



# The future of the Public Forest Estate in England

## Analysis of responses to the suspended Public Consultation January-February 2011

Final Report  
June 2011

Anna Lawrence and  
Matthew Jollands

# 'The future of the Public Forest Estate in England'

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### *Final report*

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For further information about this report please contact:

Anna Lawrence [anna.lawrence@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:anna.lawrence@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

## Summary of key points

1. **The consultation:** The consultation on the future of the public forest estate (PFE) in England was suspended after three weeks, by which time 7007 responses had been received. This report presents an analysis of those responses. The great majority of respondents described themselves as 'members of the public'. Organisational stakeholders usually respond to consultations towards the end of the consultation period. While the responses are not therefore representative of wider 'public opinion' they do offer insights into opinions held by the public.
2. **Responses:** The consultation document was largely structured as pairs of questions: one closed (tick-box response) combined with one open (respondent's own words). This report summarises the responses to all the closed (quantitative) questions, and responses to eight open (qualitative) questions.

In terms of closed questions, most respondents answered the first question, but numbers answering tailed off through the sequence with only about half answering the later questions.

However in terms of the open questions, the pattern was more variable and response rates indicate that respondents most wanted to contribute to topics of : principles for managing the forest, models of ownership, efficiency, community right to buy, and criteria for transfer to charity ownership. In view of the limited resources available, analysis has focused on questions that represent the full range of topics and ownership models, and within that range, selecting those questions that attracted most responses.

3. **Question 1: principles for making decisions on new owners** In answering the closed question, most respondents agreed with the proposed principles (86-88% agreed: 4% disagreed with each principle).

Most respondents agreed with the proposed principles for making decisions about new owners. However in the open question many noted that while they agreed with the principles they did not agree with the overall objective of changing ownership. A total of 51% expressed concerns about the consultation process and / or proposals, and 34% expressed concerns about the consequences of the proposals. 38% suggested additional principles, among which that of maintaining or increasing access was predominant (26%). On the other hand 5% were partly supportive and 2% expressed concerns about current arrangements.

4. **Question 2: alternative ownership** In responding to this question, when compared with responses to Question 1, there was closer correspondence between the answers to the closed and open questions. Most respondents disagreed with proposals to transfer ownership.

In the closed part of the question, respondents disagreed most with the proposal that 'Commercial operators should be found to take on long-term leases' (73% against: 10% for). They disagreed, but least strongly, with the proposal that 'New or existing charitable organisations should be offered the opportunity to take on ownership or management of heritage forests' (46% against: 36% for).

In the open part of the question, 63% of those who responded express some degree of criticism of the consultation. This high level of criticism seems to be specific to the topic of this question, because of the 51% who did comment on ownership issues, the majority expressed support for public ownership, and many pointed out that this was not an option which was listed in the closed part of the question. Ownership attracted much more comment than management: only 11% used this question as an opportunity to make additional observations about the pros and cons of diversifying management.

10% of those answering the question were at least partly supportive of the proposals, including 9% who made suggestions about how to modify them. These suggestions are a source of further ideas about the future of the PFE.

5. **Question 3: efficiency gains:** The question of efficiency attracted considerable concern. This was summarised in responses to the closed question where 56% of respondents thought that the proposals were unlikely or highly unlikely to result in efficiency gains, compared with 5% who thought they were likely or highly likely. 39% did not know or did not answer.

These results are mirrored in the open question. Of those who answered it, nearly half (49%) were concerned that the proposals would reduce efficiency, while a third (36%) felt that it was not the point on which the future of the PFE should be decided, or that its relevance depended on how it was defined. 23% added that the current situation is satisfactory, while 19% expressed concerns about the commercial sector and 11% expressed concerns about the charity or community sectors. However 4% were supportive of some aspect of the proposals.

Commenting on the broader issue of the proposals, 31% expressed concern about them or the consultation process, and 10% felt that they had insufficient evidence.

6. **Question 4: characterisation of the public forest estate** In answering the closed part of Question 4, a majority agreed with the characterisation offered (34% agreed: 27% disagreed).

The question presented difficulties in analysis as some of the responses make it clear that there were divergent understandings of the purpose of characterisation.

Responses to the open question suggest that whilst they agreed with the characterisation as a starting point, it could be developed further. 37% of those who answered the open question offered additional criteria of which ecological, social and cultural predominated. 29% commented on the approach, with the main view being that the characterisation was too simplistic – connected with concerns that the multiple benefits of each woodland were not recognised in this approach. This interpretation is supported by the 25% of responses to the open question, which expressed the view that the characterisation was incorrect or insufficiently detailed.

Again respondents used the open question as an opportunity to comment on the overall proposals and consultation approach, with 45% expressing disagreement. On the other hand 2% of responses to the open question indicated support for the characterisation, and 2% indicated broad support for the proposals.

7. **Question 5: criteria for transfer to charity:** more disagreed than agreed with the criteria offered (25% agreed: 38% disagreed).

The majority of those answering the open question expressed concerns about the process, with 64% objecting to the proposals or consultation, and 17% feeling unable to answer this particular question. 6% felt that some parts of this proposal were acceptable, and 4% supported change of ownership.

8. **Question 6: principles for design of transfer to charity:** more agreed than disagreed with each principle offered. Most agreement was expressed with 'The charity would have to comply with a set of agreed rules' (44% agreed: 12% disagreed). Agreement was expressed least strongly with 'The forest would be transferred to the charity at no charge for the new owner' and 'The charity would be expected to become less reliant on Government grant over time' (36% agreed: 20% disagreed in each case). Responses to the open part of this question have not been analysed.

9. **Question 7: objectives for charities:** overall, strong agreement was expressed with the objectives, ranging from safeguarding biodiversity (48% agreed: 8% disagreed) to balancing interests of timber production with those of conservation and recreation (40% agreed: 15% disagreed). Responses to the open part of this question have not been analysed.

10. **Question 8: prioritising community groups:** There was a balance of opinion amongst those who answered the closed question (28% agreed: 29% disagreed with prioritising community or civil society organisations).

The open question provided insight into the range of opinions. Again there was a large body of opinion questioning the proposals or consultation process (84% of the sample analysed). On the other hand 19% indicated support for some part of the proposal, 16% indicated concerns about feasibility and 8% made additional suggestions.

The overall picture is that respondents felt opposed to the concept of selling the PFE (80% of the sample), but had constructive suggestions to make. These responses provide a source of ideas for further policy development.

11. **Question 9: principles to guide sale to community groups:** there was a range of opinion amongst those who replied. Strongest agreement was with the principle 'Should the groups be wound up, the land would be returned to the ownership of the Secretary of State' (38% agreed: 13% disagreed). Strongest disagreement was with the principle 'If community or civil society groups chose not to purchase or lease the forest, then the land could be leased on the open market' (5% agreed: 47% disagreed). Responses to the open part of this question have not been analysed.
12. **Question 10: community groups and protection of public benefits:** most disagreed that the approach was sufficient to protect public benefits (10% agreed: 47% disagreed). Responses to the open part of this question have not been analysed.
13. **Question 11: criteria for leasing to the private sector:** most disagreed with the criterion 'Where the primary purpose and benefit delivered by the woodland is timber production and other commercial opportunities' (13% agreed: 40% disagreed), while opinion was divided on the criterion 'Scope for using lease conditions to safeguard public benefits' (25% agreed: 26% disagreed). Responses to the open part of this question have not been analysed.
14. **Question 12: principles to guide the leasing of productive forests:** there was overall disagreement with the principles proposed. Strongest disagreement was with the principle 'Leases would last for 150 years and impose conditions where needed to safeguard public benefits' (15% agreed: 34% disagreed). Responses to the open part of this question have not been analysed.
15. **Question 13: other safeguards that the Government could consider:** There was no closed part to Question 13. Amongst those responding to the open question,

again most attention was given to expressing opposition to the proposals or consultation process (49%) with a further 6% expressing reservations (rather than outright opposition). About one third (35%) suggested additional criteria that would be necessary, amongst which access (15%) and environmental protection (15%) featured strongly. 18% commented that the safeguards would not be necessary if current arrangements are maintained, and 18% also expressed concerns about how safeguards would be monitored and enforced.

3% expressed some form of support, while 1% made additional or alternative proposals.

16. **Question 14: managing the residual estate:** most disagreed that the approach was sufficient to protect public benefits (9% agreed: 44% disagreed). Responses to the open part of this question have not been analysed.
17. **Question 15: role of Forestry Commission England:** In answering the closed question, there was a strong level of agreement with the roles proposed. Strongest agreement was with 'expanding the woodland resource through promoting and creating incentives for planting and naturally regenerating trees, woods and forests of the right type in the right place' (51% agreed: 3% disagreed). Least strong agreement was with 'empowering and enabling people to determine and deliver the public benefits which they want from woodland' (42% agreed: 11% disagreed).

Responses to the open question suggested that while many respondents agreed with these roles, this did not require a change in the current arrangements (48% of those sampled), while 29% again took the opportunity to express opposition to the proposals and 11% expressed criticism of this question in particular (e.g. on the grounds that these roles are already being fulfilled).

44% of those sampled indicated particular priorities for FCE's role, while 7% suggested changes to FCE's current role, and 1% expressed at least partial support for the proposals.

18. **Final question: any further comments.** Answers to this question were in many cases extensive and detailed. They have been analysed in broad categories only. Example are provided in Appendix 1. Most respondents expressed concerns with the proposals themselves (80%), while 37% highlighted concerns with the consultation process, 20% noted concerns about the environment or social impact of the proposals, and 19% noted approval of FCE's current approach.

On the other hand 7% were open to change, with protection of public benefit, 1%

were not happy with FCE's current approach, and fewer than 1% fully supported the proposals.

19. **Sources of ideas for future management.** The response to the consultation also provides a source of ideas for future management. It is important not to lose these in the process of summarising responses. Of those open questions which have been analysed, we provide a list of categories where sources of positive suggestions can be found.

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## Introduction

### a) Purpose of this report

On 27 January 2011 the Forestry Commission England (FCE) and DEFRA opened a consultation on the future of the public forest estate (PFE) in England. The consultation was suspended after three weeks, on 17 February 2011.

The full text of the consultation document is available at:

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/forests/20110127-forestry-consult-doc.pdf>

At this early stage over 7000 responses had been received. The government convened an independent panel to look into options for the future of forestry policy in England, and the Secretary of State made a commitment that 'all those responses and the questions contained in the consultation will be part of the work that the independent panel will review' (Hansard, 17 February 2011).

Forest Research was contracted to analyse those responses in order to:

- o ensure they are summarised rigorously
- o gauge the initial public response
- o access the many ideas and suggestions contained therein.

All the quantitative responses, and qualitative responses to half of the open questions, are analysed here, with pointers to areas where most innovation and suggestions for future directions can be found. Given resource limitations, open questions were selected for analysis based on number of responses and to ensure that all the topics were covered. Furthermore, in analysing three of the open questions, a random sample of 50% of responses was selected and coded.

### b) Who do these data represent?

It is important to note that these responses are only those submitted in the first quarter of the consultation period, and that most consultations receive the great majority of responses in the last week of a 12 week process. These responses are therefore likely to represent only a small cross-section of potential respondents, and are not representative of wider public opinion. In particular, there were few organisational responses and the consultation data cannot be used as a source of views from stakeholder organisations.

Furthermore, only 1.3% of respondents responded off-line. DEFRA staff leading on analysis of other recent public consultations indicate that more typically, up to 50% of responses are made off-line. This suggests that those who would have responded on paper or email (i.e. those less comfortable with the use of the internet) are also under-represented in this early response.

Accordingly we have taken advice that it is not appropriate to include indications of statistical significance of difference between stakeholder groups.

### c) Analysis of open questions: method

Parts 'b' of each question allowed consultees to respond in their own words. These types of questions are known as 'open' questions, and analysis is done by coding the responses into categories. For each question, every response is coded according to the category or categories that best fits it.

A key part of the analysis therefore is to construct the set of coding categories. This is a significant challenge with such an unusually large dataset, and attention has been paid to transparency and objectivity by applying the following steps.

For a given question:

1. at least two researchers review the responses separately
2. they then discuss together their broad impressions of the main themes emerging
3. researcher A drafts a list of categories based on the first 100 responses, and sends this list plus the data to researcher B
4. researcher B applies the coding categories to a second group of 100 responses selected much further into the dataset (e.g. responses 3001-3100) to test for ease of use, comprehensiveness, overlapping categories etc.
5. the two researchers then compare and adjust coding categories
6. researcher A then codes all responses.

The number of categories is always a matter of judgement. In this case, with such a wide range of responses, we have aimed for the middle ground of about 30 coding categories for each question, which are in turn clustered under broader themes.

Each respondent's text response was allocated to one or more coding category. In later questions respondents would sometimes state that their response was the same as one they had given previously. In these cases the researcher would cross-refer to the question indicated, and code for the response provided there.

For three questions, resources only allowed for half of the responses to be analysed. In these cases respondents were selected at random and coded.

No statistical significance is intended or implied by any description of, or reference to, figures such as percentages or numbers.

#### d) Dealing with duplicates

We were asked to be aware of the possibility of mass responses which although included in the analysis, would be highlighted as indicative of a campaign.

There were a small number of identical responses, but these varied from question to question. For example there were 14 identical responses to Question 1b. At these low rates the responses have not been treated differently from others.

#### e) Summary of respondents

In total there were 7007 recorded responses to the PFE consultation. Of these the great majority were submitted by members of the public (table 1).

2499 responses (36% of the total) did not indicate capacity of respondent. Of those who indicated capacity of respondent, 92% were members of the public. As noted above, it is likely that most organisational stakeholders were intending to submit responses towards the end of the consultation period.

**Table 1. Responses to question:** ‘Which of the following best describes the capacity in which you are responding to this consultation?’

Category	Total	% of those responding to this question
Member of public	4148	92%
Representative of a community group	153	3%
Representative of a private timber industry organisation or business	46	1%
Representative of a Local Authority	39	1%
Representative of a university or research organisation	39	1%
Representative of a private non-timber organisation or business	32	1%
Representative of a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO)	24	1%
Representative of a government department or body	14	0.3%
Statutory adviser to Government	10	0.2%
Representative of other Government Department*	4	0.1%
[no response]	2499	

\*It is not clear what is the difference between ‘government department or body’ and ‘other government department’.

#### f) Responses to each question

Table 2 indicates the proportion of all respondents who answered each question. It indicates an overall decline in response to the closed questions, but more variable

response to the open questions. We have used this variation in response to the closed open question, to guide the selection of questions for analysis.

In view of the limited resources available, analysis has focused on questions that representative the full range of topics and ownership models, and within that range, selecting those questions that attracted most responses.

**Table 2. summary of proportion of total respondents answering each question (total respondents = 7007)**

Q	Topic	% of total respondents answering at least one part of the closed question	% of total respondents answering open question	% answering both (at least one part of the closed question and answering open question)	% of total respondents not giving any response
1	Principles	92	49	44	3
2	Types of owners	84	49	46	13
3	Efficiency	81	49	47	17
4	Characterising the PFE	60	29	25	36
5	Transfer to charity	62	41	35	32
6	Transfer to charity	59	39	31	33
7	Transfer to charity	57	33	26	36
8	Sale to community groups	57	44	36	35
9	Sale to community groups	53	33	24	38
10	Sale to community groups	57	31	27	39
11	Leasing to private sector	54	31	25	40
12	Leasing to private sector	52	32	25	41
13	Leasing to private sector	-	35	-	65
14	Residual estate	53	34	30	43
15	Future role of FCE	55	30	25	40
Final	Additional comments	-	45	-	55

## g) Structure of the report

The report is designed so that the same structure is repeated at three stages: summary, analysis and examples. A detailed contents page has been provided so that this structure can be viewed easily.

Each question is **analysed** in a section of its own, so that analysis of both the closed part and open part can be read together. Within each section the question is repeated verbatim, subheadings indicate the broad coding categories, and tables under each of those subheadings show the detailed codes. Percentages in these sections refer to the total respondents to the question not to all respondents to the consultation.

Each section (i.e. the analysis of a single question) ends with a summary of the key points. This **summary** is repeated in the 'Summary of key points' at the beginning of the report.

The same sections and subheadings are repeated in the appendix, which provides **examples** of responses that were coded under each category.

## 1 Question 1: principles for choosing new owners

### 1.1 The closed question

Question 1a asked: Do you agree or disagree with each of these key principles which Government proposes to abide by when making decisions on new owners for the public forest estate?

Expressed as % of all respondents	Agree	Disagree	No response
Protect and enhance biodiversity to contribute to a network of wildlife corridors across England.	88	4	9
Maintain public access for recreation and leisure.	88	4	8
Ensure the continuing role of the woodland in climate change mitigation and adaptation.	86	4	9
Protect nationally important landscapes.	88	4	8

### 1.2 The open question

Question 1b asked: What changes would you recommend making to this list of principles?

There were 3415 responses to Question 1b. All 3415 responses were coded and analysed.

### 1.2.1 Concerns about the consultation process or intention

51% of those answering the question indicated opposition to the proposals or consultation process.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q 1b</b>
Forests are or should be a public resource	824	24
Why change management? (e.g. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it")	427	13
The FC is doing a good job	322	9
Do not sell the forests	320	9
Critical of consultation	275	8
Disagreement with proposals to transfer PFE	274	8
Proposals not economically sustainable	111	3
No mandate for government to sell forests	110	3
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>1746</b>	<b>51%</b>

### 1.2.2 Priorities for woodland management

38% of those answering the question indicated additional priorities that should also be included in the list of principles. Many recognised that these are not mutually exclusive and highlighted the need to balance (e.g. production with conservation).

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q 1b</b>
Protect access	539	16
Increase access	328	10
Protect or expand existing woodland	281	8
Cultural heritage	134	4
Social / recreation	88	3
Commercial / productive / timber	69	2
Forest employment	28	1
Ancient woodlands	43	1
Education	42	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>1304</b>	<b>38%</b>

### 1.2.3 Concerns about consequences of proposals

34% of those answering the question indicated specific concerns about the consequences of the proposals.

<b>Concern about ...</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q 1b</b>
Legal protection if forests are sold off	392	11
Ability of private owners to manage woodlands	305	9
Efficacy of environmental or biodiversity protection	241	7
Whether woods should be run for profit	113	3
Potential for inappropriate development	112	3
Potential effect on landscapes	101	3
Potential future species choice	86	3
Charities' ability to manage woodlands	78	2
Expected focus on timber production	68	2
Energy/climate change impacts of sell off	61	2
Lack of local accountability of new owners	18	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>1147</b>	<b>34%</b>

### 1.2.4 Support for proposals

5% of those answering the question indicated support for at least part of the proposals.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q 1b</b>
Access should be restricted to some groups or areas	68	2
Broadly favourable towards proposals	45	1
Charities / communities are best placed to manage woodlands	29	1
New owners should focus on timber production	19	1
Private owners are best placed to manage woodlands	8	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>5%</b>

## Critical of current arrangements

2% of those answering the question indicated some degree of criticism for the status quo.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q 1b
Concerns over current species choice	64	2
Concerns over current management	21	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>2%</b>

## 1.3 Summary of responses to Question 1

Most respondents agreed with the proposed principles for making decisions about new owners. However in the open question many noted that while they agreed with the principles they did not agree with the overall objective of changing ownership. A total of 51% expressed concerns about the consultation process and / or proposals, and 34% expressed concerns about the consequences of the proposals. 38% suggested additional principles, among which that of maintaining or increasing access was predominant (26%). On the other hand 5% were partly supportive and 2% expressed concerns about current arrangements.

## 2 Question 2: types of owners or leaseholders

### 2.1 The closed question

Question 2a asked: Do you agree or disagree that:

Expressed as % of all respondents	Agree	Disagree	No response
New or existing charitable organisations should be offered the opportunity to take on ownership or management of heritage forests?	36	46	19
Opportunities should be created for community and civil society groups to buy or lease forests that they wish to own or manage?	31	51	18
Commercial operators should be found to take on long-term leases for the large-scale commercially valuable forests?	10	73	17

## 2.2 The open question

Question 2b asked: Are there other models of ownership or management that could achieve the Government's ambition to reduce public ownership without undermining its key principles?

### 2.2.1 Concerns about consultation process or intention

70% of those answering the question expressed some degree of opposition to the process or intention behind the consultation or this question specifically.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q 2b
Disagreement with proposals to transfer PFE	774	22
Stay with current arrangements (including 'If it ain't broke ...')	462	13
The government has no mandate or right to do this	383	11
The forests are public	375	11
The principles will be unenforceable under new ownership	326	9
The proposals are not financially feasible	317	9
Suspicious of motives for sell off	230	7
Concern about long term legacy / future generations	217	6
Critical of consultation process (as opposed to proposals <i>per se</i> )	203	6
Concerns about loss of access	194	6
Highlighting economies of scale in current situation	19	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>2171</b>	<b>63%</b>

### 2.2.2 Comment on ownership alternatives

61% of those answering the question expressed views about specific forms of woodland ownership.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q 2b
In favour of public ownership	1241	36
Opposed to private ownership of PFE	251	7
Concerned about ability of charities to take on PFE	154	4
In favour of charities taking on PFE	119	3
Qualified support for a few specific owners	110	3
Concerned about ability of community groups to take on PFE	106	3
In favour of community groups taking on PFE	74	2
In favour of private owners (individuals or commercial owners) taking on PFE	56	2
Return land to previous owners	7	<1

Opposed to public ownership	5	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>1757</b>	<b>51%</b>

### 2.2.3 Comments specific to FCE

16% of those answering the question expressed views specifically about the Forestry Commission (in addition to those expressing views about public ownership, reported in the previous section).

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q 2b
Favourable perception of FC ('doing a good job')	317	9
Supportive of management by FC	191	6
Supportive of ownership by FC	41	1
Unfavourable perception of FC	9	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>16%</b>

### 2.2.4 Additional priorities for management

11% of those answering the question provided suggestions or highlighted priorities in relation to management objectives of woodland owners.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q 2b
Diversifying management is / could be a positive step	168	5
Advantages of single body coordinating management	105	3
Should be managed for public good	84	2
Should be managed for commercial good	57	2
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>11%</b>

### 2.2.5 Support for at least some aspect of the proposals

10% of those answering the question expressed some degree of agreement with the proposals, most in conjunction with the proviso that new owners or leaseholders would provide public benefit. There is considerable detail in these suggestions which provide a source of further ideas for the PFE management.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q 2b
Broadly supportive of proposals	78	2
Suggest a modification of the proposals	295	9
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>10%</b>

### 2.2.6 Unable to answer the question

7% of those answering the question stated that they were unable to answer the question.

## 2.3 Summary of responses to Question 2

In responding to this question there was closer correspondence between the answers to the closed and open questions. Most respondents disagreed with proposals to transfer ownership.

In the closed part of the question, respondents disagreed most with the proposal that 'Commercial operators should be found to take on long-term leases' (73% against: 10% for). They disagreed, but least strongly, with the proposal that 'New or existing charitable organisations should be offered the opportunity to take on ownership or management of heritage forests' (46% against: 36% for).

In the open part of the question, 63% of those who responded express some degree of criticism of the consultation. This high level of criticism seems to be specific to the topic of this question, because of the 51% who did comment on ownership issues, the majority expressed support for public ownership, and many pointed out that this was not an option which was listed in the closed part of the question. Ownership attracted much more comment than management: only 11% used this question as an opportunity to make additional observations about the pros and cons of diversifying management.

10% of those answering the question were at least partly supportive of the proposals, including 9% who made suggestions about how to modify them. These suggestions are a source of further ideas about the future of the PFE.

## 3 Question 3: efficiency

### 3.1 The closed question

Question 3a asked: How likely are the proposed models to result in efficiency gains?

	% respondents
Very Likely	2
Likely	4
Don't Know	20
Unlikely	20
Highly Unlikely	36
No response	19

## 3.2 The open question

Question 3b asked: Do you have any evidence or reasons to support your view on the impact on efficiency, and any thoughts on how any barriers to efficiency could be addressed?

There were 3458 responses to Question 3b. All 3458 responses were coded and analysed.

### 3.2.1 Concerns that proposals will reduce efficiency

49% of those answering the question expressed concerns about a potential loss of efficiency under the proposed transfers.

Concern about ...	Number	% of respondents to Q3b
... loss of public goods (access etc.)	609	18
Other privatisations demonstrate the risks of this proposal	427	12
... private sector need for higher subsidies than under the current arrangements	333	10
... fragmentation of forest holdings, loss of economies of scale	274	8
... costs of regulating the private sector	247	7
... costs of transferring to alternative ownership	188	5
... risks of moving to private sector	186	5
... discontinuity once private sector takes over	151	4
... loss of tax revenues / profits	105	3
... costs of outsourcing	53	2
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>1695</b>	<b>49%</b>

### 3.2.2 The question is irrelevant or unclear

36% of those answering this question had objections to the focus on efficiency.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q3b</b>
The PFE should not be about efficiency	783	23
There is no reason why a public service can't be efficient	329	10
It is not clear what is meant by efficiency	244	7
The answer depends on how efficiency is defined	69	2
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>1249</b>	<b>36%</b>

### 3.2.3 Concerns about consultation process or intention

31% of those answering the question indicated opposition to the proposals or consultation process.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q3b</b>
Disagreement with proposals to transfer PFE	274	8
Proposals are based on false assumptions	235	7
Some things need to be in public hands	215	6
"Leave our forests alone"; "forests not for sale"	214	6
The question is loaded	173	5
"If it ain't broke, don't fix it"	173	5
Need to increase public ownership, not reduce it	24	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>1079</b>	<b>31%</b>

### 3.2.4 Satisfaction with current arrangements

23% of those answering the question noted satisfaction with the role or performance of the FC.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q3b</b>
FC is doing a good job, and/or is efficient	393	11
Only the FC / central agency can do this complex job (with multiple objectives)	176	5
FC is highly skilled and experienced	144	4
30p/person/year (for the FC) is good value	127	4
FC delivers economies of scale	76	2
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>23%</b>

### 3.2.5 Specific concerns about the private sector

19% of those answering the question expressed concerns about private sector / commercial ownership.

<b>Concern</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q3b</b>
Private sector only interested in profit	433	13
Private sector will not deliver	309	9
Threat to (current) timber processing investment	47	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>19%</b>

### 3.2.6 Specific concerns about the community or charity sector

11% of those answering the question expressed concerns about community or charity sector ownership.

<b>Concern</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q3b</b>
Communities and/or charities may lack resources to deliver	351	10
Local people are not always best placed to deliver public benefit	109	3
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>11%</b>

### 3.2.7 Insufficient evidence

10% of those answering the question felt they had insufficient evidence to do so.

Concern	Number	% of respondents to Q3b
Insufficient evidence to support the proposals	294	7
Insufficient evidence to be able to comment on the question/the proposals	45	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>10%</b>

### 3.2.8 Positive responses

4% of those answering the question were at least partly in favour of the proposals.

Concern	Number	% of respondents to Q3b
Charities / communities are a positive influence	75	2
Possible benefits of proposals	69	2
Benefits of private ownership	45	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>4%</b>

## 3.3 Summary of responses to Question 3

The question of efficiency attracted considerable concern. This was summarised in responses to the closed question where 56% of respondents thought that the proposals were unlikely or highly unlikely to result in efficiency gains, compared with 5% who thought they were likely or highly likely. 39% did not know or did not answer.

These results are mirrored in the open question. Of those who answered it, nearly half (49%) were concerned that the proposals would reduce efficiency, while a third (36%) felt that it was not the point on which the future of the PFE should be decided, or that its relevance depended on how it was defined. 23% added that the current situation is satisfactory, while 19% expressed concerns about the commercial sector and 11% expressed concerns about the charity or community sectors. However 4% were supportive of some aspect of the proposals.

Commenting on the broader issue of the proposals, 31% expressed concern about them or the consultation process, and 10% felt that they had insufficient evidence.

## 4 Question 4: characterising the public forest estate

### 4.1 The closed question

Question 4a asked: Do you agree or disagree with this characterisation of the public forest estate?

The associated text clarified that this question referred to the proposed characterisation based on four broad but overlapping types of woodland:

1. Large commercially valuable forests and woodlands which have commercial timber operations and can have other profitable non-timber activities, or the potential to develop them. These forests generally provide low to moderate levels of public benefits whose management is integrated with timber production.
2. Small commercially valuable woodlands which can produce timber and provide other commercial opportunities, such as sporting use. Levels of public benefits are generally low or moderate, but may include conservation features, such as ancient woodland sites, and informal use by local walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
3. Multi-purpose forests and woodlands which combine timber production with significant recreational facilities, high visitor numbers and high levels of biodiversity.
4. The heritage and community forests and woodlands which provide high public benefits often associated with their particular landscape and biodiversity character, high levels of recreational access and active community involvement.

	<b>% respondents</b>
Agree	34
Disagree	27
No response	40

### 4.2 The open question

Question 4b asked: What other factors might the government consider when characterising the public forest estate?

There were 2002 responses to Question 4b. All 2002 were coded and analysed.

#### 4.2.1 Concerns about the process or intention

45% of those answering the question indicated opposition to the proposals or consultation process

<b>Concern:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q4b</b>
Forests should remain public owned / public	304	15
Don't sell forests/ no right to sell forests	272	14
Opposed to proposals	194	10
Opposed to consultation / irrelevant question	162	8
Private owners will damage woodlands	134	7
Suspicious of motives behind consultation	119	6
Legislation to protect forests needed	67	3
If it ain't broke	23	1
Charity owners will damage woodlands	8	<1
Sell off detrimental	7	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>45%</b>

#### 4.2.2 Suggestions for characterisation of the estate

37% of those answering the question made additional suggestions about how to characterise the PFE

<b>Characteristic: forests should be characterised on:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q4b</b>
... ecological value	344	17
... recreation /social /education value	216	11
... historical and cultural / heritage value	202	10
... landscape value	72	4
... health / wellbeing benefits	44	2
... productive value	31	2
... value for tourism	20	1
... as a timber resource	15	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>37%</b>

### 4.2.3 Comments on the approach to characterisation

29% of those answering the question made additional suggestions about the approach to characterising the PFE.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q4b
All woods / forests have multiple values / cannot be compared	298	15
Benefit should be for the public / nation	160	8
The need is to maintain access	93	5
The PFE should be seen as a whole, not parts	90	4
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>29%</b>

### 4.2.4 Comments on the overall characterisation

18% of those answering the question made comments about the general approach to the categorisation.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q4b
Characterisation too broad - missing detail	296	15
Characterisation incorrect	207	10
Characterisation correct	47	2
Characterisation too narrow - too detailed	16	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>27%</b>

### 4.2.5 In favour of at least part of proposals

2% of those answering the question were at least partly in favour of the proposals.

Characteristic: forests should be characterised as:	Number	% of respondents to Q4b
In favour of proposals overall	14	1
Access should be reduced	10	0
Private interests should benefit economically	9	0
In favour of private ownership	4	0
In favour of charity ownership	3	0
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>2%</b>

### 4.3 Summary of responses to Question 4

In answering the closed part of Question 4, a majority agreed with the characterisation offered (34% agreed: 27% disagreed).

The question presented difficulties in analysis as some of the responses make it clear that there were divergent understandings of the purpose of characterisation. Responses to the open question suggest that whilst they agreed with the characterisation as a starting point, it could be developed further. 37% of those who answered the open question offered additional criteria of which ecological, social and cultural predominated. 29% commented on the approach, with the main view being that the characterisation was too simplistic – connected with concerns that the multiple benefits of each woodland were not recognised in this approach. This interpretation is supported by the 25% of responses to the open question, which expressed the view that the characterisation was incorrect or insufficiently detailed.

Again those answering the question used the opportunity to comment on the overall proposals and consultation approach, with 45% expressing disagreement. On the other hand 2% of responses to the open question indicated support for the characterisation, and 2% indicated broad support for the proposals.

## 5 Question 5: criteria for transfer to charity

### 5.1 The closed question

Question 5a asked: Do you agree or disagree that the following criteria are right for deciding whether a particular area of the public forest estate is suitable for transfer to a charity?

Forest of national historical, biodiversity or cultural significance

	<b>% respondents</b>
Agree	25
Disagree	38
No response	37

### 5.2 The open question

Question 5b asked: What other criteria might the government consider?

There were 2841 responses to Question 5b. Half (1421) of these responses were selected at random, coded and analysed.

**Concerns about the process or intention**

66% of those answering the question indicated opposition to the proposals or consultation process.

<b>Concern:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q5b</b>
Should be left with the FC / in public ownership	515	36
Charities don't have the resources - anyone can set up a charity	224	16
The proposal is impractical / flawed	176	12
Don't sell the forests /	148	10
Keep the status quo / they are public lands and should stay that way	132	9
Don't trust the consultation process or the government	68	5
Would continue to be a cost to the public	65	5
The FC does this well	63	4
General disagreement	44	3
The government has no mandate to do this	39	3
Heritage woodlands should not be transferred	24	2
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>66%</b>

### 5.2.1 Suggestions for other criteria

31% of those answering the question suggested further criteria that might be used in deciding whether a particular area of the PFE is suitable for transfer to a charity.

<b>Concern:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q5b</b>
Maintain current use / access / recreation rights	181	13
Suitability / ability of charity to manage woodland for public benefit	101	7
Location / value to community	71	5
Particular cultural / historical / biodiversity significance	68	5
Landscape value/ significance to the local area	46	3
Community / user groups agrees to sale (case by case)	39	3
Protect against inappropriate management or development	30	2
Financial viability	8	1
Protect land from being resold	7	<1
Net carbon sequestration / no pollution	7	<1
Commercial timber production	5	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>31%</b>

### 5.2.2 Difficulties with the question

17% of those answering the question felt unable to do so for various reasons.

<b>Concern:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q5b</b>
Criteria are poorly defined / applicable to all forest	165	12
Not enough evidence has been presented	51	4
Can't answer question	30	2
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>17%</b>

### 5.2.3 Some level of agreement with change

6% of those answering the question were supportive of some aspect of the proposals.

<b>Concern:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q5b</b>
Could work if charities given further support	55	4
Change of management might be acceptable, without selling or leasing	17	1
If any forest is to be transferred, this is the best option	16	1
Restructure the forestry commission	11	1
Remove heritage woodlands from the FC remit	3	<1
Some woodlands within this category should be moved to the private sector	2	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>6%</b>

### 5.2.4 Support for change of ownership

4% of those answering the question were supportive of a change of ownership.

<b>Concern:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q5b</b>
Transfer to charity	47	3
Transfer to local ownership	15	1
Transfer to commercial ownership	10	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>4%</b>

## 5.3 Summary of responses to Question 5

In answering the closed part of this question, more disagreed than agreed with the criteria offered (25% agreed: 38% disagreed).

Again the majority of those answering the open question expressed concerns about the process, with 64% objecting to the proposals or consultation, and 17% feeling unable to answer this particular question. 6% felt that some parts of this proposal were acceptable, and 4% supported change of ownership.

## 6 Question 6: principles for design of transfer to charity

### 6.1 The closed question

Question 6a asked: Do you agree or disagree that the following principles are the right ones to guide the design of a transfer of the public forest estate to a charity?

Expressed as % of all respondents	Agree	Disagree	No response
A recipient charity would be expected to manage the forests to maintain and enhance a variety of public benefits.	44	13	43
The charity would have to comply with a set of agreed rules.	44	12	43
The charity would meet existing legal commitments, for example tenancies and timber supply contracts, and partnership agreements.	41	16	44
The forest would be transferred to the charity at no charge for the new owner.	36	20	44
The charity is likely to continue to require continuing funding from Government in return for the public benefits.	42	15	43
The charity would be expected to become less reliant on Government grant over time.	36	20	44

### 6.2 The open question

Question 6b asked: What other principles should we consider?

Owing to resource limitations, responses to Question 6b were not analysed.

## 6.3 Summary of responses to Question 6

In answering the closed question, more agreed than disagreed with each principle offered. Most agreement was expressed with 'The charity would have to comply with a set of agreed rules' (44% agreed: 12% disagreed). Agreement was expressed least strongly with 'The forest would be transferred to the charity at no charge for the new owner' and 'The charity would be expected to become less reliant on Government grant over time' (36% agreed: 20% disagreed in each case).

## 7 Question 7: objectives for charities that manage such forests

### 7.1 The closed question

Question 7a asked: Do you agree or disagree that these are the right objectives for any charity which manages one of these forests?

Expressed as % of all respondents	Agree	Disagree	No response
High quality access	46	10	44
Certification of woodland management	45	9	45
Safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity benefits	48	8	44
Balancing interests of timber production with those of conservation and recreation	40	15	45

### 7.2 The open question

Question 7b asked: What other objectives should the charity have to ensure that public benefits are protected?

Owing to resource limitations, responses to Question 7b were not analysed.

### 7.3 Summary of responses to Question 7

Those who answered the closed question expressed agreement with the objectives offered. Agreement was highest with 'safeguarding biodiversity' (48% agreed: 8% disagreed); and high but with most variation, with 'balancing interests of timber production with those of conservation and recreation' (40% agreed: 15% disagreed).

## 8 Question 8: prioritising community groups

### 8.1 The closed question

Question 8a asked: Do you agree or disagree that all forest sales, apart from land which is transferred to a charity, and those sales which form part of the 2010/11 – 2014/15 programme, should be offered for sale to community or civil society organisations first?

	<b>% respondents</b>
Agree	28
Disagree	29
No response	43

### 8.2 The open question

Question 8b asked: What other approach might the Government adopt?

There were 3065 responses to Question 8b. Half (1534) of these responses were selected at random, coded and analysed.

#### 8.2.1 Concerns about the process or intention

86% of those answering the question indicated opposition to the proposals or consultation process.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q8b</b>
"Do not sell" / the government does not have the right to sell	611	40
Keep the PFE in FCE / public ownership ("if it ain't broke")	600	39
Generally opposed to the proposals	303	19
Charities / communities will not or cannot deliver results	97	6
Opposition to the consultation	88	6
The FC does a good job OR the present system works well	73	5
Commercial operators will not deliver results	47	3
Proposals will damage woodlands	37	2
Do not sell to commercial operators	31	2
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>1313</b>	<b>86%</b>

### 8.2.2 Partial agreement with proposals

20% of those answering the question expressed at least partial agreement with the proposals.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q8b</b>
Sell / lease / offer first refusal only to non-commercial operators / charities / communities	171	11
Assess the ability of prospective owners / leaseholders to manage appropriately	69	4
Supportive of leasing but not change of ownership	58	4
Agreement in principle with change of ownership	39	3
Protect from resale (to inappropriate owners)	20	1
Sell or lease to commercial operators	22	1
Make sure leased land is protected	18	1
Make sure sold land is protected	18	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>20%</b>

### 8.2.3 Concerns about feasibility

16% of those answering the question were concerned about the feasibility of implementing the proposals.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q8b</b>
Charities / communities would need a great deal of support and / or money	198	13
Would lead to conflict among objectives / owners	35	2
Need more evidence	31	2
Would need to protect conservation	10	1
Public costs of sale should be minimised	3	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>16%</b>

### 8.2.4 Additional suggestions

8% of those answering the question made further suggestions to modify the proposals.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q8b
Keep in current ownership, but consider diversifying management	60	4
Improve/ restructure the FC	37	2
Maintain or increase access	27	2
Expand the public forest estate	4	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>8%</b>

## 8.3 Summary of responses to Question 8

There was a balance of opinion amongst those who answered the closed question (28% agreed: 29% disagreed with prioritising community or civil society organisations).

The open question provided insight into the range of opinions. Again there was a large body of opinion questioning the proposals or consultation process (86% of the sample analysed). On the other hand 20% indicated support for some part of the proposal, 16% indicated concerns about feasibility and 8% made additional suggestions.

The overall picture is that respondents felt opposed to the concept of selling the PFE (86% of the sample), but had constructive suggestions to make. These responses provide a source of ideas for further policy development.

The high percentage of responses which were critical of the sale can perhaps be attributed to the use of the word 'sale' in the preceding question (Question 8a). The use of this term, rather than any other (i.e. 'disposal', 'transfer' etc), may have contributed to the increased percentage of negative responses.

## 9 Question 9: principles to guide sale to community groups

### 9.1 The closed question

Question 9a asked: Do you agree or disagree that the following principles are the right ones to guide the design of the sale of the public forest estate to community or civil society groups?

<b>Expressed as % of all respondents</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No response</b>
Extra time to prepare to bid for the forest. Groups can also approach the Forestry Commission to discuss buying land which is currently not on the market.	25	24	51
The Forestry Commission will provide a valuation and timetable for decision by the organisation.	27	22	52
The forest would be sold or leased at the market rate.	13	37	51
The groups could apply for forestry grants	30	19	51
Should the groups be wound up, the land would be returned to the ownership of the Secretary of State.	38	13	49
Any purchasing or leasing organisation would be free to manage the forest in accordance with their own objectives (subject to any lease conditions imposed by the Government to protect public benefits).	11	39	49
If community or civil society groups chose not to purchase or lease the forest, then the land could be leased on the open market.	5	47	48

## 9.2 The open question

Question 9b asked: What other principles should we consider?

Owing to resource limitations, responses to Question 9b were not analysed.

## 9.3 Summary of responses to Question 9

There was a range of opinion amongst those who replied. Strongest agreement was with the principle 'Should the groups be wound up, the land would be returned to the ownership of the Secretary of State' (38% agreed: 13% disagreed). Strongest disagreement was with the principle 'If community or civil society groups chose not to purchase or lease the forest, then the land could be leased on the open market' (5% agreed: 47% disagreed). Responses to the open part of this question have not been analysed.

## 10 Question 10: community groups and protection of public benefits

### 10.1 The closed question

Question 10a asked: Is the approach proposed for sales or leases to community or civil society groups sufficient for the protection of public benefits?

	<b>% respondents</b>
Agree	10
Disagree	47
No response	43

### 10.2 The open question

Question 10b asked: What else could be required of local community groups?

Owing to resource limitations, responses to Question 10b were not analysed.

### 10.3 Summary of responses to Question 10

In responses to the closed question there was a range of opinion. Strongest agreement was with the principle 'Should the groups be wound up, the land would be returned to the ownership of the Secretary of State' (38% agreed: 13% disagreed). Strongest disagreement was with the principle 'If community or civil society groups chose not to purchase or lease the forest, then the land could be leased on the open market' (5% agreed: 47% disagreed).

## 11 Question 11: criteria for leasing to the private sector

### 11.1 The closed question

Question 11a asked: Do you agree or disagree that these are the right criteria for deciding whether a particular area of the public forest estate is suitable for leasing to the private sector?

Expressed as % of all respondents	Agree	Disagree	No response
Where the primary purpose and benefit delivered by the woodland is timber production and other commercial opportunities	13	40	47
Scope for using lease conditions to safeguard public benefits	25	26	49

## 11.2 The open question

Question 11b asked: What other criteria might the Government use?

Owing to resource limitations, responses to Question 11b were not analysed.

## 11.3 Summary of responses to Question 11

In answering the closed question, most disagreed with the criterion 'Where the primary purpose and benefit delivered by the woodland is timber production and other commercial opportunities' (13% agreed: 40% disagreed), while opinion was divided on the criterion 'Scope for using lease conditions to safeguard public benefits' (25% agreed: 26% disagreed).

## 12 Question 12: principles to guide the leasing of productive forests

### 12.1 The closed question

Question 12a asked: Do you agree or disagree that these are the right principles to guide the leasing of productive forests?

Expressed as % of all respondents	Agree	Disagree	No response
Lessees would be identified through a competitive dialogue process	17	32	51
Leases would last for 150 years and impose conditions where needed to safeguard public benefits	16	34	50
Where practical, smaller parcels of land which have particular public value would be considered for separate sale	16	34	50
Consideration will be given to the potential impact on the supply of timber into the wood-processing industry, in particular during any transition period	21	27	52

### 12.2 The open question

Question 12 b asked: What other principles should we consider?

Owing to resource limitations, responses to Question 12b were not analysed.

### 12.3 Summary of responses to Question 12

In answering the closed question there was overall disagreement with the principles proposed. Strongest disagreement was with the principle 'Leases would last for 150 years and impose conditions where needed to safeguard public benefits' (15% agreed: 34% disagreed).

## 13 Question 13: safeguards

### 13.1 The question

Question 13 asked: Are there other safeguards that the Government could consider outside the scope of the provisions of an individual lease?

There were 2418 responses to Question 13. All 2418 responses were coded and analysed.

### 13.1.1 Concerns about the process or intention

49% of those answering the question indicated opposition to the proposals or consultation process

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q13</b>
Don't sell the forests / leave them alone	663	27
General opposition to the proposals	428	18
Private companies / individuals can't be trusted to take care of woods	172	7
Opposition to consultation process	121	5
There is no mandate or justification for these proposals	39	2
Charities can't take care of woods	25	1
The proposals are flawed by short term vision	19	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>1186</b>	<b>49%</b>

### 13.1.2 Additional conditions needed

35% of those answering the question indicated further conditions that they felt would be needed.

<b>Protect ....</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q13</b>
... or increase access	370	15
... environmental concerns	364	15
... from inappropriate development	81	3
... from conflict of interest (i.e. recognise that there are competing interests among user groups)	70	3
... national heritage/skills	70	3
... ancient / heritage woodlands	46	2
... harvesting capability/ timber markets	45	2
... landscape / visual / amenity value	37	2
... forests from resale or after resale has occurred	18	1
... health and wellbeing provision	14	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>35%</b>

### 13.1.3 Conditions can be met without change of ownership

18% of those answering the question expressed the view that safeguards could be provided without change of ownership.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q13</b>
Keep in public ownership	249	10
Leave with the FC OR: FC does this already	230	10
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>18%</b>

### 13.1.4 Concerns about monitoring and enforcement

18% of those answering the question expressed concerns about how such safeguards would be implemented.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q13</b>
Would need robust inspection system / new regulations / new legislation	222	9
Safeguards would not be adequate nor enforced	161	7
Forests should revert to public ownership if these conditions are not adhered to	130	5
It will be essential to manage or oversee at larger scale to protect overall impact	9	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>18%</b>

### 13.1.5 Reservations about proposals

6% of those answering the question expressed caution about the proposals rather than complete opposition.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q13</b>
Local communities should be consulted before tenure is changed	49	2
The leaseholder or buyer would need to prove that they can manage more efficiently than under current arrangements	38	2
These conditions are a minimum	24	1
Need to gather more evidence on how proposals can be achieved	24	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>6%</b>

### 13.1.6 Support for any element of proposals

3% of those answering the question made statements supporting some part of the proposals (sometimes qualified by other parts of their response).

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q13</b>
Support for private ownership and / or leases in principle	43	2
Transfer to local government and / or communities and / or charities	27	1
Support for decreased access	5	<1
No need to protect privatised woodlands	5	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>3%</b>

### 13.1.7 Alternative proposals

1% of those answering the question made additional suggestions for change in ownership or management.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q13
Keep in public ownership but change management	18	1
Keep in public ownership but use private contractors	10	<1
Improve current management	9	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1%</b>

## 13.2 Summary of responses to Question 13

There was no closed part to Question 13. Amongst those responding to the open question, again most attention was given to expressing opposition to the proposals or consultation process (49%) with a further 6% expressed reservations (rather than outright opposition). About one third (35%) suggested additional criteria that would be necessary, amongst which access (15%) and environmental protection (15%) featured strongly. 18% commented that the safeguards would not be necessary if current arrangements are maintained, and 18% also expressed concerns about how safeguards would be monitored and enforced. 3% expressed some form of support, while 1% made additional or alternative proposals.

## 14 Question 14: managing the residual estate

### 14.1 The closed question

Question 14a asked: Do you agree that the proposed approach is the right approach for managing the residual estate?

	% respondents
Agree	9
Disagree	44
No response	47

## 14.2 The open question

Question 14b asked: What other approach might the Government adopt?

Owing to resource limitations, responses to Question 14b were not analysed.

## 14.3 Summary of responses to Question 14

In answering the closed question, most disagreed that the approach was sufficient to protect public benefits (9% agreed: 44% disagreed).

# 15 Question 15: role of Forestry Commission England

## 15.1 The closed question

Question 15a asked: Do you agree or disagree that Forestry Commission England should focus on the delivery of forestry policy through:

Expressed as % of all respondents	Agree	Disagree	No response
protecting the woodland resource and increasing its resilience to pests, diseases and the impact of climate change	51	4	45
improving the woodland resource to enhance delivery of public benefits	50	5	46
expanding the woodland resource through promoting and creating incentives for planting and naturally regenerating trees, woods and forests of the right type in the right place	51	4	46
Empowering and enabling people to determine and deliver the public benefits which they want from woodland	42	11	47

## 15.2 The open question

Question 15b asked: What other priorities should Forestry Commission England focus on?

There were 2097 responses to Question 15b. Half (1048) of these responses were selected at random, coded and analysed.

### 15.2.1 Maintain current role

47% of those answering the question were in favour of the status quo.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q15b
FC is doing well as they are	311	30
Public ownership should be maintained	268	26
Maintain access	26	2
Expand the role of the FC	19	2
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>47%</b>

### 15.2.2 Priorities for FCE

44% of those answering the question suggested particular priorities for FCE's role.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q15b
Biodiversity/ Ecological/landscape protection	160	15
Access/ recreation	126	12
Holistic forestry / 'everything' / managing forests	67	6
Forest creation	58	6
Heritage protection	45	4
Sustainable management	43	4
Oversee / monitor private owners	36	3
More partnership working	33	3
commercial forestry	32	3
Education	32	3
Climate mitigation strategies	26	2
Research	10	1
Employment	10	1
Tourist emphasis	10	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>44%</b>

### 15.2.3 Concerns about the process or intention

29% of those answering the question were opposed to the process or proposals.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q15b</b>
Opposed to the underlying proposals	248	24
Forestry sector should not be 'competitive'	50	5
Private ownership will not deliver public benefit	36	3
Proposals will damage the forestry sector	33	3
Proposals will damage public enjoyment	13	1
Change of ownership will cause problems	11	1
No clear mandate for sell off	10	1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>29%</b>

### 15.2.4 Critical of question

11% expressed concerns about the specific question.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to Q15b</b>
Critical of question	74	7
The question is superfluous / This is already happening	48	5
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>11%</b>

### 15.2.5 Suggested changes to current role

7% of those answering the question made suggestions about FCE's role.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q15b
FC need to change / improve	26	2
If things must change, we need proper legislation	25	2
Community / charity etc ownership good	15	1
Pass regulatory functions to another body	6	1
FC should cease commercial timber production	6	1
FC should be disbanded	3	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>7%</b>

### 15.2.6 In favour or partly in favour of proposals

1% of those answering the question were at least partly in favour of the proposals.

Category	Number	% of respondents to Q15b
In favour of leases OR sell offs	4	<1
Need to make proposals more attractive to potential buyers	3	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1%</b>

## 15.3 Summary of responses to Question 15

In answering the closed question, there was a strong level of agreement with the roles proposed. Strongest agreement was with 'expanding the woodland resource through promoting and creating incentives for planting and naturally regenerating trees, woods and forests of the right type in the right place' (51% agreed: 3% disagreed). Least strong agreement was with 'empowering and enabling people to determine and deliver the public benefits which they want from woodland' (42% agreed: 11% disagreed).

Responses to the open question suggested that while many respondents agreed with these roles, they felt this did not require a change in the current arrangements (48% of those sampled), while 29% again took the opportunity to express opposition to the

proposals and 11% expressed criticism of this question in particular (e.g. on the grounds that these roles are already being fulfilled).

44% of those sampled indicated particular priorities for FCE's role, while 7% suggested changes to FCE's current role, and 1% expressed at least partial support for the proposals.

## 16 Final unnumbered question: additional comments

A final question invited respondents to "Please use this box to add any other comments you may have on the consultation." There were 3168 responses to this final question. One third (1584) of these responses were selected at random, coded and analysed.

### 16.1 Summary of additional comments

Answers to this question were in many cases extensive and detailed. They have been analysed in broad categories only. Example are provided in Appendix 1. Most respondents expressed concerns with the proposals themselves (80%), while 37% highlighted concerns with the consultation process, 20% noted concerns about the environment or social impact of the proposals, and 19% noted approval of FCE's current approach.

On the other hand 7% were open to change, with protection of public benefit, 1% were not happy with FCE's current approach, and fewer than 1% fully supported the proposals.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of respondents to final Question</b>
Disapproval of proposals (e.g. please don't sell our forests; OR this is a disgrace; OR you don't have any mandate to do this)	1262	80
Concerns with consultation process (e.g. you should have give the option to disagree; OR the questions are poorly structured; OR how much did this cost OR you aren't going to take any notice anyway)	580	37
Concerns about biodiversity / use / development / access etc	310	20
FC is doing good job or could adapt	296	19
Open to changes, given the correct circumstances and protection of public benefit	105	7
Other	19	1
FC not doing good job	11	1
Completely in favour	7	<1
<b>TOTAL (possibly less than the sum of the above, allowing for more than one response category per respondent)</b>	<b>1584</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Sources of further ideas in the consultation responses

Responses to the consultation provide a source of ideas for future management. It is important not to lose these in the process of summarising responses.

Of those open questions which have been analysed, sources of positive suggestions can be found particularly in the following categories. Given that each involves up to several hundred responses, they will be provided on request rather than included in annexes:

- Q1b: those responses coded under 'priorities for woodland management'
- Q2b: those responses coded under 'comment on ownership alternatives'; and 'additional suggestions about management'
- Q3b: those responses coded under 'specific concerns about the private sector' and 'specific concerns about the community or charity sector'
- Q4b: those responses coded under 'comments on the overall characterisation'
- Q5b: those responses coded under 'suggestions for other criteria' and 'some level of agreement with change'
- Q8b: those responses coded under 'partial agreement with proposals' and 'additional suggestions'
- Q13: those responses coded under 'alternative proposals'
- Q15b: those responses coded under 'priorities for FC'
- Additional Comments: this section was coded extremely broadly. Some respondents produced long and reasoned arguments to support their views.

## Appendix 1. Examples of views expressed

- This appendix provides verbatim examples of the responses to the open questions.
- Sections are numbered to match the corresponding section in the main report.
- Responses are included to illustrate the range of opinions, criticisms and constructive suggestions provided by respondents.
- The numbers of quotations included should not be considered to be proportional to the range of views expressed.
- There has been no attempt to edit or change the spelling of responses.
- Each example may also have been coded under more than one response category.

### Question 1: principles for choosing new owners

#### 1.2.1 Concerns about the consultation process or intention

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about the consultation process or intention'.

*Respondent 1179:* Of course these are all important principles. The question is unhelpful and misleading, and I resent the fact that you are no doubt going to quote my positive answers to demonstrate %s of the public agreeing with x, y and z in your proposals when I am totally against them. I disagree strongly with the notion of 'new owners' for the PUBLIC forest estate. How could any other 'sector' (meaning???) be 'better placed' to 'own' public forests?

*Respondent 3232:* Leave the system unchanged. It appears to work well - we have well managed forests. One of the last things one thinks when considering issues in the government of the UK is 'I really wish they'd sort out the forestry commission'

*Respondent 5755:* The question presupposes that I agree with the very principle of 'new owners'. I do not, and can not therefore agree or disagree with the above statements. As a citizen of the United Kingdom, and therefore a shareholder in these publicly owned forests, I do not want them sold at all. They cost me approximately 20p per year in tax, and frankly if they cost me a hundred times that, they'd be a bargain.

#### 1.2.2 Priorities for woodland management

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'priorities for woodland management'.

*Respondent 1382:* Strengthen the role and responsibilities of the Forestry Commission, rather than removing it. If necessary tighten up on its remit so that it very clearly must fulfil all the above requirements, and establish clear and demanding targets, deadlines and objectives so that it can be monitored in its fulfilment of the role. If necessary

establish an independent group of MPs to do the monitoring. And also perhaps invite members of the public to become part of such a monitoring body alongside the MPs?

*Respondent 3042:* Maintain access for QUIET enjoyment and natural tranquillity. Turning forests into 'theme parks' with entertainments such as 'zip wires' is not appropriate for the countryside

*Respondent 4412:* the rights of forest use's that may not be to the liking of the wildlife and walking parties. there are many popular noisy events that have taken to the woodland to keep the built up areas happy the wildlife and walks would chase them out if they were to be placed in charge as is the plan. they should be recognised in your options sorry bad spelling but I can still have a voice , can I ?

*Respondent 4229:* Maintain the forest industry. The Forestry Commission only owns 20% of woodland in England but produce 50% of the timber supply. They are clearly much better at managing productive woodlands than the private sector. Tens of thousands of jobs depend on the forest industry and timber and it makes a major contribution to reducing the import bill. This sell off of the Forestry Commission estate is ill advised, unpopular with the public and is being rushed through without proper consultation. This so called consultation seems like a 'fait accompli' to me. The question should be 'do you agree to the proposal to sell off the state forests'.

### 1.2.3 Concerns about consequences of proposals

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about consequences of proposals'.

*Respondent 798:* That a national organisation is better placed to protect the interests of the public than a mish-mash of smaller organisations - some of which will have minority interests at heart and will know nothing about forestry.

*Respondent 3554:* Recognition needs to be given to the manner in which Forestry Commission (England) supports the local timber processing industries through ensuring continual supply of timber even when that means it will operate at a loss. It is unrealistic to assume that private management companies will support local economy in this manner.

### 1.2.4 Support for proposals

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'support for proposals'.

*Respondent 1665:* None - they sound ideal

*Respondent 2737:* I agree that government has some role in the first 3 principles, insofar as they contribute to other policies, but as a taxpayer I don't think (e.g.) that the public should have access at public expense to every formerly publicly owned forest, nor do I believe that every purchaser of former public forest should have to maintain public

access at their own expense, given that I suspect the cost of all these ancillary roles has been part of what has made the public ownership of forests unprofitable.

### 1.2.5 Critical of current arrangements

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'critical of current arrangements'.

*Respondent 3105:* I think private ownership can achieve these principles better than the forestry commission

*Respondent 4975:* I would add 'aim to reverse many of the damaging effects of the destruction of native woodland in favour of monoculture commercial plantations during the last century'.

*Respondent 1855:* A major single principle seems to be missing - that of commercial timber. I think the government needs to take a revised stance on the use of timber in the UK. Over the past few decades we seem to have changed the Forestry Commission from a concern that deals with commercial timber into one that manages a leisure park. There is space for both, but the commercial side needs to be taken more seriously. especially hardwoods.

*Respondent 996:* Return Forestry Commission plantations to native woodlands - primarily hardwoods.

## Question 2: types of owners or leaseholders

### 2.1.1 Concerns about consultation process or intention

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about the consultation process or intention'.

*Respondent 105:* While I have no objection to one of the long established large scale charities like the National Trust being given opportunity to take ownership of heritage forest this is not my preference. I am fully opposed to new charities and miscellaneous interest groups emerging for this purpose. This question should not have been phrased 'new or existing' as it invites false interpretation of the response to a tick box.

*Respondent 2540:* If this is a fait accompli, then the consultation is pointless. State ownership isn't some socialist evil - it should be the highest expression of pride in one's countryside.

### 2.2.2 Comment on ownership alternatives

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'comment on ownership alternatives'.

*Respondent 11:* Return of Forestry land to the original owners i.e. the Queen (crown estates) and other estates.

*Respondent 63:* Perhaps the use of Local Authority led groups ( the Local Authority not having the voting majority) combined with the first two of the groups in 2(a)

*Respondent 67:* I am very happy for the National Trust to take ownership but am totally opposed to the Government reducing state ownership. We the people own these forests it is not up to government to betray our heritage

*Respondent 2573:* State ownership should not be given up. New Owners that are buying forest estate will be looking for profit not keeping the key principles. Ownership should be kept with the state and short term leases given in the first instant with opportunity to get a longer lease when they prove that they keep to the principles.

*Respondent 4002:* Charitable or environmental trusts seem to be the best approach. How about the Crown as an owner? Certainly ownership should be limited to British Interests - certainly not foreign investment companies.

### 2.2.3 Comments specific to FCE

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'comments specific to FCE'.

*Respondent 8:* I think that the way the forests are maintained now is the best way. There is no valid reason for selling it off. I belong to a number of environmental organisations and think the best way to protect biodiversity is to leave the Forestry Commission in charge. It is an accountable body.

*Respondent 121:* The current system with some modifications could work. The Forestry Commission does tremendous work in looking after these valuable sites but I feel we as public users of the forests should make a contribution to financing it. A system of membership similar to that used the National Trust could be an option where members pay an annual fee in return for a car park pass, handbook of all sites and facilities and publicity material of events. This could raise millions of pounds for the Commission and give the public a greater sense of ownership and responsibility.

*Respondent 2561:* Either leave it as it is, or turn the Forestry Commission into a charitable trust either a national one or local districts to manage the land. They could report to a board made up of local groups, MPs and experts to ensure that the woodlands meet the objectives of local communities.

### 2.2.4 Additional priorities for management

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'additional priorities for management'.

*Respondent 1181:* Charities and other non-profit groups would most probably provide the best future for the forests, as they are not bound by the need to create revenue at all costs, but are free to consider what is best for the communities and the environment. Commercial organisations by nature must maximise profits at the expense of all other considerations in order to simply survive in the current (and most likely future) economic climate, and to satisfy their shareholders. This will inevitably lead to them performing the absolute minimum lip service to any safeguards imposed on them to protect the forests for community use and environmental concerns.

*Respondent 1921:* As alternatives to private ownerships even on a lease basis we should be working in partnerships so that there are public and private owners to as many of the woodland assets as possible. I think it will be very difficult for charities to fund heritage sites and again public partnerships should be retained. The idea of the community and civil society groups is commendable in theory however practically this will be unachievable. A public private model should be explored in addition to retaining the current public ownership model.

*Respondent 1941:* I disagree with the initial principle of reducing state ownership and believe the existing model, as overseen by the Forestry Commission, should be left in place. "Heritage" forests are just that and should be owned by the people for the people. Handing ownership over to specific groups of people is not the same thing. Commercially viable forests should be managed by the state and the profits used to the benefit of the state for example by development wildlife corridors or improving leisure facilities.

### 2.2.5 Support for at least some aspect of the proposals

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'support for at least some aspect of the proposals'.

*Respondent 85:* It makes economic sense to divest the forestry commission of the role of managing the commercial plantations. There are other bodies who could probably do a better job, or at least they should be given the opportunity.

*Respondent 3495:* Why not split up (1-5 Acres) and sell some of the forest to private individuals such as myself to protect and manage in accordance with agreed guidelines for the benefit of biodiversity, sustainability and wildlife habitat protection.

### 2.2.6 Unable to answer the question

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'unable to answer the question'.

*Respondent 1107:* I am not agreeing or disagreeing on question 2a because the initial premise is wrong. The current model is working perfectly well and the Forestry Commission is doing a good job. Why 'fix' what's not broken? Even within the

Government's own terms, the proposal is ridiculous because it will cost extra money (especially in tax relief to affluent individuals) rather than save it.

*Respondent 4504:* Why is there no option to consult me on whether I agree with the governments ambition to reduce state ownership? Why have you decided already? This is a biased consultation.

## Question 3: efficiency

### 3.2.1 Concerns that proposals will reduce efficiency

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns that proposals will reduce efficiency'.

*Respondent 4637:* If we are to maintain the free access to land we will have to give grants to these managing organizations, thus still costing the tax-payer money, if access isn't to remain free then it is selling of the National Heritage, and as it stands the Forestry Commission cost approx Â£10million per year to run, far less than many arts or sports programs, and far less than the Nimrod replacement jets the government has just smashed up rather than selling on if they weren't going to use them

*Respondent 7009:* Under government proposals there would be considerable Duplication of functions, lack of co-ordination nationally and locally, a huge expenditure on compliance (or new owners would all just go their own sweet way, regardless of any government guarantees). Efficiency can only be improved under public ownership by enhancing and adjusting strategies already put in place by the Forestry Commission and it's current working partners.

### 3.2.2 The question is irrelevant or unclear

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'question is irrelevant or unclear'.

*Respondent 219:* Not sure what you mean by "efficiency". Is this a euphemism for commercial exploitation?

*Respondent 701:* How can the public benefit be measured in terms of efficiency? Public access and leisure use are not compatible with economic efficiency. This is an ill defined question with little meaning in it's present form.

### 3.2.3 Concerns about consultation process or intention

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about the consultation process or intention'.

*Respondent 882:* this is about raising capital and not long term protection and management. Forests take generations to grow and days to destroy.

*Respondent 988:* It all sounds like trying to get a cheap solution to forest management.

### 3.2.4 Satisfaction with current arrangements

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'satisfaction with current arrangements'.

*Respondent 1347:* There is no evidence given that the Forestry Commission has been inefficient in its management of state owned forestry, including commercial exploitation when appropriate. There is no reason to believe that commercial operators, or charitable/community ones, would manage woodland more efficiently than the Forestry Commission does at present. In the absence of such evidence, it is highly unlikely that efficiency gains will be made.

*Respondent 1903:* Charitable trusts will not have the finances to run and maintain the forests and their access properly - it costs the tax payer 30pence per year to fund the Forestry Commission, I consider that a bargain. Private companies will have far more financial pressure to make a profit from their ownership - increased logging? More profitable coniferous plantations? Less deciduous plantations? Pressure to expand construction on existing woodlands to house profitable enterprises? PROFIT becomes the driving force in private ownership - otherwise why on earth are they going to take it on?

### 3.2.5 Specific concerns about the private sector

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'specific concerns about the private sector'.

*Respondent 2031:* In Canada, leased land became treated as private land by its leaseholders (even if the lease was nominally for one aspect of land use only), and public interests, such as wildlife, public access, and so forth were ignored. A large bureaucracy was needed to deal with all the leaseholders. As inefficient way to reach the stated objectives as possible.

*Respondent 2216:* I work in an a privatised industry that costs approx. 3-4 times the subsidy to run now that it cost when it was nationalised. Just considering the increase in cost alone is simplistic, but there is a substantial increase in cost. My work in this industry is associated with compliance with government regulations and standards. In this work I can see how difficult, complex and costly it is to recreate the conditions where private companies are managed to act with the same interests as public bodies. For example, whereas a public body may see public access to the forest estate as a principle to be upheld, a private company is likely to see it as a cost. Therefore, regulations must be put in place to ensure that public access is maintained, and these regulations must be enforced. The cost of drafting, consulting and enforcing the regulations is all additional cost that does not add tangible value.

### 3.2.6 Specific concerns about the community or charity sector

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'specific concerns about the community or charity sector'.

*Respondent 2383:* If a charitable trust can be found to maintain the forest, how will sufficient funding be raised to continue maintenance without considerable government backing. In which case, what is the point in changing the status quo? Setting up the contracts etc with a new or existing charity will cost a huge amount of money. Surely it is better to invest that finance into the Forestry Commission to make it more efficient. They have 90 years of experience and expertise - don't let it go to waste.

*Respondent 2667:* we are in a financial crisis - voluntary organisations do not have the funds

### 3.2.7 Insufficient evidence

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'insufficient evidence'.

*Respondent 2846:* I do not see any evidence that proper research has been considered regarding the potential loss of eco-system services and other long term effects which at the moment do not fit into narrow market concerns. It is short sighted

*Respondent 3608:* The case has not been made and whilst commercial enterprises are arguably more efficient shareholders will expect a return on their investment.

### 3.2.8 Positive responses

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'positive responses'.

*Respondent 1053:* I understand that the Forestry Commission has long operated at a loss and I believe that charity or commercial owners will be more motivated to operate efficiently.

*Respondent 3253:* I believe charities such as the Woodland Trust etc will be able to manage the woodlands and look after them more efficiently than the Forestry Commission but will need funding to be able to do so.

*Respondent 5867:* if a corporate entity takes charge of a forest then they have to make it commercially viable by making it efficient in every way including the use by the public, hopefully

## Question 4: characterising the public forest estate

### 4.2.1 Concerns about the process or intention

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about the consultation process or intention'.

*Respondent 116:* I don't think characterisation is necessary, this consultation must be costing money that could be spent on buying new forests that the public could enjoy. try asking if the public wish to sell the forests or indeed would prefer to buy more adding to public ownership.

*Respondent 901:* The definitions are given in section 2.2 page 15. This process is obviously designed to come up with some useful categorisations for buyers to buy the forests. Since I am against this policy I don't believe classifying the forests in this way has an real purpose, other than to maximise profit.

### 4.2.2 Suggestions for characterisation of the estate

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'suggestions for characterisation of the estate'.

*Respondent 432:* While the characterisation in the document is useful it needs to be supplemented by another axis relating to their public utility with characteristics such as - proximity to centres of population - location in national parks / places of natural beauty - level of public use

*Respondent 5460:* The public forest areas should not be categorised but considered on an individual basis. I have visited many forests and they all have different characteristics and multiple uses and purposes.

*Respondent 6987:* Each woodland is completely individual, I feel that categorising the whole estate into two extremely broad categories is wrong. If it must be categorised then each piece of land should be looked at in more detail and then scored according to: biodiversity, recreation and leisure, commercial viability, protection, size, location and more...

*Respondent 6926:* Impact of public access as a source of local economic regeneration. See the towns of Innerleithen, Pickering, Kielder and the villages of the Afan valley for examples of regeneration stimulated by the growth of Mountain Biking as an activity in these areas.

### 4.2.3 Comments on the approach to characterisation

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'comments on the approach to characterisation'.

*Respondent 1:* To take an example, the Kielder forest which is considered to be "largely commercially valuable" is in fact more diverse than this title would presume. The characterisations are too large in scope and need more refinement. Nonetheless the whole is greater than the sum of its parts which is why the total area owned by the State should be kept intact.

*Respondent 42:* Incomprehensible question. They belong to the nation for both commercial and recreation purposes.

*Respondent 68:* Do not understand this question!

*Respondent 2502:* Categories are too general. There is variation within a wood or forest, with differing areas having different values. Most woods should be multi purpose i.e. heritage woods produce timber, and commercial woods have recreational use. Location of wood either in a valued or protected landscape. Proximity to local communities and access.

#### 4.2.4 Comments on the overall characterisation

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'comments on the overall characterisation'.

*Respondent 430:* Characterisation of forest types is an academic exercise that is not necessarily relevant to retaining the public forests in public ownership.

*Respondent 909:* Most Forestry Commission woodlands combine all types of benefits - recreation, public access, economic return, carbon mitigation and conservation of wildlife. All woodlands should be run for multiple benefits and the splitting in to "types" to develop different ownership models is arbitrary and wrong.

*Respondent 1009:* The classifications are unrealistic and ignore that large areas of the "forests" also comprise open moorland and heathland. The whole exercise seems predicated upon fragmentation which would be a disaster. The government thinking is fundamentally flawed. The forests and woodlands which the FC have, should be regarded as a whole and great National asset, not as some embarrassing liability for the government to rid itself of. Where they are not already part of National Parks they should be treated with the same approach.

#### 4.2.5 In favour of at least part of proposals

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'in favour of at least part of proposals'.

*Respondent 449:* Future value to the population, not just how the Forestry Commission behave at the moment. The pressure on land for recreation will grow. Look at what the forests will become under sensible, inspired, charitable ownership. Don't condemn the forests because the FC have no vision.

*Respondent 2246:* I think the assessment is fair. Can I add that wind turbine developments are only profitable due to government subsidy, not in their own right, thus it would not be a saving of public finance as it relies on the Renewables Obligation Certificates and the inflated electricity price paid for electricity generated. Please do not suggest that a saving is achieved by funding something with public money from another part of government, it suggests you don't talk to each other about where the money comes from. Has there been a consideration of the distance communities are from their nearest accessible forest? It would be a shame to sell-off a community's local wood to make a quick buck if they do not have another one within a reasonable distance.

## Question 5: criteria for transfer to charity

### 5.2.1 Concerns about the process or intention

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about the process or intention'.

*Respondent 925:* Obviously such transfers will cost considerable money to the taxpayer i.e. me, and I will then have to pay some charity to walk in a sanitised woodland theme park, where once it was wild. I do not agree with any transference of ownership

*Respondent 1508:* I find this question somewhat loaded as I don't believe that any of the public forest estate - which is not large by comparison to lands already under private ownership - should be sold off/transferred. However, not selling/transferring lands is particularly apposite in terms of the categories given above.

*Respondent 1673:* I don't want the forests transferred from the Forestry commission because this risks a reduction of public control and accountability.

*Respondent 2944:* The government proposals are for less than 8% of these woodlands to be offered to charities or communal groups.. the rest are being offered to the highest bidder. Therefore this question is misleading. It also isn't clear whether it means if you agree that forests which have national cultural, biodiversity or historical significance should or should not be sold. I really don't see the relevance of this question at all. All our woodlands and forests are of huge value to us in ways beyond number. Surely the real question or criteria should be will the new 'owners' be able to fund continued management without government grants or subsidies to help pay. If not then how will they pay for upkeep? charge at the gate? build shops and cafes throughout? sell postcards? cut down trees of economic value and sell indiscriminately? build shopping malls, car parks, high rise flats, supermarkets?.. Obviously any company, by way of their being a company, will not buy into something that has no economic gain. That is what we should be looking at.

### 5.2.2 Suggestions for other criteria

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'suggestions for other criteria'.

Respondent 540: Can any organisation afford to maintain this woodland to the highest standard without significant funding from central government

Respondent 817: An evaluation of the charities ability to provide the long term commitment needed to protect the forests in question. The government should also provide funding or resume ownership if the charity fails to meet its obligations. It would not be acceptable for the forests to eventually fall into private ownership if the charity failed.

Respondent 1496: Public importance Local community sustainability of work etc Local environmental importance

Respondent 1941: It should not be used in isolation however as it is too restrictive. Other criteria should be: 1. Whether the forest/woodland is adjacent to existing charity owned or managed land 2. Does the forest/woodland fit into landscape scale plans such as the Living Landscapes campaign 3. Does the area have significance at a landscape level as well as the local level

Respondent 5516: The value of woodland as a place to restore physical, spiritual and mental wellbeing.

Respondent 6014: Community forests (low in above values but of very high recreational and health benefit) might be better candidates than internationally important conservation sites like the FoD or NF. And they could at least access "Community cohesion" type funding rather than being yet more competition for already very limited nature conservation money.

### 5.2.3 Difficulties with the question

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'difficulties with the question'.

Respondent 828: We should not be using any criteria and the government should have followed a proper consultation process, before issuing this document. This document should have been preceded by a preliminary 'notice of intention' to key stakeholders. I think the legality of the proposals is therefore in doubt.

Respondent 4161: This is an odd question. I think all those are significant criteria, I don't think they are the only criteria, and I don't think that if there is none of those assets, then they shouldn't be offered to a charity.

Respondent 5972: I believe the criteria here are too narrow. No forest is suitable to be held by a charity. Charity funding has recently been massively attacked which effectively shows that such an important national asset should not be left in the hands of any body whose funding is susceptible to such drastic depletion of funding as is happening now and could quite feasibly be repeated in future times of hardship.

#### 5.2.4 Some level of agreement with change

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'some level of agreement with change'.

Respondent 744: I do not agree with the proposal to give land to charities, but, if you MUST take land away from the public, this is the least worse option. I have not ticked any agree or disagree boxes because this is a leading question and neither reflect my views.

Respondent 4186: Local charities should be able to take over small woods currently managed by FE. This would allow local people to manage woodland. This should be for the good of the wood, for example it would be converted to a nature reserve.

Respondent 6129: It may be better for charities to take over smaller forests

#### 5.2.5 Support for change of ownership

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'support for change of ownership'.

Respondent 3590: I would suggest that all forests, whatever their classification could be considered for transfer to charity. Our National Forests have declined heavily over the years with only a recent gentle recovery. Over commercialisation would be a disaster, stripping away woods/forests that whilst not of national historical, biodiversity or cultural significance are nonetheless important for the local/national community.

Respondent 5308: The forests should go into private ownership. Replacing the FC with charities is perpetuating the errors in common ownership of the land for common benefits. If the catchment has to be retained in a condition to provide water, that is one thing, but then again identifying the appropriate ecosystem services from land is about a mix of solutions, not just forest.

## Question 8: prioritising community groups

### 8.2.1 Concerns about the process or intention

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about the process or intention'.

*Respondent 19:* You cannot agree or disagree if the whole premise is wrong. Research the whole topic as outlined above.

*Respondent 52:* A highly divisive and impractical concept. Where would the funding appear from and how is the conflict between groups supporting & objectives dealt with - no a concern of the government. This is indicative of a policy of 'get rid of the forests and their costs by any means possible.'

*Respondent 349:* If community groups, charities etc do not have the skills, infrastructure or expertise then a public asset which is managed in a very effective way would effectively be privatised. Private companies have profit as an underlying driver. This is not good. If it's not broken don't fix it!

*Respondent 2297:* This is a total farse, there is very little chance community groups could raise enough funds to cover the cost to buy or lease of a forest, so it is a white wash so they can be sold off to the highest bidder.

### 8.2.2 Partial agreement with proposals

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'partial agreement with proposals'.

*Respondent 2544:* There should not be a sell off policy! No increase in sales. Stick to leases. If any forest is to be sold yes it should be offered to charity, community bodies or civil society organisations first. There should be a long consultation period (6Months) to give groups the chance to organise and get resources together. This offer should apply to all forests from now including 2001 and 2014/2015 plans.

*Respondent 3619:* Donate, rather than sell, to community organisations, as many will not be able to raise the funds to out-bid private profiteers.

*Respondent 6333:* Assuming Government retains the ownership of the freehold, why not allow any organisation bid for the leasehold of any forest subject to the over riding principles, and some general and more specific requirements for each individual forest. Then judge all bids on basis of an agreed set of criteria.

### 8.2.3 Concerns about feasibility

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about feasibility'.

*Respondent 38:* Meaningless if no finance to buy and run the estates.

*Respondent 629:* No voluntary body that I am aware of has the expertise to manage such woods

*Respondent 1936:* Keep it in public ownership. How will community or civil society organisations get the funding? Less affluent areas of the county will lose out. Only those areas where the locals are wealthy or able to organise themselves effectively will benefit

## 8.2.4 Additional suggestions

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'additional suggestions'.

*Respondent 2012:* how will that help the national deficit I think the best approach is to keep them in public ownership but look to generate more revenue from e.g. high value timbers and adding value to the products not just selling wood, also diversify into mushrooms and wild boar meat etc, forests can produce a lot of food

*Respondent 2384:* To leave the Forestry Commission in place with a redefined role and powers, but also subject to the quality standard of regulation mentioned in an earlier response.

*Respondent 6878:* Consider giving them to community or civil organisations as well as charities with a clause that they cannot be sold off later.

## Question 13: safeguards

### 13.1.1 Concerns about the process or intention

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about the process or intention'.

*Respondent 582:* I am fundamentally opposed to the idea that non-government organisations should run the forestry estate in this country, and keeping the status quo does not appear to be one of the options in this consultation - so making the whole consultation invalid.

*Respondent 1483:* I can't answer this question as it assumes I agree with the sell off, and I am completely opposed. The Forestry Commission is already doing a good job for us, so as the saying goes "if it ain't broke". It also seems to me that this question is loaded in favour of the sell off and could be used to misrepresent the public's views, by answering any of these questions "agree" or "disagree" would suggest the person answering accepts the sale when they may be totally opposed. If I am correct in this assumption this is highly manipulative and dishonest. The first question should be "do you agree or disagree with the sell off of our forests?" with just a plain yes or no answer.

### 13.1.2 Additional conditions needed

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'additional conditions needed'.

*Respondent 188:* The sold or leased land cannot be sub-let. Any conditions placed on sale of land are applicable to all subsequent purchasers. Sold land can not be parcelled up for resale, it must be resold in its entirety with this condition applying to all subsequent purchasers. Additional conditions for biodiversity and conservation management are required as well as those listed above.

*Respondent 6175:* There must be safeguards that do not change when the forest is sold on by the leaseholder. I understand that safeguards can only be applied for the first owner and subsequent change of ownership will revert to a company doing what it wants. Look how city firms which managed farms in the past have messed the countryside up. They only want to make money for their shareholders or equity partners.

### 13.1.3 Conditions can be met without change of ownership

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'conditions can be met without change of ownership'.

*Respondent 722:* I strongly disagree that charities or community or civil societies are better placed to own or manage the public forest estate. Government should continue to be responsible, in the national interest, for managing the public forest estate through the highly skilled and professional Forestry Commission

*Respondent 871:* The forests MUST be kept in public ownership if we are to ensure any of these principles are adhered to. If they are sold off, we may as well say goodbye to OUR heritage.

*Respondent 1560:* I can't see any realistic safeguards that could give the same level of social, economic or environmental benefit that is provided by continuing Forestry Commission management.

*Respondent 4940:* If the Government want to do this, they can do this within a framework whereby the land remains in public ownership. Public forests must remain under public ownership.

*Respondent 5790:* the forests are safest in public ownership. Both in terms of protecting the environment and public access. Leasing them will offer forests less protection in the short, medium and long term regardless of the safeguards put in place

### 13.1.4 Concerns about monitoring and enforcement

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about monitoring and enforcement'.

*Respondent 396:* Whatever safeguards are put in place at the outset, these will be easily eroded over time as owners/leaseholders start to bleat about unfair restrictions and demand more lucrative arrangements.

*Respondent 641:* All the safeguards are at risk of subversion with or without collusion by government officials. The costs of maintaining these safeguards will be high and even if safeguards are successful, once the forests are sold or leased it will be a lengthy and very costly process to reclaim any deemed to be managed incorrectly - so it will not happen, as it will be declared "not in the public interest".

*Respondent 1647:* You can not safeguard against the unscrupulous and untrustworthy. Every avenue should be looked into. How can you guarantee that someone you lease to will not sub lease or sell off? All operatives should be accredited with recognised bodies. This needs to have sub clauses written in to guarantee the perpetual safety of our woodlands and forests.

*Respondent 3738:* Who will monitor this?? From past experience the government has a appalling record on enforcement of anything. Therefore it is unlikely that leasing will be effective.

### 13.1.5 Reservations about proposals

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'reservations about proposals'.

*Respondent 26:* In principle, I object strongly to the sale of the whole FC forest estate. I accept that some minor sales may be desirable to rationalise the forest estate and my response is based on the premise of minor sales only. My response must on no account be taken as condoning the purpose of this consultation to dispose of all the FC forest estate. See additional comments.

### 13.1.6 Support for any element of proposals

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'support for any element of proposals'.

*Respondent 6804:* Sell them outright? Give old leases back to old landowners for a marginal fee?

*Respondent 6978:* There should no requirement for PAWS restoration. The quality of PAWS restoration on the FC estate is already of limited value. Grant funding can be used if this appropriate. Only statutory access should be maintained.

### 13.1.7 Alternative proposals

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'alternative proposals'.

*Respondent 3938:* Much shorter leases with forests returning to government ownership after a much more limited period.

*Respondent 4720:* Yes, out sourcing of timber production, and not granting a lease Where bidders seek to install a profitable commercial leisure facility or other commercial facility e.g. renewables, then a short term licence could also be used

*Respondent 6635:* Only UK owned companies should be able to lease the land. No onward sale of lease should be allowed. The government should not be allowed to make alterations to the lease agreement without parliamentary and Forestry Commission approval.

## Question 15: role of Forestry Commission England

### 15.2.1 Maintain current role

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'maintain current role'.

*Respondent 3:* This is what they are doing anyway, so what is all this about? It is better to preserve and expand the existing system. It is obvious that not only the public but also professional bodies are against the Government proposals.

*Respondent 139:* Our Forestry Commission is accessible locally - they're expert professionals - and the idea of them being arms length is unbelievably scary.

### 15.2.2 Priorities for FCE

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'priorities for FCE'.

*Respondent 154:* redeveloping markets for small scale woodworkers- green woodworking craft products for example

*Respondent 611:* Continue to research into the multi-functional public benefits of woodland and into management techniques for sustainable woods and forests.

*Respondent 1975:* The land should be retained by the Forestry Commission on the whole, with some areas managed by non-profit making organisations. The problem with privatising public sector areas is amply demonstrated by the so-called 'public transport system'. Private companies exist to make profit. That's the bottom line. They do so by providing a service / product that costs them as little as possible and charge as much for it as possible. So on the whole, service levels/quality declines and prices increase. So by 'encouraging a competitive' forestry sector, quality will decline while prices go up.

### 15.2.3 Concerns about the process or intention

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'concerns about the process or intention'.

*Respondent 4739:* Again this is a blatant attempt to trick people into giving you the answer that the politicians require. Disgraceful.

*Respondent 6961:* Are these questions designed to strengthen the case for sale - wouldn't it have been quicker and cheaper to have a survey that said I agree or disagree with the sale

### 15.2.4 Critical of question

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'critical of question'.

*Respondent 2735:* As with so many questions, the last one is slanted to produce a particular answer.

### 15.2.5 Suggested changes to current role

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'suggested changes to current role'.

*Respondent 2179:* Withdrawing from the subsidising of rich landowners and targeting its grant giving on a more means tested basis. HM Treasury should review the tax laws surrounding forestry. Managing the public estate in the same excellent way as it has over the last few years and acknowledging that its 1919 image needs to change and that its intensive management levels can be trimmed down. Promoting the UK's excellent woodland management on the world stage

### 15.2.6 In favour or partly in favour of proposals

The following are examples to illustrate the kinds of responses that were coded under 'in favour or partly in favour of proposals'.

*Respondent 3651:* The forestry Commission should focus on leasing to others and let them take on the responsibility. It does not take years to do that.

*Respondent 6021:* I do not see that post-sale we have a need for the Commission at all. It is my view that we could be in a situation where the tax payer has no ownership liabilities and STILL needs to subsidise estate works due to the inability or reluctance of the "new owner" to undertake some of their liabilities.

## Final unnumbered question: Additional comments

Many responses to this question were much longer than to other questions. The following includes one such response as an example, with a range of shorter examples.

*Respondent 68:* First and foremost, or would appear that, in the race to make cuts in the Public Sector, Ministers seem to have ignored the fact that the PUBLICLY owned - not Government owned as the Consultation Document would have it - Forests and Woodland are a STRATEGIC asset which is certain to be of vital importance in the not too distant future. Comments on the Consultation Document: Page 5 - To whom does it "make sense" to look at "alternative models of ownership or management" and why is it "sensible" to look at the role of the Forestry Commission. The suggestion that this whole tawdry exercise is something to do with devolving power from Whitehall to the so-called "Big Society" is not only a cop-out but an insult to the intelligence of the public. Page 6 - It is not at all clear as to why there should be an emphasis on "only 18% of England's total woodland being PUBLICLY owned as if somehow this amount is hardly worth Government involvement. The division into "four broad categories" smacks of being recommended by Forestry Consultants rather than being made on the basis of impartial advice. Page 9 - Tellingly, there is no mention of the wider General Public who may well have anticipated being included in the list of "who this Consultation is for" Page 12 - Given all the benefits of the Forests & Woodlands being PUBLICLY owned, it is hard to comprehend why any thought - other than cost cutting - is being given to changing the status quo. Page 13 - The "many hundreds of individual sales" used in this context, presumably as a precedent, were solely Treasury driven and were not in the Public interest nor were they based on good arboriculture. It is not immediately apparent as to why Government should contemplate the selling off a further 40,000 ha (some 15% of the total shown on page 6) on the spurious basis of "limited added value in terms of Public benefits." Page 15 - Whilst one should be very wary of anything called a "Portfolio Analysis Tool" the categorisation completely misses the point that the WHOLE of the PUBLICLY owned Forests & Woodlands estate is of equal importance. Page 20 - The comparison with other countries ownership and management is crass. Many countries drive on the right but that doesn't mean that it is better or safer than on the left or that it should be introduced into this country. Page 33 - Since when and under what particular legislation has the "Public Right to Buy" as more usually applied to Council Housing, been applicable to Forests and Woodlands already in PUBLIC ownership? Page 42 - With only 1200 staff employed by the Forestry Commission, a number which, in the scheme of things, is insignificant, so to reduce their numbers due to so-called "efficiency savings" or more accurately 'cost cutting' is perverse and at odds with the requirement for a "wide range expertise". Whilst many would agree that the Forestry Commission suffers some minor shortcomings wholesale reorganisation or, more accurately, a reduction in staff numbers, is to all intents and purposes using sledgehammer to crack a nut.

*Respondent 268:* I am dismayed that there is no option to state my opposition to the plan to sell off the forests, apart from as an aside in the comments boxes. What kind of consultation misses out the crucial question underlying the future of the forests? A false consultation. It's like being consulted on whether I'd like to be shot and then finding the questions are all about which type of bullets I'd prefer.

*Respondent 609:* I have not responded to a "consultation" document like this before. I have to confess that I am thoroughly disgusted, though entirely unsurprised, to discover that it has been constructed as a marketing exercise to further the government's ideological aims rather than a balanced attempt to obtain the views of the electorate.

*Respondent 1000:* Overall this seems to be a very half-hearted sale of woodland but I fully understand that a century of public ownership and management by a public body has become entrenched and is difficult to roll back. Ideally I believe this woodland should revert to private ownership, such ownership including bodies such as charities. Access should be on existing rights-of-way and by some specific conditions written into land deeds in perpetuity for the special cases of national, cultural and biodiversity interest. The 'rump' Forestry Commission should be as small as possible or preferably non-existent in the interests of reducing bureaucracy in this country. The remaining rules would be regulated by employees of DEFRA.

*Respondent 2154:* The ownership of the Public Forest Estate should remain unchanged. All ideas to sell, lease or gift the estate should be immediately dropped. The only way to secure the public benefits we all enjoy is to have the estate owned by the public and managed for the benefit of the public. There is a difference between giving public access to our Forests and making the forests accessible to the public. Rig Wood is a fine example of this, the public are allowed to access the land but is certainly not accessible to them. The car park has been closed and the wood has been fenced and gates locked. Mountain bikers or horse riders currently enjoy our Forests but they have no protection under the CROW act

*Respondent 4719:* Ideally all woodland should be in private hands, whether this be commercial or community hands. It should not be part of a government's responsibility to own wooded areas (or any other areas). The need to protect the landscape and biodiversity must always be given higher priority than public access. Public access should only be allowed on existing public rights of way or where it will not interfere with the healthy development of the forest and, for commercial forests, with the commercial operation.

*Respondent 5180:* I think it's a great pity that the initial press comments are all negative - the actual document itself is much more positive and balanced. Of course, ten years is a long time and governments change, and this could end up being a half-baked scheme. Having the option to respond online is good, and should be widely publicised.