

Practical Guidance

# What every councillor needs to know about trees

May 2018

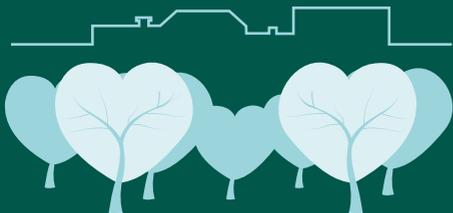


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## Trees matter!

Woods and trees are essential. They improve our health and wellbeing, clean the air we breathe, cool our cities and manage flooding. They provide space for nature to thrive, even in densely populated urban areas, and are the landmarks we grew up with, and remain connected to. But more than 100,000 trees have been removed from our streets since 2010.

When a single tree can provide tens of thousands of pounds in environmental benefits, the numbers don't add up. And it's not just street trees. Over the last 10 years more than 1,000 irreplaceable ancient woods have been threatened by development.



## What is ancient woodland?

Ancient woods are sites that have been continually wooded for more than 400 years. The age of the trees is not necessarily an indicator as to whether the wood is ancient, as the Woodland Trust also restores ancient woodland planted with conifers. Ancient woodland is one of our richest wildlife habitats and offers a glimpse into the lives of our ancestors. Ancient woodland is irreplaceable, yet many are under threat from development. Individual trees outside woods which are particularly old or distinctive (ancient or veteran trees), also need protecting.

The cost of removal?  
**£16 million**

The value lost?  
**Inestimable.**

## People need trees

Spending time or living near trees and woodland makes us healthier and improves mental wellbeing.

You can see how many people in your area have access to woodland in our *Space for People* report [woodlandtrust.org.uk/space](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/space).

The visual prominence of trees can create a balance between the built and natural environment. Street trees are often our only, or our closest interaction with nature.



Watch our short film to discover why ancient woodland is so special  
[woodlandtrust.org.uk/ancientwoods](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/ancientwoods).

## How can I protect trees?

It is essential that your local authority's Local Plan has robust policies in place to protect your existing canopy cover from development pressure or mismanagement. The Woodland Trust can provide you with model wording and good practice examples from other areas to support overall policy and strategy development.

A local planning authority can also protect any tree, or group of trees, by making a tree preservation order (TPO). TPOs are commonly used for trees with high 'amenity' value. Although a TPO doesn't give absolute protection, it does mean it can't be felled without permission. For more information on TPOs, see [woodlandtrust.org.uk/TPO](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/TPO). It would be useful to find out who in your council manages TPOs.

## Targeting tree pests and diseases

Not only are trees under threat from development, lack of funding and mismanagement, they are also at risk from pests and diseases. Populations of deer are at record levels, posing a threat to the ability of woods to naturally regenerate.

The UK has lost 60 million trees from Dutch Elm disease, which continues to spread today. Ash dieback is threatening 126 million trees in British woods with millions more ash trees along roadsides likely to be infected or felled as a precaution over the coming years. Does your local authority have a good understanding of the potential impacts in your area and a plan to manage the risks? Good biosecurity is essential; from the use of UK sourced and grown certified stock through to ensuring that footwear is cleaned after walking in the woods. The Woodland Trust is at the forefront of the fight against tree diseases and we have expertise to share [woodlandtrust.org.uk/treedisease](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/treedisease).

Trees in woods are covered by Forestry Commission felling licences. Generally it is an offence to remove more than five cubic metres of timber in any three month period without applying for a felling licence. Consult your local area office of the Forestry Commission for advice.

Protection of street trees is not just a planning matter. It's important citizens exercise their right to be consulted, to be involved in the protection of trees where they live, and that they are empowered to do so. The Woodland Trust's Street Trees project can advise and support you to make this happen. We offer the evidence you need to make the case for retaining trees, and for planting more.

To find out how you and your community can get involved, visit: [woodlandtrust.org.uk/streettrees](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/streettrees).

## Planting new trees

We work with public bodies on woodland creation schemes and provide advice, trees and grants to encourage farmers and landowners to plant woodland. For large scale planting see our MOREwoods scheme [woodlandtrust.org.uk/morewoods](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/morewoods).

Our *Trees or Turf* report demonstrates how tree planting can save local authorities money by reducing maintenance costs [woodlandtrust.org.uk/treesorturf](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/treesorturf).

Pressure for housing can threaten our natural environment. However, it should also secure 'net gain' for biodiversity. Our guide *Residential Developments and Trees* details how trees can be included in all new developments. See [woodlandtrust.org.uk/residentialdevelopments](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/residentialdevelopments). Where trees are felled to make way for development, even more trees should be planted to ensure an overall increase in canopy cover.



## How can I get more trees for schools and communities?

The Woodland Trust wants everybody in the UK to have the chance to plant a tree. So we give away **FREE TREES** to schools and communities. It's easy to apply. [woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant).

We also sell trees, so everyone can be confident the trees they are buying are UK-sourced and grown as well as great quality.

Please encourage your local residents to plant trees!

## How can I educate local schoolchildren about trees?

As well as getting their free tree packs, schools can join the Woodland Trust's Green Tree Schools Award Programme at [woodlandtrust.org.uk/schools](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/schools). It offers a wealth of resources to teach children to love trees. Encourage local schools to take part.

## How else can I get involved?

**Sign the Tree Charter** and work with us to secure your local authority as a signatory too. The Charter for Trees, Woods and People was launched in Lincoln Castle on 6 November 2017; the 800th anniversary of the 1217 Charter of the Forest. It sets out the principles for a society in which people and trees can stand stronger together.

The Woodland Trust welcomes new members and supporters. We also encourage volunteering, and we have an active network of councillor tree champions. We run a range of events in our woods which you may want to join in or promote. We also have active campaigns which the public can get involved in. Visit [woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved).

## Find out more

We have staff in your area who would love to meet and talk about woods and trees. Email [governmentaffairs@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:governmentaffairs@woodlandtrust.org.uk) and we'll put you in touch with your local team.



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