

Government Forestry Policy Statement

Incorporating the Government's Response to the Independent Panel on Forestry's Final Report

The Independent Panel on Forestry issued a clear challenge to Government and the nation as a whole last year. "As a society, we have lost sight of the value of trees and woodlands", the Bishop of Liverpool concluded. We need to "grow a new appreciation of woods and forests".

The Government shares this view and has embraced this challenge with passion and conviction. Over the last seven months Defra and the Forestry Commission have worked together to produce a response that sets out very clearly how we can turn the Panel's vision of a new woodland culture into reality.

Today, Government has responded to the Panel's report. The response addresses all the issues raised by the Panel. It revitalises our policies. It shows real ambition. It will breathe new life into our woodland economy. And crucially it takes full account of your views and the part you can play in growing that new woodland culture.

Key points include:

- Our publicly owned forests will stay in public hands. A new independent body to manage our forests for the long-term will be set up, holding the public forest estate in trust for the nation.
- Government will maintain and improve public access to our woods and forests, particularly those close to towns and cities where the greatest number of people can enjoy them.
- Government want to see England's forests and woodlands increase in size and number.
- Everyone has a role to play in managing our existing forests better as well as increasing woodland cover.

These are the first steps in a longer process of working in close partnership with others to create a healthier, more resilient and sustainable forestry and woodland sector delivering long-term social, environmental and economic benefits for all.

Stakeholder Briefing – The Way Forward to 2015

The announcement includes two important strategic decisions directly affecting the Forestry Commission:

- There will be a new, independent public body that will hold in trust the nation's publicly-owned forests for future generations.
- That the future shape of the Forestry Commission, as recommended by the Panel, along with its functions and powers will be considered by Defra and the Forestry Commission. This will be done alongside the Triennial Review and Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Expert Taskforce and with support from wider consultation.

At this stage we do not have further details on either of these issues but will keep you informed and involved as they develop.

In the meantime we will focus on the Government's new hierarchy of priorities, in the following order:

1. **Protecting** the nations trees, woodlands and forests from increasing threats such as pests, diseases and climate change.
2. **Improving** their resilience to these threats and their contribution to economic growth, peoples lives and nature.
3. **Expanding** them to increase further their economic, social and environmental value.

Visit the Forestry Commission's [website](#) for further information and a link to the full Government response