

25 YEAR ENVIRONMENT PLAN

Purpose

1. To confirm the broad objectives and approach for our engagement in the 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP).

Recommendations

2. a) That we continue to work with Defra to help develop the 25YEP so that it includes benefits for or from forestry focussed on:
 - i) A vision for forestry based on connecting people to trees; balancing economy, environment, and society; and integrating forestry into wider systems.
 - ii) Making nature conservation transformative not just restorative.
 - iii) Speaking to everyone by including urban forestry, iconic species, and public access close to where most people live.
 - iv) Keeping forestry policy stable.
 - v) Recognising urgency and depth of climate change adaptation and mitigation needed and the needs and role of forestry, including the interaction between climate change and increased threat of pests, diseases and invasive species.
 - vi) Targeting of woodland creation and active woodland management based on natural capital valuation.
 - vii) Supporting the National Forest Inventory.
 - viii) Confirming policy on ecological resilience and the Tree Health Resilience Strategy.
 - ix) Changing the way we apply regulations to make it easier to plant and manage woodland.
 - x) Getting people to actually start making Payments for Ecosystem Services and using Natural Capital Accounting in decision making.
- b) Continue to involve forestry sector partners via our national and local forums to encourage them to get behind the 25YEP.
- c) Undertake four bits of work to contribute to the 25YEP:
 - i) Tree text: provide text on forestry for integration into the plan.
 - ii) Woodland asset: provide a vision statement for woodland as a natural capital asset for inclusion in the plan if appropriate.
 - iii) Natural capital: develop a targeting approach for woodland creation and woodland management using natural capital valuation on a sub-national scale.
 - iv) Urban forestry: support for those who manage urban forest to obtain better evidence and information to assess the value of the urban tree stock.

Background

3. 25YEP arises from a Conservative party manifesto commitment, "We will work with [the Natural Capital Committee] to develop a 25YEP to restore the UK's

biodiversity, and to ensure that both public and private investment in the environment is directed where we need it most.”

4. A third draft outline structure has been produced (Fig. 1).

Fig 1: Structure for the 25 Year Environment Plan, draft 12 Jan 2016.

25 Year Plan for the Environment – a Framework	
Vision	Our environmental assets will flourish, powering on economic success and wellbeing
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use natural capital approaches so the value of the environment is incorporated into decision making • Treat the environment as an integrated system, not a collection of isolated assets • Use data, technology, incentives and better regulation to drive change and improvement • Devolve decision-making • Unleash the environmental power, passion and interests of local people, businesses and voluntary organisations
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spearheaded by a programme of Defra reform • Supported by cross-Government activity • In partnership with environmental organisations, business and local government
Success measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and quantity of environmental assets improves • More people use, enjoy, and benefit from the natural environment • Economic benefits of the environment increased

5. The final structure of the plan and the process by which the plan is finalised are being developed. Our contributions can fit any of the reasonable scenarios. We have already progressed our thinking on this as set out here but this remains subject to your direction and wider Ministerial decisions.

6. Defra is also developing a 25 Year Food and Farming Plan (25YFFP). This is focussed on food production. The draft dated 9 Dec 2015 has sections on climate change, soil management and CAP reform that are helpful to our aims. It excludes forestry and other aspects of farm diversification but we have offered some wording on the role of trees in farm productivity, soil, and water management which if included would be helpful for forestry priorities.

Themes we want 25YEP to include for promotion over the longer-term

7. A vision for forestry to include
- Nearly everyone connects to nature through trees and most people understand that in most woodland sustainably harvesting trees is a good thing to do. Woodlands are about livelihoods as well as beauty and recreation.
 - England’s woodland cover has increased.
 - Most woodland is sustainably managed for ecological and economic resilience.
 - The threat from pests, diseases, and invasive species is under control, including via its interaction with climate change.

- Enterprising public forest estate held in trust for the nation.
 - Skilled workforce, data, private investment, and demand for British wood have resulted in innovative businesses and strong private enterprise.
 - Everyone in forestry makes decisions that balance the society, the economy and the environment.
8. Making nature conservation transformative not restorative, “Nostalgia ain’t what it used to be”. This follows your mandate to play a leading role in changing nature conservation from a 20th Century “restorative” approach to a 21st Century “transformative” approach.
 9. Keep people connected to forestry, include the urban environment and links to young people, especially via contact with woodland as part of education, recognise the importance of iconic species, woodland has a key role in providing more public access to greenspace close to where people live.
 10. Confirm the framework set by the Forestry Policy Statement January 2013 and in this Parliament via our Corporate Plan 2015/16 and commit to keeping it stable for 25 years, building on the consensus and trust created by the Independent Panel on Forestry.
 11. Recognise urgency and depth of climate change adaptation and mitigation needed. Include the needs of forestry and forestry’s role in adaptation and mitigation, especially woodland creation.
 12. Constant vigilance and continued work on reducing the threat from pests, diseases, and invasive species, especially in view of the increased risk in a changing climate.

Features we want it to deliver in the shorter term, to 2020.

13. Develop woodland creation targeting based relatively more on the science of natural capital (e.g.: role of woodland in regulating water flow and safeguarding clean water, habitat networks, and timber supply) and relatively less on what sounds ambitious or on one part of the sector’s special interests.
14. Revise the “outcomes”, or output targets as they would be better called, in Biodiversity 2020 and replace them with an approach more closely linked to the outcome of halting and then reversing decline in biodiversity that we want to achieve, with success defined more by trends in the real-world.
15. Nurturing the increase in private enterprise based on forestry in a way that enables private businesses to get stronger and markets to work more efficiently so we move beyond public subsidy, but do not make sudden reduction in public support in a way that reduces business confidence. Examples:
 - support the emerging woodland social enterprise movement;
 - help farmers to understand the value of woodland for their businesses;
 - foster demand for domestic timber and innovation in woodland products;
 - provision of data to support market development;
 - support for forestry skills development; and
 - support for technological innovation, such as remote sensing.

16. Support for the National Forest Inventory (NFI) as we move into an era of open data and devolve forestry institutions and budgets. Ensure that the NFI is included in the new integrated data systems.
17. Confirmation of policy on ecological resilience, confirming our current stance that landowners should plant a wider variety of trees, including some non-native and some from further south than UK, depending on their key objectives. Confirm the Tree Health Resilience Strategy.
18. Make changes in the way forestry regulation is applied that has an impact in the real-world beyond reducing the administrative burden of our processes, despite as is likely not having any primary legislation. For example, increasing the thresholds for forestry Environmental Impact Assessments for afforestation, apply European Protected Species legislation at population not individual level, allow remote sensing of squirrel traps.
19. Get people to actually start making Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES). Include key features of our Ecosystem Services Road-map including:
 - a) Enable water companies to make a stronger case for investment in land management solutions for safeguarding clean water and carbon benefits, including woodland creation on others' land.
 - b) Reform of the Land-use, Land-use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) greenhouse gas reporting framework to encourage carbon investment in woodland creation.
 - c) Generating PES agreements between City Regions and their rural hinterlands.
 - d) Innovative investment vehicles and/or innovative models for public funding.
20. A key part of for this is the Natural Capital Assessment tool work. This work will develop and pilot an economic decision support tool to guide efficient action on the environment. The tool will allow people, including the new single leads for the Natural England – Environment Agency areas to see what the impact would be of a particular policy and thereby support policy change. For example, what would be the effect of planting woodland in a particular place – on flooding, recreation and health, carbon, and biodiversity? Our key ask of this is that it means something in the real-world, e.g.: supporting enabling regulation, built into the planning system.

Indicators.

21. Indicators seem important for the longevity of the plan beyond this Parliament. The following indicators appear most relevant:
 - a) Tree health indicator based on proportion of the woodland resource under threat.
 - b) Proportion of woodland in management.
 - c) Area of woodland.
 - d) Woodland birds index, as a proxy for woodland biodiversity.
 - e) Proportion of wood that grows each year that is harvested.

Involving the forestry sector.

22. Defra has involved lots of organisations with cross-cutting workshops and bespoke forums. These included a forestry technical workshop and a session at the Ministerial Forestry Forum. The forestry sector is well represented.
23. The National Forestry Forum came up with the following key asks:
- a) 25YFFP should be linked to the 25YEP.
 - b) We need clear connections to climate change and related legislation.
 - c) We need legislation to set up the Public Forest Estate Management Organisation as envisaged by the Independent Panel on Forestry.
 - d) There is a need to deal with tree health issues to create greater resilience of trees (now and in the future).
 - e) Importance of growing the woodland culture of the country, so that people see them as places of work – not just environmental havens and places to enjoy.
 - f) Longer-term certainty needed – some would prefer 50-year plans – or even longer.
 - g) Forestry needs to maintain its focus on delivering the triple bottom line helping to spur economic growth; offering access to wonderful places and diverse recreation opportunities; offering rich and diverse habitats for wildlife.
24. We are in the process of inviting input and encouraging commitment to the plan from Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committees and national forestry forums and through bilaterals with key stakeholders.

Discussion of the alternative courses of action available

25. 25YEP will form the policy basis of much of our delivery activity once it is finalised. For now, our focus is on contributing to the production of the document and stakeholder engagement to ensure that the broad sharing of desired outcome across the forestry sector is retained.
26. There are large numbers of other aspects we could draw out, forestry being a multi-objective activity. However, we have tried to avoid the “decorated tree” model of policy (“hang up all our baubles”). Instead, we have identified those top priority features that are best led by us or that may not be noticed if we do not push for them.
27. There are also some features that we may have wanted but are probably are not worth expending political capital on. For example, getting forestry embedded in the 25YFFP. We also seem unlikely to achieve commitment to reform of CAP in the 25YEP of the kind that we believe would be good for forestry such as using natural capital valuation as opposed to agricultural income foregone to calculate payments. Other policy processes may allow some changes to the way in which CAP is applied, for example, to the greening of Pillar 1 rules to promote afforestation.
28. So far, our stakeholders have been relatively positive but want more confidence that the plan will change the real-world. We could downgrade our engagement efforts but this would ensure that the plan had little meaning for forestry. We could

also ramp up engagement with, say, bespoke events but we do not have a mandate to do this nor do we have the capacity.

Next steps

29. Defra and Forestry Commission England (FC England) have proposed a project, led by FC England, to cover four elements:

- a) **Tree text:** Provide Defra colleagues with proposed text on forestry for relevant sections of the 25YEP, based on the proposals at Annex 1 and the latest “Condensed 25YEP Framework” available.
- b) **Woodland asset section:** Provide Defra colleagues with a proposed “woodland asset” statement for inclusion in the plan, if this remains relevant.
- c) **Natural capital valuation of forestry:** Across each of the 14 areas established by the new Natural England – Environment Agency areas, assess whether it is possible to work out the scale and location of afforestation and active woodland management that would optimise natural capital values and feasibility. Do this by bringing together:
 - i) mapping of opportunity for woodland creation;
 - ii) a refinement of the natural capital valuation techniques used by the Natural Capital Committee in their report on woodland creation, particularly to bring in values of flood risk management, safeguarding clean water and increasing active woodland management; and
 - iii) working out rates and scale of afforestation and woodland management required to achieve key objectives, particularly woodland access standards, woodland habitat networks, timber and woodfuel supply, flood risk management, safeguarding clean water, and carbon storage.
 - iv) The output of this project would feed into Defra’s natural capital modelling workstream.
- d) **Urban forestry survey:** support those responsible for managing our urban forests with better data and evidence to assess and value the existing urban tree stock – through measuring canopy cover and supporting the development and wider roll out of survey and valuation models such as iTree.
- e) **Natural capital pilots:** we will also work with Defra to influence the choice of catchments or other places over which the integrated, natural capital based approach essential to the 25YEP principles is piloted. And then help to deliver the forestry elements of any relevant pilot.

30. Defra’s plan has the draft framework shared externally in March 2016 and then the detailed contents worked up over the next year.

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