



in the East of England

Mr Dominic Driver
Senior Projects Officer
Policy and Programme Group
Forestry Commission
620 Bristol Business Park
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol
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Dear Mr Driver

June, 2009

Consultation: Restoring and Expanding Open Habitats from Woods and Forests in England

I am pleased to respond to the above consultation on behalf of the Monitoring and Action Group for Regional Woodland Strategy (RWS) for the East of England - Woodland for Life - which is available at www.woodlandforlife.net.

The Group consists of the representatives of the Department of Health, East of England Development Agency, East of England Regional Assembly, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committee, Government Office for the East of England and Natural England together with representation from the Anglia Woodland Project, Bedfordshire Local Access Forum, Forestry and Timber Association, Green Light Trust, Wildlife Trusts, and Writtle Agricultural College.

A discussion on the consultation took place at a recent meeting of the Group.

We are very pleased to see a strategic approach to the issue of restoration of open habitats as it was highlighted as being important to the region in the RWS, an action of which was to "Identify and communicate actual and potential sites for heathland re-creation". We are also pleased to see reference in the consultation document to the report on the opportunity mapping project for East England: we would strongly recommend this as an approach to be followed elsewhere.

As you will understand, with the breadth of interests represented on the Monitoring and Action Group it is not possible to formulate a common response to the questions posed in the form provided, hence the response in letter form. There was however agreement that the six elements to be present in the policy are valid, but there was a significant divergence of views on the specifics of these. There was also general agreement that any restoration programme should not be purely target driven but based on sound environmental, social and economic criteria, there was some concern that the consultation is overly weighted towards ecological drivers.

Based on the experience of the discussions within a small group, this consultation is likely to elicit very divergent yet legitimate views. We would urge that there is continued engagement

with key stakeholders as policy is developed following the consultation to ensure a widely acceptable compromise is reached.

Yours sincerely

Richard Powell

Richard Powell
Chairman