

Trees and Timber task force recommendations

Summary

Landowner/community decide to plant trees

Next 12 months:

- New support to allow people in Wales to plant trees.
- Publish user-friendly guidance on tree planting.
- Identify new sites for National Forest.
- Working group to consider models to attract investment.

This Senedd term:

- New regional community woodland officers
- Identify areas to plant on the public estate and in urban areas.

Planning and preparation to plant by landowners and communities

Next 12 months:

- New window of Glastir Woodland Creation scheme.
- New outreach approach for NRW.
- Fast tracked verification for low-risk woodland plans and system of earned recognition for woodland planners.
- New scheme to fund development of new woodland plans.
- A new woodland creation funding scheme open all year round.

This Senedd term:

- Working group on how to reduce the burden of mandatory consultations.
- Support for planting of 'hedges and edges' on farms.
- New support for woodland creation and management through the new Sustainable Farming Scheme.

Harvesting of timber and end uses

Next 12 months:

- Working group to take forward development of a timber industrial strategy to coordinate supply and demand of timber and identify high value added opportunities for the Welsh forestry sector.
- Set out NRW's approach to alternative methods for timber sales

Tree supply and forestry sector skills

Next 12 months:

- Work with nurseries to secure future tree supply.
- Support increased capacity through Timber Business Investment scheme.

This Senedd term:

- Support development of skills needed for new careers in the forestry sector

Management of woodlands

Next 12 months:

- New National Forest Woodland Investment grant.

This Senedd term:

- Make it easier for community groups to access timber on the Welsh Government Estate.
- Identify ways to bring existing woodlands into management.

Protection of woodlands and trees

- Outside of scope of this exercise but an important element of Welsh Government forestry policy.



List of Recommendations

Sustainable farming scheme

Recommendations which require follow-up work	<p>1. The deep dive has identified a number of recommendations for the proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure any future scheme which provides capital to plant trees is integrated with the Sustainable Farming Scheme so that farmers are not excluded from accessing capital funding.• The proposed scheme should ensure landowners do not lose payments for planting trees.• Conversations should happen with every farmer about opportunities to plant trees that suit their land.• Improvements to current woodland creation funding should be carried into the new Sustainable Farming Scheme.• Future advisory services should ensure a more prominent role for woodland advice to support sustainable, productive farm businesses.• Consider risks of separate schemes for non-farming landowners if not included within scope of the Sustainable Farming Scheme.• Review and improve the agroforestry category under Glastir Woodland Creation.• The role of natural regeneration needs to be reviewed.• Issues preventing tree planting by tenant farmers need to be resolved.
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Timber Industrial Strategy

Recommendations which require follow-up work	<p>2. New working group to design timber industrial strategy. This should include identifying priority moves and issues which need addressing most urgently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addressing perceptions about quality of Welsh timber, including links to silvicultural practices and species choice.• Action to address concerns about skills and labour supply, particularly for planting. This should include supporting the farming community to develop the skills needed to diversify into forestry, and considering potential expansion of the eco-schools project to place greater emphasis on trees.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on volume requirements to enter different markets at scale, future material need for timber in Wales. • Priority markets for Welsh timber in all areas of construction. • The role of housing associations, local authorities, schools and private developers in providing stable demand and demonstrating good practice in the use of Welsh timber. • The changing role of NRW and diverse private sector woodlands in supplying timber. • The role of manufacturers (timber frame and joinery) in driving demand for added-value home grown timber and in delivering low carbon solutions. • The role of primary processors (saw mills) and how to create incentives to drive higher value added processing for supply in the construction supply chain. • Potential for a Circular Economy fund to increase the use of timber.
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Landowner/community decide to plant trees

Actions agreed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Issue a 'call to arms' to promote and support a step change in tree planting. Create an alliance for change, working with farmers, landowners, communities, and volunteers across Wales. 4. Develop an approach to measuring tree planting to cover all woodland created, including individual trees and areas of woodland less than 0.25ha. 5. NRW to work with communities and businesses to identify sites for 30 new National Forest woodlands. 6. NRW to increase engagement with farmers, landowners, and communities to encourage and co-ordinate tree planting, and publish user friendly guidance on a Woodland Creation Hub. This should be written with a communication to the customer perspective. 7. Facilitate community tree planting including asking Ystadau Cymru to lead an exercise to find new areas to plant on the public estate. Identify ways for cities and towns to map areas appropriate for planting trees, learning from initiatives such as Belfast One Million Trees. 8. Offer new support to allow people across Wales to plant trees in their gardens and local areas. Learn from existing initiatives including the Mbale tree planting programme.
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<p>Recommendations which require follow-up work</p>	<p>9. Fund regional community woodland officers to help community groups navigate interactions with NRW and local authorities, and plan for longer-term resource to sustain woodland created.</p> <p>10. Consolidate woodland advisory groups (Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel, Forest Industry Partnership, Wales Land Management Forum). The need to learn from successful projects and innovation outside Welsh Government should be included in the new Strategic Panel's terms of reference.</p> <p>11. Create a new working group to urgently consider models to attract investment in woodland creation and other forms of de-carbonisation such as peatland restoration. These models should allow offsetting without disrupting existing communities and patterns of landownership. Work will be facilitated by Welsh Government with financial as well as forestry expertise. Should include lessons from community renewable energy.</p> <p>12. Consider the need for a new co-ordinating body to support tree planting by farmers, landowners and communities, and use of the timber grown, learning from the approach of Coillte in Ireland while recognising differences in the Welsh context.</p>
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Tree supply and skills

<p>Actions agreed</p>	<p>13. Welsh Government representatives should work with Confor nurseries group as well as small scale and community nurseries to secure future tree supply. This should take account of the need for tree species adapted to impacts of climate change.</p> <p>14. Encourage an innovative approach which draws on the latest research into suitable species and silviculture, taking climate change adaptation into account.</p> <p>15. Support increased capacity for tree planting through schemes such as the Timber Business Investment Scheme.</p> <p>16. Ensure join up between work on the timber industrial strategy and work on green construction skills.</p>
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Woodland planning and tree planting

<p>Actions agreed</p>	<p>17. NRW officers should move to an outreach approach – on site and supportive to get things right at the outset. This</p>
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	<p>will include proactive pre-application interaction with woodland planners.</p> <p>18. For low risk woodland plans (under the EIA threshold where the scheme falls within an area of no sensitivity on the Woodland Opportunities Map), verification should move to a desk based exercise, with only a sample of sites (1:10) being visited or requiring further assessment.</p> <p>19. Move to a system of 'earned recognition' for woodland planners where there is more trust in planners to plan for UKFS without mandating requirements but clear penalties if plans do not meet the standard.</p> <p>20. Ask NRW to ensure North Wales and South Wales Forestry Regulations officers are urgently put in place to enable them to process in a timely and streamlined way.</p> <p>21. Empower NRW officers to make decisions on contested woodland plans so that the whole organisation is aligned with the urgent need to increase woodland creation. Ensure there is the right expertise within the organisation to allow this.</p>
<p>Recommendations which require follow-up work</p>	<p>22. Support the planting of 'hedges and edges on farms through adapting the current Glastir Small Grants scheme, including considering a higher threshold up to 1.99 hectares.</p> <p>23. Provide longer-term certainty over woodland creation budget including review of unfunded liability created by 12 years of revenue payments. Scope human resource requirements and where that resource should sit.</p> <p>24. Open a further 'Glastir Woodland Creation 11' window to ensure full budget allocated to tree planting is spent.</p> <p>25. Open new woodland creation planning scheme which funds the creation and verification of new woodland plans to create a pipeline of ready projects, with approved plans eligible for Welsh Government funding for next 5 years.</p> <p>26. Launch a pilot to the woodland planning scheme which makes support available for at least 500 hectares of woodland plans. Develop pilot rules to streamline verification and test use of alternative models.</p> <p>27. Open new woodland creation funding scheme which builds on Glastir Woodland Creation but is simplified and available consistently through the year.</p> <p>28. Working group to consider how to reduce the burden from mandatory requirements to public consultation and consultation with environmental and heritage NGOs. This</p>

	<p>should consider publishing all woodland plans on a public register for 28 days when submitted to NRW, better utilising NRW's place based teams, and developing a more consensual rather than confrontational approach.</p> <p>29. There should be further review of the buffer zones around SSSIs and SPAs to ensure they are not creating unnecessary burdens.</p>
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Management of woodlands

Actions agreed	30. Open National Forest Woodland Investment Grant in July to fund new woodlands and improvements to existing woodlands.
Recommendations which require follow-up work	<p>31. Make it easier for community groups to access timber on Welsh Government Estate, building on findings of working group. NRW should work Welsh Government Treasury and Audit Wales to develop a framework for NRW to sell timber outside the auction system to provide higher value social benefits, in line with the recent Audit Wales commitment to support improvement in climate change action.</p> <p>32. Develop support mechanisms to bring unmanaged woodlands into good economic and environmental condition. This should include considering in the industrial strategy options to provide increased routes to market and actions to build scale.</p>

Harvesting of timber and use in construction

Recommendations which require follow-up work	<p>33. Minimise embodied carbon (as part of Whole Life Carbon assessment) by demanding measurement of embodied carbon and then adopting carbon emission targets for new buildings.</p> <p>34. Explore further the potential options and benefits of an environmental product declaration for Welsh timber and how this would work in practice.</p> <p>35. Support the Timber Frame Manufacturing Sector.</p> <p>36. Proactively encourage and enable investment in added value manufacturing (e.g. Glulam, Wood fibre insulation and timber windows) as part of the industrial strategy for wood.</p> <p>37. Consider options to pay for Greenhouse Gas Removal from wood in construction.</p> <p>38. Utilise social housing delivery programme to systematise the use of timber.</p>
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	39. Set out NRW's approach to alternative sales of timber.
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