

# Valley Head Project

## Briefing Note

### Background

The valley head is a spectacular place with the mountain peaks providing an almost 360 degree backdrop to the River Liza and glacial valley floor moraines. However the valley head lacks ecological structure and biodiversity of flora and fauna which we have the opportunity to improve through an exciting new project.



### What's our Vision?

Wild Ennerdale has long held a vision for the valley head where open native woodland extends from the valley bottom further east than the current forest extent then fading out into the open fell. Our vision is for a tree'd landscape where both open and wooded habitats intertwine. For some years we have been removing conifers from the eastern third of the valley and replanting at low density with native trees such as oak, birch, rowan, willow and juniper. An opportunity has arisen which will allow us to extend this approach further through new planting to link the recent restocking with remnant woodland hiding and clinging on in more eastern gullies.

### How did the project come about?

Ennerdale Water has long been the public water supply for West Cumbria but there are concerns about its future resilience and lack of connectivity to the regional water grid. The River Ehen which flows out of Ennerdale Water is a European protected habitat for its rare freshwater mussels and is the only reproducing freshwater mussel population in England and one of only a handful across the UK. The Environment Agency has said it will revoke the abstraction license at Ennerdale Water in 2022 and United Utilities must provide an alternative means of supply to West Cumbria.

In order to secure a more resilient water supply for West Cumbria and ensure the future of the River Ehen's special habitats United Utilities have developed a plan to

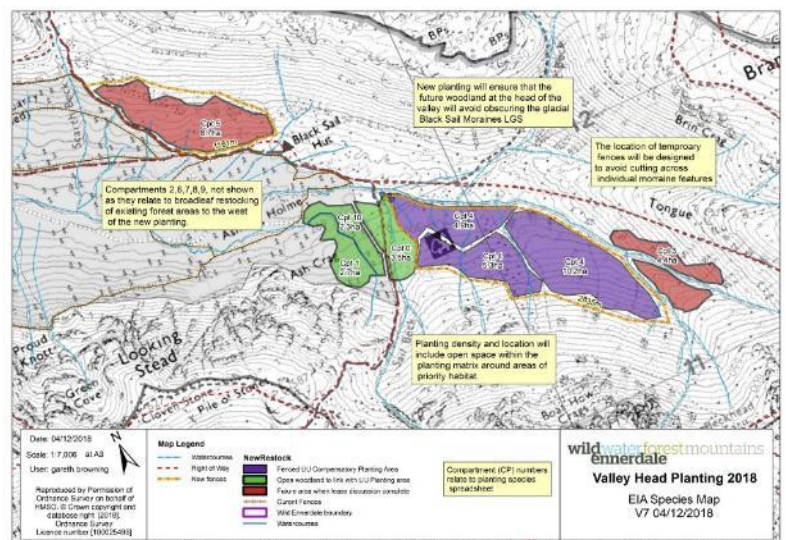
bring water from Thirlmere to West Cumbria through the construction of a new pipeline, associated Water Treatment Works and Service Reservoirs. The pipeline construction unavoidably requires the removal of a number of trees and although detailed replanting and reinstatement plans are being developed along the route, further compensation is also proposed. Inspired by Sir John Lawton's report [Making Space for nature](#) United Utilities approached the Wild Ennerdale partners to ask if we could accommodate a larger area of woodland planting in the valley that would then have a secure future under our caring.

## Who will manage the project?

It is hoped that the establishment phase of the project will be managed by the National Trust on behalf of United Utilities with the Wild Ennerdale partners providing oversight and support. Once established, around 5 years after the initial planting, the young woodland will be handed over to the Wild Ennerdale partners to look after it into the future.

## What area of new planting is proposed?

The pipeline planning permission requires a minimum of 20.4 hectares of new planting be completed. The Wild Ennerdale Partners have identified an area of up to 34 hectares of new planting potential for which they have carried out an Environmental Impact Assessment. Putting this into context the area managed under Wild Ennerdale extends to 4700 hectares of which only around



15% has significant tree cover. The Valley head east of the old forest boundary extends to around 650 hectares. Assuming the maximum of 34 hectares of new woodland proposed was planted this would still only represents 6% of the Valley Head and an overall increase in woodland of less than 1% across the valley. Importantly this new planting will be quite different to the original conifer plantings as it will be comprised of native species planted to develop a future open woodland structure

fading naturally into the more open fell land. We are also hoping to trial different innovative methods of establishing the trees and shrubs.

## **What about the Glacial Moraines?**

We are aware of the Glacial Moraines at the head of the valley and have planned the planting to ensure these special features can continue to be seen in the landscape. Naturally, they probably would have a low level of scattered woodland just like the ones at Creag Meagaidh in Scotland do. Where our planting map shows planting on areas of glacial moraine we will be planting open groups and ribbons of trees around the features and will not plant directly on the moraines. We think a fuzzy covering of open native woodland will enhance them as features as well as bringing in more wildlife.

## **What might it look like?**

Creag Meagaidh in Scotland illustrates what the valley head tree planting might look like in the future. The photo shows Creag Meagaidh with a soft low density native woodland. Both valleys have a natural river threading between glacial moraines.



To help imagine what the valley head might look like in the future once the woodland has been established, we have commissioned some photorealistic images showing the valley with the new planting established and linked into the future woodland in the existing forest. See image below and header image at the top of the pages.



## **What Species will we plant?**

We plan to plant a range of native species including juniper, mountain willows, rowan, birch Scots pine and oak..

## **When will it happen?**

We hope the planting and establishment phase may start in 2019/20 with the woodland taking up to 20 years before it starts to appear visible in the wider landscape.

## **How is the project being funded?**

The project will be fully funded by United Utilities who will also pass over to Wild Ennerdale a sum of money to support ongoing maintenance of the planting beyond the initial establishment phase . This will cover work such as removing the temporary fencing and tree shelters.