

16 September 2015

## **FOREST HOLIDAYS AND CAMPING IN THE FOREST REPORT**

### **Purpose**

1. To provide the Board with the near final version of the revised Estates Management Guidance Note (EMGN4a) specific to proposed recreation developments by Forest Holidays and Camping in the Forest.
2. To provide an update on operational developments with Forest Holidays (FH) and Camping In The Forest (CITF)

### **Background**

3. It was agreed to provide regular updates to the Committee in order to ensure that a balanced picture of the FC/FEE relationship with FH/CITF was available to members and to help ensure that information on new developments were brought to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.
4. FEE is the principal point of contact for FH and CITF when dealing with new proposals or business arising for existing developments and we also provide a point of contact if required in FC for Natural Resource Wales and FC Scotland.
5. FC has a relationship with FH as 'Shareholder', 'Landowner' and 'Development Partner' for new sites and as well as an Operational Partner on the ground in the forests.
6. FC has a relationship with CITF as 'Shareholder' and "Landowner", but does not a 'Development Partner' relationship, although there is an operational partner relationship on the ground.

### **Discussion**

#### Working with FH & CITF

7. We now have a formally-allocated one of our Land Agents to supporting and delivering the Forest Holidays site development programme and CITF in close coordination with District and National teams.

#### Site Selection Process

8. The Land Agent has been working on a Site Selection Criteria for FH/CITF, which has evolved from a joint approach. Site requirements of FH/CITF have been separated from the requirements of FC.

9. This new approach will help to ensure that there is now a clearly defined set of FC-controlled criteria which provides a new clarity and accountability before any new site proposal is taken forward with FH/CITF.
10. The approval process once a site with development potential has been selected is now handled through the process set out in a new "Estates Management Notes (EMGN4a)" developed from the previous EMGN4 which covered all types of non-forestry developments.

#### EMGN4a

11. A near final version of EMGN4a is attached at Annex A. Having a specific remit applying only to CITF and FH developments EMGN4a, has helped improve clarity as sections of previous guidance that were not relevant to recreational developments have been removed.
12. The purpose of our internal approval process is in order to ensure that we are content for a potential development to be progressed by CITF or FH to the next stage, which we would expect to be the preparations required for an application for planning permission.
13. It should be noted that the level of information required for a planning application, for example detailed ecological surveys, will not be available when approval is given under EMGN4a, so new issues may emerge and may need to be addressed as a proposal develops.

#### Latest Activity

14. District visits to scope site selection have concluded apart from East England FD and Yorkshire FD. The EMGN will direct the second phase of site selection once approved – demonstrating a clear and consistent approach in delivery.
15. The output from the District visits to date; indicates that to deliver a programme for FH will require a coordinated approach utilising a range of delivery models.
16. Initial desktop scoping of 65 sites in England has now been refined to 22 – however attrition rates remain high; and with the 5 sites that are currently at various stages in the process – there are only a further 9 with potential at this time.

#### Current Developments Progress

17. FEE is currently supporting Forest Holidays Planning teams to progress proposals in the following locations:

**Wales.** An application for the Brecon Beacons will be submitted in the next 2 months following successful pre-application consultation.

**Scotland.** Planning permission has been granted for an additional 11 cabins at Strathyre site within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.

**Delamere,** Cheshire. An appeal against the High Court judgement will be undertaken (taking 4-5 months) and [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Houghton,** Sussex. All ecological studies have been refreshed and the application is almost complete and the public consultation strategy is well advanced. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Fineshade,** Northants. Now working towards a new application to be submitted during October / November. This will address the two reasons for refusal: ecology and landscape. An exhaustive study of the ecology has been undertaken and the scheme has been significantly modified to address local concerns. FH have recently engaged with the new ward Councillor and will be undertaking a full public consultation before the application is submitted.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

18. FEE is also currently supporting CITF teams to progress proposals for a new CITF 150-pitch site and facilities [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

### **Resource implications**

19. FH continue to pay for the increased resource pressure placed on FEE for the management of FH on the PFE.
20. It should also be noted that the income generated from the site leases, including planned new developments, is an important long-term source of revenue that helps maintain the PFE.

## **Risk Assessment**

21. The FC/FEE risks are covered in the Risk Registers at both levels. As the FH and CITF business grows FH/CITF is an increasing reputational risk for FC/FEE particularly with new developments. We are undertaking a number of measures with FH and inside FC/FEE to manage those risks.

## **Communications**

22. Forest Holidays continue to work closely with the Forestry Commission National Office Communications team to develop and improve their approach to public consultation and the handling of public and media enquires about Forest Holidays.

## **Recommendations**

23. The Board is invited to note the information included in this paper and comment on the near final version of EMGN4a.

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