

This letter only deals with one item of current Welsh Government policy, namely the proposals to create large areas of forestry planting in Wales to mitigate some of the effects of climate change.

To carry out this policy areas of agricultural land, upland grazing and moorland may be involved. Before this policy proceeds I ask the Committee to be fully satisfied that Welsh Government can carry out this policy in a sound and practical way.

First of all we need to know what, if any, carbon is captured by the current grazing pastures of Wales, both lowland and upland areas.

We need to agree that NO productive arable and pasture land under land classification groups 1,2,3, and maybe 4 be turned over to forestry.

We need to look at the practical effects of tree planting. The first step is normally to plough the selected area. This action will release a quantity of carbon back into the atmosphere. We need to be able to estimate this quantity. Soils with a large peat structure will probably release a greater quantity of carbon than normal mineral soils.

We need to allow in the calculations for the fact that for 10/15 years the trees will be small and resulting carbon capture also small.

We need to be satisfied that the varieties of trees planted are suitable to the area, can effectively store carbon and provide useful timber product or environmental benefits.

For example in many coastal areas tree planting will not be successful because of wind and the salt content carried by the wind.

Many upland areas are not suitable for hardwood species. In these areas Norway and Sitka spruces, Douglas Fir and Western Hemlock are the preferred and useful timber producing species.

At the present time we have a number of diseases attacking woodland, in particular Ash Dieback, Larch and Elm infections. These disease problems limit the choice of hardwood species for planting.

In the light of the above comments I feel this is an ideal subject for the committee to consider.