

Case Study

Tree planting and farming hand in hand:

How to plant without affecting your subsidies

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WOODLAND
TRUST

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Trees can bring a wealth of benefits to a farm, from life-saving shelter for livestock, combatting soil erosion, warming the soil to extend the growing season and slowing run-off. They also provide habitats for game, birds and wildlife, attract vital pollinators; and provide an extra income through wood-fuel.

But we know many of you are worried about planting affecting your subsidies and grants. That's why the decision to leave the EU is giving us the best opportunity in a generation to change policy, to shape a new future for the land, a future that involves trees.



Unloading stakes and tubes with a forwarding machine due to waterlogged ground.



Different planting densities and large 10-12m rides give good access throughout woodland as well as large areas of woodland edge for game bird cover.

We are working in partnership with the Allerton Project, spearheaded by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, on a trial to demonstrate that tree planting and farming go hand in hand. Practically the trial will demonstrate how trees and grazing can work effectively together to make farms more sustainable. The tree species and the inclusion of shrubs in some places are specifically intended as part of the game management system at the Allerton Project.

We will aim to establish the optimum number of trees that can be planted, whilst still allowing sheep to graze permanent pasture underneath the canopy. The nature of the trial means it will be an integral part of the post Brexit debate about subsidies once we leave the EU.

Stuart Holm from the Woodland Trust says:

“The grants and subsidy system is confusing. Currently it separates planting woodland from planting trees on farms. They are considered two different activities, and each come under a separate scheme with separate rules and timescales per scheme, as well as the added confusion of different rules within the UK.

Farmers and landowners who see the value of trees are put off from planting because they are unsure about how this could affect their income and what agricultural activities they are and are not allowed to undertake.

We are running this trial to demonstrate how grazing and trees can work together, and push for a new policy approach which allows farmers to integrate trees onto their farms without being penalised.”

In March 2016, a field usually used for grazing sheep was divided into parcels of land, and each section planted with a different density of trees. Once planted, a flock of sheep were re-introduced to the field to graze.

There are 14 compartments with a total of 2000 trees and 800 shrubs. There is a range of planting densities, from high to low: 1600 trees/ha, 1100 trees/ha, 800 trees/ha, 600/trees/ha, 400 trees/ha, 200/ha and 100/ha.

The trees have been planted in sinuous curves, to reduce wind blowing /exposure throughout the site; and create a natural feel to the landscape.



Two 50mm stakes were used to hold up the tubes against sheep grazing.

The trees are all planted in 1.2m tubes with 2 x 1.5m 50mm round stakes to protect them from rabbits, hares and local deer species, including muntjac, and to prevent damage from the sheep. Five shrub plots have been individually fenced and the sheep will be excluded from these areas to allow a good thick, game friendly understory to establish.

The Woodland Trust has provided the trees, stakes and tubes and has paid for a contractor to plant the site. As well as providing the land for the trial, The Allerton Project is undertaking on-going maintenance and also long term research for the project.

The planting is a move towards a higher density style of wood pasture that also allows for grazing; and is an alternative to either blocks of woodland, or pasture with only a couple of trees. We planted wild privet and crab apple which are good for providing cover and food for pheasants. Walnut which thrives in warmer climates was planted with consideration to climate change. We also included oak, hornbeam, small-leaved lime and aspen as higher canopy trees which can be used to replace any ash lost to ash dieback.

The introduction of trees across the site will also have significant benefits for game and wildlife populations and habitats across the farm.

The outcomes:

As the project continues, it will study the effect of canopy closure on farming grants and subsidies; as well as influence and steer future land management framework and policy.

What benefits do the trees deliver to the performance of the flock? How well will grass grow under and around the trees? What are the best densities for farmers to integrate trees into a grazing regime? And at what point does grazing around the trees affect flock productivity? How do trees improve environmental resource protection?

The Allerton Project:

Researches farming for sustainability and conservation, with a particular emphasis on game birds and wildlife management. It is based at the GWCT's demonstration farm at Loddington in Leicestershire.

How the Woodland Trust can help:

Our woodland creation advisors have years of experience advising landowners on the benefits of trees. We provide subsidised trees and independent advice and support to farmers interested in planting trees, including:

- A free tree planting assessment for your whole farm
- A bespoke planting scheme
- Identification of potential funding support
- Ongoing support over the subsequent years to monitor results

Find out more

For more information about how we can help you to plant trees on your farm:

Call **0330 333 5303**

or email plant@woodlandtrust.org.uk



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The Woodland Trust, Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL

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