

EWCO: Natural Colonisation Initial Site Assessment Form

Information and guidance about the England Woodland Creation Offer's (EWCO) rules, requirements, payments, and how to make an application (including for a partnership) can be found in the [How the England Woodland Creation Offer works guidance on the EWCO Gov.uk page](#)

How to use this form

This form is to be completed by the applicant and verified by the Forestry Commission Woodland Officer when applying for natural colonisation under EWCO.

Please complete one of these forms for each individual area of the proposal where natural colonisation is proposed.

You (the applicant) only need to complete Sections 1 and 2. The other sections are for Forestry Commission staff use only.

Section 1: Beneficiary and Case details

This section is to be completed by the Forestry Commission Admin Officer.

Application / site name:	
SBI Number:	
Lead Applicant Name:	
Central grid reference:	
Cpt(s) where natural colonisation will be used:	

Section 2: Site observations

This section is to be completed by the applicant and verified by the Forestry Commission Woodland Officer.

2.1 Existing colonisation

Is there any evidence of existing colonisation on the site itself, in early or advanced stages?	Yes	☐	No	☐		
If so, can these areas be protected to ensure establishment continues?	Yes	☐	No	☐	N/A	☐
Is there any evidence of colonisation on adjacent or similar sites?	Yes	☐	No	☐		
If so, what are the differences between those areas and the target site?						
What are the conditions stopping colonisation taking place on the target site at this moment?						
Additional comments:						

2.2 Seed availability

Are there at least two tree species within 75 metres of the target site?	Yes	☐	No	☐		
If the tree are more than 75 metres away, why is the area still considered appropriate for natural colonisation?						
If so, are trees of seed-bearing age present and in a condition likely to bear seed?	Yes	☐	No	☐	N/A	☐
Are the species present suitable for the target site's conditions and for delivering management objectives?	Yes	☐	No	☐		
Are wind dispersed species located upwind of the target site according to the prevailing wind direction during the months of seed dispersal?	Yes	☐	No	☐		
Additional comments:						

2.3 Site suitability

What is the soil type, particularly soil moisture and nutrient regimes?				
What is the land use history, and is it suitable for supporting natural colonisation?				
What vegetation is on the site? How is this likely to develop in light of soil type and land use change?				
Are areas of exposed mineral soil present and likely to remain present to enable trees to establish?	Yes	☐	No	☐
Could scarification increase germination sites without worsening density of competing vegetation?	Yes	☐	No	☐
Is vegetation management necessary to achieve the desired level of natural colonisation?	Yes	☐	No	☐
In light of the soil type and previous land use, is ripping or subsoiling required to break an indurated layer (e.g., a plough-pan)?	Yes	☐	No	☐
Additional comments:				

2.4 Browsing and grazing

Do livestock have access to the site for grazing?	Yes	☐	No	☐
If so, what is the intensity and how will this be controlled to ensure natural colonisation is successful?				
Is there evidence of browsing or grazing by deer, rabbit or hare?	Yes	☐	No	☐
If so, what is the intensity? Is any woody vegetation showing signs of developing through early growth stages? (Remember that deer populations may have increased significantly since established plants were at seedling stage.)				

How is the landscape composition and management of land in proximity to the site likely to affect deer pressure on any natural colonisation?	
Additional comments:	

2.5 Ash dieback

Is the area adjacent to an ash-dominated woodland with ash dieback?	Yes	☐	No	☐
If so, what is the plan to address the risk that ash dieback results in failure of the natural colonisation?				

The rest of this form is for official use by Forestry Commission staff only.

Section 3: Site visit

This section is to be completed by the Forestry Commission Woodland Officer.

3.1 Summary of observations

Date of site visit	
Summary of observations	

3.2 Outcome

Is natural colonisation a feasible method for delivering the land manager's management objectives on this site? (Select one box)	
☐	Yes – EWCO Application (including the associated Woodland Creation Plan) should include natural colonisation to the appropriate extent.
☐	No – Plan for woodland creation using other methods.
☐	Query (Complete referral questions in Section 3.2.1).
Date EWCO Admin Team notified of outcome	

3.2.1 Referral information (if applicable)

Referred to Field Manager	☐	Date of referral	
Referred to National Office	☐	Date of referral	
Outcome after referral			
☐	Yes – EWCO Application (including the associated Woodland Creation Plan) should include natural colonisation to the appropriate extent.		
☐	No – Plan for woodland creation using other methods.		

Reason for outcome, after referral:	
Field Manager or National Officer Name	
Field Manager or National Officer e-signature	
Date EWCO Admin Team notified of outcome after referral:	

3.3 Site visit photographic evidence gathered

Photograph number	Description	Date	Comment

3.4 Document upload and sign-off

Document Type	Uploaded to EWCO Application folder?				Date of upload
Final Site Assessment Report	Yes	☐	No	☐	
Location Map(s)	Yes	☐	No	☐	
Photographs from site visit	Yes	☐	No	☐	

Please sign and date this form below once your assessment of this compartment is complete.

Woodland Officer Name	
Woodland Officer e-signature	
Date	

Forestry Commission Admin use only:

Further notes