

# 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](http://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](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats-consultation).

<b>Your name:</b>	Dr David Pilbeam
<b>Your organisation (if any):</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2009

No	Question.
<b>The nature of the change</b>	
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?
This is a rather open-ended question. The level of intervention depends on the funding available (estimated costs in the Consultation document between £9M -£61M, with 60-70% from Government). If public finances are strained, there will be little public support for a large expenditure. This is strongly influenced by the state of the public finances, and how many other areas of public expenditure require support. However, if the funds are found from expenditure already earmarked for environmental benefits, then the higher level is desirable. If not, the lower level will have to suffice.	
<b>Desired outcomes</b>	
2.	Have we developed a reasonable list of desired outcomes of the policy? Do you wish to suggest any amendments?
Yes	
<b>Measuring the success of the policy</b>	
3.	Have we developed a reasonable set of indicators for evaluation? Do you wish to suggest any amendments to this indicator list?
In terms of trends in populations of UKBAP species associated with open habitats, the potential impacts of climate change in the geographical location of the proposed restoration/expansion need to be included in the consideration.	
<b>Policy proposals</b>	

No	Question.
<b>Elements present in the policy</b>	
<b>We will treat woodland and open habitats as potentially mutually beneficial</b>	
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?
Yes	
<b>A presumption against removal of 'mature native woodland'</b>	
5.	Do you agree with the principle that there should be a presumption against removal of ancient and 'mature native woodland'?
I have some problem with the idea that more modern native woodland might be removed; this could go on to become mature native woodland, with consequent biodiversity benefits, and as England is one of the least wooded countries in Europe this could be advantageous in the long term. However, mature and ancient native woodland should definitely not be removed.	
6.	What do you think of our proposed outline definition of 'mature native woodland'?
The definition is fine.	
<b>We will expect practitioners to help local users to participate in development of the initial proposals</b>	
7.	Do you agree that local participation in decision making is helpful? What is your preferred option for how we should apply this element?
Yes. A high 'sociological' score should override a lower score for biodiversity benefits. Therefore, a wood where many local people walk their dogs should score higher than open land that has limited biodiversity benefits, unless it can be seen that it will still be used by the local people to the same extent.	
<b>We will promote mechanisms for prioritising woodland removal at a regional level</b>	
8.	Do you agree that prioritisation at a regional level is appropriate for this policy?
Yes.	
<b>We will apply a framework for evaluation to projects</b>	
9.	Do you agree with this framework for evaluation? What is your preferred option for how we should apply this element?
The framework looks fine. I think it should be imposed (tax payers' money is at stake here), but Forestry Commission help can be given to applicants.	
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?

No	Question.
	Help with drawing up plans for implementation, including some financial support.
	<b>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.</b>
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. I think that threshold should be maintained by compensatory planting, so that schemes only obtain approval if there is enough new planting in a year to match the trees lost.
12.	Do you consider that the proposed threshold is about right, too high or too low?
	About right.
	<b>Key variables</b> <b>What is the balance between achieving biodiversity objectives and the need to reduce green house gas emissions?</b>
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?
	In the short term, I think this will be the best estimates (guesses?) of practitioners.
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?
	Yes. Yes. If there is compensatory planting, it becomes less of a problem that some carbon will be lost as the open habitats are restored/expanded.
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 (see response to Question 11, where I propose compensatory planting).
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?
	This is difficult, as climate change will affect biodiversity anyway. I would err on the side of minimising carbon emissions in the first instance, as we can always move to increasing open habitat at a later date if global carbon emissions do not rise as much as expected.

No	Question.
<b>Should we be managing open habitats to keep them in 'favourable condition' or should we adopt a more dynamic approach to land management?</b>	
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?
I am not well informed on SSSI management, so no comment.	
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?
I am not well informed on SSSI management, so no comment.	
<b>What level of woodland removal due to restoring or expanding open habitats could avoid a significant negative impact on the timber industry?</b>	
19.	Can you provide any information on the likely links between any reduction in timber production and economic activity in the timber sector?
I have no expertise in this area.	
<b>Different approaches to applying policy</b>	
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?
Option 1, then Option 3 (these seem to be the most sustainable, and with the best chance of minimising carbon dioxide emissions).	
<b>The role of compensatory planting</b>	
21.	What is the appropriate role of compensatory planting in this policy?
Compensatory planting is appropriate. Given that some new planting may occur each year anyway, the 'twinning' approach may work, where Forestry Commission could act as a broker to ensure that applications to restore open habitat are matched with other funding requests for planting grants.	
<b>Factors to consider when deciding which policy is likely to work best</b>	
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.	
<b>Implications for delivery mechanisms</b>	
23.	Have we missed any major implications for delivery mechanisms? Would any be particularly welcome or unwelcome to you?

No	Question.
	There is nothing obvious to me that is missing.
<b>Other comments</b>	We welcome your input on any other aspect of this consultation.

Please include the "information about you" form with your response.<sup>1</sup>

**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](mailto:oh.consultation@forestry.gov.uk)

Fax: 0117 931 2859

**By 17.00hrs, Friday 5 June 2009.**

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats-consultation](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats-consultation) for a copy.