

Woodland Challenges

for England



Protection of our woodland heritage

Delivering greater protection for ancient woods and trees, which reflects their irreplaceable biodiversity and cultural value, should mean:

- The amendment of the current Felling Licence system with a view to protecting habitats rather than individual trees. Requirements for restocking should focus on restoring habitats in order to maximise biodiversity benefits
- Reform of Tree Preservation Orders so that dead and dying ancient trees are eligible for protection, thereby safeguarding some of our most valuable trees



Planning and Development

The national planning system is about more than just economic development. It needs to integrate a wide range of objectives and recognise that we need to live within environmental limits. It should regard our natural environment, of which woods are one of its great glories, as a great national asset to be protected and enhanced. In particular, it should ensure:

- Green infrastructure is fully integrated at the outset into development proposals and spatial planning – it should not be an afterthought
- The provisions of Planning Policy Statement 9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation) for protecting ancient woods and trees are fully reflected in Regional Spatial Strategies, Local Development Frameworks, the scrutiny of major infrastructure projects and the use of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)
- Local planners rigorously implement PPS9 and its Good Practice Guide on the ground



Delivering on 'Keepers of Time'

'Keepers of Time', the Government's 2005 statement of policy for ancient and native woodland in England, is a major step forward. Delivery will present some particular challenges which will require real leadership by the public forest estate, underpinned by rigorous monitoring. In particular we wish to see:

- All planted ancient woodland sites in state forest ownership in a process of restoration within five years and in private ownership within 10 years



Woodland Creation

England is one of the least wooded countries in Europe with only 8% woodland cover. This means that many communities and the natural environment in general are denied the benefits that woodland brings. We believe that there should be:

- 30,000ha of new woodland planting, particularly targeted in areas of high concentrations of ancient woods and other semi-natural habitats to protect, buffer and extend their value for wildlife; and targeted woodland creation close to where people live as places of quiet informal recreation
- Greater emphasis on how the benefits of more woodland can be harnessed to deliver on other policy agendas such as health and recreation; flood alleviation; tackling diffuse pollution, improving air quality and as a focus for community development



Climate Change

Greater urgency is required to tackle the worst effects of climate change, the most serious threat to our native woodland. This means:

- Getting back on track to deliver at least an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas

emissions by 2050 and a 40% reduction from 1990 levels by 2020

- A strategic approach to reducing emissions sector by sector through carbon budgeting, demand management and incentives to deliver reductions rather than the old predict and provide approach
- Proper recognition of the true environmental costs of air transport and shipping
- A more carbon conscious approach to design and planning with the Growth Areas showcasing energy efficiency, product substitution and use of renewables
- Helping biodiversity to adapt to climate change through policies which focus on action at a landscape scale



Access, Public Health and Recreation

There is a need for the population of England to be able to access and enjoy the health giving benefits of woodland both close to home and across the country. Policy should aim to ensure that

- Local authorities adopt the Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard and seek to ensure that over the next five years 30% of the population have access to a 2ha wood within 500m of their home and 80% have a 20ha wood within 4km as part of a mosaic of accessible natural green space. This will mean providing incentives both for the opening up of existing woods and also creating new woods as part of the creation of green infrastructure
- An enhanced recognition in public health policy of the role of a healthier physical environment in promoting a healthier population both through creating a more attractive environment in which to exercise and the



improvement of air quality. This should also mean making good use of adapting existing funding streams such as the innovative West Midlands Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG)



A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests

This new Strategy emphasises the impact of climate change and the role of trees and woods in combating it and adapting to it, as well as the importance of a high quality woodland environment for the well being of everyone. We want to see:

- A clear objective-led action plan with targets for delivery and adequate funding linked to it
- Defra acting as a strong advocate for the contribution of the strategy to wider Government agendas



Natural England

Natural England should be a visionary and powerful advocate for England's natural heritage. In particular:

- It should focus its action upon conservation at the landscape scale rather than the site centred approach of the past
- It should have a strong regional presence to reflect the shift of decision making to that tier
- It should have the closest possible working relationship with the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency



Investing in the natural environment

Investing in the natural environment and woodland in particular delivers a wide range of benefits to the public including public access, enhanced

landscapes, biodiversity, flood alleviation and improved air quality to name just a few. However to achieve these benefits the following investment decisions are required:

- A suite of woodland grants to reflect different woodland circumstances rather than 'one size fits all' approach
- Equality of grant opportunity between Agri-Environment Schemes such as the Entry Level Scheme and Higher Level Scheme and the England Woodland Grant Scheme (eg EWGS competitive, ELS if you qualify you get it)
- A fair share of Lottery funding for the natural environment which reflects the importance the public attach to healthy wildlife-rich places



Cross-compliance

So called cross-compliance conditions, the minimum activity farmers need to undertake to receive the Single Farm Payment, include both meeting legal requirements and a set of measures known as Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC). One of the principle themes of GAEC is the "prevention of encroachment of unwanted vegetation". We believe this condition does not benefit woodland conservation. Therefore we wish to see:

- The value of regenerating woodland in certain areas, on agricultural land, better recognised. For example, beside an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) a farmer should be able to allow scrub and tree regeneration as it is environmentally beneficial to do so. This should be possible without a farmer losing his Single Payment Scheme (SPS) and without the need for complicated bureaucracy, i.e. a derogation, which acts as a disincentive.



The English Regions

The English regional policy dimension offers important opportunities to enhance the benefits provided by woods. Reforms to English regional government should not jeopardise the delivery of these benefits through focussing exclusively on economic development and should ensure effective accountability for the delivery of sustainable development. The benefits of woods can be safeguarded and increased at a regional level through:

- Key strategies from Regional Economic Strategies and Regional Spatial Strategies through to Regional Forestry Frameworks and water catchment plans, recognising the important contribution woodland can make to the well-being of the region
- Enhanced investment by Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in woodland projects delivering benefits in the region from the creation of a more attractive physical environment to the provision of timber and woodfuel



Outdoor Learning

We believe that woodland is a key component of the new enhanced focus upon outdoor learning. We wish to see woodland form the basis of a planned programme of discovery and inspiration for children through:

- Ensuring every child is able to experience woodland at first hand as part of their formal education at least annually



WOODLAND
TRUST



The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL
01476 581111 www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

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