



# CHARTER FOR TREES · WOODS & PEOPLE



Natural treasures, in roots, wood and leaves, for beauty, for use, the air that we breathe.  
Imagine: a wood starts with one small seed. We're stronger together - people and trees.



## SUSTAIN LANDSCAPES RICH IN WILDLIFE

Each tree is a world within itself, teeming with life. A fallen branch is a feast for beetles; fungal-rich woodland soil is a wildflower bed. A hedgerow is a living network, where a host of creatures share their home. Forests are full of opportunities for people, but their natural wealth is the wildlife. Our future good means thinking in the round, adapting plans to what is on the ground. New urban and transport projects should make routes for our native wildlife to move forward too. Take heed of nature's needs.

## PLANT FOR THE FUTURE

When we enjoy the company of a treasured tree or the beauty of a favourite wood, we often owe thanks to those with the foresight and confidence to invest in the future. We must show that same generosity of spirit: that same sense of hope for the future, and plant more now. Lime streets with living greenery, let trees allow shifting colour into every life. More orchards for communities, more hedgerows for wildlife, more forests for timber and jobs. Nurture people's pride in their local trees and empower them to care for their future. Right tree, right place, bright future.

## CELEBRATE THE POWER OF TREES TO INSPIRE

Stories have always grown on trees. Artists are drawn to their intricacies. Woods are rooted in memories, but it's the leaf mould of tales told that nourishes future growth. The poetry of trees is always living for every older work sends out new shoots. We grow attached to trees in books and learn to look for them in life. We feel connected to trees we know and love to see them painted well. Celebrate Tree Charter Day each year to strengthen this cultural legacy and help our living traditions thrive.

## GROW FORESTS OF OPPORTUNITY AND INNOVATION

Forests, woods and trees all flourish under the stewardship of skilled professionals. Trees reward us with fuel for enterprise, craft and invention, green energy and fires. Consider the source of wooden products and choose the home-grown from well-managed forests. Teach the rising generation that with responsible management a wooded land is a thriving nation.

## PROTECT IRREPLACEABLE TREES AND WOODS

Ancient woods have been continuously wooded since before records started: they are living descendants from Britain's pre-history. A tree may be a village's oldest inhabitant, a founding figure in a region's identity, a natural monument in the nation's story. Thorn bushes and hedgerows harbour our history. Old orchards are habitats for some of our rarest species and living museums of disappearing ways of life. A country that cares for its future cares for its past: we need laws and commitment to protect these irreplaceable natural treasures.



## PLAN GREENER LOCAL LANDSCAPES

The trees that touch us most are those that live among us, along our street, in the local park, beside our school or place of work. Like us, they grow and change, need space to breathe and support to thrive. Trees give places their distinctive character. Local community networks have a vital role to play in caring for woods and trees. Trees provide long-lasting good, so well-informed planning reaps long-term rewards. Take guidance on planting, felling and replanting from skilled professionals. Good landscapes of the future depend on care for trees today.

## RECOVER HEALTH, HOPE AND WELLBEING WITH THE HELP OF TREES

Peace grows quietly in tree-lined places where bees, fresh scents and bird-song revive our jaded senses. Sprays of greenery ensure cleaner air and clearer minds, and fitter bodies, more inclined to take a walk or meet a friend. Spirits lift and stress recedes when we stroll through healing glades. Parks and woodlands keep us well and help to quell fears of illness, ageing, loss - we breathe more freely under trees. Healthcare and tree-care go hand in hand, harness the therapeutic power of trees.

## MAKE TREES ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Trees offer shared experience to every age, religion and race. In woods people can work together, sharing experiences and learning from each other and their natural surroundings. Those who no longer move with ease can still find pleasure among the trees. Cheerful voices ring through leaves, from makeshift pitches and games of make-believe. There should be room for us all beneath spreading canopies.

## COMBAT THE THREATS TO OUR HABITATS

Pests, diseases and climate change pose serious threats to our precious trees. Enlightened management of woods will help ensure their future health: planting strong seeds and saplings, selecting species suited to the site, keeping forests mixed in age and kind, regular thinning, combatting invasive plants, and controlling infections and pests at the earliest sign.

## STRENGTHEN OUR LANDSCAPES WITH TREES

From roots that bind and enrich the soil to leaves that shade and shelter, from locking carbon into timber and purifying air and water, trees make our landscapes better. Rising water swells and floods, so strengthen riverbanks with roots. Bare hills need trees to keep the soil stable, to slow the flow of nature's deluge, to shelter sheep or shade the cattle. The right tree in the right place earns its keep again and again. As farmers and landowners benefit from woods, the country will be strengthened in the years ahead.

THIS CHARTER FOR TREES, WOODS AND PEOPLE WAS COMMISSIONED BY THE WOODLAND TRUST AND DESIGNED, WRITTEN OUT AND PAINTED BY PATRICIA LOVETT MBE 2017

**The Charter for Trees, Woods and People**

**Designed, written out and painted by Patricia Lovett MBE, 2017**

***Natural treasures, in roots, wood and leaves,  
for beauty, for use, the air that we breathe.  
Imagine: a wood starts with one small seed.  
We're stronger together – people and trees.***

***Harriet Fraser, 2017***

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## Introduction

“The Tree Charter’s ambition was and is to place trees and woods at the centre of national decision making, and back at the heart of our lives and communities. The new charter will redefine the relationship with people and trees in the UK for present and future generations, providing guidance and inspiration for policy, practice and attitude, across Government, businesses, communities and individuals.”

**Beccy Speight, Woodland Trust CEO**

The Charter for Trees, Woods and People – or Tree Charter for short - sets out the principles by which trees and people in the UK can stand stronger together.

The call for a Tree Charter was initiated in 2015 by the Woodland Trust in response to the crisis facing trees and woods in the UK. There was no clear, unifying statement about the rights of people in the UK to the benefits of trees, woods and forests. The UK’s trees and woods face a host of issues, including:

- low planting rates
- lack of legal protection
- inconsistent management
- declining interest in forestry and arboriculture careers
- threats from housing and infrastructure development, pests, diseases and climate change

In addition, people in UK society – especially younger people - are increasingly disconnected from trees and woods, spending less time among them and knowing less about them than previous generations. This is due to increased urbanisation, the unstoppable rise of digital interaction, and changing lifestyles. Given the growing evidence base for the physical and mental health benefits of time spent among trees, this presents a wasted opportunity at a time when encouraging healthier lifestyles and addressing causes of mental health issues in UK society are seen as political priorities.

The 1217 Charter of the Forest established and protected the rights of free men to access the natural resources of the Royal Forests, including collecting firewood and grazing pigs on acorns and beech nuts in woodland. In doing so the charter demonstrates how important access to trees and woods was for people at the time. Our relationship with trees today is no less important than it was 800 years ago, however the benefits we seek from trees and the issues that threaten our access to those benefits have changed dramatically. In the interim 800 years there has been no new statement of rights for people to the benefits of trees and woods, and the anniversary provided an opportunity to revisit the concept and conceive a new charter that spoke for the needs of today’s society.

In 2015 the Woodland Trust reached out to all sections of UK society to define this new charter, and to build a people-powered movement for trees. More than 70 organisations and 450 local community groups answered the call and helped to collect over 60,000 tree stories from people of all walks of life, demonstrating the important role that trees play in their lives. These stories were read and shared, and helped to define the 10 Principles of the Tree Charter, ensuring that it stands for every tree and every person in the UK.

The final wording of the Principles were crafted by author Fiona Stafford and handwritten by calligrapher Patricia Lovett. The articles under each principle were defined by a core steering group of organisations representing a diverse range of sectors and interest groups across society. These articles are intended to provide clear guidance for decision-makers, businesses, communities and individuals.

At the time of launching the Tree Charter on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2017 more than 100,000 individuals had signed their names in support of the Principles. Over the coming years we anticipate that this number will grow, slowly but surely strengthening and enhancing the role of trees in creating a stronger, happier society.

Evidence and signposts to further information and guidance for the delivery of the Tree Charter Principles can be found online at [treecharter.uk](http://treecharter.uk)

“When I see a landscape rich in trees and hedgerows I see a landscape that is better able to deliver for people, wildlife and the planet. Trees help prevent flooding, slow strong winds and improve air quality, all while looking beautiful and providing homes for precious wildlife.”

**Iolo Williams, naturalist and presenter**



"Trees provide food, shelter and homes to so many of our native species. That's why the Tree Charter is so important; by championing trees and calling for protection, it is safeguarding a whole host of animals, insects and birds."

**Chris Packham, naturalist and presenter**

## Sustain landscapes rich in wildlife

*Each tree is a world within itself, teeming with life. A fallen branch is a feast for beetles, fungal-rich woodland soil is a wildflower bed. A hedgerow is a living network, where a host of creatures share their home. Forests are full of opportunities for people, but their natural wealth is the wildlife. Our future good means thinking in the round, adapting plans to what is on the ground. New urban and transport projects should make routes for our native wildlife to move forward too. Take heed of nature's needs.*

### 1) **Understand and protect the role of trees in supporting wildlife**

All trees and woodland habitats play a vital role in sustaining other species, and their role in the local ecosystem should be studied and recorded locally to inform management and planning decisions and ensure the wellbeing of wildlife that depends on them. The unique characteristics of a landscape's trees and woods that enable them to support a wider ecological network should be recognised and protected through local planning and with government support for management of green spaces.

### 2) **Strengthen important habitats with trees and woods**

Ancient woodland and other especially important woodland habitats should be buffered and connected with new trees and hedges wherever possible to improve chances for resident species. Connectivity should be at the heart of landscape management plans.

### 3) **Create transport networks for wildlife as well as people**

Canals, railways, roads and cycle ways lined with trees and hedges can provide vital wildlife corridors, habitats and links between woods across the wider landscape. Design, planting and maintenance decisions by all tiers of government should maximise the important role these routes can play in connecting ecological networks.

### 4) **Sustain precious and vulnerable woodland habitats**

Many native species depend on rare or irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland and wood-pasture, and on traditional management techniques such as coppicing that open the canopy of woodland to allow light to nurture life on the floor. Such important, irreplaceable habitats should be given statutory protection, and traditional management techniques should be encouraged and rewarded by government where they help sustain biodiversity. In preparing management plans, woodland custodians should consider how they sustain not only the health of the woodland but of all its inhabitants.

### 5) **Farm the land to provide for wildlife as well as people**

Trees and woodland can benefit agriculture in many ways, and opportunities to create and protect woodland habitats and networks of trees and hedges on farms should be maximised. Farming practices such as agroforestry that allow healthy woods and trees to deliver for wildlife should be encouraged and

rewarded, and regulations should be enforced where farming practices damage or destroy woodland habitats.

6) **Allow the natural cycle of life**

Deadwood enriches the local ecosystem by providing habitat and food for many species. Ancient, veteran and dead standing trees, and deadwood from fallen or damaged trees, should be conserved in woodland and parks wherever it is safe to do so.

7) **Be respectful neighbours to our wildlife**

The wellbeing and survival of all species dependent on trees, woods and hedges should be protected through the creation, communication and enforcement of wildlife law. Leisure activities and business enterprises in woodland or affecting trees should be sensitive to the wellbeing of wildlife and habitats in consideration of any noise, light and physical impact.

8) **Let nature do what it does best**

Self-seeded trees will be from trees already thriving in the environment, and will represent the species mix on which the resident species depend. Allow natural regeneration to restock and buffer woodland wherever practical for maximum benefit to existing plants and animals, controlling invasive species that limit or destroy the natural ecosystem where necessary.



“I love the thought of my grandchildren and their children climbing a tree I planted. No doubt we all want to leave the world a slightly better place than we found it. Planting trees is one way of making a contribution.”

**John Humphrys, journalist and presenter**

## Plant for the future

*When we enjoy the company of a treasured tree or the beauty of a favourite wood we often owe thanks to those with the foresight and confidence to invest in the future. We must show that same generosity of spirit, that same sense of hope for the future, and plant more now. Line streets with living greenery, let trees allow shifting colour into every life. More orchards for communities, more hedges for wildlife, more forests for timber and jobs. Nurture people's pride in their local trees and empower them to care for their future.*

*Right tree, right place, bright future.*

### 1) **Increase canopy cover across the UK**

The UK's low canopy cover means there are fewer trees and less accessible woodland than we need for a future in which trees and people stand stronger together. We should pursue opportunities to plant more trees and increase canopy cover across rural and urban landscapes, prioritising areas with low canopy cover when planning at a local or national level. We need to develop innovative ways to encourage more tree planting and consider how woodland creation and tree planting can be linked to house building and other priority areas for development through innovative approaches such as agroforestry and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS).

### 2) **Plant the right tree for the right place**

Every tree planted needs to be a tree that will survive and thrive. A tree that is wanted and planted appropriately will bring the most benefit and avoid potential problems as it grows. Plant healthy, vigorous trees with known provenance that are able and ready to thrive in the environment in which they are destined to live.

### 3) **Take a landscape view**

Trees do not exist in isolation. They affect, and are affected by, the wider landscape and should be planted with this in mind. All new planting should consider the local character of the area and be accompanied by a researched and realistic management plan that takes a short, medium and long-term view.

### 4) **Plant with purpose**

Plant trees to create functional, accessible spaces that deliver for people by improving health, providing timber, creating local enterprise and employment opportunities, improving soil and water quality and their management, and improving agricultural land use.

### 5) **Plant for beauty**

Trees can define the look and feel of a place for those who spend time there. Plant flowering trees or trees with colourful berries or changing leaf colour where people live and work to provide beauty, connect with the seasons and to inspire a love of trees in those who experience them.

6) **Plant more hedges and replenish those that become damaged**

In rural and urban areas hedges provide functional beauty as screens, enclosures, habitat for wildlife and by helping to reduce noise and air pollution. Landowners, local authorities and home owners should be encouraged and supported to maximise opportunities for hedge planting wherever they can be properly managed and do not detract from valued landscape characteristics, and to replenish and maintain those that exist.

7) **Plant more orchards**

Orchards are community resources that can make even a small green space deliver for people and wildlife. Orchard planting and maintenance of traditional orchards in urban and rural landscapes should be encouraged and supported locally and by national policy.

8) **Plan ahead**

Forward planning allows professionals to be prepared to deliver planting according to good practice, but targets are only positive if they can be trusted to be met. We need planting policies and incentives that ensure realistic and achievable annual planting targets and consistent levels of new planting, enabling nurseries to plan effectively and supply demand without using imported trees.

9) **Involve everyone in planting trees**

People remember and care about the trees they plant. Wherever possible, local communities should be involved in planting and caring for trees, in order to create a sense of responsibility for their wellbeing. Children should be given the opportunity to plant trees while at school so the next generation gains skills and knowledge about the care, protection and choice of trees.



"Woods and trees are cultural treasures; given to us by nature, they play a huge role in our heritage and artistic expression – providing inspiration, and a backdrop for our most well-loved stories. They make poetry without using words, they deserve to be loved, they deserve to be celebrated and looked after for future generations."

**Benjamin Zephaniah, poet and lecturer**

## Celebrate the power of trees to inspire

*Stories have always grown on trees. Artists are drawn to their intricacies. Woods are rooted in memories, but it's the leaf mould of tales told that nourishes future growth. The poetry of trees is always living, for every older work sends out new shoots. We grow attached to trees in books and learn to look for them in life. We feel connected to trees we know and love to see them painted well. Celebrate Tree Charter Day each year to strengthen this cultural legacy and help our living traditions thrive.*

### 1) **A national day for trees, woods and people**

Trees deserve to be celebrated. Each year the whole of UK society should unite in celebrating the value and importance of trees and woods to people. On the last Saturday in November each year, as part of National Tree Week, local communities, schools, organisations and individuals should mark a national 'Tree Charter Day' with activities and events that celebrate and reinvigorate the relationship between people and trees.

### 2) **Preserve our woodland culture**

The skills, trades, pastimes and traditions around woods and trees reflect the important role of woods and trees in the development of our society. This rich heritage should be remembered, celebrated and practically experienced by being embedded in the school curriculum and made visible and accessible to people of all ages.

### 3) **Celebrate trees and woods in the arts**

The role of trees in the development of our society is captured in our cultural heritage, and has lessons for our future. The role of trees in inspiring art, music and literature throughout history should be recognised and celebrated in schools and through museums, galleries and libraries.

### 4) **Recognise trees as living heritage**

The cultural, historical and emotional significance of specific trees, woods and parklands to people, locally and nationally, should be recorded and made available to all through a national database. Evidence of the cultural value of trees and woods should inform decisions around local planning and good management.

### 5) **Consider our future tree heritage**

The trees and woods around us are clues to the historical and cultural context that led to them being planted, protected, managed or ignored. Decisions about tree planting and management today should be based on an understanding of the area's past, and with a mind to the future. Decisions should be recorded for posterity in local records to give cultural context to the landscape for future generations.

6) **Respect and strengthen local identity**

The species, location and management of trees and woods can impact on the spirit of place. Planting and management choices should respect local cultural associations, traditions, heritage and history.

7) **Bring beauty to our landscapes**

All people should have a right to natural beauty in their lives and landscapes, including the inspiring sensory experience of varied species of tree and the wildlife that they support. Landscapes in which people live and work should be enhanced wherever appropriate with beautiful mature trees.

8) **Celebrate and preserve our rich orchard heritage**

Orchard traditions provide fun ways for communities to remember and strengthen the long-standing relationship between people, trees and pollinators, as demonstrated by fruit-growing. Orchard traditions should be nurtured, supported and celebrated, including Apple Day on October 21<sup>st</sup> and traditional orchard wassailing in early January.

9) **Provide common roots for multicultural communities**

Many tree species have deep roots in local history and tradition yet can be found in other countries and communities around the world. The diverse cultural associations of trees should be shared in schools and through local celebrations to bring multicultural communities together and foster a sense of belonging in the natural landscape.



"Forestry is worth £2 billion annually to the UK and employs 80,000 people. Woodlands sustain livelihoods, support local businesses and contribute to the greening of our national economy. With only 20% of our timber needs met by UK production there is a great opportunity for sustainable growth through use of a low carbon renewable resource."

**Shireen Chambers FICFor**

**Executive Director, Institute of Chartered Foresters**

## Grow forests of opportunity and innovation

*Forests, woods and trees all flourish under the stewardship of skilled professionals. Trees reward us with fuel for enterprise, craft and invention, green energy and fires. Consider the source of wooden products and choose the home-grown from well-managed forests. Teach the rising generation that with responsible management a wooded land is a thriving nation.*

### 1) **Promote careers working with trees and woods**

Professions connected to trees and woods are as important to our future as they have been to our past, and we need to build the next generation of experts. The profile of forestry, arboriculture, landscape architecture and conservation as modern progressive sectors with a wide range of opportunities for everyone should be raised, including by promoting these sectors in schools to inform further education and training choices.

### 2) **Create opportunities for sustainable forestry across the landscape**

Through innovative approaches, planting and managing trees across the landscape can bring sustainable economic opportunities without compromising other benefits to people and wildlife. Promote commercial forestry as part of an integrated rural landscape management strategy for each nation, encouraging the planting of productive species wherever appropriate.

### 3) **Empower the custodians of our woods and trees**

Well-managed woods and trees benefit us all. A simple incentive scheme should be implemented, agreed between central government and the devolved governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, that supports the creation of new woodland habitats and the responsible management of existing woodland and trees.

### 4) **Source timber and forest products responsibly**

Responsible sourcing of forest products supports responsible management of forests. All timber and forest products should be sourced from responsibly managed forests, certified under credible certification schemes that enable businesses and consumers to make ethical purchasing decisions. We need to strengthen links between woodland managers and timber users, enabling better understanding of, and support for, sustainable timber production.

### 5) **Encourage innovation in timber use**

There is huge untapped potential for timber as a material as new ways to treat and engineer wood are developed. Emerging timber technologies should be supported and promoted to growers, industry and decision-makers.

6) **Support small woodland businesses**

Local enterprises can create local jobs, ensure small woods are better managed and monitored, and result in locally produced wood products that lock up carbon and reduce waste and pollution. Funding and support should be provided for sustainable small businesses derived from woodland management, such as coppice products.

7) **Promote UK-grown timber products**

Using responsibly grown UK-grown timber is better for the economy and for the environment than imported timber. UK timber products should be promoted as the first choice for UK industries.

8) **Support UK fruit producers**

The UK has a rich orchard tradition that can support the economy and wildlife. Businesses and consumers should prioritise responsibly run UK orchards wherever possible when sourcing fruit.

9) **Encourage and support sustainable woodland management**

The majority of woodland in the UK is privately owned, and the way it is managed has an impact on the national economy and environment. Policies around woodland ownership should encourage sustainable management practice and cooperation between owners and managers of woods, in order to ensure quality and consistency of woodland management across the landscape.



"As iconic as our historic castles and houses our ancient woodlands and trees are a quiet connection to the past, a sanctuary from 21st century life and a gift to our descendants. We still don't fully understand all that they do. They are irreplaceable and we should cherish them."

**Luci Ryan BSC Hons MRES, Ecologist**

## Protect irreplaceable trees and woods

*Ancient woods have been continuously wooded since before records started: they are living descendants from Britain's prehistory. A tree may be a village's oldest inhabitant, a founding figure in a region's identity, a natural monument in the nation's story. Thorn-bushes and hedgerows harbour our history. Old orchards are habitats for some of our rarest species and living museums of disappearing ways of life. A country that cares for its future cares for its past: we need laws and commitment to protect these irreplaceable natural treasures.*

### 1) **Prevent any further loss of the UK's precious ancient woodland**

Ancient woodland is irreplaceable, and provides vital habitat for native species, and an important link with our natural and social history. Ancient woodland should have protection at least equivalent to that provided to our man-made heritage.

### 2) **Identify and protect important tree heritage**

Our oldest trees are living links with history, and support a wealth of wildlife. Ancient and heritage trees should be listed natural monuments and they and their immediate environment should have the same level of legal protection and financial management support as listed buildings and monuments.

### 3) **Empower custodians of our tree heritage to restore important landscapes**

Ancient woodland habitats are nationally important, but many are located on privately owned land. Landowners and managers should be supported with funding and expert guidance to effectively and sustainably manage and restore ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, hedgerows, wood-pasture and parkland for future generations.

### 4) **Identify and map important trees and woods**

We can only protect and maintain what we know is there. Important trees, woods, hedges and landscapes with trees should be recorded on a national public database that is maintained and updated to allow proper monitoring and protection.

### 5) **Clarify responsibilities for the care of important trees and woods**

Our precious tree heritage can suffer when neglected. Conservation covenants should be introduced to ensure that management responsibilities for ancient and veteran trees and ancient woodland protection are written into deeds, as with man-made heritage.

### 6) **Give legal protection to historic orchards**

Historic orchards tell the story of a long and important relationship between people and trees. Historic orchards should have statutory protection as community heritage assets and important habitat.

7) **Protect and manage established hedgerows for the future**

Ancient and established hedgerows help to deliver multiple benefits to the landscape and environment. They should be protected and managed for their role as valuable natural and historical assets, not just for their function as enclosures or screens.

8) **Conserve the unique qualities of ancient woodland**

Ancient woods have irreplaceable value as heritage and habitat, from mineral and fungi rich soil that has developed over centuries of tree cover, to boundary ditches and coppiced trees that show the historic management that led to such rich habitat. Their unique features, whether natural or as a result of management, should be maintained, restored or enhanced wherever they are found.

9) **Safeguard our future tree heritage**

The trees we plant today will be the ancient woods and trees in the future, but only if we ensure they survive. We need to plant, protect and care for young trees and woods today to ensure the tree heritage of the future. Replacements for mature trees in heritage landscapes should be planted early enough to be mature before their predecessors decline.



“Urban trees are a source of incredible environmental benefits and deep cultural meanings, and are integral to viable urban futures”.

**Professor Alan Simson**

**Landscape architect and urban forester**

## Plan greener local landscapes

*The trees that touch us most are those that live among us, along our street, in the local park, beside our school or place of work. Like us, they grow and change, need space to breathe and support to thrive. Trees give places their distinctive character. Local community networks have a vital role to play in caring for woods and trees. Trees provide long-lasting good, so well-informed planning reaps long-term rewards. Take guidance on planting, felling and replanting from skilled professionals. Good landscapes of the future depend on care for trees today.*

### 1) **Increase tree cover in new developments**

Street trees and green spaces with trees enhance built environments for people and wildlife by intercepting rainfall, improving drainage, and providing shade, natural beauty and habitat. Their inclusion in new developments should be considered at the earliest stage of planning so that new planting can complement and enhance the built infrastructure.

### 2) **Sustain strong local networks of tree expertise**

A durable culture of expertise in tree management and protection can connect and empower local communities and local authorities in maintaining a healthy tree population. Local volunteers, dedicated Local Authority staff and specialist tree and landscape consultants should work together to ensure informed decisions are made about their trees and woods.

### 3) **Recognise the full value of trees and woods**

Trees and woods are seen as valuable by different people for different reasons. We need a holistic planning approach that recognises environmental issues, development objectives, landscape character and the cultural, spiritual, and historical significance of individual trees and woods in management and development decisions. The full financial contribution of mature street trees should be calculated to inform local highway maintenance and planning decisions.

### 4) **Respect the connection between people and trees**

In many cases the people who benefit from trees and woods are not those responsible for their management. People should have a right to influence decisions affecting the trees in their lives. Significant decisions around planting, management and removal of trees should be informed by genuine consultation with those who are likely to be impacted.

### 5) **Plan for the future when making decisions about trees and woods**

The benefits of trees and woods are realised over long time periods, but are worth the investment. We need long-term planning and integrated management of trees and woods beyond short-term economic gains, with decision-makers guided and supported to achieve canopy cover targets.

**6) Take a strategic approach to tree management, planting and protection**

Clear guiding objectives help to ensure the best results for trees and people whenever a decision is made that affects trees or woods. Every local authority should have a tree strategy developed through consultation with local residents and qualified experts. This should recognise the significant contribution of the area's existing trees, and commit to future planting.

**7) Share learning and good practice about the benefits of trees**

A shared understanding of the role and value of trees in planned environments is key to creating vibrant, resilient and healthy communities going forward. Courses for landscape architects, urban designers, engineers and planners should cover in detail the importance of trees and green infrastructure.

**8) Prioritise sustainable timber as a building material**

Timber is a versatile, cost-effective and environmentally friendly choice of building material, creating beautiful and enduring buildings while locking in carbon and supporting a supply chain of traditional professions. Architects should adopt a timber-first policy in designs for new developments, and planners should prioritise development proposals that use sustainably produced UK timber over other materials.

**9) Ensure compensation for any loss of trees or woodland**

Loss of any type of tree cover must be compensated for by appropriate new woodland planting or restoration of existing woodland habitat, factoring in the quality as well as quantity of loss. Compensation planting or restoration work should benefit the ecosystem, landscape and local community affected by the loss, and the replacement trees should have the same level of statutory protection as those they replace. Ancient woodland is irreplaceable, and loss can never be fully compensated for.



“Trees play a vital role in enhancing health: they encourage us to be more active, decrease stress and help us connect with each other. They also filter out toxins, protect us from UV rays and keep cities cool in the hot summers. They are not just a cosmetic feature, but are part of the efficient ‘natural health service’ looking after whole communities.”

**Dr William Bird MBE**

## Recover health, hope and wellbeing with the help of trees

*Peace grows quietly in tree-lined places, where bees, fresh scents and birdsong revive our jaded senses. Sprays of greenery ensure cleaner air and clearer minds, and fitter bodies, more inclined to take a walk or meet a friend. Spirits lift and stress recedes when we stroll through healing glades. Parks and woodlands keep us well and help to quell fears of illness, ageing, loss – we breathe more freely under trees. Healthcare and tree-care go hand in hand: harness the therapeutic power of trees.*

### 1) **Develop an action plan to harness the health benefits of trees**

Trees can contribute to healthcare if their potential is explored. Develop a visionary and inspiring plan of action in partnership with the NHS to realise the preventative and health potential of trees, woods and green space for people.

### 2) **Create health opportunities through cross-sector partnerships**

Health benefits can be enjoyed from trees and woods that are performing other roles in the landscape. Encourage and enable embedded cross-sector working between the health sector and the forestry, conservation and green space management sectors.

### 3) **Create healthier environments with trees**

Bringing trees closer to people where they live and work has been shown to improve their health and wellbeing by improving air quality, raising their spirits and encouraging healthy lifestyles. Local Authorities should ensure the presence of trees where people live and work as part of their health and wellbeing strategy.

### 4) **Create spaces that heal**

Careful design and management choices can maximise the health benefits of trees. Light, open outdoor spaces surrounded by varied trees offer an uplifting and restful experience, and safe level access to green spaces with trees encourages healthier active travel choices such as cycling and walking. Inside buildings, the use of visible timber products has been shown to lower stress and improve mood. Planners, landscape architects, site managers and designers should seek to harness the health benefits of trees when defining spaces for people.

### 5) **Promote the benefits of green surroundings**

Views of trees through windows can improve concentration and lower stress for those who cannot go outside. Institutions such as schools, universities, hospitals and care homes should strive to ensure that trees can be seen through every window to maximise the benefits to occupants.

6) **Give children a daily dose of trees**

In our formative years we establish habits that stay with us for life. Schools should seek to ensure that time spent outside with trees is a frequent part of school life for students of all ages, ensuring children discover the benefits of time amongst trees. The health benefits of trees should be part of the curriculum.



“I'm very aware of the problems that people with mobility issues can have in accessing woodland. I think that's terribly sad. It's important to have these healing connections with trees. A lot of us are excluded and it's becoming harder to access really lovely places. The charter will change that.”

**Tanvir Bush, Author and Sensory Photographer**

## Make trees accessible to all

*Trees offer shared experience to every age, religion and race. In woods people can work together, sharing experiences and learning from each other and their natural surroundings. Those who no longer move with ease can still find pleasure among the trees. Cheerful voices ring through leaves, from makeshift pitches and games of make-believe. There should be room for us all beneath spreading canopies.*

### 1) **Help children build a connection with trees in school**

A connection with trees formed in childhood can last a lifetime, leading to adults who care about trees and nature and want to spend time among them for their work or leisure. Outdoor learning among and about trees should be part of the curriculum at all levels of education.

### 2) **Support landowners to open their woods to people**

Many people live close to woods that they cannot enter. Landowners should receive support and encouragement to overcome legal and practical barriers to allowing public access to their woods. Opportunities should be created for communities, landowners and organisations to explore ideas and work together to find ways for people to access and enjoy local woods in a safe, responsible way.

### 3) **Involve communities in planting and managing trees and woods**

The practical work of planting, monitoring and managing woodland habitats can involve volunteers who wish to give time to enhancing their community while spending time and gaining skills with trees. Local authorities and land managers should create opportunities for local residents to help create and manage woodland, trees and hedges in their community.

### 4) **Identify and overcome barriers to accessing woods and trees**

Everyone in society should feel able and welcome to enjoy time among trees irrespective of age, ethnicity, background and disability. Access to woodland, trees and green space should be a core driver of public funding schemes for public benefit. Local and national decision-makers need to address social and practical barriers to accessing woods and trees by ensuring affordable public transport access, and by promoting and facilitating inclusivity and diversity in these spaces.

### 5) **Promote awareness of local opportunities to access woods and trees**

People may not know that there are opportunities to spend time among trees. Clear information about local accessible woods and green spaces with trees should be available to all in society, including details of public transport links and structured opportunities for volunteering, socialising and exercising among trees.

6) **Promote diversity and inclusivity in forestry and arboriculture**

There are varied and rewarding opportunities for people of all backgrounds working with trees and timber, but these career paths are less well known and understood than others. Training opportunities and qualifications in tree and woodland management should be widely promoted as equal opportunities for all, and made accessible to everyone in society.

7) **Support the creation of community woodland groups**

Community woodland management brings people together around their local wood. Support should be made available to support the creation of local community woodland groups, including funding, peer support networks and expert advice in brokering relationships with managers of woodland on both private and public land.

8) **Foster a love of trees and woods across society**

The best way to ensure a positive future for trees and woods is to ensure that people across the UK will stand up for them. Enabling and encouraging everyone in society to access and enjoy trees should be recognised as a strategic action to ensure that the next generation will care for and protect trees.

9) **Safeguard the future of the Public Forest Estates**

The Public Forest Estates represent a large percentage of accessible woodland in the UK. The Public Forest Estates of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should be held in trust and maintained for the public benefit in perpetuity.



“It is vital we act now to manage our woods and trees so that they can adapt to the increased threat and severity of pests, disease and climate change. To ensure our trees and woods thrive into the future significant changes to conventional woodland management practices are required.”

**Simon Lloyd, CEO, Royal Forestry Society**

## Combat the threats to our habitats

*Pests, diseases and climate change pose serious threats to our precious trees. Enlightened management of woods will help ensure their future health: planting strong seeds and saplings, selecting species suited to the site, keeping forests mixed in age and kind, regular thinning, combatting invasive plants, and controlling infections and pests at the earliest sign.*

### 1) **Bring all woods into management**

Managed woods are more resilient to the threats of pests, disease and climate change than neglected woods. Effective incentives are needed for woods to be brought back into management and for all woodlands to be managed to nationally recognised standards.

### 2) **Provide clear good practice guidelines on planting and management**

Informed decisions about species choice can ensure the best chance of newly planted trees thriving to create, replenish or buffer woodland habitats. Selection of the right tree in the right place should be supported through free-to-access, site-specific decision support tools. Knowledge networks should be created and maintained so that the skills required to manage woods well are available to all those who own or manage them.

### 3) **Ensure diversity of trees across the landscape**

Woodland habitats dominated by one species of tree are vulnerable, because the impact of a pest or disease that affects that species could decimate the landscape. Diversification of tree species and ages should be encouraged in all woodland and across landscapes to enhance resilience to threats.

### 4) **Let woods breathe**

A crowded wood leads to weaker trees more vulnerable to threats. Young woodland should be regularly thinned to promote growth of healthy trees by giving them the light and space to thrive.

### 5) **Actively manage orchards for the future**

Orchards need active management to endure. Good orchard management practice, including regular pruning and mulching, should be encouraged and supported to maximise the health and resilience of orchards long term.

### 6) **Act fast on pests and invasive species**

Woods can be irreparably damaged when populations of destructive animals and plants get out of control. Woods and landscapes with trees should be monitored closely, and the rigorous and sustained control of pests and destructive invasive species should be undertaken where needed to deliver management objectives, contain outbreaks and avoid extensive damage.

### 7) **Invest in research to find solutions to tree diseases**

Knowledge is our greatest tool in protecting the woods and trees of the future. Support should be provided for research into causes and treatments of tree disease, development of more productive and resilient tree species, and the sharing of knowledge and data between professionals and through volunteer networks.

8) **Ensure an early warning system for tree disease and pests**

We need to monitor for threats closely to ensure problems are identified before they get out of control. Properly funded and co-ordinated methods to report and effectively control pests and diseases should be maintained. This should include encouraging and enabling the general public to report sightings, outbreaks or concerns.

9) **Maintain a disease-free supply chain for trees and timber**

Preventing the spread of disease is better than treatment. Seed should be regulated to ensure it meets at least the basic standard of being sourced from trees and woods certified disease free, germinated and grown in the UK before planting. Rigorous biosecurity should be in place for all trees and timber to prevent the spread of pests and diseases.



“A combination of high population and a climate in transition is defining a new set of imperatives for UK landscapes - the need for resilience and an emphasis on sustainability. Clean air and water, restored soils and sustainable food production can all be delivered by strengthening our landscapes with trees.”

**Merrick Denton-Thompson OBE**  
**President Elect, Trustee & Fellow, Landscape Institute**

## Strengthen our landscapes with trees

*From roots that bind and enrich the soil to leaves that shade and shelter, from locking carbon into timber and purifying air and water, trees make our landscapes better. Rising water swells and floods, so strengthen riverbanks with roots. Bare hills need trees to keep the soil stable, to slow the flow of nature's deluge, to shelter sheep or shade the cattle. The right tree in the right place earns its keep again and again. As farmers and landowners benefit from woods, the country will be strengthened in the years ahead.*

### 1) **Champion the positive impact of trees in the landscape**

Landscape-scale decision-making must be informed by the latest evidence and research into the impact of trees, woods and hedges. The role of hedges and trees outside woods in carbon sequestration, flood prevention, habitat networks and improving water quality needs to be recognised in government policy on planning, climate change, public health, planting and maintenance subsidies and economic development.

### 2) **Take a joined-up approach to land management**

Good practice in planting and managing trees needs to be reflected across the whole landscape to have the most positive impact. Integrated rural land management policies are needed in each country to ensure that decisions made concerning agriculture, conservation, planning and forestry are coordinated and complementary to each other.

### 3) **Value trees for all of the benefits they bring**

The positive impact of trees in a landscape is not just determined by their number. The habitat and ecosystem value of trees should factor into calculations of compensation planting or restoration, to ensure that a landscape is not left weaker than before. This means considering species variety, age and location, not just number of trees or hectares of woodland cover.

### 4) **Maximise the role of trees in flood prevention**

Trees can intercept rainwater in their canopies, improve the rate of drainage into the soil, and slow the flow of floodwater. The potential for trees to help reduce flood risk should be fully researched and reflected in land management policy, and in the design of sustainable urban drainage systems.

### 5) **Improve waterways with trees**

Tree canopies can shade rivers and streams while their roots provide stability to the soil of the banks. The role of trees beside waterways in improving fish stocks and strengthening riverbanks should be researched and promoted, and should inform land management decisions.

6) **Promote the role of trees on farms**

Trees can be an asset to farms, as well as providing benefits to the wider landscape. By improving soil stability, providing shelter and support and controlling rainwater runoff, trees can improve farming outputs while offering a profitable crop in their own right. The combining of forestry and agriculture as a way of supporting productive farming - and farming practices that enhance and protect tree cover - should be promoted and supported to ensure that agriculture is not in conflict with the need for tree cover.

7) **Recognise and support custodians of valuable landscapes**

We all benefit from landscapes rich in trees and woods. Quantify and value ecosystem services from appropriately planted and well managed trees, hedges and woods, rewarding land owners for their role in safeguarding these benefits for society.

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## Appendix 2: Organisations involved

### Tree Charter Content Leads

The following organisations led on the collation of evidence and drafting of the Tree Charter articles.

**Chair:** Woodland Trust  
Black Environment Network  
Campaign to Protect Rural England  
Centre for Sustainable Healthcare  
City of Trees  
Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management  
Common Ground  
Forest Stewardship Council UK  
Grown in Britain  
Institute of Chartered Foresters  
John Muir Trust  
Landscape Institute  
Llais y Goedwig  
National Association of Local Councils  
New Forest National Park Authority  
Northern Ireland Environment Link  
Order of Bards Ovates and Druids  
Orchard Project  
Royal Forestry Society  
Sherwood Forest Trust  
Sylva Foundation  
Wildlife Trusts  
Woodland Heritage  
Small Woodland Owners Group  
Tir Coed  
Trees for Cities  
Tree Council

## Tree Charter Steering Group

The following wider group of organisations contributed to defining the Tree Charter campaign and provided an expert review panel for the drafts of the Tree Charter.

Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association  
Ancient Tree Forum  
Arboricultural Association  
Bat Conservation Trust  
Borders Forest Trust  
Butterfly Conservation  
Caring for God's Acre  
Church of England  
Coigach Assynt Trust  
Continuous Cover Forestry Group  
Country Land and Business Association CLA  
Forest School Association  
Froglife  
Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust  
Going Wild  
GreenBlue Urban  
Legal Sustainability Alliance  
Muslim Action for Development and Environment  
National Farmers Union  
National Trust  
National Union of Students  
NHS Forest  
Order of British Druids  
Plantlife  
Reforestation Scotland  
Royal Horticultural Society  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
Small Woods Association  
Soil Association  
The British Beekeepers Association  
The Climate Coalition  
The Conservation Foundation  
The Conservation Volunteers  
The Consulting Arborist Society CIC  
The Land Trust  
The Mersey Forest  
The National Forest  
The Wild Network  
The Windsor Estate  
Trees and Design Action Group  
Woodlands.co.uk  
WWF UK