

UKWAS Interpretation Note 5 - Minimum Intervention/Natural Reserves in small woods and young plantations

PLEASE NOTE: THIS INFORMATION NOTE RELATES TO THE SUPERSEDED FIRST EDITION OF THE UK WOODLAND ASSURANCE STANDARD

Key Words: minimum intervention, natural reserves, small woods, long-term retentions, veteran trees, conservation areas.

Relevant requirement references: 6.3.1, 6.1.1

Date: Discussed and agreed at Interpretation Panel meeting on 8th December 2000.

Question:

Tim Hodges questioned how this requirement should be applied to a) very small woods (i.e. under 2ha), and b) to young plantations.

Discussion:

It was agreed (at the previous meeting) that the glossary definition of a Natural Reserve should be changed to the one given in the Guidance Notes:

"Natural Reserves are predominantly wooded, are permanently identified and are in locations which are of particularly high wildlife interest or potential. They are managed by minimum intervention unless alternative management has higher conservation or biodiversity value".

The Guidance Notes already make clear that in woods under 10ha this requirement is achieved by retaining trees and clumps. The origin of this requirement was a perceived need for more, large minimum intervention reserves in the UK, as implied by the Guidance Notes. This has also been confirmed by recent research commissioned by English Nature (Mountford EP, 2001; Peterken GF, 2001).

It would therefore be appropriate for larger organizations with an extensive forest estate, to take a strategic or national approach to meeting this requirement. Fewer, larger reserves might achieve this aspect better than reserving tiny proportions of every wood. In this case application of the criteria for selection of Minimum Intervention reserves contained in two Research Reports published recently by English Nature on this subject would be useful. However, the selection of reserves should also take account of the need for minimum intervention at the individual woodland, FMU or landscape level.

In young woods minimum intervention was unlikely to be the management regime that had highest value for biodiversity. All that might be required for such woods might be a policy of identifying such areas as and when the woods had become fully established and no longer required intervention in order to increase their biodiversity value.

Conclusions:

Organizations with larger and more widespread forest estates may fulfill this requirement across their estate as a whole rather than reserving specified areas in each and every wood or even FMU.

In young plantations minimum intervention may often not be the best management regime for biodiversity during the establishment phase, but potential areas for future non-intervention should be identified wherever appropriate.

References:

Peterken GF (2001) Natural reserves in English woodlands. English Nature Research Report 384.

Mountford EP (2001) A provisional minimum intervention woodland reserve series for England with proposals for baseline recording and long-term monitoring therein. English Nature Research Report 385.