

Operational Site Assessment Guide

1 Introduction

This is a short guide to the [Operational Site Assessment \(OSA\) template](#) that is located on the [Woodland Planning Grant pages](#) of the Forestry Commission internet site.

2 What is an OSA?

An OSA is a simple check list that may be used when planning forest operations such as harvesting or civil engineering work. It is designed to remind the person planning the operation to think about any aspect of the work that could cause a problem – either to the people directly involved in the operation; to third parties such as members of the public, neighbours etc; to wildlife on or adjacent to the site; or to the owner who ultimately is legally responsible for operations that occur on their land.

The OSA relates to the site where the work will take place and should be completed in association with a site visit and be accompanied by a map(s) of the work area. It can also subsequently be used as a working document, given to operators working on site to inform their working practices.

3 When should I complete an OSA?

Ideally the OSA is there to remind you of any operational problems that need to be addressed **before** you start work. You need to leave enough time to put in place any mitigation procedures. However many of the elements covered in the OSA are transitory so it should be completed as near to the date of operations as possible. In particular wildlife can come and go so if you complete the OSA months in advance of operations you may miss protected species that subsequently move in to the area.

It is important that you relate any issues to an accurate map(s) so all parties are quite clear what area is involved. A clear and accurate map can be far more useful than pages of text.

4 How do I complete an OSA?

Look at each element on the OSA and decide whether it is present on site. Some information you can find from your own records and the web such as site designations, determining whether it is an ancient woodland site or whether it is a Site of Special

Scientific Interest (SSSI) – the “Magic” website is particularly useful for this <http://www.magic.gov.uk/> .

However of equal or perhaps even more importance is information provided from a site visit. This is particularly so when identifying:

- Protected wildlife, such as birds and European Protected Species, or;
- Situations that could be a health and safety concern (such as roads, powerlines and steep slope working).

If any features or designations apply to the site you should assess any potential impact that your operation may have. If you think there may be a negative impact then list any measures you will take to avoid or mitigate this negative impact. **This is the crucial part – have you thought about ways to avoid or mitigate any potential negative impacts of your proposed work?**

Make sure the potential impact and any mitigation measure is clearly marked on the OSA map(s). This is particularly important if you wish to use the OSA as a working site document so that an operator new to the site can understand exactly what they can/cannot do. It is **not a risk assessment and does not replace the need for risk assessments** where health and safety concerns are raised.

Finally please note that the list of elements is not exhaustive and there may be other elements specific to your site to consider.

5 What should I do with the OSA when I am finished?

Keep the OSA for your own records to help you with planning and undertaking your forestry operations. It could also prove to be a useful document if you are subsequently challenged about aspects of the operation and therefore keeping the OSA as documentary evidence for at least three years is advisable.