics publications
- Forest Services Senior Managers
- the team of around 50 Forestry Commission SROs, Programme Managers and Data Managers who make reporting possible
- and Forest Services colleagues via the Friday update

They are due to signposted for all FC England colleagues in the July edition of *Bark!*

Recommendation

36. That the National Committee note the contents of this paper.

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July 2017

Accompanying documents:

Annex A:
Forestry Commission England Corporate Plan Performance Indicators 2017 report