



**TOGETHER  
FOR OUR  
PLANET**

# **The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024**

May 2021



**UK Government**



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# Ministerial foreword

The events of the last year have led people to appreciate the difference nature makes to our lives in a new way. When we destroy nature, we undermine our very foundations. We face a choice as we map out our recovery – and we must choose to build back better and greener.

This Government's pledge is not only to stem the tide of nature loss, but to turn it around – to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. The England Trees Action Plan is central to this. It sets out our long-term plan for the whole treescape - trees, woodlands and forests. It includes our vision for trees in 2050 and the economic, environmental, and social benefits that we will realise through our new trees and woodlands.

It sets out the actions Government will take in this parliament, in partnership with the private sector, the third sector, and communities, setting England on a course to support unprecedented levels of tree planting and ensure that we realise the many benefits that trees can provide.

Together with the England Peat Action Plan and wider plans and strategies for nature, it sets out how we will tackle the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change. Trees and woodlands have a vital role in delivering net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, achieving the goals of our 25 Year Environment Plan, and delivering on our ambitions to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Following the industrial revolution and First World War, woodland cover in England fell to just 5.1% of land area in 1924. Since then, sustained efforts have seen it continue to grow to 10.1%.

Climate change and biodiversity loss now require our generation to respond more boldly, taking us far beyond where we are today. Planting vastly more trees in England, and protecting and improving our existing woodlands, will be key to the Government's plan to achieve net zero and to create a Nature Recovery Network across the length of England.

This is why the Government has committed to increasing tree planting rates across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by the end of this Parliament. To achieve this we are intending to spend over £500 million of the £640 million Nature for Climate Fund on trees and woodlands in England between 2020 and 2025 to support this ambition. And by planting the right trees in the right places for the right reasons, we can do so much more than just sequester carbon. This plan aims to see current planting trends for majority native broadleaf woodlands continue, given the additional benefits they provide for nature and people.

As well as tackling climate change and providing vital habitats, trees and woodlands are a pivotal part of our landscapes – particularly when planted and supported in and around our towns and cities – and can provide space for people to connect with nature. Trees and woodlands also play an increasingly important role in building thriving rural economies, helping to level up the whole of the UK, and supporting a green recovery by stimulating markets for timber and wood products as renewable resources.

Our trees are facing unprecedented environmental challenges and our woodlands need to be resilient to this, including those that we plant over the coming decades.

Alongside planting more trees, we must protect the precious ancient woodlands and veteran trees which have stood for hundreds of years. The oldest tree in England is estimated to be 2,000 to 3,000 years old. By preserving these and planting more to withstand the test of time, trees can form a central part of our vision to leave the environment in a better state than we found it for generations to come.

We must come together to protect, improve and enhance our trees and woodlands across England which is why we will be providing improved funding options for different types of treescapes and landowners and managers. This includes the new England Woodland Creation Offer which will support landowners and managers with establishing trees and woodlands as we transition into our new Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery Schemes.



It is not just about funding the trees and woodlands of tomorrow, but supporting their long term management and protection. That is why we will develop better guidance, provide more advice, develop platforms and opportunities for innovation and encourage more people into this thriving sector as we create more jobs throughout the whole supply chain.

George Eustice, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

# Foreword from Sir William Worsley, Chair of the Forestry Commission

The publication of the England Trees Action Plan marks the culmination of a process that I have been closely involved with for three years. I am delighted that my personal engagement with the Plan will continue as Chair of the Forestry Commission, which is charged with delivering the Government's objectives for trees, woodlands and forests on the ground.

The benefits of well-planned, well-managed, and well-utilised trees, woodlands and forests are myriad. They remove carbon from the atmosphere, contributing to our net zero efforts to address climate change. They encourage and support biodiversity, of both plant and animal life. Properly managed and protected, they can provide renewable products to reduce our reliance on carbon-intensive materials and imports, and create green jobs in every corner of the country. And – along with trees planted in and around urban areas - they provide opportunities for people to connect with and enjoy nature.

Realising those benefits and successfully delivering the England Trees Action Plan means bringing together a wide range of perspectives, interests, and objectives across the sector. In order to put and maintain the right trees in the right places we will provide the right support and incentives to make woodland creation and management an attractive, viable prospect for landowners and investors. We will also work to develop a successful economic model for the goods and services woodlands and forests provide. A key part of the Forestry Commission's role will be to work cooperatively with all stakeholders to achieve these ambitions, while continuing to manage the nation's forests for the benefit of the country.



Sir William Worsley, Forestry Commission Chair

For more than one hundred years, the Forestry Commission has worked hand-in-hand with landowners, interest groups and the public, ensuring the nation's trees, woodlands and forests have met the evolving needs and requirements of society. As we help deliver the England Trees Action Plan, this will continue. We will be a collaborative and forward-thinking partner, applying our unparalleled expertise to promote a modern approach to sustainable forestry that delivers benefits for the public, nature, the climate and the economy – now, and for future generations.

# Our vision for England's trees and woodlands in the future

Trees are a long-term endeavour; the treescapes we create in the coming years will outlive us, and today's decisions will profoundly impact the country our children inhabit. This action plan will help shape the kind of country future generations will want to live in, alive with the formidable power of healthy trees.

England will have at least 12% woodland cover by mid-century, contributing to net zero greenhouse gas emissions. Its conifer and broadleaf woodlands will be managed for biodiversity and other environmental benefits, along with providing sustainable sources of hardwood and softwood timber and woody products, which can be effective carbon stores and are already seeing increased demand for as we transition to a green economy.

The value of nature will be better understood, creating a new economy of woodland establishment and management, with more private investment in trees. Because of our better understanding of natural capital and greater use of payments for public goods – and because woodlands managed for timber will deliver greater environmental and social benefits – there will be less of a distinction between 'commercial' woodland and 'amenity' woodlands in the future than there is today.

Trees will play an important role in helping us adapt to a warmer world: near rivers to help manage water quality and flood risk, and in our towns to provide shade. More tree establishment and better management of existing woodlands will restore degraded landscapes, create new habitats, provide more and better quality timber and wood products, and enable more people to have access to the benefits of trees and woodlands. Woodlands will be better connected with each other, as well as with other priority habitats.

Woodland management practices will have evolved to respond to the climate emergency, helping our trees and woodlands adapt. Well-designed and diverse woodlands will be more resilient to pests and diseases and climate change, as well as natural hazards such as wildfire and storms. Ecologically important woodlands will be better protected. More trees will be sourced from UK nurseries, and all trees will be introduced in a way which is consistent with maintaining very high standards of biosecurity and biodiversity.

Our ancient woodlands and veteran trees will also be better protected and more resilient, recognising their cultural and ecological value accumulated over hundreds of years. We will have more information on where these sites are and will have identified other significant well-established sites and afforded them unique protections.



Many more people will own and nurture trees and woodlands including trees outside of woodlands. There will be more trees on farms and estates, as well as on public land - in fields and hedgerows, small woodland copses and vast forests. In rural areas, trees in fields and hedgerows will promote nature recovery and make our landscape more beautiful and ecologically connected. Our towns and cities will be greener and more climate resilient, with trees on streets, in parks, and in urban orchards and woodlands. Trees will be seen as an essential part of the fabric of urban areas. More people will have access to and benefit from trees and woodlands in their day-to-day lives, and trees and woodlands will play an important role in the provision of education and health services.

A skilled workforce will plant and manage trees and woodlands. Trees, woodlands, forestry and arboriculture will be important sources of jobs and revenue across England, particularly in rural areas, helping to create secure livelihoods and level up parts of the country which have been often neglected today. Further to this, jobs will be created throughout the forestry supply chain as more of the timber and other wood products we use will be grown in the UK, rather than imported.

In summary, planting and establishing the right tree in the right place will deliver benefits for people, for wildlife and the economy.

## The benefits of trees and woodlands

Trees and woodlands can provide huge benefits for people, nature, climate and the economy and our action plan aims to maximise them. Building on ambitions outlined in the 25 Year Environment Plan, we will focus on:

**Nature Recovery:** Our trees and woodlands will form a core part of the Nature Recovery Network, by providing important habitats themselves as well as connecting other wildlife-rich habitats. Establishing native woodland has made the greatest contribution to the increase in priority habitats in recent years, and we will continue to improve the condition and increase the extent of our most precious woodland habitats, such as protected sites and irreplaceable ancient woodlands. This will contribute to the global goals to be agreed at the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2021 and our commitment to protect 30% of our land by 2030. We will continue to support species recovery through Forestry England's reintroduction programme, which has reintroduced pine martens to the Forest of Dean, white-tailed eagles to the Isle of Wight, and two enclosed projects for beaver.

**Trees and woodlands for climate change mitigation:** The Climate Change Committee recommends that we increase planting across the UK to meet net zero. We will work with the Devolved Administrations to deliver a UK-wide step change in tree planting and establishment. Woodland carbon offers exciting opportunities for the private sector and other investors and we will work to develop these markets further.

**Levelling up through a thriving forest economy:** Forestry is an economically important sector, particularly in often neglected parts of England. We will encourage demand for UK-grown timber which can reduce our carbon footprint from imports and reduce emissions by replacing carbon-intensive materials and encourage innovative green finance for trees and woodlands. In addition, we will work with the sector to develop the skills and resources to deliver our ambitions. We will see that trees and woodlands contribute to the bottom line of more businesses in England.

**Trees and woodlands for water and soil:** Establishing trees and woodlands can impact on water resources, and this may be amplified as the climate changes. The right trees and woodland in the right places along and near rivers and within water catchments present opportunities for improving water quality, for flood alleviation and nature recovery. Soil is critical to supporting trees and woodland and we will improve our understanding of appropriate soil management to sequester carbon and protect this precious resource from degradation and inappropriate tree establishment.

**Trees and woodlands for people in town and country:** The COVID-19 pandemic has brought home the important role nature plays in improving wellbeing and mental health and is often most valuable when close to and part of the places we live, work and play. Trees and woodlands can cool our settlements, improve air quality and contribute to community cohesion and sense of place. We will take steps to improve public access to trees and woodlands in a responsible way, encourage community-led tree planting and invest in partnerships with communities and local government.

**Heritage and Landscape:** Trees and woodlands are important features in our landscapes. We will encourage greater landscape scale planning which will enhance and transform landscape character, while protecting and conserving heritage assets from inappropriate tree planting and during woodland management.

**Trees outside woodlands:** Trees throughout the environment such as wood pastures, ancient and veteran trees, scrub, scattered and hedgerow trees contribute to England's natural beauty and are important spaces for nature. We must continue to protect and enhance these features. Agroforestry will also play an important role in delivering more trees on farms and in our landscape, improving climate resilience and encouraging more wildlife and biodiversity in our farming systems.

**Healthy, resilient trees and woodlands:** Climate change threatens our trees and woodlands, increasing the risks from pests, diseases, wildfire and long-term changes to growing conditions. We will act now to help our trees and woodlands adapt, to enhance their resilience to stresses by reducing risks and encouraging greater diversity. We will respond swiftly to outbreaks of pests and diseases and improve the management of deer and grey squirrels.

## Working in partnership

Government and its arms-length bodies including the Forestry Commission, Natural England and the Environment Agency will play a role in delivering these ambitions, but we cannot do it alone. We need the forestry sector, land-owners and managers, investors, the third sector, and communities to help us meet the challenge. We will provide funding and guidance, improve regulations, and encourage private finance to enable foresters, land-owners, managers, investors and communities to plant and protect our trees. We will act as a catalyst for the sector, making sure that our grants and the nation's forests deliver high environmental, social, and economic benefits to secure the greatest value for public money.

## Our call to action

There are actions that everyone can take to help deliver our long-term vision for trees and woodlands in England. In particular, we hope stakeholders will:

- Apply for grants for establishing and managing trees and woodlands;
- Access more and better advice and guidance on establishing and managing trees and woodlands;
- Work with us to unlock more private finance to invest in trees and woodlands;
- Plant trees particularly where they make the most difference - for water, biodiversity, climate resilience and close to where people live, work and play;
- Responsibly enjoy our wonderful wooded landscapes.

## Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Work on this action plan will not stop once it has been published - this is just the beginning. To deliver these ambitions over the coming years, we will work closely with stakeholders to implement our actions.

We will create a monitoring and evaluation plan for the action plan and develop a detailed evaluation framework. This framework will form part of a wider programme of work to improve performance measurement across the delivery of the action plan. We will track progress towards key objectives and adapt our interventions as we learn from the successes and failures during implementation.

# Expanding and connecting our trees and woodlands



Riparian woods (Getty Images)

We intend to spend over £500 million of the £640 million Nature for Climate Fund on trees and woodlands between 2020 and 2025. With this funding, we aim to at least treble woodland creation rates by the end of this Parliament, reflecting England's contribution to meeting the UK's overall target of planting 30,000 hectares per year by the end of this Parliament.

Increasing planting now is just the start of a journey towards creating a more wooded country, and we plan to consult on a long-term tree target within a public consultation on Environment Bill targets, expected in early 2022 to help meet our commitments on climate change and biodiversity. The Government's new Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery Schemes will provide the main mechanism for publicly funded woodland creation after 2024 and will be informed by any new target.

To reach these targets, England will need a step change in public and private financial support for tree establishment.

While increasing planting and establishment rates, we will maintain high environmental and biosecurity standards. All woodland creation and woodland management operations in

England are expected to comply with UK Forestry Standard requirements and Government grants and regulatory approval for forestry are conditional on this. The UK Forestry Standard outlines a series of requirements and guidelines so woodlands, both new and well established, provide a range of economic, environmental and social benefits in accordance with international commitments made by the UK Government. It also provides a basis for regulation and monitoring as well as a number of voluntary certification schemes including Grown in Britain and the UK Woodland Assurance Standard.

The UK Forestry Standard is a live process rather than a static text. The standard is reviewed every five years to reflect advances in our understanding of sustainable forest management. The current review will conclude in 2022 and the views of stakeholders will help update the standard with the latest evidence and advice.

## Supporting land-owners to create new woodlands

To meet our commitments we will provide foresters, land-owners and managers, and investors with the right incentives to establish and maintain healthy trees and woodlands. We want to make woodland creation an economically attractive option for more land-owners.

When it comes to the use of public money to incentivise establishment of new woodlands, our goal is to secure the broadest possible benefits from every scheme. We know that the right woodlands in the right places can deliver carbon sequestration, biodiversity gains, flood prevention and better water, soil, and air quality, as well as job creation and wider social benefits for people able to enjoy them. We will continue our current approach of securing as many of these benefits as possible by predominantly funding the establishment of native broadleaf woodlands at a large scale, but also by supporting well-designed and managed majority conifer and mixed woodlands.

The new England Woodland Creation Offer will be launched in Spring 2021, providing a strong offer for woodland creation. It will be tailored to the business needs and values of a diverse range of foresters, land-owners and managers in helping them to create and maintain new woodlands. We will continue to offer the Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation grant, with improvements to combine the capital and maintenance elements in the interim, to ensure a smooth transition to new funding streams for land-owners and managers.

### **We will:**

- 1.1. Support a wider range of woodland types and establishment methods with grant funding, as well as mixed woodlands that serve a variety of environmental, productive and amenity purposes;
- 1.2. Review the base payment rate for all kinds of woodlands. The more benefits a woodland provides, for example for biodiversity, flood prevention and amenity value, the greater payment rates will be;

1.3. Create a single application process for planting and maintenance payments, and an online grant portal to support land managers to make informed choices between the available grant options.

This is just the start of a trajectory of increased planting rates to 2050 and beyond. The Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery Schemes will provide the main delivery mechanism for publicly funded woodland creation after 2024 and our new tree establishment grants will act as an important precursor. To ensure a smooth transition, the England Woodland Creation Offer has been developed in parallel to these schemes, with payments for public goods and greater flexibility for land managers. Developing natural capital approaches will help us unlock more value for a wider range of ecosystem services for land-owners than ever before. We hope to allay any concerns about how woodland created now will be treated in these future schemes and encourage more tree planting as soon as possible. We are offering more generous payments this Parliament to kickstart planting ahead of the transition to our new Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery Schemes. To respond to climate change, we need you to plant trees now.

**We will:**

1.4. Include support for tree planting, woodland creation and management, and agroforestry across our new Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery Schemes;

1.5. Guarantee that if you create woodlands now you will not be unfairly disadvantaged by the launch of the governments new Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery schemes;

1.6. Allow land managers entering into any woodland creation grant agreement from 2021 to:

1.6.1. Break those agreements at agreed points without penalty (through annual break clauses) once they have secured a place in our new Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery Schemes;

1.6.2. Remain on the same terms and conditions for the duration of their agreement if they want to.

As well as opening new and improved national grants, we will also set up new Woodland Creation Partnerships to support local ambition, capacity and expertise. Partnerships bring local stakeholders together to help deliver sustainably designed woodland which can improve connectivity of priority habitats and provide enhanced natural capital value within the landscape. Each partnership draws on local knowledge and expertise to identify opportunities for woodland creation and financing while balancing varying local priorities. Partnerships create a natural alignment with Local Nature Recovery Strategies and our

new Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery Schemes.

For example, Northumberland County Council Woodland Creation Partnerships has ambitions beyond supporting the current development of the Great Northumberland Forest. The partnership will identify where woodland creation can contribute to enhancing Northumberland's natural capital and help land managers and industry realise sustainable economic growth across the region.

**We will:**

- 1.7. Continue to support England's Community Forests, the National Forest Company and the Northern Forest to plant thousands of hectares of new woodland by 2025;
- 1.8. Support the establishment of Forests 4 Cornwall and the Northumberland Forestry Partnership and develop three new Woodland Creation Partnerships.

As we increase tree planting and establishment across the nation, we must also take action to recover nature and capture carbon on land owned and managed by public bodies. Forestry England own and manage over 250,000ha of land in England and we will do more to protect and expand the nation's forests. We will also enable and encourage other public bodies to establish and manage more trees and woodlands on their land where appropriate – whether that land is used as a training area for the armed forces, or the green surroundings of hospitals and schools.

The enriched treescape we need across England will often be created with the help of local authorities. Local tree and woodland strategies offer an opportunity for local communities to decide where new trees will be planted and how existing trees will be protected. Local tree and woodland strategies will also dovetail with Local Nature Recovery Strategies to help target woodland creation opportunities.

**We will:**

- 1.9. Expand the nation's forests, managed by Forestry England, by entering into leasehold agreements with owners of land suitable for afforestation;
- 1.10. Plan to require government departments and partner organisations with the greatest potential to improve biodiversity, to increase tree planting and woodland cover where appropriate. Full detail will be available in the forthcoming 2021-25 Greening Government Commitments framework;
- 1.11. Widen the eligibility of our tree planting and tree health grant schemes so more public bodies are able to access them;
- 1.12. Publish guidance for local authorities to develop their own local tree and woodland strategies;

## 1.13. Support and encourage public sector bodies to buy biosecure trees.

### Creating new woodlands to benefit nature

It is our ambition that all woodlands in England – whether broadleaf or conifer, managed for commercial or amenity value – will improve the environment, through proper design and management in line with UK Forestry Standards. Our native woodlands play a particularly important role however in supporting biodiversity, having evolved together over thousands of years. Approximately a quarter of all species of principal importance for conservation in England (under section 41 of the NERC Act) are associated with native woodland habitats and trees, including lesser-spotted woodpeckers and high-brown fritillaries. The iconic oak tree supports 2,300 species, of which 326 are dependent on oak trees for their survival.

Establishing more native broadleaf and mixed woodlands will therefore play an important role in contributing to the broader goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan. That is why we will be offering higher payment rates to incentivise the creation of predominantly native broadleaf woodlands with supplements which incentivise biodiversity. We will also ensure that landowners who create new woodland can participate in private markets for biodiversity units, demand for which will rise as a result of mandatory biodiversity net gain being introduced under the Environment Bill.

Alongside considering the types of trees themselves, different planting methods offer alternative ways to support vibrant woodland ecosystems. While most woodland creation sites we support are planted with saplings, direct seeding and natural colonisation has the potential to be a powerful approach for woodland creation when utilised on appropriate sites, as an alternative to or complementing conventional planting. Through careful planning and management, allowing and helping natural processes to colonise land with trees can create woodlands with a structurally diverse range of habitats, while appearing natural in the landscape.

Natural colonisation can reduce the need for plastic tree guards and can also create resilient woodlands as it may enable adaptation to local sites, the changing climate, and new pests and diseases. We will prioritise the use of this approach where it will bolster the connectivity of habitats and can provide important buffers to existing woodland, working alongside further integration of wooded and open priority habitats in supporting nature recovery as part of the Nature Recovery Network. Local Nature Recovery Strategies will also help to identify the optimum location for new woodlands, and the new Landscape Recovery projects will support more opportunities for tree planting where appropriate.

#### **We will:**

1.14. Provide grant finance and guidance to support natural colonisation through the England Woodland Creation Offer;



1.15. Initiate 10 Landscape Recovery projects between 2022-2024. These projects will support the delivery of landscape and ecosystem recovery through long-term, land use change, including projects to restore wilder landscapes. Where appropriate this will include large-scale tree planting and natural colonisation.

We need to revolutionise where we look for suitable land to become woodland. Vacant and derelict sites such as landfills and former mines are often economically and environmentally degraded. In some locations, changing vacant and derelict landscapes to woodland habitats would provide cleaner air, deliver green jobs, and benefit communities and we want to explore options for increasing tree establishment on this type of land in future.

**We Will:**

1.16. Research the potential to remediate and restore different types of vacant and derelict land to woodland, with a view to supporting such projects at scale in the future.

## Woodlands for water

There are 242,262 km of watercourses in England, forming a natural network throughout the country. Planting trees or using natural colonisation along these areas and within the wider catchment would offer enormous benefits for water quality, flood management, biodiversity and climate resilience. By establishing the right trees in the right places these 'woodlands for water' can both create new priority wet woodland habitats and protect other priority habitats such as chalk streams, by improving water quality through reducing the amount of sediment and pollutants that reach rivers. These new woodlands can also provide shade and reduce summer water temperature for fish helping rivers adapt to climate change. Trees throughout catchments can also help slow the flow of and temporarily store water as part of Natural Flood Management and prevent excessive riverbank erosion and collapse.

**We will:**

1.17. Provide dedicated financial support and guidance for riparian planting through the new England Woodland Creation Offer, using over 100 existing catchment partnerships to target delivery;

1.18. Pilot new approaches to deliver coordinated woodland creation within targeted catchments, harness private investment and maximise benefits;

1.19. Collaborate with water companies to meet and exceed their target of planting 11 million trees as an industry by 2030, whilst maximising the benefits of each tree for water quality, flood resilience and biodiversity.

## Putting the right tree in the right place

Improving regulatory processes to make tree planting simpler for land managers while retaining strong environmental and biosecurity safeguards will be important to deliver high-quality woodlands at the scale needed to meet our tree planting targets. We will build on the current evidence and feedback available to ensure regulation is fit for purpose.

### **We will:**

1.20. Review the regulatory requirements for woodland creation to streamline the process while strengthening environmental protections.

Better informed targeting maps will be critical to delivering the right trees in the right places and help identify where planting and establishment can provide particular natural capital benefits whilst being sensitive to environmental and social constraints. Work is already underway to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which help to recognise the wide range of benefits provided by habitats such as woodlands, encouraging the establishment of new woodlands and the expansion of existing woodlands to increase habitat connectivity. Local Nature Recovery Strategies can help channel investment into woodland creation and management sources including through Biodiversity Net Gain.

### **We will:**

1.21. Improve the Forestry Commission's woodland creation map to better show low-risk areas for woodland creation incorporating additional sensitivities as new information becomes available;

1.22. Develop new mapping products and spatial datasets so land managers have more clarity on site sensitivities and opportunities for woodland establishment and management.

## The interaction of trees and peatland

Woodlands and peatlands are two of our largest natural climate regulating ecosystem types; our climate change and biodiversity obligations require us to manage them both sustainably. Plans to expand woodland cover and to restore peatland need to work hand in hand which is why we have aligned the England Trees Action Plan with the England Peat Action Plan to deliver a more joined up approach to land use management. We should only plant or naturally establish trees where doing so provides a net benefit to the

environment. This means working with partners and the land-owner to make the best evidence-based decision for sites with peaty soils. We want all interested parties involved in making the most appropriate decisions for each site, working together to consider natural capital value of the habitat types in discussion as well as the realistic prospects for restoration of the wider hydrological unit of an area of peat.

**We will:**

- 1.23. Develop new guidance for England that will help determine when afforested peat should be restored to bog, and to minimise impacts on peaty soils from tree planting.
- 1.24. Develop metrics that allow decision-makers to assess the realistic costs of forest to bog restoration;
- 1.25. Improve land use decision-making through the new peatland map data, once it is complete in 2024.

## Putting more trees in our towns and cities

Well sited tree planting, with appropriate management can make places where people live and work more climate resilient, healthy and attractive.

We are committed to seeing all new streets lined with trees and have recently published a response to the recommendations of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission in early 2021. Developers should work with local authorities to plan, plant and manage these trees, and agree how they will be funded - including through developer contributions such as Biodiversity Net Gain. Obtaining the expert services of local tree officers is recommended to help ensure trees and woodlands are planted and managed effectively and in helping to create, implement and monitor local tree and woodland strategies. Projects such as the Green Infrastructure Standards Framework, being led by Natural England, also showcase the benefits trees can provide for health and wellbeing when delivered close to people.

**We will:**

- 1.26. Extend the Urban Tree Challenge Fund to support the planting and establishment of trees in urban and peri-urban areas;
- 1.27. Propose new guidance through the National Model Design Code on how trees can be included in the built environment, including design parameters for the placement of street trees;
- 1.28. Propose changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, to make clear the expectation that trees, such as community orchards, should be incorporated in new developments and that streets should be tree lined.

## Building nursery capacity

Demand for trees for planting is expected to increase dramatically, both in the UK and across Europe, over coming years. Ensuring availability of more trees sourced from the UK will give land managers greater certainty over supply and boost the UK green economy. This can include the production of non-UK provenance planting material in the UK, for example to meet objectives on planting for resilience to climate change. As well as enhancing the quantity of trees produced, we need to enhance their diversity in order to plant treescapes resilient to stresses such as pest and disease, and climate change. Stocking material should be of the highest possible quality to reduce planting losses and ensure the delivery of healthy trees thriving in the landscape.

We know strategic stakeholder engagement with both the public and private forest nursery sector is crucial. We are setting out a roadmap for future engagement, building on what we already have in place. This will allow us to develop collaborative, committed and transparent relationships with the nursery sector that delivers better strategic alignment and enhances plant production further.

### **We will:**

- 1.29. Provide funding to support UK public and private sector nurseries and seed suppliers to enhance quantity, quality, diversity and biosecurity of domestic tree production. This will include capital grants and support to augment investment and stimulate innovation;
- 1.30. Provide a Nursery Notification Scheme that will help better plan for supply and demand in the sector. This will support nurseries and seed suppliers to produce the right stock at the right time.

# Trees and woodlands as part of the green economy



Community woodland management (National Forest Company)

Planting and establishing more trees and woodlands will play an important role in supporting the green economy, levelling up rural areas and creating thousands of new jobs. It will encourage a growing demand for sustainably sourced timber to be provided domestically and it will unlock new streams of green finance.

While the planting and establishment of trees and woodlands will have direct benefits for the forestry sector, it will also have vast benefits on the wider economy. From supporting a more diverse agricultural landscape to boosting leisure and tourism, investing in trees and woodlands will contribute to our green recovery.

## Encouraging the use of timber in construction

Not only do we need to plant trees, but we also need to make good use of those felled - both hardwood and softwood. We therefore committed in the Clean Growth Strategy and the 25 Year Environment Plan to increase the use of timber in construction. Timber is a commonly used building material, with 22% of English new builds using timber frames in 2016 - but we can go further. In Scotland around 75% of new-build homes are timber framed, showing that building practices are already available to increase timber use. This could reduce embodied carbon (emissions from making materials) in construction while

also locking away carbon long term and driving investment into tree planting and establishment.

Guided by market analysis, fire safety and structural considerations, key opportunities for the safe growth of timber use will be in low-rise buildings using traditional and certain modern methods of construction, and in a wide range of commercial and non-residential settings.

### **We will:**

- 2.1. Provide financial support to develop innovative timber products through the Forestry Innovation Fund;
- 2.2. Work with key construction stakeholders, including the Green Construction Board, Construction Leadership Council, House Building Federation, and Federation of Master Builders to develop a policy roadmap on use of timber;
- 2.3. Drive an increase in the use of certain modern methods of construction, some forms of which can encourage use of sustainable materials such as timber;
- 2.4. Work with Homes England and delivery partners to explore ways to increase timber use in the delivery of housing programmes;
- 2.5. Increase public demand for sustainably sourced timber through procurement policies;
- 2.6. Encourage research into barriers to uptake of timber, including looking at timber strength grades and the fire resistance of engineered timber structures.

## **Greening finance and taxation to support woodland creation**

Our goals can only be met through greater investment by the private sector in woodland creation. This means our grant offers must act to stimulate private investment, such as through payments for carbon captured by woodlands, rather than crowding private sector investment out. New markets for ecosystem services will create opportunity to develop new income streams, helping to overcome barriers to investment in woodland creation.

The £50m Woodland Carbon Guarantee, underpinned by the Woodland Carbon Code, helps accelerate woodland planting rates and develop the domestic market for woodland carbon by giving landowners the option to sell their captured carbon in the form of verified carbon credits. The Woodland Carbon Guarantee has already supported the potential planting of 2,314 hectares since 2019, while Biodiversity Net Gain, which will be introduced through the Environment Bill once enacted, has the potential to bring significant private investment into woodland creation. The £10m Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund launched in February and supports the development of natural environment projects that can generate revenue from ecosystem services and attract repayable investment. The Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund will provide a pipeline of projects that can also benefit from woodland creation grants available.

Woodland creation is part of a suite of ‘greenhouse gas removal’ approaches that will likely be required to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in support of net zero by 2050. In December 2020, the government launched a call for evidence which considered a range of nature-based and engineering-based greenhouse gas removal methods and explored a variety of policy mechanisms which could encourage their development and deployment in the short-term and longer-term. We will publish a summary of responses and set out our next steps in due course.

**We will:**

- 2.7. Launch an Impact Fund in 2021 to leverage private finance into new natural capital markets for carbon, water quality, biodiversity, natural flood alleviation and other ecosystem services;
- 2.8. Adopt a principle in the design and ongoing review of all our grant offers that it is in the landowners’ best interests to participate in natural capital markets or secure other sources of private funding;
- 2.9. Support the development of the Woodland Water Code, a crediting mechanism to encourage private investment in trees for the improvement of the fresh-water environment;
- 2.10. Explore expanding the UK Emissions Trading Scheme to the two-thirds of uncovered emissions, and set out the government’s approach to incentivising deployment of greenhouse gas removals, including nature-based solutions.

Woodland creation is a permanent land use change, with benefits delivered and protected over multiple generations. This is recognised through a number of tax exemptions for trees and woodlands, and we want to ensure tax incentives align with our goals for the environment.

**We will:**

- 2.11. Review guidance on the tax treatment of trees and woodlands, to provide greater clarity to landowners on how new and existing trees on their land affect tax liabilities.

## Building a bigger, skilled workforce

Planting, establishing and managing trees in rural and urban settings requires skills, technical knowledge, and people to put those into practice. We will empower charities and businesses to maximise this opportunity for green economic growth by encouraging sector engagement with national education and skills policies and funding, including Kickstart, the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, and the National Skills Fund. This will ensure the sector

makes effective use of national offers, and that new entrants have clear pathways to long-term employment.

**We will:**

- 2.12. Support apprenticeships, T Levels and other technical training routes into the forestry sector and develop higher technical and professional education routes. We will also improve links with allied sectors such as arboriculture, agriculture and horticulture needed to deliver our ambitions;
- 2.13. Support the Forestry Skills Forum to create a new Forestry Skills Action Plan for England;
- 2.14. Support Forestry England to deliver apprenticeships and work with further education institutions to strengthen the training and skills development offer to foresters and those working in the wider forestry supply chain.

## Supporting innovative approaches to forestry

For centuries, woodland pasture has been a traditional land use integrating livestock and woodland which is recognised as a priority habitat for the biodiversity benefits it brings. Through encouraging the use of agroforestry, trees can again play an important role on farms in England. The Committee on Climate Change recommends that agroforestry should be used on at least 10% of arable land and grassland by 2050 to meet net zero. As well as improving production potential and environmental outcomes, agroforestry bridges agriculture and traditional forestry and can provide additional income to farmers from both agricultural goods and forestry products, adding a new dimension to the conventional farm business model.

**We will:**

- 2.15. Provide financial support for agroforestry through the England Woodland Creation Offer.

Many land-owners diversify and manage their land and woodlands by providing leisure activities, generating income alongside woodlands' other benefits. Recreation and tourism should therefore be considered as a potential income stream as part of the creation, design and management of woodland.

**We will:**

- 2.16. Provide funding and advice for capital investment in recreational infrastructure in the England Woodland Creation Offer, in line with public money for public goods principles.



## Support for tenant farmers

Tenant farmers can face challenges when establishing trees and woodland, due to timescales of tenancy agreements and impacts on the land holding's status for agricultural use. We want to encourage tenant farmers and landlords to work together to find solutions to these issues and enable tree and woodland establishment such as agroforestry planting on tenanted land.

### **We will:**

2.17. Work with agricultural tenancy stakeholders to support woodland creation on tenanted land.

# Protecting and improving our trees and woodlands



Bluebell forest

Our standing trees and woodlands are at the heart of England's landscapes and urban areas. As well as planting and establishing more trees, we must do more to protect the ones we already have. We must manage existing trees and woodlands to increase their resilience to climate change and pests and disease and unlock more environmental, economic and social benefits.

## Improving woodland condition and resilience

The asset value of our trees is estimated at £175 billion - a value at risk from a range of pressures including pests and diseases and climate change. We will continue to lead efforts to build resilience to protect and enhance our trees, woods and forests for the future, and implement the four environmental goals of the Tree Health Resilience Strategy: Extent, Connectivity, Diversity, and Condition.

In the past our woodlands have been managed to produce timber and firewood and this management has shaped the types of woodland habitats that support the biodiversity we value today. In most circumstances, unmanaged woodlands can have an adverse effect on wildlife and resilience and around 41% of woodland in England is currently regarded as

unmanaged. We want to help woodland managers improve the ecological condition, resilience, carbon sequestration potential, biodiversity and connectivity of woodlands, encouraging a more diverse age structure and species mix via low impact silvicultural systems such as continuous cover forestry. Tools like the Woodland Wildlife Toolkit for woodland condition assessment can help woodland managers achieve this.

A growing deer population is putting more browsing pressure on woodland ground flora, damaging trees, inhibiting natural regeneration of existing woodlands and the use of natural colonisation to establish new ones. We intend to do more to approach deer management at a strategic and landscape level which will improve the ecological value of a woodland, improve tree establishment rates and reduce the need for plastic tree guards in the landscape. Grey squirrels are estimated to cost the economy £37 million per year in negative impacts to our trees and woodland, limiting the ability of some woodland owners to grow good quality native trees, whilst impacting our red squirrel populations. Pine martens offer hope alongside research into immune contraception research in managing grey squirrels.

### **We will:**

- 3.1. Launch the Centre for Forest Protection which will enhance the protection and resilience of our trees, woodlands and forests to the threats from pests and pathogens through the provision of evidence, interdisciplinary research and expert advice;
- 3.2. Open a competitive grant scheme to help land managers improve the ecological condition of their woodlands, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, ancient and long-established woodlands;
- 3.3. Develop a Woodland Resilience Implementation Plan to improve the ecological condition of our woodlands and increase their resilience to climate change, pests and diseases;
- 3.4. Develop a national deer management strategy;
- 3.5. Update the Grey Squirrel Action Plan, produce good practice guidance to help minimise impacts of forestry operations on red squirrels during the breeding season and work with the UK Squirrel Accord to help recover red squirrel populations in England;
- 3.6. Improve and expand the tree health grants provided to treat and/or fell diseased trees and expand grant support for resilient restocking in response to pest or disease instances;
- 3.7. Investigate effective alternatives to plastic tree guards and consider how to support their widespread deployment if appropriate;
- 3.8. Promote conservation covenants as a tool to deliver lasting conservation within the woodland sector.

## Protecting and improving our trees outside of woodlands

Trees outside of woodlands are among the most valuable to society. People place great value on trees and green spaces in their local communities, which also provide connections in our fragmented treescapes and vital habitat for threatened biodiversity. Yet they often slip through the gaps between funding mechanisms, contributing to their long-term neglect and decline. We need to reclaim our neglected public land, create tree-based community green spaces and encourage new trees in non-woodland settings, for people and nature.

### **We will:**

3.9. Open the Local Authorities Treescape Fund, to work in partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations, local land-owners and community groups to deliver strategic planting and natural regeneration of trees outside of woodlands for the benefit of local communities and nature.

## Adapting trees and woodlands to the impacts of climate change

While trees will be an important part of our efforts to reduce emissions, trees themselves are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

We need to create and manage trees and woodlands that will remain functioning ecosystems and are fit for the future. By making changes to the species composition, structure and management of our woodlands we can give them the best chance to survive and thrive in 50 years' time, when we know our climate will be different. The rapidly changing climate will lead to an increase in the frequency of incidents of flooding, high winds, wildfire and droughts. These factors will potentially change the range over which our native trees can continue to grow.

We recognise that different woodland management objectives require different adaptation strategies and timescales – some objectives can rely on evolutionary adaptation while others, particularly timber production, require proactive intervention now. Adapting our woodlands to the future climate cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach, and diversity will be needed at the landscape level, as well as within woodlands, to address the risks.

### **We will:**

3.10. Support the Forestry and Climate Change Working Group in implementing its adaptation plan, launch a climate change competition to highlight best practice and the need to adapt new and existing woodlands to the effects of climate change, and publish guidance on managing woodlands for a changing climate;

3.11. Maintain our membership of the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme to promote the conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources in Europe.

## Ancient and long-established woodlands and veteran trees

Ancient woodlands (woodlands established before 1600) are an important part of our natural heritage. They are irreplaceable habitats that contribute to our landscapes, our national identity and sense of well-being. They are one of our most biodiverse habitats, as well as critical carbon sinks. These woodlands face threats, both from development and from less visible issues including climate change, browsing animals and lack of management. In 2005 'Keepers of Time' clearly highlighted these threats, which have since become even more understood.

We reconfirm our commitment to the principles of Keepers of Time: recognising the value of our ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees and other semi-natural woodland, as well as the need to restore plantations on ancient woodland sites. These principles will be carried forward in the development of the Woodland Resilience Implementation Plan. This will assess and promote appropriate woodland management decisions to ensure resilient ancient woodlands. We will also promote and support landowners' choices to undertake restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites to enhance their habitat and support wildlife.

In 2018, we strengthened protections for ancient woodland when considering planning decisions for development by amending the National Planning Policy Framework and want to do more to continue to raise the importance of this habitat. In addition, we want to acknowledge that woodlands that are very old but not ancient are also valuable habitats and pieces of our history.

### **We will:**

- 3.12. Introduce a new category of 'Long Established Woodland': woodlands that have been in situ since 1840, alongside ancient woodland. We will consult on the protections these woodlands are afforded in the planning system, recognising their high ecological and societal value;
- 3.13. Update the ancient woodland inventory to cover the whole of England. This will include mapping smaller ancient woodland sites of 0.25 hectares;
- 3.14. Update the Keepers of Time policy on management of ancient woodland and other semi natural woodland.

## Better regulation of tree management

Protecting and sustainably managing our existing tree and woodland cover requires strong regulation. We introduced Felling Licence Online in 2019 to modernise the customer journey for felling licence applications and continue to develop and improve this. We are also making changes through the Environment Bill (2020), which contains several measures to improve enforcement against illegal tree felling.

Tree Preservation Orders are used by local planning authorities to protect individual trees and woodlands that have high amenity value, including many urban trees and other trees outside woodland. As part of future planning reforms we will make sure the planning system fully recognises all the benefits trees provide. We want to make sure trees in the urban environment are no longer seen as a management liability because of the costs, rather that they are seen as an important asset. In addition, to supplement the new duty on local authorities to consult on felling street trees in the Environment Bill, we will provide more guidance to support local authorities to manage street trees.

**We will:**

- 3.15. Reform the felling licence system and controls, introducing greater flexibility, improved clarity around felling controls and UK Forestry Standard requirements, and improved enforcement capability;
- 3.16. Ensure future planning reforms will lead to more trees being planted and ensure strong protections for existing trees;
- 3.17. Work with engineers, developers and arboriculturists to get more trees on streets and in developments, including by revising the Manual for Streets and potentially amending National House Building Council guidance on foundations.

## Preserving the nation's forests for future generations

Forestry England is the country's largest land manager, managing over 1,500 woodlands and forests covering around 254,000 hectares. Its purpose is to secure and grow the social, economic and natural capital value of the nation's forest. The nation's forests host some 230 million visits each year by the public; are an important source of sustainable timber and are home to iconic species like ospreys in Kielder Forest, and nature-rich landscapes like Wild Ennerdale and the New Forest. The Independent Panel on Forestry issued a recommendation in 2012 that the nation's forests should be held in trust for the nation so that it will always remain a national asset. We agree and want to see the £24 billion natural capital value of the nation's forests secure and growing.

**We will:**

- 3.18. Strengthen our commitment on no net reduction in size of the nation's forests managed by Forestry England;
- 3.19. Consider new statutory duties and powers for the Forestry Commission, which reflect the social and environmental importance of its woodlands as well as their timber value.

## Protecting trees by reducing biosecurity risks

Biosecurity risks are increasing due to increased international trade of plant materials, and as climate change is altering the geographical range of many pests and diseases. Protecting our new and existing trees from biosecurity risks will be vital to delivering our long-term vision for trees and woodlands.

The UK continues to drive higher international biosecurity standards and, working with industry, considerable progress has already been made to drive up biosecurity standards more generally. We have worked in partnership to support the establishment of the UK Plant Health Alliance, developed the Plant Health Management Standard and launched the Plant Healthy Certification Scheme aimed at improving biosecurity standards across the different sectors and along their supply chains. Where possible, people should get their plants from nurseries with clear Plant Health Management Standards in place including, for example, nurseries with Plant Healthy certification or similar.

### **We will:**

- 3.20. Support and promote the Plant Healthy Certification Scheme, encouraging more UK growers to become members;
- 3.21. Introduce a condition for all tree and hedgerow planting grants that tree and plant suppliers should be able to demonstrate that they can meet the requirements set out in the published Plant Health Management Standard;
- 3.22. Introduce procurement criteria for government contracts that tree and plant suppliers should be able to demonstrate that they can meet the requirements of the Plant Health Management Standard;
- 3.23. Publish a new GB Plant Biosecurity Strategy by 2022 and drive higher international standards of biosecurity;
- 3.24. Consult on additional biosecurity measures for high risk tree species and commodities.

# Connecting people with trees and woodlands



Children enjoying woodlands (National Forest Company Ben Hall)

Trees and woodlands are some of the most prominent examples of the natural world close to people, from the street trees we can see from our windows to woodlands near towns and cities that the whole community can benefit from. As we increase tree cover in England, it is vital that we make sure this includes trees that are established close to people, and that new and existing woodlands are accessible to the public.

The 25 Year Environment Plan committed to make sure the natural environment can be enjoyed, used by and cared for by everyone. We are already connecting disadvantaged children with nature and piloting nature-based social prescribing to harness nature's health and wellbeing benefits. And evidence from Natural England shows that the NHS could save over £2 billion in treatment costs<sup>1</sup> if everyone in England had equal access to good quality green space.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35009>



It is therefore positive to see rising recreational use of woodlands, with 63% of the population visiting woodlands each year, and a record 218 million visits made to the Public Forest Estate last year – showing the importance of natural spaces to so many of us throughout the pandemic. Around 18% of people in England have an accessible woodland of at least 2 hectares within walking distance of their home. And through new investment by government and buy-in from communities we want that to increase, giving more of us regular access to visit, support and enjoy the nature around us.

Our £80m Green Recovery Challenge Fund is supporting new projects to improve the environment and connect people to nature. We are working with local authorities to establish Community Forests, with charitable organisations to increase voluntary sector involvement in woodland creation and want to encourage members of the public to engage with trees and woodland.

In addition, we are improving equality of access for the wider population in a responsible way, through updating the Countryside Code and responding to Julian Glover's landscapes review, including through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme to fund new access and engagement projects. This range of initiatives work in partnership with individuals, communities, farmers and other land managers, charities and businesses who do so much already to embed the benefits of trees and nature in our lives.

## Community Forests

England's Community Forests are a network of 10 Community Forest organisations and have been working for over 25 years, to bring nature, trees and woodlands to areas where they make the greatest difference, benefiting communities in and around towns and cities.

These forests are within reach of 50% of the population of England and in the areas where community forestry can have the most socio-economic impact. They have opened 16,000 hectares of woods and green space for recreation and leisure and restored or built over 4,000 kilometres of footpath, bridleways and cycle routes.

Through Nature for Climate Fund investment we will enable a new programme of planting by England's Community Forests, called Trees for Climate. This will deliver 6,000 hectares of new woodland by 2025, building on the 500 hectares planted in 2020-21 through our initial investment of £12.1 million. These will be woodlands planted and managed by, and for the benefit of, local communities, based on long-established Forest Plans, recognised by our National Planning Policy Framework. The programme is being delivered by England's Community Forests and supported by Community Forest Trust and Cheshire West and Chester Council.

### **We will:**

- 4.1. Support England's Community Forests Trees for Climate planting programme;
- 4.2. Create at least three new Community Forests where they are needed most.

## Supporting access to trees and woodlands

We are a nation with a passion for nature and the outdoors - made evident by our millions of visits to parks and woodlands each year. Access to trees, woodlands and forests, exercised responsibly, is key to realising their social benefits. We want to protect and improve this access to nature, so we will support land-owners to provide public access to existing and new woodlands. We will also ensure new woodland designs protect existing rights of access.

### **We will:**

4.3. Ensure the provision of safe and appropriate public access is a feature of as many woodlands as possible and work with landowners and woodland users to develop and implement a plan to improve the quantity, quality and permanency of public access to new and existing woodlands.

We have strong emotional connections to trees, as part of our cultural heritage and as an important part of our sense of place. The nation's forests are treasured by many and Forestry England will continue to develop and improve these spaces to engage people for health, wellbeing and learning. Further public, private and charity projects across the country are already engaging people in planning, planting and managing trees and we want that to increase – reconnecting us with the natural world.

Planting and managing trees is a fantastic way for people of all backgrounds to engage with nature. We will engage more people in woodland creation. One example of this is the Queen's Green Canopy Project, an initiative run by Cool Earth with the support of Defra. This will celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee by asking people across England to plant or dedicate a tree for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in summer 2022. It will see communities, charities, schools, scout groups, councils and land-owners planting and dedicating trees across the four nations to create a lasting legacy of the Queen's leadership of the nation, that will enhance our environment and the landscape, for generations to come.

### **We will:**

4.4. Make community groups eligible to apply for new grants for tree planting, woodland creation and management.

## Trees in our landscapes

Trees are key to many of our most cherished and visited landscapes: places we relax, explore and holiday in. Landscapes are constantly evolving, with woodland creation and tree planting offering positive change for a climate resilient future. Landscape is fundamental to good woodland design and sustainable management.

**We will:**

- 4.5. Improve capacity in the sector by publishing guidance, and conducting training for land managers and foresters, historic environment and landscape professionals on landscape, design and the historic environment in woodland creation;
- 4.6. Explore improving access to historic environment data, aiding faster assessment of woodland creation proposals;
- 4.7. Encourage National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to include net zero and tree establishment targets in their statutory management plans.

# Knowledge and science for trees and woodlands



Pine marten

Robust evidence and sound understanding, underpinned by excellent and topical research provides the knowledge of why, what, where and how to establish, protect and manage trees. Using 'right tree in the right place for the right reason' principles and practices we can make best use of the different benefits of trees and woodlands.

Tree, woodland and forest science is a long-term endeavour which requires long-term vision, planning and a multidisciplinary evidence base. We will work to develop a research plan which sets out the current evidence base and identifies where our knowledge is lacking. Defra will establish a Trees and Woodland Science Advisory Group to provide independent scientific advice to support the development of this plan. We will increase our investment in tree related science and support a skilled research community. To achieve

this we will collaborate with the devolved administrations, including through the UK's world-leading forest science agency Forest Research, to work on a Science and Innovation Strategy for forestry in Great Britain<sup>2</sup>. We will also work with other research funders, such as the Natural Environment Research Council on their Future of UK Treescapes Programme<sup>3</sup>.

In the short term we are supporting tree related science in a number of areas.

**We will:**

- 5.1. Develop our understanding further about where and how to expand tree and woodland cover and how to encourage land managers to undertake this in a manner which fulfils multiple objectives;
- 5.2. Develop the evidence base for various woodland and tree cover expansion methods, including natural regeneration, agroforestry and riparian planting. We will also assess the importance of species choice, including exploring novel species in short rotation forestry systems;
- 5.3. Conduct research to better understand where is suitable to expand tree and woodland cover including on vacant and derelict land.

We must better manage our existing tree stock to ensure it is resilient, supports a thriving forest economy and assists in nature recovery.

**We will:**

- 5.4. Draw together and expand the existing evidence and data on woodland management and the multiple benefits various techniques can bring, including for producing timber and wood products, and biodiversity benefits;
- 5.5. Support development of innovative woodland based products, sustainable supply-chains and recycling and reuse of otherwise waste materials;
- 5.6. Continue to support research to ensure our forests and treescapes are resilient to current and future threats, including investigating climate adaptation and pests and diseases;
- 5.7. Continue to monitor the impacts of the re-introduction of pine marten, including on grey squirrel populations in the Forest of Dean, and support further reintroductions of the species where appropriate;

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<sup>2</sup> <https://gov.wales/gb-wide-science-and-innovation-strategy-forestry-published>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nerc.ukri.org/research/funded/programmes/future-of-uk-treescapes/>

5.8. Build the evidence base to protect ancient woodlands, undertaking research into the interaction between ancient woodland and new development to inform proposals by developers and decisions by planners.

Improving the baseline level of data we have will enable us to fully understand our starting point, inform where to target our resources and assess the impact the England Trees Action Plan will have. While we require data to know who the right people to target are, effective spatial planning is also essential to achieve well designed and resilient treescapes which deliver maximum benefits and minimise trade-offs.

**We will:**

5.9. Explore how people, land managers and foresters engage with woodlands and trees; investigating motivations, barriers and engagement methods to expand tree and woodland cover and bring woodland into active management;

5.10. Investigate how different woodland expansion methods and woodland management techniques impact carbon flows as well as improving the data and modelling associated with this in the UK's Greenhouse Gas Inventory;

5.11. Expand our data on trees, woodlands and forests, including through the National Forest Inventory, to build on our baseline and gather evidence on where to target our resources;

5.12. Support the forest economy by investigating natural capital concepts, supporting payments for ecosystem services and attracting more green finance going into trees. In addition, we will build the economic evidence base to help land managers and businesses make informed decisions on land use change and woodland management.



People enjoying Alice Holt woodlands