

## **Sustainable Communities Act**

### **Suggested proposal for enabling the creation of more native woods and places rich in trees.**

#### The current situation

England, along with Scotland and Wales, is one of the least wooded countries in Europe. By developing accessible woodland near to where people live, in both urban and rural areas, society will enjoy many of the other benefits that woodland offers, including health improvement; landscape enhancement; better quality air; soil stabilisation and flood alleviation.

- The government's Strategy for England Trees, Woods and Forests (2007), highlights the contribution that trees make to social, environmental and economic objectives today and sets out a vision for their future role. The Strategy's goal is that by 2020 we will have a healthier landscape for wildlife and an increase in people visiting woodlands.
- The England Biodiversity Strategy brings together England's key contributions to achieving the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss, seeks to make biodiversity part of the mainstream of our thinking and emphasises that healthy, thriving and diverse ecosystems are essential to everybody's quality of life and well-being.
- The leading UK woodland conservation charity, the Woodland Trust is calling for a doubling of native woodland cover across the UK, and also wants to see more access for communities to woodland. The Trust has developed a Woodland Access Standard that it calls on every local authority to meet.

This says that:

- no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size; and
- there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km (8km round-trip) of people's homes.

#### What we would like to change

We want to see more native broadleaved trees and woodland planted in this area in line with these national strategies, and related local commitments, in order to encourage the environmental and social wellbeing of this community and to improve and increase our neighbourhood's green spaces.

# Sustainable Communities Act

## Expression of Interest

### Title of proposal

'More trees and accessible native woods'

### Summary of proposal

We are asking that the Sustainable Communities Act enables the creation of accessible native woods and places rich in trees as a local service in this area:

- in order to improve community health and wellbeing and to increase social inclusion;
- as mitigation for the impact of greenhouse gas emissions in the vicinity;
- to support the achievement of the carbon reduction ambitions of the local authority; and
- in line with the Woodland Trust's vision to see a doubling of native woodland cover across the UK, and in accordance to the Woodland Access Standard.

It is officially recognised that woodland is good for you. Planting a wide mix of native broadleaved and other tree species will immensely benefit both the biodiversity and visual amenity of the area. Moreover, enabling the creation of native woods and places rich in trees will improve the social wellbeing of both local people and visitors in the area, and offer improved green space for exercise such as walking and cycling. Over 70% of people asked by the Woodland Trust in a national survey agreed they would like to see more woods and trees.

We also ask that all sites selected for trees and woodland under the provisions of this proposal be formally designated as 'community open space' in accordance with related local policy, so as to assure protection for the future.

Under this proposal, government can enable councils to invest in creating woods and planting trees on land which they might otherwise be pressured to dispose of in order to raise revenue. This proposal meets provisions A; G; H; J; K and L of the Schedule to the Act.