



WOODLAND
TRUST

Woodland Creation

why it matters

woodlandtrust.org.uk



Planting woods and trees across the UK for the benefit of all

Woodland creation matters to everyone. It matters not only in terms of creating more attractive landscapes and townscape within which to live and work and to help wildlife prosper, but also because woodland has a key role to play in securing our future quality of life.

The importance of trees and woods has never been more apparent – they are essential to regulating climate and weather, important for the flow and quality of water, for mitigation of air pollution, soil conservation, storing carbon and adapting society to climate change. They provide valuable habitats for wildlife as well as timber and other products.

The presence of trees and woods is also central to the character of many local communities. They provide vital green spaces for physical exercise and mental relaxation. Their colour, beauty and timelessness, spanning generations, inspires our imaginations and our creativity. Most of us have fond childhood memories of playing on or around trees. A world without trees would be bleak and unimaginable.



WTPL/Stuart Handley



WTPL/Steven Kind



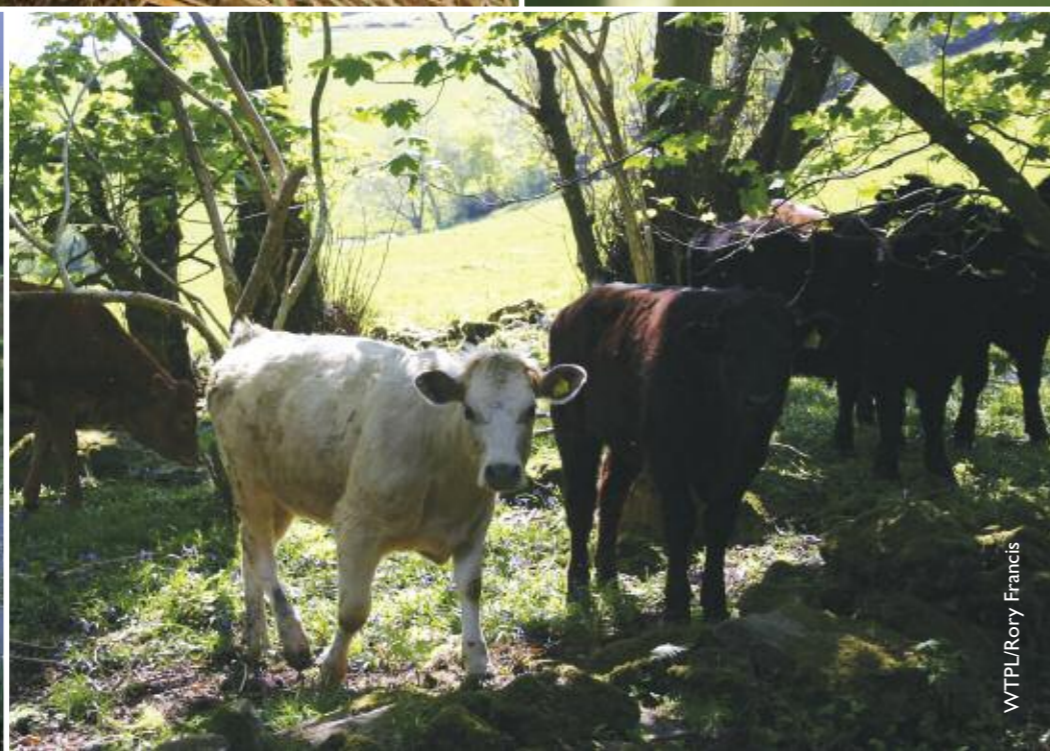
WTPL/Claire Borrowdale



WTPL/Claire Borrowdale



WTPL/Steven Kind



WTPL/Rory Francis

What woods and trees do for us

- Woodland encourages exercise, improves health and reduces mental stresses
- Woodland creation offers limitless opportunities for community engagement, learning and volunteering
- Creating woodland at bottlenecks on floodplains can significantly reduce major flood events by absorbing and delaying water flows, while retaining existing woods will continue to regulate the release of water from the catchment
- Creating new woods in the right places can reduce pollution entering water courses by as much as 90% and help soil conservation measures
- Windbreaks and hedgerow trees on farms are vital for maintaining populations of pollinating insects critical to secure our food supplies
- Shelter and shade for livestock provided by trees have been shown to increase productivity and maintain animal welfare conditions as the climate changes
- A belt of trees can reduce noise levels by as much as 6–8 decibels (the equivalent of a large lorry going past) for every 30 metres width of woodland
- Trees have a measurable ability to reduce the ‘urban heat island effect’ whereby urban areas become far hotter than surrounding areas on summer nights. The high leaf surface to ground area ratio of trees makes them particularly effective in providing shade and reducing temperature through absorbing latent heat during transpiration
- The cooling effect of trees in summer, and shelter offered in winter, can reduce energy consumption for air conditioning and heating, thus reducing CO₂ emissions
- Sitting under the canopy of a broadleaf tree can reduce UVB radiation by the equivalent of a factor 10 sun cream
- Trees in particular provide additional motivation to walk compared with routes that have no trees
- Trees and green spaces in urban areas intercept rainfall and slow the flow of water into drains reducing localised flash flooding



A green and pleasant land?

For all the benefits woods and trees provide, the UK remains one of the least wooded countries in Europe with a mere 11.6% woodland cover. In England, the figure is only 8.6% with only 5.8% being native broadleaf. Moreover, almost half of what remained in the 1930s of our ancient woodland heritage has been lost or damaged.

As well as protection and restoration of existing woodland, the Woodland Trust's vision is of a doubling of native woodland cover in the UK from around 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 hectares. This target is based on action needed to place wildlife on a more sustainable footing for the future, to ensure everyone has access to woodland close to where they live and that society reaps the multiple benefits that woodland delivers.

It also signifies the scale of our ambition and vision to see this country more richly endowed with native woods and forests in the future. Helping to shape a country which is better able to meet future challenges we face as a society. Challenges such as physical and mental health, the impact of climate change, and the creation of thriving communities within which people will want to live, mindful that it is often the most socially deprived neighbourhoods which are also those most lacking in tree cover.

We must ensure that people are not disenfranchised from an experience of nature if we are to understand our place within it and prove effective future stewards of the environment. Within as little as 12 years, bare land can be transformed into thriving woodland providing crucial green spaces for people, wildlife and the planet.



WTPL/Nick Spurling



WTPL/Colin Yarnell



WTPL/Andrew Butler

Leadership abroad, leadership at home

The urgent task of addressing global deforestation has placed forestry high on the agenda and the UK rightly aspires to play a leading role in shaping the international response. But we need to display leadership at home in terms of our own forest stewardship if we are to speak with authority on the international stage. As well as protection and restoration of our remaining forests, our domestic policy should be to ensure that all in society in both town and country can enjoy the benefits woodland brings and that means woodland expansion as well.

Woods, trees and food security

The Woodland Trust supports the need for a thriving, viable and sustainable agricultural industry in the UK. We also believe that a steady expansion of tree and woodland cover is entirely compatible with this objective.

Future food security will require a stable and thriving ecosystem to provide the necessary services for planned production such as clean and plentiful water and healthy soils. Farming systems are already beginning to change as a result of climate change and will only develop effectively if the natural environment is also thriving and resilient. This means both conserving what we have and creating new habitats too.

Moreover, food, whilst immediately critical to life, is not the only element of a liveable environment in an era of environmental change, and recognition of this needs to be reflected in future land use policy.



WTPL/Deborah Morris



WTPL/Steven Kind



WTPL/Stuart Handley



WTPL/Bob Macdonald



Allan Baxter Photography



WTPL/Niall Benvie

A prescription for public health

Public health is one of the biggest challenges facing modern society. Easily accessible woods close to where people live provide measurable benefits in terms of:

- encouraging people to take exercise
- helping reduce the mental stresses of modern society
- improving air quality
- reducing respiratory diseases

Woods make particularly outstanding greenspaces for public access because of the experience of nature they provide, their visual prominence alongside buildings which offers balance between the built and natural worlds, their low maintenance costs and their ability to accommodate large numbers of visitors.

So woods and trees can clearly improve the quality of life in our communities but in order to do so it is vital that there are sufficient woods close to where people live. At present less than 15% of the UK population live within easy walking distance of a wood.

The Woodland Trust's 'Space for People' project has developed a Woodland Access Standard, to sit alongside other accessible natural greenspace standards, and based on wide ranging research and surveys of public opinion. It aims to guide action at a local level and be a rallying point for environmental action to create the communities of the future.

Case Study: Heartwood Forest

The Woodland Trust is creating England's largest new native forest on 850 acres of arable land at Sandridge near St Albans – just 25 miles from Marble Arch – where 600,000 trees will be planted by volunteers including a new community orchard. There will also be new wildflower meadows, open spaces and miles of footpaths and bridleways created over a 10 year period.



Sited within London's Green Belt, Heartwood boasts four remnants of precious ancient woodland covering 45 acres, is a haven for wildlife and has enormous potential for public engagement with the natural environment. It will provide health, education and leisure benefits for the two million people who live within a 20 mile radius of the site.

Case Study: National Health Service Forest

The NHS Forest is a visionary hearts and minds project which aims to plant 1.3 million trees for the benefit of patients and staff – representing each of the NHS's employees. It will also underline the strong links between greenspace and public health, providing very tangible physical benefits and a symbolic connection with the wider environment.

The NHS Forest aspires to improve the natural environment surrounding NHS buildings. It will consist of trees on every NHS site, in the local surrounding area and beyond, ensuring involvement from the wider community and contributing to what has been called the

'Natural Health Service', namely the presence of trees, bushes, flowers, birds and butterflies on every campus.

The forest will also play a significant part in offsetting the reduced carbon footprint of the health service.

The Campaign for Greener Healthcare is currently working with the Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, NHS Trusts, Natural England, the Sustainable Development Unit and others to develop a number of pilot projects and wider partnerships.



Case Study: Carnmoney Hill

Carnmoney Hill, an ancient green monument, is one of a chain of hills, steeped in history and folklore, which watch over Belfast City. This green oasis consists of grassland, wetland and woodland – both ancient woodland and new planting providing perfect habitats for a wonderful variety of wildlife including bats, badgers, foxes, the Irish hare, breeding buzzards, sparrowhawks and the long-eared owl.

The Woodland Trust, with the help of Newtownabbey Borough Council and local people, has planted over 60,000 trees, making Carnmoney Hill one of the largest native woodland creation projects in Northern Ireland. In years to come, the mix of young native trees will buffer the precious fragments of ancient woodland, providing an extended foraging habitat for wildlife and a majestic natural resource for the province.



What the Woodland Trust is doing

- Working in partnership with others to create new woods such as through our MOREwoods scheme. Visit woodlandtrust.org.uk/MOREwoods
- Using the act of tree planting as a rallying point for public engagement in our work and in the environment. Our Tree for All project is the most ambitious ever children's tree planting project in the UK. It aims to give two million children the chance to plant one of 12 million trees. Visit treeforall.org.uk
- Targeting activity on sites we own to buffer and extend ancient woods and providing quiet spaces for people to enjoy close to where they live
- Selectively acquiring land for woodland creation ourselves as exemplars such as Heartwood Forest, near St Albans (see case study)

A manifesto for woodland creation

- The area of native woodland in the UK should be doubled. This means a commitment from Government in all four countries of the UK to ambitious targets for increased woodland cover. We need to create around 15,000 hectares (45,000 acres) of woodland per annum, more than double the current rates of planting
- Every child in the UK should have the chance to plant trees in his or her local community so that they have a life changing experience through direct contact with nature
- The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard should be implemented:

The Woodland Access Standard aspires:

That no person should live more than 500 metres from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2 hectares in size

That there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of not less than 20 hectares within 4 kilometres (8 kilometres round trip) of people's homes

- Funding from national, regional and local government sources needs to reflect the wide range of public benefits arising from new native woodland creation
- Funding sources should also minimise bureaucracy in order to incentivise wide take up by landowners
- All levels of government should give heightened emphasis upon new native woodland creation within spatial planning and green infrastructure strategies
- Business corporate social responsibility strategies should reflect the ability of woodland creation to shape more attractive places within which to live and work





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**For more information
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