

## WOODLAND OPPORTUNITIES MAP (WOM) Q & A

### **Why do we need another map?**

This is a key output from the Regional Forestry Framework, which resulted from consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and has the following rationale:

- It is intended to support practitioners' decision making and scoping prior to or as part of developing their proposals.
- It is a strategic decision making tool which broadly characterises local landscapes with respect to their opportunities and sensitivities to new woodland creation.
- With the Regional Forestry Framework in place, we are looking to develop greater regional targeting and this sort of map could inform this process.

### **Won't the map become a statement of where forestry can and cannot take place?**

The map is designed as a generic decision support tool that is intended to assist the scoping process that those creating and managing woodlands go through in considering environmental impacts. It is not intended to be prescriptive or apply to decisions on individual sites, since it indicates the opportunity/sensitivity at a broad landscape level only.

### **Why not use parishes or other recognised boundaries?**

The tool is intended to operate at landscape level. The recognised currency for landscape is the various levels of description units derived through the Landscape Character Assessment process: landscape description units (LDUs) from the Joint Character Areas down. It is these units that have been used as the building blocks for the WOM.

### **Why are some areas not included or shown differently?**

Such areas generally require special consideration, eg:

*Urban* areas are generally not covered by Landscape Character Assessment, so the methodology used in developing the tool cannot be used. However there are numerous opportunities for urban forestry that apply at a generic level across urban areas, which often require special consideration due to challenging sites and local stakeholder involvement, for example.

*The National Forest* has its own landscape character assessment and Opportunities Map, which can be found in the Forest Strategy ([www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org)) together with separate arrangements for funding woodland creation – reference should be made to the National Forest Company direct.

*The Forest of Mercia* has its own strategy and action plan so reference should be made to the Forest team direct.

*The Peak Park* (which includes part of Staffordshire Moorlands) is administered outwith West Midlands and the current arrangement is for woodland planting and management to be dealt with from our East Midlands Conservancy.

### **If I have to speak to local ecologists or archaeologists, what value is the map?**

The WOM is intended to support landowners, agents and potential applicants to our grant schemes in terms of providing a more structured scoping process, which currently operates with mixed success. The composite map is intended to highlight broad opportunity and sensitivity and the theme maps indicate the broad nature of the sensitivity.

This should help to focus on what aspects of woodland creation and or management may require more careful treatment.

For example, if cultural heritage theme is flagged *sensitive* in the landscape where a project is being developed, it makes sense for early contact to be made with local heritage expertise such as the county archaeologist, to see what the sensitivity is and how the proposal can address it.

### **Won't the FC use this map as an excuse to refuse applications in say sensitive areas?**

Because the WOM is designed as a generic landscape level support tool, it is not prescriptive, ie it doesn't pick out individual sites, but shows the indicative sensitivity at a landscape level.

### **What does this mean in practice?**

Individual sites and applications for grant will be treated on a case by case basis as currently. In practice, there are likely to be individual sites that are sensitive within preferred areas and vice versa. Proposals will still be dealt with on a case by case basis, in accordance with the FC's published guidelines and procedures.

### **Doesn't this mean I won't be able to do what I want to do or will have to change it too much?**

The WOM is not designed to answer this question – but is only part of the process in determining a proposal to plant woodland. It is intended as an initial indication, a 'first sift' in formulating a proposal. Whatever opportunity or sensitivity is indicated on the WOM, a proposal must meet the current guidelines (UKFS, eWGS criteria, etc)

### **How will local authorities view the map?**

Local authorities to a large extent welcome the approach and have led in developing the landscape theme, through the regional Living Landscapes Group that comprises local authority landscape practitioners. Local authorities have been key in providing the data that has been used in producing the map. The exception to this is for the Access theme map, where the Woodland Trust Space4People data has been used, together with CROW open access land data from the Countryside Agency.

### **How will version 2 differ from version 1?**

Version 1 has been pulled together with relatively limited consultation with wider stakeholders, including landowners and agents. Version 2 will be developed from version 1 taking into account feedback on version 1. The following are examples of what might be considered:

- Refining the data used in the existing map – eg the link to Historic Landscape Characterisation which is currently not complete for the whole region
- Including other theme layers, such as floodplains
- Including more reference to existing woodlands
- Developing a cd based GIS version, which could be used to view the map at different scales
- Linking the map to regional targeting of grant