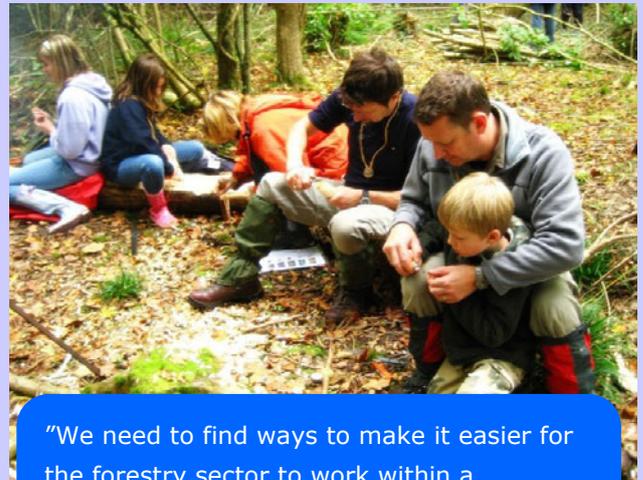


## Forestry, sustainable behaviours and behaviour change

Behaviour and behaviour change have emerged as core areas of interest for central government. A number of departmental initiatives focus on behaviour change, most notably in relation to health, the environment, travel, and energy use. The Forestry Commission and the wider forestry sector are increasingly interested in this area in order to encourage woodland creation and the use of woodlands. A literature review was undertaken to learn from existing research and translate this into practical advice.



"We need to find ways to make it easier for the forestry sector to work within a regulatory environment that rewards good behaviour" Forestry Regulation Taskforce

### Background

Policy makers have long sought to influence people's behaviour however policy instruments have often been limited to legislation, regulation and financial incentives. Insights from research on behaviour are increasingly being used to develop alternative methods providing a broader mix of policy options. Despite the recent explicit focus on behaviour and behaviour change within government, it is important to acknowledge that this is not an entirely new topic area for the forestry sector. Within forestry a lot of activity is already focused on encouraging particular types of behaviour such as woodland creation and sustainable woodland management, physical exercise and renewable energy use. A range of interventions are already employed, for example, grants, campaigns, regulation and targeted programmes. However, there are lessons that can be learnt from research focused directly on behaviour that could improve policy delivery within the forestry sector.

### Objectives

This literature review aimed to:

- Understand and describe the current environmental, health, transport and energy policy emphasis on behaviour and behaviour change.
- Understand and describe the various theoretical frameworks and models that support interventions to promote sustainable behaviour and to change problem behaviours.
- Review the effectiveness of environmental, health, transport and energy interventions in terms of promoting the adoption of sustainable behaviours.
- Inform the design of forestry interventions to promote the adoption of sustainable behaviours.

### Methods

Online bibliographic databases and government department websites were searched to identify academic evidence and unpublished 'grey' literature. Approximately 190 relevant references were identified including evaluations of interventions with an explicit focus on changing behaviour. Many of these related to health, climate change and sustainability issues, with fewer related to transport, energy, and the environment. The evidence was analysed to identify cross-cutting themes and lessons that could be drawn from across the various sectors.

## Findings

Numerous theories and models have been proposed which seek to define and explain behaviour. Theories from psychology and economics focus on rationality and individuals as decision-makers. Sociological theories emphasise the role of socio-economic contexts and technology. 'Behaviour' is a contested concept in that it is defined and analysed variously across different disciplines. Interventions were grouped into two broad categories - those that were not related to greenspace and those where greenspace represented a key dimension. Interventions aimed at health, energy usage, transport and pro-environmental behaviours which target the social environment of individuals are more effective than those which just focus on the individual. These interventions can focus on embedding changes in behaviour and attitudes within wider social contexts such as community structures and social networks. Projects that combine technical and infrastructure approaches with education, training and community-based activities, for example, are likely to have a more profound and lasting affect on behaviour. The review of behavioural theory highlights a number of key factors for consideration by policy makers and those involved in the delivery of behavioural interventions. In particular there is considerable tension between conceptualising behaviour as a consequence of individual decisions or as a product of social contexts, technology or interactions between these. However, both these conceptual frameworks offer potentially useful insights for those designing interventions to promote sustainable behaviours.

## Recommendations

The evidence provides key insights and therefore our recommendations suggest successful interventions:

- *Are based on a good understanding of individuals' and groups' values and motivations* – it is important to be clear about what behaviour is being targeted and understand people's attitudes, perceptions and motivations towards these specific behaviours.
- *Target the wider social environment of individuals* – it is important to not just focus on the individual but consider wider issues, such as involving families in encouraging and enabling individual behaviour change.
- *Adopt a multi-faceted approach* – consider combining a range of approaches, such as information provision, specific targeted support, infrastructure change, and incentives.
- *Facilitate active involvement by participants in project design and delivery* – involve those whose behaviour you want to change in designing an approach that can support them.

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### Reports and Publications

Morris, J. Marzano, M. Dandy, N and O'Brien, L. 2012. Forestry, sustainable behaviours and behaviour change – setting the scene. Summary report. Forest Research, Franham. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/INFD-923FBR> Including sections on the:

Policy context: influencing and changing behaviour  
Theories and models of behaviour and behaviour change  
Lessons learnt from interventions and evaluations