

Iversen, Sara, Convery, Ian ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2527-5660> , Holt, Claire ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3635-5404> , MacDonald, Michael, Mansfield, Lois ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0707-2467> and van der Velden, Naomi ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8969-1191> (2023) Balancing multiple landscape demands: a case study of the societal consequences of creating new woodlands in the UK uplands. In: IUFRO Division 8 Forest Environment Conference 2023, 24-27 October 2023, University of Évora, Portugal. (Unpublished)

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OC 1.12 Balancing multiple landscape demands – a case study of the societal consequences of creating new woodlands in the UK uplands

Sara V. Iversen^a, Ian Convery^b, Claire D.S. Holt^b, Michael MacDonald^c, Lois Mansfield^b, Naomi van der Velder^b

^a Aarhus University – Denmark

^b University of Cumbria

^c RSPB

Upland regions in the UK are increasingly under consideration as potential areas for the creation of woodlands. This is driven by a combination of factors, including the aims of UK forestry policy to increase woodland cover, changes in current upland land-use and management, agri-environment schemes in national and international policy and an increasing public awareness of the ecosystem service benefits landscapes can deliver for society. Creating new woodlands in upland areas is challenging, partly due to concerns about potential impacts from a change in land use and stakeholder interests. This study considers a 250 km² Cumbrian (England) upland landscape dominated by sheep grazing and, using an established ecosystem service assessment tool (TESSA), estimates the provision of ecosystem services under plausible alternative woodland creation scenarios. The assessment focuses on changes these scenarios will deliver in terms of key ecosystem goods and services, which are identified by stakeholders to be of high importance to the study area. The results indicate that, under lower woodland percentage scenarios, no drawbacks and only benefits on all indicators are expected. However, a more complex outcome would be expected from the higher percentage woodland scenarios.