Forestry England

Our response to key themes from early engagement

We invited local people to share their initial views about our plans to create a new woodland near Clipsham.

Here's our responses to the key themes and questions people raised. You can download a summary of all the feedback given from our website at https://consult.forestryengland.uk/forest-districts/clipsham-coronation-wood

1. Public access

The new woodland at Clipsham will be open to the public. Once we have finished creating the woodland we will dedicate the woodland under the Countryside and Rights of Way act so people can walk freely.

Our proposal for new trails has been designed for local people to enjoy the site whilst being mindful of not significantly increasing car traffic. Existing Public Rights of Way, stone vehicle tracks and unsurfaced grass rides will give access for walkers in a lot of the new wood, with a new, short, circular route from Clipsham village for visitors to enjoy. Existing Public Rights of Way will link the new woodland to the wider countryside. We will monitor visitor numbers and impacts to inform how we manage the site.

Our draft design includes open spaces and glades that would provide peaceful picnic spots. We are carefully considering where we can afford to spend our limited money for the best benefit, so our proposals do not include surfacing sections of the unsurfaced bridleway.

Some woodlands nearby that we manage, but are owned by someone else, are not open to the public and have to remain separate from the new woodland. The Yew Tree Avenue is managed on behalf of Forestry England by the Clipsham Yew Tree Avenue Trust. Information on the avenue and their work is on their website https://yewtreeavenue.co.uk/.

Visitors will be welcome to walk their dogs in the new woodland, but we won't fence the full woodland boundary. We expect all dog owners to be responsible and to keep their pets under control in all the forest and woodland we care for, following signs and our Forest Dog Code.

We would be happy to hear from local organisations and schools who would like to use the new woodland for children's activities such as forest schools and educational visits.

Forestry England works with many 'friends of' societies and community groups that help manage our woodlands. We would be happy to discuss this idea with anyone interested in taking this forward. We hope to host a community planting day when we begin planting the new woodland for local people to join in creating this special place.

2. Traffic and parking

So we can manage and maintain the new woodland, we need access from the road for our forestry vehicles. We plan to use an existing access point to the north of Clipsham off Castle Bytham Road to manage the main site. For land south of Holywell Road, we are exploring the possibility of creating new access from the road, using existing access or field gates. To plant and manage this woodland, forestry vehicles will use routes we already use to manage and maintain woodlands next door. It will be about 10-20 years before any timber can be harvested from the site. Transport routes for the sustainable timber will be agreed with the local highways authority as required.

Our draft design includes a small car park to the South of Castle Bytham Road. This would need funding and planning permission to go ahead.

We would like a sign with the name of the new woodland at the main entrance. For security, we may put some fencing along the site boundaries. Some barriers have already been installed at some vehicle access points.

We have used our experience to design the woodland to discourage antisocial behaviour where we can, such as minimising secluded areas and improving visibility. Regular maintenance activities can deter vandalism and littering, as will regular use by the local community. If we get reports of anti-social behaviour, we monitor them to assess ways of preventing or minimising them.

3. Views and neighbouring properties

The design sensitively considers how close the new woodland will be to our new neighbours. The design includes open space closest to properties with shrubs and low-density broadleaf trees before the main woodland. We will have more broadleaf species in these areas because they are shorter than some conifer species, generally live longer and need managing less often.

We clearly heard that it is important to have views from the public footpaths within and around the site. Where possible, our design will frame and enhance existing views and we will establish open spaces between the new woodland and key viewpoints

4. Wildlife and archaeology

We want to keep existing hedgerows so we will survey them to have a plan for maintaining them. Our design includes glades and rides with trees planted away from the hedgerows, access tracks and powerlines which will benefit biodiversity such as butterflies. Our design keeps open spaces to protect and maintain the archaeological features and existing important habitats.

Our design takes account of other important designations. For example a strip of broadleaf trees has been included in the areas closest to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). SSSIs are some of the country's most important wildlife sites. We do not anticipate significantly increasing traffic along the stretch where the Holywell roadside nature reserve is.

Our breeding bird survey that followed British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) guidelines found 48 bird species on site. The new woodland is likely to benefit species such as the green woodpecker, mistle thrush, yellowhammer and willow warbler. These are all birds of 'Conservation Concern' listed as amber or red on the lists that assess the status of UK bird populations. Planting and initial woodland maintenance will be outside of the bird breeding season (typically between March and August) where possible to minimise the risk of disturbing nesting birds and their young. If we believe activities must take place during the nesting season, they will not go ahead without a check and approval by an ecologist.

5. Protecting the new woodland from deer

The UK is home to six species of deer and their natural predators, such as bears, lynx and wolves, are extinct. Without predators, deer populations can become unnaturally big and their browsing can damage young trees. In the short-term, this can kill the trees and in the longer-term, it can reduce the resilience of the new woodland to climate change, reduce plant and animal diversity and lower the carbon captured from the atmosphere.

Forestry England is part of the Deer Initiative[1], a partnership that promotes sustainable deer management in England and Wales. We will use deer fencing to protect larger blocks of new planting and tree tubes in smaller areas. Our highly skilled wildlife rangers replace the role of Britain's missing predators by safely and humanely controlling deer populations in our woodlands, working to the highest standards. More information about how Forestry England manage deer can be found here[2].

Deer fencing would be removed after trees become established.

[1] http://www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk/
[2] https://www.forestryengland.uk/article/managing-deer-the-nations-forests

6. Choosing the trees we plan to plant

We are planning in detail for the trees we want to plant for the new woodland. Our surveys help us choose trees most suitable for the site now and as the climate changes. We will plant a wide range of species at Clipsham, reflecting our aims for this new multi-purpose wood. Using a mix of tree and shrub species will also help make the wood resilient to climate change and tree diseases and support a wider range of wildlife. Some areas will be planted with a mix of trees, including broadleaved trees and conifers. This will complement the local landscape, provide seasonal colour for visitors and increase resilience.

Our professional foresters carefully choose what trees to plant and where to plant them. They understand soil conditions, how quickly the trees will grow, and the important habitats, species and heritage features nearby. We also consider tree pests and diseases and future climate conditions to keep woods as healthy as possible.

One of our main priorities is to grow a sustainable supply of timber to meet increasing demands for renewable resources. Fast-growing softwoods like Scots pine, Douglas fir, spruce and Loblolly pine will be planted, along with smaller areas of less common species expected to grow well in our warming climate. Conifers will also provide year-round woodland cover for wildlife. In decades to come, the timber from these could be used for things like building materials or fences.

We will also plant large areas with broadleaved trees including birch, field maple, rauli beech, wild service and red oak. These will connect existing broadleaved woodland in Pickworth Great Wood, Holywell Wood and Clipsham Park, providing new corridors for wildlife to move. Native trees and shrubs will be especially valuable next to important habitats such as ancient woodland, streams and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Most areas of broadleaved trees will also be managed to produce timber, helping fund ongoing management of the site and maintaining a mosaic of habitats as our new woodland matures.

Around 20% of the trees we want to plant are native and the site will also feature ‘near-natives’ such as sycamore, walnut and Norway maple which are already naturalised or likely to adapt to climate change. The non-native trees chosen have been carefully chosen to provide a sustainable timber crop, improve resilience of the woodland to climate change and increase biodiversity.

7. What is a seed stand?

We are increasing the number of trees we plant which are grown from our own seeds or other UK sources. They come from seed stands with trees specially grown for their seeds

and we grow new trees at our nursery in Cheshire. The seed stand trees are managed differently for seed production and collection, much like a fruit orchard. The trees in the stand are kept low, about 6ft, and are gradually thinned out to have wider space between them. This makes the trees easier to pick from and helps produce more seed. We plan to plant Norway maple, hornbeam, wild service tree, Atlas cedar and Macedonian pine to give us a supply of seeds.

8. What are the research trials you are planning?

The UK is expected to experience hotter and drier summers, warmer and wetter winters, and an increased frequency of extreme weather events such as storms and droughts. To keep our forests resilient to these climatic changes, we need to plan now for what trees and mixtures of species we will be planting in the future.

We will test seed from some common tree species that we could continue to plant in the future, collected from different locations with differing climate conditions. Where seed comes from is known as its provenance. For example, we will compare trees adapted to milder, wetter conditions with those from warmer, drier regions to identify any obvious differences.

We are planning to have some small provenance trials of birch, alder and spruce at Clipsham. This will help identify local varieties of tree species which might be expected to survive and thrive in an altered, future climate.