

## Written evidence submitted by Pennine Prospects (TPW0075)

### Tree Planting and Woodlands

#### Pennine Prospects Parliamentary Committee Response

Pennine Prospects is a rural regeneration company established in 2005 with a focus on the South Pennines (National Character Area 36; [Natural England](#)). As an organisation we are strongly supportive of increased tree planting and woodlands on a national level. Particularly with its contribution towards tackling climate change, offsetting greenhouse gas emissions and the role woodland management and development will play in reaching the broader goals of the Paris Agreement.

Within the South Pennines, which is characterised by its large-scale, sweeping landscape of exposed upland moorland and deeply incised valleys, there is widespread and obvious evidence of man's activities throughout history. This gives the area a historic richness but reduces its sense of remote wilderness.

Woodland in the region is characterised as '*... sparse and generally limited to the steep sides of valleys, where woodlands of beech and sycamore occur along with small areas of conifers. Internationally important upland oak woodlands, primarily associated with wooded cloughs, extend up to the moorland, but some are in poor condition. There are a few 20th-century conifer plantations on higher land, in some instances associated with the reservoirs. The isolated farmsteads on the moorland fringes are often sheltered by copses of trees*' (p.7, National Character Area 36; Natural England)

In response to the questions, in particular question 5: '*In relation to increasing forestry coverage in England, what should the Government be trying to achieve? For example, how should the following policy objectives be prioritised?*

- *Mitigating or adapting to climate change;*
- *Promoting biodiversity and nature recovery;*
- *Increasing biosecurity and plant health;*
- *Improving human well-being and health;*
- *Protecting natural and cultural heritage;*
- *Food security*
- *Creating commercial opportunities from forestry, tourism and recreation;*  
*and*
- *Any other priorities?'*

We are concerned that there is no reference to the broader Landscape Character, natural environment or historic environment alongside proposals for increased forestry coverage in England.

There is no doubt that forestry coverage in England needs to increase over the coming decade, and in terms of prioritising the policy objectives exemplified in

Question 5, certainly mitigating or adapting to climate change; promoting biodiversity and nature recovery; increasing biosecurity and plant health and protecting natural and cultural heritage should be top of the agenda. Followed closely by creating commercial opportunities from forestry, tourism and recreation; improving human well-being and health; and food security.

The planting of trees and development of new woodland/forestry should not however be undertaken in isolation of its wider landscape setting. We strongly advocate the need and importance of landowners and developers to follow existing guidance and standards as outlined by '[The UK Forestry Standard: The Governments' Approach](#)' as part of any new woodland plantation strategies.

As it states:

*'The landscape and visual aspects of forest design start by taking account of the broad-scale landscape character and other factors affecting the context. This will guide the nature of forestry and, for new planting, the capacity of the landscape to accommodate change. For most areas, Landscape Character Assessment (LCAs) studies have been completed and these will help inform decisions about the nature, location and design of new forests or woodlands. ... Having taken the landscape context into account, the forest design principles can then be applied to the spatial design of the forest and their landscape and visual impacts assessed.'*

*... 'By following the guidelines, landscape change can be developed in an informed way and communicated to a wide range of audiences.'* (p.98, The UK Forestry Standard)

We need an increased drive for mixed native woodland in order to avoid monoculture plantations, which have little role to play in the fight against climate change, provide poor habitats for wildlife and are weak in biodiversity. Taking into account the wider landscape setting of prospective woodland developments will ensure we achieve the result of the 'right tree in the right place'. This will ensure woodland plantation on the fringes of moorland, as an example, is complimentary, native, not invasive, serving to diversify biodiversity and enhance habitats, whilst contributing towards re-wetting and water retention.

*'Woodland owners and managers need to consider the impacts of forestry beyond the forest boundary and engage with others if the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is to be achieved. This has implications for the location, composition and size of new woodlands.'*

*'The implications of woodland creation and management for biodiversity in the wider environment should be considered, including the roles of forest habitats and open habitats in ecological connectivity'* (p.42, The UK Forestry Standard)

The historic landscape cannot be overlooked in the planning stages, as the landscape character as a whole has a narrative sculpted by human intervention

since the last ice age (c.12,000 years ago). The establishment of woodland around known monuments of national significance (such as the enclosed Late Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements and carved stones on Ilkley Moor) could have the effect of damaging its setting in relation to its connectivity with its wider landscape setting.

As outlined in The UK Forestry Standard (p.84):

*'The primary responsibility for land managers in relation to historic features is to ensure they are conserved and not accidentally or unknowingly damaged. This will involve an appropriate evaluation of the site, and an assessment of features of importance – whether scheduled or not – as part of the forest management plan. A range of measures can then be set out in the operational plan to ensure the features are protected, and these will extend to a reasonable area of their settings. Historic features are not confined to archaeological remains and include a range of features of local significance, for example earth banks and veteran trees. Each feature will need to be evaluated on an individual site basis.'*

*... In some situations, new forests and woodlands can enhance or develop the historic character of the landscape, but in others they may be inappropriate and detract from it.*

*... Forests should be designed and managed to take account of the historical character and cultural values of the landscape.*

*... Forests should be designed and managed to take account of policies associated with historic landscapes, battlefield sites, historic parks and gardens, and designed landscapes of historic interest'.*

We would like to reiterate that Pennine Prospects is not at odds with the proposals for tree planting and woodland in England, only that when considering new forestry and woodland the wider landscape character (both natural and cultural landscapes) is firmly embedded in the planning and implementation phases as outlined in The UK Forestry Standard: The Governments' Approach document.

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