



Forestry England

# Growing the nation's forests

## A proposed new woodland at Lower Lye in the Shropshire Hills

### We are planting new woodlands to expand the nation's forests

We are working on designs for a new woodland at Lower Lye, within the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and approximately 1.3 miles northwest of Bucknell. We would like your comments and feedback on our initial proposals. Your feedback will inform our final designs for the woodland.

Working with public and private landowners, we're choosing the right places for woodlands to grow and flourish, carefully planting a mix of tree species to be resilient in our changing climate.

Every new woodland will have public access so you can explore and enjoy them to support your health and wellbeing. They will be valuable places for wildlife,

often linking other woods to provide green corridors for wildlife to move and thrive across the landscape.

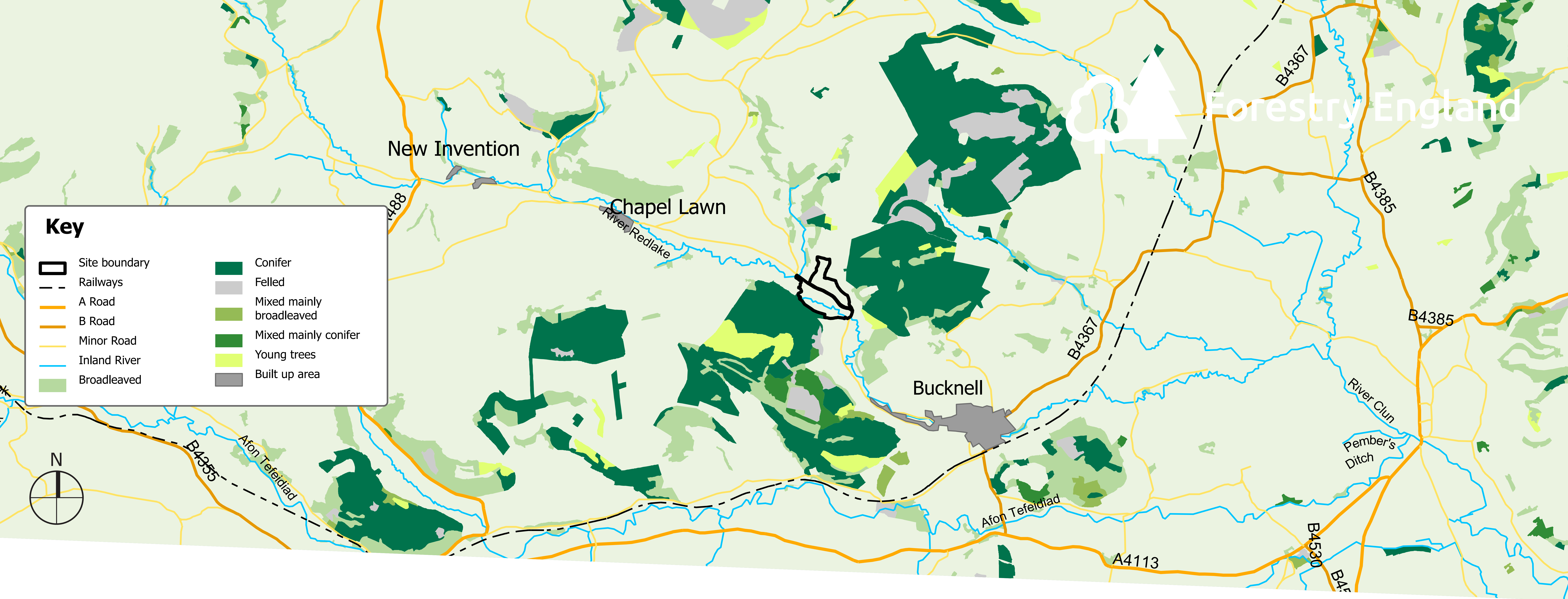
Our plans are part of the government's commitment to increasing tree planting rates across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by the end of this parliament, supported by the Nature for Climate Fund. We aim to plant at least 2,000 hectares of new, high-quality woodlands across England.

In time, each new woodland will provide sustainable timber, contributing to a rural economy. And they'll have wider environmental benefits including absorbing carbon, improving soil health and air quality, and combating flooding.

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[forestryengland.uk](https://forestryengland.uk)



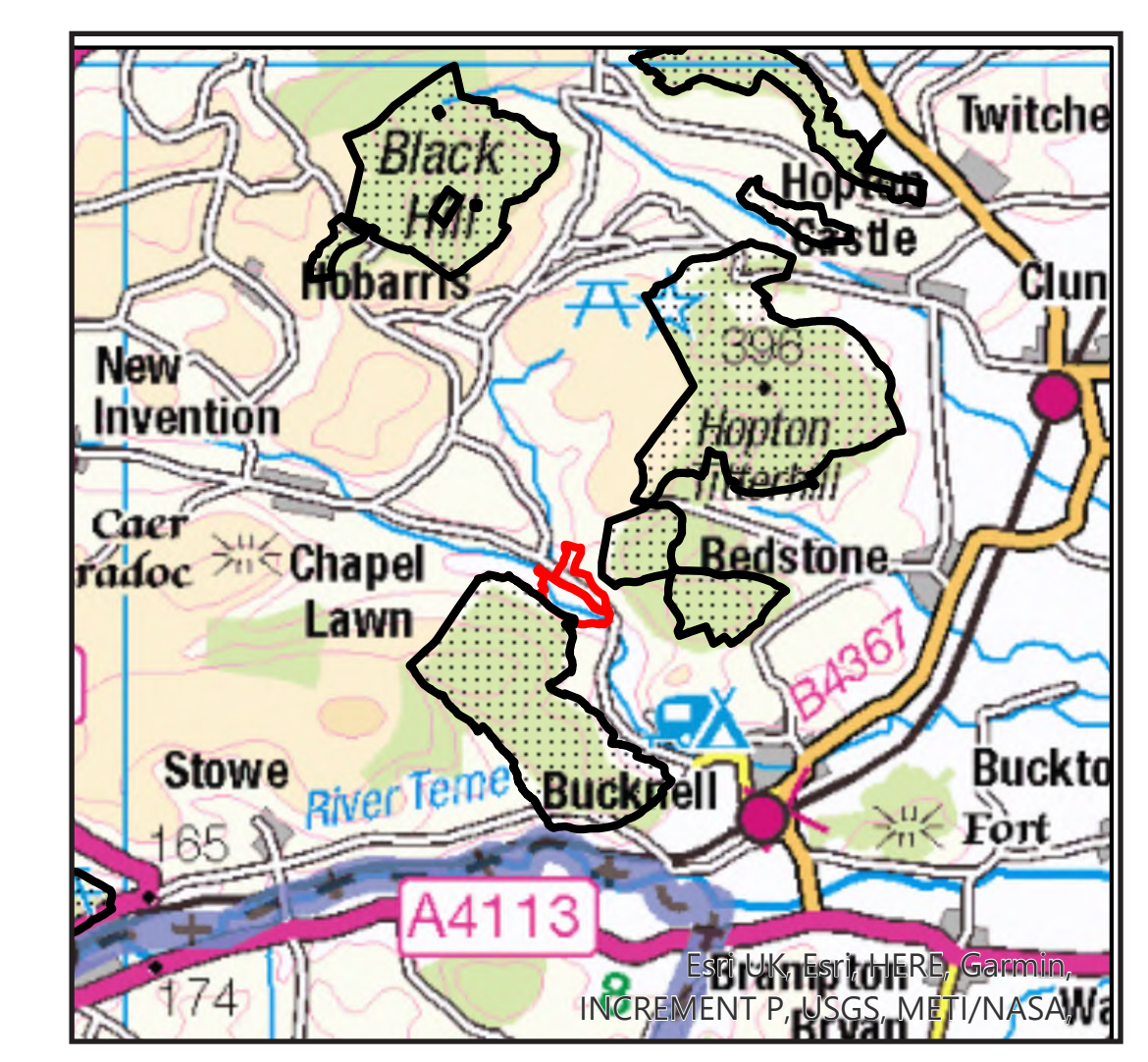
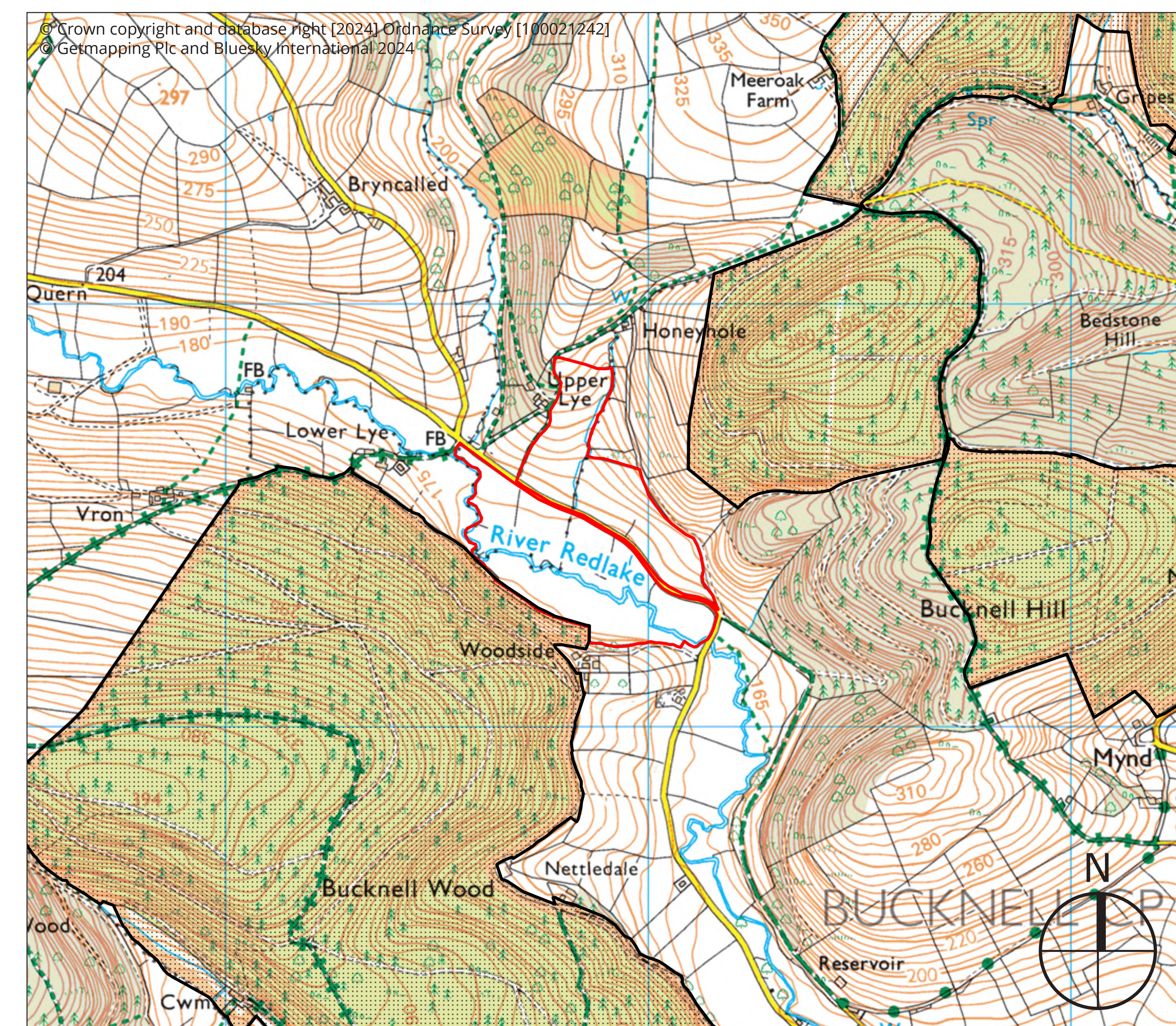


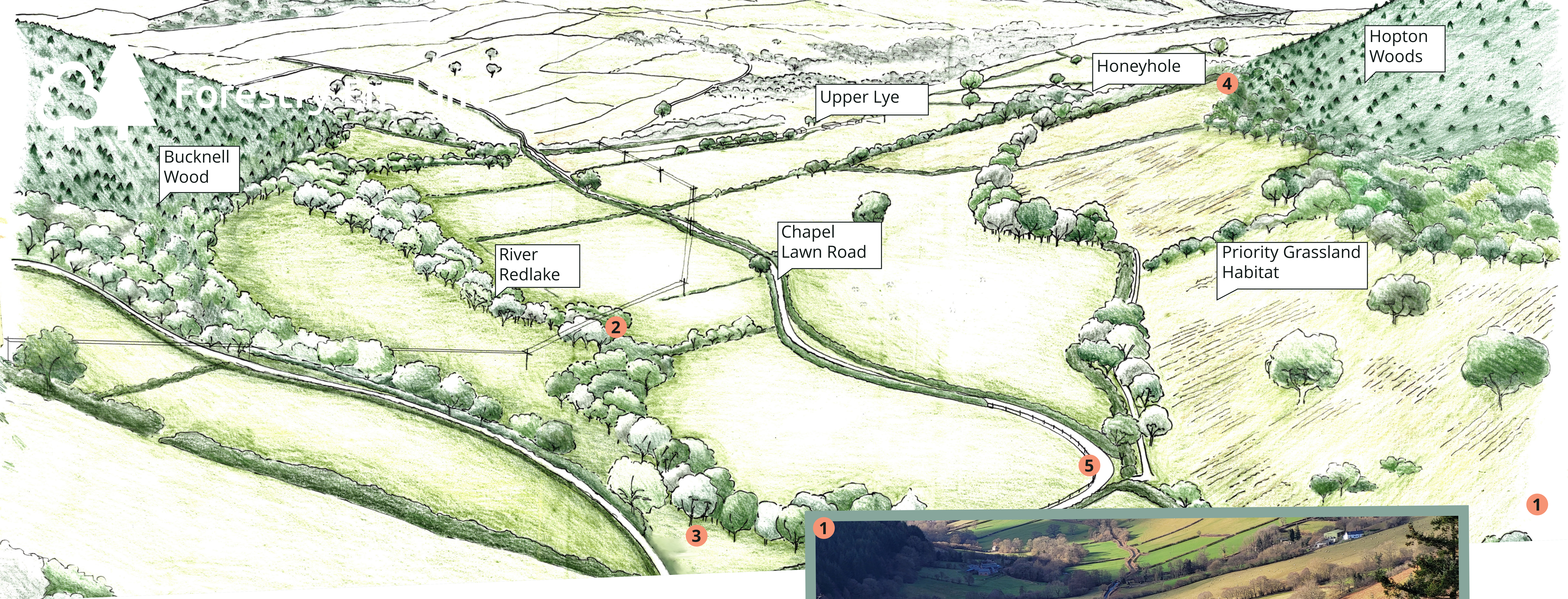
# Site Location & Context

The proposed new woodland is in the south-western part of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, approximately 10 miles west of Ludlow, close to the village of Bucknell. The site lies between Bucknell Wood to the southwest and Hopton Woods to the northeast.

The site for the proposed woodland lies within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 83 Clun and North West Herefordshire Hills. The landscape is undulating, tranquil, rural and sparsely populated, divided by the river valleys of the Clun and Teme. Higher land is often wind-swept heath and grassland. Typically plantation and native woodland are on the hilltops and upper valley slopes.

The landscape at Lower Lye is sensitive by virtue of being in the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and considerable thought has been given to protect the landscape character throughout the design process.





## The existing site

In the Redlake Valley, the site at Lower Lye straddles the River Redlake and Chapel Lawn Road. A ribbon of riparian<sup>1</sup> woodland grows along the river and along a small watercourse that runs from Honeyhole, north of the site, down to the road. The fields either side of the river form the floodplain and are relatively flat and often wet where there is no underground drainage. There is evidence of an old meander in the river. The land is pasture farmland currently grazed by sheep, and compacted as a result. Field boundaries are predominantly hedgerows, typical of this area. Areas of good quality semi-improved grassland and calcareous grassland<sup>2</sup> have been identified directly north of the site.

<sup>1</sup> relating to or situated on the bank of a river

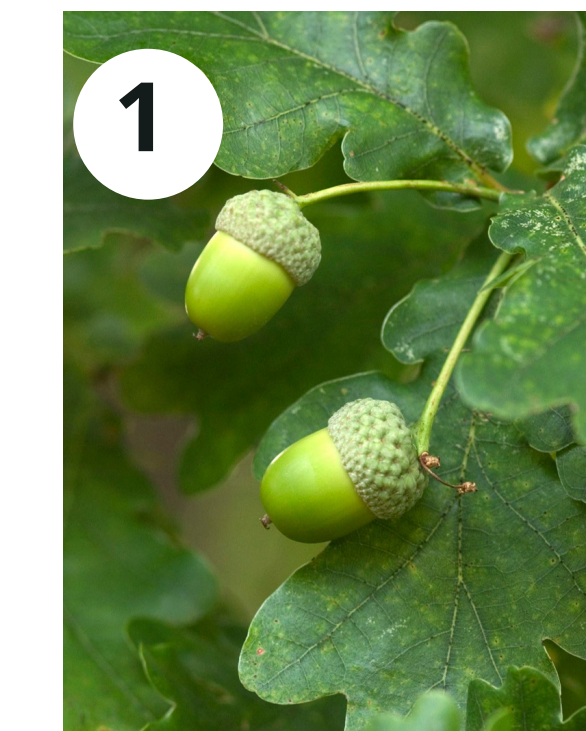
<sup>2</sup> grasslands characterised by species-rich grass and herb communities which grow on shallow lime-rich soils

Photos: 1. View of the site from the east. 2. River Redlake. 3. Field south of River Redlake. 4. View west from Bucknell Hill. 5. View west along Chapel Lawn Road.





## Tree species we could plant



**English oak** with Hornbeam, Small leaved lime, Aspen, Rowan, Wych elm



**Silver birch** with Scot's pine, English oak.



**Aspen** seed stand (see information on seed stands p8/'Our Response to Key Themes from Early Engagement')



**Rowan** within mixes



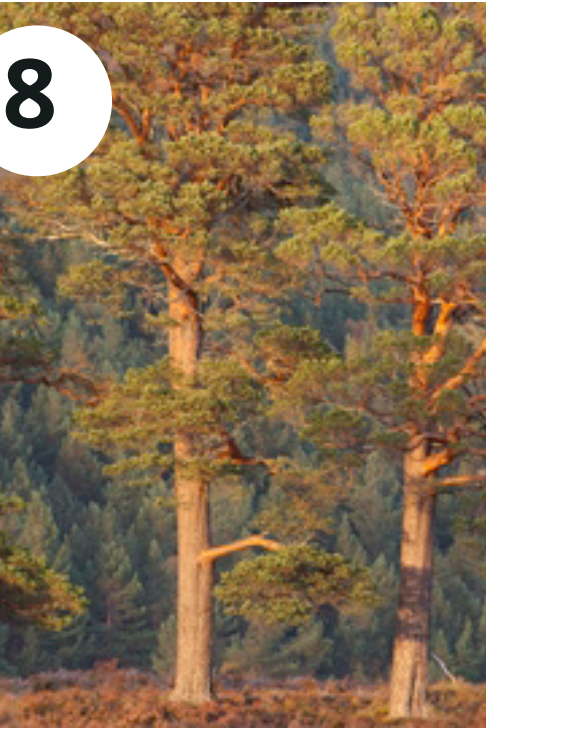
Shrubs including **Guelder rose**, Rowan, Spindle, Elder, Alder buckthorn, Hazel



**Wild cherry** within mixes



**Common alder** and Downy birch research plots (see information on research trials p9/'Our Response to Key Themes from Early Engagement')

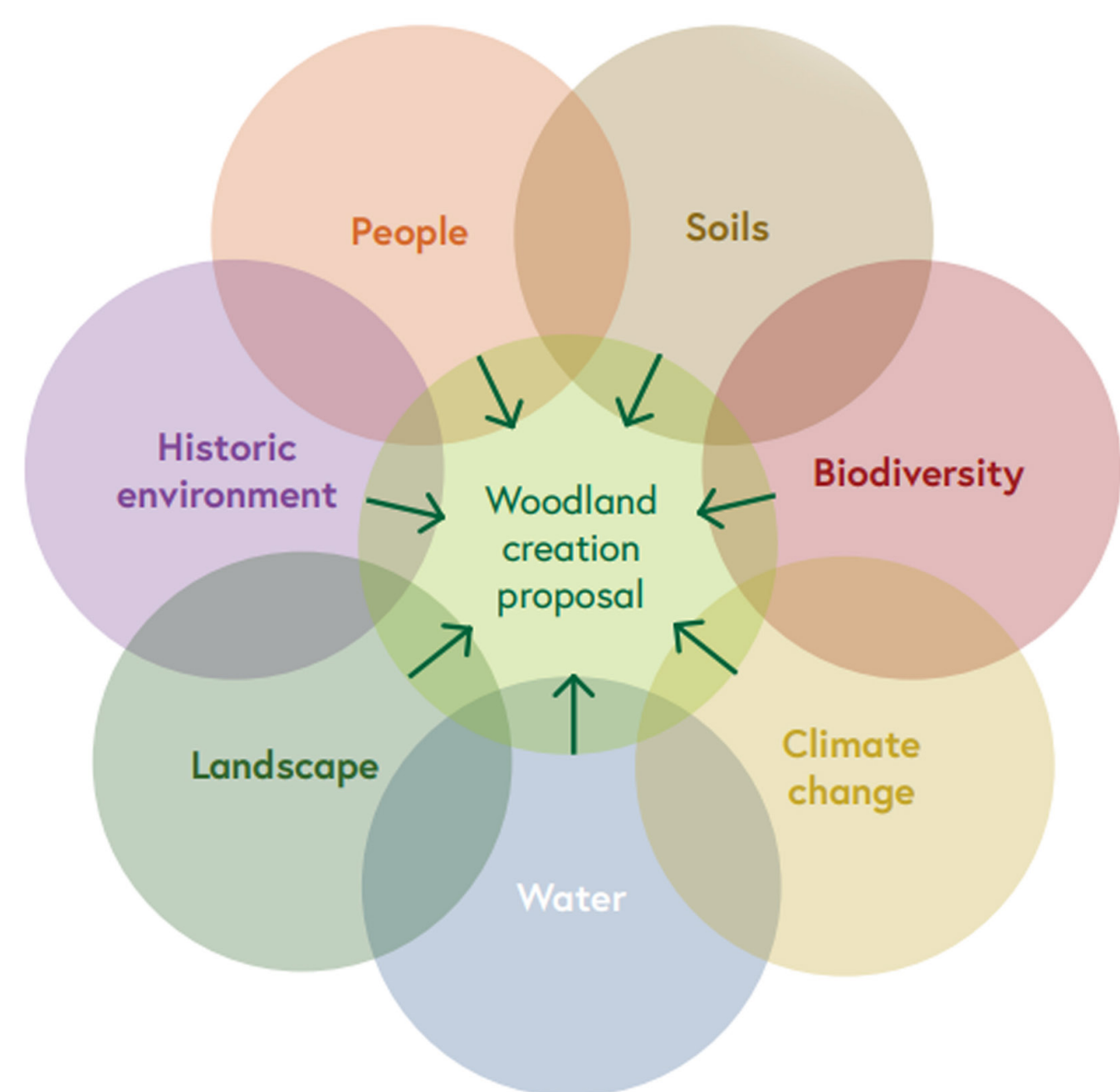


**Scots pine** with Sessile oak, Birch and Rowan

# Draft design

## How we design new woodland

We are designing the new woodland with a natural capital approach, with benefits for people, wildlife and the wider landscape. Our designs meet the UK Forestry Standard, which takes into account the following elements (Forestry Commission, 2021):



Detailed desktop surveys, site surveys and analysis will inform our design. This research includes:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Spring 2024)
- Historic Environment Records
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal
- Local Environment Records
- Soil mapping
- Ecological Site Classification
- Climate matching tools
- Utilities searches
- Responses to initial consultation

## Objectives for the new woodland



**Opportunity to create riparian woodland** which could mitigate flooding and help to reduce agricultural run-off.



**Create a mixed resilient woodland:** plant a mix of trees for a lasting supply of FSC and PEFC certified sustainable timber.



**Incorporate seed stands and research trials**, helping to secure future supply of climate resilient tree species.



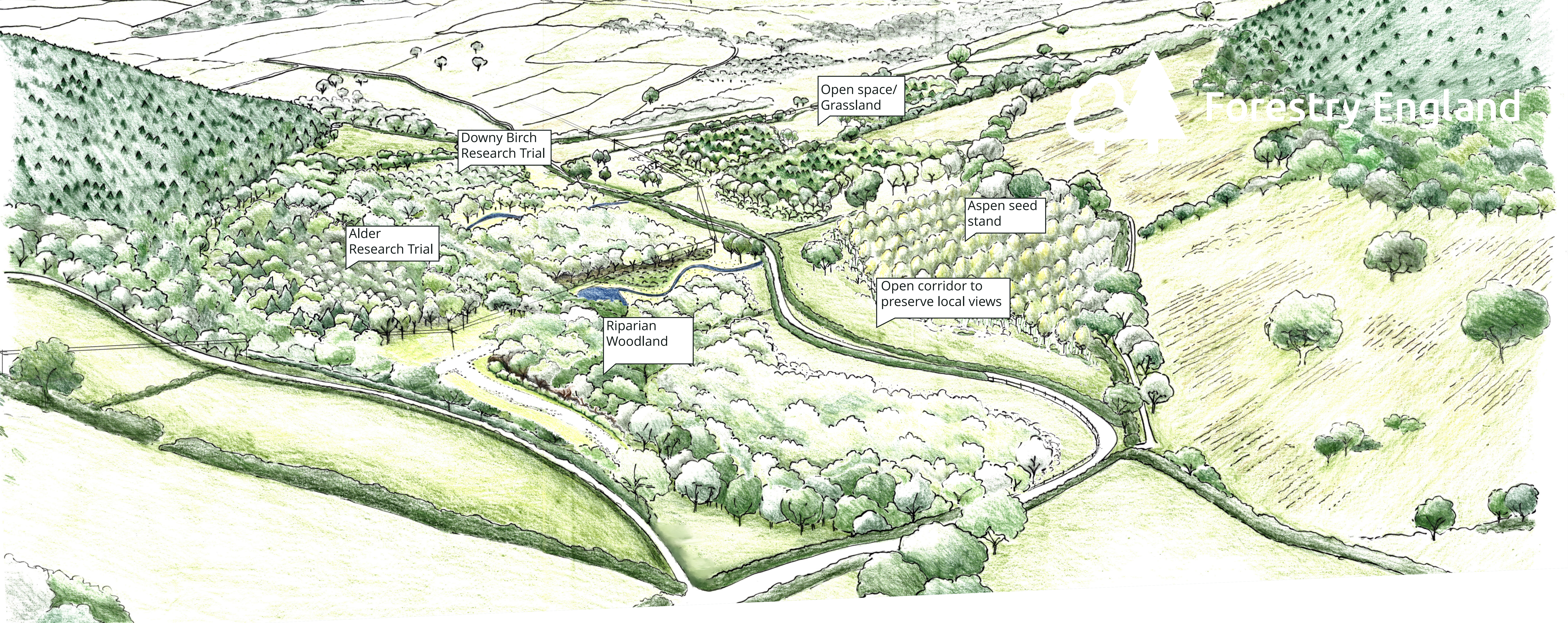
**Sequester atmospheric carbon:** support Government net zero emissions strategies by planting and managing woodland that will thrive in future climate scenarios and creating new carbon sinks or storage.



**Retain and manage important habitats:** Link adjacent ancient woodlands at a landscape scale to improve habitat connectivity. Maintain hedges and create open space within the woodland for wildlife to thrive.



**Public access for health and wellbeing:** create low-key public recreation opportunities by increasing access to the countryside.



# How the new woodland could look

Our initial designs include proposals to:

- Plant riparian woodland on the floodplains adjacent to the River Redlake.
- Plant predominantly broadleaf woodland with some Scots pine, blending well with the surrounding woodland.
- Provide buffers around hedgerow and plant shrubs at the edges of woodland to create areas for wildlife to thrive.
- Retain key views up the valley by keeping the planting back from the road.
- Retain key views from adjacent properties by leaving areas of open space that also provide connectivity with surrounding priority grassland habitat.
- Include an Aspen seed stand to ensure the future supply of climate resilient trees.
- Include research plots for Common alder and Downy birch.
- Possibility to bypass the public highway for a section on the Heart of Wales National Trail.

## Natural Flood Management



**Leaky dams across the river**

As part of developing the design we have met with the Environment Agency and the Shropshire Wildlife Trust at Lower Lye to discuss our proposals. We are exploring ideas and funding for natural flood management approaches such as leaky dams and seasonal wetland.

Woodlands are great natural flood managers. They intercept rainwater that is directly evaporated back into the atmosphere and slow down the rate at which rainfall reaches the river.



**Seasonal wetlands**

The presence of trees and surface roots increases local surface roughness and helps to hold-back and slow floodwaters.

The forest floor usually has a looser structure and more organic matter than soil in farmland. It acts like a sponge temporarily holding water between the layers of dead leaves, soil, roots and organic matter, where it then slowly evaporates or is absorbed by tree roots and released back into the air.



# Forestry England



## Your views are important to us - let us know what you think



**Forestry England**

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## **Responding to this consultation**

We encourage you to submit your response online. You can view our plans and submit your views by completing the online feedback form at:

- <https://consult.forestryengland.uk/forest-districts/lower-lye-woodland/>

If you are unable to do this, you can respond via email at

- [woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk](mailto:woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk)

All views should be received by Tuesday 28th May

## **What's next ?**

- Review of consultation feedback
- Further design work to refine our proposals
- Application to the Forestry Commission for permission to create the new woodland
- Initial planting (Winter 2024)

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## Our Response to Key Themes from Early Engagement

We invited local people to share their initial views about our plans to create a new woodland at Lower Lye. Here are our responses to the key themes and questions people raised.

### Public access

The new woodland at Lower Lye will be open to the public. Once we have finished creating the woodland we will dedicate it under the Countryside and Rights of Way act so people can explore the site.

Existing Public Rights of Way and unsurfaced grass rides will give access for walkers in the new wood and link it to the wider countryside. We are not proposing to create new trails to link with existing woodland or create surfaced trails for horse-riding or cycling. Our proposal to include a grass unsurfaced ride in the woodland to the south of the road offers a safer alternative to people that currently walk on the road.

We are mindful of not significantly increasing car traffic, particularly as the road is narrow. Our proposal does not include public parking. We will consider signs to discourage parking along the lane should this be necessary.

Our draft design includes open spaces and glades that would provide peaceful picnic spots. Once the woodland is established, we would be happy to hear from local organisations and schools who would like to use the new woodland for children's activities such as forest schools and educational visits.

Visitors will be welcome to walk their dogs in the new woodland, but we won't put a fence around the whole woodland. Dog owners must be responsible and keep their pets under control in all the forests and woodland we care for, following signs and our Forest Dog Code.

### Design

We are doing ecology surveys to tell us more about the plants, wildlife and ecosystem at Lower Lye. This will help shape our final design for the new woodland. Our draft design includes meadow and grassland open spaces to create diverse habitats for wildlife and connect to existing open spaces outside the woodland. This will be an attractive environment for birds and we are looking at the possibility of including perches for birds of prey.

The area immediately next to the river will include native trees at a lower density than in the rest of the woodland to protect the river habitat and help stabilise the banks. We are not proposing any bridges.

We want to keep the existing hedges and trees as part of the design where possible, as well as creating glades and rides with trees planted away from the road.

Our plan for the new, resilient woodland with a variety of trees at Lower Lye, aims to:

- create a new riparian (riverside) and floodplain woodland which would mitigate flooding and reduce agricultural run-off.
- improve connections to the woodlands next to Lower Lye at Bucknell Wood and Hopton Wood.
- provide more opportunities for informal access to the countryside,

- take carbon from the atmosphere, supporting Government in achieving net zero emissions targets.
- include areas for us to grow trees and collect their seeds and climate-matching trials run by Forest Research, helping to secure future supply of climate resilient tree species.

The site is small with few existing seed trees nearby so we will plant trees so it can establish quickly rather than wait for it to establish woodland by natural colonisation.

Access for us to maintain the new woodland and harvest sustainable timber will be planned around improvements to the existing field gates.

### The trees we will plant

We are using years of experience and the latest scientific evidence to plan in detail for the trees we will plant for the new woodland. Our surveys help us to choose the trees most suitable for the site now and as the climate changes.

Our professional foresters carefully choose what trees to plant and where to plant them. They understand the soil, how quickly the trees will grow, and the important habitats, species and geographical features nearby. We also consider tree pests and diseases and future climate conditions to keep woods as healthy as possible.

We propose to plant a range of species at Lower Lye, including Scots pine and native broadleaves such as oak and rowan. Alder, birches and willow species will be planted closest to the river and help to stabilise the banks and reduce soil erosion, whilst a mix of broadleaves, native shrubs and naturalised conifers will complement the local landscape, provide seasonal colour for visitors and increase resilience.

### Water, wetlands and flooding

As part of developing the design we have met with the Environment Agency and Shropshire Wildlife Trust at Lower Lye to discuss our proposals. We are working closely with Shropshire Wildlife Trust to explore ideas and funding for natural flood management approaches such as including leaky dams, open drainage swales and a seasonal wetland.

Trees close to rivers are important for helping to manage the flow of water into the river after it has rained. They hold back water better than short plants as rain gets caught in the leaves and branches where it eventually evaporates into the air. Water also runs down the trunks directly into the soil or drips through the leaves and importantly, this slows down rainfall reaching the river. Underneath the trees, some of the water is held temporarily by the layers of dead leaves, soil and organic matter on the forest floor, where it slowly evaporates or is absorbed by tree roots and released back into the air.

Studies in the UK have shown that in areas covered by broadleaved woodland, up to 25% of the rainwater that falls is intercepted, while in evergreen forests, this can be as high as 45%.

The soil in woodlands usually has a looser structure and more organic matter than soil in farmland, so (unless it's already saturated), it can hold onto rainwater longer and slow

down its flow into rivers and streams.

Trees and other woody vegetation in floodplain woodlands increase the "hydraulic roughness" of the ground, holding-back and slowing-down flood flows. Trees in riparian areas also stabilise river banks, reducing silt and help to contain floodwater.

### Landscape and Views

Our design sensitively considers how close the new woodland will be to our new neighbours. Where there are key views from properties, we have left open space and have shrub planting at the edges of the woodland for visual diversity. We will have more broadleaf trees in these areas because they are shorter than some conifers, generally live longer and need managing less often. We clearly heard that it is important to have views from the public footpaths in and around the site. Where possible, our design will frame and enhance existing views and we will establish open spaces between the new woodland and key viewpoints.

### Establishing and managing the woodland

We aim to plant the new woodland in winter 24/25. It will take approximately five years to establish and maintenance during this time is important to ensure its long-term success. The woodland will be managed by the Forestry England team and local contractors.

The woodland will eventually provide a small supply of sustainable timber. We plan to manage the woodland as "continuous cover" without cutting down larger areas of trees before replanting them. This approach maintains tree cover and biodiversity and allows for the gradual removal of individual trees or small groups of trees, leaving the majority of the canopy intact. We anticipate beginning to thin out the trees in approximately 25 years.

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## Our Response to Key Themes from Early Engagement

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### What is a Seed Stand?

We are increasing the number of trees we plant which we grow from our own seeds or other UK sources to guarantee our supply of home-grown trees for our forests and woodlands. They come from seed stands with trees specially grown for their seeds and we grow new trees at our nursery in Cheshire. The seed stand trees are managed differently to give us seed, much like a fruit orchard. The trees in the stand are kept low, about 1.8m, and are gradually thinned out to have wider space between them. This makes the trees easier to pick from and helps produce more seed. We plan to plant aspen to give us a supply of seeds.

### What are the research trials you are planning?

The UK is expected to experience hotter and drier summers, warmer and wetter winters, and an increased frequency of extreme weather events such as storms and droughts. To keep our forests resilient to these changes, we are planning now for what trees and mixtures of species we will be planting in the future.

We will test seed from some common tree species that we could continue to plant in the future, collected from different locations with different climates. Where seed comes from is known as its provenance. For example, we will compare trees adapted to milder, wetter conditions with those from warmer, drier regions to identify any obvious differences.

We are planning to have some small provenance trials of birch and alder at Lower Lye. This will help identify local varieties of trees which might be expected to survive and thrive in a different climate.

### Protecting the new woodland from deer

The UK is home to six species of deer and they are not controlled by natural predators, such as bears, lynx and wolves which are extinct. Without predators, deer populations become unnaturally big, and their browsing can damage young trees and wildlife habitats. In the short-term, this can kill some trees and in the longer-term, it can reduce the resilience of the new woodland to climate change, reduce plant and animal diversity and lower the carbon captured from the atmosphere.

Forestry England is part of the [Deer Initiative](http://www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk/)<sup>1</sup>, a partnership that promotes sustainable deer management in England and Wales. We will use deer fencing to protect larger blocks of new planting and tree tubes in smaller areas. Our highly skilled wildlife rangers replace the role of Britain's missing predators by safely and humanely controlling deer populations in our woodlands, working to the highest standards whilst undertaking other vital conservation works to protect and increase the numbers of other threatened species. More information about how Forestry England manage deer can be found [here](#)<sup>2</sup>.

Deer fencing would be removed and where possible recycled after the trees become established.

### Why are you planting agricultural land?

Forestry England is creating new woodlands which will capture carbon, restore and connect habitats, enhance biodiversity, supply sustainable, homegrown timber and be great places for people to enjoy. Sites are individually and carefully assessed so they are suitable for woodland creation and sensitive to the local landscape. This assessment considers the existing land use, and we target lower-quality or less productive land to create new woodlands.

Our proposals for a new woodland at Lower Lye support the Government's tree planting targets to create 30,000 hectares of new woodland every year by 2025 and provide a source of sustainable homegrown timber. Currently the UK imports over 80% of its timber<sup>3</sup> and we are more reliant on imported timber than imported food (40% of food is imported)<sup>4</sup>. Meeting the government's woodland creation targets would only need less than 10 percent of this potential land so will not have a significant impact on food production.

Forestry England understands concerns around food security and keeping the best land in agricultural production. Our woodland creation programme seeks to avoid the most productive land (grades 1 & 2). The land at Lower Lye is graded at 3. All landowners choose how they should best manage their land to suit their business.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk/>  
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.forestryengland.uk/article/managing-deer-the-nations-forests>  
<sup>3</sup> [Forestry Facts & Figures 2023 \(forestryresearch.gov.uk\)](#)  
<sup>4</sup> [United Kingdom Food Security Report 2021: Theme 2: UK Food Supply Sources - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)