



WOODLAND
TRUST

Growing the Future

a Woodland Trust Manifesto

woodlandtrust.org.uk/campaigns

Woods and trees have a key role to play in meeting some of the major policy challenges facing decision makers. Creating new woods and planting trees is not a luxury but essential if we are to tackle challenges such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, wildlife loss, improving public health – both physical and mental – and shaping places people want to live, work and spend their leisure time. They also offer genuine value for money at a time of enormous pressure on public finances.

Woods and trees matter to everyone because they are vital in securing our future quality of life. The Woodland Trust wants to see political parties realise their potential and safeguard the natural environment – our life support system – for future generations.

We call on all political parties to take the following actions to help secure the benefits of woods and trees.

Adopt a target of doubling native woodland cover in the UK over the next fifty years, bringing together the public, private and voluntary sectors to make this a reality

The UK is one of the least wooded countries in Europe, with only 11.8% woodland cover compared to the European average of 44%. In England that figure is only 8.6% with 5.8 per cent being broadleaf. Despite this, levels of woodland creation with broadleaved trees have halved in the last six years. This is incredible given the prominence of deforestation on the world stage and the growing awareness of how many agendas trees and woods can deliver across.

Doubling native woodland cover will require the creation of 15,000 ha of woodland a year for the next 50 years, which in turn will deliver a wide range of benefits to society. It requires political leadership to harness the potential of all three sectors and make it happen.



Enable every child to plant trees and engage with the natural world as part of their formal education to develop rounded citizens equipped for 21st century challenges

Tree planting engenders an optimistic view of the future and is a fantastic way to engage children with nature as part of their education. As a society we have become increasingly disconnected from the natural world. For example, research shows that 40% of 7-11 year olds have never visited a wood.

Provide planning guidance which makes provision for the creation of new native woods within walking distance of residential areas

Public health is one of the biggest challenges facing modern society. Easily accessible woods close to residential areas provide measurable benefits: they encourage people to exercise; help reduce the mental stresses of modern society; improve air quality and reduce respiratory diseases. At present 85% of the population do not have a wood within easy walking distance. We need to remedy this and bring the quality of life benefits trees and woods can offer to our communities.

Offer incentives to encourage private landowners to plant trees

Doubling native woodland cover requires positive action to engage private landowners. This means a range of approaches including: a stronger emphasis on woodland creation in the existing grants regime; enabling the creation of tradeable carbon permits from domestic forestry, and a willingness to look at the role of the tax system.



Retain a public forest estate but ensure it reflects society's changing needs with an enhanced emphasis on woodland creation

The Forestry Commission estate should be an exemplar of good practice, showcasing the role of woods and trees in tackling key contemporary policy challenges. It should focus its work on biodiversity priority areas rich in ancient woodland, key water catchment areas and communities with little existing access to woodland.

Provide global leadership on deforestation by ensuring the UK's equivalent of the rainforest – our ancient woods and trees – are protected for their biodiversity and cultural importance

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. This means 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. Ancient woodland is our equivalent of the rainforest – it covers just 2% of our land, is home to more threatened species than any other UK habitat and it is irreplaceable.

There are more large ancient trees in the UK than anywhere else in Europe, yet incredibly they are often unmapped and unprotected.

We must ensure the planning system better protects our ancient woods and trees, recognising their unique and irreplaceable position within our national heritage.





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