*Submitted by online form.*

18 October 2016

**RE: CIfA response to EFRA Forestry in England inquiry**

Dear Mr Parish,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to this enquiry. We would like to underline the important overlap between forestry and archaeology and the requisite need for understanding of the archaeological resource, and wider significance of the historic environment, within forestry policy. This understanding should reflect the contribution made by archaeology and heritage to the cultural and amenity value of publicly and privately owned forests, and also the need to adopt practices which are sensitive to the need to protect and preserve irreplaceable historic assets.

We understand that we are not the core audience for this inquiry, however, these views are a necessary part of the discussion on how to improve forestry policy for the purposes of maximising both the commercial benefits of forestry and balancing woodland protection. The following comments address the key terms of reference with respect to these interests:

***Increasing the level of tree cover and improving management of private and public forests in England***

We recognise and support the aim to increase tree cover in the UK, where we currently have among the lowest levels of forest as a percentage of land area in Europe. However, afforestation requires sensitivity to historic landscapes and buried archaeology.

It is important that the specific management requirements of historic environment assets are understood by land managers and that relationships remain in place to ensure specialist advice in relation to the historic environment. The archaeological sector values the current archaeological expertise within both Natural England and the Forestry Commission in this regard and, crucially, within local authorities, where historic environment advisors provide a necessary link with historic environment databases. This point is recognised in current guidance on Forestry and the Historic Environment, but should be emphasised as a key partnership in any future strategic aims for UK forests.

***Balancing woodland protection, including of ancient forests, with economic exploitation, including developing woods as an energy source;***

Ancient forests are assets of the highest cultural and ecological significance and carry a high level of protection within the planning system. Some ancient forests are mixed use, providing complex management needs with economic exploitation. Proper processes to ensure sufficient protection for the delicate ecological and historic assets in ancient woodland are vital. To provide the information necessary to deliver good management, continued support for data integration through Magic mapping system and ancient tree hunt are valuable, but data collected locally and held in Historic Environment Records is also a source of information of critical importance.

***Provide a strategic framework, including fiscal and regulatory regimes, to support forestry businesses;***

It is important that mechanisms to ensure the dissemination of good practice in a diverse range of areas is successful at reaching all levels of forestry businesses, with important areas of investment to include native woodland preservation, carbon sequestration, environmental conservation, and historic asset conservation, as well as programmes which create social benefits. Current guidance for the historic environment is valued, but should any revision of strategic framework be considered, a more holistic approach to setting that framework to achieve these broad benefits should be seen as a vital starting point.

***Provide grants and advice through the CAP and the Rural Development Programme, and any successor programme, for England that incentivise the sector to deliver multiple economic and environmental benefits;***

One of the major benefits of the CAP programme in the UK is that it provides for a greater degree of integrated management of the natural and historic environment, providing a clear avenue through agri-environment schemes for the inclusion of heritage assets in land management strategies. We strongly believe that this holistic vision, which recognises the overlapping influence of agriculture, ecology, rural communities, place, and cultural and natural heritage in rural development is part of good practice for forestry. The associated benefits are also important to wider communities.

It is important that future programmes seek at least a similar level of integration and that any changes to grants and advice within specific areas, like forestry, do not allow any retrenchment into silos which limit the range of economic, environmental, and cultural benefits which are possible.

European Regional Development Funds have clearly been of huge significance in many places in Scotland, particularly for enhancing public access and sustainable tourism benefits. Other funding, such as that from the LEADER programme, is targeted directly to communities and allows for innovative projects which can lead to local benefits derived from the forest resource. Both of these funding sources will be sorely missed by rural communities if the UK and Scotland ceases to have access to them. Future options for the delivery of similar funding may be important to consider.

***Concluding remarks***

We look forward to the Committee’s comments on this important subject and hope that there is agreement that the forestry policy needs to preserve the positive engagement across the wide spectrum of natural and historic environment protection, in any future guise.

If there is anything further that we can do to assist, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,



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