

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:	Martin Noble
Your organisation (if any):	New Forest Ecological Consultants
Date:	25 April 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?
Yes but towards the higher end of the range	
Desired outcomes	
2.	Have we developed a reasonable list of desired outcomes of the policy? Do you wish to suggest any amendments?
The main outcome should be the restoration of the most important elements of former heathland in south Dorset, North-east Hampshire, Norfolk and Suffolk	
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?
Indicators for evaluation should be	
a) Total area of heathland restored set against the original targets	
b) An assessment of the biodiversity, especially of rare species, produced as a result of the restoration	
Policy proposals	
Elements present in the policy	
We will treat woodland and open habitats as potentially mutually beneficial	

No	Question.
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?
Agreed. This will be a major challenge for the future in determining the proportions of wooded and open areas	
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'?
Agreed	
6.	What do you think of our proposed outline definition of 'mature native woodland'?
Acceptable	
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 Forums and field trips where the proposed programmes can be explained are very useful. I believe that these are already in place in most Forest Districts	
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?
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?
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 removal? What is your preferred mechanism by which such a threshold could be

No	Question.
	applied to policy?
12.	Do you consider that the proposed threshold is about right, too high or too low?
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?
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?
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?
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?
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?
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?

No	Question.
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?
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?
The role of compensatory planting	
21.	What is the appropriate role of compensatory planting in this policy?
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?
Implications for delivery mechanisms	
23.	Have we missed any major implications for delivery mechanisms? Would any be particularly welcome or unwelcome to you?
Other comments	
We welcome your input on any other aspect of this consultation.	
This consultation is far too complicated and asks many irrelevant questions. Such national consultations should be much simpler and ask only important questions. I lost the will to carry on about halfway through. Open space restoration is a simple concept and should be dealt with at that level. More detailed consultation should be kept at a local level via consultation forums.	

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

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

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.