

## Written evidence submitted by A1 (TPW0070)

Tree Planting and Woodlands - Call for Evidence – Question 4

### Why were previous ambitions for increasing tree planting in England not met and what lessons should be learned?

I am a novice landowner and woodland creator –

Project start: 2016; Size of project: 13 Hectares; Location: Northern valley side, former sheep pasture;

Purpose: Climate Change mitigation, Biodiversity, Public Amenity, Timber Production

Funding help from

1. Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation scheme (EU Rural Development Fund)
  2. Basic Payments Scheme (EU Common Agricultural Policy)
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Creating a woodland is costly and challenging. It is no surprise that farmers are reluctant to commit much land for tree planting. Keeping sheep looks to be a much easier occupation.

The costs include

- (1) A significant drop in land value when converting even poor-quality pastureland to woodland
- (2) Contractor base is poor quality and as a consequence remedial costs are incurred to rectify errors which don't come to light until much later
- (3) Repairing drystone walls to keep out livestock (@ £70 per metre). No grant available.

The challenges include

- (1) Volume of documentation needed to be read to obtain a grant (189 total pages for Countryside Stewardship, 188 total pages for Basic Payments, 232 pages for UK Forestry Standard) and form filling (17 pages for Woodland Creation)
- (2) Voluminous bureaucracy; dealing with copious delays in the application/claim process
- (3) Having to deal with so many different people in many different offices – Forestry Commission/Natural England/Rural Payments/Countryside Stewardship Delivery Services)
- (4) Trying to locate suitable personnel who are available to do the work
- (5) Tending to each tree on a regular basis (I was advised by a farmer with decades of experience producing trees on his mixed farm that on average **each** tree requires 5 minutes work **per year** until felled)
- (6) Coping with the failure of plants due to extreme weather events (several named storms, tornado, prolonged drought in 3 out of 4 years, late frost)
- (7) Tackling pests (damage from voles, grey squirrels and sawfly caterpillars sufficient to kill the plants, damage from deer that stunt woody shrubs/holly grown in short wide shelters)

### Suggested Solutions

- 1) Simplify and speed up the bureaucracy. (Speedy responses from bureaucrats can be crucial for a successful project because land management is seasonal – if a window is missed it may be necessary to wait a year)
- 2) Better training for Forestry Commission Woodland Officers – better pay to attract higher calibre people
- 3) Immediate introduction of scheme to drastically reduce grey squirrels and deer
- 4) To address the abysmal quality of tree planters, introduce a
  - i) Basic Tree Planting certificate (1-2 days instruction)
  - ii) Advanced Tree Planting certificate (3-5 days instruction) for team leaders
- 5) Greatly improve the Woodland Creation Maintenance grant. (The current scheme emphasises planting and penalises those who plant at high density since the maintenance payment is per Hectare *not* per tree even though every tree is required [very unrealistically] to be alive at the end of the period. Note that the Welsh scheme pays significantly more and the Maintenance element is automatic.)
- 6) Improve the information available in England. See: -
  - i) Tree planting guide for Glastir Woodland Creation available at the foot of this webpage: <https://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/guidance-and-advice/environmental-topics/woodland-management/new-woodland-creation/support-available-for-new-woodland-creation/?lang=en>

- ii) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysomBHDBqug&list=PL8DdHOvRK\\_JIB7ECDOIQusoMjYWxmVUI&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysomBHDBqug&list=PL8DdHOvRK_JIB7ECDOIQusoMjYWxmVUI&index=3)

*December 2020*