

Study into the future long-term sustainable role of the Public Forest Estate.

Statement

The Forestry Commission manages over 250,000 hectares of land in England and provides a unique national asset delivering many benefits. These include protecting and enhancing the natural environment, providing economic opportunities and helping to improve the quality of people's lives. Since 1997 the Forestry Commission has been able to buy and sell land in order to increase the public benefits on the public forest estate.

Last year we published our Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests and the time is right to consider how the public forest estate might respond to the strategy. I have therefore asked the Forestry Commission to carry out a study of the future long-term sustainable role of the public forest estate in England and to make recommendations.

The Commission's England National Committee will act as the governing body for the study, establishing a working group from relevant key stakeholders, including Defra.

The terms of reference for the study are:

To consider the future long-term sustainable role for the public forest estate making recommendations about any necessary changes to improve its ability to deliver relevant priorities in the Strategy for England's Trees Woods and Forests and contribute to other Government objectives.

The study will be grounded in our sustainable development strategy, Securing the Future, and there will be a full public consultation.