

Submission of Evidence Form – National Development Framework

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Title of evidence

Woodland Trust Evidence to NDF

Summary of evidence

The Woodland Trust's evidence simply sets out the importance of the Ancient Woodland Inventory and the Ancient Tree Inventory. These are central to informing a landscape scale approach to development in Wales, which is critical to meeting the well-being goals set out in the future Generations Act.

Summary of key issues/conclusions

The Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) is held by Natural Resources Wales. Ancient woodland is defined as an irreplaceable natural resource that has remained constantly wooded since AD1600. The length at which ancient woodland takes to develop and evolve (centuries, even millennia), coupled with the vital links it creates between plants, animals and soils accentuate its irreplaceable status. The AWI was always considered to be provisional and subject to refinement and was never intended as a definitive listing of ancient, or 'the best', woods. The inventory currently lists woods over 0.5ha in size.

Ancient trees are living relics of incredible age that inspire in us feelings of awe and mystery. They also create a unique habitat for wildlife, with exceptionally species rich communities associated with wood decay and the bare surfaces of trunks, bough and roots.

The Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI) began in 2004, as a joint venture with the Tree Register of the British Isles and the Ancient Tree Forum. By October 2011, over 100,000 hand-picked trees had been recorded across the UK. It is the most definitive record of ancient trees in Wales and throughout the rest of

the UK.

Why have you submitted this evidence?

To draw the Welsh Government's attention the importance of considering ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees as central to strategic planning. Early consideration means that these irreplaceable natural assets can be enhanced as the assets they are and capitalised upon rather than being damaged or destroyed as a result of ill-conceived plans.

How should this evidence inform the development of the NDF?

The Woodland Trust would like to see the AWI and ATI form part of the evidence base which informs the development of projects and policies set out in the NDF. The Trust believes that good planning can ensure the protection of these irreplaceable habitats; the NDF is an opportunity to promote this strategic approach across Wales.

How does this evidence and any actions it recommends help achieve the 7 well-being goals?

Protecting and enhancing these historically and environmentally irreplaceable habitats would directly contribute to the aspiration of creating a resilient Wales.

Why is the evidence of national significance?

Ancient Woodland only covers 2% of the UK's land mass. Along with ancient trees it is an irreplaceable nationally significant resource. The varied and unique habitats ancient woodland sites provide for many of the UK's most important and threatened fauna and flora species cannot be re-created and cannot afford to be lost. Approximately one quarter of priority UK BAP species are associated with woodland habitats. Forests, woods, and trees make a significant contribution to biodiversity, and ancient sites are recognised as being of particular value. Due to their longevity, ancient woodlands are more species rich, and are often refuges for specialist woodland species that struggle to colonise new areas.

Do you agree for your evidence to be made public? (Only evidence that can be made public will inform the development of the NDF)

Yes.