

Parliamentary Questions tabled by Sarah Boyack MSP and replied December 2008

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

WRITTEN ANSWER

10 December 2008

Index Heading: Rural Affairs and the Environment

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many companies it is envisaged will be involved in bidding for leases for management and cutting rights over the national forest estate.

(S3W-18403)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM> The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

The bidding process for any management lease would be subject to public procurement rules. It is not possible to predict the number of potential bidders at this stage.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is envisaged that leases for management and cutting rights over the national forest estate will be released in one block or in smaller parcels.

(S3W-18404)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM> The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

No decisions have therefore been taken on the size of any blocks which may be leased, although there may be good arguments for a single lease. Forestry Commission Scotland will be considering a range of options on this aspect during its review.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it envisages allowing foreign companies to bid for leases for management and cutting rights over the national forest estate.

(S3W-18405)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

The bidding process for any lease would be subject to public procurement rules, which include compliance with international obligations. Therefore, foreign companies are free to bid.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will confirm that it envisages that leases for management and cutting rights over the national forest estate will be for up to 75 years.

(S3W-18406)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

No decisions have therefore been taken on the length of any leasing arrangement, although there may be good arguments for it lasting several decades. Forestry Commission Scotland will be considering a range of options on this aspect as part of its review.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what safeguards it envisages will be inserted into the leases for management and cutting rights over the national forest estate to safeguard biodiversity, access, leisure and recreation.

(S3W-18407)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

The consultation exercise and options review will help inform Forestry Commission Scotland's deliberations on the range and nature of the safeguards to be included in any leases.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what level of monitoring it will put in place to assess to what extent biodiversity, access, leisure and recreation are safeguarded if management and cutting rights over parts of the national forest estate are subject to leasing.

(S3W-18408)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

The consultation exercise and options review will help inform Forestry Commission Scotland's deliberations on the level of monitoring required to assess the extent to which biodiversity, access, leisure and recreation were safeguarded under a lease.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the transfer of Forestry Commission assets and land in perpetuity to a not-for-profit trust is an option being considered by the Scottish Government, as set out on page six of the paper *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate - Consultation on forestry provisions in the Scottish Climate Change Bill*.

(S3W-18409)

Mr Michael Russell :

As the consultation document indicates, this is one of the options to be considered as part of the consultation exercise and the options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has discounted the option of transferring assets and land in perpetuity to a not-for-profit trust, as set out on page six of the paper *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate - Consultation on forestry provisions in the Scottish Climate Change Bill*.

(S3W-18410)

Mr Michael Russell :

No.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is envisaged that under the option of transferring assets and land in perpetuity to a not-for-profit trust, as set out on page six of the paper *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate - Consultation on forestry provisions in the Scottish Climate Change Bill*, such a trust would be prevented from selling on any land that it was given to manage.

(S3W-18411)

Mr Michael Russell :

Under one option set out in the consultation paper, a not-for-profit trust could be given the task of holding in perpetuity the national forest estate land that had been leased. A trust could, however, also be given flexibility to sell any newly created woodland, which it had established using the proceeds of a lease, in order to generate funds to create more woodland. However no decision on that or any other actions possible for a trust have been made.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will guarantee that there will be no redundancies as a result of proposals for leasing out management and cutting right over parts of the national forest estate.

(S3W-18412)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

There will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of any leasing arrangement arising from the consultation exercise and wider options review.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many staff are currently estimated to work in the areas identified under proposals for leasing out management and cutting rights over parts of the national forest estate.

(S3W-18413)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

It is therefore too early to say how many staff are working in the areas which might be selected for leasing, should that particular option be taken forward.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive which areas of the national forest estate have been considered for leasing out or transfer to a public trust.

(S3W-18414)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights, and transferring the proceeds to a not-for-profit trust for investment in woodland creation, are potential options for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. These options are included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and*

the National Forest Estate <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

It is therefore too early to say which geographical areas would be considered for leasing, but they are likely to be those parts of the national forest estate where timber production is the main objective, and where public benefits such as conservation, community engagement and recreation are relatively less significant.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what calculations have been carried out to establish how much of the national forest estate could be bought.

(S3W-18415)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

The amount of land which could be appropriate for leasing is a key consideration in the consultation exercise and options review.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what level of income is predicted to be raised through the proposal that management and cutting rights over parts of the national forest be leased out.

(S3W-18416)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation

closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

The income raised from a lease would depend upon a range of factors including the area that it covered and its terms. There may be good arguments for a lease of up to about 25% of the national forest estate, we have taken no decisions on this. The consultation exercise and options review will help inform deliberations on this issue.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive in which financial year it is anticipated that income will be generated by leasing out management and cutting rights over the national forest estate.

(S3W-18417)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

The timescale for the generation of income from the leasing option will depend on the decisions taken following the options review and consultation exercise, as well as the availability of the necessary legal powers.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will publish the business case on which proposals are based for the leasing out of management and cutting rights over the national forest estate.

(S3W-18418)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

The options review will be published after we have had the opportunity to consider it.

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Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the impact of the current economic downturn has been factored into the financial assumptions behind the proposals for the leasing out of at least 25% of the national forest estate.

(S3W-18419)

Mr Michael Russell :

Offering management leases and cutting rights is a potential option for releasing capital from the national forest estate which could be used to fund woodland creation projects to help mitigate climate change. This option is included in a public consultation currently being carried out on *Climate Change and the National Forest Estate* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KUMVM>. The consultation closes on 27 January 2009. All responses will be carefully considered and will be taken into account as part of a wider options review being carried out by Forestry Commission Scotland.

The impact of the current economic downturn is one of the many factors that will influence our decision on the leasing option.

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