

A Recently Translocated Woodland Plant-Soil Ecosystem: Some Early Outcomes and Lessons Learnt¹

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Whilst the translocation of wildlife habitats (soils and their vegetation) is now referred to in UK national planning policy as potential mitigation action for both mineral and the built developments, and although it is now commonplace, it remains controversial and as a last resort where prime ecosystems are involved. None is more contentious as woodland translocations where those designated as ‘semi-natural ancient woodland’ (i.e. have been in situ for some 400 years or more) are involved, and there is a presumption against the granting consent for developments adversely affecting them. In this paper, the early outcomes of a translocation of part of such a woodland following the granting of planning consent to extend a nationally important granite resource is reviewed with lessons learnt. Here, we found that weediness and its control in the short-term appears to be paramount and may determine future success. As with the translocation of other ecosystems, the condition of the woodland pre- translocation and the actions taken subsequently are likely to be of overriding importance, and may be too easily overlooked. These findings are of relevance beyond the mineral extraction industry given that built developments such as the UK Government’s plans to construct a high-speed rail network (HS2) could directly affect a hundred or more such woodlands where translocation will be offered as mitigation.

Additional Key Words: wildlife habitats, ancient woodland, oak woodland, woodland regeneration, woodland management.

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1. Oral paper presented at the 2019 National Meeting of the American Society of Mining and Reclamation, Big Sky, MT. Welcome Back to Montana: The Land of Reclamation Pioneers, June 3–7, 2019. Published by ASMR, 1305 Weathervane Dr., Champaign, IL 61821.
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