

Press release: England's largest woodland planting scheme gets green light

More than 600,000 trees are set to be planted across Northumberland over the next two years, with England's largest woodland planting scheme in decades given the go-ahead by the Forestry Commission today.

Thanks to government funding, Doddington North Moor has been given consent to plant a new 350-hectare forest near Wooler in Northumberland – the largest of its kind to be planted in England for over 30 years.

The forest, which will span the equivalent of over 650 football fields, will help to enhance populations of the iconic red squirrel, while storing over 120,000 tonnes of carbon and helping to manage flood risk in the area. With the forestry and timber processing industry a major employer in the region, the project is also set to bring a boost to local businesses and will generate a number of new jobs.

It joins another successful project that has just been approved this week in the Lake District, with government funding helping the Lowther Park Estate plant more than 200,000 trees over 170 hectares of their land.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey welcomed the decision, saying:

Our forests and woodlands are some of our most vital and cherished natural assets, and planting more trees is at the heart of our ambition to protect the environment for future generations.

Doddington North Moor will make a significant contribution to our drive to plant 11 million trees across the nation and is a fantastic example of the kind of tree planting schemes we want to see more of. I hope this will signal a wave of similar projects to come forward and help other landowners realise the benefits of woodland creation.

Richard Greenhous, Director of Forest Services at the Forestry Commission said:

We have worked very closely with the applicant, Natural England and the Environment Agency to help shape this important project into something we can all be proud of.

We stand ready to support more large scale woodland creation projects that will deliver the government's and the forestry sector's ambitions to plant more trees across the country.

Andy Howard, Doddington North Moor project manager, said:

I'm delighted that we have gained approval from the Forestry Commission for our afforestation project at Doddington North. There needs to be a major uplift in the planting of new woodlands in England, and hopefully us starting to plant trees at Doddington and the lessons learnt from the application process can unlock interest from further potential applicants.

Planting at Doddington is expected to begin in March 2018 and will be phased over the next two to three years.

Doddington has been developed over the last two years with support from the government's Woodland Creation Planning Grant. It anticipated the planting will be funded through other schemes such as the Woodland Carbon Fund and Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant.

Under the Countryside Stewardship scheme landowners can apply for up to £6,800 per hectare to plant more trees, reaping the environmental and financial benefits of woodland creation – and improvements have been made to this scheme this year to make it easier to apply.

Funding is also available for larger scale projects via the £19million Woodland Carbon Fund. The threshold for minimum applications for this funding has been recently reduced to 10 hectares, so that more projects can take advantage of this support.

Press release: Consultation on further safeguards on investigatory powers launched

The government has announced today that it is consulting on new safeguards for the use of communications data.

A [consultation](#), which will run for 7 weeks, is seeking views on amendments to the UK's communications data and acquisition regime in response to a judgment handed down by the Court of Justice of the European Union in December 2016.

The proposed changes will introduce additional safeguards to ensure communications data can continue to be used to keep people safe from crime and terrorism while complying with the judgment.

Launching the consultation, Security Minister, Ben Wallace said:

Communications data is used in the vast majority of serious and organised crime prosecutions and has been used in every major Security Service counter-terrorism investigation over the last decade. Its importance cannot be overstated.

For example, it is often the only way to identify paedophiles involved in online child abuse and can be used to identify where and when these horrendous crimes have taken place.

As this is an issue of public importance, we consider it important to consult on our proposed changes to inform our legislative response and subsequent Parliamentary debate. All responses will be welcomed and carefully considered.

The new provisions include:

- the introduction of independent authorisation of communications data requests by a new body, known as the Office for Communications Data Authorisations, under the Investigatory Powers Commissioner Lord Justice Fulford
- restricting the use of communications data to investigations into serious crime
- additional safeguards which must be taken into account before a Data Retention Notice can be given to a telecommunications or postal operator
- clarification of the circumstances in which notification of those whose communications data has been accessed can occur
- mandatory guidance on the protection of retained data in line with European data protection standards

The communications data code of practice, which sets out how the safeguards governing the retention of communications data by telecommunications operators and its acquisition by public authorities will operate, is also being published today for consultation.

The government is clear that the December 2016 judgment does not apply to the retention or acquisition of data for national security purposes as national security is outside of the scope of EU law. Nevertheless, a number of the proposed changes will apply to certain national security applications for communications data to create a simpler, more practical regime.

Notes to editors:

Communications data is the 'who', 'where', 'when', 'how' and 'with whom' of a

communication, but not what was written or said, and includes information such as the subscriber to a telephone service. It is an essential tool for the full range of law enforcement activity and national security investigations, for example to investigate crime, keep children safe, support or disprove alibis, and tie a suspect to a particular crime scene, amongst other things. It is used in 95 percent of serious and organised crime prosecution cases handled by the Crown Prosecution Service Organised Crime Division, and has been used in every major Security Service counter-terrorism investigation over the last decade.

The Investigatory Powers Act brings together and updates existing powers while radically overhauling how they are authorised and overseen. There is more information on [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk).

The consultation is open for responses now and will close on 18 January 2018. The government proposes amending the IPA by secondary legislation made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972.

We have also published relevant [case studies](#).

Research and analysis: Marine licence review (MMO 1126)

The project has included a number of key components which can be summarised as:

- a review of marine licences and the respective conditions;
- understanding the drivers and evidence supporting the requirements for marine licence conditions;
- understanding which Marine Licence conditions have the greatest impact on industry; and
- a review of current practice and recommendations.

Consultation outcome: Environment Agency enforcement and sanctions policy

Updated: Added consultation response document.

We have combined the [enforcement and sanctions statement and the enforcement and sanctions guidance](#) into one document: The enforcement and sanctions policy. We have updated our approach to include new government policies we need to take account of.

The consultation document sets out:

- where we propose to amend our current approach
- what we propose should remain unchanged

We will use your feedback to further develop and finalise our enforcement and sanctions policy.

We will produce a consultation response document by 6 April 2018.

Shortly after this we will publish our enforcement and sanctions policy.

Press release: Managing hazardous materials advice for Astonfields businesses

The advice and guidance Environment Agency staff gave to businesses on the Astonfields Industrial Estate, Stafford, will ensure that local businesses manage their hazardous waste and materials to help prevent pollution in the future.

In this unannounced day of action, more than 50 businesses were visited and inspected by Environment Agency staff. The inspections checked a number of things, including how hazardous materials are stored, how they are disposed of, whether the site and its drains are maintained and if businesses know what to do if something did spill into surface water drains.

James Perry, from the Environment Agency's Hazardous Waste Team, explains why it's important to reduce the risk of pollution:

Hazardous materials used in industrial processes can be washed into the surface water drains by rain. These drains usually flow directly into a brook or a river which means hazardous materials can pollute the water, causing a problem for fish and other aquatic life. In serious cases, a pollution can also affect other businesses who use the water for their industrial processes or even affect drinking water.

By offering advice and guidance on measures businesses can take to reduce the risk of pollution, we're seeking to make sure the owners

have robust processes in place to prevent a pollution and know what to do if something goes wrong. This is really important; at the Environment Agency we follow the 'polluter pays principle', so if something does happen, the company responsible will have to pay the costs of clean up and recovery.

The Marston Brook flows near the industrial estate and has suffered from low levels of pollution from materials washed into it from surface water drains for a number of years. It is hoped this day of action will reduce the level of pollution seen in the Marston Brook.

If anyone is concerned about the business practices at any site, or if there is a pollution in a river or brook, please contact the Environment Agency's 24/7 incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.