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Issue 2

Independent Panel on Forestry Newsletter

The Independent Panel on Forestry was set up to advise the government on the future of forests and woods in England. Welcome to their second newsletter which focuses on the release of the progress report.

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Panel launch their progress report

The work of the Panel is well underway now, and in the spirit of continuing a conversation they wanted to share where they have got to in their thinking in advance of the final report and recommendations next spring.

So, after visiting the forests and woods of England and analysing the many passionate responses to the 'call for views', the Panel are pleased to release their progress report this month.

The Panel's chair, The Right Reverend James Jones Bishop of Liverpool, said: "Although our Panel was born out of fierce debate over the future of the public forest estate, what has become apparent through our work so far is that we must look at the future of all woods and forests, not just the one fifth managed by the Forestry Commission."

The report says the Panel are working towards recommendations that will increase the benefits generated from all forests in England – to the people that enjoy them, to nature and to the businesses that rely on them. Of the

woods which are not in the public estate, 80%, only about half of them are managed. The Panel wants to see more woods created and more woods managed.



Bishop James Jones

The report also makes clear that the Panel believe there is a role for a national public forest estate. It also says how this tremendous asset is managed and used should evolve to reflect people's aspirations and wider challenges like climate change.

The report notes that while looking over a landscape of different types and ages of trees in the Forest of Dean, the Panel were told this was "a political landscape"

shaped by the national politics at the time of planting. The Panel has said in the progress report that future forestry policy should reflect the economic and ecological timescales of woodlands.

Progress report headlines:

- Panel believe there is a role for a national public forest estate
- The Panel want to see more woodlands created and more woodlands managed
- Future forestry policy should reflect economic and ecological timescale of woodlands
- Further work exploring how more woodlands in England can deliver more for society, the environment and the economy.

A full copy of the progress report can be found on the website:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/reports/>.

Snapshots from the Panel's visits to Northumberland, Kent and Nottinghamshire



The Panel continue visiting England's forests

Some of you may have met the Panel on one of their visits. During their visits the Panel hope to build up a good picture of the varied nature of forests and woods, and the role they play in our communities and the economy. Details of all the visits can be found on the website:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/>

Next steps ...

In the next steps of the Panel's journey they are keen to look deeper and wider into the issues.

An example could include how the Forestry Commission is held accountable and how benefits, such as access, can be sustained over a long timescale.

They will explore whether the current set up for the Forestry Commission is the right one whilst looking at all of England's forests and woods. The Panel are keen to develop

recommendations that encourage more people to tend and manage woods in the interests of conserving and enhancing nature, to connect people with nature and to support green jobs.

In addition to drawing on the call for views and lessons learned from the visits around the county the Panel have commissioned a variety of research reports and workshops, which will cover history, ecology and economics. The long term sustainability of the forest

and woodland sector is a particular concern. A review of work on access and community engagement has also been commissioned. The Panel continue to meet with different groups and test out their ideas.

The Panel are not specifically seeking comments on the progress report, but as ever, remain open to ideas and suggestions that may stimulate their work.

Thousands share their views with the Panel

Back in May the Panel launched its 'call for views'.

Huge numbers of individuals, clubs, charities, organisations and businesses putting pen to paper, keyboard to computer, or in one case paintbrush to card, to express their opinion.

Bishop James said: "We have been struck by the heartfelt connections between the forests and woods of England and the people who live, work and relax in them.

"More than 42,000 people responded to the Panel's call for views. They overwhelmingly expressed their passion for the public forest estate, and woods

more generally, as places of recreation, a way connect with nature and as a vital source of resources."

The call for views was featured widely online and picked up by numerous organisations including the Woodland Trust and the campaign group 38 Degrees.

In total the Panel received 42,159 responses to the call for views. There were 223 letters, 7063 emails and 34,873 responses received via 38 Degrees.

Of the emails received directly, 3841 responses came from individuals via the facility on the Woodland Trust website, and over 262 were based

on a template response issue by the Motor Sports Association.

From the very first response received to the last it was clear that each and every response represented a person's, or number of peoples, time, effort, interest and passion.

The Panel will continue to use the information everyone has provided as they work towards their final report due in Spring 2012.

A detailed analysis of the responses to the call for views can be found in Annex 2 of the progress report.