

England Tree Strategy – Consultation

By the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Please refer to the DEFRA webpage to access this strategic document and the full on-line questionnaire at: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/forestry/england-tree-strategy/consultation/subpage.2020-06-18.8820368597/>

Background and purpose – in the words of DEFRA

“This consultation will inform a new England Tree Strategy which we will publish later this year, setting out our forestry policy through to 2050, and replacing the Government 2013 Forestry Policy Statement¹. The strategy will set out policy priorities to deliver our ambitious tree planting programme. It will focus on expanding, protecting and improving our woodlands, and how trees and woodlands can connect people to nature, support the economy, combat climate change and recover biodiversity. This will ensure that trees are established and managed for the many benefits they provide for people, the economy, the climate and nature itself.

The £640m Nature for Climate Fund announced in the March 2020 budget provides significant funding for tree planting, and will be spent on the basis of paying public money for public goods. The strategy will set out how elements of this Fund will be used to best effect. Its delivery will require input from a range of partners, so we want to hear feedback through this consultation from a wide range of stakeholders.”

Why is the South Hams Society responding?

The South Hams Society is established to stimulate interest in, and care for, the beauty, history and character of the South Hams and, in particular, the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We work to secure the protection and enhancement of the landscape, including the area’s trees, hedgerows and woodlands.

In recent times the Society has been shocked at the growing number of illegal fellings of woods and copses in the South Hams area, including within the AONB. We have consistently raised the lack of effective protection for trees – even those covered by Tree Protection Orders – with the Local Planning Authority (SHDC). So we are keen to encourage members to respond to this Consultation, either individually in full (via the above web link) or by providing us with their answers to a limited number of questions on the following pages which we will then collate into a group response from the South Hams Society.

Content of the consultation

The consultation is divided into the four sections (topics) outlined below.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-forestry-policy-statement>

| Expanding and Connecting trees and woodland | Protecting and Improving our trees and woodland | Engaging people with trees and woodland | Supporting the economy |
|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Establishing more trees and woodlands and ensuring they are resilient to our future climate, pests and diseases •Addressing barriers to woodland creation •Creating space for nature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Protecting our trees and woodlands •Managing woods to recover biodiversity and increase resilience •Developing our domestic nursery capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increasing access to trees in and around towns and cities •Education and engagement with woodlands •Enabling investment in and protection of green infrastructure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diversifying rural economies •Enabling agro and energy forestry •Supporting our timber industry •Increasing forestry skills |

Your answers to ten key questions – please answer as many as you can

Section 1: Expanding and Connecting trees and woodland

This section contains seven questions (which ask you to choose options as an answer) dealing with the financial and non-financial barriers to the creation of new woodland. These are followed by some important open questions:

Q8. Woodlands provide a range of ecosystem services that provide benefits to businesses and society. How could government better encourage private investment in establishing trees and woodland creation? (Maximum 150 word response)

Answer (please write or type here):

Q13. How can we most effectively support the natural establishment of trees and woodland in the landscape? (Maximum 100 words)

Answer (write or type):

Q14. Are there any other actions - beyond the options you have already selected or submitted - that would help land owners and managers to transform the level of woodland creation and increase the number of non-woodland trees in England?
(Maximum 150 words)

Answer:

Q16. What role could the nation's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) play in increasing woodland cover? (Maximum 150 word response)

Answer:

Section 2: Protecting and Improving our trees and woodland

There are fourteen questions (which ask you to choose options as an answer) dealing with the financial and non-financial barriers to woodland management. Among them are the following key questions:

Q18. Which actions would best help the planning system support better protection and enhancement of the ancient and wider woodland environment and trees?

(select up to two options)

- a) Providing support to fully complete revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory (to include ancient woodlands under two hectares in area)

- b) Commissioning research into effective size and use of buffer zones around woodland for different impacts
- c) Providing better monitoring and recording of decisions on planning applications affecting ancient woodland
- d) Sharing best practice guidance and training to support implementation of National Planning Policy Framework policy on ancient woodland with local authority planners
- e) Encouraging more woodland to be brought into management where impacted by development
- f) More effective information sharing between agencies and local planning authorities to inform decision making impacting on woodland including to prevent woodland loss
- g) Refining the process of making Tree Preservation Orders, and clarifying the criteria to improve consistency in application of the policy across local authorities.
- h) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

Answer (please choose the two most important options):

Q28. Which of the following actions are or would be most appropriate for England's trees and woodlands to contribute to climate change mitigation and helping to achieve net zero?

(pick up to three options)

- a) Bringing woods into management to enhance their future resilience to climate change and secure greenhouse gas emissions reduction in other sectors through wood replacing 'carbon intensive' materials (acknowledging that this will lead to a short to medium reduction on carbon stored in the woodland)
- b) Planting UKFS-compliant productive forests to provide a strong carbon sink over the coming decades and then a source of sustainable timber to meet the needs of future generations
- c) Planting predominantly native woodland to act as a long term store of carbon
- d) Establishing 'energy forest' plantations (short rotation coppice and short rotation forestry) to satisfy future biomass demand for bioenergy with carbon capture and storage
- e) Encouraging agroforestry to increase the amount of carbon stored on productive farmland

- f) Strengthening the protection of all woodland to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation

Answer (please choose up to three options):

Section 3: Engaging people with trees and woodland

There was a focus on urban settings and street trees in this section. It contained seven questions in all, those most relevant to more rural settings are reproduced below. There was also a closed question relating to street trees.

Q35. Which actions would most effectively engage people in the management and creation of their local woodlands? (rank the following options in order of preference)

Answer – please rank just your top 3 choices

| RANK (1,2,3) | OPTION |
|-------------------------|--|
| | a) Providing more training opportunities to support woodland management and creation |
| | b) Providing legal support to community groups for the acquisition or lease of woodland |
| | c) Enabling community groups to influence decision making about the management of their local woodland |
| | d) Enabling community groups to participate in the management of their local woodland |
| | e) Facilitating networks to exchange ideas and share good practice |
| | f) Providing better support for community forests in areas of greatest need |
| | g) Creating new community forests in areas of greatest need |
| | h) Supporting the growth of woodland social enterprise in and around towns and cities |

Q36. Which actions by government would be most effective in addressing barriers to peoples' access to trees and woodlands? (rank the following options in order of preference)

Answer – please rank just your top 3 choices

| RANK (1,2,3) | OPTION |
|-------------------------|---|
| | a) Supporting woodland access through existing incentives and rights of way |
| | b) Offering more generous woodland management incentives for those woodlands with public access |
| | c) Creating new accessible woodlands in and around towns and cities |
| | d) Supporting woodland access with bespoke incentives, simply to allow access |
| | e) Improving the quality of access by investing in infrastructure (car parks, trails, path surfacing, signage, seating) |
| | f) Regulating to maintain access rights when creating new woodland |
| | g) Supporting people to become trained/accredited to better facilitate contact (learning and health) with nature |

Q37. Which of the following do you most value about trees and woodland? (select up to two options)

- a) Places to exercise and relax and engage with nature
- b) Places for nature
- c) A source of sustainable products and employment
- d) A resource that provides water management
- e) A resource that cleans the air
- f) A resource that stores carbon
- g) As a feature within towns and cities
- h) As part of urban green space
- i) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

Answer (please choose the two most important options):

Section 4: Supporting the economy

From the final section, a question of great relevance to the South Hams is:

Q42. Which actions would best increase the planting of more trees on farms? (select up to two options)

- a) Clarifying the regulation of agroforestry as either agriculture or forestry
- b) Clarifying the implications for the land holding's tax status of planting more trees
- c) Providing better advice and guidance on woodland creation and management
- d) Providing incentives for a wider range of tree planting on farms
- e) Funding for the advice and the design of schemes for trees on farms and agroforestry
- f) Providing better advice and guidance on how woodland creation and management can contribute to farm business models
- g) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

Answer (please choose the two most important options):

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Your name:

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS SURVEY BY MONDAY 31ST AUGUST TO:

Andrew Northrop, South Hams Society, via e-mail: ajnorthrop@btinternet.com

Or hard copy by post to: Weir Bridge Cottage, East Allington, Totnes, Devon TQ9 7RW.