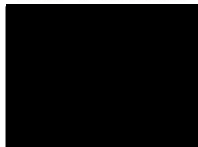


**England National Office**

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Helen Anderson  
Our Forests



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6 October 2011

Dear Helen

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: OUR FORESTS, OF290711**

Thank you for your request for information regarding the public forest estate which we received on 29 July 2011. As you know from my e-mail of 2 August we can only provide information that is held by the Forestry Commission. However, if we are aware that some of the information you are seeking is held by another public authority we can consider a transfer. As you have made a very similar request to Defra, who may also hold some of the information you are seeking, we are not proposing to transfer any part of your request.

As I also advised in my e-mail of 2 August most, if not all, of your request is exempt from disclosure under section 39(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 because this information is "environmental information", as defined in regulation 2 of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Your request must therefore be considered under these Regulations.

I would like to thank you for your e-mail of 5 August in which you clarified the period for which you wanted us to disclose details of meetings with any organisation or body 'potentially taking on land currently falling within the Forestry Commission public forest estate' as being from 1 January 2010 to the time of your request. I am very sorry for the time it has taken to provide this reply following that clarification.

Our policy is to be as open with the information that we hold as possible and I am pleased to say that we are able to disclose most of the information you have requested. Where we are not disclosing the information the reason for non-disclosure has been set out.

For clarity I am restating each element of your request before providing our response. Where necessary we have enclosed relevant documents (please note that the legislation does not require us to send you a copy of the original documents, just provide you with the information in them), and I will refer to these enclosed in the answers below.

1) *Please can you provide details of all meetings, site visits and/or discussions in person, via the phone or email that the Government and its officials (including Forestry Commission staff) have held with any organisations - including conservation NGOs and/or commercial and professional bodies - concerning any of those organisations and bodies potentially taking on land currently falling within the Forestry Commission public forest estate?*

*Please also provide details of all meetings, site visits and/or discussions in person, via the phone or email that the Government and its officials (including Forestry Commission staff) have held with any overseas based organisations - including conservation NGOs and/or commercial and professional bodies - concerning any of those organisations and bodies potentially taking on land currently falling within the Forestry Commission public forest estate?*

*Please specify the dates of any such meetings, site visits and/or discussions above and all those attending. Please also supply copies of notes you hold of any such meetings, site visits and discussions in the form of paper and electronic records, including emails.*

#### Ongoing Asset Sales Programme 2010/11

We have retained records of the following exchanges having taken place between 1 January 2010 and 29 July 2011 which we consider may fall within the term 'potentially taking on land currently falling within the Forestry Commission public forest estate'. All of these were in the context of our ongoing asset disposal programme which we have been operating for a number of years. In July 2010 Simon Hodgson contacted the National Trust, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts and RSPB asking if the respective organisations had any interest in acquiring any parts of the public forest estate or whether they were interested in having leasehold areas back (where the organisation was the freeholder). He explained that these sales could be under the 'sponsored sale arrangements' that the Forestry Commission had been operating.

The National Trust provided a list of sites of potential interest. This was on 13 August 2010 in an e-mail from David Riddle to Simon Hodgson. In this e-mail the David Riddle said: 'I now have responses from regional colleagues as per the list attached. I realise that some sites are not ones included on your list of potential disposals<sup>1</sup> but I thought I would include them anyway, just so you know of our interest in case opportunities arise in future for them to be considered. I expect a few additions might come in during the next week and hope it is OK if I feed these in to you as and when? However I hope this

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission had provided the National Trust with a list of sites that were on the 2010/11 disposals programme which had been sent to the Regional Advisor Committees and other interested bodies, a copy of this list is enclosed.



gives you what you need for now'. A revised list was sent to Simon Hodgson on 20 August 2010 and a copy of this list is enclosed.

The Woodland Trust's response was to advise the Forestry Commission that they were not interested in taking on the ownership and management of any existing woodland.

The Wildlife Trusts provided a list of woodlands where they 'have an interest in having more active management', and I enclose a copy of this list.

The RSPB, in an e-mail on 12 August 2010, indicated that other than discussing the Rempstone lease (Dorset) they were not in a position to discuss potential purchases of other Forestry Commission England sites or site types at this time.

David Riddle (National Trust) met Brian Mahony (Chief Executive, Forest Enterprise) and Mark Thornycroft on 4 October 2010 to discuss the sites on the list provided to the Forestry Commission on 20 August 2010. We have not retained any recorded information from this meeting.

#### Public Forest Estate Consultation

In the context of the consultation launched on 27 January 2011 there were two meetings with representatives of the National Trust held in February this year. These were not about 'potentially taking on land currently falling within the Forestry Commission public forest estate'. They were to discuss issues raised by the public consultation on the future of the Public Forest Estate in England, so they appear to us to fall outside the scope of your request, but we have included them for completeness.

2) *Please supply the average costs per hectare for managing the woodlands and forests that lie within the public forest estate in England and which are managed by the Forestry Commission.*

As I advised in my e-mail of 2 August, updated with a revised link in my e-mail of 11 August, the cost of managing the Public Forest Estate in England is published in the Forestry Commission Great Britain/England Annual Report and Accounts. As this is easily accessible by electronic means there is no requirement under the regulations for us to supply it separately.

3) *Please specify the overall costs per annum to the taxpayer for managing the woods and forests of the public forest estate in England.*

As with the cost per hectare this information is published in the Annual Report and Accounts, and the same provisions outlined above answer apply. I would also suggest that Annual Report and Accounts provide useful context for any individual figure that you may wish to reuse.

4) *As well as the average costs across the entire 258,000 hectares of the public forest estate, please also supply management costs per hectare for the following*

*indicative examples of woods and forests on the public forest estate:*

- *a site with standard access, low visitor numbers, and a primary output of timber production;*
- *a site with standard access, low visitor numbers, and a primary output of timber production;*
- *a site developed/restored as community woodland in close proximity to and delivering multiple benefits to urban populations.*

As I advised you in my e-mail of 2 August your request does not fit any standard criteria that we normally use. However, in accordance with regulation 9 (the provision of advice and assistance) we have looked at how we can relate available information to the criteria you have specified and we have continued to gather the information as proposed in my e-mail of 11 August.

For a site with standard access, low visitor numbers, and a primary output of timber production we have chosen the 10,800 hectares that is the Kershope/Spadeadam Beat of Kielder Forest. This had a net surplus of £53.84 per hectare in 2010/11.

For a site delivering the full mix of multi-purpose forestry benefits – access/recreation/timber/biodiversity/ecosystem services we have chosen the Thetford Beat of East Anglia Forest District which extends to 18,730 hectares and includes the High Lodge Visitor Centre. This had a net cost of £85.51 per hectare in 2010/11.

For a site developed/restored as community woodland in close proximity to and delivering multiple benefits to urban populations we have chosen Thames Chase which is only 529 hectares. This had a net cost of £1307.55 per hectare in 2010/11.

The above figures are just for the year stated (2010/11), not the annual or average cost per hectare over a period of time.

We hope that we have been able to provide the information you expected and as promptly as possible. If you think this is not the case please let me know as soon as possible.

Please note that the supply of this information does not provide an automatic right to re-use the documents in a way that would infringe copyright or intellectual property rights, for example, by making multiple copies, publishing and issuing copies to the public. If you do wish to reuse information supplied please contact me.

Should you wish to complain about the way your request has been handled please contact:

Chief Executive  
Forestry Commission England  
620 Bristol Business Park  
Couldharbour Lane  
Bristol BS16 1EJ

Complaints regarding non-compliance with the open access legislation obligations should initially be made to the Forestry Commission itself. We aim to resolve any complaints with you directly. However, should the matter fail to be resolved, you may make an appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office at:

FOI Compliance Team (complaints)  
Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

If I can be of any further assistance please contact me using the address details at the top of this letter.

**Yours sincerely**



**Richard Barker**  
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Forestry Commission England

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