

Woodlands and Forestry in UK National Parks

Case studies – April 2012

The case studies below, drawn from the UK's National Parks, show just some of the ways in which National Park Authorities (NPAs) are working with partners to maximize the benefits of woodlands and forests in National Parks. The case studies demonstrate five key areas of activity:

- **Creating new woodland**
- **Benefits for biodiversity**
- **Engaging people for active involvement**
- **Connections in the landscape**
- **Working with private woodland owners**

Creating new woodland

National Parks offer some significant opportunities for increasing woodland cover, as recognised in the UK Government's Vision and Circular for English National Parks. While variations in existing baseline woodland cover and landscape character mean that opportunities will be greater in some Parks than others, National Park Authorities are working to support woodland creation with 'the right tree in the right place'. The integrated approach offered by National Parks means that woodland creation can be targeted to areas where multiple benefits in terms of environment, economy and society will be realised for long-term sustainability.



Tree planting at Caldbeck, Lake District National Park

Aspirations for creating woodland

NPAs and partner organisations set out their objectives for the National Park area in strategic documents such as National Park Management Plans, and in a number of National Parks this includes articulating ambitious targets for woodland creation. In the North York Moors. It is considered that an additional 3,000 hectares of woodland could be accommodated in the National Park, taking the total proportion of woodland in the National Park from around 22% to around 24%. It is thought that this could be accommodated on land of low productivity, largely on bracken covered slopes but also through extending and connecting existing ancient semi-natural woodland. Further work is required to ascertain precisely where this may be feasible and to avoid conflicts with other environmental interests. In the Lake District National Park there are bold aspirations to increase woodland cover from 12.6% to between 18-24%.

Working at a landscape scale in Northumberland National Park

Blindburn Farm is owned by the Ministry of Defence and forms part of the Otterburn Training Area. Working together, staff at Natural England, Defence Estates and the National Park Authority have identified a scheme to plant up approximately 200 hectares of new native woodland. It is hoped that this work will help safeguard local jobs, help maintain the viability of the estate farms and provide a more diverse upland habitat that will contribute to combating climate change through the process of carbon sequestration. It should also provide flood mitigation measures where the trees are planted alongside burns and watercourses.

Benefits for biodiversity

The Independent Panel on Forestry's Progress Report recognised that forests and woodlands should be considered as one element of a resilient ecological network, alongside other habitats. Habitat connectivity should be an important consideration in determining where new woodlands should go. While woodland creation is needed there are also very significant biodiversity gains to be made in improving the management of existing woodlands, and in restoring PAWS (Plantation on Ancient Woodland) sites.

Habitat Networks in the Yorkshire Dales National Park

Fragmentation and isolation of species and their habitats is acknowledged as a major threat to biodiversity, especially in the face of climate change. The development of habitat networks is widely seen as a key mechanism for reversing the effects of fragmentation on biodiversity while delivering a range of other social and environmental benefits, such as enhancement of local landscape character and greater opportunities for public access and recreational use. Habitat networks consider how different species use woodland and other habitats to move and disperse through the landscape.

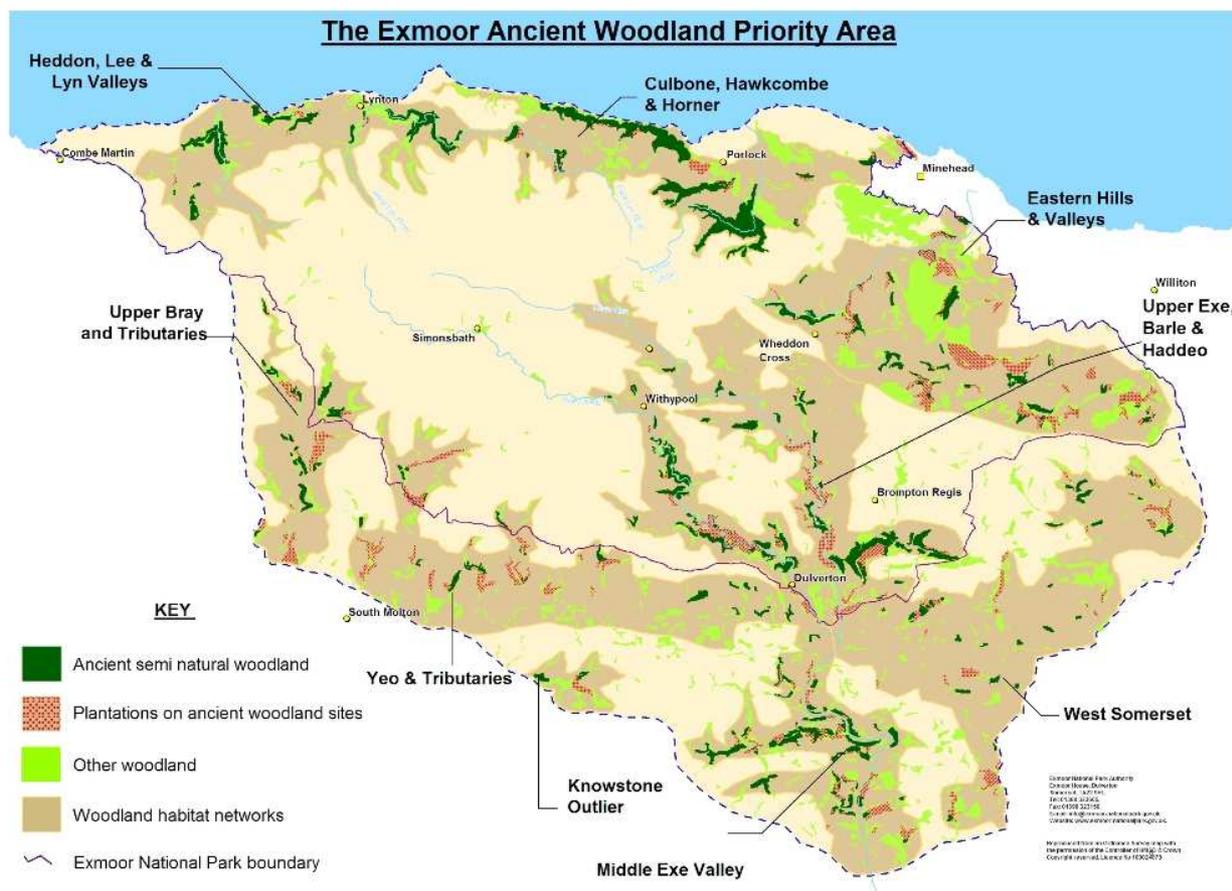
The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority has looked at the amount, location and type of woodland in a given area, and targeted areas in between existing woodland for appropriate planting to link woods together. By expanding the available habitat the woodland becomes more robust and greatly improves the conditions for species to feed, breed and spread through the landscape. The Yorkshire Dales is now also involved with a project led by Forest Research to look at producing an Integrated Habitat Network. This involves mapping of all habitats, including species as well, to identify the best areas to focus conservation efforts in order to achieve the greatest benefits.

Habitat networks for targeting support on and around Exmoor National Park

Forest Research has developed a software programme that maps woodland habitat networks around clusters of ancient woodland as a tool to identify potentially suitable areas for woodland creation. This was applied to the south west and a number of "hotspots" or clusters of networks emerged including "Greater Exmoor".

Strong structures and partnerships were already in place around the National Park and there was a proven track record of delivery on Exmoor through Woodland Accords and the New Native Woodland Challenge Schemes. Greater Exmoor was therefore selected as one of four Ancient Woodland Priority Areas in the south west where enhanced grants for creating new native woodland and managing existing semi-natural woodland could be targeted and delivered successfully in the mapped habitat networks (image below).

The Exmoor Ancient Woodland Project has been highly successful in delivering targeted grants to improve standards of woodland management. An important principle underpinning this work is the concept that we can only secure on-going management by developing economic sustainability – grants help to pump-prime activity.



Map of woodland habitat networks in Greater Exmoor including Exmoor National Park

Engaging people for active involvement

Trees and woodlands are key to delivery of National Park purposes, including the promotion of opportunities for enjoyment and understanding of National Parks' special qualities. The Independent Panel on Forestry is looking at how to make community engagement available to more people so they can be actively engaged as well as having access and recreational opportunities. This is an approach that National Park Authorities support and promote in their work.

Yorkshire Dales Parish Wildlife Project

The Parish Wildlife Project is a Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority initiative developed to encourage and support local people, interested individuals and groups in identifying, developing and managing local wildlife projects within the National Park. It is intended to be a truly local delivery mechanism to implement local priorities for biodiversity.

The basic principles of the project are:

- Local, community projects
- Long term and sustainable projects
- Biodiversity based projects
- School and community gardens are not eligible
- Projects are developed and managed by the local community as far as possible

Between July 2011 and March 2012, the Parish Wildlife Project has advised on 20 projects and provided funding for 10 of them. 7 of these projects have involved the creation of new habitat. The projects range from a small orchard at Dent, to a larger 50 acre farm undertaking hedgerow restoration and planting with a community bat and nest box scheme alongside this.



Underprivileged children from Liverpool planting trees as part of a National Park visit

South Lakeland Community Spirit Forest



This is a community led project running for 10 years from 2012 – 2022. The aim is to grow a community forest in South Lakeland by harnessing the power of community spirit. The project brings together people from all areas of the community and statutory bodies including the Lake District National Park Authority, South Lakeland District Council, Cumbria County Council and Highways Department. Planting will include street trees, fruit trees, orchards, hedgerows and woodlands spreading out from the settlement into the countryside forming a network of trees planted by the community. A webpage will show the location of the trees so that people can see the network grow. Some trees are funded and some are grown by the community so that people feel a real sense of ownership for the project. The project has currently planted trees in Kendal and Staveley and people want to get involved and plant trees in 11 further communities.

Connections in the landscape

Connectivity of trees and woodlands can be important not just for the benefits for wildlife but also in landscape terms. In some National Parks where the scope for woodland creation may be limited (e.g. the Broads) there are nonetheless areas outside the boundaries where increased woodland cover would be beneficial and desirable. National Park Authorities are keen to work with partners to achieve this. Identifying how trees and woodlands can contribute to and strengthen the character of the landscape should be a key consideration alongside ecological connectivity.

North York Moors National Park and Howardian Hills AONB Native Woodland Partnership

The North York Moors National Park Authority has been part of a native woodland partnership with Forestry Commission, Natural England and the Howardian Hills AONB since 2001. The partnership's work has been guided by the 2002 Forest Habitat Network study '*Native Woodland Development in the North York Moors and Howardian Hills*' commissioned by the partners and produced by woodland conservation expert Dr George Peterken OBE.

The report acknowledges the importance of the National Park and AONB coming together with partners to develop a woodland network spanning across the whole area, and to identify opportunities to improve woodlands. Since 2002 the National Park Authority has employed a jointly-funded development officer to provide advice and encouragement for woodland creation and management projects throughout the National Park and the AONB.

The Great Trossachs Forest



Loch Katrine at the heart of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (Dannie Calder)

The Scottish Forest Alliance is a unique collaboration between the public and private sector. Backed by £10m of funding from BP, the aim of the Alliance is to restore much of Scotland's lost and fragmented native woodland. To date there are 14 projects across the country. 3 of those sites stretching from Loch Lomond north of Inversnaid reserve, across the Loch Katrine Catchment to Glen Finglas are managed by the neighbouring land-owning organisations RSPB, Forestry Commission Scotland and the Woodland Trust Scotland. While each organisation has independent specific objectives for land management on the individual sites, they are working in partnership across this vast landscape to create potentially the largest native woodland in Scotland known as The Great Trossachs Forest.

The project is based in the centre of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and contributes to the key guiding principles set out in the Park Plan. Specifically the project supports the aspirations in the Park Plan for the Trossachs including; celebrating and raising awareness of the areas rich culture, particularly the Romantic Movement; enhancing sense of place in the settlements by celebrating local culture and historic associations; developing and promoting the contribution of forests to landscape and biodiversity; giving greater protection and promotion to the enjoyment of the industrial heritage of the area associated with water abstraction at Loch Katrine. The project will also significantly contribute to targets in the LL&TNP Woodland and Forestry Framework and LL&T NP Biodiversity Action Plan.

Working with private woodland owners

The Independent Panel on Forestry is considering how active management of woodlands in private ownership can be increased. National Park Authorities in partnership with Forestry Commission work closely with landowners to seek to encourage active woodland management and creation. Improving management has an important role to play in maximising the ecosystem services that woodland delivers, particularly where opportunities for new woodland creation may be limited.

Carbon neutral sheep farming in Northumberland National Park



In 2008 a study was undertaken by the Oxford-based *Food Animal Initiative* which looked at the carbon footprint associated with upland sheep farming. Researchers used the Country Landowners Association's Carbon Accounting for Land Managers (CALM) model to calculate the Greenhouse Gas emissions and carbon sequestration on two

upland sheep farms in the National Park. The results indicate that these farms are nearly carbon neutral and could achieve complete neutrality by planting a relatively small additional acreage of woodland on each holding. This project demonstrates the role that tree planting can play in minimising the carbon footprint of certain land management practices.

Functional partnership to support woodland owners in Exmoor National Park

A consequence of the Exmoor Ancient Woodland Project (described under 'Benefits for Biodiversity') was the opportunity to formalise the successful partnership working between the National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission which had been developing over the previous years. Exmoor NPA and Forestry Commission agreed a formal partnership arrangement which would see the Exmoor NPA Woodland Officer seconded part-time to the Forestry Commission, taking on grant and regulatory functions in Greater Exmoor. The post was based in the National Park office and was presented as a genuine attempt to streamline processes, reduce bureaucracy and improve effectiveness of both organisations. It has been received in that way by woodland owners and forestry businesses and is now highly regarded by the forestry sector on Exmoor as a successful arrangement securing improvements on the ground. The arrangement was renewed in April 2011 for a further 3 years.

Land Use Management in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park

Investment in long-term planning has paid dividends for Glenfalloch Estate which has been awarded a £219,000 Rural Priorities scheme contract with Scottish Government. The contract will help deliver many of the actions identified in a Land Use Management Plan, developed in 2009 with funding provided by the National Park Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage through the Natural Heritage Grant Scheme.

With one eye on likely reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013, the Estate decided to work on a Land Use Management Plan to identify its environmental assets and to develop clear, long-term objectives for its land management activities. Development of the Plan was coordinated by the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group with lots of input from the Estate, agency staff and local specialists in woodland and fisheries management.

The subsequent Rural Priorities scheme application was undertaken on behalf of Glenfalloch Estate by consultants Andersons Northern. The resulting five-year contract includes measures to manage the estate for key habitats and species on the Estate, including native woodland and wood pasture, moorland, black grouse, species-rich grasslands and wetlands, watercourses and sea trout.

Another positive outcome of the planning process has been a closer, better-informed and more proactive relationship between the Estate, the National Park Authority and other rural agencies. David Lowes, Managing Partner of the Estate said, "I doubt if we would have achieved this result without the encouragement and support of the National Park Authority which is greatly appreciated and has made an otherwise complex undertaking much more achievable."



Female black grouse with chick

For more information please visit www.nationalparks.gov.uk

**English National Park Authorities Association, 2-4 Great Eastern Street, London EC2A 3NW
020 7655 4812 enquiries@enpaa.org.uk www.enpaa.org.uk**