



Forestry England

Blackwell Wood: a new woodland on Exmoor

Consultation report and our
response to key issues raised

March 2026



Contents

1.	Executive summary.....	3
2.	About the Consultation	3
2.1	Introduction	3
2.2	Objectives of the new woodland	3
2.3	Early Engagement	4
2.4	Consultation purpose.....	4
2.5	Who we consulted	5
2.6	What we asked	5
2.7	Methods of responding.....	5
2.8	Consultation materials and publicity	5
2.8.1	Consultation materials	5
2.8.2	Consultation activity.....	6
3.	Consultation feedback	6
3.1	Overview of responses	6
3.2	Consultation response by theme.....	6
3.3	Supportive comments	7
3.4	Concerns and questions.....	7
3.5	Stakeholder responses	8
4.	Our responses to issues raised	10
4.1	Archaeology and heritage	10
4.2	Landscape and woodland design	11
4.3	Public access	11
4.4	Water and flood risk	13
4.5	Wildlife and habitats.....	13
	Appendix A: Our response to key themes from early engagement	14
	Appendix B: Consultation information.....	16
	Appendix C: Consultation questionnaire	26
	Appendix D: Examples of letters/emails announcing the consultation	28
	Appendix E: Stakeholders.....	30

1. Executive summary

Between Monday 12 January and Friday 30 January 2026, we held a public consultation on proposals for the design of Blackwell Wood, a new 21-hectare woodland we are planning to create on the edge of Exmoor in Somerset.

This report focuses on our approach to the consultation, summarises the main themes raised, and sets out our responses.

A total of eight responses to the consultation were received from local residents and stakeholders. While some feedback was broadly supportive, other responses raised concerns, questions, and suggestions about specific aspects of the proposals. We carefully considered all comments and have addressed the key issues in **Section 4** of this report.

Overall, the consultation has provided valuable insights that will help us refine the final woodland design. We will now prepare our proposals for submission to the Forestry Commission for regulatory review ahead of planting the new woodland.

2. About the Consultation

2.1 Introduction

Forestry England is planning to create a new 21-hectare woodland, called Blackwell Wood, on land near the village of Roadwater in Somerset. We purchased this site with the aim of creating a healthy, resilient woodland that would be planted with a mix of conifer and broadleaf trees chosen to cope with future climate conditions.

Once established, Blackwell Wood would provide space for wildlife, help absorb carbon, and support a greener economy by producing British-grown timber. The woodland would also be open for people to visit and enjoy as a new local green space.

This consultation invited local people and stakeholders to share their views on the proposed design and planting plans for Blackwell Wood. The feedback we received will help shape the final design as the project moves forward.

2.2 Objectives of the new woodland

Our objectives for the new woodland are to:

1. Create a mixed, productive, and resilient woodland
2. Improve connectivity across woodland areas in the landscape
3. Provide additional opportunities for informal access to the countryside

4. Capture carbon, improve soil and air quality, and support the government in achieving its net-zero emission targets

2.3 Early Engagement

Ahead of the public consultation, and to help shape our initial woodland proposals, we engaged with immediate neighbours to the site as well as a small group of additional stakeholders. This included:

- Rachel Gilmour, MP for Tiverton & Minehead
- Luxborough, Withycombe, and Treborough Parish Councils
- Unitary Ward Councillors for Dunster Ward and Dulverton & Exmoor Ward
- The former owners of the site

Between Thursday 9 October and Tuesday 30 October 2025, we contacted this initial group of stakeholders to announce our acquisition, share a map showing the boundary of the new woodland, and invite them to share their thoughts with us through an online survey.

We received a total of five responses, all from neighbouring properties of the new woodland. The primary topic highlighted in this feedback was around potential parking and traffic problems to the area, followed by requests regarding the planting of specific tree species and the design of the woodland.

Appendix A sets out how our designs have been shaped by this feedback and addresses some of the key issues raised. Feedback to this early engagement survey, together with further design and survey work, and engagement with other specific stakeholders such as Natural England and Forest Research, helped to shape the design proposals we shared during the public consultation.

2.4 Consultation purpose

The public consultation took place between Monday 12 January and Friday 30 January 2026. Its aims were to:

1. Provide the public and our other stakeholders with sufficient information about our proposals to allow them to give informed responses and suggestions
2. Understand the reasons for any issues or concerns about our proposals
3. Identify any issues we might not already be aware of
4. Provide adequate time for people to respond
5. Consider all responses carefully ahead of making any changes to our proposals

2.5 Who we consulted

Our consultation was open to anyone who lived or worked in the local area, or who had an interest in our proposals. Feedback was collected through an online survey, which was shared directly with:

- Immediate neighbours who had responded to our early engagement and told us they would like to receive further communications about Blackwell Wood
- Local elected officials, including the MP for Tiverton & Minehead
- Statutory stakeholders we consult with when creating a new woodland, including Natural England and Exmoor National Park
- Environmental stakeholders including the RSPB and Somerset Wildlife Trust

The full list of stakeholders we contacted is included in **Appendix E**.

2.6 What we asked

The consultation survey included one open question inviting written feedback or questions about our proposed plans for Blackwell Wood.

We also asked respondents to give their name and email address and, where applicable, supply details of the organisation on whose behalf they were responding.

The survey we published on the website is included in **Appendix C**.

2.7 Methods of responding

People were able to respond to the consultation by:

- Completing the survey hosted online at <https://consult.forestryengland.uk/forest-districts/blackwellw/>
- Giving comments by email to woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk

2.8 Consultation materials and publicity

2.8.1 Consultation materials

We published consultation information about the new woodland on our consultation website, Citizen Space: <https://consult.forestryengland.uk/forest-districts/blackwellw/>. This included:

- An overview of Blackwell Wood
- A site appraisal, with photographs and maps to give context
- An overview of the surveys undertaken
- Our project objectives, which informed our design proposals

- An overview of tree species we plan to plant
- Visuals of how the new woodland might look after planting
- Information on how to respond to the consultation

2.8.2 Consultation activity

We publicised the consultation in the following ways:

- **Media release:** distributed to regional press contacts
- **Dedicated webpage:** www.forestryengland.uk/woodland-creation-blackwell-wood
- **Citizen Space consultation portal:** <https://consult.forestryengland.uk/forest-districts/blackwell/>
- **Emails:** to local residents and other stakeholders (see **Appendix D**)
- **Posters:** a poster publicising the consultation was shared locally. It was also sent to local parish councils for inclusion on their noticeboards and websites

3. Consultation feedback

3.1 Overview of responses

We received eight individual responses to the public consultation for Blackwell. Two were from local residents, and six were from stakeholder organisations. These organisations were:

- Historic England
- Exmoor National Park Authority
- Somerset Lead Local Flood Authority (Somerset Council)
- National Gas
- Environment Agency
- Natural England

Comments included general support for the new woodland, suggestions, and specific concerns.

3.2 Consultation response by theme

The responses to the consultation have been categorised into the following themes:

- Supportive comments
- Archaeology and heritage
- Landscape and woodland design
- Public access

- Water and flood risk
- Wildlife and habitat

Within each theme, responses were then categorised into concerns or questions.

3.3 Supportive comments

General supportive comments for Blackwell Wood included:

- Support from Exmoor National Park Authority, describing the plans as “a well thought-through proposal” and “a good example of establishing robust and resilient mixed woodland”, “which has taken the historic environment features into account”
- Support from Somerset’s Lead Local Flood Authority, who welcomed the proposal as it is likely to help reduce local flood risk
- A local resident expressing strong support, saying they felt “overwhelmingly positive” about the new woodland and that they welcomed a more mixed, diverse woodland
- Natural England stated that they were “strongly supportive of the proposal”, noting the woodland would benefit water quality and support nature’s recovery

3.4 Concerns and questions

Key questions and concerns raised during public consultation were as follows:

Archaeology and heritage

- Concern from Historic England about archaeological features on the site, including a post-medieval water meadow system and possible settlement evidence. They emphasised the need for archaeological investigation and for sensitive design to avoid disturbance

Landscape and woodland design

- Question from a resident about whether steep land would require significant earthworks to make paths accessible
- Question from a resident about why nearby existing clear-felled conifer sites weren’t being restored as native woodlands, which they favoured over new woodlands being planted
- Question from Exmoor National Park about the open area around the former farmstead and how this part of the woodland will be used

Public access

- Question from Exmoor National Park about which of the proposed tracks and routes within the woodland would be open to the public
- Question from Exmoor National Park about how the public will gain access to the north-west corner of the site

- Question from Exmoor National Park about whether a connected walking route could be created across the new woodland, linking to the existing public footpath

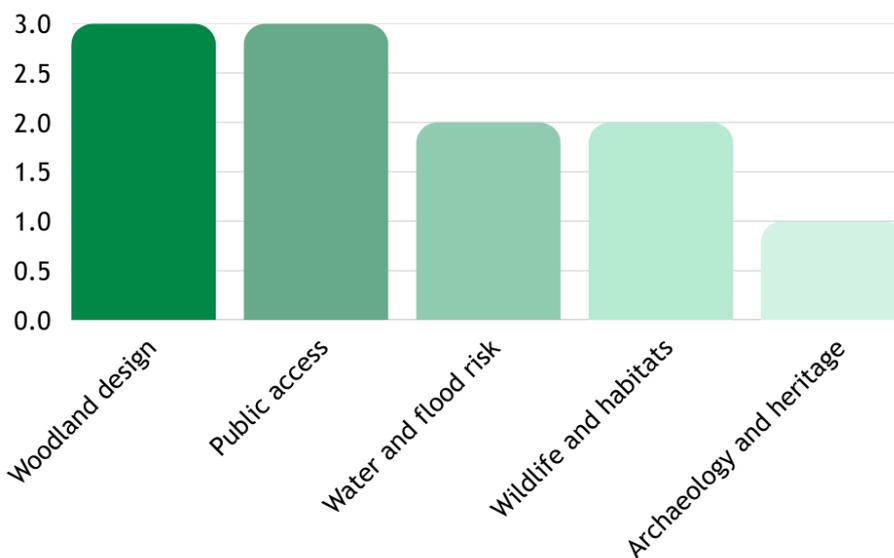
Water and flood risk

- Concern from a resident that part of the site lies on a floodplain and would need to be managed appropriately
- Question from Somerset Local Flood Authority (Somerset Council) about how the wet flush area of the site will be used

Wildlife and habitats

- Note from Natural England about area of the site with the high potential of waxcap fungi
- Suggestion from Natural England that the hedgerows on site should be managed appropriately in the long term, such as through laying or coppicing, to encourage regeneration

Comments by theme



3.5 Stakeholder responses

The responses we received from the six stakeholder organisations who responded to the consultation are summarised in more detail below:

Historic England

- Highlights the presence of archaeological features within or near the site, including:
 - a post-medieval water meadow system
 - possible building or settlement remains

- potential for further unrecorded features
- Notes the relationship between features on this site and similar archaeological remains visible on aerial photographs nearby
- Recommends close liaison with Exmoor National Park archaeologists to ensure any archaeological features are properly investigated, recorded, and if necessary, kept as open space
- Advises that the long-term management of the nearby Scheduled Monument 1020689 at Langridge Wood should also be considered

Exmoor National Park Authority

- Supportive of the overall proposal, describing it as a well-designed mixed woodland that sits well within the local landscape
- Confirms the presence of known archaeological features (water meadow and deserted farmstead) and notes that the planting design respects these by incorporating areas of scrub and open space
- Requests more detail on the open area around the former farmstead, which could act as a natural hub for paths and visitor access
- Highlights that the proposal will improve woodland connectivity along the valley
- Welcomes the proposed public access, but seeks clarity on:
 - whether internal tracks will be open to the public
 - how the public will reach the northwest access point
 - whether a through-route could link the public road and footpath network
- Offers support for a site visit from their Rights of Way Officer to help shape future access provision

Somerset Lead Local Flood Authority (Somerset Council)

- Supportive of woodland creation as it can help reduce local flood risk
- Requests careful consideration of all watercourses and ditches, ensuring they remain accessible for maintenance and do not become blocked during or after planting
- Highlights that:
 - there should be no works to the cross section of any ordinary watercourses without Land Drainage Consent from Somerset Council
 - The Washford River is a main river and any works within 8m of this will need a Flood Risk Activity Permit from the Environment Agency
- Asks for clarification of how the wet flush area will be used, to avoid increasing flood risk elsewhere

National Gas

- Confirms that no National Gas Transmission assets are affected by the proposals
- Advises raising a search through Linesearch BeforeUdig (LSBUD) if the project area or works change

Environment Agency

- Notes that woodland creation can help improve water quality and reduce flood risk, depending on species choice, design, and management
- Highlights the need to avoid water pollution during planting and management, particularly from sediment, nutrients, and pesticides
- Provides links to government guidance on:
 - preventing water pollution
 - pesticide use
 - relevant Farming Rules for Water

Natural England

- Strongly supportive of the proposal
- Confirms woodland creation will benefit water quality and reduce downstream flood risk by slowing the flow of the river
- Supports the creation of riparian woodland next to the Washford River
- Confirmed that hedgerows are a priority habitat currently in poor condition and supports proposal of a 10m buffer zone. Also recommends long-term management to restore hedgerows, such as through laying or coppicing
- Supports native broadleaf and natural regeneration planting along woodland edges
- Notes a field with high potential for waxcap fungi and supports reduced planting in this area, as well as an eDNA survey
- Confirmed no significant impacts would be anticipated on the nearby Nettlecombe Park SSSI or Dunster Park & Heathland SSSI
- Supports the overall design for accounting for existing ecological features

4. Our responses to issues raised

We have considered all the feedback we received to the consultation, and our responses to the key issues raised are set out on the following pages.

We have grouped the issues into broad themes for a more readily understood overview.

4.1 Archaeology and heritage

Question about tree planting near archaeological features on the site, including post-medieval water meadow and possible settlement remains

We have carried out extensive checks to understand and protect heritage features at Blackwell Wood. This has included:

- early engagement with Exmoor National Park archaeologists to understand the remains of the historic farmstead
- commissioning a building survey of the remains of an historic structure that has been incorporated into a modern cattle shed, in order to understand its historical significance
- a site visit from Forestry England’s Historic Environment Advisor to review the water meadow earthworks, where no surviving features were identified

These steps meet the requirements of UK Forestry Standard and its Historic Environment guidance. We will continue to work closely with Exmoor National Park’s archaeology team to ensure any features are protected through appropriate woodland design.

4.2 Landscape and woodland design

Concern about steep ground and how accessible paths will be

We have no plans to carry out any major earthworks to reduce the steepness of the hill within Blackwell Wood. The unsurfaced grass routes the public can use to explore the new woodland will follow the natural contours of the slope to avoid steep gradients where possible. There are also no plans to include surfaced trails that may be more suitable for pushchairs and wheelchair users, however our existing woodland at Nutcombe Bottom is a short drive away and provides more accessible walking routes.

Suggestion to restore nearby conifer woodland

While this suggestion falls outside of our proposals for Blackwell Wood, Forestry England continues to review opportunities for woodland restoration across our sites. We have long-term commitments to restore plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS), of which this referenced area is a part of. You can find out more about the woodlands we care for within Exmoor National Park in our Forest Plan: [Exmoor Forest Plan_0.pdf](#)

Request for more detail about the open area around the former farmstead

Blackwell Wood will be open to the public once the woodland is established, including this area around the former farmstead. We are not currently planning to create any visitor infrastructure within the new woodland, such as benches or bins.

4.3 Public access

Request for clarity on which proposed internal tracks will be open to the public

Once the new woodland is established, we will dedicate it under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act. This will allow local people to explore and enjoy Blackwell Wood using the series of unsurfaced grass trails throughout the woodland. The small section of tracks we are proposing to create for our forestry

vehicles, as well as the existing tracks, will also be available for the public to use (see Appendix B for a map of the new woodland).

Question about how the public will access the north-west corner of the site, where a private road appears to cross the access road

We have investigated this query and can confirm that the public will be able to access the new woodland via the north-west corner.

Suggestion to create a walking route through the woodland for the public to use, linking the road to the public footpath network

Access is currently available for the public between the Coleridge Way and the footpath to the north of the site, although it is not a direct route (see map below). We have considered the possibility of creating a more direct route through the woodland, however as we need to balance public access with our other goals for the new woodland – which include supporting nature recovery, timber production, and carbon storage – as well as funding constraints, will not be able to facilitate a more direct walking route at this time.



4.4 Water and flood risk

Request to protect watercourses and ensure they remain accessible for maintenance

All watercourses will be kept accessible during and after planting. Buffers of approximately 10m will be maintained between the woodland and the Washford River to allow ongoing maintenance and prevent debris from entering the watercourse.

Concern about the wet flush area of the site and potential increased flood risk

We will not be creating any new areas of wet flush habitat at Blackwell Wood. By planting more trees in this area, we aim to slow the flow of the river, which could play a role in reducing local flood risk.

4.5 Wildlife and habitats

Awareness of area of the site with high potential for waxcap fungi

We have already planned to reduce planting density in the area of Blackwell Wood that could support waxcap fungi, and we are planning to keep large parts of this area of the site more open. An eDNA survey is also underway, and final planting decisions for this part of the site will be made once the results have been reviewed.

Suggestion for appropriate long-term hedgerow management to support regeneration

We have already built in a 10m buffer zone around existing hedgerows to our designs for Blackwell Wood, a proposal which is supported by Natural England. As the woodland establishes, we will explore opportunities for long-term hedgerow management, where appropriate.

Appendix A: Our response to key themes from early engagement

In October 2025, we invited local people to share their initial views about our plans to create a new woodland on Exmoor. We've set out our responses to this feedback below:

1. Public access

The new woodland will be open to the public and provide a quiet space for local people to enjoy and connect with nature. Once we have finished planting the woodland, we will dedicate it under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act so that people can access and explore the site.

Pedestrians will be able to visit the new woodland via the network of existing public rights of way, including the Coleridge Way, a 51-mile public footpath that runs through the south-eastern part of the site. We will also be creating a network of new, unsurfaced grass routes through the new woodland. There are no plans to include surfaced trails for cycling, horse riding, or motorised vehicles.

Visitors will be welcome to walk their dogs in the new woodland, but we have no plans to add infrastructure such as bins. We expect all dog walkers to be responsible and keep their pets under control in the new woodland, in line with our forest dog code.

2. Traffic and parking

We want to avoid a significant increase to car traffic on local roads and inconsiderate parking that may cause problems for neighbouring properties. The new woodland has been designed primarily for local people to enjoy, which is why our proposals do not include a public car park. We have no plans to include visitor or other recreational facilities, including signage that might direct visitors to the new woodland from the road. The new woodland is a short drive away from our Nutcombe Bottom site, which provides parking, a picnic area, and play area, and the spectacular Tall Trees Trail – and we anticipate that those who wish to visit a woodland by car will choose to visit this site over Blackwell Wood. However, if inconsiderate parking does become an issue, we will consider signs in appropriate locations to discourage this.

Our forestry vehicles need to be able to access the new woodland from the road so that we can manage and maintain the site. We plan to use an existing access point to the north of the site, where there is already a large layby, and another through Langridge wood – the existing woodland neighbouring the site to the east. Within the new woodland, we will be creating a new track from the northern access point and upgrading an existing track to allow us to access the site with our vehicles.

In time, this woodland will provide a sustainable source of timber. However, it will be about 10-20 years before any timber is harvested from the site, and transport routes will be agreed with the local highways authority as required.

3. Tree species

We have decades of experience and the latest scientific evidence to help us plan in detail the trees we will plant in the new woodland. We have carried out surveys to help us choose the trees most suitable for the site, both now and as the climate changes. Our

local foresters have considered factors including the soil quality and how quickly the trees will grow, as well as the important habitat, species, and geographical features within the area. We also consider tree pests and diseases and future climate conditions to keep the woodland as healthy as possible and ensure the trees we plant will visually complement pre-existing woodlands in the area.

The species we plant in the new woodland will be a mix of broadleaf and conifer, with groups of shrub species along the edges of the site to increase the variety of species and provide seasonal colour and texture. Specific species we are considering planting on Blackwell Wood include small-leaved lime, alder, western red cedar, and Douglas fir. These species have been chosen to provide a range of benefits for wildlife while contributing to the timber industry once the woodland is established.

At the north of the site, where the woodland runs next to the Washford River, we will be planting riparian species that will thrive in wetter conditions and help with flood prevention. We will also be preserving the mature trees already on the site, leaving space around them to protect them.

4. Wildlife

The new woodland will increase biodiversity by providing rich, varied habitats for wildlife. Our draft designs include open spaces and widely spaced trees to create a diverse environment that will benefit a wide range of species. This may include foraging and commuting bats, badgers, otters, small mammals, foraging and nesting birds, reptiles, common amphibians, and invertebrates. The woodland will also help connect the pre-existing woodlands in the area – Forestry England’s Side Wood and an area of woodland owned by the Fairfield Estate. The new woodland will act as a wildlife corridor between these two sites, making it easier for species to move across the landscape.

As part of our planning, we carried out surveys to tell us more about the plants and wildlife in the area, and these surveys have guided our draft designs. We currently have no plans to install bird or bat boxes, as the focus is on establishing the woodland itself. Over time, new trees will create natural roosting and nesting opportunities for birds and bats. We will be planting outside of the bird nesting season, following standard guidance. We have no current plans for a species reintroduction programme at Blackwell Wood.

5. Planting on agricultural land

We understand concerns around food security, and we want to keep the best-quality land in agricultural production. This is why we do not create woodlands on the most productive land (grades 1 & 2). None of the land at Blackwell Wood has been found to be of agricultural quality.

Forestry England’s role is to manage and expand the nation’s forests to ensure they are healthy and sustainable and benefit wildlife, people, and the economy. The new woodland will capture carbon, connect existing woodland habitats for wildlife to move between, and provide a sustainable source of timber, which is crucial for the UK’s green economy.

Appendix B: Consultation information

Available to view on the consultation website [here](#), and previously exhibited at the consultation drop-in event



Growing the nation's forests Blackwell Wood - A proposed new woodland near Luxborough, Exmoor National Park

Forestry England are planting new woodlands to expand the nation's forests

We are working on designs for a new woodland, Blackwell Wood, near Luxborough in Exmoor National Park, Somerset. We would like your comments on our initial proposals. Your feedback will inform our final designs for the woodland.

Working with public and private landowners, we're choosing the right places for woodlands to grow and flourish, carefully planting a mix of tree species to be resilient in our changing climate.

Every new woodland will have public access so you can explore and enjoy them to support your health and wellbeing.

They will be valuable places for wildlife, often linking other

woods and hedgerows to provide green corridors for wildlife to move and thrive across the landscape.

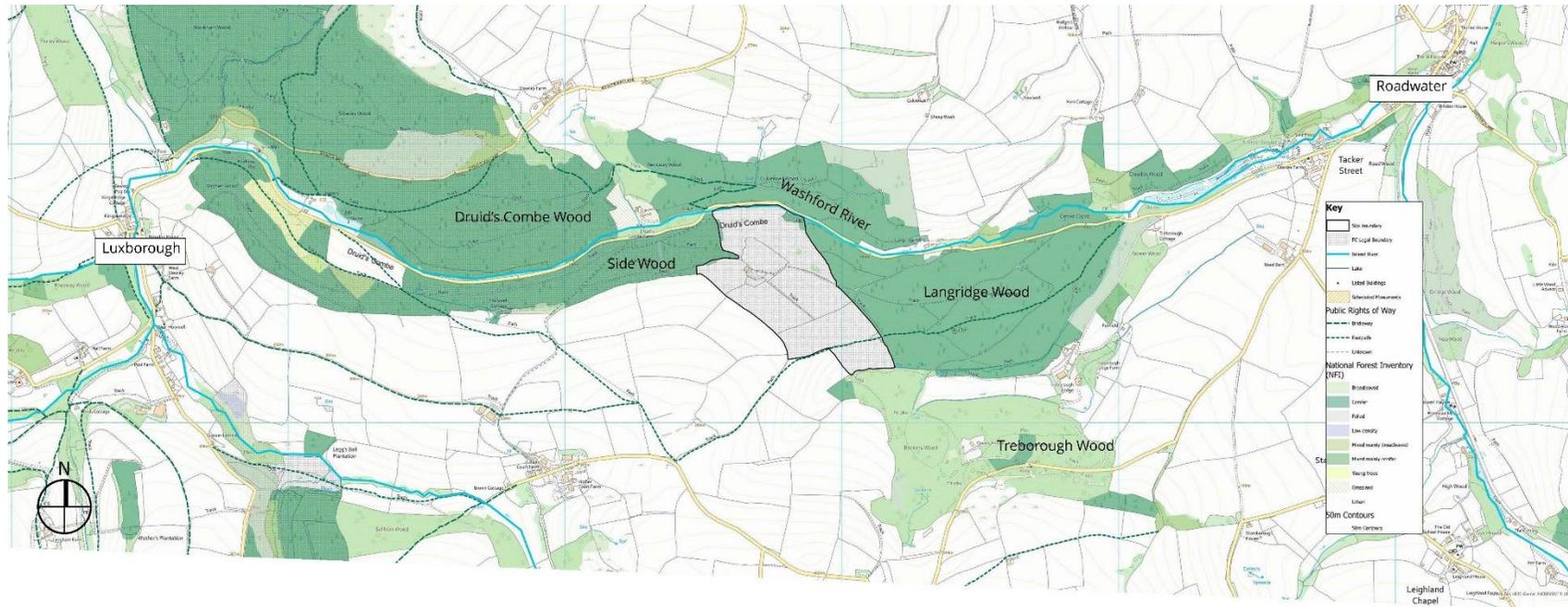
In time, each new woodland will provide sustainable timber, contributing to the rural economy. And they'll have wider environmental benefits including absorbing carbon, improving soil health and air quality, and water management.

Forestry England is creating these woodlands through the government's Nature for Climate Fund programme.

Scan the QR code to find out more:

forestryengland.uk



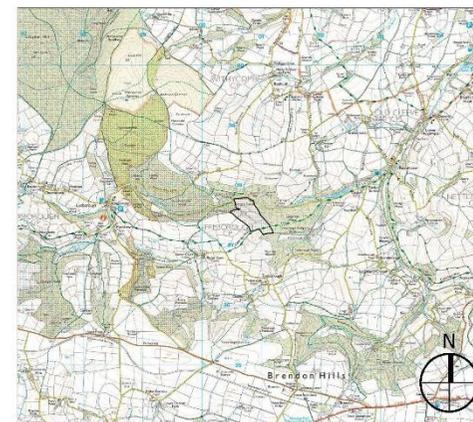


Site location & context

The proposed new woodland is located towards the eastern tip of Exmoor National Park, east of Luxborough in Somerset. The Washford River flows eastwards from Luxborough, passing the northern boundary of the site, towards Roadwater.

The site for the new woodland lies within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) '145 Exmoor National Park', described as a 'diverse upland landscape, rising abruptly out of the surrounding lowlands. Central high, treeless moorlands used for rough grazing, incised by steep wooded valleys and combes with occasional grass and arable fields'. The site lies within Druid's Combe, a steep, mostly wooded valley along the Washford River.

Exmoor National Park NCA features rich wildlife habitats including grassland, heathland, traditional orchards and woodland; nationally important assemblages of woodland birds and butterflies; internationally important woodland, river and bat sites; and a range of other rare flora and fauna.



Site Location 1:24,000
 © Crown copyright and database right (2024) Ordnance Survey (100021242)
 © Geomapping Plc and Bluesky International 2024



The existing site

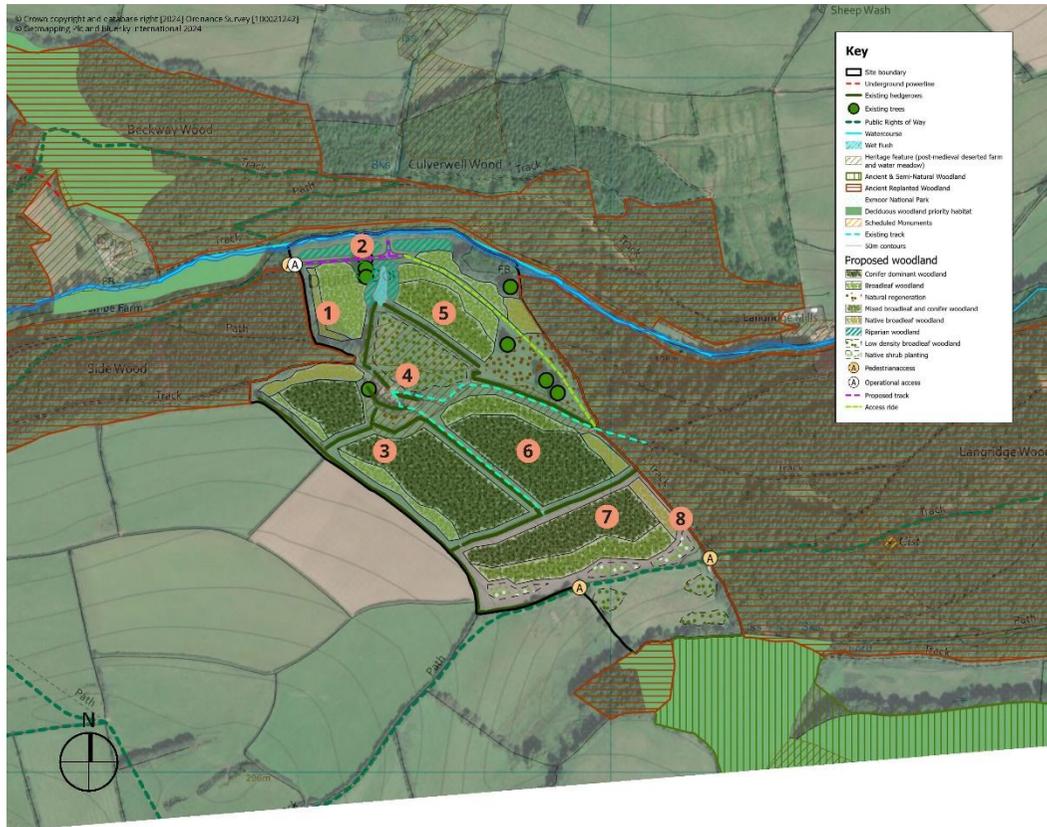
The 21 hectare site consists of pastoral fields and is divided by a network of hedgerows and clusters of trees. There are a number of mature trees within some fields. There are areas of Ancient Replanted Woodland and Ancient Semi Natural Woodland to the north-west, north, east and south-east of the site that largely follow the valley formed by the Washford River. The site slopes steeply from north to south with the Washford River forming its northern boundary.

Public Rights of Way are extensive in the vicinity of the site and Coleridge Way long-distance public footpath crosses at its southern end along the ridge. A deserted farmstead lies at the centre of the site, part of which now forms a cattle shed.

There are heavily wooded scenic views along the valley to the east and west from within the site. These views open up into the longer distance from higher up on the ridge and Coleridge Way.

Photos: 1. View east along Coleridge Way 2. View west along Coleridge Way 3. View north west along Washford River valley 4. View west into field 5. View east at the entrance in the north west corner of the site.

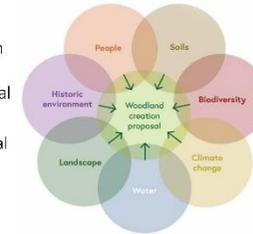




Draft design

How we design new woodland

We are designing the new woodlands to benefit people, the economy, climate, wildlife and the wider landscape. Our design meets the UK Forestry Standard, which takes into account the following elements (Forestry Commission, 2021):



Detailed desktop surveys, site surveys and analysis will inform our design. This includes:

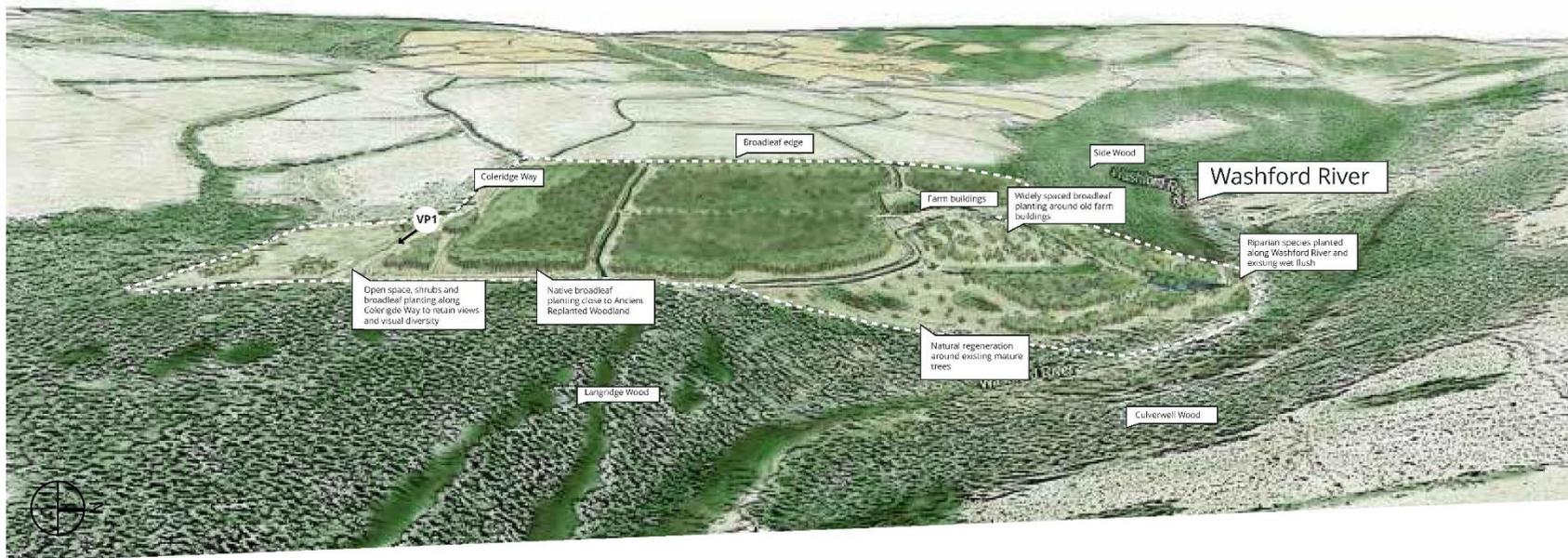
- Preliminary ecological appraisal
- Historic environment records
- Landscape and visual appraisal
- Local environment records
- Soil mapping
- Ecological site classification
- Utilities searches
- Responses to initial consultation

Objectives for the new woodland

- Establish a productive, mixed resilient woodland:** plant a mixed species woodland that complements the adjacent Forestry England leasehold woodlands to produce a lasting supply of certified sustainable timber.
- Improve woodland connectivity and enhance existing ancient woodland:** link adjacent ancient woodlands to improve habitat connectivity. Preserve hedges and create open spaces and areas to regrow naturally (natural regeneration) within the woodland for wildlife to thrive.
- Opportunity to create riparian woodland** which could mitigate flooding and help to reduce agricultural run-off.
- Maintain the landscape character of Exmoor National Park:** Ensure woodland creation complements the distinctive landscape features, cultural heritage and visual aesthetics of Exmoor.
- Sequester atmospheric carbon:** help meet government net zero emissions goals by planting and managing woodland that will thrive in future climates and store carbon.
- Public access for health and wellbeing:** provide low-key recreation opportunities by improving access to the countryside for local residents and visitors.

Tree species we could plant

							
1 Small leaved lime in mixes with aspen, black poplar and grey willow	2 Alder in mixes with aspen, black poplar and grey willow	3 Western red cedar in mixes with dawn redwood, Norway maple and sweet chestnut	4 Sessile oak in mixes with wild cherry and black walnut	5 Scots pine in mixes with Corsican pine, sessile oak, wild service tree and wild cherry	6 Douglas fir in mixes with Lawson cypress, small leaf lime and red oak	7 Oriental spruce in mixes with Douglas fir, small leaf lime and Norway maple	8 Shrubs including hazel, hawthorn, dogwood and guelder rose



How the new woodland could look

Our initial designs include proposals to:

- Plant riparian (riverside) woodland on the floodplain adjacent to the Washford River and next to an existing wet flush. As this develops, it may help to slow the flow of water, which could play a role in reducing local flood risk.
- Protect the surrounding Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland by planting native broadleaf buffers.
- Use the new woodland to frame views along the Coleridge Way using shrub planting, mixed species and open space.

- Use broadleaf planting at the edges of conifer stands to provide a wind firm buffer and to create a feathered edge to the woodland that helps to blend with the surrounding landscape.
- Provide areas of wider spaced planting, open space and natural regeneration to create an ecologically diverse woodland that benefits wildlife.

Artist's impressions:

Coleridge Way at viewpoint 1
How it looks now



How it could look after planting



How it could look in 10-15 years





Your views are important to us -
let us know what you think



Forestry England

Your views are important to us - let us know what you think

Responding to this consultation

We encourage you to submit your response online. You can view our plans and submit your views by completing the online feedback form at:

- <https://bit.ly/blackwellw>
- If you are unable to do this, you can respond via email at woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk

All views should be received by midnight on Friday 30 January 2026

What's next ?

- Review of consultation feedback and additional surveys
- Further design work to refine our proposals
- Application to the Forestry Commission for permission to create the new woodland
- Initial planting (Winter 2026/27)

Scan the QR code
to find out more:

forestryengland.uk





A new woodland at Blackwell - our response to key themes from early engagement

In October 2025, we invited local people to share their initial views about our plans to create a new woodland on Exmoor. We've set out our responses to this feedback below:

Public access

The new woodland will be open to the public and provide a quiet space for local people to enjoy and connect with nature. Once we have finished planting the woodland, we will dedicate it under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act so that people can access and explore the site.

Pedestrians will be able to visit the new woodland via the network of existing public rights of way, including the Coleridge Way, a 51-mile public footpath that runs through the south-eastern part of the site. We will also be creating a network of new, unsurfaced grass routes through the new woodland. There are no plans to include surfaced trails for cycling, horse riding, or motorised vehicles.

Visitors will be welcome to walk their dogs in the new woodland, but we have no plans to add infrastructure such as bins. We expect all dog walkers to be responsible and keep their pets under control in the new woodland, in line with our forest dog code.

Traffic and parking

We want to avoid a significant increase to car traffic on local roads and inconsiderate parking that may cause problems for neighbouring properties. The new woodland has been designed primarily for local people to enjoy, which is why our proposals do not include a public car park. We have no plans to include visitor or other recreational facilities, including signage that might direct visitors to the new woodland from the road. The new woodland is a short drive away from our Nutcombe Bottom site, which provides parking, a picnic area, and play area, and the spectacular Tall Trees Trail — and we anticipate that those who wish to visit a woodland by car will choose to visit this site over Blackwell Wood. However, if inconsiderate parking does become an issue, we will consider signs in appropriate locations to discourage this.

Our forestry vehicles need to be able to access the new woodland from the road so that we can manage and maintain the site. We plan to use an existing access point to the north of the site, where there is already a large layby, and another through Langridge Wood — the existing woodland neighbouring the site to the east. Within the new woodland, we will be creating a new track from the northern access point and upgrading an existing track to allow us to access the site with our vehicles.

In time, this woodland will provide a sustainable source of timber. However, it will be about 10-20 years before any timber is harvested from the site, and transport routes will be agreed with the local highways authority as required.

Tree species

We have decades of experience and the latest scientific evidence to help us plan in detail the trees we will plant in the new woodland. We have carried out surveys to help us choose the trees most suitable for the site, both now and as the climate changes. Our local foresters have considered factors including the soil quality and how quickly the trees will grow, as well as the important habitat, species, and geographical features within the area. We also consider tree pests and diseases and future climate conditions to keep the woodland as healthy as possible and ensure the trees we plant will visually complement pre-existing woodlands in the area.

The species we plant in the new woodland will be a mix of broadleaf and conifer, with groups of shrub species along the edges of the site to increase the variety of species and provide seasonal colour and texture. Specific species we are considering planting on Blackwell Wood include small-leaved lime, alder, western red cedar, and Douglas fir. These species have been chosen to provide a range of benefits for wildlife while contributing to the timber industry once the woodland is established.

At the north of the site, where the woodland runs next to the Washford River, we will be planting riparian species that will thrive in wetter conditions and help with flood prevention. We will also be preserving the mature trees already on the site, leaving space around them to protect them.

Wildlife

The new woodland will increase biodiversity by providing rich, varied habitats for wildlife. Our draft designs include open spaces and widely spaced trees to create a diverse environment that will benefit a wide range of species. This may include foraging and commuting bats, badgers, otters, small mammals, foraging and nesting birds, reptiles, common amphibians, and invertebrates. The woodland will also help connect the pre-existing woodlands in the area — Forestry England's Side Wood and an area of woodland owned by the Fairfield Estate. The new woodland will act as a wildlife corridor between these two sites, making it easier for species to move across the landscape.

As part of our planning, we carried out surveys to tell us more about the plants and wildlife in the area, and these surveys have guided our draft designs. We currently have no plans to install bird or bat boxes, as the focus is on establishing the woodland itself. Over time, new trees will create natural roosting and nesting opportunities for birds and bats. We will be planting outside of the bird nesting season, following standard guidance.

We have no current plans for a species reintroduction programme at Blackwell Wood.

Planting on agricultural land

We understand concerns around food security, and we want to keep the best-quality land in agricultural production. This is why we do not create woodlands on the most productive land (grades 1 & 2). None of the land at Blackwell Wood has been found to be of agricultural quality.

Forestry England's role is to manage and expand the nation's forests to ensure they are healthy and sustainable and benefit wildlife, people, and the economy. The new woodland will capture carbon, connect existing woodland habitats for wildlife to move between, and provide a sustainable source of timber, which is crucial for the UK's green economy.

Scan the QR code
to find out more:

forestryengland.uk



Event poster



New Woodland near Roadwater

Have your say about a new woodland near you

Forestry England is planning to create a new 21-hectare woodland called **Blackwell Wood** between Roadwater and Luxborough. This will be an extension to existing Forestry England woodland.

We're holding an **online public consultation** between Monday 12 January and Friday 30 January. During this time, we invite you to view our draft designs for the new woodland and share your thoughts with us. This feedback will help shape our final design for the new woodland.

Share your views at www.bit.ly/blackwellw or by scanning the QR code.

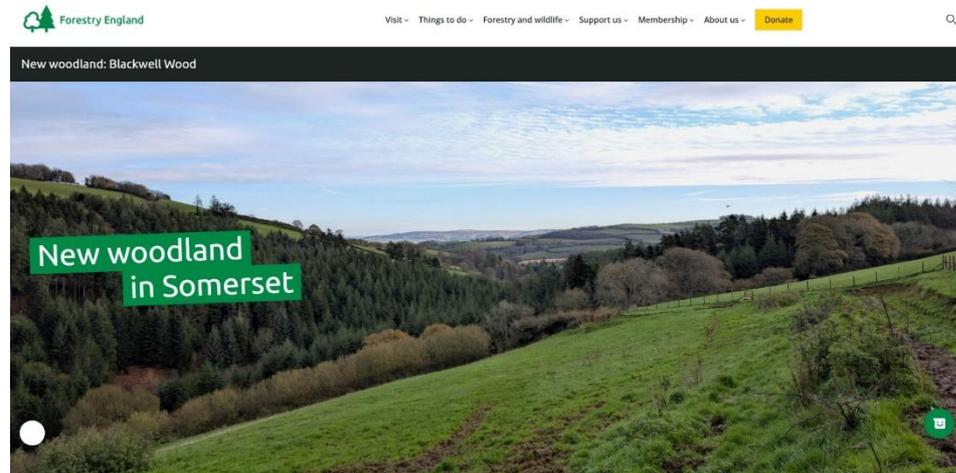


You can also contact us at:
woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk

forestryengland.uk

Forestry England Website

<https://www.forestryengland.uk/woodland-creation-blackwell-wood>

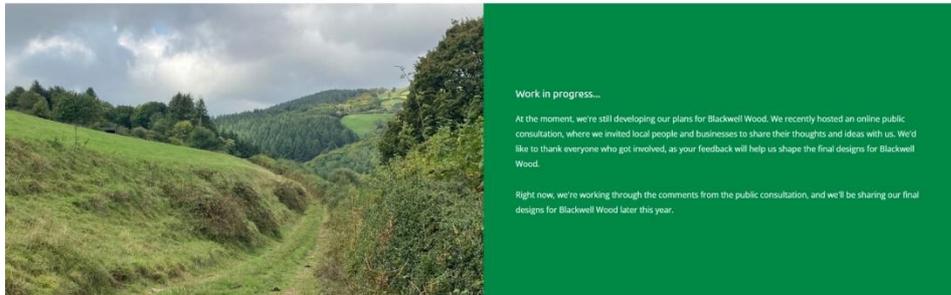


Growing the nation's forests

At Forestry England, we're expertly creating a new woodland between the villages of Luxborough and Roadwater on the edge of Exmoor.

The new 21-hectare woodland, called Blackwell Wood, will become a valuable habitat for wildlife, an important carbon store, and produce sustainable timber to support a greener economy. It will also be a new green space for local people to enjoy.

This is one of many new woodlands we're creating at Forestry England to help grow the nation's forests. The work has been made possible thanks to the government's Nature for Climate Fund programme.



Tree species at Blackwell Wood

For every new woodland we create, we aim to plant a mix of species that complement the surrounding landscape, support a range of wildlife species, and, in time, contribute to the UK's sustainable timber industry. Tree species we're planning to plant at Blackwell Wood include:

- Small-leaved lime
- Alder
- Western red cedar
- Sessile oak
- Scots pine

We will also be looking to plant native shrubs in more open areas, which could include hazel, hawthorn, dogwood, and guelder rose.

[Learn more about tree species >](#)



Frequently asked questions

✕ Close all

When will works start and finish?

Will the woodland be open to the public?

How will the woodland benefit wildlife?

Appendix C: Consultation questionnaire

 Forestry Commission

Home Find Activities We Asked, You Said, We Did

Search



New woodland - Blackwell

Page 1 of 4

Closes 30 Jan 2026

This service needs [cookies enabled](#).

Introduction

Thank you for taking part in this consultation on the design proposals for a new woodland, Blackwell Wood, near Luxborough in Exmoor National Park, Somerset.

You can submit information without completing the name and email details, but if you choose to do so they will be held by Forestry England as per our privacy policy [Privacy Policy | Forestry England](#)

1. What is your name?

Name

2. What is your address?

3. What is your postcode?

4. Are you responding as:

A local resident

A local business

A elected official

Other stakeholder: Please name below

5. If you're responding on behalf of an organisation, what is the name of your organisation?

6. What is your e-mail address?

7. Would you like to be notified about future consultation on these new woodland proposals?

(Required)

An answer is required

Yes (please make sure you have provided your e-mail address above)

No

[Citizen Space from Delta](#)

[Accessibility](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Cookies](#) [Privacy](#) [Help / feedback](#)



New woodland - Blackwell

Page 2 of 4



Closes 30 Jan 2026

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Provide your views on a new woodland, Blackwell Wood, near Luxborough

To view a larger or smaller image: Click + or -

To view as a presentation, save or print the proposals: Click >>



8. Please use this space to add feedback or questions on the proposed plans

Type your response here (Required)

[Back](#) [First](#) [Save and come back later...](#)

[Continue](#)

Appendix D: Examples of letters/emails announcing the consultation

Public consultation on draft design proposals for a new woodland on Exmoor

 Woodland Creation <woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk>
To
Bcc

Mon 12/01/2026 11:50

Dear neighbour,

Thank you for your interest in Blackwell Wood, the new woodland we are planning to create on the edge of Exmoor, between the existing woodlands of Druid's Combe Wood and Langridge Wood.

We are now contacting you as we have today launched a public consultation on our draft design proposals for the new woodland.

These are available to view and comment on **until midnight on Friday 30 January**: [New woodland - Blackwell - Forestry Commission - Citizen Space](#)

While we continue with our detailed planning for Blackwell Wood, we are keen to hear your views on our initial designs. These have been informed by site surveys as well as the valuable insights gained from you and other local people last year.

This new woodland is one of many we're creating across the UK to grow the nation's forests. It will become a valuable habitat for wildlife and an important carbon store. In time, it will also provide a source of sustainable timber and become a new green space for you to explore and enjoy.

Responding to the consultation

We encourage you to submit your response online. You can view our plans and submit your views here: [New woodland - Blackwell - Forestry Commission - Citizen Space](#)

If you are unable to do this, you can respond via email, typing 'Blackwell Wood Consultation Response' in the header of your email and including your name, address, and postcode in your response.

Next steps

The consultation will close at midnight on Friday 30 January. All responses will then be summarised and included in a consultation report — along with our response to the key issues raised — and published on our website. Consultation feedback and further surveys will help shape the final design proposal we will submit for regulatory review ahead of planting the new woodland.

We will update our website as our plans for the new woodland progress. You can find the latest information here: [New woodland at Blackwell Wood | Forestry England](#)

We look forward to reading your comments.

Kind regards,

The Woodland Creation Team

Forestry England
Email: woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk
Website: www.forestryengland.uk
More information about Blackwell Wood: www.forestryengland.uk/woodland-creation-blackwell-wood

 Forestry England | Growing the future

Public consultation on draft design proposals for a new woodland on Exmoor



Woodland Creation <woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk>

To

Bcc

Mon 12/01/2026 12:38

Good afternoon,

We are contacting you as we have today launched a public consultation for Blackwell Wood, a new woodland we are planning to create between the villages of Luxborough and Roadwater on the edge of Exmoor. We're inviting you to comment on our draft design proposals for the new woodland, which you can do by following this link: [New woodland - Blackwell - Forestry Commission - Citizen Space](#)

The consultation is open from today **until midnight on Friday 30 January**.

While we continue with our detailed planning for Blackwell Wood, we are keen to hear your views on our initial designs. These have been informed by site surveys as well as the valuable insights gained from local residents last year.

The consultation will close at midnight on Friday 30 January. All responses will then be summarised and included in a consultation report — along with our response to the key issues raised — and published on our website. Consultation feedback and further surveys will help shape the final design proposal we will submit for regulatory review ahead of planting the new woodland.

We will update our website as our plans for the new woodland progress. You can find the latest information here: [New woodland at Blackwell Wood | Forestry England](#)

This new woodland is one of many we're creating across the UK to grow the nation's forests. It will become a valuable habitat for wildlife and an important carbon store. In time, it will also provide a source of sustainable timber and become a new green space for local communities to explore and enjoy.

Kind regards,

The Woodland Creation Team

Forestry England

Email: woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk

Website: www.forestryengland.uk

More information about Blackwell Wood: www.forestryengland.uk/woodland-creation-blackwell-wood



Forestry England

Growing the future

Appendix E: Stakeholders contacted

Statutory Stakeholders
Natural England
Environment Agency
Exmoor National Park
Historic England
Somerset County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority)
Elected Representatives
Parliamentary MP for Tiverton & Minehead, Rachel Gilmour
Unitary Ward Councillors for Dunster Ward
Unitary Ward Councillors for Dulverton & Exmoor Ward
Parish Councils
Treborough Parish Council
Withycombe Parish Council
Luxborough Parish Council
Wildlife and special interest groups
Somerset Wildlife Trust
RSPB
Bat Conservation Trust
Butterfly Conservation
CPRE Somerset
National Farmers Union (NFU)
Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Utilities
National Grid
National Gas
Other
Fairfield Estate