

1. Questions raised during the consultation, with replies from CCW/FCW

1.1 Questions about what is driving change, and what decisions have already been made

What (e.g. Europe, economics etc) is driving the interest of CCW and FC in the Newborough Forest area?

The Forestry Commission manage the woodland to deliver the objectives set out by the Wales Assembly Government in “[Woodlands for Wales](#)” and uses a Forest Design Plan to develop and describe the way in which it balances the needs of people, conservation, recreation, tourism, landscape and sustainable economic activity.

CCW is responsible for the management of the dunes, beach and adjacent estuaries of the National Nature Reserve (NNR) and for the provision of advice on the conservation of flora, fauna, geological and physiographic features. CCW and FC are advisors on the special Conservation and Environmental opportunities of the site.

The existing Plan is 10 years old and this is an opportunity to better integrate our management of the dune and woodland to improve its ecological and social values.

References

- [Woodlands for Wales](#)
- [Habitats Directive](#),
- UK [Biodiversity Action Plan](#),
- The [Anglesey Local Biodiversity Action Plan](#),
- The [Anglesey Woodland Strategy](#),
- The [Unitary Development Plan](#)
- The EU’s Århus Convention and Directive 2003/35/EC
- The CCW booklet: habitat series No. 7 Sand Dunes

Is it true that the availability of money from Europe is driving the deforestation plans?

No. There is no European budget driving the process.

What is this SAC, what does ‘achieving favourable conservation status of the SAC’ mean, and what will happen if it is not achieved (isn’t it true that WAG will face prosecution if it is not achieved – i.e. that consultation won’t have any effect on decision making)? What does the SAC status compel CCW to do? What does the Habitats directive mean for the area?

- The Newborough Warren is part of the Abermenai to Aberffraw dunes Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated under the [EU habitats directive](#) to conserve the range of European species and wildlife habitats].
- The UK government is required to work towards “Favourable Conservation Status” (FCS) of these features and to avoid the deterioration of features for which the SAC is designated.

- Achieving “Favourable Conservation Status” is a combination of ensuring that the habitat or species is in good condition, that the future management of the habitat or species is secure and that the factors or processes that determine its long term functioning are operational.
- FCW must carry out an Assessment of the effect of its management of the SAC. If its plans would adversely affect the integrity of the SAC, implementation can only proceed for reasons of overriding public interest. In this event, compensatory measures could be required to ensure the integrity of the SAC.
- An Assessment cannot be made until the Design Plan has been written.
- Failure to abide by these regulations could lead to proceedings in the European Court.
- The challenge is to produce a Design that achieves Favourable Conservation Status for the SAC and all other stakeholder objectives on the site.

Special Area of Conservation features of the Newborough site include:

1. Embryonic shifting dunes (strandline)
2. Shifting dunes along the shoreline with marram grass *Ammophila arenaria* (‘white dunes’).
3. Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (‘grey dunes’)
4. Dunes with creeping willow (*Salix repens* ssp. *argentea*)
5. Humid dune slacks (the wet depressions between the dunes)
6. Naturally nutrient-rich lakes, which are often dominated by pondweed.
7. Petalwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii* (a liverwort)
8. Shore dock *Rumex rupestris* (a vascular plant)

In addition, Newborough Warren (including the forest) is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under UK legislation, notified for its geology, landforms, habitats and species which underpins the Special Area of Conservation.

What sort of change do CCW and FC want to see in the area and why? What does the Assembly want to do with the land? What is the status of the ‘vision’ and the plans and maps that we saw at the public meetings, and the current Forestry Design Plan?

The Forest Design Plan expired in 2001 (Check date). The “vision” [[hyperlink to archived version](#)] was only ever one of the ways of meeting the environmental objectives and has now been shelved.

What scientific evidence do you have to support your idea that things need to change? What has happened to the Environmental Impact Assessment that was commissioned earlier this year? Does this mean CCW/FCW have already made up your minds?

Doing nothing is not really an option.. Things will change whatever we do as the tree crop at Newborough matures and we have to actively manage it ensure an environment that users enjoy. The Environmental Impact Assessment has been suspended along with the Vision until the consultation process has been completed. There is scientific evidence that the conifer plantation impacts on the dune ecosystem by stabilisation of naturally mobile and dynamic landforms, by **changing** the natural dune flora and fauna and by lowering of the groundwater.

References:

Hill M O & Wallace H L (1989) *Vegetation and environment in afforested sand dunes at Newborough, Anglesey. Forestry* 63(3) pp249 – 267.

Rhind P M., Blackstock T H, Hardy, .H S., Jones R E., Sandison W. (date) *The evolution of Newborough Warren dune system with particular reference to the past four decades.....* ,

Houston J, (date) *British Wildlife*

Bristow etc) et al (*Birbeck College Reports*)

Ranwell, D.s. (1958) Movement of vegetated sand dunes at Newborough Warren, Anglesey. *J Ecol* 46, 83-100

Ranwell D.S. (1959) Newborough Warren, Anglesey I: The dune system and dune slack habitat. *J Ecol* 47 571-602

Ranwell D.S. (1960a) Newborough Warren, Anglesey II: Plant associates and succession cycles of the sand dune and dune slack vegetation. *J Ecol* 48 117 – 142

Ranwell D S (1960b) Newborough Warren, Anglesey III: Changes in the vegetation on parts of the dune system after the loss of rabbits by myxomatosis. *J Ecol* 48 385-395.

What will happen to the forest while the new plan is drawn up? Why didn't this consultation process start earlier? What is the standard procedure for the changing FDP? Can we be assured that AONB rules will be applied?

The forest will continue to be managed as a commercial and recreational woodland, so thinning and maintenance will continue. Major works to change the forest pattern, structure and diversity will not start until an agreed Plan has been produced. Forest Design Plans run for 10 years (but look forward 30 years) and are reviewed every 5 years.

CCW and FCW have been in discussion on the revision of the FDP since 2000, (the last plan was due for revision in 2001) but other priorities have intervened. Public consultation started after FC and CCW had reached an understanding of the environmental issues that should be addressed, the "vision" was to form the basis for wider consultation. The Community Council has been briefed under a long-standing protocol.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 places an obligation on all public authorities (including CCW & FCW) to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in performing their functions. Activities in the AONB should be guided by the [AONB Management Plan](#). Any plan requiring Local Authority planning consent would also be subject to Planning Policies set out in the Local Plan, [Unitary Development Plan](#) and [Planning Policy Wales](#).

1.2 Questions about what will be considered to be within the scope of the work, and how it links to other initiatives

How joined up will this be (with other plans, with health, social and economic interests, with wider area interests and issues)? What other proposals are there for the area (eg biofuel plant, interpretation and visitor centre, log cabins)? Will these be included in the consultation on the forest?

CCW and FCW are Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies and are required to deliver Assembly policies where reasonable and appropriate. The economic importance of Newborough Forest, beach and dunes as a major attraction is recognized by both agencies, as are the health benefits of outdoor recreation. CCW and FCW are involved elsewhere in the facilitation of economic, recreational and health initiatives, e.g the “Walking your way to Health” campaign, establishment of mountain bike routes and enterprises and funding of green transport schemes.

How will this fit with the Anglesey Woodland Strategy e.g. can any felling be balanced against planting proposals elsewhere?

The question of compensatory planting can be addressed, through the [Anglesey Woodland Strategy](#).

What area will this cover – will it cover Penlon Dunes, Malltraeth Marsh?

The immediate need is to produce a plan for the forest area. When this is available, discussion of the wider environment may be appropriate.

How flexible or robust will any plans be to deal with any changes to the climate etc in the longer term?

The Forest Design Plan is a long-term plan, but must reflect changing priorities. The plan will also consider issues such as climate change (and sea level rise), where there is major uncertainty over what will happen. The process will proceed on the basis of best available information. Periodic reviews (5 yearly) will enable new information to be incorporated.

What will be taken into account in the planning and operation in the area? Will rare and scarce plants be considered? How will economic returns be measured (recreation, car park fees, wood)? Will the global role of the area be considered (eg as a carbon sink)? How will the public’s views be balanced with things like the requirements of SAC, habitats directive etc?

The consultation process will identify all of the issues (environmental, social and economic) which impact on the forest. It will be our challenge to find a suitable balance. The public view will be safeguarded through the liaison group.

What does ‘world class forestry’ mean?

Woodland industries contribute some £400 million a year to the Welsh economy. For the woodland owners, contractors, sawmills and joinery businesses to survive in what is a very competitive world timber market, they have to invest and develop in staff, equipment, the wood supply chain, product development and marketing. This requires effective business support, and forests across the sector

1.3 About decision making and staffing

Who is in control of the project? Who is making sure that everything is done properly? Who makes the final decision? Why is the partnership at the centre so small? What will be the role of the community council? Why aren’t WAG involved? Where are the county council planners?

The Forestry Commission’s land managers will produce a draft Forest Design Plan which has to be approved by a Forestry Commission regulatory division who ensures that the plan meets legal and technical standards. CCW is closely involved in the partnership because of the sensitive nature of the site

and its proximity to the nature reserve. CCW, the Environment Agency the Local Authority and the Community Council are statutory consultees in the Design Plan process.

The Forestry Commission manages the forest on behalf of Wales Assembly Government. CCW is the Assembly's advisers on conservation matters.

How can we trust CCW/FC that this genuinely is a 'fresh start' when there are no staff changes?

CCW and FCW staff have a job to do and will be supported and guided by a Liaison Group who will develop Terms of Reference for their role. Jointly they will develop a Forest Design Plan which best meets the many outputs sought from the forest

Will there be someone independent managing things like the website/discussion forum to make sure all views are considered?

FCW and CCW manage their own websites, an independent facilitator may be used to ensure that the views of the liaison group are publicised.

1.4 About engagement plans

How available will the report(s) from the consultation be?

Everyone who provided an address will receive a copy. It will also be available on the Forestry website.

Is it true that CCW didn't want any consultation on this?

No. CCW and FCW took their original view on the design plan, and the subsequent (now shelved) vision statement, to the Community Council and to the Anglesey Environment Forum (part of the County Council's Community Strategy mechanism) and to the Newborough Forest Environment Panel (a FCW community liaison group). CCW has been closely involved in planning and organising the local community consultation and the planning of wider consultation with other stakeholders.

Will there be more public and stakeholder involvement and meetings in the future? What will be the role of the liaison group?

Yes. There will be further consultation when options are clearer. The liaison group will be asked to clarify the issues and help define options.

Why 2 year timescale – surely we can do this faster? Worried that otherwise public interest may drop off

There are many issues to address and conflicts to resolve. If we can do it more quickly we will – the FDP is already overdue, but we need to get it right.

1.5 About specific issues in the area

Do CCW/FCW want red squirrels in the Newborough Forest? Can CCW tell us what the minimum red squirrel viable and sustainable population size would be acceptable in Newborough?

All parties are keen to have red squirrels in Newborough as part of the Anglesey Red Squirrel Project.

The question of viable and sustainable population size is highly complex, depending upon assumptions about timescale, degree of human intervention, habitat connectivity, levels of predation and disease etc.. CCW has funded the Anglesey Red Squirrel Project for the past 6 years and continues to do so.

Why do we need ponies?

Ponies are a green option. They are used on some areas within the forest as natural mowing machines to maintain open glades for specific conservation objectives – including some very rare species such as shore dock and medicinal leech. Their dung supports many invertebrates (used by feeding birds such as chough) and rare species of fungi. They are also used widely on the open warren to restore and maintain a species rich short sward community.

Is the land too acidic for anything else to grow there?

No. The soil may be more acidic under the pine needles but this does not prevent growth of other species. The sand is actually highly calcareous (lime-rich) which accounts for much of the valuable flora and fauna associated with the dunes. Minor instability (such as blow-outs and erosion scars) brings this lime-rich sand back to the surface. Some areas may develop into acidic communities such as dune heathland or lichen dominated communities. As both these communities are rare in Wales, they should be encouraged.

What would happen if we took a 100 yard swathe of forest off the front of the dunes?

Felling edge trees would expose a new line of taller trees to wind and salt, and there would be visible signs of die back. Wind-throw is not likely but it would be wise to develop a new “ramp” of scrub, say 100 metres back, before any felling on the front occurred to protect the wider forest. Shifting dunes with marram grass would re-establish, helping to deflect some salt and wind in the process. Removing root-plates on the dune cliffs would allow the sand to establish gentler slopes “strandline and foredunes” which would colonise with natural vegetation. Some local sand movement would occur as dunes form on the forest edge, but planting of marram grass planting would stop key access routes being blocked.

What are the economics of the situation? The income and costs of forest plans? The purpose of the car park charge (is this to deter visitors to the SAC)?

Costs of the Forest Design Plan will be determined when the prescribed actions are determined and prioritised. If cost (minus income) exceeds existing operational budgets then sources of additional funding will be sought – primarily from the National Assembly.

The purpose of the car park charge is to raise revenue for FCW operations, including the surfacing of the forest road (not maintained by the Local Authority) and the car park and toilet facilities. There is no strategy to deter visitors to the SAC, but the environmental cost of cars is appreciated. We assume that people come to visit the forest and the dunes, not a car park. There is therefore a finite capacity to the car park (370 places, plus 25 at Cwningar) and the barrier charge does help to regulate use of this.

questions raised during consultations with responses

The Bio-fuel project

The Bio-fuel project is a free-standing project lead by Coed Cymru and EGNI, not dependent on the forest design plan. Though it could utilise low grade timber and waste timber from the forest (and elsewhere), this can occur with or without the implementation of the Forest Commission / Countryside Council vision.

It is on hold until after the drop-ins and public meeting for the Forest Design Plan. It may hold its own specific consultation once the issues about the Forest Design Plan have been agreed.

**CCW - They don't like people and don't want people on the site
- Don't want CCW to repeat previous mistakes**

CCW welcomes people for quiet enjoyment and responsible use of the National Nature Reserve (NNR). The inclusion of the forest within the NNR would present an opportunity to manage access and recreational facilities on the whole site in a more "joined-up" way.

Blowing sand

Blowing sand was a problem at Newborough in the early post-war years when the site was disturbed by military activity and very heavy rabbit grazing. Since rabbit myxomatosis in the mid 1950s, the dunes have stabilised almost everywhere – including on the open Warren, and very little sand blow is now experienced. We would like some sand movement, particularly on seaward areas, since there is a shortage of bare sand for some of the rare plants and invertebrates adapted to this environment. However, dunes now tend to stabilise naturally and the retention of the major part of the forest would ensure that there is no danger of sand moving far inland.

Concentration of walkers and other users into smaller area

There is no plan to decrease the areas available to walkers and other users – indeed the dedication of the present Forestry Commission area under open access legislation will enshrine the present open access policy in law.. Careful planning of shelterbelts and routes should ensure that the area remains attractive to walkers during inclement weather.

Large waste barren areas

During the removal of trees from an area there is an inevitable period of disturbance which is unsightly. Public consultation has shown this to be a major concern and if clearfelling is carried out we would hope to remove brash and stumps from prominent areas to aid the recovery of natural vegetation. Some planting of marram grass may also be required to re-establish building dunes in places.

Process of getting there – landscape change

There has been landscape change at Newborough for the past 1000+ years – perhaps some of the most dramatic in the past 60 years – and a fascinating story to tell about it. Some change is inevitable as the forest matures and develops. By careful planning we would hope to minimise the negative aspects of change.

Wildlife destruction.

The Forest Design Plan must seek to conserve wildlife by addressing their habitat needs – such as improving the dune habitat by enabling natural sand dune evolution to occur, restoring natural water tables where possible, increasing the species diversity and structure of the woodland. Where intervention is required to achieve this, appropriate methods would need to be used, such as restricting tree felling to the winter period and avoiding sensitive sites.

Ragwort.

Ragwort is a natural component of the sand dune flora. It is poisonous to grazing animals, but is normally avoided when green. It can be a problem if dead or wilted ragwort is fed to livestock. The solution is to avoid its inclusion in hay, and to reduce its occurrence by good grazing practice, avoiding overgrazing, which can encourage seedling establishment. Ragwort is an "injurious weed" and FCW and CCW adhere to the Code of Practice to Prevent and Control the Spread of Ragwort (2004).

No felling.

Newborough Forest was planted to provide timber. Trees are felled to provide timber and other wood products such as MDF. We also fell trees so as to improve the structural and biological diversity of the forest.

No Rabbits

Rabbits are a long established component of the dune fauna, though severely diminished by myxomatosis and more recently by Rabbit Haemorrhagic Viral Disease (RHVD). Their grazing helps to keep the dunes open and to conserve important and diverse habitats for rare plants and invertebrates such as early sand grass or burrowing bees. Rabbits often prosper in conjunction with other grazing animals, utilising the short sward left by cattle or ponies, but have more difficulty spreading in dense vegetation.

No change.

There has to be a new Forest Design Plan to allow the forest to be managed in the future. Natural changes are occurring all the time, including trees maturing and the shoreline responding to climate change. The configuration of trees and sand will change whatever happens.

Not enough consultation to date.

We would prefer to have started way back, but intend to make this consultation and involvement process as transparent and as inclusive as we can. Following the meeting in September we will identify and feed back all of the proposals for the way forward based on all of the views gathered over the summer. Environmental Impact Assessment can be used as a tool to help decide between options or develop compromise solutions which meet everybody's needs as far as is possible. We will make sure that we consult as the forest design plan progresses.

Concerned that people from outside the area have too much influence and that the Community Council is sidelined.

Rhosyr Community Council has been kept informed of the progress of the forest design plan for several years. It has a pivotal role in the consultation process.

The location of a visitor centre outside the village will mean that the village will not gain financially.

The visitor centre is a separate partnership project supported by WDA, Isle of Anglesey County Council, CCW, FCW and is being led by Menter Môn. At this stage it is simply a feasibility study to look at options for how a visitor centre might work to maximise the economic benefits to the locality as well as adding to the visitor experience. It will look at the pros and cons of various locations and will consider the "no visitor centre" option. It is on hold until after the drop-ins and public meeting for the Forest Design Plan. It will hold its own specific consultation once the issues about the Forest Design Plan have been agreed.

Impacts on the public's use and access to the forestry.

There is no proposal to limit public access to the area – indeed access will be enshrined in the dedication of the Forestry Commission area as Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Don't want damaging practices such as motorbikes and horse riding.

The access policy at Newborough Forest is to enable quiet recreational use on foot. Horse riding is a legitimate pursuit, which is managed along defined routes and limited by a permit system. Cycling is permitted on defined routes. We are seeking ways to enable all these activities to co-exist without conflict in order to enable the maximum number of people to enjoy the site without damaging the tranquillity which we all value.

Forest becomes too commercial from visitor side due to e.g. visitor centre.

Newborough has long been a commercial forest. The challenge now is to maintain its wildlife importance and its value for quiet recreation while ensuring that opportunities for creating economic benefits accrue to the local community. This will require sensitivity and an openness to new ideas while recognising the intrinsic values of the site.

Ongoing felling and associated large vehicles – increase traffic concern.

Until the Forest Design Plan is drawn up, there will be no changes to the levels of management in Newborough forest. If as part of the new Forest Design Plan we decide to cut down additional trees to restore the sand dunes, then the Environmental Impact Assessment will look at issues such as increased traffic. We would liaise with local people to try and reduce as much as possible the impact such work would have.

Consultation is cosmetic exercise & European Habitats Directive will override local community / local conservation interests.

The Forestry Commission and the Countryside Council for Wales have a number of "drivers" for change. These include the Habitats Directive, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, The Anglesey Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Woodlands for Wales (Welsh Assembly's strategy for forests in Wales), the Anglesey Woodland Strategy and the EU's Århus Convention and Directive 2003/35/EC. The consultation process is a serious effort to gather opinions, which will inform the design process and help balance apparently conflicting and competing claims.

In addition, we have a simple desire to see the site better managed for a multiplicity of objectives so that people, the forest and the open dunes can coexist without conflict!

Affordable low cost housing.

The Welsh Assembly Government requested the Forestry Commission to examine its holdings for potential housing land and Newborough was listed as possible. Nothing more has been done about this and any plans would be subject to full planning laws, including the need to address the conservation of biodiversity and landscapes.

Shelter from elements when walking.

A large area of woodland seems likely for the foreseeable future at Newborough. The provision of shelter within more open areas will be considered as options within the detailed design.

Access – for walking.

There will be no decrease in the area available for access on foot. – indeed dedication of the site as "Access Land" under new legislation will protect these rights.

Open dunes – more open areas.

One option for the future would be to create more open dune along the shoreline, restoring the early dune succession and enabling the shore to respond to long term changes in wind, waves and climate, and to increase the open dune habitat particularly on lower lying areas.

Trees - more broadleaf - keep trees - greater tree cover.

One option for the future would be to create a much more diverse tree canopy and ground layer, with more broadleaves. Although the total area of woodland may change, the large remaining area will become more diverse.

Wardening - to pick up dog mess - for policing - on horse back

Our local staff try to make sure that Newborough forest is a safe and pleasant place to visit. Changes in staffing may be considered as resources permit.

Get rid of ponies.

Ponies are used on some areas within the forest as natural mowing machines to maintain open glades for specific conservation objectives – including some very rare species such as shore dock and medicinal leech. Their dung supports many invertebrates (used by feeding birds such as chough) and rare species of fungi

Keep habitat and diversity of wildlife.

This is a driving objective of the CCW/FCW. Both dune and woodland habitats change over time – sometimes naturally and sometimes through human intervention or neglect. Given the huge impact of humans in affecting the global and local environment we have a responsibility to address these impacts and to ameliorate them where possible.

Public to be involved – listened to & involved in management.

That is the objective of the consultation. We cannot promise to please everyone, but we will make a genuine attempt to address all of the issues raised.

More information and be kept informed.

As the plan develops, issues raised will be fed into the design process. There will be further opportunities for involvement.

Open old road for residents.

The long-standing agreement with the community at Newborough is to respect ancient rights of access. However, there may be many ways of achieving this in an effective and efficient way. It may be better to

look at what can be done to improve things now rather than to try and restore something that may no longer be relevant. Give us your suggestions!

Money from car park to be spent on site.

Currently there is no linkage between the money collected from the car park and the amount spent on site. Forestry Commission Wales has and continues to manage the facilities at Newborough.

Gradual change.

The Forest Design Plan is long term, looking at the next 30 years, it is reviewed on a 10 year cycle.

Squirrels group want a meeting.

Meetings have been held with Friends of the Anglesey Red Squirrel Project and a dialogue with them will continue.

Keep peace and quiet.

We recognise the value placed on the quiet and solitude of the site – both in the dunes and the forest.

Be able to get lost in the forest.

The peace and solitude of the forest is a recognised value. Some people are fearful of getting lost in the forest so a system of waymarkers is often used.

FC to stand up for themselves.

Not a problem! FC and CCW are working together at Newborough. We have joint objectives but this is only part of the bigger picture for Newborough (perhaps we should not say this here as some parties may interpret this as a secret agenda). We are running this consultation to find out about as many of the different interests and concerns that exist at Newborough. With all this information FC will draw up a new Forest Design Plan.

Car Park – Keep the residents car park - Increase the car park.

Although the position of the residents' car park may be dictated by coastal erosion, there is a commitment to maintain this facility at Newborough. Increasing the capacity of the main beach car park could conflict with the demand for peace and solitude on the site and with other conservation requirements.

Benefits to the people of Niwbwrch to be clearly outlined.

We will make sure we do this.

Expose the rock ridge.

Some rock features have been exposed in recent years along forest roads. We will examine opportunities for detailed landscaping to capitalise on these where possible.

Continue to feel safe in forest due to proximity of other users within call distance.

The ability of the forest to absorb numbers of people whilst also giving a sense of solitude is a fine balance.

Hold seminars to consult public rather than traditional public meetings

We plan to use a variety of techniques to gauge public opinion.