

Equality Impact Assessment Form

A. What is the name of your policy, function or service?

The Study of the Public Forest Estate in England

B. What are the names and contact details of the policy, function or service's owner and assessor? (When working in partnership, identify the lead partner.)

The Project's Senior Responsible Officer
 Dominic Driver
 Contact: Dominic.Driver@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
 07779 627668 VOIP 36003

Assessor
 Joe Watts
 Contact: joe.watts@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
 07788 190 733; VOIP 46007

C. Does your new/revised/existing policy, function or service affect people?

If Yes	Continue to Step 1.
If No	Complete Steps 1, 9 and 10
Your comments	Yes

Stage 2 – PARTIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Step 1 – Identify the purpose/aim(s) of the policy, function or service

1.0 Provide a brief outline of the purpose of the policy, function or service:

To consider the future long term sustainable role for the public forest estate making recommendations about any necessary changes to improve its ability to deliver relevant priorities in the Strategy for England's Trees Woods and Forests and contribute to other government objectives

1.1 Provide details of the main aims and objectives:

- set out the distinctive future role of the public forest estate in delivering the new Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests;

- increase awareness about the multiple roles and opportunities provided by the estate;
- consider the long-term challenges associated with funding sustainably an increasing range of public benefits on the estate;
- explore the scope for changing over time the character, scale, distribution or modus operandi of the estate so that it is best placed to contribute to future priorities such as adapting to climate change and improving the quality of life of urban communities;
- provide a strategic context for any future asset sale/investment programmes.

1.2 List who will benefit and how from this policy, function or service:

One of the objectives of the study is for society to benefit from the improved and sustainable delivery of government priorities from the public forest estate. The beneficiaries will include those parts of society that currently or will in the future directly experience the public forest estate and wider society's benefits from the ecosystem services that the estate provides.

1.3 What impact will this policy, function or service have:

The impact will depend upon the response to the Study Report. The Study will make recommendations to the English National Committee. The ENC will then make its own recommendations to Ministers. Ministers may decide to draw on these recommendations when setting the long-term strategic direction of the public forest estate and when considering FC funding.

1.4 How will this policy, function or service be put into practice?

Depending on the views of Ministers, the impact of the study is likely to be made as a result of negotiations for the Spending Review 2010 and any resulting changes to the management of the public forest estate. The timeframe is likely to be a number of years.

Step 2 - Gather existing information and data (evidence)

2.0 What existing information and /or data (evidence) has been obtained to impact assess this policy, function or service?

The Study will include a formal public consultation, which will, among other things, seek to understand better the impact of possible different "directions" the public forest estate could take in the future.

On the broader subject of the wider impact of the public forest estate, Bianca Ambrose-Oji, Forest Research has written "Equality and Inclusion of Social Diversity with respect to Woods and Forests in the UK: An Evidence Review" (in draft). Although a useful document it takes a UK perspective and considers all woods and forests irrespective of ownership and does not specifically address the public forest estate. For the purposes of this assessment it has been assumed that issues relating to diversity, inclusion and equality highlighted in this report apply in a similar

manner to the public forest estate in England.

From the report the following high-level observations can be made:

“There is ample evidence to support the view that transport and the costs of accessing woodland is the major barrier to access for a significant proportion of diversity groups” – although detailed evidence for specific diversity groups is not available.

“.. the apparent lack of information about specific woodland and forest sites and services offered by the Forestry Commission and others...has been identified as a major issue for disabled people and other underrepresented groups.”

“woodland free from signs of abuse and litter/rubbish encourage use by women, the elderly and socially excluded groups.”

In terms of the impact of the public forest estate on different diversity groups, there is a lack of specific evidence but “impacts are assumed and generally thought to be similar to those experienced by the rest of the community.”

Note: evidence review does not pick up evidence of whether or to what extent diversity groups are underrepresented as users of the public forest estate.

The population that is served by the public forest estate has been analysed spatially using demographic data (from the 2001 census) and the location of the estate in 2008. This can be compared against the results of the analysis using the location of the estate in 1999. The change in location is largely as a result of the disposal of primarily rural woods and the acquisition of land closer to urban areas – these changes are relatively small, disposals of about 7,000 hectares and acquisitions of about 3,000 hectares.

This analysis has considered the change in the population “served” by looking at the population within a 500m, 4km and 10km catchment of any part of the estate. The results are presented in Annex A for Ethnicity (also including the whole population) and Annex B for multiple deprivation. Over the period of study, assuming a stable population, the population served within all three catchments has increased (by 34%, 30% and 22% respectively and the ethnic minority population served has also increased (by 134%, 54% and 50%, albeit from a lower percentage baseline). The shift towards greater provision of service to urban populations may have increased the provision to other strands of diversity such as religion or the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) population.

This change in the estate has also meant a changed population in terms of level of deprivation experienced by those served by the estate. A greater proportion of the population served in 2008 is living in the 40% most deprived areas than was in 1999 (a change to 31% in 2008 from 22% in 1999 for the 4km catchment). This addresses the “seventh strand” of diversity – social deprivation. This change could also have a positive impact on the populations of elderly and disabled people living near to the estate – reducing the physical barriers to their use of the estate.

Although the distinction should be noted between provision of service by increasing proximity to where people live does not necessarily equate with use of that service due to other potential barriers remaining: physical and structural; social and emotional; and perceptual.

The tentative conclusion could be drawn is that the change in the location of the estate over a 9 year period has resulted in an improved service to the population as a whole but also to particular diversity groups including for example ethnic minorities.

2.1 What does this evidence tell you about the actual or likely impact on different groups?

The study is to explore the scope for changing over time the character, scale, distribution or modus operandi of the estate. Any such changes may be significant in the future use by and impact on diversity groups. The evidence presented above concerning recent changes highlights the need to take note of this potential impact when considering any further changes. The study, among other things, looks to improve the quality of life of urban communities, which may directly benefit minority ethnic populations, people with disabilities and the LGBT community.

Assuming that diversity groups *are* underrepresented amongst current users of the public forest estate any public consultation needs to go beyond engagement with the existing/traditional customers of the estate and also to include encouragement of staff to contribute.

Step 3 - What else do you need to know to understand the diverse needs/experiences of your target audience?

3.0 What gaps are there in the available information?

We have yet to identify evidence as to the "catchment" populations the public forest estate serves and how these are reflected in the people that make direct use of the estate. We expect to address some of these gaps during the study.

If no gaps:	Go to Step 4
If there are gaps:	Collect necessary data and you may need to go to Steps 5 -10

Step 4 – What does the information you have tell you about how this policy might impact positively or negatively on the different groups within the target audience?

4.0 Consider the actual or likely effect for each group.

Please identify the likely impacts on	Beneficial impacts (positive/negative/no impact)	Adverse impacts, please state whether or not these could be unlawful	Comments
---------------------------------------	--	--	----------

the following		discrimination	
Race	Indirect benefits through the improved and sustainable delivery of government priorities through the public forest estate particularly for urban communities	Indirect impacts if inappropriate changes to the estate were implemented. Would not be unlawful but would certainly be undesirable	Changes could come from the location, nature and modus operandi of the public forest estate
Gender	Indirect benefits through the improved and sustainable delivery of government priorities through the public forest estate	Indirect impacts if inappropriate changes to the estate were implemented. Would not be unlawful but would certainly be undesirable	Changes could come from the location, nature and modus operandi of the public forest estate
Disability	Indirect benefits through the improved and sustainable delivery of government priorities through the public forest estate particularly for urban communities	Indirect impacts if inappropriate changes to the estate were implemented. Would not be unlawful but would certainly be undesirable	Changes could come from the location, nature and modus operandi of the public forest estate
Sexual Orientation	Indirect benefits through the improved and sustainable delivery of government priorities through the public forest estate particularly for urban communities	Indirect impacts if inappropriate changes to the estate were implemented. Would not be unlawful but would certainly be undesirable	Changes could come from the location, nature and modus operandi of the public forest estate
Religion or Belief	Indirect benefits through the improved and sustainable delivery of government priorities through the public forest estate particularly for urban communities	Indirect impacts if inappropriate changes to the estate were implemented. Would not be unlawful but would certainly be undesirable	Changes could come from the location, nature and modus operandi of the public forest estate
Age	Indirect benefits through the improved and sustainable delivery of government priorities through the public forest estate particularly for urban communities	Indirect impacts if inappropriate changes to the estate were implemented. Would not be unlawful but would certainly be undesirable	Changes could come from the location, nature and modus operandi of the public forest estate

4.1 Based on the work you have done rate the level of relevance of your policy?

Mark X in one box for each strand.	Race	Gender	Disability	Sexual Orientation	Religion / Belief	Age
High						
Medium	X		X			
Low		X		X	X	X
Unknown						
Positive or No Impact	YES - Go to steps 9-10 (Delete Steps 5 to 8 of this pro-forma)					
Negative or Unknown	NO Full EqIA required – Go to step 5					

Step 9 – Monitoring and Evaluation Process

<p>9.1 What arrangements are in place for monitoring the implementation and impact of the policy, function or service?</p> <p>It is proposed to review this EqIA as the study progresses: following the public consultation; as the Working Group recommendations are being prepared in winter 2009/10; and as the England National Committee recommendations are prepared in January/February 2010.</p>
<p>9.2 What is the review date for the policy, function or service?</p> <p>The study is likely to be a one-off process – at least in the short to medium term. The implementation of any subsequent ministerial decisions will be subject to the routine scrutiny of the English National Committee. The requirements for subsequent EqIAs will be based upon the nature of the recommendations and will reference the process by which the changes themselves were arrived at through a process of consultation that included diversity. The impact of the study will be reviewed in 2011/12.</p>

Step 10 – Senior Manager sign off

10.0 Senior Manager Sign Off

Senior Manager's Signature (Head of Unit/Cost Centre)	
Date	7 th June 2009