

Restoration of open habitats from woods and forests in England: developing policy.

Workshop agenda item 5: Reviewing the evidence.

Analysis of feedback and proposed actions arising.

Participants were generally positive about our analysis of the evidence. They challenged some of the statements and identified a number of areas for improvement:

- Nine of the 15 evidence statements were regarded as satisfactory (Figure 1).
- Statements for “Positive trends in populations of open habitat species” and “water quality and yield” received conflicting ratings from satisfactory to unsatisfactory.
- Statements for “carbon balance” and “Keeping to Government commitments on woodland cover” received consistently neutral or unsatisfactory ratings.

The following summarise the main changes to the draft evidence paper we are proposing as a result of this feedback:

- **General:** Illustrate more clearly that we are analysing evidence about the impact of change. Use more graphs to illustrate differential impacts depending on scale of change.
- **Financial viability:** Look for evidence on state of recently restored open habitats. Differentiate between cost of land management and long-term viability.
- **Woodland cover:** Review calculation of current net change. Investigate using trends rather than a threshold. Review references to international obligations.
- **Carbon balance:** Review figures. We acknowledge the policy conflict but we still wish to make a clear evidence statement. Policy development should resolve the conflicts.
- **Species:** Show more evidence for taxa other than birds.¹
- **Landscape:** Make the issue of pace of change more prominent.
- **Historic features:** Include evidence on whether guidelines are currently followed.
- **Woodland biodiversity:** Discuss biodiversity value of non-native plantations. We have picked up on the wet-woodland issue in the native/ancient woodland outcome.
- **Water quality and yield:** Review, the local issues may add up to a national scale issue.
- **Air and noise pollution:** Add discussion of light pollution.
- **Local and other user concerns:** Discuss difference between short-term and long-term impacts. Investigate a mechanism for encouraging local input to the consultation.
- **Timber sector confidence:** Revisit the regionalisation of impact, we think we may be mistaken in assessing the impact on the north as negligible. Compare to the current

¹ We believe we have, in fact, taken into account taxa other than birds but we may need to make this clearer in the paper.

production forecast. Reassess the presumed impact of red band needle blight on pine productivity. Look for more evidence on the relationship between timber production and business confidence.

- **Insert a section on soils.**

We will consider picking up on several of the uncertainties or challenges to the evidence in the public consultation, e.g.: calculation of a threshold rate of woodland loss.

Figure 1: Outcomes for a policy on restoration of open habitats from woods and forests in England: satisfaction with statements on evidence about the impact.

From stakeholder workshop 26th September 2008.

Title of outcome	Satisfaction with using evidence statement to inform policy development. 10 = extremely satisfied, 5 = neutral, 0 = extremely dissatisfied.		Main reason for dissatisfaction
	A	B	
1. Financial viability	7	9	A. varies from 9 to 5
2. Keeping to Government commitments on woodland cover.	4	4	A. Concern that international commitments have not been properly expressed. B. Challenge to threshold figure.
3. Resilient ecological communities.	7	8.5	
4. Carbon balance.	5	5	A. Evidence OK but concern at how conflicting policy issues will be resolved. B. Uncertain figures.
5. Positive trends in populations of open habitat species.	9	4	B. Need more evidence on taxa other than birds.
6. Quality of life and landscape.	7		
7. Learning about landscape history.	9		
8. Preservation of historic features.	9		
9. Commitments on native and/or ancient woodland.	8.5		
10. Desired trends in woodland biodiversity are not compromised.	4		Loss of wet woodlands should be included. Biodiversity value of plantation woodland insufficiently recognised.
11. Water quality and yield.	4.5	8	A. Local issues may add up to national scale impact.
12. Air and noise pollution abated.	9		
13. Positive engagement by local and other users.	9	7	
14. Access and recreation.	9		
15. Timber sector confidence.	7		

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