

## SUPPORTING LAND MANAGERS FOR RESILIENT TREESCAPES RESEARCH SUMMARY 2019-20

### Introduction

Research was undertaken between August 2019 and March 2020 in support of developing policy options relating to:

1. Supply and demand for quality tree planting stock
2. Implementing treatment and/or felling in response to pests and diseases (P&D)
3. Restocking for resilient treescapes
4. Networks and governance mechanisms supporting actions for tree health

The research methods used included: 6 multi-stakeholder deliberative workshops including Q methodology involving over 50 participants in co-design work; 2 national online surveys looking at supply and demand for quality stock (N=22) and network membership (N=138); semi-structured interviews with 3 owners of small woodlands/trees outside of woodland (ToW) to discuss shared schemes, 8 farmers to investigate their attitudes to tree P&D, and 17 supply chain stakeholders; 5 case studies of schemes designed to encourage innovation in supply chain delivery; and a rapid evidence assessment of supply chain challenges.

Evidence gathered relating to each policy option is outlined:

### Supply and demand for diverse, good quality planting stock

- i. Future demand and preferences for planting material depend on stakeholder and management objectives: 1) higher demand for improved trees in commercial settings (for quality timber and carbon sequestration); 2) provenance is an important characteristic for stakeholders but for different reasons, e.g. local provenances for conservation organisations, planting 2<sup>o</sup> south for those concerned about climate change, UK sourced and grown for those concerned about biosecurity; 3) some stakeholder groups expressed indifference for specific planting stock and allowed substitutability of species and provenances if their preferred option was not available.
- ii. Demand is expected to increase in the near future but there is scepticism about planting goals given lack of detail on species choice and planting location.
- iii. There were some concerns about the capacity of the supply chain to further expand the supply of high quality diverse planting material due to: 1) ability to expand even further beyond recent rapid expansions; 2) barriers (land availability for both expanded

facilities and tree planting, labour supply and training, clarity around Government objectives including grant specifications); 3) structure of the sector (small, with aging management, and difficult to penetrate due to high initial investment costs); 4) trade-offs between volume, diversity, and quality of stock; 5) composition of future treescapes can be a limiting factor i.e. large increases in conifer planting in Scotland compared to more fragmented picture in England (higher species diversity over a more fragmented landscape).

- iv. Supplier policy preferences emphasise the need for confidence and clarity about planting strategies to drive investment decisions.
- v. There was a range of views across the supply chain for different policy options, but preferred ones are an innovation fund and industry capacity/productivity grants.
- vi. There is a potential need for support for smaller and public sector operators (including community groups) to support the production of low demand species due to low economic viability in those cases, for example by providing seed stands/orchards.
- vii. COVID19 might change all of the above (e.g. biosecurity is perceived as less important by nurseries and seed suppliers in difficult economic times).

### **Treatment and felling for P&D management**

- viii. The information-to-action gap needs to be addressed for stakeholders to achieve policy objectives. Specific points were:
  - Information needs better sign-posting, navigation and synthesis. Information needs mentioned included better sharing of data about P&D presence and spread, practical information about treatment/felling responses with contextual information about the pros and cons of particular actions.
  - Resources directed at building 'social infrastructure' are important to onward uptake of information and knowledge.
- ix. Sector stakeholders felt that policy options should continue to be based on a mix of regulation, incentive and other support since there was a strong belief that the market will not incentivise treatment and felling and using government funding on only one mechanism would not be effective. Specific points were:
  - Regulations should not deter detection and reporting of tree P&D, i.e. regulations should not be perceived as punitive.
  - Regulations should be fully enforced.
  - Policy should focus on outcomes, not process.

- There is debate on who should be eligible for support.
- Policy options for felling and treatment should be pre-emptive rather than simply reactionary.
- x. Participants felt that incentives should compensate for loss of value/profit and cover costs of treatment and felling, and should not be based on basal area; the site and P&D contexts should also be taken into consideration.
- xi. There is still a widespread belief that accessing incentives and other forms of support is time consuming and difficult.
- xii. Further debate is required about how surveillance and monitoring for tree P&D could be undertaken, and how data is collected and shared.

## Restocking

Looking across all sources of evidence, sector stakeholders are most likely to act to achieve policy objectives if:

- xiii. There is clear advice about what species/varieties and provenances confer resilience in different parts of the country and according to different management objectives. There is demand for a “source of truth” to provide this information.
- xiv. Policy option design takes into account smaller woodland manager needs for advice and guidance on replanting choices. In contrast, managers of larger woodlands and multifunctional or productive sites are more interested in guidance about market opportunities.
- xv. There is guidance on P&D risk in the context of creating mixed forests.
- xvi. Policy option design takes into account the sensitivities, constraints and conditions associated with different kinds of sites and management objectives.
- xvii. There is additional debate about the role of natural regeneration in P&D recovery strategies. Not all land managers felt public support for natural regeneration would achieve policy outcomes. The costs of managing natural regeneration, e.g. deer fencing, need to be supported.
- xviii. Support is provided to those land managers unable to meet the costs of restocking by other means.
- xix. Felling for P&D is linked with restocking.

- xx. Policy design considers stakeholder support for payment by results, i.e. production of public goods, so that the tree P&D policy falls in line with broader environment and land management policies.
- xxi. The ongoing costs of managing mixed stands should be taken into account as this was a particular stakeholder issue.

### Tree health networks

- xxii. Policy could design different support measures for:
  - networks that co-ordinate action amongst land managers and stakeholders across a landscape unit,
  - networks that disseminate information, knowledge and support social learning amongst members.
- xxiii. Around two thirds of land managers and sector stakeholders already belong to a network. Stakeholders trust and depend on them for information and knowledge. There is scope to enhance the activities of these networks.
- xxiv. Far fewer stakeholders are involved in networks focused on landscape level actions, e.g. Local Nature Partnerships, or have a specific focus on tree health issues, e.g. NWTfH. There is scope to build tree health-focussed actions within these or new networks.
- xxv. There was strong consensus that land manager action would be driven by understanding gleaned through practical activities, e.g. demonstrations, listening to tree health experts, or peer-to-peer learning.

### Farmers

- xxvi. A key challenge to facilitating any action around the management of trees, is the perception farmers have that their trees have no commercial value.
- xxvii. Farmers can lack the confidence to act in response to tree P&D because of low levels of knowledge.
- xxviii. Some farmers who are active managers of trees feel unconnected with appropriate woodland and forestry networks. Most farming bodies and networks farmers belong to do not commonly address tree related topics, with tree pests and diseases rarely covered.



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- xxix. Suggestions from farmers for overcoming barriers included: local advisor farm visits, trusted information about P&D identification and management, and a simple application process for any future tree health funding or grant schemes.