

Questions from our consultation

This form sets out the questions we ask in a consultation on restoring and expanding open habitats from woods and forests in England that we launched on 12 March 2009. The consultation ends on 5 June 2009. You can find the consultation at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats-consultation or contact Dominic Driver, Forestry Commission for further information (contact details below).

Comments on any aspect of the consultation are welcome, but we are particularly interested in your responses to the questions below. This form is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats-consultation.

Your name:	John Bragg
Your organisation (if any):	Estates Mgt , Durham County Council
Date:	3 June 09

No	Question.
The nature of the change	
1.	Does your aspiration for the scale of the policy fit within our calculated range of 5,600 to 30,000 ha of restoration or expansion of open habitats from woodland or forest over 10 to 15 years? This is 370 to 3,000 ha each year. What level of intervention would you prefer and how is this justified?
<p>I would prefer that we keep to the lower end of the range, based on the principle that there is enough open habitat in the North anyway, albeit outside of the forest estates, and that these areas should be improved in parallel.</p> <p>The onus on the forestry sector to restore open habitats should be considered in the light of the present low woodland cover, climate change and the current financial constraints.</p>	
Desired outcomes	
2.	Have we developed a reasonable list of desired outcomes of the policy? Do you wish to suggest any amendments?
<p>I certainly agree with most of the outcomes and especially no net deforestation, carbon balancing, woodland biodiversity and local involvement. Can I suggest that the local involvement forms a partnership with those organisations that already work in this field and of course the wildlife trusts and national bodies.</p>	
Measuring the success of the policy	
3.	Have we developed a reasonable set of indicators for evaluation? Do you wish to suggest any amendments to this indicator list?
<p>Not sure if the UKBAP species would be impacted by such small restoration area as 300ha pa., unless they are monitored on a site level. The indicator list needs to be a simple method that works on the ground</p>	

No	Question.
Policy proposals	
Elements present in the policy	
We will treat woodland and open habitats as potentially mutually beneficial	
4.	Do you agree that woodland and open habitats are potentially mutually beneficial? Is promotion of this idea helpful in gaining support for open habitat restoration and expansion from woodland?
Historically forests were a mosaic of open, woodland and other habitats and we should try to restore this meaning. Woodlands and open habitats work well together in increasing wildlife cover and peoples enjoyment, but it needs to be an equal amount of each and not be dominated by one. For example the North's moorland dominates the landscape and forestry is quite minor, except in Kielder. To address this imbalance we need to increase native woodland cover (with open patches in it) and not decrease it. The key should be to manage all of the landscape in a biodiverse manner and as such Defra should be working with more farmers and estates to increase their wildlife content, especially in the uplands.	
A presumption against removal of 'mature native woodland'	
5.	Do you agree with the principle that there should be a presumption against removal of ancient and 'mature native woodland'?
Of course, that should be a given, as the most biodiverse land based habitat is ancient woodland and not heathland or any other landed habitat	
6.	What do you think of our proposed outline definition of 'mature native woodland'?
Fine	
We will expect practitioners to help local users to participate in development of the initial proposals	
7.	Do you agree that local participation in decision making is helpful? What is your preferred option for how we should apply this element?
It can complicate the issue to the point of making no progress and should to be addressed by organisations used to working with communities, eg Groundwork.	
We will promote mechanisms for prioritising woodland removal at a regional level	
8.	Do you agree that prioritisation at a regional level is appropriate for this policy?
yes	
We will apply a framework for evaluation to projects	
9.	Do you agree with this framework for evaluation? What is your preferred option for how we should apply this element?
yes	

No	Question.
10.	How much and what kind of support do you think we should give to practitioners to help them evaluate their projects using this framework?
	as much as possible with grants from the FC
<p>To avoid net deforestation in England we will try not to go over a threshold rate of woodland removal due to restoring and expanding open habitats.</p>	
11.	Do you agree with the principle of an England scale threshold rate of woodland removal? What is your preferred mechanism by which such a threshold could be applied to policy?
	yes
12.	Do you consider that the proposed threshold is about right, too high or too low?
	about right
<p>Key variables</p>	
<p>What is the balance between achieving biodiversity objectives and the need to reduce green house gas emissions?</p>	
13.	Is there a way, in the short term, we can better estimate the contribution to biodiversity objectives from different levels of restoration or expansion of open habitats?
14.	Do you agree that management practices to minimise carbon emissions during restoration or expansion of open habitats should be adopted? Do you agree with the outline practices presented? How could we best ensure that such practices are adopted?
<p>we should minimise the carbon emissions, but I dont see how removing woodland will help this; you will increase emissions in harvesting and then arrive at another habitat which does not absorb as much carbon as woodlands? On a carbon balance this does not make sense..</p>	
15.	Do you agree that it is appropriate to include impact on long-term average carbon store <i>and</i> loss of potential to substitute timber for higher carbon materials and fuel in the calculations on carbon balance?
	yes
16.	Where do you think the appropriate balance lies between achieving biodiversity objectives and the need to reduce carbon emissions? What processes might help to make this judgement?

No	Question.
	we should be looking at the whole landscape picture and not just forests, to include farmland and large estates to make up the picture. You may find that forests contribute more to carbon sinkage than farmland per ha.
<p>Should we be managing open habitats to keep them in 'favourable condition' or should we adopt a more dynamic approach to land management?</p>	
17.	Outside SSSIs, do you agree that a more dynamic attitude to land management could deliver equivalent or greater gains for open habitats and species than one where success for all sites is based on assessments of condition as applied to SSSIs?
<p>favourable condition is an artificial construct by NE, often maintaining a static plagio climax from some period that no longer exists. The dynamic approach works better with climate change, thus allowing the simple forest landscapes to evolve into complex habitats, which include woodland regeneration, patchworks, heath, wetlands, woods, etc. It might also be beneficial to allow wild animals to control this through grazing pressure eg deer controlling woodland regeneration, or colonise forests with once native animals like beavers.</p>	
18.	If so, how might such an approach be developed? Is there scope for modifying the conservation objectives on some SSSIs to incorporate a similar approach? If not, do you consider that the endpoint for all restoration proposals should be judged against favourable condition as defined for SSSI habitats?
<p>yes - some parts of the forest and habitats could be linked and provide a flowing dynamic, as per the Frans Vera models, of grazing pressure governing the type of forest and its habitats.</p>	
<p>What level of woodland removal due to restoring or expanding open habitats could avoid a significant negative impact on the timber industry?</p>	
19.	Can you provide any information on the likely links between any reduction in timber production and economic activity in the timber sector?
<p>I firmly believe that compensatory planting is the way forward whilst also modifying present woodlands to include some 10% of open land and rides widening.</p>	
<p>Different approaches to applying policy</p>	
20.	Which of the three approaches by which we make decisions about woodland removal is your preferred option? Can you see any alternative types of approach based either on a combination of these approaches or on new ideas?
<p>First of all the approach of a sustainable resource allied to climate change. Biodiversity will have to adapt to climate change anyway, so this will be a moving target if given.</p>	
<p>The role of compensatory planting</p>	
21.	What is the appropriate role of compensatory planting in this policy?
<p>It is important to plant areas to compensate for the habitats with forestry planted on them, these could be further encouraged through the grant system. It should be allied to the restoration of some key forest areas.</p>	

No	Question.
	also the role of compensatory harvesting from areas that have not been harvested before.
Factors to consider when deciding which policy is likely to work best	
22.	Have we developed a reasonable set of questions for informing the decision on which policy is best? Do you wish to suggest any changes to the list of questions?
	yes
Implications for delivery mechanisms	
23.	Have we missed any major implications for delivery mechanisms? Would any be particularly welcome or unwelcome to you?
	I would like to see the whole English forest estate, private and gov't, included but some emphasis placed on gov't bodies and local gov't / councils to deliver the larger amount, rather than economic forestry operations.
Other comments	
	We welcome your input on any other aspect of this consultation.
	In terms of the North of England, many county councils like ourselves in Durham might be able to deliver the conversion hectareage to other habitats, from forest that was mis planted over the last fifty years. we could manage a 100ha pa if the grants and felling licences allowed us to do this.

Please include the "information about you" form with your response.¹

Please send your completed forms to:

[Dominic Driver](#)

Senior Projects Officer | Policy and Programme Group | Forestry Commission England

620 Bristol Business Park | Coldharbour Lane | Bristol | BS16 1EJ

0117 906 6003 | 07779 627668 | oh.consultation@forestry.gov.uk

Fax: 0117 931 2859

By 17.00hrs, Friday 5 June 2009.

¹ See www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats-consultation for a copy.