



Productive Woodland Creation: Challenges and Solutions

A broader environmental perspective

**ICF & Confor North of England Conference
Brad Tooze, 18th October 2017**

My plan is to...



- Explain what I believe biodiversity priority habitats represent
- Suggest that they risk being seen as a barrier to afforestation
- Be somewhat **overdramatic**
- Suggest we can *all* approach things intelligently and work together
- Mention some positive examples of collaboration and partnership
- Suggest that by working on a landscape scale, we can achieve amazing things

(I think) we all understand that...



- Woodlands and forests can deliver enormous and wide-ranging benefits for the environment and for society...
- ...and that there are many other important (and sometimes highly sensitive) components of a healthy and productive environment
- Whenever we make choices about how we use land, there are social, economic and environmental consequences
- We could be making informed choices that look to promote all interests (and not any one at the exclusion or expense of another)

So... I could start talking about environmental legislation...



The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act came into force on 1st Oct 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.

The list has been drawn up in consultation with Natural England, as required by the Act. It is informed by the UK list of priority habitats.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) describes a range of 'broad' habitat types across the country and also identifies a smaller subset of 'priority' BAP habitats.

Fifty-six habitats of principal importance are included on the S41 list. These are all the habitats in England that were identified as requiring action in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) and continue to be regarded as conservation priorities in the subsequent UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.

They include terrestrial habitats from upland hay meadows to lowland mixed deciduous woodland, and freshwater and marine habitats such as ponds and subtidal sands and gravels.

and roles and responsibilities...



S40 of the NERC Act states that all public bodies have a duty to conserve biodiversity and the Act is very clear that 'conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.

The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

...but I only want to say three things about them...

**THEY INCLUDE SOME OF OUR RAREST
AND MOST THREATENED HABITATS**

**AND ARE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT FOR
MUCH OF OUR WILDLIFE THAT IS ALSO
RARE OR THREATENED**

- **Habitat:** Lowland Raised bog
- **Key components:** cottongrass, sphagna, dwarf shrubs
- **Range:** typical of cool humid regions
- **Extent:** c. 500ha (diminished by around 94%)

A photograph of a lowland heath landscape. The foreground is dominated by dense, low-lying vegetation, including various shrubs and ferns. A dirt path or track winds through the middle ground. In the background, there are rolling hills under a cloudy sky. A large, red, rounded rectangular text box is superimposed over the upper portion of the image, containing white text.

**They help form iconic landscapes
that are part of our cultural heritage**

- **Habitat: Lowland Heath**
- **Key components: ericaceous shrubs**
- **Range: Generally below 300m in altitude**
- **Extent: UK c. 58,000 ha (20% of international total)**



Some habitats play additional important roles such as carbon storage, water quality and reducing flood risk

- **Habitat: Wet woodland**
- **Key components: alder, birch and willows**
- **Range: poorly drained or seasonally wet soils**
- **Extent: UK resource estimated at 50,000–70,000ha**

To disregard priority habitats would be like...

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...cutting or scraping away most of the connections to and from part of the brain...

...The procedure was controversial from its inception. It was prescribed as a mainstream procedure in some Western countries for more than two decades...

...this was despite general recognition of frequent and serious side effects. While some experienced symptomatic improvement with the operation, the improvements were achieved at the cost of creating other impairments...

But there is plenty of scope to work together...



- **The NERC Act 2006 does not state that areas of BAP priority habitat in the UK are some sort of ‘no go’ area for any development whatsoever.**
- **Some priority habitats are in pristine condition; some require restoration; others are highly degraded**
- **Many change through time through succession, depending on management and environmental conditions**
- **Many occur in mosaics with other habitat types. These can be extensive or highly intricate.**

- **There are real imperatives for planting new productive woodland**
- **We have the opportunity to work together to get this right**
- **...to do this in a way that enhances landscapes and their biodiversity, helps manage and protect our water resource and increase the value of places for people who live in them and visit them**
- **This requires vision, willingness to collaborate and flexibility**

Working on a landscape scale...



- **What could we achieve across a whole landscape?**
- **What if we collaborated sufficiently that we could enable large scale interlinked forestry and biodiversity schemes?**
- **Forest Enterprise, the Northumberland National Park Authority and Natural England are looking to work in partnership with stakeholders in the Cheviot Hills to see what the art of the possible is**
- **I look forward to working together on sites and across landscapes with as many of you as possible**

