

26th January 2022**CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK PROJECT REVIEW – COVER PAPER****Purpose**

1. To update the Board on the completion of the Changing the Way We Work Project (CWWW) and set out steps for the ongoing implementation of the project outputs by the relevant parts of the Forestry Commission.

Background

2. CWWW was initiated in August 2020 to respond to 'The Future Will Be Different' review following Coronavirus restrictions. The Executive Board approved a Forestry Commission wide project in January 2021 to develop an implementation plan and establish guidance that could be used by all parts of the organisation.
3. Our vision for the programme was for the Forestry Commission to be a place where team members can enjoy innovation in the ways that they work and where they work from. Our summarised aims were to:
 - **Embrace new and more inclusive ways of working;**
 - **Make the most of IT and collaborative ways of working;**
 - **Make fewer or shorter journeys by travelling only when it's appropriate;**
 - **Be open to hearing ideas and seeking out new initiatives which improve everyone's employee experience.**

Discussion

4. A pan-Forestry Commission group was established including: IT, HR; Buildings Management; Forestry England; Forest Research and; Forest Services. The group met monthly from March to November 2021 with interim workstream and project team meetings. Meetings also took place with Forest Services, Forestry England, and Forest Research leadership teams and FCTU representatives at key stages of the programme.
5. The project maintained contact with wider Defra HR and Horizon teams to ensure aligned approaches.
6. In terms of achieving our vision for the Forestry Commission to be a place where team members can enjoy innovation in the ways that they work and where they work from, we have made considerable progress.
7. **Embrace new and more inclusive ways of working.** We have new blended working arrangements in place that based on early indications will be adopted by: 49% of teams in Forestry England reflecting the larger proportion of staff working in the forest and at visitor sites; 83% of staff in Forest Services; due to different rules in Scotland and Wales plus the Forest Research Reshaping Project, most

FR staff remain working from home and initial blended working numbers are not yet available.

8. **To make the most of IT and collaborative ways of working.** Standards and guidance have been put in place for workplaces and blended working. IT equipment has been ordered for blended workers and delivery of this will start in January 2022.
9. Teams meeting room equipment will be rolled out, with supporting guidance between January and March 2022 at 44 offices. Mobile kits will also be available to help staff to join blended and virtual meetings.
10. Ninety staff have participated in or booked a place on the soft skills of virtual and blended meetings training course.
11. **To make fewer or shorter journeys:** Training and guidance has been developed for travel and meetings with blended meetings already being offered as the norm. Travel and expenses costs in Forestry England are estimated to have reduced by 20% based on the 2022 business plan submission compared to 2019.
12. **Be open to hearing ideas and seeking out new initiatives which improve everyone's employee experience.** Staff surveys were carried out in May 2021 with 1060 respondents, the survey results and key themes have informed other actions.
13. Following twenty five management workshops supported by the core project team between June and August 2021 to introduce the programme, team conversation guidance has been rolled out to help managers engage with their team on future ways of working and understand needs at a team level.
14. A new room booking system will be soft launched in Bristol and Westonbirt in January. Central and North districts will follow and then other management units through 2022.
15. Plans for office refurbishment to meet blended needs are in progress with Sherwood office likely to take place in 2022 and others will follow in due course. As many offices accommodate Forestry England, FS and FR staff it is important that in any changes meet all teams' needs.
16. The project group has now concluded its work providing guidance and principles required to implement blended working and other aspects of the programme. Delivery is now remitted to the federated parts of the organisation.
17. In the recent Smarter Working audit Forestry Commission was awarded 'Mature', for our approach to smarter working principles.

Risk Assessment

18. The project risks identified are summarised below, updated for the actions we have taken

- Lack of engagement with staff meaning cultural change is not achieved: this has been mitigated by our staff engagement plan
- Lack of resources on offices and IT mean changes cannot be achieved: this has been mitigated through implementation plans for these areas of work and additional resource allocation
- A clean implementation will be harder to due to the COVID restrictions during the transition period: flexible timing of implementation has mitigated this risk; however, it will continue until restrictions are fully removed or new ways of working adopted
- Site based staff feel disenfranchised/ lack of benefit: this has been mitigated through manager briefings and staff engagement plan.
- Teams become less cohesive with less face to face contact: mitigated through ensuring regular face to face contact, team conversations and our staff guidance.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

19. An EqIA was completed for the project

Communications

20. The comprehensive CWWW Roots pages will be retained for the next three months during which time they will be migrated the departments responsible for implementation. A simpler link page will be created under CWWW banner. The link page will be maintained by Forestry England HR team.

21. Further communication will take place in 2022 on: completing blended working conversations; introduction of new desk and meeting room bookings systems; roll out of IT; and office changes.

Recommendations

EB are asked to note:

- Completion of the project groups' work
- Move to delivery by the federated parts of the organisation
- Continuing dialogue on blended working with FCTU through the T1 Staff Council

CWWW Project Team
17th January 2022

Attachments
Changing the Way We Work Final Report

Appendix I
Steering Group Members

Appendix II
Guidance documents