

**7 JANUARY 2025****FC BUSINESS CONTINUITY FRAMEWORK****Issue**

1. In November 2022, the Forestry Commission (FC) Executive Board (EB) asked for a review of its business continuity plans and framework to ensure both best practice is being followed and for a consistency in approach if possible.

**Background**History

2. A draft suite of documents was presented to the FC EB in November '23. At this meeting concerns were raised around how practical it would be to implement them, and a request was made for a further consultation.
3. Due to the pressing need to have a policy in place to improve scores in the upcoming assessment of our compliance against the governments functional standard for security, a decision was made to separate out this policy from the other documents. This was presented to and approved by the FC EB in January '24.

Update

4. Since then, work has been carried out by the FC's Business Continuity Working Group (BCWG) to improve the remaining documents and to gain further thoughts and suggestions from across the business. As a result, these key changes have been made to the documents -

Document	Changes
FC Business Continuity Management Procedures	<p>Further clarification was requested on the difference between business continuity, contingency planning and disaster recovery. This has been provided in the opening section of the document.</p> <p>Concerns were raised by the Business Continuity Lead &amp; Head of IT in Forest Research that the procedures wouldn't fit their business area due to their structure and lack of districts/areas. It was agreed that an additional statement in the procedures document would be sufficient to confirm that Forest Research will only be undertaking a strategic/business wide business continuity plan and site level business continuity plans with no functional/regional level plans sitting in the middle.</p>

Document	Changes
FC Business Continuity Plan (BCP) template	<p>Clarification was needed on the relationship between the BIA &amp; planning templates. It was agreed that it would be clearer and easier for staff if we merged these two documents – this will avoid the need to copy and paste information from one to the other, there will be no need to maintain two documents and it will remove the risk of information becoming outdated in the planning template as it didn't have a live/direct link to the BIA.</p> <p>Where systems are impacted during a business continuity event, to avoid confusion and duplicated effort, BCPs should where possible, simply refer to existing IT BCPs, Disaster Recovery Plans with initial contact points identified. BCP authors are to avoid duplicating information on steps to be taken. The level of IT information contained within BCP templates will need to be monitored and agreed with IT when they are being completed. Steps to follow for non-centrally managed IT systems will need to be agreed so roles are clear for those in IT teams and system owners.</p>
Business Impact Analysis (BIA) template	

5. The BCWG met on 3<sup>rd</sup> December to discuss the two updated documents. It was agreed that all concerns raised had been addressed and that the documents were fit to be presented to the FC EB for approval.

#### Next Steps

6. Following approval of the FC Business Continuity Management Procedures and FC Business Continuity Plan templates, Business Continuity leads in Forestry England, Forest Services, Forest Research and the Commissioners will begin work to complete a strategic/business wide BCP for their area of the business. These are to be completed and in place by the end of March 2025.
7. I will also work with, and support Business Continuity Leads as they implement the new BCP template in their business areas to the level they/their Executive Teams see fit and to their own timescales.
8. Work will also be undertaken through the BCWG to complete the final two GIAA business continuity audit recommendations –
  - Define arrangements for holding documents centrally within a business unit and for sharing relevant plans with other business units' representatives.
  - Schedule a business continuity tabletop testing exercise in 2024/25 to provide a solid milestone for implementation, the opportunity to refine plans and procedures, and test systems of resilience – this exercise is likely to be based on the CO plan to relieve pressure on the other business areas but we will of course share findings through the BCWG.

### **Recommendations**

9. The Board are invited to approve the updated FC Business Continuity Management Procedures and FC Business Planning Template.

**Head of Internal Governance**  
**December '24**