

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:	Norman Hutchinson - Forest Manager - A private opinion
Your organisation (if any):	The Swinton Estate
Date:	22/05/09

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?
I accept that there may be some areas best suited to openhabitat but cannot see how deforestation over large areas can be justified. Surely the government has commitments to increase woodland cover. It does look like the forestry industry in England is being abandoned. No companies are going to invest in forestry related industries the way things are going. This will surely lead to the loss of jobs. The planting policies over the last 20yrs have resulted in mainly native species put down at wide spacing. Where are the future required volumes going to come from. We will not perhaps be able to rely on imports quite so much as the years go by, who knows.	
Desired outcomes	
2.	Have we developed a reasonable list of desired outcomes of the policy? Do you wish to suggest any amendments?
No Comments	
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?
OK	
Policy proposals	
Elements present in the policy	

No	Question.
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?
Open habitats could be mutually beneficial but not to the detriment of the total forestry cover.	
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'?
OK. But productive woodland should still play its part.	
6.	What do you think of our proposed outline definition of 'mature native woodland'?
OK	
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?
Local participation would be fine as long as decision making is even handed and not biased.	
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?
This would be a good idea. Regions do differ a great deal. What must be guarded against is losing woodland cover just for the sake of a lone species.	
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?
Evaluation should apply. However we must not let too much red tape take over.	
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 above	
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.	

No	Question.
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?
	Ideally there should be no loss of woodland cover in England. By law any felled trees must be restocked. Any loss must be kept to a minimum. We already have much less tree cover than most of Europe.
12.	Do you consider that the proposed threshold is about right, too high or too low?
	<p>Only areas that are plainly obvious should be considered. It is important to take into account the fact that forestry industries will not invest if there will not be enough productive woodland in the future.</p> <p>Most recent planting will prove to be non productive.</p>
	<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?
	<p>This would be a difficult task. Climate change does not seem to be taken into account. Why go for deforestation when we do not even know what species will be suited to open habitats in the future. There will surely be a loss of present species and an influx of invasive ones.</p> <p>Open spaces occur on a regular short term basis when areas of woodland are felled. This will continue if our forests are well managed.</p>
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?
	This is a must. If we are to lose woodland cover the best way to minimise carbon emissions would be to have well stocked and productive woodlands.
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?
	<p>Yes. If we are to be one of the leaders in the reduction of carbon emissions we must look after our woodlands to help achieve this.</p> <p>Much of the proposed open habitat would come from the deforestation of what is good productive lowland conifers. Surely this is not a back door way for self interest and pressure groups getting rid of more conifers.</p> <p>Forests are one of the best ways of reducing carbon emissions.</p>

No	Question.
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?
	<p>Climate change. If all the forecasts are correct is deforestation sensible. How do we know how any future open habitat sites would react.</p> <p>There has been a great deal of research into climate change, how much has gone into this open habitat initiative, vulnerable and endangered species may not survive changes in climate.</p>
	<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>The environment is constantly changing. We are supposed to trying to stop the decline of deforestation and yet this consultation is about deforestation. What actually is government policy. As i have said previously there are certainly some areas that might benefit from becoming open habitats but we must ensure that our forests do not suffer because of this.</p> <p>Finance will play a big part in managing any new open habitat. If money were tight newly created habitats would soon change in appearance and might become thick scrub and may defeat the object of what is intended.</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>The present objectives on some SSSIs will not remain as they are today. The decision makers of the future will want changes to suit what they think should be priority. This always happens, forestry for example has not had a settled policy for 20 yrs or more.</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>It is plain to see that any large reduction in productive woodland would hit the private sector very hard. I have stressed this point several times already.</p> <p>The timber industry will not invest money if timber volumes are going to decline. Jobs will go.</p> <p>Private growers are already at the limit of their tether. More and more directives keep coming forward. Cerification is a bind and expense with no actual benefits to the grower.</p> <p>There will one day be a world shortage of timber, we can never be self sufficient but why make the situation worse.</p>

No	Question.
	<p>Has the decision already been taken to abandon the forestry industry in England and is this just a paper exercise.</p>
<p>Different approaches to applying policy</p>	
20.	<p>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>
	<p>If there is a planned cycle of felling there will always be open ground for a while at each coupe, although only for a few years at each site. Then there is the option of keeping 20% open ground at all times. Is this not enough.</p>
<p>The role of compensatory planting</p>	
21.	<p>What is the appropriate role of compensatory planting in this policy?</p>
	<p>Compensatory planting should be high on the agenda.</p>
<p>Factors to consider when deciding which policy is likely to work best</p>	
22.	<p>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?</p>
	<p>The set of questions are ok.</p>
<p>Implications for delivery mechanisms</p>	
23.	<p>Have we missed any major implications for delivery mechanisms? Would any be particularly welcome or unwelcome to you?</p>
	<p>Any proposal to push through deforestation at too fast a pace would be unwelcome.</p>
<p>Other comments</p>	
	<p>We welcome your input on any other aspect of this consultation.</p>
	<p>If the forestry commission is once again to have its arm twisted and lose a substantial area of forest to open habitat i do think the already 20% which can be left to open ground should nearly suffice with regard to open habitat.</p> <p>As a manager of woodlands in the private sector i have seen a huge increase in numbers of people coming to visit. Different groups are making ever increasing enquiries about varying activities. The forestry commission has many years experience in catering for the public, surely there would be an outcry from them if large tracts of forest disappear.</p>

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

Please send your completed forms to:

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

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By 17.00hrs, Friday 5 June 2009.