



Forestry England

Okement Wood: a new woodland in Devon

Consultation report and our response to key issues raised

May 2026



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1. Executive summary

Between Monday 9 February and Friday 6 March 2026, we held a public consultation on proposals for the design of Okement Wood, a new 83-hectare woodland we are planning to create near Okehampton in Devon.

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

A total of 32 responses to the consultation were received from local residents and other stakeholders. While feedback was broadly supportive, other responses raised concerns, questions, and made suggestions.

After carefully considering all responses, we have updated our proposed designs for the new woodland to include the following changes:

- We have reduced the area of riparian planting in the north-east of the site to create more open space.
- We have replaced the broadleaf planting along the eastern edge of the site with small areas of planting, leaving the majority of this area free for natural colonisation from the existing woodland.
- We have concentrated broadleaf planting to the east of the site to create better habitat corridors for wildlife.

Over the coming weeks, we will be applying 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 83-hectare woodland, called Okement Wood, on land near the town of Okehampton in Devon. 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, Okement Wood would provide space for wildlife, help absorb carbon, and support a greener economy by producing sustainable 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 Okement Wood. Feedback from the consultation has helped to shape our plans for the woodland.

2.2 Objectives of the new woodland

Our objectives for the new woodland are to:

1. **Establish a productive, mixed, resilient woodland:** plant a mixed species woodland that complements other diverse Forestry England woodlands nearby to produce a lasting supply of certified sustainable timber.
2. **Enhance biodiversity and improve woodland connectivity:** link existing woodlands to improve habitat connectivity. Enhance hedges and create open spaces within the woodland for wildlife to thrive. Plant species associated with Atlantic oakwoods and create areas of wet woodland.
3. **Opportunity to create diverse habitats** by initiating the development of temperate rainforest through species choice, design, and future management. Creating scrapes (shallow ponds) and enhancing the development of wet woodland through planting around wet flushes.
4. **Sequester atmospheric carbon:** help meet government net zero emissions goals by planting fast-growing conifers in diverse, complementary mixtures with native species, and providing resilient woodland management options in the future, in addition to storing carbon.
5. **Public access for health and wellbeing:** provide low-key recreation opportunities by improving access to the countryside for local residents and visitors.

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 any properties where views were likely to be affected. This totalled over 120 local properties. We also contacted a small group of additional stakeholders. This included:

- Mel Stride, MP for Central Devon
- Inwardleigh, Jacobstowe, and Sampford Courtenay Parish Councils
- District Councillors for Okehampton North and Exbourne Wards
- County Councillor for Hatherleigh and Chagford

Between Thursday 9 October and Thursday 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 13 responses, all from neighbouring properties of the new woodland, which focused on the following themes:

1. **Footpaths and trails:** primarily queries about paths for different community groups, including hikers, dog walkers, runners, and cyclists.
2. **Tree species and woodland design:** a request for trees to be planted in a 'random pattern' rather than 'rows', and requests for native tree species.
3. **Wildlife:** primarily general support for the woodland due to its benefits for local wildlife.
4. **Parking and traffic:** concerns about an increase in traffic to the local area, as well as inconsiderate parking.
5. **Horse riding:** specific requests for a bridleway to be included in the new 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, helped to shape the design proposals we shared during the public consultation.

2.4 Consultation purpose

The public consultation took place between Monday 9 February and Friday 6 March 2026. Its aims were to:

1. Provide the public and 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 responded to our early engagement and told us they would like to receive further communications about Okement Wood
- Local elected officials, including the MP for Central Devon
- Statutory stakeholders, including Natural England and the Environment Agency
- Environmental stakeholders including the RSPB and Westcountry Rivers Trust

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

2.6 What we asked

The consultation survey included one open question inviting written feedback or questions about our proposed plans for Okement 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/okementw>
- Giving comments by email to woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk
- Leaving written comments at our public consultation drop-in event, which was held on Tuesday 24 February at Inwardleigh and Folly Gate Village Hall. Feedback received at the drop-in event is summarised separately in **Section 3.5** of this report.

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/okementw>. This included:

- An overview of Okement Wood
- A site appraisal, with photographs and maps to give context
- An overview of surveys which have informed our designs
- Our project objectives
- 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 news outlets
- **Dedicated webpage:** www.forestryengland.uk/woodland-creation-okement

- **Citizen Space consultation portal:** <https://consult.forestryengland.uk/forest-districts/okementw>
- **Emails:** to local residents and other stakeholders (see **Appendix D**)
- **Posters:** a poster publicising the consultation was shared locally (see **Appendix B**). It was also sent to local parish councils for inclusion on their noticeboards and websites
- **Consultation drop-in event:** we held a public drop-in event at Inwardleigh and Folly Gate Village Hall on Monday 24 February, from 4pm - 7pm. At the event, the same information available on Citizen Space was printed out on large display boards, and Forestry England staff were on hand to talk through our plans, answer questions and queries, and listen to any concerns from those attending. Attendees were encouraged to leave immediate feedback on our in-person ‘comments board’ (see **Appendix B**), while formal responses to the consultation were collected via the online survey, by emailing in, or by completing a hard-copy of the consultation survey. We also asked attendees to leave their contact information if they would like to be kept updated about our plans

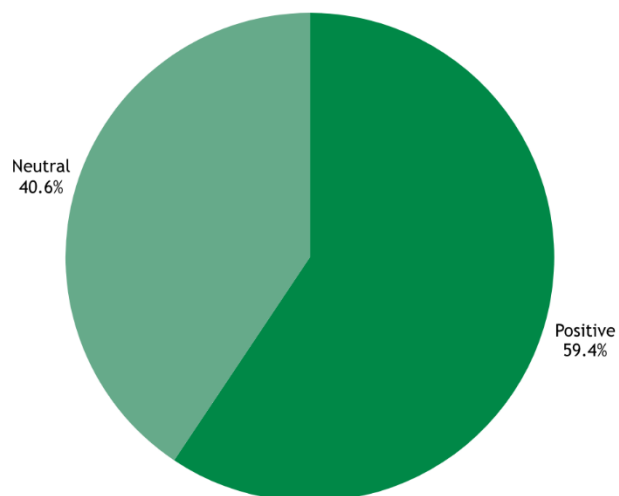
3. Consultation feedback

3.1 Consultation response overview

We received 32 responses to the public consultation for Okement Wood during the consultation period. Of these, 28 were from local residents, and four were from stakeholder organisations. A full list of stakeholder organisations contacted is available to view in **Appendix F**. The organisations that responded were:

- Historic England
- Environment Agency
- Devon Countryside Access Forum
- British Horse Society

Responses were found to either be supportive of our plans or neutral about them, with no distinctly negative comments received. They included general support for the new woodland, suggestions about what could be concluded, and some specific concerns – all of which are detailed below.



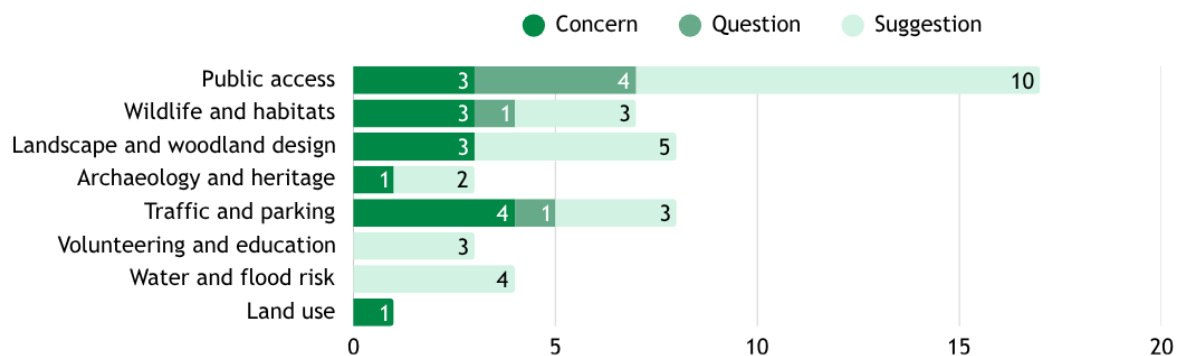
We also received a response from Natural England outside of the consultation period. This feedback has impacted the final design of Okement Wood, and a summary of this communication is provided in **Section 3.6** of this report. Our response to specific comments raised from Natural England are also included in **Section 4** of this report. However, the feedback is not included in the summaries or graphs below, as it was received after the consultation had ended.

3.2 Consultation response by theme

The 32 responses to the consultation were categorised into the following themes:

- Supportive comments
- Public access
- Wildlife and habitats
- Landscape and woodland design
- Archaeology and heritage
- Traffic and parking
- Volunteering and education
- Water and flood risk
- Land use

Within each theme, with the exception of supportive comments, responses were then categorised into concerns, questions, and suggestions.



3.3 Supportive comments

We received eight generally positive comments that expressed support for the creation of new woodland, highlighting benefits for nature, climate, and community wellbeing. Supportive comments included:

- Multiple residents welcoming the proposal and describing it as ‘wonderful’ or a ‘fantastic idea’, especially given recent housing development in Okehampton
- Several local people emphasising the importance of creating more natural space for walking, dog walking, and outdoor recreation

- Residents noting the benefits for wildlife, carbon storage, and long-term climate resilience
- A number of residents expressing enthusiasm for potential community involvement in the future, including support from the North Tawton Scouts group

3.4 Concerns, comments, and suggestions

In addition to the eight general positive comments we received, we also received the following main concerns, comments, and suggestions. All feedback is available to review in **Appendix E** of this report.

Public access

- Concern that site location next to Abbeyford Woods may not extend access to new users
- Concern from Devon Countryside Access Forum that the timeframe for CRoW (Countryside and Rights of Way) dedication is unclear, which may confuse visitors to the new woodland
- Concern that access offer may be too limited if only existing/extended forest track is available
- Suggestion from a large number of residents and the British Horse Society to provide dedicated or shared horse-riding access
- Suggestion from residents to include cycling or multi-use access where appropriate
- Suggestion from Devon Countryside Access Forum that the woodland design should remain flexible and reviewed as the site establishes
- Question from residents about whether safe walking links will be created between the new woodland, Abbeyford Woods, and the Tarka Trail

Wildlife and habitats

- Concern from a resident about disturbance of salmon nursery habitat
- Concern that planting or machinery access could damage existing wet habitats if not planned carefully
- Concern from residents about the need for deer and grey squirrel management to protect newly planted trees

Landscape and woodland design

- Concern about productive conifer planting limiting biodiversity
- Suggestion from the Environment Agency to plant native, locally characteristic deciduous species, avoiding homogeneous rows, and to create a diverse multi-layered structure including fruit, nut, and berry species, with varied planting age and timing
- Suggestion from residents to include open areas within the woodland for greater habitat diversity

Archaeology and heritage

- Concern from Historic England that planting may affect undesignated archaeological features such as medieval ridge and furrow remains, suggesting further investigation before planting
- Suggestion from Historic England to consult with Devon County Council's Historic Environment Team

Traffic and parking

- Concern from residents that increased visitors could cause problems on narrow rural lanes
- Suggestion to consider modest parking provision, particularly to support people with limited mobility

Volunteering and education

- Suggestion to involve local groups, adults, and children in planting and maintaining the woodland
- Suggestion to create an educational hub or youth learning resource linked to the woodland

Water and flood risk

- Suggestion from the Environment Agency to include a range of natural and engineered features – such as swales, mini wetlands, buffer zones, and drainage measures – to help slow runoff, reduce erosion, and protect water quality
- Suggestion from a resident to give oversight of river management to an organisation such as Westcountry Rivers Trust, in order to protect river wildlife

Land use

- Concern about the loss of agricultural land

3.5 Feedback from the consultation event

Over 35 people attended our in-person consultation event, where we displayed the information already published on the consultation website on large posters around the venue. Forestry England staff were on hand to talk through the proposals, answer questions, and listen to any concerns from those attending.

Attendees were also encouraged to leave immediate feedback on sticky notes on a comments board. Only one comment was left on the board:

- 'Please allow horse riding. The lanes here are increasingly dangerous!'

We also encouraged attendees to submit their formal consultation responses online, and we collected the contact information from everyone who consented to being kept up to date about our plans.

3.6 Stakeholder responses

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

Historic England

- Highlights the potential presence of significant archaeological features within or close to the site, including:
 - possible medieval ridge-and-furrow earthworks, which are relatively rare in Devon
 - early field patterns and other historic landscape features
- Notes the potential for undesignated heritage assets along the western side of the River Okement
- Recommends liaising with Devon County Council's Historic Environment Team to confirm the presence and significance of any archaeological remains, and to determine whether further investigation is required before planting
- Advises that new woodland creation should follow recent government guidance on planting in areas containing ridge-and-furrow earthworks, and that any sensitive features may need to be preserved as open space

Environment Agency

- Supports the overall principles of woodland creation and notes that the proposal aligns with priorities for river and floodplain restoration, as stated in the developing Nature Recovery Strategy for Devon and Cornwall
- Highlights the need to protect existing wet habitats on the site, including ponds, streams, wet grassland, and flush areas, and recommends avoiding planting and/or machinery use within these sensitive areas
- Encourages the creation of deciduous woodland using native, locally characteristic species, and advises that planting should mimic natural woodland succession, rather than planting in uniform rows
- Recommends designing the woodland within a layered structure (canopy, lower tree layer, and shrub layer), including native fruit-, nut-, and berry-producing species to maximise benefits for wildlife
- Advises that woodland design can also contribute to improved water quality through features such as swales, mini-wetlands, and buffer zones, which help slow runoff and intercept sediment and nutrients
- Recommends additional measures such as mapping runoff pathways, adding interceptors and using simple sediment-control features to reduce erosion on tracks and rides
- Emphasises the importance of establishing a pollution-prevention plan for site works, including monitoring wet working areas for sediment release

- Recommends adopting biosecurity measures to reduce the spread of pests, diseases, and invasive species
- Encourages long-term maintenance and monitoring to ensure the woodland develops successfully and continues to deliver biodiversity benefits over time

Devon Countryside Access Forum

- Notes that the site will be dedicated as public access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act, but requests a clearer indication of when this access will begin
- Highlights that the new woodland is intended primarily for local people, but that its distance from residential areas may mean some visitors will arrive by car, potentially causing parking problems
- Observes that the access proposals focus on the existing forest track, with limited additional routes, and suggests that future access design should remain adaptable as use patterns develop
- Requests ongoing communication, particularly regarding how access comments have been considered

British Horse Society

- Supports the proposal but stresses the need for clarity and clear communication around whether horse riding will be permitted within the new woodland
- Notes that horse riders have limited access to safe, off-road routes in this part of Devon, and highlights that including well-designed bridle routes would provide significant public benefit
- Recommends ensuring that information materials and signage explicitly state where horse riding is allowed, to avoid confusion among visitors

Natural England

- Supports the overall principles of woodland creation for nature recovery but makes suggested design changes to maximise benefits and reduce impacts.
- Stresses the need to protect existing mature and semi-mature oak trees.
- Requests that open space is increased throughout the woodland design, including open areas near the river.
- Suggests a few specific areas of the site where planting should be limited or avoided.
- Encourages scrub areas, particularly as edge transitions, to benefit birds and invertebrates.
- Suggests that natural colonisation should be encouraged via the nearby existing woodland.

- Suggests carrying out further ecological surveys, including a lichen and bryophyte survey and a hedgerow survey to confirm the presence of Devon Whitebeam.

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 Public access

Concern that site location next to Abbeyford Woods may not extend access to new users

Okement Wood is being created as part of Forestry England's Woodland Creation Programme, through which we are growing the nation's forests by creating new woodlands across the country, all the way from Devon to Northumberland. This particular site has been chosen partly because of its position between our existing woodlands at Abbeyford Woods and Berrydown Wood. Connecting the two sites will be beneficial for wildlife by making it easier for species to move across the landscape. It will also provide other benefits such as helping to store carbon, improving water quality, and, in time, contributing to the UK's sustainable timber industry.

We recognise that local residents already benefit from access to a nearby woodland. However, Okement Wood is not intended to replace or duplicate what is on offer at Abbeyford Woods, and we have no plans to create a car park or install any visitor infrastructure at Okement Wood. Creating this new woodland forms part of a much wider, national effort to increase woodland cover across England. You can learn more about some of our other new woodlands here:

www.forestryengland.uk/growing-new-woodlands

Concern that the timeframe for CRoW (Countryside and Rights of Way)

dedication is unclear, potentially confusing some visitors to the new woodland

Once Okement Wood is established and the trees are healthy, we will dedicate the site under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act, giving everyone the legal right to access the woodland on foot. To give the young trees the best chance of growing well, we need to keep protective fencing in place while the woodland establishes. This means CRoW dedication is likely to be 10-15 years away, although we will confirm this as our plans develop. We will also make sure visitors are kept informed about what access is available, sharing any updates on our website:

www.forestryengland.uk/woodland-creation-okement

Concern that access offer may be too limited if only existing/extended forest track is available

Okement Wood will provide public access for local people who wish to explore and enjoy a quieter woodland environment. It is not intended to be a destination site in the same way some of our larger forests are, and we have no current plans to create any surfaced paths for walking, cycling, or horse riding. Visitors will be able to explore the woodland using our forest tracks, as well as a series of unsurfaced grass paths we will be creating to support with woodland management. Once the new trees are established, the land will be dedicated as open access, and visitors will be able to use these grass paths to explore the woodland more freely.

Suggestion to provide dedicated or shared horse-riding access

We understand how important horse riding is to people in this part of Devon, and we have thought carefully about any provisions we might be able to deliver to support horse riding at Okement Wood, while maintaining safe access for others.

Our funding for Okement Wood comes from the government's Trees Programme, which does not cover the cost of additional horse-riding infrastructure such as bridle gates or new surfaced trails. This unfortunately means that we are not able to provide dedicated horse-riding routes at this time. However, once the woodland is dedicated under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act, horse riders will be welcome to visit Okement Wood provided they stay on the surfaced forest tracks. This is the same approach we take at our more established woodlands within this area. The grass paths we will be creating through the woodland are designed for walkers, as horse hooves can unfortunately cause serious damage to them, which would be too costly for our team to maintain and could prevent other people from being able to visit.

We do offer dedicated horse-riding routes at other Forestry England woodlands where funding allows. One example is Harcombe, part of Haldon Forest, which you can learn more about here: www.forestryengland.uk/harcombe

Suggestion to include cycling or multi-use access where appropriate

Our funding for this project does not extend to the creation of dedicated cycling infrastructure or other specialist multi-use facilities, and we are therefore unable to include these as part of our current plans. Cyclists will welcome to visit Okement Wood using the surfaced forest tracks once the woodland is dedicated under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act. This is the same guidance we have in place at Abbeyford Woods. Further guidance for cyclists can be found below:

- Our nearest woodland with official cycling trails is Haldon Forest Park: www.forestryengland.uk/haldon-forest-park/cycling-and-mountain-biking-trails-haldon-forest-park

- Dartmoor National Park also offers local cycling routes: www.visitdartmoor.co.uk/get-active/cycling-on-dartmoor/

Suggestion that the woodland design should remain flexible and be reviewed as the site establishes

Woodlands change and grow over time, and so does our understanding of how people use them. We will be monitoring how Okement Wood develops and will review our approach as the site matures. Any key changes to our plans will be shared on the Forestry England website: www.forestryengland.uk/woodland-creation-okement

Question about whether safe walking links will be created between the new woodland, Abbeyford Woods, and the Tarka Trail

The Tarka Trail runs through Abbeyford Woods and then runs parallel to Okement Wood, linked via an existing gateway. To walk between the two woodlands, pedestrians will need to walk along a small section of road. We are unfortunately unable to reroute the Tarka Trail to avoid the road as we do not own that section of land and do not have the authority or resource to make changes to the Tarka Trail itself.

4.2 Wildlife and habitats

Concern about disturbance of salmon nursery habitat

We appreciate the ecological importance of this part of the River Okement and the wildlife that depend on it. As noted in our communications shared during the consultation, the River Okement is an important migratory route for species including the Atlantic salmon, which requires cool, well-oxygenated, clean water and a variety of habitats that provide in-stream cover and protection. The ecological survey we undertook to inform our designs recorded that the bank tops and banksides of this part of the River Okement are heavily vegetated with trees and shrubs (lowland mixed deciduous woodland), and on the whole, the bank tops are steep-sided, approximately three to four meters above the waterline. We are planning to retain the existing wooded habitat corridor along the river, which will help maintain cool aquatic habitats. The new trees we are planning to plant across the wider site will also actively support improving the biodiversity of the area by increasing woodland connectivity and shade cover, helping to prevent excess warming during the summer. Over time, the new woodland will help reduce soil erosion and improve water quality along the River Okement, which will further benefit aquatic wildlife.

Okement Wood will be open to the public to visit and explore, however we are not planning to create a car park or any visitor infrastructure, and we do not anticipate that the levels of footfall will result in any disturbance to the river habitat, especially considering the typically steep-sided vegetated banks along the river edge, which are likely to prevent the public from accessing the river directly. We have also consulted with environmental bodies including the Environment Agency and the Westcountry Rivers Trust as part of developing our proposals.

Concern that planting or machinery access could damage existing wet habitats if not planned carefully

Our forestry vehicles will be adhering to at least the minimum buffers for watercourses and standing water that are laid out in the UK Forestry Standard. These buffers vary depending on the size of the watercourse. The risk of soil erosion and sedimentation from access by machinery will also be mitigated by timing operations seasonally, so that work is carried out when the ground is drier and when periods of heavy rainfall can be avoided. Weather conditions will be monitored by our team, and operations will be postponed or cancelled, depending on the severity of weather and nature of the work.

Concern from residents about the need for deer and grey squirrel management to protect newly planted trees

Mammals such as squirrels and deer can damage woodlands, particularly while the trees are still young.

England is part of the Deer Initiative, a partnership that promotes sustainable deer management in England and Wales. We will use deer fencing to protect larger sections of the new woodland, and tree tubes in smaller areas. Our highly skilled wildlife rangers also replace the role of Britain's missing predators across our woodlands by safely and humanely controlling deer populations where necessary. More information on how Forestry England manages deer can be found here: www.forestryengland.uk/article/managing-deer-the-nations-forests

Grey squirrels can also pose serious threats to young woodlands. While natural predators like pine martens may help to balance grey squirrel numbers in the long term, their populations currently need to be controlled by specialist staff and contractors where necessary. We will be monitoring the effects of grey squirrels to the new woodland and take action to control populations if required. You can read more on our position here: www.forestryengland.uk/article/managing-grey-squirrels

Suggestion from Natural England to carry out further ecological surveys

We acknowledge the value of undertaking additional targeted ecological surveys. However, in the case of lichens, bryophytes, and hedgerow species, we have already implemented buffer zones in our designs and do not believe these species will be impacted by woodland creation work. In the future, we may consider further surveys to help inform ongoing management.

4.3 Landscape and woodland design

Concern about productive conifer planting limiting biodiversity

Conifers will make up around half of the trees planted at Okement Wood (54%). Their fast growth makes them effective at storing and capturing carbon, while also

providing a sustainable source of timber that helps reduce our reliance on international imports. After about 20 to 25 years, we will begin to remove some of the trees at Okement Wood as part of our ongoing management of the woodland. This also helps the remaining trees to grow healthily for many years to come.

The remaining half of the woodland will be planted with broadleaf species or native shrubs, creating a diverse woodland that could support species including the hazel dormouse, woodland birds, bats, otters, hedgehogs, common amphibians, and invertebrates. Due to its location, Okement Wood will also act as a wildlife corridor, linking Abbeyford Woods and Berrydown Wood and making it easier for species to move across the landscape.

Suggestion to plant native, locally characteristic deciduous species, avoiding homogeneous rows, and to create a diverse multi-layered structure including fruit, nut, and berry species, with varied planting age and timing

We are planning to plant a mix of tree species at Okement Wood, including native species like pedunculate oak, sessile oak, small-leaved lime, silver birch, and common hornbeam. Shrub species will be planted along woodland edges, and open spaces will be woven throughout the site, creating a mosaic of different habitats. Our species selection has been guided by extensive site surveys and the latest climate science, which has helped us select trees likely to be resilient to future conditions. This will ensure Okement Wood provides benefits for generations to come.

While we would ideally like to deliver greater variation in planting age and timing, the nature of our funding for this project restricts how we can deliver this. However, once the woodland is established and we begin to harvest trees for timber, new trees will be planted to replace them. Over time, this means Okement Wood will naturally develop trees of different ages and sizes.

Suggestion to include open areas within the woodland for greater habitat diversity

Open spaces are an important part of our plans at Okement Wood. This is to ensure we are supporting a wide range of wildlife species, protecting existing environmental features, and creating a woodland that blends aesthetically into the wider landscape. All of our new woodlands feature at least 10% of open space, or land managed primarily for biodiversity, in line with UK Forestry Standard Guidance.

Examples of open spaces included in our designs are:

- Open space around the existing mature oak trees already at Okement Wood, which need space to thrive
- Wider-spaced planting at the woodland edges to help the woodland blend visually into the wider landscape

- Open space around new scrapes within proposed wet woodland area
- Additional open space along the eastern edge of the site to allow for natural colonisation from the existing woodland

Concern from Natural England about protection of existing mature trees

We recognise the ecological importance of the existing scattered mature and semi-mature trees across the site, particularly the in-field oak trees located near the River Okement. These trees support a range of species, including lichens and bryophytes. We are committed to retaining and safeguarding these trees as key features within the woodland design. Open space has been incorporated around them to ensure sufficient light reaches their trunks and canopy, supporting them as the woodland establishes.

Suggestion from Natural England to increase scrub and transitional habitats

We are aiming to create a range of habitat types within the new woodland, including scrub and transitional edge habitats. These areas provide valuable resources for birds, invertebrates, and other wildlife, and help create a gradual transition between dense woodland and open ground. Scrub and shrub planting will therefore play an important part in the woodland design, particularly along edges and within more open areas of the woodland.

Suggestion from Natural England to allow for natural colonisation

We recognise the potential benefits of natural colonisation in areas adjacent to existing woodland. In suitable locations, particularly along the River Okement, we will allow for some element of natural colonisation alongside planned planting. This approach will help create a more varied woodland structure and support the development of a woodland that is well adapted to local conditions.

4.4 Archaeology and heritage

Concern that planting may affect undesignated archaeological features

We take our responsibility to protect the historic environment very seriously. Before designing the planting scheme at Okement Wood, we carried out a thorough assessment to understand whether any heritage features were present within the site and how they might be affected. This included:

- Desk-based research using the Devon Historic Environment Record (HER), Historic England datasets, historic Ordnance Survey mapping, aerial photographs, the Environment Agency's LiDAR data and specialist resources.
- A site walkover survey carried out on 8 October 2025 by Forestry England's Historic Environment Adviser to verify findings on the ground.
- Consultation with both Historic England and Devon County Council's Historic Environment Team (DCCHET).
- A meeting with Historic England and DCCHET on 25 February 2026 to explain Forestry England's approach to heritage assessment for woodland creation and how this aligns with the UK Forestry Standard.

We have also kept the Historic Environment Advisor at Forest Services informed of our findings and approach.

The Devon HER records a single undesignated feature (MDV135197) within the holding, described as field boundaries and possible drainage ditches west of the River Okement. While very faint traces remain visible on LiDAR, the walkover survey confirmed that:

- Long-term agricultural activity has heavily degraded these features, and
- No discernible earthworks are now visible on the ground.

Historic England and DCCHET noted the wider landscape context and advised us to consider the potential sensitivity of these remains. Their input was an important part of the process. Taking all evidence into account (desk-based assessment, LiDAR, walkover survey and consultation) we concluded that planting across this area would be appropriate. Although no visible trace of the features survives on the ground, removing the land from active farming and establishing woodland will create a more stable soil environment, offering better long-term protection for any surviving subsurface remains.

Suggestion to consult with Devon County Council's Historic Environment Team

We agree that consultation with the local Historic Environment Team is essential. DCCHET were contacted at the outset to provide Historic Environment Record data, and as the assessment progressed, further correspondence took place between Forestry England and DCCHET to ensure their views were fully understood. A meeting was also held on 25 February 2026 to discuss our approach to heritage assessment in woodland creation and its alignment with UKFS.

4.5 Traffic and parking

Concern that increased visitors could cause problems on rural lanes

We want to avoid a significant increase to car traffic on local roads and inconsiderate parking that may cause problems for nearby properties. Okement Wood has been designed primarily for local people to enjoy, and we have no plans to include visitor facilities or signage that might direct people to the woodland from the road. We believe this will help keep traffic increase to a minimum. The woodland is just half a mile from our established woodland Abbeyford Woods, which provides parking, a picnic area, and walking trails – and we anticipate that those who wish to visit a woodland by car will choose to visit this site over Okement Wood. If inconsiderate parking does become an issue, we will consider signs in appropriate locations to discourage this.

We will be accessing the site with our own vehicles to manage and maintain the site, but this we have carefully considered our access routes in order to reduce traffic on rural lanes. In time, this woodland will also provide a sustainable source of timber. However, it will be 10 to 20 years before any timber is harvested, and transport routes will be agreed with the local highway authority as required.

Suggestion to consider modest parking provision, particularly to support people with limited mobility

Okement Wood has been designed as a quiet, informal space for local people to enjoy. It is not intended to be a destination site in the same way that some of our larger forests are. While we are not planning on creating a designated car parking area at this time, the woodland can be reached on foot using the existing network of footpaths in the area, including the popular Tarka Trail.

We understand that a lack of parking facilities will make it harder for some people to visit, and while we want as many people as possible from the local community to be able to enjoy the woodland, our funding for this project unfortunately does not cover the cost of building or maintaining a car park. Forestry England generates over 80% of its core income through membership fees, donations, and timber sales, and we have to make careful decisions about where that money goes.

For those who would like to visit a Forestry England woodland by car, Abbeyford Woods is just half a mile away and offers parking, a picnic area, and more accessible walking trails. We would encourage visitors with limited mobility who are travelling by car to make use of those facilities. While we strive to make our woodlands as accessible as possible, we are not always able to provide everything at every woodland.

4.6 Volunteering and education

Suggestion to involve local groups, adults, and children in planting and maintaining the woodland

We may host a community planting day when we begin planting the new woodland, so that local people can be a part of creating this special place. If we're able to facilitate this, we will advertise the opportunity locally. We're also in the process of setting up a small volunteering group in this part of Devon, which local people will be able to get involved in.

Suggestion to create an educational hub or youth learning resource linked to the woodland

While some of our larger forests across the country have a range of facilities for educational forest visits, this will not be possible at Okement Wood. Our funding for this project does not include any visitor infrastructure such as an educational hub. We are also not anticipating that there will be high levels of footfall at the new woodland, particularly as we will not be creating a car park.

4.7 Water and flood risk

Suggestion to include a range of natural and engineered features – such as swales, mini wetlands, buffer zones, and drainage measures – to help slow runoff, reduce erosion, and protect water quality

We are planning to create additional scrapes and wet woodland habitat, including reinstating a historic pond, which will benefit biodiversity and capture potential

agricultural runoff. We are also planning to plant riparian tree species like black poplar, willow, and alder, where conditions are suitable for them to thrive.

Suggestion to give oversight of river management to an organisation such as Westcountry Rivers Trust, in order to protect river wildlife

We are the country's largest land manager, looking after over 250,000 hectares of land and over 1,500 forests. We also draw on over 100 years of expertise in successful woodland management. As a public body, we work to the highest quality standards and follow accredited sustainable forest management practices. We are responsible for the management of land within our estate, and it would not be appropriate for us to transfer oversight of river management to a third party. However, we work closely with partner organisations and regulators, and we have consulted with both the Environment Agency and the Westcountry Rivers Trust as part of developing our proposals for Okement Wood.

4.8 Land use

Concern about the loss of agricultural land

We understand concerns around food security, and we want to keep the best-quality land in food production. This is why we do not create new woodlands on the most productive land (grades 1 and 2). The soils at Okement Wood are found to be of grades 3 and 4, which means they are not the highest quality. We are confident that creating a woodland here is the right use of this land, as it will provide long-term benefits for wildlife, the climate, and the local community.

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 near Okehampton in Devon. We've set out our responses to this feedback below:

1. Public access

Okement Wood will be open to the public and provide a quiet space for local people to enjoy and connect with nature. Once planting is complete and the trees are established, the woodland will be dedicated under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act so that people can access and explore the site.

Pedestrians will be able to visit Okement Wood via the network of existing public rights of way, including the Tarka Trail, a 180-mile walking trail that runs to the west of the site. They will also be able to walk to the new woodland from Abbeyford Woods, a popular Forestry England woodland that is just ½ mile from Okement Wood and connected via the Tarka Trail. The new woodland has been designed primarily for local people to enjoy, which is why our proposals do not include a public car park.

Once at the new woodland, pedestrians will be able to explore the site using the existing forest track, which we will be extending for our access. We have no plans to create any paths around the boundary of the site. There are also no plans to create any surfaced trails for cycling, horse riding, or motorised vehicles.

Visitors will be welcome to walk their dogs in the new woodland, but we are not intending to add infrastructure such as bins. We expect all dog walkers to be responsible and keep their pets in sight and close by at all times, in line with our forest dog code.

2. Tree species

We have decades of experience and the latest scientific evidence to help us carefully plan the trees we will plant within Okement Wood. Detailed surveys have been carried out to help us choose the species that are well suited to the site, both now and as the climate changes. Our local foresters have considered a wide range of 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 take account of tree pests and diseases to help keep the woodland resilient and healthy over the long term.

We will ensure the new woodland will visually complement established woodlands in the area, including Abbeyford Woods, and we also protect the mature trees already on the site, leaving appropriate space around them to safeguard their roots and ensure they can continue to thrive. Existing hedgerows will also be protected, which are species rich and could provide important habitat for the hazel dormouse, a protected species in the UK, as well as nesting and foraging birds.

The new woodland will include a mix of broadleaf and conifer tree species, with groups of shrubs planted around the edges of the site, including along the Tarka Trail. This helps to increase the variety of habitats for wildlife and adds seasonal colour and texture to the landscape. Specific species we are planning to plant at Okement Wood include Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, Corsica pine, western red cedar, and small-leaved lime. These species have been chosen to provide a range of benefits for wildlife while also contributing to the UK's sustainable timber industry once the woodland is established. In areas of the site that become waterlogged, we will be planting wet woodland tree species such as alder and willow, particularly towards the east of the site, where the woodland runs next to the River Okement.

We have also identified a small area of the site suitable for temperate rainforest planting. Where there is a shallow valley near the centre of the site, the ground is naturally wetter, creating conditions where trees such as oak, silver birch, rowan, and holly may thrive. Planting in and around this area should increase humidity throughout the year, and, with careful, long-term management, we may be able to create a more suitable and stable habitat for rarer lichens, fungi, and mosses.

3. Wildlife

Creating a new woodland in this area will increase biodiversity by restoring more varied habitats that are beneficial for wildlife. 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're planning to create open spaces and leave wide spaces between trees, creating a diverse environment that will benefit a species including the hazel dormouse, woodland bird species, badgers, otters, bats, hedgehogs, common amphibians, and invertebrates.

In the small area of the site where we are planning to carry out temperate rainforest planting, specialist lichen, mosses and liverworts, fungi, and insect species may also be supported.

The River Okement is a migratory route for Atlantic salmon. This species requires cool, clear, well-oxygenated water and a variety of habitats that provide in-stream cover. It will benefit from the protective functions of the trees we are planning to plant, including the provision of shade to prevent excessive warming during the summer and the reduction of soil erosion.

Okement Wood will also increase connectivity between woodlands within this part of Devon and reverse past fragmentation. It will create a wildlife corridor between Abbeyford Wood and Berrydown Wood, located to the south and the east of the new woodland. Connecting these habitats will make it easier for species to move across the landscape.

We have no current plans to install additional bird or bat boxes, as there are already plenty of mature trees and hedgerows on site, which will be retained. We may consider adding raptor perches and owl or kestrel boxes in the future to help protect the growing trees from vole damage.

4. 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 just ½ mile from Abbeyford Woods, which provides parking, a picnic area, and walking trails – and we anticipate that those who wish to visit a woodland by car will choose to visit this site over Okement 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 formalise an existing access point to the north-west of the site and use another existing access point within the south-eastern corner. Within the new woodland, we will be creating a small section of new track that will connect to the existing network of forest tracks already in the site.

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.

5. Jobs and opportunities

Creating this new woodland will support regional employment, as we will hire contractors to help with planting, fencing, and maintenance. Some tasks will also be carried out by our in-house staff. Longer term, the woodland will also support jobs in timber management and processing.

6. 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 Okement Wood has been found to be of this 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



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

We are working on designs for a new woodland, Okement Wood, near Okehampton, Devon. 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.

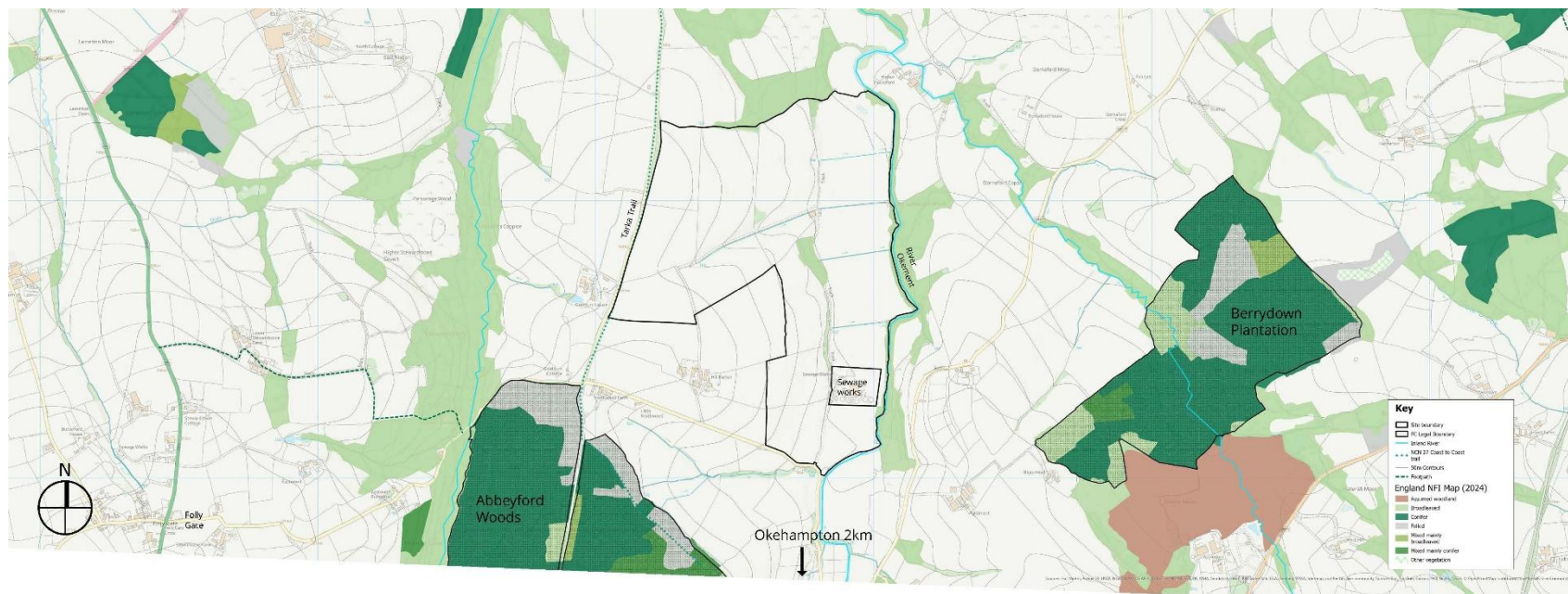
In time, each new woodland will provide sustainable timber, contributing to the rural economy. And they'll have wider environmental benefits including absorbing carbon, improving soil health and air quality, and water management.

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





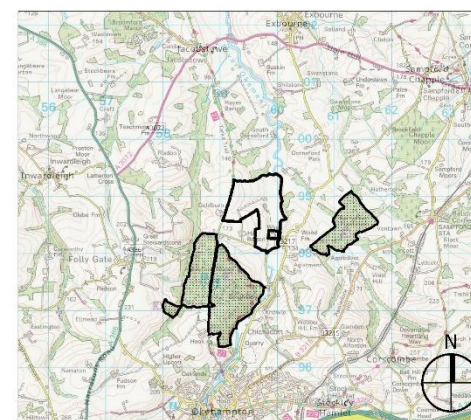
Site location & context

The site is located between Okehampton and Exbourne in West Devon. The northern edge of Dartmoor National Park lies approximately 3.5km to the south.

There are existing Forestry England woods to the south and east of the site, Abbeyford Woods and Berrydown Plantation.

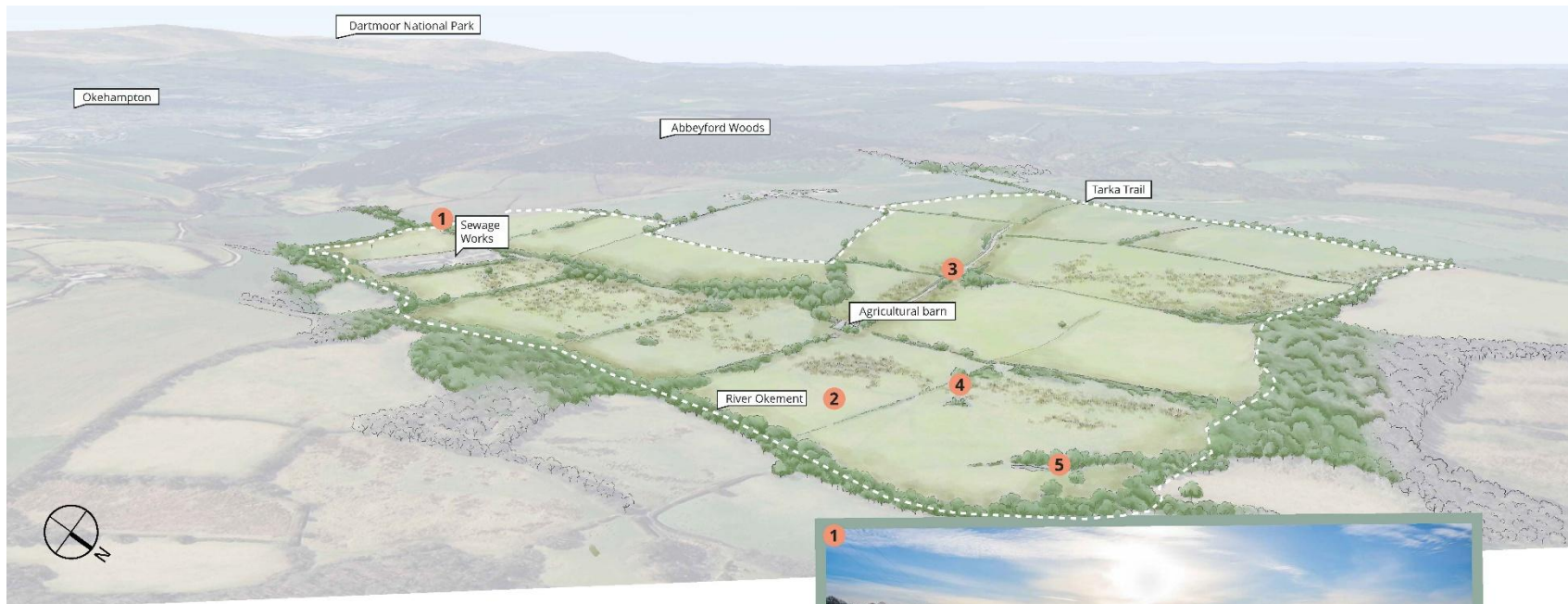
The River Okement and its valley run along the eastern boundary of the site.

At a national level, the site is wholly within Natural England's National Character Area 149: The Culm. The Culm is described as a landscape of 'rolling ridges and plateaux. [...] The open, often treeless, ridges are separated by an intricate pattern of small valleys forming the catchments of the Rivers Taw, Torridge and Mole. This is largely a remote and sparsely populated landscape.'



Site Location 1:24,000

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© Geomapping, PIC and Bluesky International 2024

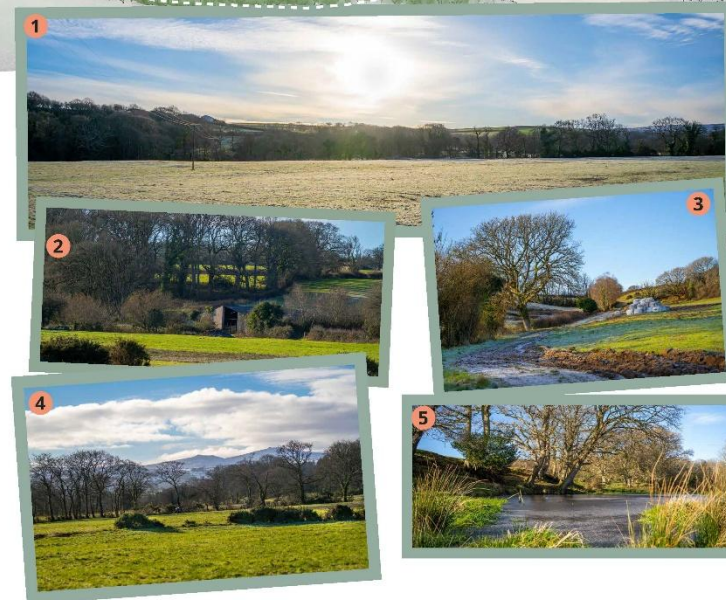


The existing site

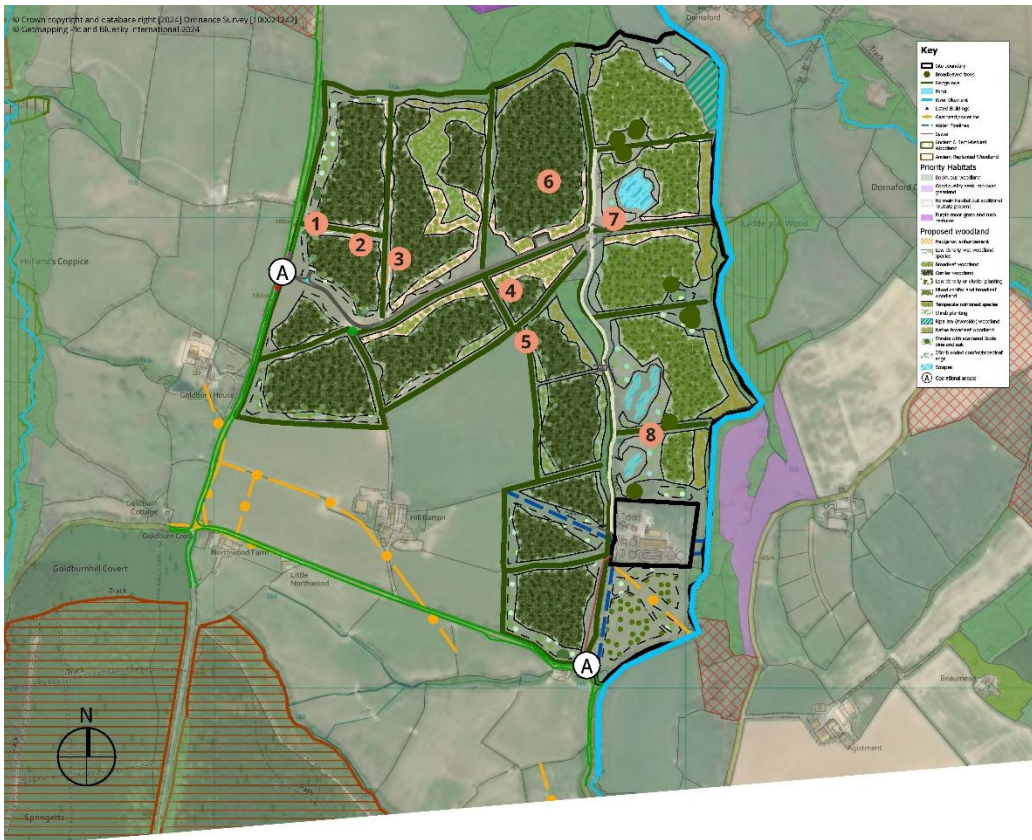
The 83-hectare site consists of mostly pastoral (grazed) fields divided by hedgerows and clusters of trees. There is a small section of woodland at the centre of the site. The site slopes steeply from west to east before becoming flatter at the central woodland and access track, creating a flat valley towards the River Okement. There is a small pond in the north east corner of the site. Ancient semi-natural and deciduous woodlands lie immediately to the north and east

Public rights of way within and around the site are mostly within areas of woodland, such as Abbeyford Woods and Berrydown Plantation. The national cycle route 27 and Tarka Trail long distance public footpath forms the western boundary of the site along the road.

There is a sewage works located within the site boundary and an agricultural barn.



Photos: 1. View south east from the sewage works 2. View of the agricultural barn from within the site. 3. View west along the existing track within the site. 4. View south towards Dartmoor National Park from within the site. 5. View of the pond in the north east corner of the site.



Tree species we could plant



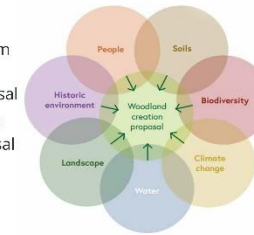
Draft design

How we design new woodland

We are designing the new woodland 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):

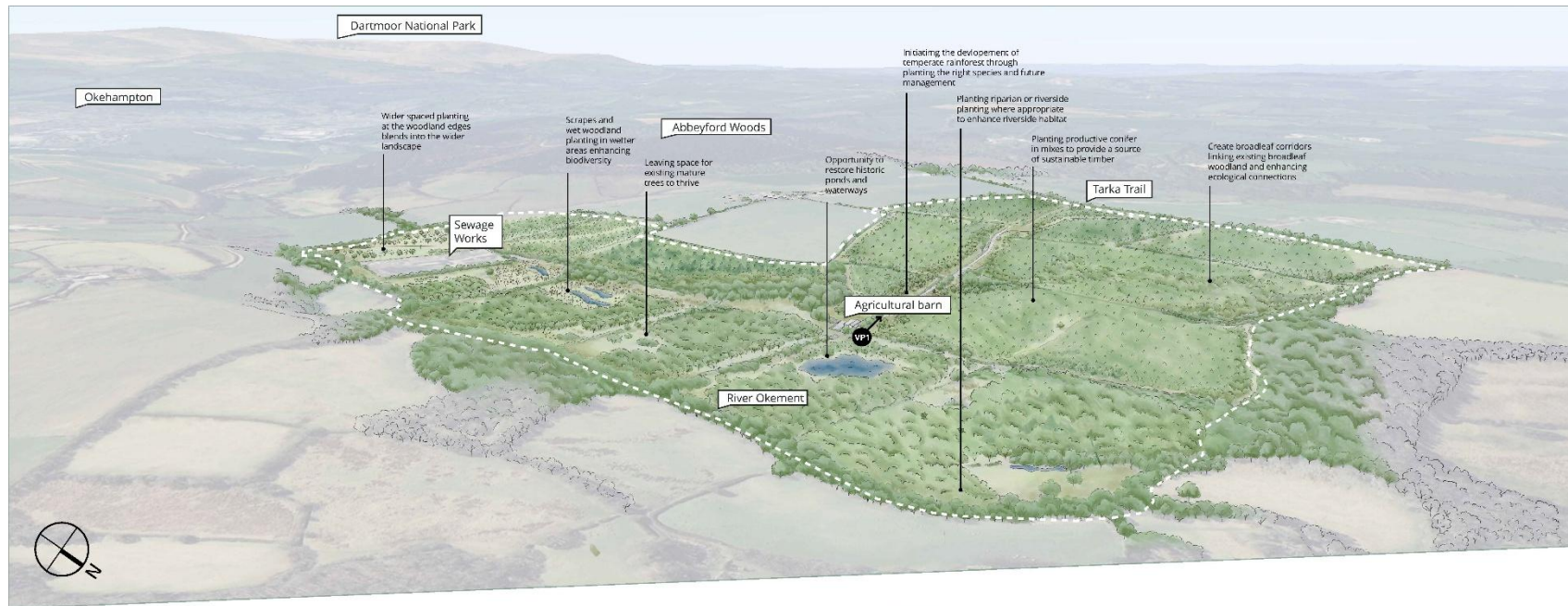
Detailed desktop surveys, site surveys and analysis will inform our design. This includes:

- 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 other diverse Forestry England woodlands nearby to produce a lasting supply of certified sustainable timber.
- Enhance biodiversity and improve woodland connectivity:** link existing woodlands to improve habitat connectivity. Enhance hedges and create open spaces within the woodland for wildlife to thrive. Plant species associated with atlantic oakwoods and create areas of wet woodland.
- Opportunity to create diverse habitats** by initiating the development of temperate rainforest through species choice, design and future management. Creating scrapes (shallow ponds) and enhancing the development of wet woodland through planting around wet flushes.
- Sequester atmospheric carbon:** help meet government net zero emissions goals by planting fast-growing conifers in diverse, complementary mixtures with native species, and providing resilient woodland management options in the future in addition to storing carbon.
- Public access for health and wellbeing:** provide low-key recreation opportunities by improving access to the countryside for local residents and visitors.



How the new woodland could look

Our initial designs include proposals to:

- Focus our broadleaf tree planting along corridors and in places that will connect existing broadleaf woodland in and around the site.
- Create scrapes (shallow ponds) and plant wet woodland tree species such as alder and willow in areas of the site that become waterlogged.
- Leave areas of open space around existing mature oak trees and some rush pasture.
- Plant temperate rainforest species where conditions may suit the creation of this habitat.
- Enhance the surrounding Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland by planting native broadleaf buffers.
- Use shrubs and broadleaves along tracks and trails to create interesting views and wildlife corridors.
- Blend the edges of woodland blocks by having gradual transitions from broadleaf or shrub planting into conifer planting.
- Enhance hedgerows by 'scaloping' the sides to add diversity, softening the linear features as they are integrated into the future wooded landscape.

Artist's impressions:

Viewpoint 1
How it looks now

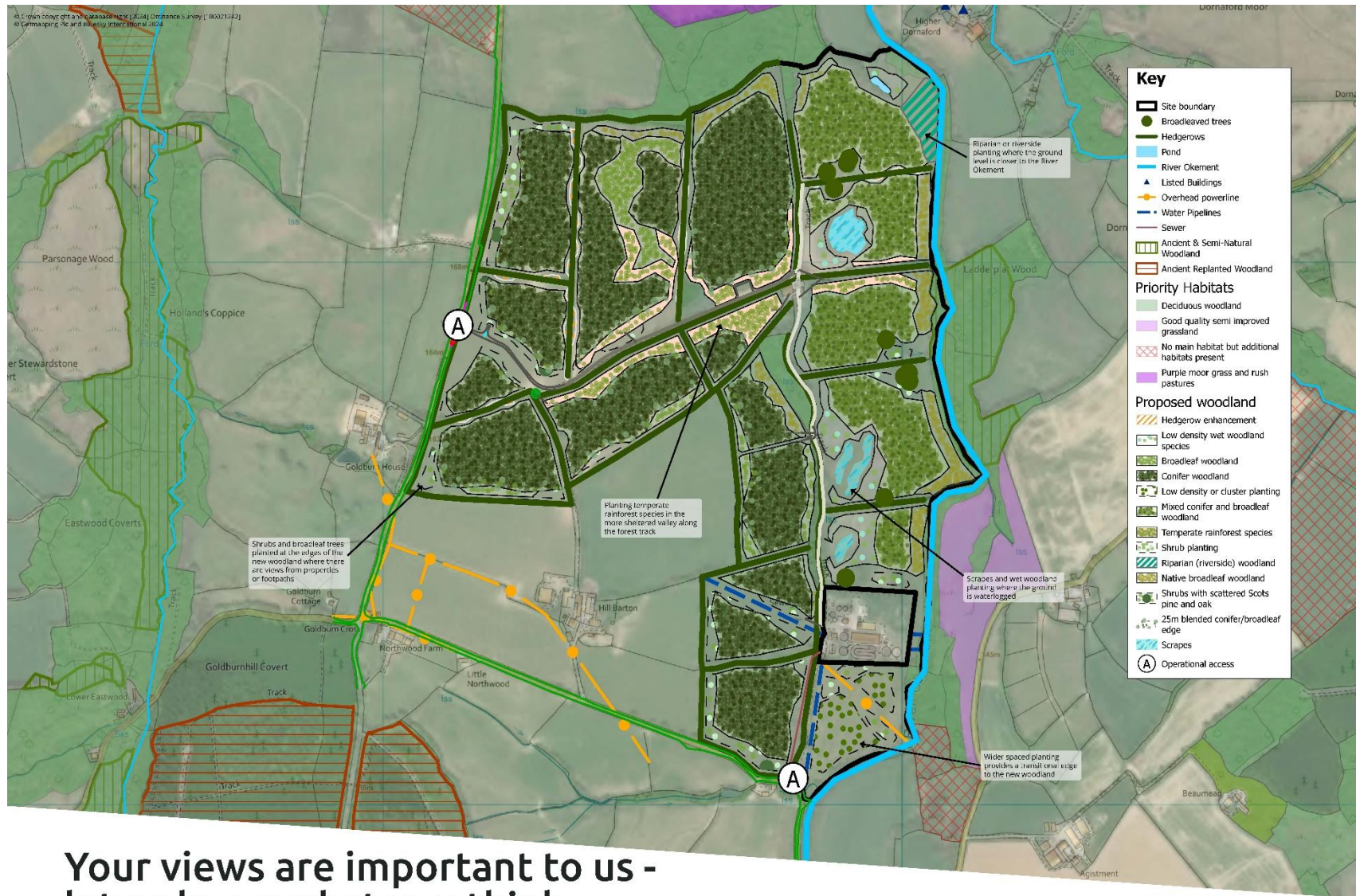


How it could look in 50 years



How it could look after planting





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/okementw>
- 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 6 March 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:

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Forestry England

A new woodland at Okement - 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 near Okehampton in Devon. We've set out our responses to this feedback below:

Public access

Okement Wood will be open to the public and provide a quiet space for local people to enjoy and connect with nature. Once planting is complete and the trees are established, the woodland will be dedicated under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act so that people can access and explore the site.

Pedestrians will be able to visit Okement Wood via the network of existing public rights of way, including the Tarka Trail, a 180-mile walking trail that runs to the west of the site. They will also be able to walk to the new woodland from Abbeyford Woods, a popular Forestry England woodland that is just ½ mile from Okement Wood and connected via the Tarka Trail. The new woodland has been designed primarily for local people to enjoy, which is why our proposals do not include a public car park.

Once at the new woodland, pedestrians will be able to explore the site using the existing forest track, which we will be extending for our access. We have no plans to create any paths around the boundary of the site. There are also no plans to create any surfaced trails for cycling, horse riding, or motorised vehicles.

Visitors will be welcome to walk their dogs in the new woodland, but we are not intending to add infrastructure such as bins. We expect all dog walkers to be responsible and keep their pets in sight and close by at all times, in line with our forest dog code.

Tree species

We have decades of experience and the latest scientific evidence to help us carefully plan the trees we will plant within Okement Wood. Detailed surveys have been carried out to help us choose the species that are well suited to the site, both now and as the climate changes. Our local foresters have considered a wide range of 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 take account of tree pests and diseases to help keep the woodland resilient and healthy over the long term.

We will ensure the new woodland will visually complement established woodlands in the area, including Abbeyford Woods, and we also protect the mature trees already on the site, leaving appropriate space around them to safeguard their roots and ensure they can continue to thrive. Existing hedgerows will also be protected, which are species rich and could provide important habitat for the hazel dormouse, a protected species in the UK, as well as nesting and foraging birds.

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We have also identified a small area of the site suitable for temperate rainforest planting. Where there is a shallow valley near the centre of the site, the ground is naturally wetter, creating conditions where trees such as oak, silver birch, rowan, and holly may thrive. Planting in and around this area should increase humidity throughout the year, and, with careful, long-term management, we may be able to create a more suitable and stable habitat for rarer lichens, fungi, and mosses.

Wildlife

Creating a new woodland in this area will increase biodiversity by restoring more varied habitats that are beneficial for wildlife. 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're planning to create open spaces and leave wide spaces between trees, creating a diverse environment that will benefit a species including the hazel dormouse, woodland bird species, badgers, otters, bats, hedgehogs, common amphibians, and invertebrates.

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The River Okement is a migratory route for Atlantic salmon. This species requires cool, clear, well-oxygenated water and a variety of habitats that provide in-stream cover. It will benefit from the protective functions of the trees we are planning to plant, including the provision of shade to prevent excessive warming during the summer and the reduction of soil erosion.

Okement Wood will also increase connectivity between woodlands within this part of Devon and reverse past fragmentation. It will create a wildlife corridor between Abbeyford Wood and Berrydown Wood, located to the south and the east of the new woodland. Connecting these habitats will make it easier for species to move across the landscape.

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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.

Jobs and opportunities

Creating this new woodland will support regional employment, as we will hire contractors to help with planting, fencing, and maintenance. Some tasks will also be carried out by our in-house staff. Longer term, the woodland will also support jobs in timber management and processing.

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 Okement Wood has been found to be of this 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
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Forestry England



New Woodland near Okehampton

**Come along to our public
consultation event**

24 February 4pm - 7pm

Inwardleigh and Folly Gate Village Hall,
Okehampton, EX20 3AB

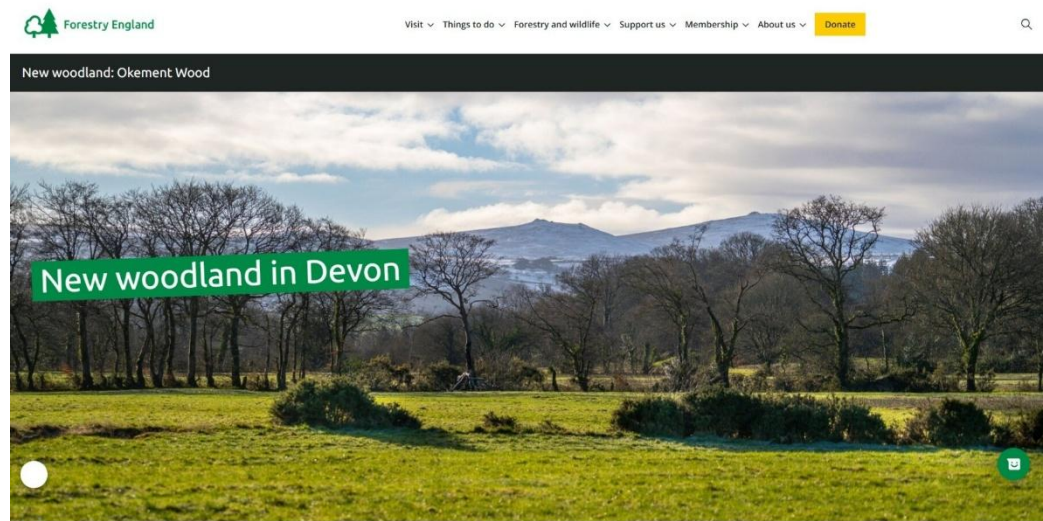
Forestry England is planning to create a new 83-
hectare woodland called Okement Wood near
Okehampton.

Please drop-in at our local consultation event to
view our proposed designs and speak to members of
our team. You can also share your views with us
online by scanning the QR code or visiting
<https://bit.ly/okementw>



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

forestryengland.uk



Growing the nation's forests

At Forestry England, we're creating a brand new woodland near Okehampton. Okement Wood will cover around 83 hectares and be planted with a mix of carefully selected tree species, including both broadleaf and conifer trees. As these trees grow, Okement Wood will become a valuable habitat for wildlife and an important carbon store. In time, it will also provide a future source of sustainable timber and become a new green space for you to explore and enjoy.

This isn't the only new woodland we're creating in this part of Devon. We're also developing [Eshleigh Wood](#), near Hatherleigh, just 8 miles away, and [Quoditch](#), 12 miles away. All three sites are also a short drive away from our existing woodlands at [Abbeyford Woods](#). Together, these sites will help create a stronger network of woodland cover across the landscape.



Work in progress...

At the moment, we're still developing our plans for Okement Wood. We recently hosted a public consultation, where we invited local people and businesses to share their thoughts and ideas with us. This included a special 'drop in' event in Folly Gate. We'd like to thank everyone who got involved in this process and who attended our event, as your feedback will help us shape the final designs for Okement Wood.

Right now, we're working through the comments from the public consultation, and we'll be sharing our final designs for Okement Wood later this year. Subject to the approval of our final design plans, we hope to begin planting the first trees at this new woodland in winter 2026/27.

Supporting nature recovery

Creating a new woodland in this part of Devon will help nature recover by increasing connectivity between existing woodlands in the area. This will make it easier for wildlife to move across the landscape and reverse past habitat fragmentation. Specifically, this new woodland will join up [Abbeyford Woods](#) and [Berrydown Wood](#).

We'll also be creating varied habitats within the woodland to benefit a wide range of species. We'll be planting a mix of different tree species and creating areas of open spaces that could benefit species including the hazel dormouse, woodland birds, badgers, otters, bats, hedgehogs, common amphibians, and invertebrates.

[Read more about connecting woodlands »](#)



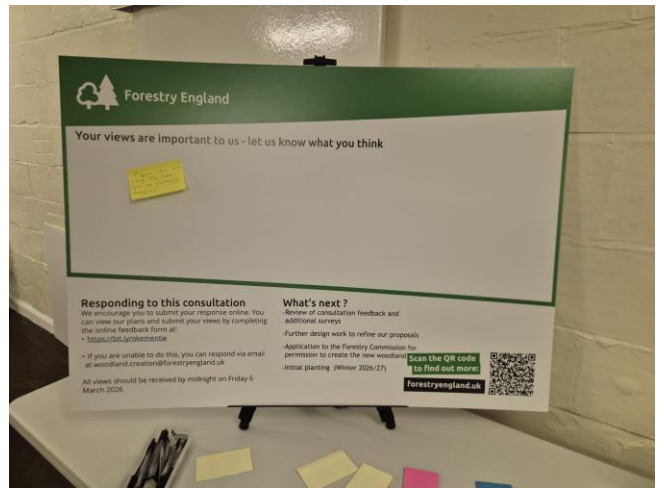
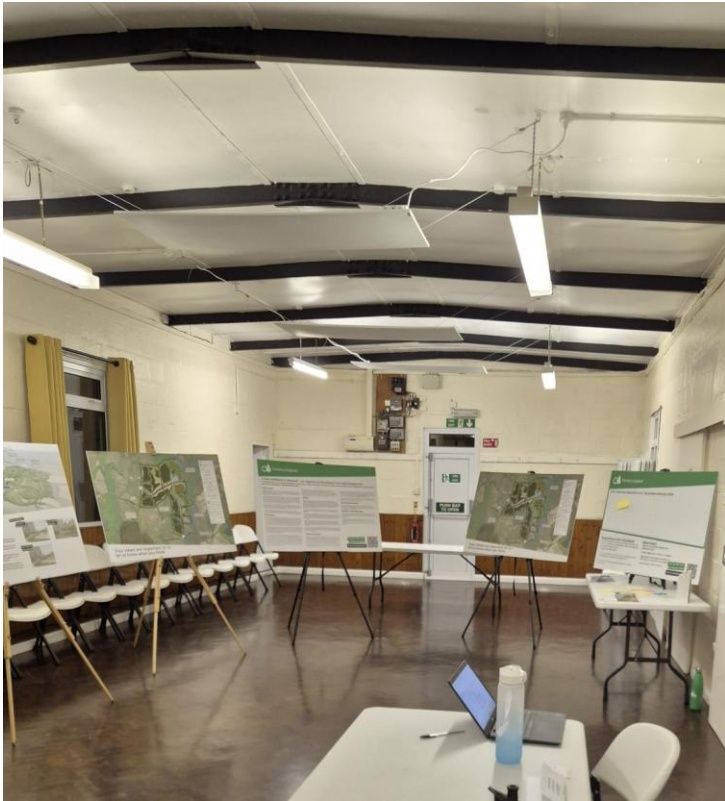
Frequently asked questions about the new woodland

Close all

What types of trees will you plant? ▾

When will works start and finish? ▾

How do I stay in touch about the project? ▾



Appendix C: Consultation questionnaire

Consultation questionnaire



A proposed new woodland near Okehampton

Overview

Forestry England would like to share with you our proposed plans for Okement Wood, the new woodland we are planning to create near Okehampton.

Why your views matter

Your feedback, as well as site surveys, will help shape what the new woodland could look like. Forestry England value your comments and feedback and welcome you to our consultation event.

Introduction

Thank you for taking part in this consultation on the design proposals for Okement Wood.

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](http://www.forestryengland.uk/privacy) (www.forestryengland.uk/privacy)

1. What is your 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?

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

No

Feedback

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

Appendix D: Letters/emails announcing the launch of the consultation

Parish Council



Public consultation on draft design proposals for a new woodland near Okehampton

From Woodland Creation <woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk>

Date Mon 2026-02-09 08:00

1 attachment (2 MB)

Okement Consultation Poster.pdf

Good morning,

We recently contacted you about a new woodland we are planning to create near Okehampton in Devon, close to our existing woodland Abbeyford Woods.

We are now writing to let you know that we have 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 6 March**:

<https://consult.forestryengland.uk/forest-districts/okementw/>

While we continue with our detailed planning for Okement 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.

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 people to explore and enjoy.

Public drop-in event

As part of the consultation, we will be holding a public drop-in event to give people the opportunity to view our initial designs for Okement Wood and talk to members of the Forestry England team. This will be held at **Inwardleigh and Folly Gate Village Hall on Tuesday 24 February from 4pm to 7pm**.

We have attached a PDF copy of a poster promoting the consultation and drop-in event and would be grateful if you could include this on your website or notice boards where available.

Next steps

The consultation will close at midnight on Friday 6 March. 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:

www.forestryengland.uk/woodland-creation-okement

We look forward to reading your comments.

Kind regards,

The Woodland Creation Team
Forestry England

woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk

www.forestryengland.uk



Appendix E: Code frame

Theme / comment	Concern	Question	Suggestion
Public access	3	4	10
Site location next to Abbeyford Woods may not extend access to new users	1	0	0
Timeframe for CRoW dedication / public access opening is unclear	1	0	0
Access offer may be too limited if only the existing / extended forest track is available	1	0	0
Whether footpaths / walking access will be provided	0	1	0
Whether safe walking links will connect Okement Wood to Abbeyford Woods / the Tarka Trail	0	1	0
Whether cycle or other multi-use trails will be included	0	1	0
Whether horse riders will be included in access plans	0	1	0
Provide dedicated or shared horse-riding access	0	0	7
Provide horse-riding-only areas or segregated routes where appropriate	0	0	1
Clarify in literature / signage that horse riding is allowed	0	0	1
Keep access arrangements under review and allow flexibility as the site establishes	0	0	1
Wildlife and habitats	3	1	3
Disturbance to salmon nursery habitat / river wildlife	1	0	0
Planting or machinery access could damage existing wet habitats	1	0	0
Need for deer and grey squirrel management to protect newly planted trees	1	0	1
Whether biodiversity will be prioritised	0	1	0
Ensure long-term maintenance and monitoring of the woodland	0	0	1
Adopt biosecurity measures to prevent disease and invasive species	0	0	1
Landscape and woodland design	3	0	5
Productive conifer / non-native / monoculture planting may limit biodiversity and resilience	3	0	0
Plant native, locally characteristic and diverse species; avoid homogeneous rows and create a varied layered structure	0	0	4
Include open areas within the woodland for greater habitat diversity	0	0	1
Archaeology and heritage	1	0	2
Planting may affect undesignated archaeological features such as ridge and furrow remains	1	0	0
Consult Devon County Council Historic Environment Team	0	0	1
Undertake further investigation of undesignated historic assets before planting	0	0	1
Traffic and parking	4	1	3

Increased visitors could lead to unsafe or inconsiderate parking on narrow rural lanes	4	0	0
Whether parking will be provided	0	1	0
Consider modest parking provision, particularly for people with limited mobility	0	0	3
Water and flood risk	0	0	4
Include swales, mini-wetlands, buffer zones, drainage or water-retention features to slow runoff, reduce erosion and protect water quality	0	0	2
Give river management oversight to an organisation such as South West Rivers Trust to protect river wildlife	0	0	1
Design the woodland to contribute to flood management and water retention	0	0	1
Land use	1	0	0
Loss of agricultural land	1	0	0
Volunteering and education	0	0	3
Involve local groups, adults and children in planting and maintaining the woodland	0	0	2
Create an educational hub or youth learning resource linked to the woodland	0	0	1

Appendix F: Stakeholders contacted

Devon County Council
<p>Elected representatives Councillor for Hatherleigh and Chagford</p> <p>Officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Rights of Way • Local Nature Recovery • Flood Risk • Historic Environment • County Archaeologist
West Devon Borough Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor for Okehampton North Ward • Councillors for Exbourne Ward
Parish Councils
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampford Courtenay Parish Council • Jacobstowe Parish Council • Inwardleigh Parish Council
Defra Bodies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England (TAP-D) • Natural England (Protected Sites) • Environment Agency
Wildlife Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon Wildlife Trust • Devon Butterfly Conservation • RSPB • Devon Bat Conservation and Research Group • Bat Conservation Trust • Westcountry Rivers Trust
Special Interest Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Horse Society • National Farmers Union • Devon Countryside Access Forum • CPRE
Utilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Water • National Grid • BT Openreach
Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliamentary MP for Central Devon (Mel Stride) • Local Highways Authority • Historic England