

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:	Dr Nicky Rivers
Your organisation (if any):	
Date:	1/6/09

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?
It is quite a big range - why is the range so large? I would probably support something more towards the upper end of this range I think but in reality it would be better assessed on a site by site basis. Where have the three very different cost scenarios come from? This is not clear.	
Desired outcomes	
2.	Have we developed a reasonable list of desired outcomes of the policy? Do you wish to suggest any amendments?
They seem sensible. In addition, do you want to add 'contributing to the England Biodiversity Strategy' targets for habitat creation/restoration for open habitat types (referred to at the beginning of the document) - I see you have that as an indicator, but it may be appropriate to have it as an outcome too?	
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?
Looks generally good, but for the woodland biodiversity one, surely the indicators would be species indicators? Otherwise how will you know if you have succeeded in your desired outcome? And yes I think the third public engagement indicator is worth working up.	
Policy proposals	

No	Question.
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?
I guess so, and I agree there is certainly value in woodland edge habitats, although it may be difficult to explain to people and it makes assessing the size of BAP habitats rather difficult! We must be careful not to succeed on open habitat BAP targets and fail on woodland BAP targets with this policy, which I am sure the Forestry Commission are very mindful of.	
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	
6.	What do you think of our proposed outline definition of 'mature native woodland'?
Looks sensible	
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?
Yes, otherwise you may run into problems further down the line. I am no expert on which is the best approach, but would avoid 2. Presumably you have in-house experience of this before that you can draw on. If not, there are other organisations out there, like the Wildlife Trusts, who could help.	
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. There is a regional forestry forum in Yorkshire & Humber and engagement with the Yorkshire & Humber Biodiversity Forum which is key to agreeing on and recording any biodiversity habitats created	
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. with a combination of 2. and 4	
10.	How much and what kind of support do you think we should give to practitioners to

No	Question.
	help them evaluate their projects using this framework?
	It depends on how complicated you make it! Keep it simple and less help is needed. Guidance is always useful (and cheap) and a contact to ask for help - at least by phone and email.
	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 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?
	I would ask Pete Brotherton at Natural England that question
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 and I think that actually some of the wood felled could be used as timber or fuel which it may not have been otherwise if the wood was not managed in that way. The practices look sensible. I guess they need to be written into your staff policies and practices and/or training given to those people who will do the work.
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?
	I think both are really important. As you say yourself it is about woodland being in the

No	Question.
	right place, so yes sometimes it will make sense to remove woodland from an area and plant new woodland somewhere else. Sometimes it will make sense to leave woodland where it is and this will include some areas that the public use. Regional biodiversity habitat targets can help guide the process, along with the regional forestry strategy. I think a discussion is needed on the subject in each region between the interested parties to find the best approaches.
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?
Yes and working with partners and community consultation may play a part in this.	
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 don't know. I like the idea of carrying out some research on different approaches	
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?
Yes. But do you need another one about does the opening up of woodlands fit within the wider landscape context and any landscape-scale plans or projects? (which you would know if the partnership working was right)	

No	Question.
Implications for delivery mechanisms	
23.	Have we missed any major implications for delivery mechanisms? Would any be particularly welcome or unwelcome to you?
Again working with partners so this could be part of larger landscape-scale projects.	
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.