



# Private landowners' approaches to planting and managing forests in the UK: What's the evidence?



Anna Lawrence<sup>a,\*</sup>, Norman Dandy<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Forest Research, Northern Research Station, Roslin, Midlothian EH25 9SY, United Kingdom

<sup>b</sup> Forest Research, Alice Holt Lodge, Farnham, Surrey GU10 4LH, United Kingdom

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 4 July 2013

Received in revised form 29 August 2013

Accepted 2 September 2013

### Keywords:

Advisory systems

Decision-making

Forest policy

Land owners

Non-industrial private forests

Woodland creation

## ABSTRACT

Woodland expansion and sustainable forest management are key features of forest policy in the UK. Because a large majority of land and forests is owned privately, these policies need the involvement of private landowners. Studies of owners' attitudes and decisions in the UK are at a disadvantage as there is no complete database of land or forest ownership. This paper is based on a Rapid Evidence Assessment which identified 42 relevant studies. The predominant narrative reflects a low level of interest and management activity. There are many exceptions to this, and land management decisions are more differentiated within the socio-cultural, multipurpose landscape than has perhaps been previously acknowledged. A wide cultural gap between farming and forestry is often noted, in contrast to the international literature. Many woodland owners see themselves as managing their woodlands, in contrast to official perceptions and statistics. The evidence also reports generally negative attitudes towards woodland creation. The predominant policy tools are grants and advice. Grant uptake across England, Wales and Scotland is not currently as high as governments would like. A combination of amount offered, fit with owners' objectives, amount of paperwork and interaction with professionals are cited to explain low grant uptake. Information and advice is an important and neglected factor in the equation. A focus on both content and process of interactions with advisors, knowledge exchange and application, and outcomes, is lacking in the UK. Given the centrality of private landowners in delivering public policy, we see a need to go beyond this body of evidence and focus on innovative approaches, including engagement via social networks, knowledge exchange processes which build on existing relations and link with land managers' existing objectives, and the contextualisation of woodland within the wider land use sector.

Crown Copyright © 2013 Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

The delivery of forest policy through privately owned forests is a significant challenge in countries where much of the forest is owned by non-state landowners. Worldwide, about 18% of forest is privately owned, but there is great variation between regions, and in terms of the balance between individual, community or industrial 'private' ownerships (FAO, 2010). In the USA, for example, 35% of forestland is owned by more than 10 million private 'non-industrial' owners (Ma et al., 2012a). In Sweden the figure is 50% and rising (Fischer et al., 2010). In Great Britain, 67% of the forest area is privately owned (Forestry Commission, 2012).

Understanding the decisions and behaviour of private landowners is therefore a critical task, and in some regions has received substantial attention. It constitutes the second most widely studied

area of forest economics (Amacher et al., 2003), in addition to a wide range of other disciplines. The majority of studies is from the USA, followed by Scandinavia and they take a range of approaches. These can be summarised as: (a) understanding perceptions and explanations of individual's woodland management decisions (Davis and Fly, 2010; Elands and Praestholm, 2008), (b) understanding the attitudes of woodland owners and managers towards public policy tools such as regulation and incentives (Aguilar and Saunders, 2011; Janota and Broussard, 2008; Schaaf and Broussard, 2006), and (c) assessing the outcomes of such policy tools, including behavioural (e.g. tree planting) and physical (increase in forest area) (Jacobson et al., 2009a,b; Kilgore et al., 2007).

A consistent theme driving such studies is the sense that private owners are not meeting the aspirations of forest policy, a theme that has been framed as 'the perennial family forest problem' (Straka, 2011). Language used by researchers reflects an implicit standard: management is seen as 'suboptimal', there is a need for owners to 'properly manage' (Ma et al., 2012a; Straka, 2011). In Ohio one study found that only 4% of forest landowners have a formal management plan for their forests, and fewer than 14% seek any advice before

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 131 445 8716.

E-mail addresses: [anna.lawrence@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:anna.lawrence@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) (A. Lawrence), [norman.dandy@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:norman.dandy@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) (N. Dandy).

making forest management decisions (Widmann et al., 2009). Furthermore, participation in programmes and incentives schemes is consistently viewed as low (Ma et al., 2012a) even where the focus is environmental conservation which is often identified as a significant objective for owners, rather than timber production. Where forest expansion is a high priority much debate has similarly been generated around the failure to meet policy targets. For example in Belgium only about one-third of the target for new planting was achieved (Van Gossum et al., 2008).

A range of policy tools is brought to bear in attempts to influence private owner behaviour and decisions. Classifications of such tools often include regulation, financial incentives, and information or education (Aguilar and Saunders, 2011; Janota and Broussard, 2008). Others include governance mechanisms such as owner associations and cooperatives (Schaaf and Broussard, 2006). Again, there is significant regional variation in the application of these tools. In Sweden, policy focuses on delivery through provision of advice and information, but is underpinned by regulation (e.g. compulsory nature protection sites on private land) (Götmark, 2009; Gulbrandsen, 2008). In Denmark policy delivery relies on information and advice to private owners, but is supported by financial incentives for woodland expansion and biodiversity conservation (Boon et al., 2010; Madsen, 2003). A large number of studies find that private forest owners are resistant to state intervention in forest management, particularly in the USA. A review of five countries shows a consensus that incentive programmes are too complex, involve too much paperwork, are administered by too many organisations, and poorly communicated (Lawrence and Dudley, 2012). Many landowners have limited knowledge of financial assistance programmes and have not utilised them (Hibbard et al., 2003; Jacobson et al., 2009a; Kilgore et al., 2007; Sun et al., 2009). Family forest owners viewed one-to-one sites visits with a forestry professional as the preferred form of assistance (Kilgore et al., 2007).

The availability of data about owners is a significant explanation for why the USA and Scandinavia feature so strongly in studies of forest owners, and this is highlighted by the methods used. In the USA, studies have been based on the National Woodland Owner Survey, a census which collects information using the publicly available property tax records (Ma et al., 2012a). Similarly in Sweden researchers have access to forest owner data through Skogsstyrelsen, the Swedish Forestry Agency (e.g. Andersson, 2012).

Private forest owners are as much of a policy concern in the UK as elsewhere, with similar issues expressed regarding their under-performance relative to public policy goals. To date, however, there is no comparable register of private forest owners in the UK, and this has constrained studies of motivation and behaviour. Despite a number of individual studies over many years, an overview of owner behaviour and decision-making in the UK is lacking and there is no consensus regarding the effectiveness of policy tools. This study addresses this gap, situating what is known in the wider context of the international literature and providing a baseline for future analyses which may draw upon national registers of private forest owners currently being developed.

## The UK context

In the United Kingdom forests cover 3.1 million ha, 13% of the land area (FC, 2012). The majority of this is privately owned, averaging 67% across Great Britain (Forestry Commission, 2012). Forestry is a devolved policy issue in the UK, and each constituent country (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales) has its own forest strategy (DEFRA, 2013; Northern Ireland Forest Service, 2006; Scottish Government, 2006; Welsh Assembly Government, 2009). Each of these seeks to promote sustainable forest management and with such a high proportion of woodland outside public

ownership this necessitates strong engagement with private managers. Estimates made during the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees indicate that 20% of private woodland in England and 23% in Wales has 'no obvious management'. A more commonly used official indicator of active management is receipt of government grants or licences. Using this indicator, Yeomans and Hemery (2010) estimate that 71% of private woodlands in England are not managed. Expanding the woodland area is another key policy commitment, in particular as a response to climate change, with its potential for carbon storage and use as a renewable fuel. This requires the creation of woodland on non-wooded land which is almost entirely in private ownership. To accomplish these goals, the devolved governments use a suite of policy tools, including financial incentives, regulation, and provision of advice, leadership and standard-setting.

Woodland creation on private land and active management of private woodland are thus clear primary objectives for the UK's devolved governments, which have established several targets and aspirational goals. At the UK level analysis has identified the need for increases in woodland creation of more than 23,000 ha per year for 40 years in order to make a substantive contribution to climate change mitigation (Read et al., 2009).

In England, in addition to long-standing objectives such as timber production and biodiversity conservation, the use of forest biomass for renewable energy has become central to woodland policy (DEFRA, 2007; Forestry Commission England, 2007), linked explicitly to the role of the forest industry in a low carbon 'green economy' (DECC, 2009). Recent policy identifies a rate of 5000 ha per year as achievable in England, resulting in an increase in total land cover from 10% to 12% by 2060 (DEFRA, 2013). Targets for increasing forest management are more ambitious with, for example, the goal of mobilising 50% of the estimated available unharvested material for use in the woodfuel market (Forestry Commission England, 2007). More recent policy aims to increase the area of actively managed woodland (defined as adhering to the UK Forestry Standard) from around one-half to two-thirds, with an aspiration to reach 80% within a developed green economy (DEFRA, 2013).

In Scotland policy aspires to 25% land cover by 2050, through a planting rate of 10–15,000 ha per year (Scottish Government, 2006). The difficulties of reaching this target have been explored through the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group (WEAG, 2012). Wales aims for more woodlands and trees to be managed sustainably, and to gradually increase woodland cover, noting that the current rate of 400 ha increase per year only balances losses elsewhere (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009). In addition, in 2010 the Welsh Government Minister responsible for Forestry Commission Wales set a target of creating 100,000 ha of new woodland over the next 20 years (Forestry Commission, 2013). In Northern Ireland the forest strategy aims to double woodland cover from 6% to 12% in the next 50 years and notes that the current rate of 500 ha increase per year, is inadequate (Northern Ireland Forest Service, 2006).

Land tenure in the UK is complex, historically shaped and geographically differentiated (Ilbery et al., 2010; Munton, 2009; Stockdale et al., 1996), resulting in a complex land management stakeholder landscape. Owners include farmers, estates (often owned by the same family for centuries), businesses, conservation NGOs, local authorities, and churches, among others (John Clegg and Co. et al., 2002; Lobley et al., 2012). Obtaining meaningful and reliable data on land occupancy and tenure is 'notoriously hard' (Lobley et al., 2012), particularly because only around one-half of rural land ownership is formally registered, information is held by various sources, and ownership is subject to change over time. Ward and Manley (2002a) estimated that approximately 1% of land is sold annually in the UK; non-farmers purchase around one-third

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6548987>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6548987>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)