

Written evidence submitted by Coed Cadw - Woodland Trust Wales (HIL0021)

Thank you for your letter of 15th December and for providing us with this opportunity to contribute to the Committee's Inquiry.

Is the Woodland Trust working with the UK and Welsh Governments to contribute to achieving their tree planting targets?

Yes, we are working with all Governments across the UK. In Wales we are in regular dialogue with Ministers and civil servants, including participating in the Welsh Government current co-design process discussing changes to farm support and woodland creation grant schemes. In June 2021 the Deputy Minister for Climate Change conducted a "deep dive"¹ into issues around woodland creation. We participated in discussions with the Minister and provided written submissions.

We have also submitted substantive responses to Welsh Government consultations on post Brexit farm support proposals and on net zero and forestry policies. We would be happy to share these submissions with your Committee if they are of interest.

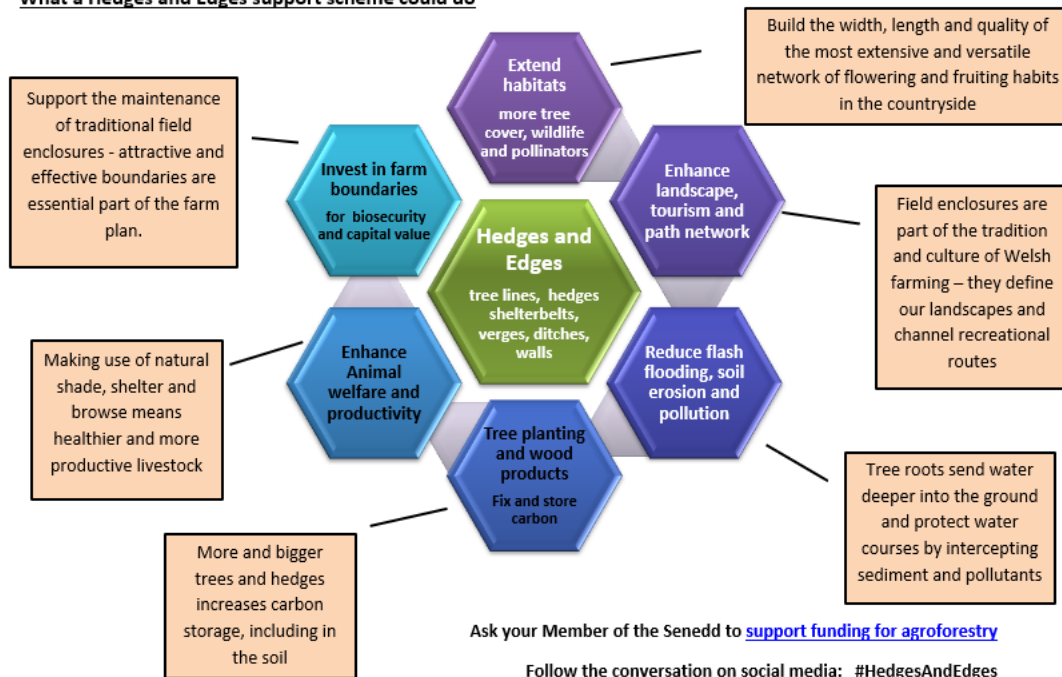
Our key messages to the Welsh Government are:

- We support the Welsh Government's adoption of the recommendation of the Committee for Climate Change (CCC) for the creation of 180,000 hectares of additional woodland in Wales by 2050.
- We believe that this very ambitious target is achievable, provided that a suitably wide range of approaches is taken. The country does need more plantations producing softwood timber, but we suggest that two thirds of the increase need to be other forms of tree cover that better deliver farming, water resource, carbon and wildlife benefits. All woodland is productive, but many produce substantial but intangible public benefits rather than marketable products.
- Farmers have a crucial role to play and control land availability. We suggest that half of this target could credibly be met by the expansion of agroforestry which involves the incorporation of additional tree cover onto farmland and supporting, rather than replacing, continued farming activity.²
- In particular, we are advocating a "Hedges and Edges" scheme as a universal basic component of the proposed new Sustainable Farming Scheme.

¹ <https://gov.wales/trees-and-timber-deep-dive>

² Woodland Trust - Coed Cadw (2021) : Expanding Tree Cover in Wales: Proposals to meet the recommendations of the Climate Change Committee, December 2020. Unpublished

What a Hedges and Edges support scheme could do



The Wales National Forest

We support this program and think it has the potential to bring public engagement behind the development of a woodland economy and action on climate mitigation. Our woodland at Wentwood is one of the initial National Forest Sites³ and the program was launched by Ministers at our new woodland creation site at Brynau near Neath. We are the lead delivery organisation for the Welsh Government's Tree Giveaway Initiative to offer a free tree to every household in Wales. This project was launched in December last year and in March we will start to dispatch the first of 300,000 trees from pilot community hubs completing distribution of hubs and trees by March 2023.

UK Government goals

We support the UK Government's goals for woodland creation and tree planting whilst continuing to emphasise the need for this approach to be focused on tackling the nature and climate crises together through a strong emphasis on native species. We have engaged extensively with the Government at Westminster through consultations and direct engagements with Ministers and civil servants. These engagements have covered a range of issues from net zero to post-Brexit farming changes, planning and infrastructure projects where we've emphasised the opportunities to plant more of the right trees in the right places, protect and restore irreplaceable ancient woodland habitats and maximise the benefits to people.

Since our founding in 1972 we have planted 50 million trees and in 2020 planted/supported the planting of around 5 million trees through our operations. Following the emergence of Ash Dieback in 2012 we've established a UK and Ireland Sourced and Grown standard which

³ <https://gov.wales/national-forest-wales-woodland-sites>

ensures that every tree we plant is sourced and grown in the UK and/or Ireland to ensure we reduce the risk of importing new pests and diseases.

We are partners in the Northern Forest project working alongside the four regional Community Forests, helping to plant at least 50 million trees across the Northern Forest region over the next 25 years and have been since the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, launched the project in 2018. The latest £6M funding from the Government's Nature for Climate Fund will help to deliver one million trees contributing to the Government's tree planting targets.

We are actively involved as a partner in the Queen's Green Canopy project, helping to plant and dedicate trees and woods across the UK in tribute to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. As part of this we're helping to supply trees across the country through our varied Tree Pack offers with the most popular of these being our free Community Tree Packs and Schools Tree Pack programmes which continue to deliver hundreds of thousands of trees every year.

Is there a co-ordinated and consistent approach to planting trees on Woodland Trust land across the UK and Wales?

Yes. The management of our estate is governed by internal policies, procedures and standards that we apply to all land we own and manage throughout the UK. The sustainable management of our UK wide estate is independently certified under the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS)⁴.

We will shortly be publishing a substantial new guide to woodland creation describing our approach to creating new woodlands for people and wildlife.

When we acquire land for woodland creation it is subject to a detailed assessment of suitability. We do not acquire high value agricultural land or valuable open habitats for woodland creation. We invest strongly in local activity and our new woodlands are planned in consultation with local people and relevant stakeholders to ensure design that is suitable to the context. Brynau Farm⁵ is our most recent example in Wales, where we are creating new woodland to deliver outcomes for public access & well-being, local biodiversity and ecosystem services including flood mitigation and carbon sequestration.

Open space is an important and valuable component of all woodlands. We design and manage our sites to retain open areas including pre-existing high value habitats, public access routes and recreational space, and open space to enhance heritage and landscape features. Where appropriate we retain land in agricultural production, within the setting of a well-treed landscape. An example is at Llenrych in Snowdonia, where we have a hefted sheep flock and a farming tenant who maintains grazing over a 500 acre mosaic of fields and grazed woodland which is a high conservation value Site of Special Scientific Interest.

What discussions has the Woodland Trust had with farmers in Wales and have farmers voiced any concerns during these conversations?

We are currently supporting NFU Cymru with their "Growing Together" strategy⁶ and are supplying trees for their tree planting events with Members of the Senedd. We agree on advocacy for a

⁴ <https://ukwas.org.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/press-centre/2020/03/new-wood-at-neath/>

significant expansion of agroforestry including our Hedges and Edges proposal. We are working directly with an informal group of farming advocates and with NFU Cymru, the FUW and CLA Cymru on ideas and proposals to improve support for trees and woodland on farmland.

We have for many years provided advice to landowners who wish to create new woodland. We have a small outreach team in Wales working directly with farmers and landowners and with independent agents who are approved by the Welsh Government to prepare applications for the Glastir woodland creation grant scheme. We advise farmers to use the Welsh Government Glastir scheme wherever appropriate and we put them in touch with suitable approved Glastir agents. We have assisted with the planting of more than 300 hectares of land on more than 100 farms in this way.

We also offer direct support for small scale tree planting through our MOREwoods⁷ tree and hedge planting scheme and Farm Tree Packs⁸. These are particularly suited to smallholders who are not registered for the Basic Farm payment Scheme. We have directly supported the creation of a further 130 hectares of woodland across more than 140 farms and landholdings in this way.

Concerns about woodland creation

The issues and challenges for farmers arising from the aspiration for a substantial increase in woodland cover are well known and have been reviewed in detail.⁹ These issues have informed the key messages we have highlighted to the Welsh Government and have summarised in our answer to your first question above.

We note the recently re-stated concerns expressed across the political spectrum about the negative impact of this demand for land on the future of the family farming sector in Wales.¹⁰ The case is made for supporting family farming in Wales in principle, for all sorts of social and cultural reasons, including in evidence presented to your Committee.^{11 12}

As a charity, it is not appropriate for us to have a view on who should buy or own land, but we have a number of suggestions that could help with this debate, and have a further paper in preparation discussing these in more detail:-

- An attractive grant scheme is a valuable means of encouraging high standards in afforestation.
- A clear regulatory baseline is needed to ensure minimum standards for schemes not seeking public funding.
- The current review of the Government's UK Forest Standard is an opportunity to raise standards in relation to stakeholder consultation and co-design and social and cultural impact.

⁶ <https://www.nfu-cymru.org.uk/cross-sector/environment/nfu-cymru-launches-new-strategy-for-sustainable-tree-planting-in-wales/>

⁷ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/large-scale-planting/>

⁸ <https://shop.woodlandtrust.org.uk/landowner-packs>

⁹ <https://gov.wales/woodland-creation-wales-report>

¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-58103603>

¹¹ UK Parliament Welsh Affairs Committee (2021) Formal meeting (oral evidence session): The economic and cultural impacts of trade and environmental policy on family farms in Wales.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/event/6405/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session/>

¹² <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/news-events-and-case-studies/news/family-farms-are-significant-part-welsh-society-and-culture-they>

- Development of a Carbon Code applicable to agroforestry and hedge planting will increase the range of options available for carbon offsetting and support farm level net zero targets.
- There is a need for agreements and land tenure arrangements that work for the existing farming landowner and enable the incorporation of private investment without the need for land purchase.
- There is a need for a framework that ensures that the companies investing in woodland carbon offsets have credible and substantial emissions reduction programs and are not using offsetting to avoid emissions reduction.

Policy Measures to support appropriate woodland expansion

We would be grateful for any help the Committee can give in creating a supportive framework for effective action, for example

1. Supporting actions at UK level to meet COP26 obligations and Net Zero targets.
2. Ensuring that the case for woodland expansion is not undermined by the use of carbon offsetting to avoid substantive emissions reductions.
3. Maintaining levels of funding for farm support in Wales, enabling support for the Hedges and Edges scheme that we have proposed.
4. Ensure the full replacement of EU funding previously provided for woodland creation grants and land management schemes such as funded by the EU LIFE program.
5. Ensure UK wide biosecurity measures to prevent new tree pests and diseases being imported into the UK, including via transit of biological materials through free ports.
6. Duplicate at UK level the foundation the Well-being for Future Generations Act provides for supporting action on climate change and biodiversity loss and other policies meeting the needs of future generations and of civil society.

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