

<u>Memorandum for Executive Council</u>	
SUBJECT	Rationalisation of the SHG Forest Estate
	Memorandum by Chairman of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
ADVICE SOUGHT	<p>1. Executive Council is asked to advise whether excision of the attached list of land parcels at Annex A (currently designated as National Forest) from the SHG Forest Estate should be approved. The request is made under Section 12 of The Forestry Ordinance CAP 92, which states:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>(1) The Governor in Council may, after consultation with the Committee and subject as hereinafter provided, amend, vary, or revoke, any Order relating to the constitution of land as National Forest, Dedicated Forest, or Protected Forest.</i></p>
BACKGROUND & CONSIDERATIONS	<p>2. Agriculture and Natural Resources Division (ANRD) has completed its phased exercise to rationalise the SHG forest estate and redefine its boundaries towards streamlining its management responsibility for an estate that is both productive and environmentally suitable for long-term forestry purposes.</p> <p>3. Over the years ANRD has entertained individual requests from the public and the SHG Properties Division for various pieces of forest land for a variety of uses, including residential development, extensions to existing residential dwellings and various business uses. This resulted in both ad-hoc requests for excisions and boundary alterations of the estate.</p> <p>4. The rationalisation exercise will achieve the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide opportunity for the Environment and Natural Resources Directorate (ENRD) to focus its forestry programme over the medium-long term on land that is suitable for sustainable forestry, rather than having to commit resources, even if only occasionally each year, for oversight and management of unproductive areas of the forestry estate. ▪ Free up some potentially developable land from the exercise in a single transaction allowing the ENRD Properties Division to be better positioned to plan for Crown land disposal for commercial and residential needs. ▪ Create efficiencies in the way land is made available from the

	<p>National Forest Estate by reducing resources expended on adhoc excisions.</p> <p>5. There are no financial consequences for the loss of forest land as the majority of the land does not have forest plantations or trees on it of significant value, does not support the provision of forest services of value or lend itself to promoting non-production related forest objectives.</p> <p>6. From the forest estate land parcels comprising a total of 13,021.252 acres, 9,101.966 acres was excised in 2014 and a further acreage of 2,117.292 acres is being proposed through this excision, leaving an area of 1,802 acres that is deemed suitable for the pursuit of forestry objectives. A copy of the list of parcels is attached at Annex A.</p>
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>7. A positive financial impact is expected as a result of this excision. There is potential for revenues to be generated by SHG over the medium-longer term for those plots suitable for disposal, through land rentals and sales via their Land and Buildings Disposal Policy.</p>
ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS	<p>8. There is little opportunity cost from this transfer since there is no forestry existing amongst the land identified and there is no potential to produce timber trees and future plantations on these sites due to soils and conditions. As these areas are not productive in terms of timber use, and also not advantageous for coffee growing nor general agriculture, the most economical solution is to transfer these lands over to ENRD's Properties Division to consider more productive use and develop the built environment. It is noted that the development of the timber industry is a potential growth area, as outlined in the SEDP, but the areas identified for transfer would not help achieve the overall SEDP objectives should they stay under ANRD's remit.</p>
CONSISTENCY WITH INVESTMENT POLICY PRINCIPLES	<p>9. Investment Policy:</p> <p>Principle 1.</p> <p>Make Saint Helena a desirable and competitive destination to do business by removing barriers to investment.</p> <p>Principle 4.</p> <p>Promote fair, consistent, timely and transparent decision making.</p>
PUBLIC / SOCIAL IMPACT	<p>10. Although not all of the land can be utilised without significant development funding being applied, the excision will lead to additional land resources becoming available for SHG to meet demand from the community for land.</p>
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	<p>11. There is no significant area of tree cover that will be lost through excision of the attached parcels. A positive environmental impact is expected in many respects as much of the land is not being used and some is encroached with invasive weeds. Use of</p>
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	<p>the most suitable parcels for development in the short term and beyond could ensure the land is contributing to the Island's sustainable development instead of potentially becoming a source of seed dispersal for invasive plants.</p> <p>The environmental impact of new development on the land will be assessed through the lands and planning consultation processes.</p>
PREVIOUS CONSULTATION / COMMITTEE INPUT	12. The Environment and Natural Resources Committee was consulted on the proposal at its February 2019 meeting and gave approval for it to proceed to Executive Council for a decision.
PUBLIC REACTION	13. This is expected to be positive. The public largely support the release of Crown land for business and residential uses and approval will show that SHG is taking positive steps to free up land to make available under the provisions of its Land and Buildings Disposal Policy.
PUBLICITY	<p>14. Executive Council's decision will be published in the ExCo report and associated broadcast.</p> <p>If approved, the public will have an opportunity to comment on the proposal for excision of forest land through the following requirement:</p> <p><i>Section 12 (2) of the Forestry Ordinance requires: Notice of intention to amend, vary or revoke an order to constitute forest land must be published in the Gazette and must: (a) describe the land affected; (b) contain details of the proposed amendment, variation, or revocation; (c) specify a date not earlier than 6 weeks from the date of the notice for written representations or objections to be lodged; and (d) specify a date not earlier than 6 weeks from the date specified in the preceding paragraph when it is proposed that the order will be amended or revoked.</i></p> <p><i>Section 12 (3) of the Forestry Ordinance requires: The Governor in Council must before amending, varying, or revoking any order take into consideration all matters that appear to the Governor in Council to be relevant, including: (d) any representations or objections lodged under subsection (2)(c).</i></p>
SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	<p>15. This paper supports the following National Goal / Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altogether Wealthier: We are committed to a Crown Estates strategy to make obtaining Crown land easier.

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LINK TO SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN GOALS	<p>16. This paper is linked to the following SEDP Goal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving Land Productivity - Making use of derelict or underused brownfield land and changing use of existing property to provide space for businesses to thrive. Supporting businesses to make the most productive use of land.
	<i>RKY</i>
OPEN /CLOSED AGENDA ITEM	<p>17. This paper is proposed for the ‘open’ session of ExCo.</p>
Corporate Support Corporate Services	
20th March 2019	

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