Guidance Document
Woodland Opportunities Map

Introduction

The Woodland Opportunities Map has been developed to help land owners and land managers understand more about the feasibility of woodland creation on their land.

In this instance, woodland creation can include native woodland planting, natural colonisation, wood pasture, scrub, hedgerows and individual trees. Woodland planting can also form part of a wider mosaic of habitats and even in potentially suitable sites, there is a range of what would be best type of planting for that particular site.

The map shows areas according to the following categories:

- Category 1: Areas where woodland creation is unlikely to be suitable

- Category 2: 'Sensitive' areas that might suit woodland creation but are likely to require more detailed checks and possibly survey work to ensure other habitats or species would not be damaged

- Category 3: Areas where woodland creation is likely to be suitable. For each of these an 'opportunity score' has been generated based on available data for the site (see 'Limitations' below). The higher the score the more beneficial woodland planting is likely to be.

Guide to using the map

The Woodland Opportunities Map is sited on our Re:Cover mapping site. When first opened, it will display the National Park boundary and background map. All other layers will be off.

To find out about a particular area or parcel of land:

1. First, locate the area by searching for a postcode or using the zoom and pan tools to focus in. Once you have found the area of interest, click on the 'Layers' icon above the map and then select the 'Woodland Opportunities Map'.

2. Click the 'Legend' icon to see what each colour on the map means.

3. By clicking on a 'block' of colour on map the 'Feature Info' box will appear. This provides information on the category; the 'opportunity score' (if applicable); and a brief description and link to this document for more

information. By zooming in, the more specific the feature information will become.

If the maps shows a potentially suitable site for woodland creation and you would like some advice, please contact the Trees & Woodlands Team on trees@yorkshiredales.org.uk. You can also find much more information on our website about getting help with new and existing woodland.

Limitations

The Woodland Opportunities Map should be used as a guide. It is designed to aid decision-making and does not replace the full land assessment and consultation process we carry out for all potential new woodland schemes. Many factors are considered when deciding the suitability of woodland creation, some of which cannot be mapped due to the complexity or lack of data.

Site specific surveys can be used to assess the impact of any identified constraints. For example, some historical features have been omitted from the map due to the low detail available with the mapping for these features. While many historic features will not prevent a scheme proceeding, they may influence the design specifications. Key terms are explained in the glossary in Appendix 3.

The category 1 to 3 system in the map uses multiple datasets representing constraints and opportunities with an individual score. The score on the map is the sum of the individual features identified in each $10m^2$ block.

- A positive score: may contain constraints which have been overshadowed by opportunities available, so will not automatically mean the area is suitable for woodland creation.

- A negative score: indicates potential constraints which require a site specific assessment. Many constraints may be mitigated for within woodland design or may be found to not exist /not be of material concern following site visit.

While details of individual constraints and opportunities for each area are not provided on the map due to privacy and licence restrictions, we have this information to identify what underlies each score and this is used within our land assessment and consultation process. Additional guidance on constraints can be found in Appendix 2.

About the layers

Category 1: No planting

Planting is highly unlikely due to constraints mapped in these areas, including:

- Priority habitats (excluding gills) *

- Lakes, ponds and reservoirs + 25m buffer

- Scheduled monuments + 20m buffer

- Veteran trees + 15m buffer

other than Limestone Pavement and Calcareous Grassland, which are classed as Category 2

Category 2: Sensitive site

Potential woodland creation sites but which need careful assessment, planning and consultation. Constraints can be uncertain and require surveys to be undertaken or may be compatible with woodland creation only if the design specifications are sympathetic to the existing features.

Woodland creation in these areas is likely to be through natural colonisation, scrub, or specific species mixes and may need specific management to limit any impacts on existing features. This category includes constraints from:

- Limestone pavement and calcareous grassland (excluding gills)
- Ground nesting birds
- Northern Brown Argus colonies

Category 3: Opportunity score

Category 3 is where woodland creation is most likely to be suitable. This layer has been broken into $10m^2$ blocks with individual scores. Visually, scores fall within a range which reflect the available opportunities and constraints in an area.

Each feature within a block has an individual score. These are summed to provide the overall score. Constraints have a negative score (-1 to -5) and opportunities have a positive score (1 to 5). Scores indicate the likelihood for woodland creation and could change with site visits and surveys during consultation.

The list of constraints and opportunities used are listed in Appendix 1.

Existing broadleaved woodland:

Existing broadleaved woodland overlays the three category layers and represents areas of existing woodland where creation is not possible. This layer only maps known broadleaved woodlands and does not currently include conifer plantation, wood pasture, orchard, or hedgerows which are accounted for in the category layers. As a result, not all woodland appears on this layer.

Urban land/Open water and rivers

These two layers also overlay the Woodland Opportunities category layers and represent areas where woodland is not possible.

- Urban land: a combination of urban and suburban areas; individual buildings plus a 20m buffer; and the road and rail network.
- Open water and rivers: includes ponds, lakes, reservoirs, canals, and the river networks.

Appendix 1: List of constraints and opportunities for Category 3

Constraints by group

Biodiversity:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Special Areas of Conservation (SAC);
- Special Protection Area (SPA)
- SSSI Impact Risk Zone
- Local important conservation areas outside SSSI
- Curlew Habitat Suitability Modelling
- Lapwing Habitat Suitability Modelling
- Grasslands within woodlands

Environmental limits:

- Significant glacial and post glacial features
- Stepped profiles

Heritage:

- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Historic Environment Record
- Local Geological Sites

Land use / ownership:

- Common land

Tree cover:

- Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)
- Existing conifer woodland
- Existing mixed woodland
- Veteran trees (extended buffer from 15m to 50m around tree)
- Wood pasture and parkland
- Orchards

Water quality and quantity:

- Buffer zone around lowland fen priority habitat
- Acid sensitive surface water bodies
- Water abstraction and availability (Source Protection Zones)

Opportunities by group:

Biodiversity:

- Upland Gills (including areas cut from Priority Habitat)
- Red squirrel zone

Tree cover:

- Proximity to existing broadleaved woodland
- Proximity to ancient semi natural woodland
- Connection between woodlands
- Proximity to hedgerows
- Extent of felled and windblow trees
- Mitigation against potential loss of ash trees

Water quality and quantity:

- Riparian shading
- Mitigation against flood risk
- Sediment pressures on watercourses

Appendix 2: Non-exhaustive additional guidance and potential constraints

Guidance documents

- [Afforestation on or near priority habitats](#) – Forestry Commission
- [Afforestation and important wader sites](#) – Forestry Commission / Natural England
- [Landscape Character Assessment](#) – YDNPA
- [Woodland Siting and Design Guide](#) – YDNPA
- [Public Rights of Way Landowner responsibilities](#) – GOV.UK

Constraints which may affect the suitability of land management objectives

- *Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)*. Works affecting these may require consent from [Natural England](#)
- *Limestone Pavement Orders (LPOs)* restrict activities on or near limestone pavement. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is responsible for these Orders. Please contact the Authority's Wildlife Team for advice at wildlifeconservation@yorkshiredales.org.uk.
- *Public Rights of Way*
- *Historic Environment* may restrict woodland creation. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is responsible for the Historic Environment Record (HER) which contains tens of thousands of records of archaeological sites, buildings, structures and landscapes in the National Park. Please get in touch if you want us to do a search of your proposed project area and offer advice on potential impacts and mitigation. We are able to make site visits, conditions permitting. Please email herinfo@yorkshiredales.org.uk or ring 01969 652362 or 01969 652360.
- *Priority Species and Upland breeding wader habitat*

Suggested layers on [MAGIC](#) related to potential constraints

- Designations - Land-Based - Statutory
- Designations - Land-Based - Historic
- Habitats – 'Priority Habitat Inventory'
- Species - 'Upland Breeding Bird Areas for CS'
- Species - 'Priority Species for CS targeting' for redshank, snipe, curlew and lapwing

Appendix 3: Glossary of key terms

Ancient woodland	An area that has been under continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. These are either: • Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) mainly made up of trees and shrubs native to the site, usually arising from natural regeneration. • Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) - replanted with conifer or broadleaved trees that retain ancient woodland features, such as undisturbed soil, ground flora and fungi.
Breeding wader habitat	Upland habitat with the required range of features wading birds such as Curlew, Lapwing, Redshank and Snipe need to breed. These species are nationally in decline and their breeding habitat is important to stabilise and improve their populations.
Designated sites	Nature sites and areas of countryside can be 'designated', which means they have special status as protected areas because of their natural and cultural importance.
Forestry Commission	The government department responsible for protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable management of woodlands.
Habitat suitability modelling	Modelling uses environmental factors such as land use/land cover, elevation, and topographic position together with randomised sample data to depict the probability of occurrence of a target species across a specified study area.
Historic Environment	The archaeological aspects of the environment which provide a historical record of human activity. This includes statutory designations such as Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Registered Parks & Gardens.
Landscape character	A method for classifying and describing the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another. Examples of characteristics include geology, soils, land cover, hydrology, historic and cultural development.
Limestone pavement orders	A designation under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which protects limestone pavement for its geological interest and the unique habitat it provides for wildlife.
Natural England	The government's adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide. Natural England is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI)	Semi-natural habitat types identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
Priority habitats	Combines data from a variety of sources to create a national dataset which shows the geographical extent of the habitats of principal importance. The PHI is published and updated by Natural England.
Priority species	Species identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
Public Rights of Way	Defined routes which the public have the right to access for walking and other leisure activities. These are broken into four categories and each allows specific activities: footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways, byways open to all traffic.
Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Land designated by Natural England as having features of special interest for wildlife, geology and/or landform. These are the sites which support rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features. SSSI's are protected by law and each site has specific management requirements and operational conditions
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Designated areas which make a significant contribution to conserving the habitats identified in the Habitats Directive. These are designated in England under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	Designated areas selected to protect one or more rare, threatened, or vulnerable bird species listed in Annex 1 of the Birds Directive or certain regularly occurring migratory species. These are classified under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation Regulations 2010 in England.