



Ministry of Defence

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4 July 2019

Ref. FOI 2019/06692

Dear Mr [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter of 7 June 2019 requesting the following information:

- i. *How many acres or hectares of woodland are currently on the MOD estate?*
- ii. *What role does woodland cover play in your estate management strategy (eg, flood defence, support biodiversity, timber)?*
- iii. *Are you planning to increase woodland cover on the estate? If so, by how much and in what timescale?*
- iv. *If not, what are the reasons?*
- v. *Is there any support from external parties that would help you to plant more?*
- vi. *Are there any other points I should be aware of?*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and I can confirm that all the information in scope of your request is held. The information you have requested can be found below.

i. How many acres or hectares of woodland are currently on the MOD estate?

There are approximately 19,500 hectares of woodland on all UK MOD sites. 44% of this is broadleaf, 56% is conifer.

ii. What role does woodland cover play in your estate management strategy (eg, flood defence, support biodiversity, timber)?

The primary objective for woodland on the MOD estate is to provide cover for military training, however, conservation, biodiversity, climate change, flood defence, timber harvesting and amenity are all important secondary objectives. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) currently averages 40,000 tons of harvesting per year with a mix of thinning and clear fell, depending on crop type and location. On average DIO restock approximately 50 hectares per year. However, due to an outbreak of *Phytophthora* in Wales, Ash dieback in Kent, and the ongoing restoration of windblow sites, DIO restocked 115 hectares in this last 18 months. All sites have been restocked with climate change resilient species.

iii. Are you planning to increase woodland cover on the estate? If so, by how much and in what timescale?

The MOD has carried out significant woodland creation over the past 8 years working in partnership with the Woodland Trust. In 2010/11 the DIO Forestry team carried out an extensive UK wide survey to establish how much potential land there was available for woodland creation on the MOD estate. Following the survey DIO were able to identify significant areas for new woodland, planting primarily in support of military training. Over a three year period approximately 550 hectares of new woodland (approximately 1.3 million trees) were planted through leasing the land to the Woodland Trust, who were able to utilise Forestry Commission grants for Woodland creation that were unavailable to the MOD. The project has generally been a success, however, MOD is currently reviewing the next stage of the woodland creation project due to changes to operational and training requirements, and the disposal of some sites containing newly planted trees under the departments Defence Estate Optimisation Programme.

The department's primary objective is to establish new woodland and develop existing woodland in direct support of military training as this gives the sites longevity and security going forward. DIO are working with both Dartmoor National Park and Northumberland National Park on planting at Dartmoor and Otterburn. Site specific areas for new woodland are currently being finalised in the Long Term Forest Plan for each establishment. These plans are being produced by DIO's industry partners and are due to be completed by the end of 2019.

iv. If not, what are the reasons?

There are a huge number of factors which detract from our ability to vastly increase tree cover on the estate including other environment and landscape designations which often cannot be deconflicted. DIO continue to work closely with the Forestry Commission on exploring how any identified tree planting can be taken forward.

v. Is there any support from external parties that would help you to plant more?

DIO are currently able to claim the carbon sequestration planting grant available from the Forestry commission and are hoping to utilise this on the proposed woodland creation projects.

vi. Are there any other points I should be aware of?

Ash dieback is certainly the most significant forestry issue the Department now faces across the MOD estate. DIO are currently working on a national survey to establish the extent of our Ash tree cover and implement a risk assessed program of works to ensure the MOD Health and Safety liability is met.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made in writing within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be

contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

DIO Secretariat

