## Woodland Opportunity Areas

In 2016, WENP produced a series of ecosystem service maps to demonstrate a range of ecological networks and ecosystem services in the West of England. This mapping included woodland opportunity mapping, which identified the best opportunities for woodland creation to expand and strengthen the existing woodland network, considering existing land use, soil, slope, geology and position within the landscape.

By considering soil type and proximity to existing woodland, the WENP mapping highlights areas that are likely to establish quickly and prove most resilient in the long-term. This mapping was also used to inform the aforementioned West of England NRN mapping.

Friends of the Earth (FoE) has recently mapped woodland opportunity areas across England on land that would not impact food production or encroach on protected areas and existing priority habitats. Specifically, excluded from the analysis are:

- All priority habitats, including good quality semi-improved grassland that may be biodiverse;
- Upland peat bogs (because of their carbon storage potential and biodiversity);
- Protected areas designated for the conservation of habitats and species;
- Land already managed as woodland; and
- Urban areas, non-agricultural land and water bodies.

This leaves Marginal agricultural land of very-poor-quality (Grade 5), poor-quality (Grade 4) and moderate-quality (Grade 3b), including land on steep slopes and marginal grassland, as suitable areas for woodland creation. The mapping can be viewed at https://takeclimateaction.uk/woodland-opportunity-mapping-england.

The Forestry Commission also has a map of 'low risk' areas for woodland creation, using a similar but less detailed methodology to the Friends of the Earth work. This can be viewed at the following link: https://www.forestergis.com/Apps/MapBrowser/.

**However, it should be reiterated that, for all these maps, further verification (ideally including on-the-ground surveys) will be necessary at any potential tree planting sites to ensure that there is not any existing high-quality habitat that would be threatened by woodland creation. Landscape character will also need to be considered for any opportunity areas.**

Combining woodland opportunity mapping with the NRN mapping could help to further refine the Strategic Woodland Areas described in Section 2.2.4 and prioritise additional areas for woodland creation by identifying land which is both within the NRN and would be suitable for woodland creation.

## Ecosystem Opportunity Mapping

As part of the WENP Ecosystem Service mapping, 'opportunity' maps were created showing areas where land use could be modified to improve water quality, and areas with opportunities to provide NFM. Interactive maps and further information are available at https://wenp.org.uk/maps/.

These maps could be used to inform the establishment of trees and woodland to improve water quality and provide natural flood management, and to identify opportunities to leverage in private financing for these services. By combining the maps with NRN mapping, opportunities to combine nature's recovery with these ecosystem services can be highlighted. There may also be value in mapping opportunities for other ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration.