

Sandlings e-mail to Cabinet on inclusion of new Forestry legislation in the forthcoming Queen's Speech

The Campaign has now emailed each member of the Cabinet to urge them to approve the inclusion of a new Forestry Bill in the forthcoming Queen's Speech.

Draft Legislation on Forestry for the Queen's Speech

We are writing to you, as member of the Cabinet, to urge you to do what you can to ensure draft legislation to secure the future of the public forest estate appears in the Queen's speech so that legislation can be enacted within this Parliament. This, we believe, would be widely supported by many thousands of people across this country and would secure a lasting green legacy for this Government.

Save Sandlings Forest campaign was born out of our community's concern in 2010 that Government was planning to sell-off (or lease) a substantial part of our Public Forest Estate (PFE). Following a national outcry Government listened, withdrew the plan and set up the Independent Panel on Forestry (IPF). Save Sandlings Forest campaign, along with other campaigns and community groups contributed to this process.

Since the IPF produced its final report in July 2012 we, along with colleagues from other community campaign groups, have had regular contact with the DEFRA Forestry Team and members of the Forestry Commission. We have greatly appreciated this opportunity to influence government thinking and help shape the future of the PFE. All through this process our principal aim has been to help create a thriving, properly funded and expanding Public Forest Estate held safely within public ownership.

To that end we broadly welcome:

the announcement at the recent Stakeholder Meeting of the ten core principles that will guide government's legislative planning.

the focus on sustainable multipurpose forestry as outlined in the IPF's Final report.

the inclusion of representatives from all spheres of interest at board level and amongst the Guardians.

the safeguards against privatisation from these principles and arrangements

the move to pay for the public benefits that flow from the PFE through a system of Eco-System Services.

On this basis, we believe that legislation encompassing all of these principles should be brought before Parliament at the earliest opportunity.

We therefore urge you, as a member of the Cabinet, to do all you can to ensure that the draft legislation is included in the Queen's Speech in June so that it can be scrutinised and passed before the end of this Government in 2015. We feel that doing this would complete the work started by the Independent Panel, keep faith with all those thousands of people who fought to save the PFE from the sell-off and secure this much loved national asset for future generations.

Such a move would be a lasting green legacy for this Government. It would have the support of the many thousands of people across the country who value our woods and forests for timber production, wildlife and recreation and as a unique asset for future generations.

Imogen Radford

Clive Coles

Coordinators, Save Sandlings Forest campaign