

Written evidence submitted by Woodland adviser (TPW0074)

To the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee.

I am an independent woodland adviser and would like to comment on your Tree Planting and Woodlands call for evidence.

I have been chair of the National Coppice Federation and the Coppice Association North West and the Bill Hogarth MBE Memorial Apprenticeship Trust (coppice apprenticeships).

1. The targets for increasing forestry coverage are ambitious and not very realistic.

(reasons below)

2. The grant system, both Countryside Stewardship and Woodland Carbon Fund are bureaucratic, underfunded, off putting and not fit for purpose.

My main concern with the present system is the lack of support for woodland creation through natural regeneration. At present this is not funded and is a far better way of creating woodlands that are ecologically balanced.

I am also concerned that ongoing management and future planning for sustainable use of timber is not built into the design of woodlands at the planning stage. There is still a false division between commercial forestry and amenity woodland. We should be working towards productive woodlands. Even if part of that production is habitat and ecological capital.

3. No comment
4. See comment 2
5. Priorities for policy objectives

It is important that we increase tree cover to mitigate climate change, however I am concerned about food security and would like there to be more joined up thinking between the farming, forestry, conservation/ecology and carbon sequestration.

It is an easy win with the public to call for tree planting and can be very important in urban settings where social engagement with nature is essential for future safeguarding of our natural capital. This has health benefits both directly through contact with trees and indirectly through combatting climate change.

However there is far more that could be done in terms of rewilding landscapes that are lacking in tree cover (and low agricultural value).

Biosecurity and plant health has been poorly served by the tree nursery industry and a reckless approach to translocating pathogens through planted stock.

6. Future policies and funding for existing woodlands

It is not clear how ELMS will be in future but I am optimistic that some of the concerns that we have regularly raised will be addressed under the new scheme. It needs to be more streamlined, less bureaucratic and well funded. A carrot not stick approach.

December 2020