Supplementary Material

This material accompanies the British Woodlands Survey 2024 (BWS2024) report, providing further information and results which could not be included due to space limitations. The document is hosted by Sylva Foundation at www.sylva.org.uk/bws

The BWS2024 survey was commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) to explore attitudes, experiences and actions among private land managers towards public access in woodlands with a view to providing evidence for the England Tree Action Plan. Welsh government supported the project by funding a translation into Cymraeg. An online survey was open to participants for 10 weeks during summer 2024 and promoted to landowners, agents, and tree and forestry professionals. A total of 467 usable submissions were received, 79% of which were from people in England, 13% in Wales and 8% in Scotland. Most respondents were landowners (87%). The total land area represented by respondents across Britain was 1.3Mha, broadly evenly distributed across the three countries, which is equal to 56% of the privately-owned woodland area in Britain.

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New Ecological Paradigm

Supplementary Materials Table 1 The 15 statements or items of the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) and their attribution to a pro-or anti-ecological worldview, and to five facets from Dunlap et al. (2000). NEP scores ranged from 1-5, where 5 was strongly-agree. Note that scores for even-numbered statements (i.e. anti-ecological) were reversed to allow their combination with pro-ecological scores to arrive at a meaningful score.

NEP code	Statement	Worldview	Facets
1	We are approaching the limit of the number of people the Earth can support	PRO	LIMITS
2	Humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs	ANTI	ANTI-ANTHRO
3	When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences	PRO	BALANCE
4	Human ingenuity will ensure that we do not make the Earth unliveable	ANTI	ANTI-EXEMPT
5	Humans are seriously abusing the environment	PRO	ECO-CRISIS
6	The Earth has plenty of natural resources if we just learn how to develop them	ANTI	LIMITS
7	Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist	PRO	ANTI-ANTHRO
8	The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrial nations	ANTI	BALANCE
9	Despite our special abilities, humans are still subject to the laws of nature	PRO	ANTI-EXEMPT
10	The so-called “ecological crisis” facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated	ANTI	ECO-CRISIS
11	The Earth is like a spaceship with very limited room and resources	PRO	LIMITS
12	Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature	ANTI	ANTI-ANTHRO
13	The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset	PRO	BALANCE
14	Humans will eventually learn enough about how nature works to be able to control it	ANTI	ANTI-EXEMPT
15	If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe	PRO	ECO-CRISIS

Summary of comments received regarding negative impacts of public access

Supplementary Materials Table 2 Summary of negative impacts of public access reported by woodland owners and managers in England.

Main Theme	**Sub-Themes**	**Selected quotes** (each bullet indicates a different respondent)
Environmental impacts	Damage to wildlife and habitats	• "Impact on wildlife, habitat damage, reduction in bird nesting opportunities, destruction of habitats for rare species, disturbance of ground-nesting birds, wildlife disturbance by dogs, loss of biodiversity."
	Wildlife disturbance	• "Free-running dogs disturbing ground-nesting birds and wildlife, general disturbance of wildlife, interference with predator control, and danger to sensitive species."
	Environmental degradation	• "Woodlands need to be where nature thrives; more public access is concerning."
	Other	• "Biosecurity issues, spread of pests and diseases, vandalism, risk of fires."
Privacy and Safety Concerns	Loss of privacy	• "Public access reduces the social and health benefits to the owners themselves."
	Safety risks	• "Risk to public safety due to hazards (dangerous trees, forestry operations), increased public liability, and the need for safety inspections."
Management Challenges	Increased management burden	• "Cost of clearing litter, maintaining gates, paths, and trees, and additional work required for public access."
	Legal and liability concerns	• "Increased liability for accidents, impact on insurance, concerns about risk of litigation, and the owner's legal responsibility for hazards."
	Conflicts with land management goals	• "No understanding or consideration towards forestry operations."
	Pressure to alter management objectives	• "Change of management objectives through public pressure."
Financial and Opportunity Costs	Costs of public access	• "Financial implications from maintenance, litter clearing, insurance, liability, and increased costs of managing public access."
	Opportunity costs	• "Loss of alternative uses for the land due to public access, impact on potential commercial ventures, and increased planning required for forestry activities."
Negative Public Behaviour	Irresponsible behaviour	• "Littering, dog fouling, leaving poo bags, vandalism, trespassing, theft of wood and tools, illegal camping, and setting fires."
	Lack of respect for the environment	• "Disturbing wildlife, picking plants and fungi without permission, and damaging flora and fauna."
	Sense of entitlement	• "Some visitors showing a sense of entitlement to access the land without understanding the responsibilities of the landowner."

Summary of comments received regarding unsuitability of woodland for public access

Supplementary Materials Table 3 England Woodland owners' views for why their woodland properties were unsuitable for public access.

Main Theme	**Sub-Themes**	**Selected quotes** (each bullet indicates a different respondent)
Wildlife conservation and biodiversity protection	Protection of specific species or habitats	• "The presence of people, some with dogs, will disturb nightingales, turtle doves, and other important wildlife."
	Minimising human impact	• "If you want wildlife and nature to thrive, keep people out."
	Exclusion of public for conservation	• "My woodland is managed for wildlife and nature restoration. Visitors would damage vegetation and disturb wildlife."
Safety and liability concerns	Natural hazards and risks	• "Danger from falling limbs/trees (Ash dieback, Dutch elm disease), rifle shooting."
	Difficult terrain	• "It would be too dangerous; uneven ground, steep gorge, river floodplain, risk of rapid water changes and eroding banks."
	Risky activities	• "Working coppice woodland with charcoal burning and biochar burns done on-site." • "It is actively managed for shooting and forestry purposes."
Privacy and security concerns	Loss of privacy	• "Privacy issues as the woodland surrounds my property." • "The land was bought for family use, not public."
	Private ownership and exclusion	• "It's private property, public access is not welcome." • "It's a private woodland with no PROW and will remain private." • "Private woodland with multiple owners, and some do not welcome visitors."
	Security concerns	• "There is a legal covenant preventing public access." • "The general public do not deserve access."
Land management and practicality	Challenges of permissive access	• "Opened permissive access, but public spoiled the area, disturbed wildlife, and did not respect it."
	Farming and shooting activities	• "Working coppice woodland with deer fences, shooting, and charcoal burning." • "Game shooting and unplanned public access are problematic."
	Incompatible land use	• "Actively managed through coppice felling, with a deer management program in place. Not conducive to public access."
Size and suitability of land	Land not connect to public access	• "It doesn't link to any pathways and I want to leave it wild." • "Lack of parking, limited size."
	Small, unlinked woodlands	• "Too small to justify access." • "It is entirely surrounded by agricultural land." • "There is ample public access around the wood, so additional access isn't needed."
Negative public impact	Disrespect and damage by public	• "People are awful, destructive, and inconsiderate." • "People are irresponsible, disturb wildlife, and leave litter." • "Dog walkers are often irresponsible and thoughtless."
	Irresponsibility and lack of awareness	• "People are too irresponsible, unaware of hazards."
Personal preference	General opposition to public access	• "I may well be a maverick, but I do not believe in public access for nature conservation." • "I do not want public access." • "Why should public access private land?"

Summary of comments received relating to advice and guidance

Supplementary Materials Table 4 Comments received from woodland owners in England relating to advice and guidance.

Main Theme	**Sub-Themes**	**Selected quotes** (each bullet indicates a different respondent)
Liability and legal concerns	Clarity on complex issues	• "Any guidance is helpful especially when it comes down to insurance and liability if the worst happens."
	Legal advice and guidance	• "Legal position of the owner of the woodland. Any liabilities for those who access the wood either with or without permission."
	Insurance	• "We insure our village woodland which does cost us money. Is this really necessary or are people supposed to be responsible for their own actions?"
Management of public access	Best practice	• "Guidance on how to manage the access well. More signage or communication methods that may work for others to get people to understand how they should access the site sensibly and responsibly."
	Peer-to-peer learning	• "Experience from other small woodlands that have allowed public access. How to encourage good behaviour and respect for the woodland while allowing access."
	Permissive access	• "Guidance around non-statutory paths that have nonetheless been used to access the woodlands for many years."
Signage and communication	Informing public of appropriate behaviour with onsite signage	• "Putting up signs saying what you are allowed to do and not allowed to in woodland (as happens in Denmark where there is public access to all woodland)." • "Boards providing instructions for the public on how to behave and respect such access."
	Education	• "Adverts on the TV and other media to reintroduce and follow the Countryside Code and respect the countryside, and not act like scum. The current situation is totally unacceptable." • "Signs are useless. Education, education, education." • "To make the 'countryside' part of the School Curriculum."
Wildlife and environmental protection	Encouraging appropriate behaviour	• "Instruction to the general public on the damage they do to wildlife by walking with dogs off leads and away from the public paths."
	Biosecurity	• "Guidance also on how to get visitors to consider the risks, 1) to themselves in adverse weather conditions (snow, high winds, rain) and 2) to the woodland due to lack of good biological practice, bringing in seeds on their boots etc."
Practical management and costs	Infrastructure	• "Any advice on longer lasting and environmentally friendly and suitable path and step structures/surfaces."
	Multiple factors	• "The cost, time, and effort in clearing up and disposing of their rubbish, faeces, and fly-tipping after the public is unacceptable and cancels out the attractiveness of ANY grants offered. This cost is incurred even without grants. The contract between the public and private forest owners seems utterly broken."
Best practice	Research	• "Any research findings as to what works most safely." • "Results of scientific studies."