

# **The Roots to a Green Recovery in Wales**

**Manifesto for the 2021  
Welsh Parliament Elections**



**COED CADW  
WOODLAND  
TRUST**

# The Roots to a Green Recovery in Wales

## How trees work for nature, people and our economy

Our wellbeing has depended on trees and woods for centuries to provide the roots and branches for life. Trees have always offered simple and cost-effective solutions to the challenges we all face.

In our Manifesto we show how trees can now help us address the nature and climate crisis and build a climate resilient economy and a nature rich society, one fit for present and future generations.

From national forests to local streets, trees reflect our pride in our surroundings. They provide shelter, shade and the oxygen we breathe; they draw in carbon and filter pollution, enrich soils and hold back water. They provide wood as a raw material for buildings, joinery and craftwork. They are marvels to admire; they stand witness, across the generations, to historical events and secrets, and are central to story-telling and play. Trees are a vital asset for our health, wellbeing and future.

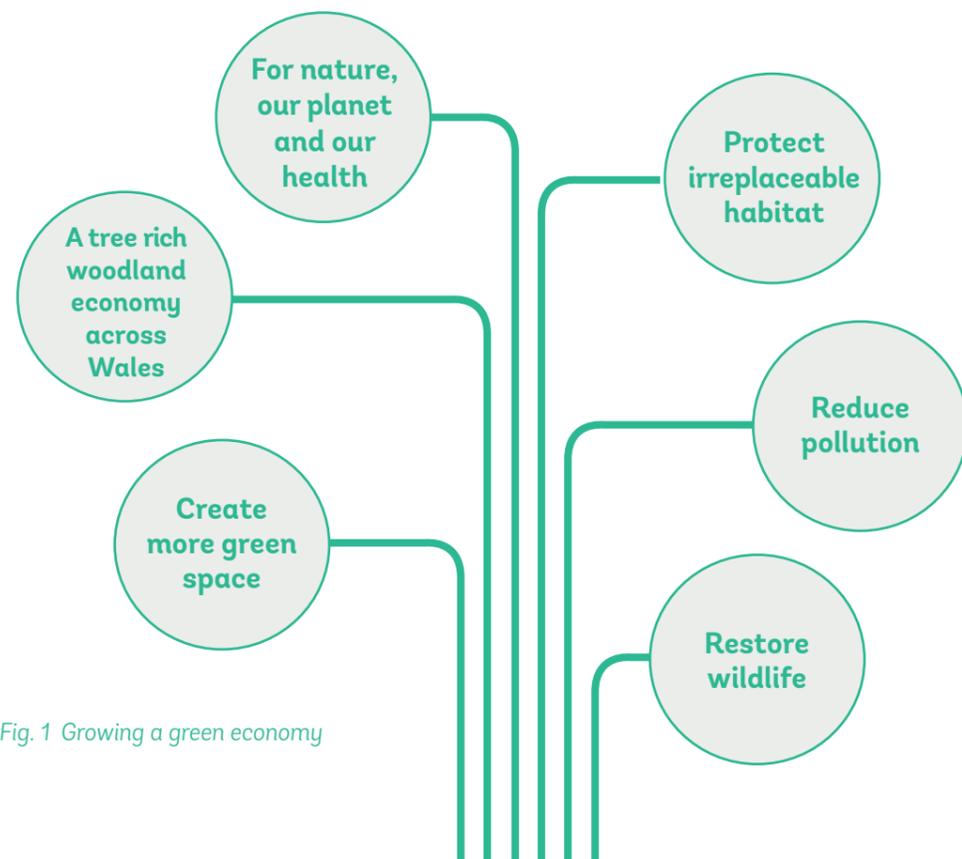


Fig. 1 Growing a green economy

Ancient woodland<sup>1</sup> is rare. In Wales it covers only 4.5% of the land surface. Centuries old, it has developed special communities of plants, insects and animals not found elsewhere.

These woods have seen all human history and are richly represented in Welsh mythology and culture. It is no surprise that their constant loss in the name of human development, runs in parallel with the nature crisis.<sup>2</sup> The ancient woods of Wales include our Celtic rainforest<sup>19</sup> which is nationally and internationally important as a rich and rare home to wildlife.

Our mission is, with your support, to protect and restore ancient woodlands and provide more trees, now and for future generations... to achieve our vision of a UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife.

Wales has made a good start. The Plant! Scheme plants a tree for every new baby born or adopted in Wales. The Wales National Forest was launched in March 2020 at Coed Cadw's latest new woodland at Brynau, near Neath. It is one of the largest woodlands we have ever created in partnership. It is designed to encourage wildlife, reduce flooding, create new areas for play and recreation, and increase the wellbeing of the 530,000 people within one hour's journey of the site.

These are positive roots to build from, but we MUST do so much more to realise the full value of trees for the wellbeing of communities and businesses right across Wales. Our manifesto outlines the changes we MUST make in how trees and woods contribute to a flourishing and prosperous Future Wales.

## What does our manifesto offer?

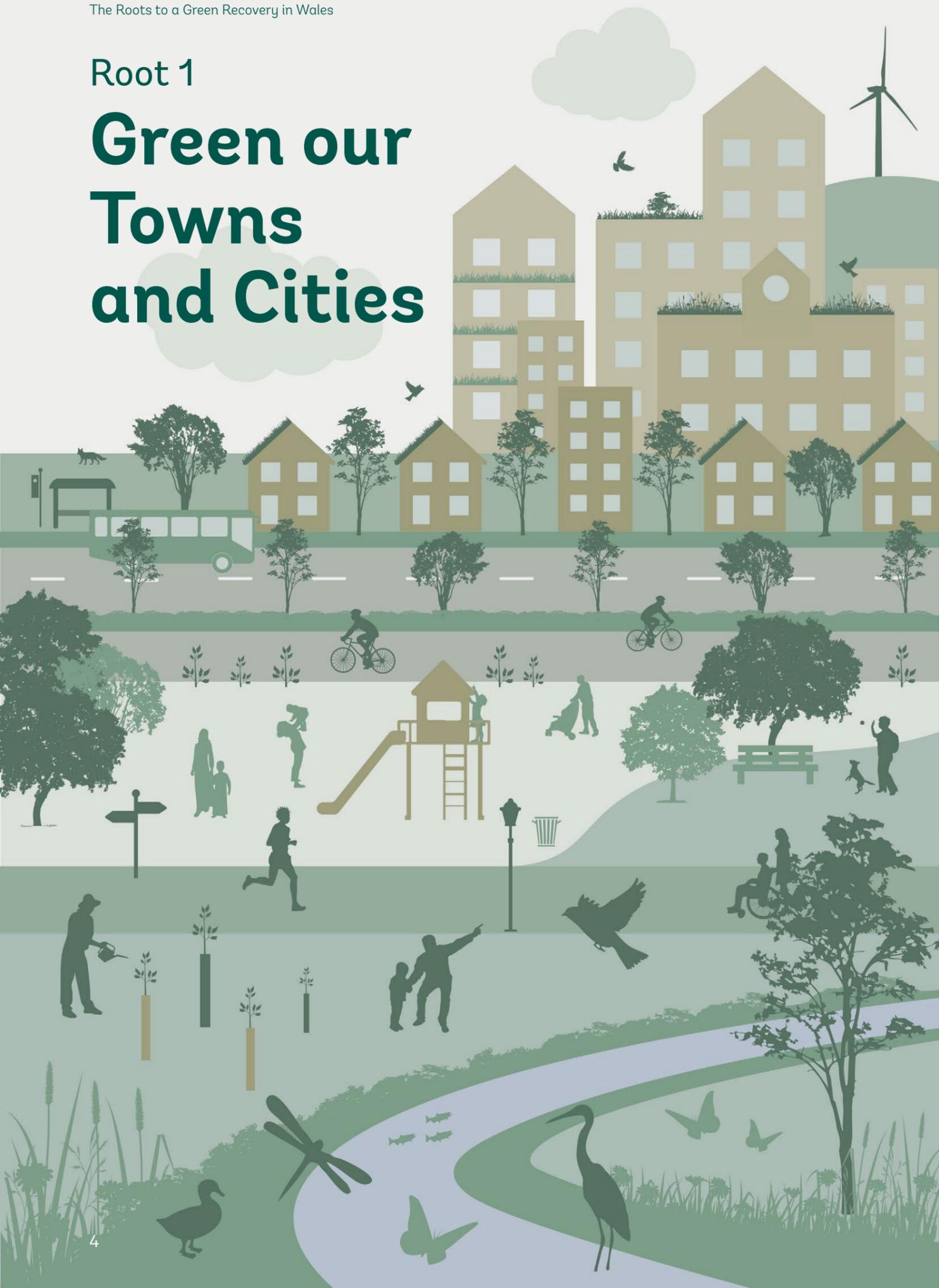
The Covid-19 pandemic has left us all reeling. At the same time, we are in the midst of a linked climate and biodiversity crisis. Our recovery must address this now, with urgency and focus, to reduce the impacts now and on future generations.<sup>21</sup>

To return to normal is to repeat the mistakes of the past.

These three main 'roots' are our foundations for a strong and resilient Wales:

- 1 Green our Towns and Cities
- 2 Support Farming Communities with Trees
- 3 Connect Wales to a Woodland Economy

# Root 1 Green our Towns and Cities



## Why?

Bring trees and green spaces close to us all; they are naturally vital for our health and happiness in every way. We need trees to breath, protect us from pollution and to reduce flooding. They shade us from extreme heat and will bring our much-loved nature closer to our homes. The services that trees provide save us money and lives.

## How?

### Branch 1.1 – A Tree and Woodland Plan for every Council in Wales

- Make every town in Wales a Tree Town,<sup>3</sup> with every Council preparing a long term Tree and Woodland Strategy.<sup>4</sup> They must deliver and sustain a minimum of 20% tree cover in urban areas<sup>5</sup> and 30% tree cover for all new developments.
- Build up tree and woodland teams at community, regional and national level.<sup>6</sup>
- Support councils to work with communities and help people have their say in planning for trees.
- Locate new woods to help reduce flooding and to provide for communities deprived of accessible green space.

### Branch 1.2 – End the destruction of the mature trees we already have

- Commission tree reports for every urban area, which show the full lifetime value and benefits of existing trees, especially large mature trees.<sup>7</sup> Fig. 2
- Implement the Law Commission recommendations to update and improve tree protection legislation as part of a new Welsh Planning Act.<sup>8</sup>
- Stop council planning committees allowing developers to remove healthy mature trees.
- Empower communities by strengthening planning regulations that protect green space and irreplaceable ancient woodland and trees. Fig. 3

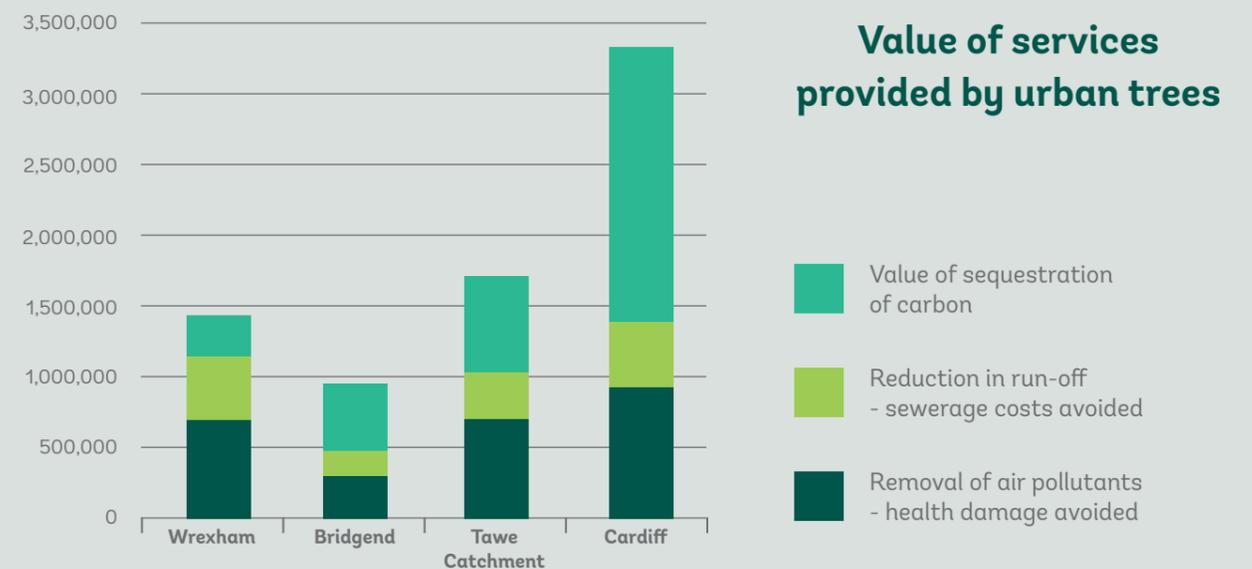


Fig. 2 Tree Reports measure 3 key annual benefits of urban trees<sup>7</sup>



### Branch 1.3 – Set up Tree Teams as part of a national Green Recovery Programme

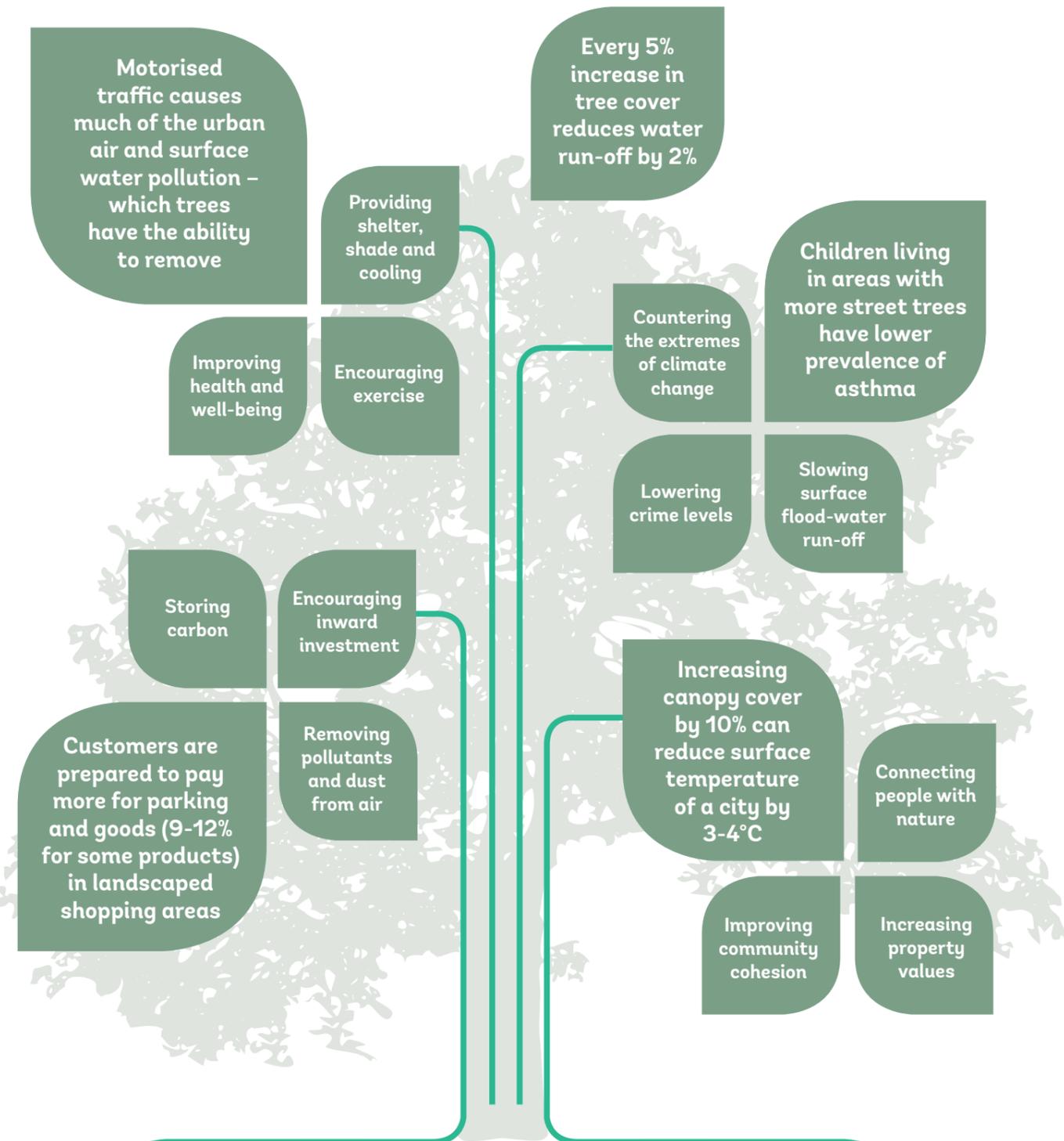
- Increase tree cover along roads and walking and cycling routes to make them more attractive, safer and healthier and better for wildlife.
- Support green prescribing by the NHS to increase outdoor activities to improve physical health and mental wellbeing.<sup>10</sup>
- Inspire the next generation’s interest in green jobs by supporting community tree nurseries and “forest schools” across Wales as outdoor classrooms.



Since **1999** we have recorded a total of **584** ancient woodlands potentially threatened by development in Wales. Of those **584** cases, **337** have been 'saved', **98** have been lost or damaged, and **149** are currently under threat.

Fig. 3 Number of Ancient Woods in Wales under threat 2009 – by type of threat<sup>9</sup>

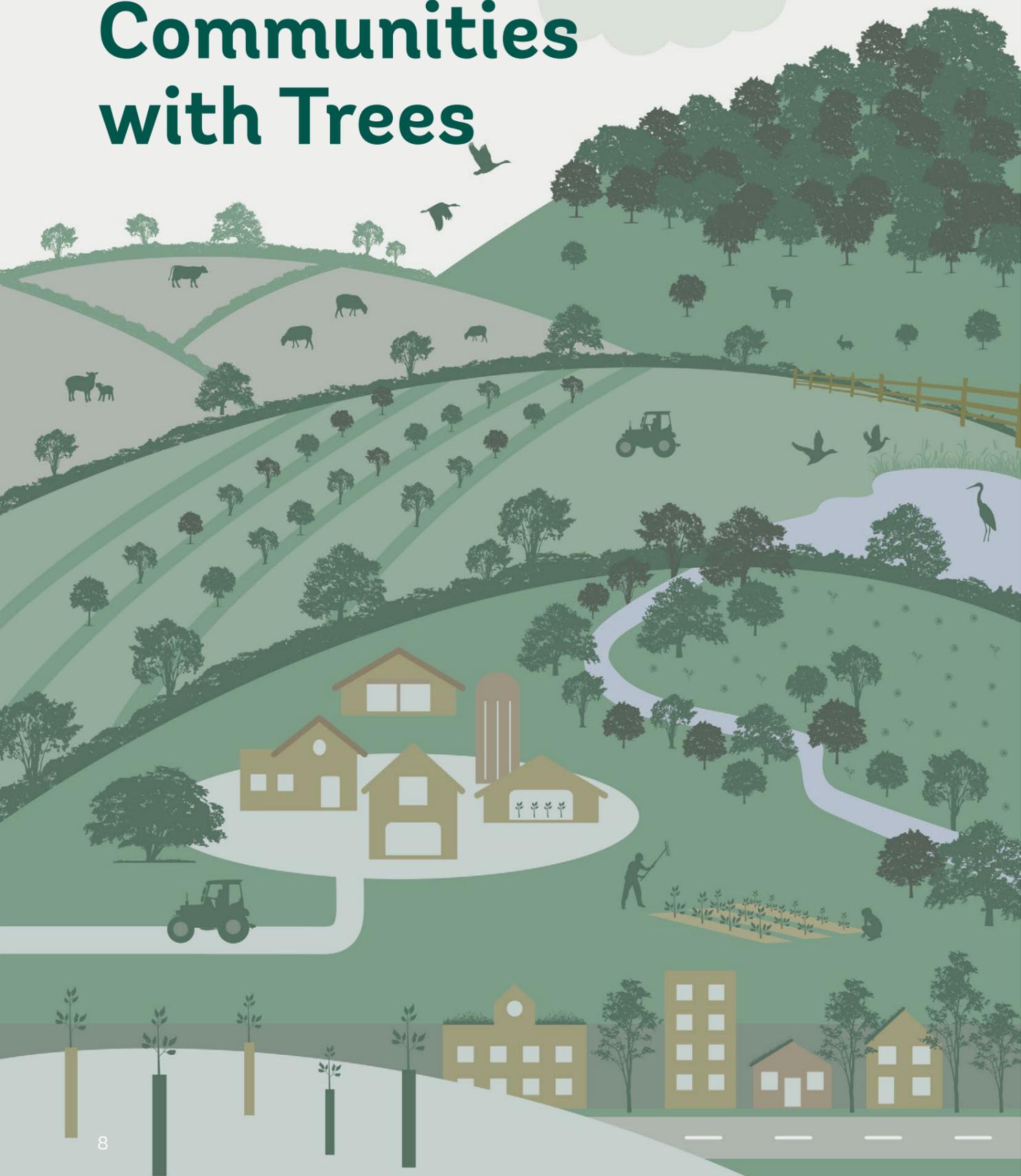
## Trees are powerful and versatile natural assets<sup>30</sup>



Between 2006 to 2013 some **7,000** large trees were lost, and between 2009 and 2013, **159** out of our **220** towns showed an overall decline in tree cover

## Root 2

# Support Farming Communities with Trees



### Why?

Trees and hedges have traditionally protected and provided for the welfare of farm animals. They naturally nourish, increase, and protect farm soils, both their fertility and their vital carbon store, enhancing their ability to grow. Trees provide a diverse and complex unique home for an abundance of nature. Their appropriate re-establishment will help to protect our communities from increasing adverse weather conditions, caused by climate change.

### How?

#### Branch 2.1 – Increase in tree cover on farms with payments under a Hedges and Edges Scheme, supporting climate-smart, nature friendly farming

- Fund landowners for nature-friendly natural solutions to flood management,<sup>11</sup> and tree hedge regeneration for wildlife and carbon storage.
- Establish a “Hedges and Edges” scheme<sup>12</sup> which rewards farmers for expanding and extending hedges, shelterbelts, stream side and field edge habitats. Fig. 4
- Ensure farmers receive a reliable basic income for creating and maintaining areas of high quality wildlife habitat and tree cover.

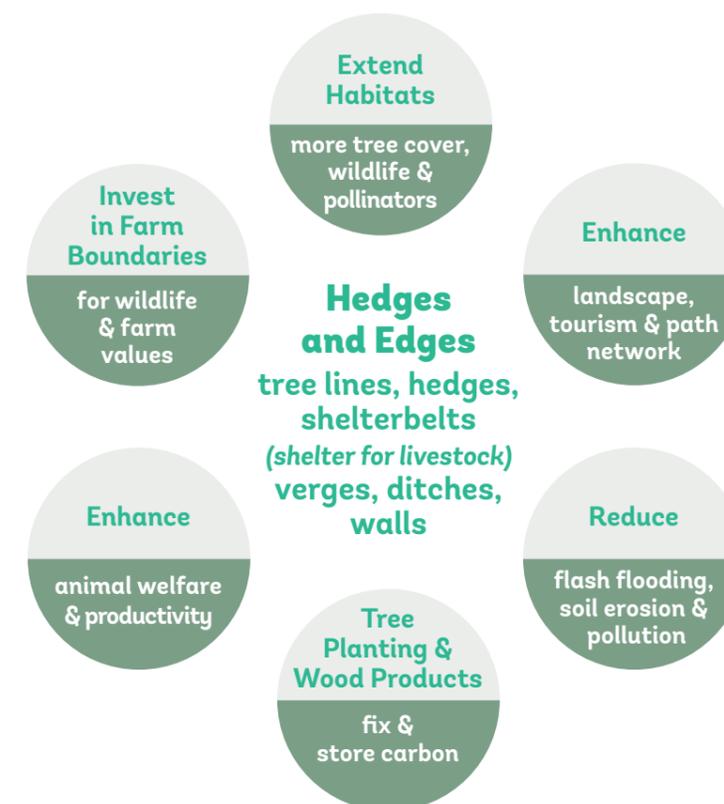


Fig. 4 The wildlife and farming benefits of agroforestry<sup>12</sup>



In Wales, a quarter of all hedgerows were removed between 1984 and 1990,<sup>13</sup> and 78% of remaining Welsh hedgerows are in 'unfavourable condition'.<sup>14</sup>



**Branch 2.2 – Strengthen advice and partnership work with farmers as part of a national Green Recovery Programme**

- Invest in skills and advisory networks to meet the many diverse needs and opportunities that trees can offer to farming communities. This creates climate resilient food systems whilst enhancing their distinctive regional and cultural landscapes and wildlife habitats.<sup>15</sup>
- Enable community based river catchment partnerships that support landowners to expand woodlands and restore habitats to provide nature-based solutions to reduce flooding and store carbon.<sup>13</sup>
- Reduce pollution from intensive farming by strengthening regulation and enforcing planning conditions. Support nature friendly interventions such as tree planting that intercept pollution.<sup>16</sup>



Just over 99% of all woods in Wales exceed nitrogen pollution levels. This has damaging effects for woodland plants and wildlife.



## Root 3

# Connect Wales to a Woodland Economy



## Why?

Building every day connections to trees can help us to care for and increase our understanding of our natural environment. Their increase will improve the health and wellbeing of our communities by delivering a better quality of life and a more certain future for our children, as well as urgently addressing the climate and nature crisis. A woodland economy that looks after and expands our tree cover will provide jobs and significantly contribute to the green recovery of Wales.

## How?

### Branch 3.1 – Develop the Wales National Forest to make Wales a connected Woodland Nation

- Support a Wales-wide multi-purpose National Forest programme, enabling communities to interact with woodland for wellbeing, climate resilience and economic benefits.
- Empower high quality community engagement in decisions on location, design and delivery of all National Forest projects.
- Respond to the catastrophic decline of woodland wildlife by prioritising the restoration of ancient woods,<sup>18</sup> including Wales' internationally important Celtic Rainforest.<sup>19</sup>
- Use public funds to make forests more diverse and climate resilient and better for wildlife and people.

### Branch 3.2 - Fix and store carbon in trees, woodlands, and “carbon smart” forests

- Accelerate new woodland creation each year, using more natural colonisation, exceeding 5,000 hectares per year by 2035,<sup>20</sup> always working to the 10 Golden Rules for Tree Planting to ensure ‘the right tree in the right place’.
- Meet the latest recommendations of the Committee for Climate Change<sup>21</sup> and achieve 24% woodland cover by 2050, with further increases in tree cover on farms and in urban areas.<sup>22</sup>
- Make sure all stages of forest management are carbon positive by taking care to protect the carbon in soils and old trees. Wherever possible use timber in long lifetime products.<sup>23</sup>

**Only 2% of non-native woodland in Wales is in good ecological condition, and only 9% of native woodland.<sup>19</sup>**  
 Those in poor ecological condition are characterised by low levels of deadwood, low levels of a diversity of age of trees and of species, with few open woodland habitats.

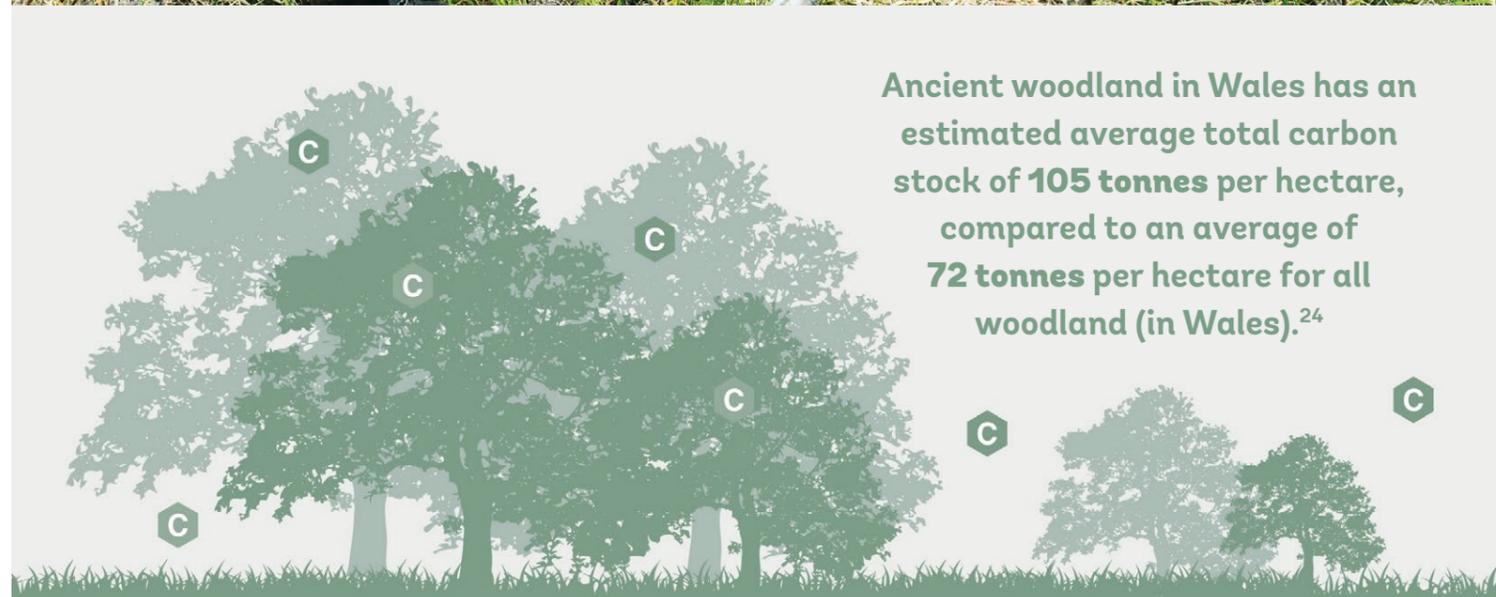


Between 1990 and 2019 the U.K. has seen a **41% decline** in woodland butterflies. Bird species which are highly dependent on woodland habitats declined by **47%** between 2011 and 2017. Two thirds of the woods in Special Areas of Conservation in Wales are in unfavourable condition.<sup>2</sup>



### Branch 3.3 – Connect communities to the woodland economy as part of a national Green Recovery Programme

- Develop a range of private and public funding options for different types of forestry and tree planting.
- Invest in local partnerships that develop skills and capacity to create and utilise woodland for innovative crafts and trade, house building, recreation and tourism.<sup>25</sup>
- Supply public needs through buying products from Wales' woodland economy.
- Support Welsh tree nurseries with orders for UK and Ireland Sourced and Grown (UKISG) trees for planting, using locally collected seed of native tree species.
- Use farm plans to increase demand for sustainably certified fencing from Welsh timber.
- Develop alternative wood-based materials and products to replace plastics, especially tree guards.
- Refresh the Welsh Governments "Woodlands for Wales" Strategy<sup>26</sup> with a fully funded delivery plan to make a connected Woodland Nation.



Ancient woodland in Wales has an estimated average total carbon stock of **105 tonnes per hectare**, compared to an average of **72 tonnes per hectare** for all woodland (in Wales).<sup>24</sup>

# Six Climate and Ecological Emergency Principles

We support the consensus for action for a green recovery that is emerging across many sectors and is expressed in The Six Principles for Climate and Nature,<sup>27</sup> and in the manifestos produced by Wales Environment Link,<sup>28</sup> the Future Generations Commissioner<sup>29</sup> and many others.

## Will you join our voice for a Green Recovery with Trees?

Contact us NOW – we would be delighted to explain our manifesto in more detail and the evidence that supports the actions we propose.

Email [wales@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:wales@woodlandtrust.org.uk)

Or direct message us:

 @CoedCadw

 @CoedCadw

 coedcadwcymru



- 1 Ancient woodland is woodland believed to have been in continuous existence for centuries. These ancient woodlands and their soils and wildlife have co-evolved for thousands of years, creating diverse, distinctive and valuable ecosystems that cannot be re-created.
- 2 The Woodland Trust has published an evidence report on the State of the UK's Woods and Trees - 2021. (Soon to be published).
- 3 Our proposal "Tree Town Teams for Wales" is a top priority action in the NRW "Green Recovery: Priorities for Action Report"  
<https://cdn.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/media/692667/final-green-recovery-priorities-for-action-report-english.pdf>
- 4 Wrexham Tree & Woodland Strategy 2016-2026  
[http://old.wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/env\\_services/trees/tree\\_and\\_woodland\\_strategy.pdf](http://old.wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/env_services/trees/tree_and_woodland_strategy.pdf)
- 5 Natural Resources Wales. Urban tree cover in Wales. Available at:  
<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/what-we-do/green-spaces/urban-trees/?lang=en>
- 6 Davies et al (2017 ) Challenges for tree officers to enhance the provision of regulating ecosystem services from urban forests. Environmental Research Volume 156, July 2017, Pages 97-107.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0013935117304942> Accessed 5 June 2020
- 7 I-tree reports are available for Wrexham, Bridgend, Tawe Valley and Cardiff.  
<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/i-tree-eco/i-tree-eco-projects-completed/>
- 8 <https://gov.wales/detailed-response-law-commission-report-planning-law-wales>
- 9 Development Threats to Ancient Trees and Woods in Wales 2019. Coed Cadw's report on cases of ancient woods threatened by planning applications in Wales in 2019, and particularly reviewing the impact of road schemes, of ammonia pollution from intensive poultry units and the on-going loss of urban tree cover. Unpublished. Available from Coed Cadw.
- 10 <https://www.coedlleol.org.uk/green-health-and-access-west-wales-ghaww/>
- 11 Agroforestry and flooding briefing note. We provided this summary of evidence on how agroforestry interventions can help mitigate flooding, distributed to constituency AMs in February 2020. Available from Coed Cadw.
- 12 Hedges and Edges Scheme Proposal. Coed Cadw proposals for a new universal Hedges and Edges farm support scheme. It summarises the evidence for the farming and biodiversity benefits and suggests how it can be delivered through farm plans. Available from Coed Cadw.
- 13 <http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/id/eprint/502914/1/N502914CR.pdf>
- 14 <https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/684348/chapter-3-state-and-trends-final-for-publication.pdf>
- 15 Our proposals for Farm Habitat Assessments and Tree Friendly Future Farming: NRW "Green Recovery: Priorities for Action Report"  
<https://cdn.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/media/692667/final-green-recovery-priorities-for-action-report-english.pdf>
- 16 <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1687/ammonia-impacts-on-ancient-woodland.pdf>
- 17 <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/national-forest-inventory/what-our-woodlands-and-tree-cover-outside-woodlands-are-like-today-8211-nfi-inventory-reports-and-woodland-map-reports/nfi-woodland-ecological-condition/>
- 18 <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2018/07/current-state-of-ancient-woodland-restoration/>
- 19 <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMRYNIOkQrQDjYU1gArV77g>
- 20 <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2020/01/emergency-tree-plan/>
- 21 <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/the-path-to-net-zero-and-progress-reducing-emissions-in-wales/>
- 22 Plan to Increase Tree Cover in Wales. Unpublished recommendations. Available from Coed Cadw.
- 23 <https://erammp.wales/en/r-forest-evidence>
- 24 The higher carbon storage per hectare in ancient woodland is principally due to ancient woodland having higher numbers of older and larger trees than other woodlands – with a higher component of broadleaved tree species.
- 25 Woodknowledge Wales. Making the Foundational Economy happen – with joinery.  
<https://woodknowledge.wales/news/making-the-foundational-economy-happen-with-joinery>
- 26 <https://gov.wales/woodlands-wales-strategy>
- 27 <https://www.sixprinciples.org/>
- 28 [https://www.waleslink.org/sites/default/files/wel\\_manifesto\\_english\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.waleslink.org/sites/default/files/wel_manifesto_english_-_final.pdf)
- 29 <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/manifesto-for-the-future/>
- 30 <https://cdn.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/media/679615/eng-urban-tree-summary-2016.pdf?mode=pad&rnd=13150288696000000>



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