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# Growing the nation's rorests A proposed new woodland at Quoditch, Devon

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

We are planning a new woodland near Quoditch, North Devon. We would like your comments and feedback on our initial ideas. Your input will help shape our final designs.

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



Our plans are part of a wider commitment to increasing tree planting rates across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025, supported by the Nature for Climate Fund. We aim to plant at least 2,000 hectares of new, highquality woodlands across England.

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





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## Site location & wider context

The proposed new woodland is in northwest Devon, next to the hamlet of Quoditch. The nearest town is Holsworthy, about 5.6miles to the northwest. Forestry England's Quoditchmoor Plantation is directly north of the site and their Witherdon Plantation is to the southeast.

The site for the new woodland lies within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 149: The Culm. This area is mostly remote and sparsely populated. It is a landscape of rolling ridges and plateaus and small valleys with fast flowing rivers and streams that drain the area. The heavy poorly drained soil supports a pastoral (grazed) landscape. There are also unique culm grasslands, a type of habitat typically found in this area and known for uncommon plant communities such as purple moor grass.

The land in the surrounding area is rolling. Large conifer plantations, like Quoditchmoor Plantation, are on higher plateaus and are a key feature of this landscape.









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## Draft design How we design new woodland

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

![](_page_3_Figure_2.jpeg)

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

- Preliminary habitat assessment
- Historic environment records
- Landscape and visual appraisal
- Local environment records
- Soil mapping
- Ecological site classification
- Climate matching tools
- Utilities searches
- Responses to initial consultation

#### **Objectives for the new woodland**

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**Create a diverse and resilient** woodland: plant a mix of trees for a lasting supply of certified sustainable timber.

![](_page_3_Picture_16.jpeg)

Improve conncetions between woodlands and enhance existing ancient woodlands: connect adjacent woodlands to improve habitats. Maintain hedges and create open spaces within the woodland for wildlife to thrive.

![](_page_3_Picture_18.jpeg)

Public access for health and wellbeing: provide low key recreation opportunities by improving access to the countryside.

![](_page_3_Picture_20.jpeg)

#### **Capture carbon from the**

atmosphere: help meet net zero emissions goals by planting and managing woodland that will thrive in future climates and create new areas to store carbon.

![](_page_3_Picture_23.jpeg)

Include research trials: to better understand how trees produce timber and capture carbon in a changing climate.

#### Tree species we could plant

![](_page_3_Picture_26.jpeg)

English oak research trial

![](_page_3_Picture_28.jpeg)

Red alder in mixes with aspen, willow and rowan pine

![](_page_3_Picture_30.jpeg)

Sitka spruce with Macedonian

![](_page_3_Picture_32.jpeg)

Lodgepole pine with Sessile oak, aspen and rowan

![](_page_3_Picture_34.jpeg)

Shrubs including Guelder rose, rowan, spindle, elder, Alder buckthorn, hazel

![](_page_3_Picture_36.jpeg)

Sessile oak with hornbeam, rowan and wild service tree

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# How the new woodland could look

Our initial designs include proposals to:

- Protect and enhance the habitat along Dury Water by planting broadleaf buffers and leaving some open space to create habitat diversity.
- Plant a mix of conifer, mixed and broadleaf woodland carefully placed within the landscape to provide sustainable timber and support biodiversity.
- Create wildlife corridors by leaving open space next to hedgerows and adding shrubby borders at the edges of woodland for wildlife to thrive.

- Keep views from properties next to the woodland by leaving open spaces near their boundaries and sparsely planting a mix of native shrubs and fruit trees that will also provide seasonal interest.
- Include an area in the northern fields for a research trial for English oak.
- Reflect the surrounding landscape pattern of keeping the conifers on the higher ground within the site.

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#### Key

Site Boundary				
<ul> <li>Overhead powerline</li> </ul>				
Inland river				
Upgrade to existing track				
Proposed surfaced route				
Public Rights of Way				
Proposed grass footpaths				
Existing hedgerows				
Proposed loading bay (20x20m)				
Hedgerows_PairwiseBuffe				
Proposed Woodland				
Research plot for Pedunculate Oak				
Broadleaf Dominant				
Mixed conifer and broadleaf				
Conifer				
Broadleaf				
Low density broadleaf planting				
Shrub planting				
Priority Habitats				
Deciduous woodland				
Good quality semi improved grassland				
No main habitat but additional habitats present				
Purple moor grass and rush pastures				
Ancient Woodland				
Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland				

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

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## 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:

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

If you are unable to do this, you can respond via email at woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk

All views should be received by Sunday 28th July 2024

### What's next?

 Review of consultation feedback • Further design work to refine our proposals • Application to the Forestry Commission for permission to create the new woodland Initial planting (Winter 2024)

### Scan the QR code to find out more:

forestryengland.uk

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![](_page_6_Picture_16.jpeg)

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#### 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 at Quoditch. Here are our responses to the key themes and questions people raised.

#### Public access

The new woodland at Quoditch will be open to the public and provide a quiet space for people to enjoy. Once we have finished creating the woodland we will dedicate it under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act so people can explore the site.

There will be pedestrian access into the new woodland off the road leading from Quoditch at the two existing gates. This will allow people to explore the new woodland by a series of grass paths. There is no plan to include cycling or horse riding specific infrastructure.

We are mindful of not significantly increasing car traffic particularly as the road is narrow. Our proposal does not include public parking. We will consider signs to discourage parking along the lane should this be necessary.

Visitors will be welcome to walk their dogs in the new woodland, we do not intend to fence the whole woodland. We expect all dog owners to be responsible and to keep their pets under control in all the forests and woodlands we care for, following signs and our Forest Dog Code.

#### Design

Our draft design has considered the existing field pattern, the wider landscape character and proximity to nearby properties. Priority habitat at the western end of the southern woodland area will be retained and broadleaf planting with some open space is proposed along this edge adding structural and species diversity.

Our draft design includes grass paths, open spaces and keeps the existing hedgerows to create diverse habitats for wildlife and connect to existing open spaces outside the woodland.

This will be an attractive environment for many birds, and we are looking at the possibility of including owl boxes. Trees will be planted away from the hedgerows and shrubs will be planted along the edges of the woodland blocks providing additional space for hedgerows to thrive, which will benefit biodiversity such as butterflies.

We are doing ecology surveys to tell us more about the plants, wildlife and ecosystem at Quoditch and this will help shape our final design for the new woodland.

Our plan for the new, resilient woodland with a variety of trees at Quoditch, aims to:

• Create mixed productive and resilient woodland that delivers benefits for people, nature and economy

- Improveing woodland connectivity in the landscape
- Provide additional opportunities for informal access to the countryside
- Sequester atmospheric carbon, supporting achieving net zero emissions targets • Establish research trials to understand how our native and commercial trees grow and

store carbon in a changing climate

#### The trees we will plant

We are using years of experience and the latest scientific evidence to plan in detail for the trees we will plant for the new woodland. Our surveys help us to choose the trees most suitable for the site now and as the climate changes. Our professional foresters carefully choose what trees to plant and where to plant them. They understand the soil, how quickly the trees will grow, and the important habitats, species and geographical features nearby. We also consider tree pests and diseases and future climate conditions to keep woods as healthy as possible.

The species will be a mix of broadleaf and conifer, planted together in mixtures, with shrub species along edges to increase the variety and provide seasonal colour and texture. Species have been chosen to produce a future source of sustainable softwood timber. This supply of homegrown wood products will support the wider British timber and forestry industry, helping to reduce the demand for imports from other countries.

We propose to plant a range of species at Quoditch, including Sitka spruce, Lodgepole pine, Maritime pine, oak, hornbeam, rowan, small-leaved lime, alders, willows and aspen.

#### Landscape and Views

Our designs are based on a landscape and visual assessment and sensitively consider how close the new woodland will be to our new neighbours. Where properties have important views, mainly along the southern edge, we have left open space (a minimum of 20metres) and will plant shrubs at the edges of the woodland closest to the houses to make it more visually interesting and open.

We will plant more broadleaf trees including some fruit trees in these areas as they are shorter than some conifer, generally live longer and help keep the view open also giving biodiversity benefits. The fruit trees will attract insects that will then feed the birds.

The woodland has been designed to blend with the overall landscape and to consider external views. Like the surrounding woodland, conifers are placed on higher ground, while mixed woodland and broadleaf trees are on the lower slopes. The western part of the site features scattered broadleaf trees to imitate the common strips of riparian (riverside) and broadleaf woodland in the area.

#### What are the research trials you are planning?

We are setting up a series of research trials to help understand how our native and commercial tree species grow and store carbon in a changing climate. These trials will examine how different spacings between trees can affect their growth across a variety of locations and climates. Over future decades, we will study the survival, growth, form and yield of English oak trees at Quoditch. The information we gather will help us make more accurate estimates of the timber and carbon stored in British woodland and inform future decarbonisation and net zero strategies.

#### Establishing the new woodland

We aim to plant the new woodland in winter 24/25. Maintenance during the first five years is important to ensure its long-term success. The woodland will be managed by the Forestry England team and local contractors. 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 for the north and south woodland areas to manage the site, and propose to improve the existing track to make this easier.

As part of our ongoing management of the woodland, we will begin to remove some trees after about 25 years - this will provide a sustainable supply of timber and help the woodland to thrive for decades to come.

#### 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 amount of carbon captured from the atmosphere.

Forestry England is part of the <u>Deer Initiative<sup>1</sup></u>, a partnership that promotes sustainable deer management in England and Wales. We will use deer fencing within the site boundary to protect the new woodland. 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 on our website<sup>2</sup>.

Rabbit and deer fencing around the blocks of trees, will protect the young trees from browsing by deer and rabbits, and treeshelters (a protective tube or casing placed around a young tree) will protect smaller, wide spaced areas of trees.

Treeshelters and fences will be removed after approximately 10 years, after the woodland has become established, with materials being recycled where possible.

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#### Why are you planting agricultural land?

Forestry England is creating new woodlands which will capture carbon, restore and connect habitats, enhance biodiversity, supply sustainable, homegrown timber and be great places for people to enjoy. Sites are individually and carefully assessed so they are suitable for woodland creation and sensitive to the local landscape. This assessment considers the existing land use, and we target lower-quality or less productive land to create new woodlands.

Our plans are part of a wider commitment to increasing tree planting rates across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025 and provide a source of sustainable homegrown timber. Currently the UK imports over 80% of its timber<sup>1</sup> and we are more reliant on imported timber than imported food (40% of food is imported)<sup>2</sup>.

Forestry England understands concerns around food security and keeping the best land in agricultural production. Our woodland creation programme seeks to avoid the most productive land (grades 1 & 2). The land at Quoditch is graded at 3. All landowners choose how they should best manage their land to suit their business.

#### Will the woodlands sequester more carbon than grassland?

As they grow, trees capture more carbon and more quickly than grass. The soils of permanent pasture may have more carbon stored away than woodland soils, particularly of young woodland, but these stores have taken a long time to build up.

Woodland is considered a permanent land use change in the UK, so even when productive forests are felled, trees will be replanted and their carbon stocks will build up again over the following decades.

Sustainable home-grown timber can store carbon for many years while in use and also avoid fossil fuel emissions from products it replaces such as concrete.

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