FORESTRY COMMISSION KIM PROJECT PROPOSAL

Purpose

1. To seek agreement to the overall approach to improving Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) across Forestry Commission as presented in the project management plan. To request a decision on following a four-year delivery plan or a two year-year delivery model for the project.

Background

2. The FC Executive Board understands significant improvements are needed to how the organisation manages information to make it easier to find, access and identify, share securely and keep for the right time. It is recognised that improving information management will change how the organisation works with information and its information culture.

3. The FC Executive Board has acknowledged that making changes to information management requires new policies and procedures facilitated through systems to automate compliance as much as possible and significant engagement with the business. To enable this change, the KIM Lead was asked to define a programme of work with a governance structure, programme documentation and dedicated resource reflecting how this relates to existing capacity.

4. Each part of Forestry Commission has started to improve its management of information creating the potential for the new KIM project to share, learn, develop and adapt approaches which will fit and benefit the whole organisation.

5. Forest Services have used O365 tools to streamline and automate existing processes, for example the development and management of Woodland Management Plans, making them easier to create and maintain provides accurate source of information for reporting. Forest Research have developed a new Information Asset Register which identifies key information assets, asset owners, risk to the assets and mitigation actions, making sure information assets are protected against change or loss when systems change.

6. The Covid-19 experience has presented the Forestry England KIM team with a fantastic opportunity to supercharge the work on rolling out Teams capability. The take up and benefit to the business has been fundamental to our successful navigation through this difficult time. Without being forced to work in this way, there would not have been this level of uptake.

7. The FC has a unique opportunity and moment in time to build on this momentum with how we use and manage information in our systems. The KIM team are seeing the business asking for more guidance and support in the areas that this KIM project management plan covers. However, we do not underestimate the change this represents.

Discussion

Value and benefit of information to the Forestry Commission

8. Information is vital to every aspect of FC work for example, Forestry England's land management work is assisted through the deeds and land management files it keeps; Forest Research's research and analysis work is facilitated through the data it collects and manages; Forest Services licensing and grant work is enabled through the documentation it creates.

9. The use of high quality, accurate and up to date information makes a fundamental contribution to FC meeting its aims of protecting, expanding and promoting sustainable woodland. FC will achieve these aims more successfully through effective information management which enables accurate information to be identified and found quickly.

10. The benefits of information management include improved and clearly evidenced decision making, improved sharing of information avoiding duplication and re-inventing work and increased ability to demonstrate legal and legislative compliance. Effective information management is one of a number of factors which contribute to the overall performance of the organisation which are measured through the key performance indicators. However, it is possible to create a picture of what good information management looks like and what contributes to successful information management.

11. The ongoing COVID-19 experience has put into sharp focus the concept of what effective information management looks like. The difficulties of accessing information remotely and identify the correct information when the creator is not available is more apparent when most staff are working remotely. Given the geographical spread of the organisation, the problems are not new nor are they are not likely to go away given the accelerated trend towards remote working.

12. Information management practices will enable the FC to handle information more effectively and efficiently so it can spend more time doing the work it was set up to deliver. The practices of information management focus on standardisation, for example labelling of information including titles, author and dates so staff can identify it, structuring information to facilitate searching across common themes (a bit like a library), having retention schedules to specify what information should be created and how long it should be kept and access to scanned copies of paper documents. It is these types of practices which will need to be delivered through the FC KIM project.

KIM project approach and delivery model

13. The approach to delivering new information management practices through FC KIM project is based on the EB's acknowledgement of facets considered to be critical to the successful delivery of information management. The high-level approach to delivery covers:
    - policies to set a shared standard across the FC
    - procedures to support implementation of the policies which are automated as far as possible and reflect the business of each part of the FC
    - training and engagement to facilitate and support the adoption of new policies and procedures
    - a governance framework that facilitates monitoring and reporting around policy compliance and identifies opportunities for improvement

14. The KIM lead has worked with representatives across the FC to design a project that addresses the development and adoption of common information management practices. The FC KIM project management plan [see Appendix 1] sets out a series of workstreams delivering a four year work programme to increase the level of knowledge and information maturity from absent to defined/embedded, as defined by the JISC records management maturity model.

15. The KIM project's aims and objectives are centred on improving effectiveness, trust and compliance through enabling information to be found more quickly, shared securely, accuracy maintained and kept for the right length of time. The Forestry England KIM team have started putting this approach into practise through the successful delivery of the Forestry England Board SharePoint site; the purpose, product and benefits are described in Appendix 2.

16. The wide-ranging changes to be introduced by the KIM project will include:

    - Policies which assert organisational ownership of information and the responsibilities of all groups of staff around managing information.
    - An information asset register identifying valuable information, associated risks and mitigation plans
    - Retention schedules setting out what information should be created and kept and how long it should be kept before being disposed (deleted or transferred to archive[1])
    - Guidance on naming and organising documents to provide common structures for finding information
    - Weeding, indexing, scanning and offsite storage provision for paper records to minimise the need to store information onsite and enable it to be accessed more easily from any location
    - Systems enabling a more automated approach to organising, structuring and managing the retention and disposal of information

17. The KIM project management plan recognises the need to engage with staff across the organisation using a variety of methods including formal training, messaging and meetings. There will need to be a co-ordinated approach to communications working with each FC internal communications teams so communications fit business needs. The first part of this work includes identifying stakeholder groups and key messages; these are included in Annex 4 of the project management plan.

18. The project management plan is based on a four-year delivery model intended to provide time to work closely with the business so teams feel are shaping products to fit their needs with changes feeling like a natural evolution of the engagement. The four-year delivery model enables changes to become embedded within the culture and ways of working. The key milestones for this delivery model are shown in section 10 of the project management plan.

19. A two-year delivery model has been considered as an alternative approach. A two-year delivery model would not include all the deliverables covered by a four-year approach, also there would be insufficient time available to fully engage with the business around the changes. The main difference between a four-year and two-year delivery model is that a four-year year model delivers policy, technology and cultural change whereas a two-year model would deliver only policy and technology change. Annex 2 of the project management plan provides a full

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[1] Archive includes The National Archives as a public record, local public record offices or potentially a FC archive.

analysis and comparison of the two models in terms of the impact the on the Forestry Commission, the risk to ongoing business and alignment to the project objectives.

20. The KIM Lead has a preference for a four-year delivery as it allows time to engage with the business, learn from experience, build momentum around the approach and to use early adopters to encourage and assist others to adapt and change. The KIM Lead is conscious that the organisation has undergone significant change over the past few years and quick changes may feel to staff as though National Office lacks understanding of the daily issues faced across the wider office; this is particularly acute in the current climate of managing around COVID-19.

Resource implications

21. In its first year of establishment the Forestry England KIM team has taken on the role within Forestry England of handling information rights issues (EIR/FOI and data protection), information security and records management. The KIM team have strengthened processes for handling information requests across Forestry England and Forestry England's compliance with data protection through working on projects with data protection implications (for example, car parking systems and volunteer data sharing).

22. The Forestry England KIM team have started work on several work areas for Forestry England that will be linked to the FC KIM PID, including O365, offsite storage and retention and disposal scheduling. Outputs in these areas include:
    - Developing the SharePoint site for Forestry England organisational improvement plan
    - Taking a leading role in implementing MS Teams
    - Developing a HR retention and disposal schedule
    - Completing separation between English and Scottish agencies in offsite storage contract
    - Initiating tender for offsite storage
    - Developing a draft SharePoint site for Forestry England Board papers
    - Developing an approach to remove old and unused MS Teams
    - Developing an External Sharing Policy for MS Teams (out for consultation)

23. The Executive Board has asked Forestry England KIM team to take on a wider policy role leading on information management for the FC. The KIM team would continue to be responsible for implementing FC KIM policies within Forestry England and Forest Research and Forest Services will retain operational responsibility for implementing FC policy in their areas.

24. As predicted, the draw on resource around information rights has intensified, and the KIM team expects to see this trend continue. As Forestry England has increased its co-ordination within the organisation and externally as the brand awareness increases, the scrutiny and information-based requests will rise in line with this increased awareness. The KIM team have received recently several complex, in depth cases simultaneously and they are seeing more requests for advice and involvement from the business as the visibility of the team increases.

25. The Executive Board have asked for a step change in the way information managed across the FC. The foundation blocks for the changes are being worked on, but to deliver a substantial and sustained level of change needs additional resource. The Executive Board recognised that before new systems are put in place there will be a resource intensive period,

for example reviewing and weeding both paper records held in districts and information held on shared drives; this can be addressed through temporary additional resource (see Annex 5 of the project management plan).

26. The KIM project will have implications for both IT and staff as a whole. As the intention is to embed compliance with information policy into systems through automation there will be a need to draw heavily for support from IT. As the KIM project is focusing on information staff handle on a daily basis there will be a need for staff to engage with project in terms of training, attending briefings or workshops and to spend time adapting some of their approach to handling information. To gain the full benefits of the KIM project there is an expectation that staff will be given time to engage with the project.

Risk Assessment

27. The main risks from the project relate to external factors (for example COVID-19 and the comprehensive spending review), insufficient technical capacity in IT and staff having insufficient time or being unwilling to engage. Mitigations are in place and documented in the project management plan in section 12. There is a residual risk that COVID-19 and local lock downs could lead mean paper records cannot be accessed for review and impact on the delivery timescale in this specific workstream.

Equality Impact Assessment

28. An Equality Impact Assessment, if required, will be undertaken at an appropriate stage as the project progresses.

Communications

29. Regular and well-positioned communications will be essential to the successful delivery of the KIM project. The project will use a variety of methods to deliver communications for example, briefings, workshops, emails, meetings and messages on the intranet. The delivery methods will need to be tailored to fit each part of the Forestry Commission.

30. On the advice of the Internal Communications team in Forestry England the key stakeholder groups and messages for these groups have been identified for this stage of the project. The stakeholder groups and messages for staff are illustrated in a "Message House" diagram available in Annex 4 of the project management plan.

31. A full communications plan will be developed in consultation with the Internal Communications teams from Forestry England, Forest Services and Forest Research on approval of the approach and delivery model.

Recommendations

32. The Executive Board are invited to approve the approach and four-year delivery model for the KIM project as presented in the project management plan.

Knowledge and Information Management Lead
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