



From the Private Secretary
Oddi wrth Ysgrifennydd Preifat

Ein cyf/Our ref FM/05398/09

Dr Craig Shuttleworth
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5 August 2009

Dear Dr Shuttleworth

NEWBOROUGH FOREST AND RIGHTS UNDER THE AARHUS CONVENTION

I am writing in response to your letter of 11th July 2009 to the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan about compliance with the Aarhus Convention in relation to the development of plans for the future management of Newborough Forest, Anglesey.

The First Minister is aware that there has been close involvement by community interests over a number of years in the development of management plans for this important forest area. He also understands that you and other representatives of the Newborough Forest Liaison Partnership recently met with the head of the Welsh Assembly Government's Nature Conservation team to discuss the concerns which you and others have raised. The First Minister hopes that that meeting has gone some way to clarifying and resolving the points which were concerning you and which you raise in your letter.

As a result of that meeting you will be aware that a revised management plan for the Newborough Forest area, including the Special Area of Conservation which covers part of it, is being prepared by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and by the Forestry Commission, Wales. The First Minister understands that the CCW and Forestry Commission are committed to involving the Newborough Forest Liaison Partnership in the development of that new plan – and the expectation is that you should see the draft version for comment in the next few weeks.

The First Minister also understands that the CCW are undertaking a review of the science underpinning the recommendation to fell a section of the Forest and that the review will involve representatives of the Newborough Forest Partnership. The results of this review, and of a separate review of the various nature conservation designations in this area, are intended to help inform the development and content of the new management plan for Newborough Forest.

The First Minister has also noted your concerns about whether the terms of the Aarhus Convention – in relation to access to information and public participation in decision making – have been complied with. As regards access to information, he believes that the Assembly Government is fully compliant with this in the manner in which we respond to information requests both under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. In this context the First Minister understands that you have already exercised your right under the Freedom of Information Act to request information held by the Assembly Government in relation to Newborough Forest.

As regards your complaint about the CCW possibly not complying with the Aarhus Convention, the Welsh Assembly Government has taken this matter up with them. In response CCW have explained that some of the information you refer to was produced originally for internal purposes, but has now been released to the Newborough Forest Management Plan Working Group. CCW also maintain that they have provided you with other papers which you requested. The First Minister also understands that the science review now proposed will also involve you as well as other members of the Newborough Forest Liaison Partnership – again in line with the principles of the Aarhus Convention.

The First Minister hopes that the contents of this letter and the next steps proposed for the development of the new management plan for Newborough Forest will help address your concerns.

Yours sincerely



ROSE STEWART

Private Secretary to the First Minister
Ysgrifennydd Preifat i'r Prif Weinidog