

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:	Anne Mason
Your organisation (if any):	Friends of Thetford Forest Park
Date:	1 June 2009

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?
No. I consider that the Forestry Commission should not give up more land to open habitats. Its purpose is to grow timber for the nation's needs and to provide open access and recreational opportunities for the public.	
Desired outcomes	
2.	Have we developed a reasonable list of desired outcomes of the policy? Do you wish to suggest any amendments?
No. I do not agree with any of the outcomes as I am totally against the policy.	
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?
Yes, in theory.	
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?

No	Question.
	I do not agree with taking more of the forest estate out of timber production and replacing it with open habitat.
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'?
	Yes. Once removed, such a habitat is irreplaceable.
6.	What do you think of our proposed outline definition of 'mature native woodland'?
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?
<p>Yes; the organisation to which I belong - Friends of Thetford Forest Park - seeks to represent the views of the public and to act as liaison with the Forestry Commission.</p> <p>This questionnaire is not 'user-friendly' and is not understood by many members of the public. Feedback has already indicated to FOTFP that individual questions are too obscure and simply not intelligible, so members of the public have been deterred from answering.</p>	
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; it is vital that the needs of each region are met through local evaluation.
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?
Through local consultation. The views of users of the forest estate in each region must be taken into account and acted upon.	
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.
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.	
11.	Do you agree with the principle of an England scale threshold rate of woodland

No	Question.
	removal? What is your preferred mechanism by which such a threshold could be applied to policy?
	No more land should be taken for open habitat.
12.	Do you consider that the proposed threshold is about right, too high or too low?
	The proposed threshold is too high. Taking land for open habitats will result in less forest habitat; threaten forestry jobs and those in associated trades such as saw-milling and haulage and may restrict open access.
Key variables What is the balance between achieving biodiversity objectives and the need to reduce green house gas emissions?	
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?
	No. The forest is key to mitigating the effects of climate change and reducing greenhouse gases. The work of the Forestry Commission in leading on climate change mitigation is excellent and to be applauded. The 'open habitats' scheme would make a mockery of this work.
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?
	See answer to 13
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?
	Such an obscure question -not clear what you are asking !
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?
	The forest estate has enough 'open habitat' already.
Should we be managing open habitats to keep them in 'favourable condition' or should we adopt a more dynamic approach to land management?	
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?
	There are already problems with the management of 'open habitats' created through the 'Heathland Re-Generation Scheme' as there is a shortage of grazing animals to maintain

No	Question.
	the heath. The current assessment regime does not need changing.
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?
What level of woodland removal due to restoring or expanding open habitats could avoid a significant negative impact on the timber industry?	
19.	Can you provide any information on the likely links between any reduction in timber production and economic activity in the timber sector?
	Any woodland removal will have an undesirable impact.
Different approaches to applying policy	
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?
	I am not in favour of any further woodland removal.
The role of compensatory planting	
21.	What is the appropriate role of compensatory planting in this policy?
	There would be no need for this if no woodland is removed.
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?
	The questions are far too complicated and make too much use of 'jargon' and technical terms. Members of the public have been unable to understand them
Implications for delivery mechanisms	
23.	Have we missed any major implications for delivery mechanisms? Would any be particularly welcome or unwelcome to you?
	Yes - putting the questions in simple terms, with 'yes/no' answers to at least some of them.
Other comments	
	We welcome your input on any other aspect of this consultation.

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

Please send your completed forms to:

[Dominic Driver](#)

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By 17.00hrs, Friday 5 June 2009.

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