

## **Potential for the scaling up of low-impact development in Wales: Ideas for a sustainable future**

If we notionally divide land in Wales into three altitude zones, we have:

**The Productive lowland** – including urban areas, the vast majority of horticulture and a considerable portion of dairy/ meat production: comprising approximately 40% of the land<sup>1</sup> area and being between sea level and 150 meters above sea level.

**The Mountains** - 27% of land in Wales is above 300m and is largely mountain/ moor, with some coniferous forestry.

**The Hills** - 33% of land in Wales (approx 693,000 Ha)<sup>1</sup> is between 150 and 300 meters above sea level. Considered as marginal agricultural land, this land is largely permanent pasture/ rough grazing with some forestry/ woodland (largely coniferous).

I am interested in the potential for this latter zone (the hills) to be transformed from rye grass and sheep monocultures into a band of bio diverse forest gardens/ eco-smallholdings.

If half of this land (nominally that with a southerly aspect) was dedicated to low-impact smallholdings (of an average 3Ha size), then we could create approx 115,000 new eco-holdings, accommodating approx 414,000 people<sup>2</sup>.

16.5% of the land directly supporting 14% of the population living sustainably<sup>3</sup>

Land previously considered uneconomical by virtue of being too steep, too poor or too high would, through permaculture practices, be transformed to a mosaic of habitats and productive ecosystems supplying fresh produce, crafts and skills to local towns and villages. These regions would become reserves for wildlife and biodiversity and also play a key role in stabilising the climate by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and locking it into biomass.

Supporting Factors:

Planning provision for such a transition now in place.<sup>4</sup>

On-the-ground examples being constructed.<sup>5</sup>

Self-funding and self-motivating grass roots movement.<sup>6</sup>

Climate change and prospect of environmental/ social/ economic instability

Inhibiting Factors:

Current agricultural subsidy system financially props up the current status quo, perpetuating the dominant position of agri-business in the landscape.

Current agricultural subsidy system masks the true cost of food production (for example in terms of carbon pollution, biodiversity loss, soil depletion) creating cheap mass-produced food and distorting the market.

The nations sense of identity (social and landscape) inhibits change.

Denial of the prospect of climate change and of environmental/ social/ economic instability

1 Land area figures taken from <http://www.aber.ac.uk/gwydd-cym/modiwlau/pyncaullosg/AgriInWales.pdf>

2 Back of an envelope calculations based on 3.6 people per household (the Lammas average), and being is somewhat higher than the national average (2.3) due to the predominance of young families

3 Back of an envelope calculations based on Wales population being approx 2,900,000

4 One Planet Development, TAN6

5 [www.lammas.org.uk](http://www.lammas.org.uk)

6 Set up costs between £50,000 and £100,000 per smallholding