

11th November 2009



England

Allan MacKenzie
Chair

Dear Union Member

The Operational Efficiency Programme in England

Further to my recent letter on forthcoming change we can now be fairly certain that the Pre-Budget Report (PBR) will be laid before Parliament on December 9th 2009. This could have wide ranging implications on how the FC in England delivers its objectives in line with the Government agenda on the Public Forest Estate (PFE). The delivery mechanism for making these changes is contained within the Operational Efficiency Programme (OEP).

So what do we know about the OEP? I sat down and asked myself 10 questions.

1. What is it?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do we know about the process?
4. What information does it contain?
5. What do we know about any interim results?
6. How will it affect Forestry Commission (FC) union members?
7. What do union members need to do?
8. How can the FCTU and its members influence the process?
9. Who will make the final decisions?
10. What will be the long term effects?

On pondering them it became apparent that I can probably answer questions 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8 but the rest are, at this time, complete unknowns.

What is OEP?

It is wide ranging across the whole of the Governments estate, and seeks to ensure that future efforts to drive efficiency in public services keep pace with developments in the private sector. In relation to the FC the OEP will include how the PFE can generate greater commercial benefit, including new and innovative opportunities, while respecting Government's continuing commitment to public – sector ownership.

So what does it mean?

The OEP looks at four key areas and asks –

- Are the right skills, structures and tools in place to manage the assets on the PFE?
- Are there assets of low commercial and economic value that the FC should no longer hold?
- Do current commercial activities deliver good value?
- Are there any additional opportunities that could be realised?

What do we know about the process?

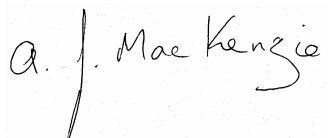
We know that HM Treasury (HMT), the FC, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Shareholder Executive formed a steering group and working group to consider five work streams and to report findings.

What do union members need to do?

As you will see there are many questions without answers, union members need to ask these questions of their local and senior managers, local politicians, sitting MPs and prospective parliamentary candidates. Some would contend that we should wait until the PBR and then ask, but by then it could be too late, and events could overtake us.

For us to influence the process we need information and at this time we can not get any as it is shrouded in confidentiality until Treasury and DEFRA Ministers have been consulted.

We need your help to get that information if you can get the answers to the above questions, feed your responses back to me so that we can work together to develop a strong and unified strategy to meet and adapt to forthcoming changes.



Allan MacKenzie
FCTU England Chair