

# Forestry England Proposal for new woodland at Quoditch, near Ashwater

## Devon Countryside Access Forum response

Response ID ANON-X32M-8T5Y-4  
Submitted to New woodland - Quoditch  
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### Introduction

1. What is your name?

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2. What is your email address?

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3. What is your postcode?

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4. Are you responding as?

Other stakeholder: Devon Countryside Access Forum

### Feedback

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

The Devon Countryside Access Forum welcomes proposals Forestry England have made to develop a new woodland at Quoditch, particularly given their commitment to dedicate this new woodland for recreational access under the CROW Act. The Forum would like to raise several points:

1. The plans show a number of paths. The grass surface of many of the paths across the wood suggests that these may get muddy and may not be available all-year round. It would be useful to provide well-drained and surfaced paths in keeping with the woodland environment yet allowing access for those with mobility scooters, powered wheelchairs, wheelchairs and pushchairs.

2. There is also reference to access through existing gates. It would be helpful to have details of the design of these gates (and other gates/gaps through hedgerows within the woodland) to ensure that they are suitable for disabled users. A width of 1.5m is required.

3. It is not clear whether this proposal will secure public access along the existing track (not maintainable at public expense) between Quoditch and the northern

section of new woodland (English oak research plot), although it is mentioned that this track will be improved. It would be helpful if the status and use of this track could be clarified.

4. Forestry England is asked to identify ways in which circular walks can be developed between the northern and southern sections of new woodland, recognising that the proposals currently identify a potential link only via the existing north-south track from Quoditch. There do not appear to be any paths identified in the northern oak area of woodland.

5. The Forum notes the larger expanse of woodland, Quoditchmoor Plantation, situated immediately to the north. Forestry England is advised to explore ways in which public access may be secured between the proposed new woodland and this plantation to link neighbouring woodland areas and achieve greater recreational and environmental benefits. The Forum seeks to secure additional benefits for cyclists and horse-riders wherever possible and linking to neighbouring woodlands might enable multi-use to be achieved, thereby allowing more groups of users to benefit.

6. Although it is a small woodland, the nearby roads are narrow and it would therefore seem expedient for the design to make provision for a small car park to avoid any obstruction on the adjacent road and verges, or at least to allow this to be provided should the need arise. The proposed signs discouraging parking may not be adequate.

This response will be on the agenda at the next Forum meeting on 23 September for formal approval. The comments are in line with advice given previously and Forum position statements.

These comments constitute formal advice from the Devon Countryside Access Forum and the Forestry Commission is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions. Feedback would be appreciated.

(The Devon Countryside Access Forum (DCAF) is a local access forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act). Its statutory remit is to give independent advice "as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area..." Section 94(4) of the Act specifies bodies to whom the Forum has a statutory function to give advice, and this includes the Forestry Commission and the Secretary of State for any Government Department.

The DCAF currently has nineteen members, appointed by Devon County Council, who represent the interests of landowners/managers, access users and other relevant areas of expertise such as conservation and tourism.

Chair: Sarah Slade

Vice Chair: Chris Cole



Forestry England

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# Quoditch Wood

Consultation report  
and our response to  
issues raised

August 2024



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# 1. Executive summary

Between 8 July and 28 July 2024, we held a consultation on proposals for the designs of a new woodland at Quoditch. The new woodland is in northwest Devon, next to the hamlet of Quoditch and 5.5 miles from Holsworthy. The woodland will be open to the public and provide a quiet space for people to enjoy alongside thriving wildlife and sustainably grown timber.

The design proposals we consulted upon were informed by site surveys and early engagement with statutory stakeholders as well as the local community.

We received 14 responses to the consultation, including responses from residents and stakeholders. The majority of the feedback was supportive, others highlighted concerns about our proposals, raised questions or made suggestions.

After carefully considering the responses, we are making the following changes and amendments to our proposals for the new woodland:

- We propose to include a scrape in the Southwest of the site, subject to checking the land to ensure the location is suitable. This is a small shallow area that would temporarily hold water and benefit various wildlife species, particularly birds, amphibians and invertebrates.
- We have made changes to the designs to retain existing views across the landscape.
- We've increased the proportion of broadleaves in some areas to bring additional variety, colour and texture.

Over the coming weeks, we will be finalising our designs to reflect these changes, ahead of an application to the Forestry Commission for regulatory review before we can begin to create the new woodland.

This report outlines our approach to our consultation and engagement with the local community and other key stakeholders, summarises the key concerns, issues and questions raised, and our response.

## 2. About the Consultation

### 2.1 Introduction

Forestry England is creating a new woodland on land we have bought at Quoditch in Devon. The land was previously used for grazing and will provide a thriving woodland which will be planted with a mix of tree and shrub species, including mixed conifer and broadleaf trees, specially selected to be resilient to future climate conditions. The new woodland will be a 'Coronation Wood' to celebrate the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.

The new woodland will have public access for visitors, providing a high-quality green space for people to explore and enjoy, a valuable wildlife habitat, and a sustainable source of timber for a green economy.

The consultation invited views from the public and stakeholders on our proposals for the planting and design of the new woodland.

Feedback will help to shape and inform our final designs which will be submitted to the Forestry Commission for permission to create the new woodland.

### 2.2 Purpose

The aims of the consultation were to:

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

### 2.3 Early engagement

In April 2024, we wrote to neighbours at 18 addresses close to the site for the new woodland.

The letter invited people's views on the issues important for us to consider as we develop our designs for the creation of a new woodland on land in Quoditch. We also wrote to Ashwater Parish Council. The letter included a map showing the boundary of the new site and invited responses via an online survey. We also invited direct neighbours to the site to get in touch with us by email so we could introduce ourselves and discuss the process of new woodland creation in more detail.

We received 10 responses to the early engagement, including a response from Ashwater Parish Council. Additionally, we had telephone or face to face discussions with the owners or occupiers of 3 neighbouring properties.

The feedback, together with further design and survey work and engagement with stakeholders, has helped to shape the design proposals we presented in the July 2024 public consultation.

## 2.4 How our consultation designs were informed by feedback to early engagement

Feedback to our early engagement included questions and concerns about issues including:

- Suggestions for the main entrance and access to the new woodland
- Concerns about an increase in parking in the local narrow lanes and an increase in local traffic
- Views and neighbouring properties
- Tree species and choices - avoid planting dense woodland, include a mix of hardwoods, native and broadleaved trees
- Woodland design suggestions included not planting too close to neighbouring properties to preserve natural light and refers to the West Devon Forest Plan
- Involve local schools in planting and ecological studies
- Questions about woodland management and timber harvesting

**Appendix E** describes how the designs presented at the public consultation responded to this feedback.

## 2.5 Public consultation - who we consulted

We invited local people who responded to our initial early engagement survey, as well as representatives from Devon County Council, Torridge District Council, County and District Ward Councillors and the MP for Torridge & Tavistock Constituency. We also contacted Ashwater Parish Council.

Other stakeholders we advised of the consultation included the Devon Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

A list of stakeholders we contacted are listed in **Appendix F**. Stakeholder responses are summarised in **Section 3.4** of this document.

## 2.6 Dates and duration

The public consultation was open for 3 weeks from 8 July to midnight on the 28 July 2024.

## 2.7 What we asked

The consultation survey included one open question inviting written feedback or questions about our proposed plans for the new woodland.

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.

## 2.8 Methods of responding

Respondents to the consultation were invited to give their views by:

- Completing the questionnaire included on our website at: <https://consult.forestryengland.uk/forest-districts/quoditch-consult/>
- Email at: [Woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk](mailto:Woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk) (where responding via the survey was not possible).
- Leaving comments or suggestions at the public information event held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> July between 4pm - 7pm at Ashwater Parish Hall, Ashwater, EX21 5EZ. (These have been summarised separately in **Section 3.3** of this report).
- Completing a paper survey at the public information event.

## 2.9 Overview of consultation responses

We received 14 responses to the consultation. 8 were submitted by completing the consultation online, and 6 were submitted by email or completed at the consultation drop in event. The responses were coded and categorised as either positive, negative/concerns, questions or suggestions.

## 2.10 Consultation materials and publicity

### 2.10.1 Consultation materials

We published consultation information about the new woodland on our website. This included:

- An overview of the new woodland creation programme and tree planting objectives.
- A site appraisal of the existing site - with photographs and maps to give context.
- An overview of the surveys undertaken and the objectives and principles that have informed our design proposals for the new woodland.
- An overview of planting types included in the proposals.
- Visuals of how the new woodland might look soon after planting and in the future.



- An overview of how feedback received to our early engagement had been incorporated into the designs presented in the consultation.
- Information on how to respond to the consultation.
- Comment boards at the consultation information drop in events inviting attendees to use sticky notes to leave comments about the proposals.

### 2.10.2 Consultation activity

We publicised the consultation in the following ways:

- **Media release:** Distributed to local news outlets.
- **News item and dedicated web page:** On the Forestry England website: [New woodland at Quoditch | Forestry England](#)
- **Emails:** Sent to over 20 people in the local area and stakeholders.
- **Posters:** Posters publicising the consultation were put up in public areas around Quoditch.
- **Consultation drop-in event:** We held a public information drop-in event on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> July between 4pm - 7pm at Ashwater Parish Hall, Ashwater, EX21 5EZ. More than 35 people attended the event.

### 2.10.3 Analysis of consultation responses

Responses received by completing the survey or by email were analysed by assigning (or coding) the points made by each respondent to one or more codes within a code frame. Codes were organised by theme and separated into positive, concerns/negative, and questions or suggestions. Each code reflects a point raised by multiple individuals in a variety of ways. From this it was possible to count how many times respondents had raised the same or similar points.

## 3. About the responses

We received a total of 14 responses to the consultation: 8 via the online survey and 6 were submitted by email or by completing a feedback form at the consultation drop-in event.

We have summarised the comments into the following overarching themes:

Issue	Mentions
Parking and traffic	13
Access to the new woodland	9
Views	3
Tree species and planting	3
Flooding and water management	2
Community involvement	2
Birds, wildlife, and diversity	1

Comments discussed at the drop in event have been summarised separately in **Section 3.3** of this document.

### 3.1 Positive comments

General positive comments included:

- 1. Support for the new woodland:** Several responses expressed excitement and support for the creation of a new woodland, especially in commemoration of the Coronation of the King.
- 2. Biodiversity:** Positive remarks about the potential for biodiversity, including the introduction of wildflowers.
- 3. Environmental benefits:** The proposal is seen as beneficial for carbon sequestration, water quality improvement, and habitat enhancement. Mention of the benefit of woodland to improve water quality, flood risk, and water resources.

## 3.2 Key questions, suggestions and concerns

The key questions, suggestions and concerns from the consultation are listed below, starting with the ones mentioned the most.

- 1. Parking: Suggestions and concerns about the lack of a dedicated car park, fearing that visitors will park on narrow lanes and verges, causing congestion and noise.**

8 responses mentioned this as a specific concern, whilst 5 responses suggested the inclusion of a small car park as proposed signs to discourage parking may not be sufficient. In two cases obstructions or blocking access to property were mentioned.

- 2. Access to the new woodland: Concern about the accessibility of the site, particularly for wheelchairs, mobility scooters, horse riders and cyclists.**

5 responses mentioned concerns about accessibility to the new woodland, whilst 4 responses suggested improvements to paths and access. These included:

- Ensure access points are wide enough for horses to use the grass tracks
- Provide flat, surfaced paths for wheelchair and mobility scooter access
- Design gates to be suitable for disabled users (1.5m wide) and ensure paths are well-drained and surfaced
- Concern about access and parking behind a private garage
- Create circular walks connecting the northern and southern sections of the new woodland.

- 3. Views: Concern about the density and type of planting, particularly conifers, which might obstruct views and reduce light to nearby properties.**

3 responses raised this as a concern.

- 4. Tree species and planting: Suggestions to experiment with agroforestry and to increase the percentage of native species planted, include a mixture of soft and hard woods and ensure the stock is sourced and grown in the UK.**

3 responses suggested agroforestry and/or tree species.

- 5. Flooding and water management: Concern about existing issues with flooding off the fields and how the new woodland might impact water quality and pollution management.**

2 responses mentioned this as an issue or concern whilst also flagging the benefits the new woodland would bring to flooding and water management.

- 6. Community involvement: Suggestions to include the local community.**

Suggestions to include local schools to participate in tree planting, contributing to information boards and exploring ways to secure public access between the new woodland and neighbouring woodland areas, through community engagement and volunteering: 2 responses suggested community involvement and volunteering.

7. **Birds, wildlife and diversity:** Presence of special species in the area, including hummingbird hawk moths and nightjars, and suggested adding a small pond and seeding the area with wildflowers to help maintain biodiversity.

1 response

### 3.3 Feedback from the consultation drop in event

Over 35 people attended the public information drop in event held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> July between 4pm - 7pm at Ashwater Parish Hall, Ashwater, EX21 5EZ

The event displayed the information already available to view on the website on large posters around the venue and Forestry England staff were on hand to talk about the proposals, answer questions or queries, and listen to any concerns from those attending. In addition, visitors to the event were invited to leave comments on feedback boards.

#### Key discussion points included:

- Suggestions for access to the new woodland from Prestacott
- Suggestions that hedges should be regularly maintained for nesting birds
- Concerns about dogs chasing livestock and suggestion to include boundary fencing
- Questions about deer and grey squirrel management as both are prevalent in the area
- Questions and concerns about species diversity and the proportion of coniferous planting
- Concerns about the loss of productive farmland
- Concerns that tall trees may affect views and light into properties
- Concerns about parking and traffic and suggestions to include a dedicated area for parking

Sticky notes posted on the exhibition boards reflected some of the comments above:

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
<i>Concern about lack of parking/provide a car park/off road parking</i>	<b>5</b>
<i>Lack of public access points/include access via green lane near Prestacott</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>Concern about use of agricultural farmland and impact on food production</i>	<b>1</b>
<i>Concern about species diversity/proportion of conifer</i>	<b>1</b>
<i>Maintain roadside hedges regularly</i>	<b>1</b>

## 4. Our response 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 in the tables on the following pages (Appendix A).

We have grouped the issues into broad themes for a more readily understood overview of the issues. Positive comments about the proposals have been noted, but for conciseness, these have not been included in the tables.

Following further design work and in response to consultation feedback, we have made the following changes to our proposed designs for the new woodland:

- We propose to include a scrape in the Southwest of the site, subject to checking the land to ensure the location is suitable. This is a small shallow area that would temporarily hold water and benefit various wildlife species, particularly birds, amphibians and invertebrates.
- We have made changes to the designs to retain existing views across the landscape.
- We've increased the proportion of broadleaves in some areas to bring additional variety, colour and texture.

## Appendix A: Our response to key issues raised - Quoditch

Traffic and car-parking		
1	Include a car park or off road parking and include signage to discourage parking on verges or in gateways.	While the new woodland will be publicly accessible, it has been designed for local people to enjoy and our initial proposals do not include public parking. Along with the majority of our woodlands we will have operational access points where there would be space for occasional parking.
Access to the new woodland		
2	Include access for horse and bike riders - include surfaced paths, gates that are wide enough for pushchairs and wheelchair users (a minimum of 1.5 metres)	The paths within the new woodland will be unsurfaced grass spaces for people to explore the new woodland. We have no plans to introduce surfaced paths or facilities for horse riding or cycling.
3	Will the site be fully fenced/contained to prevent people and dogs to access private property and land?	We are not proposing to include dog proof fencing on the boundary of the new woodland; we expect visitors to be responsible dog owners and follow our <a href="#">dog code</a> .
4	Provide an additional entrance to the woodland via Prestacott	Access points to the new woodland have been carefully considered to allow people to enjoy the new woodland and are included in the designs. We have no current plans on creating any additional access points in the design.
5	Create circular walks connecting the northern and southern section of the woodland	Unfortunately, this will not be possible as this would involve crossing land that is not owned by Forestry England.
Views and planting		
6	Concern about the density and type of planting, particularly conifers, which might obstruct views and reduce light to properties	We have made changes to the designs to retain existing views from properties. We have increased the proportion of broadleaf species in some areas of the woodland.

<b>Tree species and planting</b>		
7	Include agroforestry in the proposals	The objectives of this woodland have been carefully considered with our professional foresters and we don't intend on creating areas of agroforestry within the new woodland.
8	Increase the percentage of native species planted, a mixture of soft and hard woods and ensure stock is sourced and grown in the UK	<p>The woodland will have a mix of broadleaf and conifer trees with shrubs along the edges to add variety, colour and texture.</p> <p>Forestry England owned nurseries grow 7 million new trees every year to replant forests across England and create new areas of woodland. The majority of trees we plant are sourced and grown in the UK, but we occasionally purchase from other nurseries or source seeds which may originate outside of the UK. All the trees we use are required to have a <a href="#">plant healthy certificate</a> to guarantee they're not carrying pests and diseases.</p>
<b>Flooding and water management</b>		
9	Concern about flood water running off the fields and affecting properties close by	Woodlands can help to alleviate flooding, improve soil infiltration and reduce or slow surface runoff. Specific areas of concern have been discussed with our foresters.
<b>Community involvement and engagement</b>		
10	Include the local community in tree planting and community volunteering	Forestry England works with many 'friends of' societies and community groups that help manage our woodlands. We will monitor site use and interest at Quoditch as part of our wider engagement plans across the district.
11	Include information boards	There will be signage at the entrances to the new woodland, but we don't plan to put up other signs within the woodland. We want visitors to enjoy the area's natural beauty and keep signage to a minimum.
<b>Birds, wildlife and diversity</b>		

12	Include a small pond to encourage species diversity	We propose to include a small scrape (subject to land checking). This is a small shallow area to hold water temporarily. It will benefit various wildlife species, particularly birds, amphibians and invertebrates.
13	Include programmes for deer and grey squirrel management	A local wildlife ranger will regularly check the new woodland to see if any interventions are needed to prevent deer and grey squirrels from causing damage.
<b>Public facilities</b>		
14	Include dog bins in the new woodland	We have no plans to install dog bins at this location. We expect visitors to be responsible dog owners and follow our <a href="#">dog code</a> . Dog owners should always clear up after their dog. Where no bins are available, owners should bag the dog waste and take it home.
<b>Use of agricultural land for new woodlands</b>		
15	Why are you using agricultural land to create new woodlands	<p>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.</p> <p>Our proposals for a new woodland at Quoditch supports tree planting targets to create 30,000 hectares of new woodland every year by 2025 and provide a source of sustainable homegrown timber.</p>



		<p>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 &amp; 2). The land at Quoditch is graded at 3. All landowners choose how they should best manage their land to suit their business.</p>
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