



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Public Views consultation, Forestry Panel A response by English Heritage, July 2011

English Heritage is the Government's statutory adviser on the historic environment. Our role is to champion and care for the historic environment which we do by:

- Improving understanding of the past through research and study
- Providing conservation grants, advisory and education services
- Identifying and helping to protect buildings and archaeological sites of national importance
- Maintaining over 400 historic properties and making them accessible to the broadest possible public audience
- Maintaining the National Monuments Record as the central publicly accessible archive for the historic environment in England.

Question 1 – What do forests and woods mean to you?

The social and cultural significance of woods and forests encompasses both "hard" and "soft" culture, in so far as, whilst England's woods and forests preserve physical elements of our historic landscape which might not survive elsewhere, they also preserve customs and traditions which are valued in their own right, reinforcing regional or local distinctiveness, and enhancing tourism. It is also important to say that when we talk of the cultural significance of forestry, this extends to both woods and, especially in urban areas, to individual trees.

Whilst there are (as recognised in the 2010 Public Forestry Estate consultation) so-called "Heritage Forests", that is, woods and forests (such as the Forest of Dean, the New Forest etc) which are of great antiquity and iconic landscape features, and arguably, represent archaeology in their own right, more modern woodland plantations will also contain evidence of earlier land use in the form of well preserved archaeological sites and landscape features. In many cases these may represent rare survivals, features which were once commonplace or locally distinctive, but which have now been effaced in areas outside woodland by more intensive cultivation.

For these reasons we feel that it is important that England's woods, forests and trees – whether part of the Public Forest Estate or privately owned - should be managed in a balanced, sustainable and multi-objective way which acknowledges and delivers a range of public goods; economic, social and environmental (including the historic environment and broader cultural heritage).



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We suggest that in balancing considerations of soft and hard culture, English Heritage's recent work on valuing 'place' in the context of *Conservation Principles* (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/content/publications/docs/conservationprinciplespoliciesandguidanceapril08web.pdf>) offers a useful model.

Paragraph 24 of the document states:

Sustainable management of a place begins with understanding and defining how, why, and to what extent it has cultural and natural heritage values: in sum, its significance. Communicating that significance to everyone concerned with a place, particularly those whose actions may affect it, is then essential if all are to act in awareness of its heritage values. Only through understanding the significance of a place is it possible to assess how the qualities that people value are vulnerable to harm or loss.

The significance of place as set out in 'Conservation Principles' is based upon four considerations:

Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present - it tends to be illustrative or associative.

Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory

This conceptual framework would allow tangible and intangible cultural significance and value to be reconciled together under the broader 'social, cultural and natural heritage' banner.

Question 2 – What is your vision for the future of England's forests and woods?

We feel that the current multi-objective way in which the Public Forest Estate is managed, acknowledging and delivering a range of economic, social and environmental public goods, should be a model for all forests and woods in the future. Whilst it is not always possible - nor necessarily desirable - to manage proactively to deliver against all objectives, management should always be carried out in such a way that delivering against one objective does not have a detrimental impact upon the others. This basic principle underpins agri-environment schemes and is the key to sustainability. It also characterizes how the Public Forestry Estate is currently managed, and summarises our vision for the future.

Question 3 – What do you feel to be the benefits of forests and woods to:

Amenity value - woods and forests can easily be made accessible and provide considerable scope for the interpretation and presentation of heritage and monuments for public enjoyment and understanding. The value which the public place upon this aspect of their presentation and management is evidenced by the numerous HLF Landscape Partnership Programme projects and other initiatives which deal with forestry.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the south east, supported by the Forestry Commission, have collaborated on a Woodland Programme that addresses some of the



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range of cultural values. It can be downloaded in chapters at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-7dlcjj>

As part of the HLF Landscape Partnerships Scheme, the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership (<http://www.sussexwt.org.uk/uploads/ggp-fsc%20weald%20forest%20ridge%20landscape%20partnership%20scheme%20summary.pdf>) has been formed to resurrect the once well-known Weald Forest Ridge name, celebrate the area's local distinctiveness, widen access to the area's special features, and also reduce the threats to these by involving people in the area's integrated management.

Another HLF funded Landscape Partnership scheme is the 'Grow with Wyre' project, which similarly seeks to engage communities with the forest landscape under five thematic programmes of work, including heritage (<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/environment-and-planning/countryside/worcestershire-wardens/contacts/grow-with-wyre.aspx>).

However, whilst these 'bottom up' community initiatives are very welcome, the cultural heritage public goods delivered directly by the Public Forestry Estate should not be lost sight of. The Forestry Commission, as a Governmental body, abides by protocols for the management of the Government historic estate. Since 1999, it has undertaken to put in place management plans for all Scheduled Monuments under its direct management, and these are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. As a result of this proactive approach it now has the lowest percentage of "at risk" Scheduled Monuments of any major landowner in England (10%, against a national average of 17.6% for all land uses/ownerships). This work helps meet the "at risk" Key Performance Indicator for historic environment designations agreed by DCMS, Defra and DCLG. The Forestry Commission also routinely follows the UK Forestry Guidelines (which encompass cultural heritage, both designated and undesignated) in all of its day to day works.

Owners of private forestry do not generally carry out proactive management work, nor do they have to follow the UK Forestry Guidelines unless they are in direct receipt of public grant aid. As a result the percentage of "at risk" Scheduled Monuments within all forestry/woodland in England is 18% (slightly above the 17.6% national average for all land uses/ownerships).

The environmental and social benefits of woodlands in addition to the direct economic benefits have been examined more in recent years. The United Nations report titled *The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity* details how the importance of trees and forests goes beyond just their timber supply. The benefits include regulating the atmosphere, climate and water cycles, soil conservation, along with supporting biodiversity. Therefore, we would urge that in addition to reviewing the direct commercial economics of forestry and timber, 'other' income (from access and recreation) is also taken into consideration, as is the delivery of other environmental public goods, some of which can be quantified directly (eg. Progress against BAP targets, and against Heritage at Risk indicators), others of which cannot. In the context of 'other' income and wider public benefits, we would recommend as a model the two 'Building Value' projects jointly undertaken by Defra and English Heritage (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/content/imported-docs/a-e/buildingvaluesummaryrevised.pdf>). These looked at the extent to which Rural Development Programme funding (in this case, through agri-environment schemes) created

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employment, supported local economies and boosted craft skills, in addition to enhancing one element of the landscape and its enjoyment by the public.

Question 4 – We would like to hear about your suggestions of practical solutions and good practice which can be replicated more widely.

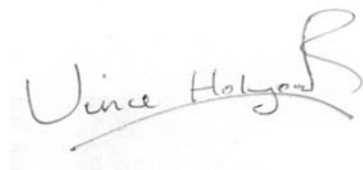
The SHINE (Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England) project undertaken jointly by Natural England, local authority Historic Environment Records and English Heritage has produced a single, national mediated dataset showing undesignated but nationally important archaeological features which can be managed under agri-environment schemes. If the sustainable management of woods and forests, private or otherwise can only be achieved by raising awareness about the value and significance of the cultural heritage they contain, then extending coverage of SHINE to these areas (and therefore making historic environment data readily available to land managers and the public) would represent a significant achievement.

Question 5 – What do you see as the priorities and challenges for policy about England's forests and woods?

On the whole, the low proportion of designated historic features 'at risk' on the public forestry estate under the management of the Forestry Commission show the benefits of the proactive approach they have taken. It is also clear that access to and enjoyment of the historic environment within England's woodlands is very much a part of the visitor 'offer'. There are clearly opportunities to enhance these opportunities – and as we suggest in relation to question 4 and the SHINE initiative – these need not be difficult or costly. However, others clearly require investment of some kind. We have noted in relation to Question 3 that private owners of forestry do not have to abide by the UK Forestry Guidelines unless they are in receipt of public money. Given that the proportion of 'at risk' designated assets in private forestry is almost twice that for the Public Forestry Estate, this is clearly a concern. We would therefore like to see the UK Forestry Guidelines become mandatory.

In respect of woodland creation, it would be useful to utilize the protocol developed by the Woodland Trust and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers for assessing and mitigating the impacts upon the historic landscape. In addition, work by English Heritage on Historic Landscape Characterisation has been successfully used in Leicestershire, Shropshire and Cornwall to show those areas where woodland creation would enhance the historic character of the landscape.

Yours sincerely,



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