

Guidance notes for Woodland Opportunities Map (WOM) version 2

Why was a map produced?

The Regional Forestry Framework (RFF) for the West Midlands was launched in October 2004 (www.growingourfuture.org). A key output was the production of a Woodland Opportunities Map (WOM). Version 1 (March 06) is now succeeded by version 2 (March 07).

What does the WOM aim to do?

The WOM builds on existing codes of practice such as the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS-www.forestry.gov.uk/publications) or England Woodland Grant Scheme conditions (eWGS-www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6dcccen) etc and aims to:

- Assist landowners and managers in making decisions about how their proposals fit into the wider regional aspirations of the RFF
- Save time spent developing possibly inappropriate proposals and indicate where further information and advice may be needed
- Help focus activity on areas of maximum public benefit in creating and managing woodlands in the region
- Assist the FC and other funding bodies regionally in making decisions about proposals to create and manage woodlands (via future regional scoring)

Will there be only one map?

Version 2 comprises 6 maps: 2 priority maps and 4 theme maps. The priority maps are:

- woodland creation (based on the theme maps, **supercedes** the composite map)
- ancient woodland (AW) landscapes and restoration areas (based on AW Inventory)

The four theme maps, updated from version 1 are:

- Landscape (based on that produced by the West Midlands Living Landscapes Group)
- Biodiversity (produced at county level with input from a variety of local stakeholders)
- Cultural Heritage (produced by Local Authority Archaeologists, linked to county Historic Landscape Characterisations)
- Access (based on data from the Woodland Trust/FC *Space for People* project - www.woodland-trust.org.uk/woodsforpeople/finalreport/finalreport.htm & CROW Open Access land)

What do the maps show?

The priority maps for creation and management indicate broad brush regional priorities and are likely to be linked to regional scoring for EWGS:

Priority map	Priority description	Comments
Woodland Creation	Priority 1 (dark green)	Highest priority for creation
	Priority 2 (light green)	Priority for creation
	Low priority (no colour)	Low priority for creation
Ancient Woodland	AW Landscapes (green)	Regional concentrations of ASNW & PAWS greater or equal to 3% woodland cover where maintenance/ expansion highest priority
	AW Restoration Areas (purple hatch)	Regional concentrations of PAWS greater or equal to 3% woodland cover where restoration highest priority

The 4 theme maps indicate the broad opportunities for woodland creation, compared to broad sensitivities **at a landscape scale** (ie broad brush, not site specific and with no hard boundaries). Combined they form the basis of the creation priority map and are outlined in the following table:

Map	Preferred	Neutral	Sensitive
Landscape	Woodland creation will generally reinforce landscape character and is encouraged	Woodland creation could generally reinforce character, but there may be sensitivities	Woodland creation will not generally reinforce landscape character and could harm it
Biodiversity	Woodland creation will generally benefit biodiversity and is encouraged	Woodland creation could generally benefit biodiversity but there may be sensitivities	Woodland creation will generally not benefit biodiversity and could harm it
Cultural heritage	Woodland creation is likely to have minimal impact on historic features/landscapes but sensitivities may exist	Woodland creation could be accommodated, but sensitivities exist	Woodland creation will generally not fit with cultural heritage and could harm it
	Most preferred	Preferred	Neutral
Access	There is generally a lack of woodland access and CROW open access land. Woodland for access is encouraged	There is limited woodland access and/or CROW open access land	There is already some woodland access and/or CROW open access land

NOTE these descriptions are generic so being in any area does not avoid the need for assessment of the individual site characteristics. Decision rules for the maps are available. All maps based on landscape units derived from local Landscape Character Assessments.

How should I use the maps?

The priority maps will guide you on how your proposal for creation or management fits with regional priorities. The theme maps will guide you on how your creation proposal fits in terms of the balance of opportunity and sensitivity in your area. It can help you scope what/how much further work you might need to do on your proposal. Sources of further advice are given below.

For example, if you are proposing to plant a large block of woodland in an area highlighted as **sensitive** on one or more theme maps then you will need to consider what steps to take to ensure that your proposal addresses the sensitivity identified. The table above may help with this scoping process.

Where can I find further help?

- Regionally, the WOM is part of a move to a more spatial approach to land use planning, exemplified by the Regional Spatial Strategy and Character Area Framework project, eg:
 - Environmental Stewardship Targeting Statements (www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/jca-ts/jca-map-wm.htm)
 - Biodiversity Enhancement Areas, Landscapes for Living project (further details at West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership website www.wmbp.org/)
- Your local Woodland Officer (01905 362730) who can also help you with additional contacts:
 - Your local Natural England/County Ecologist/Local Records Centre contact
 - Your Local Authority Archaeologist www.algao.org.uk/Association/Members.htm
 - Local woodland guidelines (Worcestershire CC, Shropshire Hills AONB)
- Other resources:
 - MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) – environmental designations and grant scheme areas
 - Nature on the Map (www.natureonthemap.org.uk/) – Nature Reserves/priority BAP inventory types