

We all need trees

Woods and trees are vital for life. They've helped make your community great - and can make it even greater.

There is now a wealth of evidence on the many benefits of accessible woodland and high canopy cover, including improving:

- physical and mental health
 - air quality
 - water quality
- water management (fighting flooding)
 - shading and cooling

There are also obvious benefits for wildlife and creating attractive places to live and work. Everyone should have easy access to woods and trees, and everyone should be able to enjoy their benefits.

**Woods and trees don't get a say
in this election – but you do.**

Candidates hoping to represent you should have clear plans for your woods and trees. If elected, they can also make the most of them as policy tools.



**WOODLAND
TRUST**

Ask your candidates - if elected, will they:

Protect ancient woodland and trees?

Current planning policy is failing our most precious woodland habitats, but the full extent and loss is unknown as there are no central records. Local and national planning policy should afford them the same protection as our built heritage, and a formal register would celebrate and identify our most important trees. Major infrastructure projects should genuinely seek to avoid irreplaceable habitats.

Maintain and enhance our existing environmental protections?

A range of EU laws and principles currently offer a degree of protection to the UK's cherished landscapes, wildlife and natural environment. Post Brexit we need these to become part of UK law and be enhanced.

Put trees and woods at the heart of new land use policy?

Our trees, forests and woodland habitats face many challenges, including climate change, pests and diseases, loss and damage from development, over-grazing and intensive land use. A strong vision for future land use and subsequent legislation should recognise their contribution as an integral part of farming systems and seek to secure the many public benefits they deliver. A renewed focus on best practice restoration of ancient woods should also be a priority for the nation's publicly-owned forests.

Champion the health and wellbeing benefits of trees and woods?

Trees and woods can help make us healthier and happier. Savings can be made to public services by putting trees at the heart of communities. A further benefit provided by street trees is a reduction in air pollution. Yet few road schemes or even urban greening projects appear to take into account how trees and woodland can help achieve air quality goals.

Work to increase planting rates?

As one of the least wooded countries in Europe, we need a more ambitious approach that is not shy of setting targets, that tackles administrative complexities and harnesses innovative sources of funding, in order to capture the imagination of landowners and the public alike. It's crucial that tree planting initiatives are supported, encouraging more people to get involved.

Make the most of the public benefits trees and woods bring?

The right trees in the right places can help fight flooding, lock up carbon, boost air quality, increase biodiversity, provide timber, and benefit business, tourism and sustainable agriculture. Existing woodland and veteran trees should be considered as assets that, along with new trees and green infrastructure, positively shape places where people want to live, work and visit. Planting more trees near where people live could generate £500 million in benefits every year.

[woodlandtrust.org.uk/elections](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/elections)