

24 April 2019

Key Issues for the Year Ahead

Purpose

1. To discuss and agree what are the key issues that the Board should focus on over the coming year.

Discussion

2. To *'provide leadership for Forest Services by supporting, guiding, constructively challenging, and directing the Forest Services executive team in the development and delivery of its strategy'* (FS Board Terms of Reference), the Board will need to focus on the key strategic issues for Forest Services, in a timely way. Forest Service and its Board will inevitably need to respond to events that could have a material impact on its future. Nonetheless, current knowledge suggests that the following are key issues for the Board to focus on over the year ahead and indicative timings:
3. Today's April 24 2019 meeting:
 - a. The English Tree strategy – agree FS's priorities.
 - b. Woodland creation – agree FS's strategy for accelerating woodland creation rates towards government's high ambitions.
4. 27 June 2019 meeting:
 - a. The Spending Review – agree FS's priorities.
 - b. Dame Glenys Stacey's Review of Farming Regulation and Enforcement – agree FS's response to the government's consultation on the review's recommendations.
 - c. Future Farming and Countryside Policy – agree FS's priorities for Future Farming and Countryside Policy and FS's preferred delivery role.
 - d. Tree Health and Woodland Resilience – agree FS's strategy for increasing England's woodlands' resilience to pests, diseases, and climate change.
5. 3 October 2019 meeting:
 - a. The English Tree strategy – consider consultation responses and comment on a draft of the strategy.

- b. Woodland Management – agree FS’s strategy for bringing more woodland into management.
 - c. Illegal tree felling – agree FS’s strategy for reducing illegal tree felling.
6. 11 March 2020 meeting
- a. The English Tree strategy – agree the final strategy’s implications for FS.
 - b. The Spending Review – agree the review’s implications for FS.
 - c. FS’s 5 year strategy – review and agree FS’s 5 year strategy.
 - d. 2020/21 Business Plan – agree FS’s 2020/21 Business Plan.
 - e. Indicators – review and agree FS’s key indicators.
 - f. Customer service – agree FS’s response to latest customer service scores
7. The final timing of a number of these key issues’ consideration by the Board may need to be adjusted in line with changing external timetables. Other key issues that could arise in the year ahead and have implications for FS that may therefore merit the Board’s attention include: EU Exit, the Environment bill, any major new pest or disease outbreak, forestry sector skills, Defra 2030 or any change of Government.
8. The Board will also need to provide for discharging its other main duties, for example (with indicative timings):
- a. approve the consolidated Annual Report and Accounts and Corporate Plan for Forestry Commission (annually)
 - b. regularly receive and review information on financial and operational performance of Forest Services against agreed objectives (each meeting)
 - c. help the Board to address key financial and other strategic risks faced by the organisation, ensuring adequate systems and internal controls are in place to safeguard resources including by using the independent audit committee (each meeting)

Recommendation

9. Members are invited to discuss and agree the key issues that the Board should focus on over the coming year and their indicative timings.

Richard Greenhous – Director, Forest Services
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12 April 2019