

CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: UPDATE AT 31 MARCH 2018**Purpose**

1. This paper is to provide **information** to the National Committee on Forestry Commission England's performance *Indicators Report 2018*.

Background

2. The National Committee and Minister approved our six headline indicators in 2011 and these were re-confirmed in each Forestry Commission England Corporate Plan since then¹. The suite of approved indicators also includes about 40 more indicators.
3. The indicators provide strong evidence to help Forest Services advise on forestry policy, and monitor what is happening in the real world, allowing our stakeholders to hold us to account. They provide vital tools for assessing progress towards our key aims to protect, improve and expand English woodland, and show how we contribute to the delivery of the Government's 25 Year Plan for the Environment². They also illustrate how Forest Enterprise supports people, nature and the economy through its management of the Public Forest Estate.

Performance Indicator Report 2018

4. **The seventh annual performance Indicator Report has been completed and published on 14 June 2018 and this is attached at Annex A (separate document).** As in previous years, all of the outturn figures have been validated by the Government Internal Audit Agency. The narratives accompanying each of the statistics have been approved by the Director of Forest Services, or the Chief Executive or Director of Operations of Forest Enterprise England.
5. Overall 22 out of the 29 FC England indicators assessed over a period of five years or more are improving or steady. Out of those, 4 out of 5 of our headline indicators that can be measured in this way are improving or steady. Generally, to count as improving there has been at least a 3% positive increase in the respective indicator over the period of 5 years.

A. FOREST SERVICES**Key Findings: Expanding English woodland**

6. The **headline indicator on area of woodland in England** (page 19) provisional figure at 31 March 2018 is **1,307,000 hectares (ha)**. This is stable from last year's figure of 1,306,000 ha at 31 March 2017. The aspiration remains to achieve 12% woodland cover by 2060, equating to 1,566,000 ha.
7. **Government supported planting** delivered **1.6 million new trees** in 2017-18. This is a new indicator developed specifically to track Government progress towards meeting its commitment to plant 11 million new trees in England in the 5-year period

¹ Forestry Commission England (2017) *Corporate Plan 2017-18*. Bristol: Forestry Commission England at: <https://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-5e4g6a> .

² HM Government (2018) *A Green Future: Our Plan to Improve the Environment*, London: Defra at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

of the 2017-22 parliament. This report includes a clear statement of the methodology employed (**See Annex B; separate document**). Out of those 1,415,000 trees (895 ha) have been planted through the Rural Development Programme for England Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant. While this is slightly less than an 'average annual requirement' to meet the 11 million trees commitment, based on existing grant agreements, grant applications and woodland creation plans, we are confident that this target will be met. Other contributions to this total in 2017-18 were: Planting by the Environment Agency 75,000 trees; planting via other Countryside Stewardship tree planting options 67,000 trees; and by the National Forest Company 23,000 trees.

8. The indicator on **net change in woodland area indicator** (page 49) shows that in 2015-16 the balance between new planting of woodland and woodland removal resulted in **556 hectares net loss** of woodland. This is a new indicator discussed at the ENC meeting on 7 June 2018 that was developed to add to the picture of change provided by the area of woodland statistics (that also incorporate methodological improvements such as the use of more detailed remote sensing data). The net loss in that one year resulted from a combination of low woodland creation rates, high levels of woodland loss to development, and restoration of open habitat in line with Government policy. We are confident that the longer term trend remains one of increasing net area of woodland in England. Over the 4 year period for which data are available (from 2012-13 to 2015-16), there was an overall net gain of 5,489 hectares. This indicator did not attract the level of interest and publicity we thought it might.
9. There was **335 ha of open habitats restoration** from woodland in England in 2017-18, 197 ha of which was in woodland other than on the Public Forest Estate (PFE), and 138 ha was on the PFE (pages 40 and 65 respectively). The figures were 200 ha and 85 ha in 2016-17 respectively. In light of the net change in woodland area in 2015-16, Forest Enterprise will adjust their open habitat restoration policy on the Public Forest Estate, and we will adjust requirements for compensatory planting on land other than the PFE in line with Government policy³.
10. There was **2.0 thousand hectares of publicly funded restocking** (replacement of trees on areas of woodland that have been felled) in England in 2017-18, all of which was on the PFE. This is shown in the *Woodland Area, Planting and Publicly Funded Restocking 2018* report published by Forest Research in June⁴ (page 13). For 2016-17 the figures were 3.0 thousand hectares in total, of which 2.4 thousand hectares were on the PFE and 0.6 thousand hectares by other woodland owners. Countryside Stewardship grants do not provide funding for restocking, so it is likely that restocking in England is under-reported in this indicator.
11. **The carbon captured by English woodlands (page 52) was 9.381 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2015**, an increase of 0.6% since the previous year.

Key Findings: Improving English woodland

12. **Headline indicator: The percentage of woodland in active management (including the Public Forest Estate) is 59% at 31 March 2018 (page 17)**, (equating

³ Forestry Commission England (2010) *When to convert woods and forests to open habitat in England: Government policy*, Bristol: Forestry Commission England at: <https://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats>

⁴ Forestry Commission (2018) *Woodland Area, Planting and Publicly Funded Restocking 2018*, Edinburgh: Forest Research at: <https://www.forestryresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/woodland-statistics/>

to 764 thousand hectares when rounded) and broadly stable compared to that over recent years (when it has been 58%). 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 Gross Value Added from domestic forestry was £339 million in 2015 (page 37).** This represents an overall increase of 53% from £221 million in 2010.
14. **The area of felling licences issued was 54,152 hectares of woodland in 2017-18 (page 35),** up 11% compared to 2016-17, and well over double that of 2014-15 (144% more).
15. **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 36% compared to 2010-11.
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 79.2 in 2000 (figure not shown) and 74.2 in 2015 (page 41).** 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: Protecting English woodland

17. The key indicators are:
18. **Headline indicator: The number of high priority forest pests in the UK Plant Health Risk Register (UKPHRR) is 14 as at 31 March 2018 (page 12),** one more than a year previously. The most recent 'high priority' addition to the register is *Agrilus fleischeri*, that is a wood-boring insect, native to East Asia that can affect poplar trees. It is currently absent from the UK.
19. **The number of tree pests and diseases 'established' in England in the last 10 years is 4 in the most recent ten year period, 2008-2017 (page 28).** The 4 are: Alder rust, *Chalara* dieback of ash, Oriental chestnut gall wasp, and sweet chestnut blight (considered established in 2017). The first 2 of these also count as 'high priority' in our headline indicator. Our GB Plant Health and England 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.
20. **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 99.93% in the year to 31 March 2018 (page 16).** The overall figure for the proportion of all felling that is not illegal felling remained at a very good level in 2017-18. There is generally good public understanding of the legislation reflecting the high quality of Forestry Commission advice, and our action to enforce the regulations. Our teams investigate alleged illegal felling cases and take actions to address these as appropriate. We suspect however that some illegal felling remains undetected and we are exploring how best to use remote sensing data to allow us to identify potential cases and prioritise action.

Key Findings: Customer Service

21. **The percentage of Forest Services grants and felling licence customers who reported their customer satisfaction as either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' between April 2017 and September 2017 was estimated by our survey at 56 %, compared to 45% between January and September 2016 although this increase is not statistically significant (page 55).** We have put in place improvements over the last year (improved guidance, earlier notice of application windows), either fully within FC control or working with Rural Payments Agency and Natural England.

B. FOREST ENTERPRISE

Economy

22. **Headline indicator: There were 592 businesses operating on the PFE at 31 March 2018, up from 502 at 31 March 2017, when the data was measured at a time when many contracts were being renewed, and comparable to the figure of 593 businesses at 31 March 2016 (page 24).** Notable increases in businesses operating on the nation's forests include 5 brand new radio masts for the new Government Emergency Services Network run by EE Limited.
23. **The volume of timber brought to market per annum from the Public Forest Estate was 1.2 million tonnes of wood to market in 2017 (page 69), the same as in 2016, and in line with sales plans.**

Nature

24. **The percentage of woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (by land area) in desired condition on the Public Forest Estate was 98.5% in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition, and 37.3% in favourable condition at April 2018 (page 66).** The equivalent figures at April 2017 were 99.5% and 36.5% respectively). The slight drop in the percentage reaching target condition has resulted from reappraisal of some of the plans aimed at recovery of SSSIs. Work continues towards restoration to favourable condition across the SSSIs managed by Forest Enterprise England.

People

25. **The number of households in the Discovery Pass Scheme for the Public Forest Estate was 30,053 at 31 March 2018 (page 63), up 9% in a year, in addition to the 15% increase the previous year.**

Organisational

26. **Headline indicator: The cost of managing the Public Forest Estate was £65.75 per hectare in 2017-18 (confirmed outturn) (page 25).** This is comfortably within the target of £98.81 per hectare. The main reasons for the net cost being lower than target are; timber prices and commercial revenues were better than plan, and poor weather in February and March 2018 delayed planned programme works (costs) into 2018-19.
27. **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 2018 (page 70).** The small percentage decrease in the year is due to a small range of

reasons such as low ratings given to smaller woodlands where forest management works have taken place.

C. PROGRESS ON INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT

Risk Assessment

28. We have collated from Indicator Managers fuller reports of their understanding of the reasons underlying performance and any related risks. Senior Managers are fully aware that achievement of Government's tree planting aims, and mitigating the risks associated with pests and diseases remain particular priorities and a range of actions are being carried out to ensure they are achieved. These risks are identified and managed through Forest Services' risk register.

Resource Implications

29. We developed, enhanced and now maintain the indicator suite with very little external programme spend because nearly all the indicators were, by design, based on our own Forestry Commission administrative data, the National Forest Inventory, surveys conducted for us by the Forest Research Statistics team, and data freely available from other parts of the Defra Group and other government departments. The external budget to deliver indicators reporting this year is £19,000, largely to fund the Commission's next biennial Public Opinion of Forestry Survey.
30. Delivery of the quarterly and annual reports relies on in total around 50 respective Data Managers who provide data, Indicator Managers who write accompanying narratives, SROs who review the reports, and the Director of Forest Services who considers and approves the publications. Coordination and statistical and geographical analyses from our Evidence team has increased to enable development of the new indicators; totalling about 0.8 of a full-time equivalent role in 2017-18 and this cost is included in the budget for Strategic Development in Forest Services.

Communications

31. The *Indicators Report 2018*, the report on *Government supported new planting of trees in England*, 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 and FC Policy Advice and Communications teams to relay the indicator reports to Defra, the forestry sector and other stakeholders.
32. Highlights from headline indicator updates (especially those on new planting of trees, and tree health) have been sent quarterly to the Secretary of State, and included as part of the dashboard reviewed by the Defra Board and ExCo.
33. Summary findings from the annual Indicators Reports are:
 - Signposted for all Forest Services colleagues via the Friday Roundup
 - Reviewed every other month by Forest Services Senior Managers via the Management Information Pack
 - Communicated to the Minister and Secretary of State in the regular update of statistics publications and via a supporting information note for each release
 - Seen by the team of around 50 Forestry Commission SROs, Indicator Managers and Data Managers who make reporting possible

- Signposted for all FC England colleagues in the July edition of *Bark!*
- To be considered further by Forest Services Senior Managers in September 2018.

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July 2018

Accompanying documents:

Annex A:

[Forestry Commission England Corporate Plan Performance Indicators 2018](#) report

Annex B:

[Government supported new planting of trees in England; Report for 2017-18](#)