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Part 1: The OpenMW Project

Intro

Hello, and welcome to our new FAQ video series which will replace the rather outdated FAQ video released in September 2012. Since then, the OpenMW project has come a long way. Our engine is nearly feature-complete and there will only be a couple of releases until version 1.0.

The goals of this series are to properly introduce our project, answer the most common questions about OpenMW, and give some in-depth information about certain aspects of the engine, e.g., the current development status or future moddability.

In the first video – which you are watching now – I'll give a general introduction to the project and explain the advantages OpenMW brings for our different target audiences. The second video will summarise the project's current status and the remaining tasks for version 1.0. In the third video we will take a closer look at OpenMW's future by discussing the engine's potential and naming limitations to both the OpenMW project as well as the engine itself. The fourth video will focus on compatibility issues with the original game OpenMW was designed to run in the first place, mainly speaking of problems with user-created modifications to the vanilla game. The fifth video will be a call to arms for everyone who is interested in helping OpenMW to reach its goals – whether you are an experienced coder, a fan of the original game, or an artist who creates models and textures.

Enough said. Now, let me introduce you to the OpenMW project.

What exactly is OpenMW?

Q: *What exactly is OpenMW?*

A: OpenMW is a free and open source software designed to run the classic RPG *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind.* The original game has been created by Bethesda Softworks and was released in 2002. It received critical acclaim because of its open-world character and its innovative setting. It came with its own editor, *The Elder Scrolls Construction Set*, which allowed players to modify many aspects of

the game, leading to a huge amount of mods – some of which are still being worked on.

Bethesda also created other famous RPGs, like parts four and five of the *The Elder Scrolls* series, Oblivion and Skyrim, as well as the revival of the Fallout series. The OpenMW team wants to build an engine called *OpenMW* to replace Morrowind's original engine, making the latter obsolete in the future.

Why would you reimplement a whole game engine?

Q: *Why would the OpenMW team start such a huge undertaking in the first place? Morrowind has been playable when it was released, and it is still running on recent Windows versions.*

A: Well, Morrowind's original engine has its flaws. There are many bugs which will never be fixed considering the game's age. Moreover, it tends to be unstable and was optimised for, now, very outdated hardware. Also, the modding capabilities are limited when it comes to changes in the actual game mechanics, which lead to a variety of hackish third-party software to overcome at least some of the hard-coded limitations. Last but definitely not least, the vanilla engine only runs on Windows, ignoring a growing part of the gaming community.

Isn't this illegal?

Q: *You are rebuilding a commercial game? Isn't this illegal?*

A: No, the OpenMW project is a completely legitimate engine reimplementation. It is neither a modification nor a third-party engine hack. We are just writing a piece of software which is able to run Morrowind by reading its game files, and every part of the engine has been written from scratch. We do not provide any of the original contents and have obtained our information through clean reverse-engineering. The game files themselves are still property of Bethesda Softworks and ZeniMax Media.

54 What are your goals for version 1.0?

55 Q: *Okay, I get it. What are your goals for version 1.0 then?*

56 A: The OpenMW engine has a great potential which goes far beyond the scope of
57 the original game. But for the time being, the OpenMW team concentrates on
58 reimplementing Morrowind with all of its features, some of its bugs when necessary,
59 and compatibility with all of its mods, given they have been created in a clean way.

60 We'll consider the engine ready for version 1.0 when the following goals have been
61 reached:

62 1. OpenMW correctly implements every feature of the original game, while
63 adjusting obviously wrong behaviour when it is reasonable.

64 2. OpenMW fixes every system design bug in the original engine, e.g., the
65 infamous bloating of savegame files during a play-through, or the limit of 256
66 mods to be active at a time.

67 3. OpenMW supports all existing content, including the add-ons *Tribunal* and
68 *Bloodmoon* as well as every mod which has been created without using third-
69 party software or libraries.

70 4. OpenMW runs natively on Windows, Linux, and Mac OSX.

71 5. OpenMW takes advantage of modern hardware in order to achieve a better
72 graphical quality without a performance hit.

73 6. OpenMW improves the interface and journal system of the original engine.

74 7. OpenMW improves the game's physics and AI.

75 8. OpenMW allows developers to create a new game from scratch, independent
76 from Bethesda's contents.

77 Of course, these goals can be adjusted in case of unreasonable delays because of a
78 single feature missing but we consider the first four goals essential for OpenMW
79 1.0.

What are OpenMW's hardware requirements?

Q: *What are OpenMW's hardware requirements? Will OpenMW perform better than the original engine?*

A: Morrowind is an old game and should run well on any remotely up-to-date system. Since version 0.37.0, our engine's performance equals or exceeds the vanilla one's in most situations. However, there are some restrictions when comparing both pieces of software. First of all, OpenMW has not been optimised yet, leaving room for noticeable improvements. Secondly, OpenMW ships with improved graphics which complicates a straight comparison between the engines. Finally, there are a few problems with certain system setups, especially with AMD drivers. To cut a long story short, if your PC is above Morrowind's hardware requirements, the game should perform well using OpenMW. If not, please contact us in our Support subforum at openmw.org.

Do I need a copy of TES III: Morrowind in order to play OpenMW?

Q: *You are replacing Morrowind's engine with a new one. Do I need the original game files in order to play Morrowind on OpenMW?*

A: OpenMW only is an engine designed to run Morrowind's game files. We do not provide any of the original content – which would, by the way, be a severe copyright infringement. So yes, you need the original game to run Morrowind using OpenMW. It is still available on Steam or GOG for a fair price, and, sometimes, you can still find it for sale at game stores.

Please note that you don't need Morrowind to run OpenMW. You only need the Morrowind game files, if you want to play Morrowind on OpenMW. This is especially true for new games created with our editor, OpenMW-CS.

Is it possible to port my old Morrowind savegames to OpenMW?

Q: *Is it possible to port my old Morrowind savegames to OpenMW?*

106 A: In general, no. There is an early version of a savegame importer but it is far
107   from being finished. Maybe, someone is willing to continue work after version 1.0
108   has been released. We advise you to start a new game when switching over to
109   OpenMW.

I just want to play Morrowind. Why would I use OpenMW instead of the vanilla engine?

112 Q: *I'm just a Morrowind enthusiast who wants to enjoy the game without any modding*
113   *magic. Why would I use OpenMW instead of the vanilla engine?*

114 A: OpenMW is a modern engine and runs natively on Windows, Linux, and Mac OSX.
115   And the best thing is, you can play the game on any screen resolution. OpenMW
116   is actively maintained and fixes most of the vanilla engine's bugs and design flaws.
117   We have reworked the savegame management and have improved the interface,
118   e.g., by making all UI windows adjustable, redesigning the Alchemy window, or
119   adding comfort functions to the mercantile window. The placement of items has
120   seen improvements too. Moreover, a great amount of settings has been added, e.g.,
121   to adjust the view distance, make the sneak mode toggle, or show the owner status
122   of items and activators. OpenMW also supports joysticks and gamepads.

I play Morrowind using tons of mods, MWSE, MGE, and MGSO. Why would I switch to your engine?

125 Q: *I play Morrowind using tons of mods, MWSE, MGE, and MGSO. Why would I*
126   *switch to your engine?*

127 A: First of all, OpenMW should support every user-created content, if it doesn't rely
128   on third-party software or engine hacks. Obviously, this doesn't include utilities like
129   *Morrowind Script Extender* or *Morrowind Graphics Extender*. However, OpenMW
130   will provide most of the additional functionalities right from the start in the future,
131   compensating for the lack of compatibility. Modifications relying on third-party
132   software may remain incompatible though. They need to be rewritten or, more
133   likely, to be substituted with written-from-scratch modifications using OpenMW's
134   extended modding capabilities.

135 So, if utilities like the *Morrowind Graphics Extender* are a must-have for your
136 Morrowind play-throughs, OpenMW may not be the best choice for you right now
137 as it will take some time after version 1.0 has been released until OpenMW features
138 everything the great Morrowind modding community has invented to cope with
139 the original engine's limitations.

I want to mod Morrowind. What advantages does OpenMW provide for modders?

142 Q: *I want to mod Morrowind. What advantages does OpenMW provide for modders?*

143 A: Morrowind came with its own editor, *The Elder Scrolls Construction Set*, which
144 allowed modders to change many aspects of the game. However, there were many
145 hard-coded limitations, and the editor always felt somewhat clunky.

146 The OpenMW team has created its own editor, OpenMW-CS, to overcome these
147 restrictions. Our editor is multi-threaded, non-blocking, and provides a modern
148 interface which is customisable and supports multiple views. Modders may open
149 as many documents at the same time as they want to, while keeping the load on
150 their system low. It is also possible to create new games without any Morrowind
151 dependencies.

152 On the hard-coding side of things, the OpenMW team plans to get rid of most
153 limitations after version 1.0 has been released. In the future, modders will be able
154 to add new skills to the game, overhaul the combat system, create schedules for
155 NPCs, and much, much more. And keep in mind that all of this will happen in a
156 clean way, ensuring a high degree of compatibility and consistency.

I want to develop a game based on the OpenMW engine. Is this possible, and am I allowed to sell my game in the end?

159 Q: *I want to develop a game based on the OpenMW engine. Is this possible, and am I*
160 *allowed to sell my game in the end?*

161 A: Like I said before, OpenMW-CS provides the option to create new games running
162 on the OpenMW engine. We will also provide a game template which contains
163 the minimum of required assets a developer would need in order to create a new
164 game – independent from Bethesda's contents, of course. The corresponding *Game*
165 *Template* project as well as the *OpenMW Example Suite* whose purpose it is to
166 showcase OpenMW's additional features are already in slow but active development.

167 Regarding commercialising your game: OpenMW is licensed under the GNU GPL
168 license. This license grants free access to the OpenMW source code. If you develop
169 a game and change the source code in the process, you must ensure public access
170 to that particular code. If you don't change the source code at all, your customers
171 can simply download OpenMW from official sources. Apart from the source code,
172 any assets you have created for your game are under your copyright and are not
173 subjected to the GNU GPL.

174 To sum things up: Yes, you can create a game with OpenMW-CS and sell it. You
175 must provide free access to your source code though.

Outro

177 That's all for the general introduction to OpenMW. The next part covers the project's
178 current status. If my answers to the frequently asked questions raised even more questions,
179 please leave a comment, or visit our forums at openmw.org. The corresponding links as
180 wells as references to other relevant sites are available below this video.

181 See you in part two of the FAQ series. And, as always, thanks for watching!