Workshops to discuss the future of tree planting with Welsh farmers

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
Net Zero	Net zero means to cut greenhouse gas emissions close to zero and re-absorb the remaining emissions by, for example, forests and oceans. Wales has legislated to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (i.e. carbon emissions) to net zero by 2050.
Backcasting	Backcasting is a method wherein a desired future state is envisioned as the starting point, followed by a discussion of steps and actions needed to reach that goal.
Silvopasture	Silvopasture is the practice of integrating trees, forage, and the grazing of domestic animals in a mutually beneficial way. It utilizes the principles of managed grazing, and it is one of several distinct forms of agroforestry.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 The Welsh Government (WG) has committed to support the planting of 180,000 hectares of trees by 2050 as part of their Net Zero strategy[1]. The future carbon profile of Wales and reaching Wales's Net Zero targets[2] depend on the delivery of increased woodland[3]. Additionally, woodland in Wales will also deliver multiple benefits, including improved air quality, flood prevention, biodiversity, recreation, timber, and climate change mitigation[4]. Given that approximately 85% of the land[5] is under the ownership or management of farmers, increasing tree cover requires a collaborative approach with landowners.

1.2 To promote woodland creation and encourage the planting of more trees, Welsh Government held a [Trees and Timber Deep Dive](#) to identify and prioritise a set of actions to:

- increase tree planting, and

- overcome barriers related to:

    (a) woodland creation, taking account of the challenging levels of tree planting needed to address climate change

    (b) the use of Welsh timber in construction and the need to de-carbonise Welsh housing

    (c) encouraging community tree planting

1.3 During the deep dive, a task force of experts worked together to develop recommendations to drive change[6]. Addressing these recommendations will also contribute to meeting the Woodlands for Wales Strategy[7].

1.4 To support delivery of these strategic objectives, WG have developed a number of support schemes, aimed specifically at farmers and landowners, intended to

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[1] Welsh Government (2021). [Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021 to 2025)](#)
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] CCC (2020). [The Sixth Carbon Budget Agriculture and land use, land use change and forestry](#).
[4] See e.g. [ERAMMP National Forest Evidence](#)
[5] Welsh Government (2022) [Farming Facts and Figures, Wales 2022](#)
[6] Welsh Government (2021) [Trees and Timber task force recommendations](#)
[7] Welsh Government (2018) [Woodland for Wales](#)

enable and encourage tree planting (see Table 1 for an overview of current schemes). The Welsh Government is also currently consulting on a new Sustainable Farm Scheme which will commence in 2025, and which will encourage tree planting and woodland management as one means of delivering Sustainable Land Management[8].

1.5   Forest Research have recommended that policies need to help reduce barriers to long-term land use change[9] and provide support structures for woodland creation. Without a deep understanding of social and cultural barriers and opportunities that influence farmers' decision-making process, evidence suggests the required large-scale creation of woodland and associated uptake of policies could fail or be slower than required[10].

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[8] The Scheme has been designed to support famers to deliver on the following Sustainable Land Management objectives: to produce food in a sustainable manner; to mitigate and adapt to climate change; to maintain and enhance the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits they provide; and to conserve and enhance the countryside and cultural resources, promoting public access and engagement with them.

[9] Forest Research (2020). Woodland Creation in Wales: Report for the Wales Land Management Forum

[10] Natural England (2021): Encouraging woodland creation, regeneration and tree planting on agricultural land: A literature review (NEER020) Encouraging woodland creation, regeneration and tree planting on agricultural land: A literature review - NEER020

Table 1: Overview of Woodland creation schemes/grants

Scheme	Aim of scheme
Small Grants Woodland Creation Scheme	Supports farmers and other landowners to plant less than two hectares of trees on land which is agriculturally improved or of low environmental value. Funding is available for tree planting, fencing and gates, maintenance, and premium payments for 12 years. At present, those who have successfully accessed the grant can also continue to claim Basic Payment for the land.
Woodland Creation Planning Scheme	Provides financial support for farmers and other land-owners to obtain professional advice from a Registered Woodland Planner to develop a woodland creation plan. The scheme offers grants of between £1,000 and £5,000 to develop a plan and pays up to 80% for the costs of surveys e.g. for priority habitat.
Woodland Creation Grant	Supports farmers and other landowners to plant larger areas of woodland or smaller areas not eligible under the Small Grants Woodland Creation Scheme. Funding is available for tree planting, fencing and gates, maintenance, and premium payments for 12 years. At present, those who have successfully accessed the grant can also continue to

	claim Basic Payment for the land.

1.6 Policies designed to increase tree planting and overcome barriers related to woodland creation need to be underpinned by social science evidence[11]. This ensures that policy levers and engagement strategies are aligned with farmers' values, identity and attitudes and can be feasibly incorporated into existing and new schemes and plans[12].

1.7 In February 2023, the Welsh Government commissioned Menter a Busnes (MaB) to conduct workshops to engage with farmers. The aim of this was to contribute to the evidence base on farmer views on tree planting in Wales. It would also start the discussion with the agricultural industry needed to initiate a "'call to arms' to promote and support a step change in tree planting and create an alliance for change, working with farmers, landowners, communities, and volunteers across Wales" as recommended by the Deep Dive Task force. The research does this by understanding what a 'call to arms' might look like which aligns with farmers' values, identity, and attitudes. The work provides an evidence base that can be drawn on to inform current and future WG policies which intend to encourage farmers to plant trees – the approach taken is discussed further in the methodology section.

1.8 The workshops were designed by Dr Caroline Verfuerth, a policy research fellow with the Welsh Government and researcher at the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations at Cardiff University. The policy research fellow used workshop notes from Menter a Busnes to analyse the findings and write this report.

1.9 This report also aims to explore the value of a future and backcasting based approach as a means of providing a deeper and richer understanding of

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[11] Welsh Government (July, 2021). Written Statement: Trees and Timber deep dive.
[12] Welsh Government (2021). Understanding farmer motivations: very small and small farms

farmers' views on tree planting. This broad approach to exploring farmers' perspectives on the topic of tree planting aims to provide in-depth insights to the topic rather than focusing on the specifics of any near-term scheme or policy. In doing so, it sought to answer the following research questions:

a) How do farmers view the role of farmers in 2050?

b) What are reasons for why they would/ would not plant trees? What land would farmers be willing to use for tree planting?

c) What are the characteristics of a payment schemes that farmers would take up?

d) What are the implications for the kind of interventions that are likely to increase tree planting on agricultural land?

1.10   Through answering these questions, the research also aimed to explore the longer-term pathways (i.e. existing and hypothetical/new policies and funding) that farmers find more or less acceptable to achieve tree planting targets[13].

1.11   This research intends to complement the insights from the co-design of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) to inform the development and improvement of existing woodland creation funding, but should also inform wider policies and schemes, which encourage woodland management and creation. The report is structured as follows: Section 2 covers the methodology including a description of the deliberative method, data collection, sampling, workshop procedure, and approach to the analysis. Section 3 covers the findings in relation to the research questions and some initial implications for tree planting policies and schemes. Lastly, section 4 provides a conclusion and implications drawn from this report.

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[13] Welsh Government (July, 2021). Written Statement: Trees and Timber deep dive.

2. Methodology

A. Rationale for using deliberative methods.

2.1 A focus on deliberation and public and stakeholder engagement can improve the evidence basis to support successful policies. A people-centred approach, where solutions are developed both with and for people, is important to address complex policy challenges like Net Zero because the required changes to implement the policies affect day-to-day lives[14]. This also applies to the context of woodland creation, where farming practices for some farmers may need to change substantially to achieve the tree planting targets set by the Welsh Government as part of their Net Zero strategy[15]. Research suggests that deliberative approaches increase legitimacy and perceived fairness of policies and improve the relationship between the stakeholders (e.g. farmers) and policy-makers (e.g. Welsh Government)[16].

2.2 Deliberative policy development processes also meet the Sustainable Development Principles in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) and the five ways of working set out in the Act[17]. Especially, social science research methods that take a more holistic approach and aim to bring out underrepresented voices meet key indicators of the National Well-being Framework[18], particularly indicator 23 'People feeling more involved'. In the past, procedural issues around the grant application process, engagement and communication with farmers, and interaction between different schemes have been identified as barriers to a more successful implementation of grant schemes like Glastir [19] and others[20]. Deliberative, future orientated, and holistic methods can provide an in-depth understanding of these complex social and

[14] Verfuerth, C., Demski, C., Capstick, C., Whitmarsh, L., & Poortinga, W (2023) A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals. *Journal of the British Academy, 11*(S4), 97-124.; Cherry, C.E., Capstick, S., Demski, C., Mellier, C., Stone, L. and Verfuerth, C. (2021), Citizens' climate assemblies: Understanding public deliberation for climate policy. Cardiff: *The Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations.*
[15] Welsh Government (2021). Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021 to 2025)
[16] Demski, C. for BEIS (2021). Net zero public engagement and participation: A research note
[17] Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. [accessed 24th July 2023]
[18] Welsh Government: Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: the essentials.
[19] Forest Research (2012). Evaluation of the Better Woodlands for Wales Grant Scheme
[20] Forest Research (2018). Influencing behaviour for resilient treescapes: Rapid Evidence Assessment

cultural barriers and drivers and can support the design of successful and future orientated policies and funding programmes.

2.3   The deliberative workshops presented in this report are centred around the backcasting method. Backcasting is a social science approach in which a desired future (e.g. 43,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030[21]) is imagined, followed by identifying the necessary actions to achieve that future[22]. The changed perspective facilitated by backcasting enables creative thinking, strategic planning, and decision-making by working backwards from a future vision to determine the necessary steps for its realisation. In this project, the backcasting method was chosen to encourage the participating farmers in the respective workshops to envision the desired future state of increased woodland in Wales and collectively deliberate their role and challenges in achieving this.

B. Overview of data collection

2.4   In total, six workshops and an additional pilot workshop were conducted during February and March 2023 with farmers across Wales. The workshops took place in person, lasted about three hours and each group had between seven to nine participants. All participants received a £50 voucher to an agricultural store in acknowledgement of travel costs, and the considerable investment of time. The vouchers also served to maximise participation from individuals who had not previously participated in Welsh Government formal consultation exercises. The workshop language was either Welsh or English, depending on participants' preferences. In total, three workshops were held in Welsh, including the pilot, and four in English with some workshops using a mix of both Welsh and English.

2.5   A qualitative data approach was chosen to allow for a more in-depth and nuanced exploration of the research questions. Notes were taken during the

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[21] Welsh Government (July, 2021). Written Statement: Trees and Timber.
[22] See Backcasting a Roadmap to Transformational Change – Sustainable Brands blog

workshop by a notetaker. The notes were analysed using thematic analysis[23] and have been summarised in this report.

2.6   Findings reflect the views of the 55 farmers engaged with in this exercise rather than the farming population more generally. They provide insight into the views and issues faced by farmers and are a useful contribution to the wider evidence base of farmer views on tree planting.

C. Pilot Study

2.7   A pilot workshop was conducted with farmers prior to the six workshops to test the workshop materials and questions. The pilot study was led by MaB and recruitment was conducted by word of mouth through MaB. The pilot workshop sample consisted of six farmers covering a range of types of farming (e.g. upland, dairy) as well as age; although the pilot group was younger than the other six workshops. The pilot workshop was delivered by MaB followed by a discussion with the participants on the different segments of the workshop to assess the suitability of the provided materials, questions, and methods. Small adjustments were made with regards to the description of the vision and some of the question phrasing to improve clarity for the six main workshops.

D. Sampling

2.8   Participants for the workshops were recruited by MaB through online open calls on social media and through networks (e.g. farming organisations, MaB, advisors sharing the workshop information amongst their contacts). In total, 47 farmers were recruited to take part in the workshops and an additional two had to be turned down as they were predominantly foresters and not farmers. Additionally, a total of eight farmers were recruited for the pilot focus group by MaB through convenience sampling recruited through word of mouth.

A recruitment guideline was developed that included categories around age, work status, farm type (e.g. hill, lowland), size, income, farming enterprise, and land ownership. These recruitment categories were developed to make sure a

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[23] See e.g. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). *Thematic analysis*. American Psychological Association.

wide spread of farming voices were included in the workshop sample and was not intended to be representative. Key demographics and farm characteristics of the sample are presented in

2.9   Table 2 below.

Table 2: Key demographics and farm characteristics of participating farmers and farms represented across all six workshops

Age	Number of participants across workshops	Pilot Group
Under 30	3	2
31-55	21	5
Over 55	23	1
Work Status	**Number of participants across workshops**	**Pilot Group**
Full time farmer	37	0
Part time farmer	10	8
Contractor*	3	0
Farm type**	**Number of farms represented across workshops**	**Pilot Group**
Hill	10	3
Upland	28	5
Lowland	16	0
Farm size	**Number of farms represented across workshops**	**Pilot Group**
1-25 HA	2	0
26-100 HA	14	1
101-300 HA	22	3
301 HA +	9	4
Main farming enterprises	**Number of mentions across workshops** *(Note: most farmers included multiple types of farming)*	**Pilot Group**
Beef	38	8
Sheep	40	8
Pigs	1	/
Poultry	1	/
Dairy	8	/
Arable	9	/
Woodland	10	/
Horticulture	3	/
Tenanted vs owned	**Number of farms represented across workshops**	**Pilot Group**
Tenant	6	2
Owned	26	3
Mixed	15	3

Economically small or very small [*)]	Number of farms represented across workshops	Pilot Group
Yes	12	n/a
No	35	n/a

Previous engagement with any Welsh Government land management policy workshops or consultations	Pilot Group
Yes	20	1
No	27	7

Table notes: * Contractor farmers worked additionally either as full or part time farmers; ** Some farms spanned more than one type of land; *) small = annual turnover £25,000-£125,000, very small = annual turnover < £25,000.

2.10   The workshops took place in six locations across Wales (see also **Error! Reference source not found.**) and the pilot workshop took place in the Menter a Busnes offices in Aberystwyth. The in-person workshops enabled participants who would not have had the access or skills to attend a virtual workshop to participate. Additionally, the place-based approach ensured that the different needs of farmers working on different landscapes and within different farming systems were included. Conducting research in specific locations promotes collaborative development of solutions tailored to the local context[24]. For example, a farmer predominantly focused on dairy production who has fertile land is likely to have a different perspective on woodland creation in comparison to a farmer focused on rearing sheep with predominantly less fertile upland farmland. Bringing these perspectives together through a localised lens can improve the delivery of policies and uptake of schemes later on.

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[24] Balvanera, P., Caldero, R., Castro, A. J., Geijzendorffer, I. R., Jacobs, S., Martı, B., … Gillson, L. (2017). Interconnected place-based social – ecological research can inform global sustainability. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2017.09.005

Figure 1: Depiction of a map of Wales, showing coverage of the six workshops across Wales. Original map without annotations from Scott & Bullen[25].
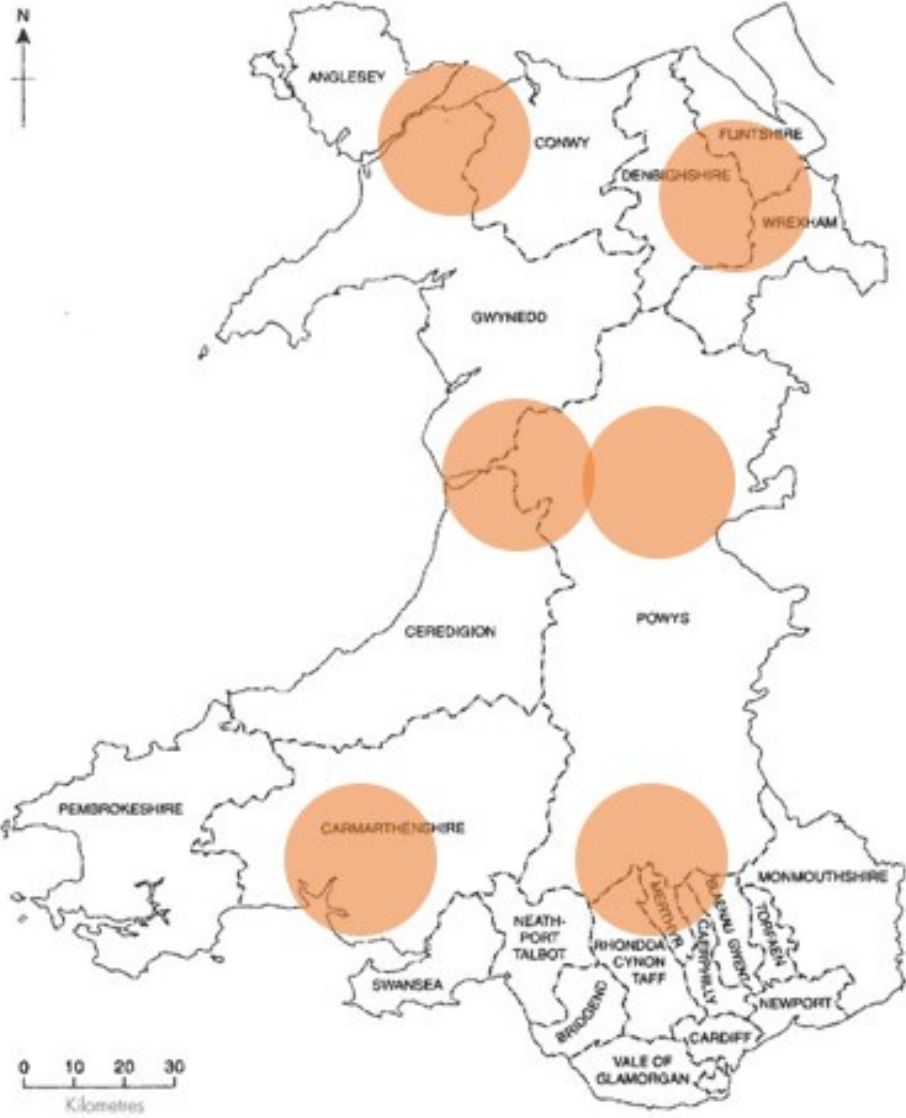
[25] Scott, A., & Bullen, A. (2004). Special landscape areas: landscape conservation or confusion in the town and country planning system?. The Town planning review, 205-230.

E. Workshop Procedure

2.11   The workshops consisted of three parts:

(1) Deliberation phase. The deliberation phase focused on introducing the tree planting goals for Wales and what changes this may involve for the farming industry. The aim of this part was to introduce the goals and some of the known drivers and barriers to on-farm tree planting and to create room for initial questions, concerns, and to explore underpinning values. Key questions in this phase included: "Were there problems with previous grant schemes?", and "What went well in the past?". The intention was that this stage grounded individuals in the here and now and allowed them to air views about the current context, enabling them to better focus on the future in later phases.

(2) Backcasting phase. The second phase used a method called backcasting to dive deeper into what a future Net Zero Wales that has achieved its tree planting targets by 2050 might look like. The aim of this part was to create a space that was detached from present-day tensions and focused on a positive future in which climate change targets have been achieved together. Participants were given an outline about what the future could look like accompanied – see figure 2 - by an illustration. This part of the workshops aimed to identify characteristics of policies and other circumstances that support farmers in planting more trees. Key questions in this phase included: "What do you think is your role as a farmer (or that of the next generation) for your community in 2050?", "Do you think you [or whoever is farming your land] will have planted trees on your land?", "In an ideal world there are farming schemes that are attractive to you (and other farmers) which have supported farmers in Wales in being more sustainable and also in planting more trees. What do you think these schemes will have looked like?".

Figure 2: Description given to workshop participants about what Wales in 2050 could look like.

> *The agriculture sector in Wales has been net zero since 2040.The climate has already changed, and we are all having to adapt to more regular droughts, floods and heat waves during the summer months.*
>
> *In the process of achieving net zero, people in Wales, the UK and around the world have adopted a range of low-carbon strategies, including flying less frequently, improved, more efficient public transport, and people are buying less and wasting less. Businesses have also changed the way they operate. Fossil fuel free production of goods is now the norm. Goods across the country are being transported on hydrogen or electric trucks. Supermarkets have required all of their suppliers to be net-zero since 2030. New homes are built from Welsh home-grown timber and are heated without fossil fuels.*
>
> *The countryside has changed and looks a bit different now. Wales has more tree cover across the nation, and the landscape is more mixed. Local people and tourists enjoy spending time in Wales's woodlands. A national forest network and trail is stretching from Snowdonia to South Wales and cities have more tree lined streets.*
>
> *Farming in Wales has also changed to mitigate against and adapt to climate change and promote biodiversity while still providing food for the nation. Rural communities in Wales are thriving. A number of challenges have had to be overcome and changes made along the way to achieve this, including finding fair ways to pay for tree planting, getting the process right and ensuring we have the right skills and knowledge to support these changes.*

(3) Feasibility & Desirability of Pathways. In the last step, identified pathways to tree planting were deliberated in more depth. This section aimed to consolidate the ideas from the backcasting phase and help to identify what is needed to encourage and support farmers to create woodland. Key tasks in this phase included: "List the ways in which you think Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) can better work with farmers, landowners and local communities to support woodland creation".

Analysis

2.12   The notes from the workshops were used to compile the findings below. The notes were structured around the research question and thematically analysed for common themes across the six workshops and the pilot workshop. Using a

thematic approach[26], the notes were coded and then combined into themes, followed by an iterative process of reviewing the significance of the identified themes in relation to the research questions. Most of the themes were identified across multiple workshops unless stated otherwise. Notes were used over transcribed workshop recordings to allow for an anonymous atmosphere in the workshops to encourage the farmers to speak freely and express their views without hesitation. Where the workshops were held in Welsh, the notes were translated into English for the analysis.

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[26] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

3.   Findings

3.1   This section reports on the analysis of the notes from the six workshops and additional insights from the pilot study. The findings are structured around the key research questions (and not necessarily the format of the workshops) and present the core themes that were identified from the workshop notes.

A. What are farmers' roles in 2050 in the view of farmers, and how does that relate to the potential role of farmers in planting and managing trees and woodland?

3.2   In the context of this research question, the backcasting methodology explored the wider context of the future of farming. First, this section presents key insights given by workshop participants into what roles farmers might play in 2050 more generally. The last section discusses how these findings can be interpreted in relation to tree planting. However, overall, participants' views on whether farmers will have planted more trees on their land in the future was mixed, with most farmers stating they were unsure whether they will plant trees themselves due to a perceived lack of clarity over what future policy might look like.

3.3   *Anticipated significant changes for the future of farming.* Key topics that workshop participants explored here include the role of farmers and the farming community in 2050. In general, there was a sense that farming in Wales will undergo significant changes by the year 2050. Some participants thought that farming income will increasingly depend on diversification through activities such as tourism or energy production. Additionally, participants anticipated that they would face pressures from climate change and will need to adapt to its effects and increasing demands for carbon capture and other climate mitigation actions. Two themes were prominently discussed across all workshops regarding the role of farmers in the future. These were (1) the important role farmers have and will have as food producers for Wales and (2) the role farmers play as being at the heart of local communities – especially Welsh speaking communities.

3.4   ***Farmers as food producers in a food-insecure world.*** There was a very
        strong sense that a farmer's role in 2050 should still be to produce food for their
        community and for Wales. Other issues such as climate change and biodiversity
        were considered to be secondary, whilst still thought of as important. Some
        farmers expressed concerns about meeting the demand for food while also
        addressing the challenges of climate change, such as achieving Net Zero
        carbon emissions. There was a general sense that food production by farmers
        was a high priority for both the local and global supply chain. It was also
        referenced in relation to geopolitical conflicts and climate change, where a more
        self-sufficient food provision for Wales was considered by some farmers to be a
        good approach that could reduce vulnerability to the impacts of global crises.
        The balance between providing cheap and healthy food and reducing carbon
        emissions was seen as another challenge that may be difficult to achieve;
        especially with multiple demands on farmers including tree planting. Many
        farmers were concerned that they lack the time, skills, and financial resources
        to maintain trees, whilst also prioritising food production. Across the workshops
        a majority of farmers expressed the concern that tree planting could be
        competing with food production. This was further exacerbated by the concern
        that converting farmland to woodland would be a permanent change reducing
        flexibility to adapt in the future (see paragraph 3.13).

3.5   ***Farmers at the heart of (Welsh speaking) communities.*** Across the groups,
        participants discussed that practices would shift towards different types of land
        management (e.g. diversification of what land is used for, including forestry and
        the production of renewable energy). Some participants voiced concerns about
        the potential for farms to be sold to people outside Wales, and the subsequent
        reduced role farmers would have in the community, which was seen as a threat
        to both local communities and the Welsh language.

3.6   **A number of opportunities and challenges were identified in the
        discussions around the future of farming.** As part of the holistic approach,
        these give a wider context as to what farmer groups consider feasible and
        desirable when discussing tree planting schemes. There was a strong
        perception that good aspects of being a farmer in 2050 could include:

- *Efficient food production & work-life balance.* Across workshops, participants felt that in the future, technology would allow for a better work/life balance, while innovation in livestock farming and possibly growing more crops could lead to feeding the world as climate change takes hold.

- *Agency & fair compensation.* There was a strong perception that, in the future, farmers have control over food production, with the potential for a fair price for their produce and financial rewards for their hard work and dedication.

- *Being valued.* Across workshops, there was hope that farmers will be valued, treated with respect, and appreciated, with less regulation and more people listening to their input.

3.7   Workshop participants also anticipate that it will be challenging being a farmer in 2050. Main considerations by the participating farmers included:

- *Climate change impact*. Some farmers anticipated that the weather and climate will be unpredictable and pose a significant challenge to farmers, with droughts, dry summers, and disease outbreaks being some of the issues they are likely to face. However, this was not related in any way to discussion as to why there is a need to plant trees to mitigate climate change.

- *Uncertainty about the next generation.* There was a strong sense that future generations of farmers face financial insecurity and participants referenced examples of companies buying farms for the land. Additionally, there was a perception by some farmers in the workshops that the general public does not hold farmers in high regard, adding to the disincentives of pursuing a career in farming. These factors were considered to collectively discourage farming as an occupation for future generations of potential farmers.

- ***Constant change to short- and mid-term government policies.*** Some participating farmers felt that the government's policies and direction towards farming were constantly changing, making it difficult for farmers to plan for the future. There was a sense that an increased push to plant trees could result in a decline in agricultural land and an increase in food imports, which may jeopardise food security and sovereignty in Wales (see also 3.5).

B. What are reasons why farmers would or would not plant trees in the future?

3.8 Farmers in the workshop reported decisions to plant trees on their land were influenced by factors such as financial incentives, suitable tree species for the surrounding environment, and the impact on food production. Participants had mixed opinions on tree planting: some were willing to plant trees under specific conditions. However, as mentioned above, they felt they lacked the time, skills, and financial resources to maintain trees.

3.9 Overall, two key themes were identified in terms of reasons for planting trees. These themes were the potential for tree planting to support the diversification of farm income, and the potential for tree planting to support other farm priorities and systems.

3.10 ***Tree planting was seen by participants as having the potential to support diversification of farm income.*** In principle, many farmers expressed an interest in tree planting, especially when reflecting the future development of farming (but only if they could be confident that planting trees would provide an income). They predicted that future farms would need to diversify and develop a mix of income streams that could also include income from woodland and other ventures, for example tourism or production of renewable energy on the farm.

3.11 ***Tree planting was seen as potentially supporting other farm priorities and enhance the existing farming system if policies and support schemes enable this***. Some of the participating farmers saw tree planting as a potential opportunity to increase biodiversity, sequester carbon, and increase timber production. Some also saw tree planting as a way to enhance their wider farming practice - for example providing shelter for livestock, providing drainage

for wetland, or managing water courses. However, to enable this, farmers felt they needed more flexibility in selecting where they plant trees and agency in what trees are planted. In general farmers in workshops favoured planting trees on less fertile land such as bracken land and on steep hillsides, which were harder to make use of in some farming systems, as well as for practical purposes (e.g. shelter) as noted above.

3.12   Although tree planting in principle was seen by many workshop farmers as an additional income stream, the need for a viable funding structure from the Welsh Government and longer-term and more easily accessible financial incentives (see discussion below) were seen as key factors for participating farmers to consider planting trees. To enable farmers to make informed decisions about where to plant trees and to subsequently manage them, improved flexibility in where they are allowed to plant as well as knowledge provision and training were seen as critical (see discussion below).

3.13   A number of farmers across workshops raised concerns that **converting farms to woodland would represent an irreversible decision and would minimise their ability to adapt in the future.** They were concerned that the land would no longer be eligible for the tax exemption rules that apply to agricultural land. Representing this wider sentiment, one individual mentioned as a positive example the flexibility in changing from agriculture to forestry and back to agriculture in New Zealand with a lack of Government intervention. There was also a related concern that farmers would not be able to claim Basic Payment Scheme type subsidy for woodland as it would no longer be classified as agricultural land.

3.14   **Tenant farmers, in particular, raised concerns throughout the workshops about achieving tree-planting targets that were perceived to depend on landlord approval.** The issue of landlord-tenant agreements was perceived as a common obstacle, potentially making the target figures unattainable and leading to landlords reclaiming farms so that they could directly benefit from payments associated with tree-planting opportunities.

3.15 ***There was also a sense that tree planting competed with additional and multiple pressures faced by farmers.*** A number of the farmers attending the workshops prioritised other agricultural practices such as ensuring that they had the grassland available to reduce stocking density to conform with Agri-pollution regulations (which was seen to conflict with tree planting) or on conserving and storing water to promote resilience in the future.

3.16 ***Some participants raised perceived risks or issues associated with planting trees.*** These included the perceived risk of introducing new tree and plant health diseases if trees are imported to meet tree planting targets. Some of the participants also questioned the carbon sequestration benefit of trees compared to well-managed grassland. There was also a perception that carbon stored in trees would be more likely to burn (in forest fires), while carbon stored in soil is safer.

3.17 Additional negative and positive factors viewed by workshop participants as influential to farmer decision-making in relation to tree-planting are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Key factors that influence farmers' decisions to plant trees based on the workshops conducted for this report:

Key positive factors	Key negative factors
- Financial incentives can motivate farmers to plant trees. - If the right trees are planted in the right places and for the right reasons, it can benefit both the farmer and the environment. - In general, farmers were more open to planting trees as part of an integrated farming system as opposed to in large blocks. - Livestock farmers particularly valued trees for shelter, for providing a strong biosecurity barrier to minimise disease spread and for protecting watercourses. Some participants specifically saw huge potential for silvopasture in the future. - Some participants recognised that they would need to offset their own emissions in the future and recognised the role that tree planting could play in sequestering carbon and enabling them to continue producing food. - Trees can be planted on marginal land.	- Farmers' main aim is food production and they may not want their land to be turned into forests. - A number of farmers questioned the carbon sequestration benefit of trees compared to well-managed grassland. There was also a perception that carbon stored in trees can burn, while carbon stored in soil is safer. - Trees can be seen as a nuisance and bring added stress and work for farmers. - Some farmers may not have the necessary skills or money to maintain trees. - Some farmers were concerned about the landlord-tenant agreements issue, potentially hindering target achievement and prompting farm reclamation for future tree-planting opportunities. - There was a concern about the lack of native trees for planting and that importing trees would lead to new tree and plant diseases being imported.

C. What long-term support would farmers need to plant trees? What are the characteristics of payment schemes that farmers would take up?

3.18 This section presents the key characteristics that farmers would like to see in initiatives to support tree planting, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for future schemes based on participants' and their networks' experiences with current and past schemes. They also reflect farmers' aspirations for the future, as outlined above. The identified themes reflect farmers' perceptions around what went well and areas of improvement

with existing and previous tree planting schemes while also reflecting forward what support farmers will need in the future. This section mostly reflects the discussions from the deliberation phase of the workshops.

3.19   The discussions revealed that long-term support for farmers requires a number of things:

(1) Firstly, a *trusting collaborative relationship between the Welsh Government and farmers* was described as a major factor for future woodland creation by participating farmers across the workshops. Farmers' experiences with previous schemes influenced their perception of the relationship with the Welsh Government. Negative perspectives that some participants discussed included a lack of trust, perceived restrictive and inflexible policies, and feeling anxious about financial risks and potential penalties. Positive perspectives included feeling valued, understood, and positively influenced by effective communication and supportive project officers with local knowledge. In terms of future schemes, several farmers across all workshops noted that open dialogue and appropriate support to farmers would provide them with agency to '*plant the right tree in the right place'*

(2) Secondly, *longevity* was identified as a key factor to be considered for future schemes. Existing and previous schemes were criticised by some participating farmers for not being long enough to support tree planting adequately, which takes multiple years until it creates income. It was felt by some participants that planting trees was a long-term decision, but some farmers voiced concerns that the current payments were not reflecting this. There was a sense that long-term support for maintenance and upkeep would improve future schemes. Additionally, some participants felt that clearer guidance on the use of carbon calculators would enable farmers to calculate for themselves how much carbon they are sequestering, helping them to think of tree planting as a longer-term investment.

(3) Increased **flexibility and reduced financial risk** were considered key: Participants also flagged a need for increased flexibility and adaptability of

the scheme to the specific land (see discussion above). Financial support was considered to be vital, and it was felt by some that farmers must be given the chance to make changes gradually, with flexibility in the scheme to suit individual farms. As such, there was a sense that the scheme must be fair to tenants, offer fair payment to farmers, and not be imposed. Some participants proposed that it should also consider a tiered system, differentiating between farms, and not penalise farmers.

(4) **Increased accessibility of schemes and capability building within the industry**: Some participants noted that they had experienced difficulties with finding information online about schemes and guidance. Participants also felt that there were too few trusted field officers with local knowledge that could advise farmers. Farmers' own lack of expertise around tree planting, management, and tree health was identified as a key barrier that would need to be addressed.

3.20   A SWOT analysis was used to further explore potential strength, weaknesses, and opportunities for future tree planting policies and schemes on the basis of the discussions across the workshops. A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to assess strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats of a policy or intervention. Table 4 shows the analysis of the workshop notes using a SWOT analysis approach and reflecting workshop discussions on past tree planting schemes and policies.

Table 4: SWOT Analysis based on reflections of previous schemes that can provide learning for future schemes

STRENGTHS

- *Project officers with subject knowledge* who visited farms helped build relationship, trust and skills with regards to tree planting and schemes.

- Named *contact project officer* that understood farming and *gave suitable advice* and was always there to assist with any queries.

- When *messaging around scheme praised farmers' good work for the environment*, this increased likelihood for engagement.

- When *set-up of scheme was perceived to be working with the farmers* rather than setting strict rules, this increased likelihood for engagement.

- Especially hedgerow schemes had *positive effects on biodiversity* on farm and on *livestock management* (e.g. providing shelter).

WEAKNESSES

- Perceived as very *complicated with many rules* and strict punishments attached.

- *Anecdotal negative experiences* where farmers were penalised when making an error from the scheme evoked feelings of distrust and lack of support towards WG.

- *Restrictions and rules* not taking into account realities of life (e.g. delays due to working with the weather) and agency of farmers, while farmers/ landowners carry 100% of responsibility to carry out contract of tree planting, including the risks should it fail (e.g. trees die, revenue not as projected).

- Perceived *high financial risk of being penalised* and losing or not receiving money from scheme when accidentally not following rules (e.g. when planting tree in 'wrong' place).

- Perceived *high risk due to lack of support and guidance on tree planting* (e.g. support contact person with tree expertise) and longevity of schemes.

OPPORTUNITIES

- *Build relationship and provide support* through knowledgeable support officer that is available for advice and guidance.

- *Simplification of schemes and rules* that reduce (perceived) risk of engaging in scheme.

- *Improved longevity* of schemes to provide longer-term security when engaging in scheme that takes into account lifecycle of tree planting to return of investment (e.g. 10, 20, 30 year support schemes rather than 5 years).

- *Engage farmers in scheme development*. Schemes that take different farms and situations into consideration.

THREATS

- *Bureaucratic barriers* prevent many from engaging in schemes (e.g. long rules books and application forms).

- *Reduced trust in WG* due to perceived lack of support and perception WG system works 'against' farmers.

- *Negative emotions* and *anxiety* associated with schemes where farmers are scared to do something wrong when applying for scheme.

- Perceived *high financial risk* prevents farmers from engaging in scheme.

- *Strained relationship with WG* due to lack of engagement and tailoring of schemes to farmers' situations.

- *Missed opportunity to develop schemes in conversation* between those who were implementing the scheme and those who were managing the land.

Reflections on the value of a deliberative approach in this context

3.21   The Welsh Government specifically wanted to explore the value of a
deliberative approach in this context, given that previous research highlighted
the importance of deep-rooted cultural factors such as identity and values in
governing farmers' decisions and behaviours[27]. The deliberative approach
provides a mechanism through which to explore often difficult-to-discuss topics
(i.e. tree planting).

3.22   While the approach was not formally or systematically evaluated, the team
reflected that:

- While an approach that asked farmers to put themselves in an
imagined future led to some initial unease for some participants, the novel
nature of the approach introduced an element of light heartedness and
detachment from the "here and now" and enabled a more relaxed and
constructive discussion on what can be a contentious issue.

- While many of the findings reported here will have been identified in
previous research focused on farmers and woodland[28], the wider framing of
this work enabled participants to focus the discussion on what was most
important to them. This allowed the researchers to understand factors in the
wider context in which farmers experience them (e.g. their reasons for their
strong identity as food producers and how this identity feels threatened, and
their perceptions of how policies interact).

- The approach more strongly brought to the fore issues relating to
trust and the desire for a more collaborative relationship with government,
which are not so apparent from more structured quantitative and qualitative
research.

- Overall, the researchers felt that this approach has the potential to
be valuable in contexts such as this where there is a need to bring about major

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[27] Natural England (2021): Encouraging woodland creation, regeneration and tree planting on agricultural land: A
literature review (NEER020) Encouraging woodland creation, regeneration and tree planting on agricultural land: A
literature review - NEER020 (naturalengland.org.uk)
[28] *Ibid.*

change within society or a specific group. It adds value by allowing participants to articulate what is important to them, in their own terms, which is critical if farmers are to be part of, and/or are to respond to a 'call to arms' for tree planting. Deliberative methods, such as the ones used in this report, are also an established approach for engaging stakeholders, such as farmers, to ensure their perspectives contribute to public engagement on Net Zero[29]. As such, given the potential contribution of tree planting to Net Zero, this project is a valuable step towards ensuring wider public engagement on Net Zero policy development with stakeholders in Wales.

4. Conclusions & Implications

4.1 This section reflects on the findings above, and their implications for what might better encourage and enable farmers to plant trees in the future. As this is a small exploratory piece of work to provide insights into a subset of farmer views, findings should be viewed within the context of other work with farmers.

4.2 Farmers saw themselves primarily as food producers. This means that policies, communications and schemes to enable tree planting which are designed to enhance and complement food production are likely to be more successful at engaging the farming population as a whole.

4.3 Farmers were concerned about the loss of small farms and the impact on communities. Particularly for tenanted farmland, where agreements from landlords are required for woodland creation, tree-planting targets were seen as challenging. This suggests that ensuring that support and funding is accessible to smaller farms for tree and woodland planting and management, and considering how this can help ensure long-term farm resilience, will be important.

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[29] Verfuerth, C., Demski, C., Capstick, S., Whitmarsh, L., & Poortinga, W. (2023), 'A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals', Journal of the British Academy, 11(s4): 97–124.

4.4　Farmers recognised that trees can both provide an opportunity for diversifying farm income and enhance existing farming systems. This indicates that highlighting to farmers how tree planting can support diversification and farm systems may enhance farmer support. However, to feel that they have agency in ensuring that the right trees are planted in the right place to support their farming enterprise (e.g. to provide shelter, protect water courses etc.) farmers felt that schemes need to be more flexible and less prescribed. Participants generally called for more agency and for their own expertise to be valued.

4.5　Climate change was seen as an issue but was not always closely associated with tree planting. Farmers were very aware of changes in the climate and the need to adapt now and for the longer term. This suggests there may be value for policies and schemes in focusing more on the role of trees in supporting adaptation, encouraging farmers to make the link between the two. While participants recognised a need to mitigate against climate change, most were more focused on achieving more immediate production efficiencies and conforming to accommodate and comply with very current policies such as agricultural pollution regulations.

4.6　Participants raised concerns that the next generation is currently not incentivised to continue farming, for reasons which included both financial uncertainty and the perceived lack of public respect for farmers. Policies relating to tree planting need to take this into account. There may be opportunities to emphasise the long-term financial benefits of tree planting and how tree planting can help demonstrate to the public the role farmers play both in producing food and looking after the environment.

4.7　Participants raised concerns over relatively short-term policies and their inability to plan. This suggests that future schemes and communications need to provide farmers with the confidence to take this very long-term change that woodland creation requires, including recognising the non-subsidy benefits. Increasing farmers' knowledge and agency to think about the role of tree planting in offsetting their own emissions might also give farmers the confidence to make this long-term investment for reasons other than direct agricultural policies.

4.8   Some participants raised what they perceived as risks or issues associated with planting trees, in some cases based on misconceptions. This included that trees might not be as efficient as soil for sequestering carbon, and would be more likely to burn, and that importing trees would put existing woodland at risk of disease. Addressing farmers' demand for more advice and training on woodland planting and management could provide the opportunity to discuss these complex issues and to provide evidence-based, applied advice.

4.9   There was a perception that tree planting conflicts with multiple other priorities and challenges faced by farmers (e.g. reducing agricultural pollution, increasing water storage) – it may be useful for policy, communications and delivery officers to recognise this sense of multiple competing pressures and to help farmers to understand how trees can help to address these multiple competing challenges.

4.10   Farmers felt that past schemes have been too prescribed and stringent and feel there is considerable risk that they will be penalised financially for doing the wrong thing. There may be scope to reflect more on where and how farmers can be given more agency during the process of applying for support. Trusted and knowledgeable tree-planting advisors who can help build farmers' confidence and buy-in to the benefits of tree planting would also facilitate building this trust.

4.11   Farmers did not feel confident in accessing and understanding information about tree planting and the support available to them. These findings suggest there is potential for schemes to support upskilling farmers, for example through demonstrator farms that show good practice and trusted project officers that offer practical advice for farmers. The discussion also suggested a need for adequate training for tree planting and management both for farmers and potential advisors.

Annex A

Part 1 – List of benefits and challenges for introducing trees (these are from the workshop notes)

Benefits

- Shelter for livestock
- Food source if they are fruit trees
- Improve the landscape and biodiversity
- Noise reduction if you live by a busy road
- Carbon sequestration
- Drainage/help water control
- Use of shelter belts
- Cleaner air
- Can be used to adjust awkward field boundaries
- Timber

Challenges

- Take years to grow- slow return on investment and slow carbon sequestration. Grassland sequesters carbon and does so quickly as leys are established quickly
- Taking land away from food production- food security is highly important
- Lack of skills and knowledge to manage trees
- A lot of work to plant trees
- Pests and diseases being introduced to the farm- foxes/badgers, killing lambs and spreading TB
- Imported trees bringing in disease
- Cost of planting, fencing and maintenance- a high cost to the farmer
- Tax implications- once planted it is not agricultural land
- Lose BPS on the trees as not agricultural land
- Once you put it into trees you will never get it back again
- Schemes too restrictive with no flexibility
- Can't plant it where we want to plant it and can't choose what tree
- Devaluing land- productive arable land worth a lot more than woodland
- Losing communities and language- spoiling it for the next generation that want to come back to farm.

Croeso
Welcome
Gweithdy Coedlannau'r Dyfodol
Future Woodland Workshop

Croeso

1. Enw ac o ble rydych yn dod?
2. Cefndir y fferm – mentrau, math o ffarm ac ati
3. Beth yw eich gwelediageth chi a gyfer eich fferm i'r dyfodol neu y diwydiant amaeth yn gyffredinol?

Welcome

1. *Name and where are you from?*
2. *Farm background – enterprises, type of farm etc*
3. *What is the future vision for your farm or the agriculture industry in general?*

Trefn y dydd

- Cyflwyniad
- Gweithdy - Rhan 1 (35 munud)
- Cinio
- Gweithdy – Rhan 2 (55 munud)
- Paned
- Gweithdy – Rhan 3 (25 munud)

Plan for the day

- *Introduction*
- *Workshop – Part 1 (35 minutes)*
- *Lunch*
- *Workshop - Part 2 (55 minutes)*
- *Tea/coffee break*
- *Workshop - Part 3 (25 minutes)*

Cefndir

- Mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi comisiynu Menter a Busnes i gyflwyno'r gweithdai hyn i gasglu eich barn ar –
  - y gwahanol ffyrdd y gellir plethu coetir i fusnesau ffermio yn y tymor byr a'r hirdymor;
  - Y posibiliadau o blannu coed ar fferm;
  - Y ddarpariaeth fyddai angen bod mewn lle o ran cymorth

Background

- *Welsh Government have commissioned Menter a Busnes to deliver these workshops to capture your views on –*
  - *the different ways in which woodland might be incorporated into farming businesses in the short and long-term;*
  - *The feasibility of planting trees on farm;*
  - *Provision that needs to be in place for support.*

Cefndir

- Nid yw'r gwaith hwn yn gysylltiedig ag unrhyw bolisi neu gynllun penodol gan Lywodraeth Cymru ond bydd yn llywio'r ystod o ymyriadau a mecanweithiau cymorth y mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn eu datblygu nawr ac yn y dyfodol

- Bydd Menter a Busnes yn dileu unrhyw ddata personol a ddarperir drwy'r gweithdai ac yn sicrhau bod y data crai yn ddienw cyn iddo gael ei rannu â Llywodraeth Cymru.

- Bydd y wybodaeth a gesglir yn ystod y prosiect yn cael eu cynnwys mewn adroddiad a gyhoeddir ar wefan Llywodraeth Cymru.

Background

- *This work is not associated with any specific Welsh Government policy or scheme but will inform the range of interventions and support mechanisms that Welsh Government are developing now and into the future.*

- *Please note that Menter a Busnes will delete any personal data provided through the workshops and anonymise the raw data before it is shared with the Welsh Government.*

- *The information collected during the project will be included in a report published on the Welsh Government website.*

Rhan 1- Esiamplau o goed ar fferm
Part 1- Examples of trees on farm

Planting designed to improve livestock management

Hard standing feeding area

Catching overland flow

Easier livestock management with funnel design
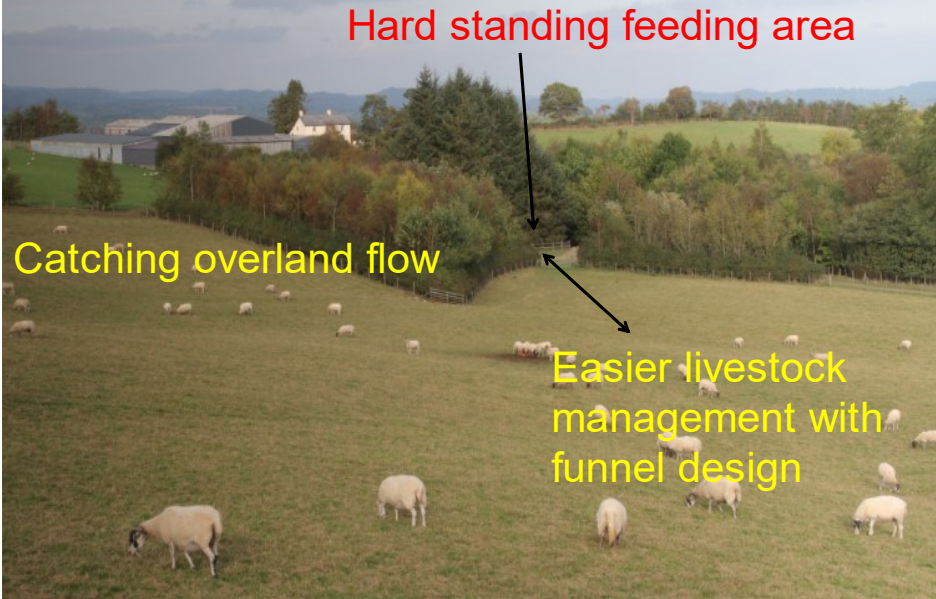
Fit for purpose?

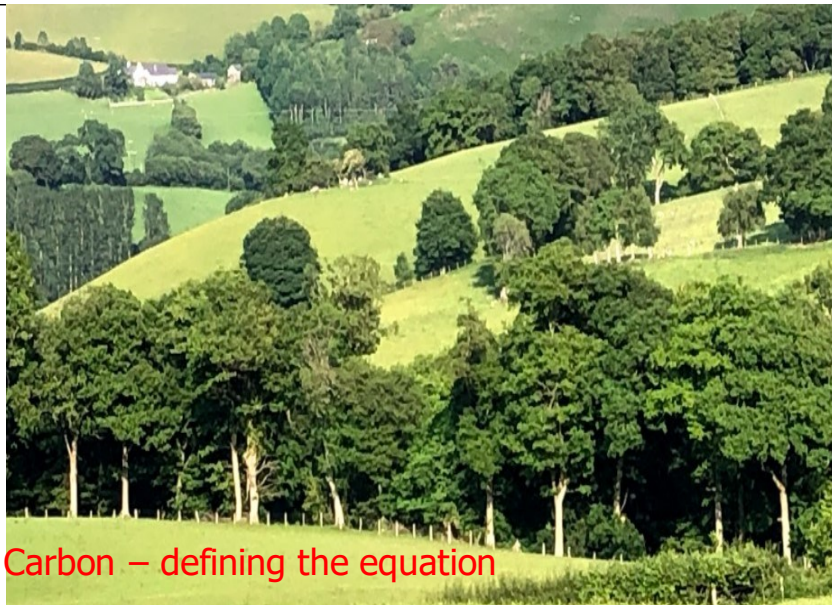Ystyried hyd a graddfa priodol? Appropriate length and scale?

Issues………. Open access to watercourses leading to erosion and poaching of banks leading to dilapidation of the banks and sediment loading in the channel.

Before…..

After…
Buffer zone is defined…

Biodiversity on farm….. a product of farming when managing the environment to take advantage of the multifunctional benefits of trees.

Hedgerows and Biodiversity

Carbon – defining the equation

Wrth feddwl am gynlluniau grant... *Thinking about grant schemes…*

- A oedd problemau gyda chynlluniau grant blaenorol?
- Beth aeth yn dda yn y gorffennol?

- *Were there problems with previous grant schemes?*
- *What went well in the past?*

Tasg

- Post-its melyn - buddion / cyfleon y gallwch ei weld o gael mwy o goed ar eich fferm;
- Post-it glas - her sy'n gysylltiedig â phlannu mwy o goed ar eich fferm

Task

- *Yellow post-its - benefit / opportunity you can see from having more trees on your farm;*
- *Blue post-it - challenge associated with planting more trees on your farm.*

Rhan 2

- Gadewch i ni gymryd cam yn ôl a chymryd ychydig funudau i ganolbwyntio ar y dyfodol.

- Sut olwg fydd ar Gymru, eich cymuned leol a'ch fferm yn y dyfodol?

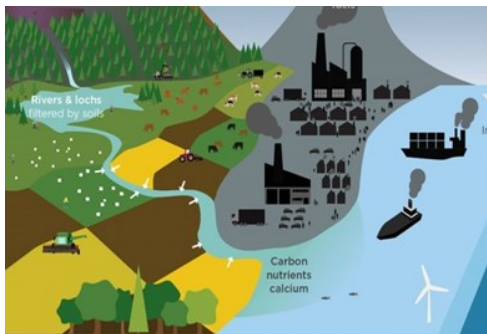- Sut olwg fydd arno erbyn 2050?

Part 2

- *Let's take a step back and take a few minutes to focus on the future*

- *What will Wales, your local community and farm look like in the future?*
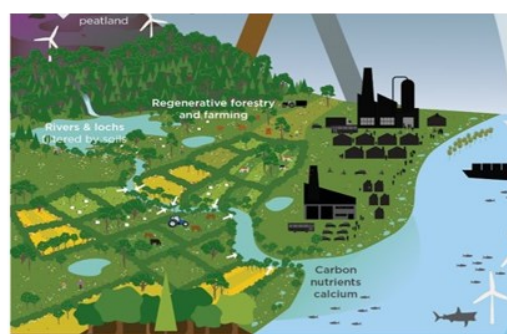
- *What will it look like by 2050?*

Cymru yn 2050

- Darllenwch y paragraff.

- Nid datganiad gan LlC na'u glasbrint ar gyfer y dyfodol mo hwn – dyma rai o'r pethau a allai fod wedi newid ymhen 30 mlynedd.

Wales in 2050

- *Please read the paragraph.*

- *This is not a WG statement or their blueprint for the future – here are some of the things which might have changed in 30 years time.*

The agriculture sector in Wales has been net zero since 2040. The climate has already changed, and we are all having to adapt to more regular droughts, floods and heat waves during the summer months.

In the process of achieving net zero, people in Wales, the UK and around the world have adopted a range of low-carbon strategies, including flying less frequently, improved, more efficient public transport, and people are buying less and wasting less. Businesses have also changed the way they operate. Fossil fuel free production of goods are now the norm. Goods across the country are being transported on hydrogen or electric trucks. Supermarkets have required all of their suppliers to be net-zero since 2030. New homes are built from Welsh home-grown timber and are heated without fossil fuels.

The countryside has changed and looks a bit different now. Wales has more tree cover across the nation, and the landscape is more mixed. Local people and tourists enjoy spending time in Wales' Woodlands. A national forest network and trail is stretching from Snowdonia to South Wales and cities have more tree lined streets.

Farming in Wales has also changed to mitigate against and adapt to climate change and promote biodiversity while still providing food for the nation. Rural communities in Wales are thriving. A number of challenges have had to be overcome and changes made along the way to achieve this, including finding fair ways to pay for tree planting, getting the process right and ensuring we have the right skills and knowledge to support these changes.

Trafodwch fel grwp

- Beth ydych chi'n meddwl yw eich rôl fel ffermwr (neu'r genhedlaeth nesaf) yn eich cymuned yn 2050?
- Beth ydych chi'n meddwl yw'r peth gorau am fod yn ffermwr yn 2050?
- Beth ydych chi'n meddwl y byddech chi'n ei gael fwyaf anodd am fod yn ffermwr yn 2050?

Discuss as a group

- *What do you think is your role as a farmer (or next generation) for your community in 2050?*
- *What do you think is the best thing about being a farmer in 2050?*
- *What do you think you would find most difficult about being a farmer in 2050?*

Show of hands…

- Ydych chi'n meddwl y byddwch chi [neu bwy bynnag sy'n ffermio eich tir] wedi plannu coed ar eich tir?
- Ble?
- Pam?

- *Do you think you [or whoever is farming your land] will have planted trees on your land?*
- *Where?*
- *Why?*

Trafodwch fel grwp

- Mewn byd delfrydol mae yna gynlluniau ffermio sy'n ddeniadol i chi (a ffermwyr eraill) sydd wedi cefnogi ffermwyr Cymru i fod yn fwy cynaliadwy a hefyd i blannu mwy o goed.
  - Sut olwg fydd ar y cynlluniau hyn yn eich barn chi?
- Beth am yrwyr ar gyfer plannu coed y tu hwnt i ymyriadau a chynlluniau cymorth y llywodraeth, sut olwg oedd ar y rhain?

Discuss as a group

- *In an ideal world there are farming schemes that are attractive to you (and other farmers) which have supported farmers in Wales in being more sustainable and also in planting more trees.*
  - *What do you think these schemes will have looked like?*
- *What about drivers for tree planting beyond government interventions and support schemes, what did these look like?*

Rhan 3

Part 3

Rhestrwch y ffyrdd y credwch y gall Llywodraeth Cymru a CNC weithio'n well gyda ffermwyr, tirfeddianwyr a chymunedau lleol i gefnogi creu coetiroedd.

List the ways in which you think Welsh Government and NRW can better work with farmers, landowners and local communities to support woodland creation.