Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

England Tree Strategy

Consultation

June 2020

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

Tree.Strategy.Consultation@defra.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/defra

Acknowledgements: engagement and evidence supporting development of this consultation

Before taking on the role of Forestry Commission Chair, Sir William Worsley was the Government's National tree Champion. Sir William was tasked to work with Ministers to drive up planting rates and develop the England Tree Strategy. To do this Sir William engaged extensively with stakeholders to gather feedback on the range of issues affecting trees and woodland. This work blazed a trail for this consultation and input provided has been highly valuable, forming the basis for the policies proposed in this consultation.

We would also like to thank attendees of roundtables held by Ministers Goldsmith and Pow earlier this year, which showed the enthusiasm and expansive thinking which must underpin government's holistic approach to increasing tree-planting, and restoring the natural environment.

Other written input from the following organisations and groups has and will provide valuable points of reference:

- Beavers Trust
- ConFor
- County and Land Business Association
- Forestry Climate Change Working Group
- Grown in Britain
- Roots to Prosperity
- RSPB
- Syla Foundation
- Woodland Trust

Development of this consultation to date, and development of the final England Tree Strategy, are and will be underpinned by a sound evidence base. The work of scientists and research organisations are invaluable here, in particular the work of Forest Research commissioned through the Science and Innovation Strategy for Forestry in Great Britain. Responses to this consultation will also form part of that evidence base and the material in this document is supported by a Technical Annex.

Purpose

This consultation will inform a new England Tree Strategy which we will publish later this year, setting out our forestry policy through to 2050, and replacing the Government 2013 Forestry Policy Statement[1]. The strategy will set out policy priorities to deliver our ambitious tree planting programme. It will focus on expanding, protecting and improving our woodlands, and how trees and woodlands can connect people to nature, support the economy, combat climate change and recover biodiversity. This will ensure that trees are established and managed for the many benefits they provide for people, the economy, the climate and nature itself.

The £640m Nature for Climate Fund announced in the March 2020 budget provides significant funding for tree planting, and will be spent on the basis of paying public money for public goods. The strategy will set out how elements of this Fund will be used to best effect. Its delivery will require input from a range of partners, so we want to hear feedback through this consultation from a wide range of stakeholders.

To help us analyse responses we would like to know who you are. Our national response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies is reliant on land owners and managers choosing to plant and manage the right trees and woodland. We hope farmers, land managers and the owners of all types of land, especially those who have not considered woodland creation and management in the past will respond. We also want to hear from those who can join communities, landowners and investors to make landscape-level changes. So we would value feedback from environmental NGOs, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Community Forests, councils and Local Nature Partnerships – though this list is not exhaustive and this consultation is open to everyone.

1. **Would you like your response to be treated as confidential (please see this consultation's Data Privacy Notice?**
    - *Yes*
    - *No*

2. **What is your name?**

3. **What is your e-mail address?**

4. **Please tell us about yourself (*select one option*):**
    - *I am responding as a member of the pubic*
    - *A land owner*
    - *A land manager*
    - *A farmer*
    - *A forester*
    - *An association*

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-forestry-policy-statement

- *A professional body*
- *Researcher or scientist*
- *Developer*
- *Local Authority*
- *An environmental non-government organisation*
- *Other - please specify in no more than 25 words*

5. What is your organisation?

Contents

Foreword

A Chinese proverb tell us: the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now. Never was this truer. Urgent action is needed to address climate change and biodiversity loss, and trees can help address both. That is why I am delighted to open this public consultation on the England Tree Strategy. To deliver our goals requires collaboration with the public, charities, investors, the managers and owners of all land and the forestry and tree sectors, so this consultation seeks your valuable feedback on our policies and priorities.

It is right that coronavirus is a chief focus of government's attention. However through this challenging time, the value the nation places on access to nature has rarely been so prominent. Trees and forests support our environment, and they can support our personal and national recovery too. Growing more trees close to where we live will expand access to the benefits we can gain from contact with nature. Forestry is also key to a green economy, with the industry employing thousands and providing sustainable materials to help rebuild the national economy. By encouraging a greater use of timber in construction in a safe manner, we can capture and lock up more carbon by and support the domestic timber industry and our rural economy.

Our commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 requires us to ramp up our efforts. Trees currently capture 4% of current UK emissions. Increasing this carbon store will be a key step on the path to net zero emissions. That is why we set out in our manifesto a commitment to increase tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025, in line with the annual rate recommended by the Committee on Climate Change in 2019 to help us meet net zero.

But carbon capture is just one of the staggering range of benefits of planting trees. To leave the environment in a better state for future generations – helping to deliver our 25 Year Environment Plan– we are taking a coordinated natural capital approach, investing £640 million through a Nature for Climate Fund, and aligning the Government's strategies for nature, trees, peat, floods, and agriculture.

Because forestry is devolved, this consultation outlines policies for forestry in England, including how to deliver England's share of our UK-wide tree-planting manifesto commitment. This requires establishing trees across the country in all settings and through a range of approaches; ensuring we encourage the right tree in the right place through the use of both public money for public goods and increased private finance for tree planting. This includes planting in urban areas, integrating trees and woodlands into farmland, creating large new forests and harnessing the power of natural processes to establish woodlands where appropriate. I am especially excited by the potential of woodlands to connect areas and create wildlife corridors across the landscape, particularly alongside our water courses.

To support this, I am determined to increase uptake of our existing grant schemes, streamlining the delivery of grants, and developing partnerships to create woodlands across landscapes, like the Northumberland Forestry Partnership.

Because trees provide so many public goods, much attention is directed at how the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM) will operate, providing payments for public goods. However, we have more to do to develop ELM, and I want to repeat my message from last November[2], that anyone signing up to a grant agreement to plant woodland now will not be unfairly disadvantaged when ELM is introduced. That includes grant agreements as part of Countryside Stewardship, other current incentive schemes, and future support introduced by the Nature for Climate Fund.

With ELM and the Nature for Climate Fund in development, now is as good a time as any to take-up existing offers of grant support for tree planting and woodland establishment. These are available through Countryside Stewardship, the Woodland Creation Planning Grant and the Woodland Carbon Fund, which are already being used by more and more land owners to support large-scale afforestation.

We are also confident that the coming years will see growth in markets for ecosystem services. We have demonstrated our confidence by creating a £50m Woodland Carbon Guarantee, on the basis that private demand for carbon offsets will drive up the price of the carbon trees capture. Trees' ecosystem services increase as they mature - for example, significant carbon capture takes place once trees are at least a decade old. Planting now will therefore set landowners up to benefit from these markets in the future.

I urge you to get involved in helping the nation to plant, regenerate, protect and manage our trees, woods and forests.

[2] www.gov.uk/government/news/reassurance-to-land-managers-to-plant-trees-now

Introduction

England's trees and woodland are a key part our natural history, cultural heritage and resilient healthy future. They come in many forms; from the trees in hedges, farmland and parkland, to our ancient trees and woods, more recent conifer forests and those that line our streets. They are all important. They look after us and wildlife in many ways. Providing homes for plants and animals and places for us to relax. They clean our air, help manage our water, provide wood products as well as being beautiful features in our landscapes in their own right.

Trees and woodland are critical to supporting our national commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050. And trees also have a critical role to play in recovering nature and promoting biodiversity. Government is committed to expanding and managing our woodlands to deliver the multiple environmental, social and economic benefits trees can offer. They are integral to our long term environmental vision, set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan. The England Tree Strategy and the Nature for Climate Fund will be important in enabling that vision.

Government has made major commitments to trees in recent years. We kick-started planting of a Great Northumberland Forest, invested alongside charities in a new Northern Forest stretching from Liverpool to Hull, planted trees in towns and cities with the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and planted one million trees in schools. We have also managed a range of grants for landowners to create and manage woodlands and launched mechanisms to stimulate private investment, such as the Woodland Carbon Guarantee. But we know that we need to do more.

Our manifesto highlighted trees as an important component of wider efforts to reach net zero - reflected in our commitment to increase planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares of trees per year by 2025, in line with Committee on Climate Change recommendations. Scotland has delivered the vast majority of woodland creation for the UK in recent years, and our commitment to increase planting across the UK means that England has to do much more.

This bold ambition underpins our strategy for England over this parliament – to increase domestic nursery capacity in the short term, streamline our grants and engage landowners to take them up, and combine public and private investment to drive woodland creation at scale. Planting will increase year on year, as new programmes and partnerships are set up, which join government, communities, businesses, landowners and managers to plant available land, and create a sustainable pipeline of woodland creation projects for future years.

It will require bold and innovative approaches to create the diverse woodlands we need. This will include using natural processes such as natural colonisation, accelerating this where it is possible to realise faster carbon storage and biodiversity gains, as well as a variety of planting approaches. Government has set out an intention to use a 'natural capital' approach to make key choices and long-term decisions. So tree planting and management policy must be guided not only by maximising carbon removal, but also our wider environmental goals. England's woods and forests as a national asset deliver incredibly valuable services to society, of which timber values are about 8%[3] of the benefits provided, so we need input to design a strategy for woodland creation and management which increases and balances these different benefits. This consultation asks how we can best collectively deliver on this exciting opportunity for the long-term benefit of people, the economy and the environment.

Trees are a unique natural resource with a crucial role in meeting the challenges we face. It is therefore critical that we manage our existing treescapes and woodlands to ensure they are resilient to a changing climate, as well as pest and disease risks. By ensuring these are managed and diverse, we can protect them for years to come. Expanding and connecting woodlands will make a significant contribution to our Nature Recovery Network, and well placed woodlands also improve water quality, protect water resources and reduce flood risk where this takes place in key locations throughout water catchments. We also need to establish trees in a way that minimises excessive plastic use, in line with the 25 Year Environment Plan ambition to ultimately eliminate all avoidable plastic waste.

We also want to increase the contribution forestry can make to the economy as we aim to recover from the impacts of Covid-19. Forestry provides both environmental benefits and sustainable products for construction and clean energy. By investing the Nature for Climate Fund we will inject ambition into woodland creation, supporting a wide range of businesses, contractors, eNGOs and supply chains which get trees in the ground, manage them for the future, and make the best use of their products.

We are developing this strategy as part of a fresh domestic approach to land management across our landscapes. So this consultation has been developed in parallel with other environmental strategies flowing from the 25 Year Environment Plan, including our recent Tree Health Resilience Strategy, and the forthcoming Nature Strategy and England Peat Strategy. Integrating these should enable sustainable change at landscape-scale and collective delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan goal of improving the environment within a generation.

[3] The non-market benefits of woodland exceed the market benefits of timber by approximately 12 times; timber represents £275.4 million out of £3.3 billion total annual value of woodland in 2017.www.ons.gov.uk/releases/uknaturalcapitalwoodland

Our plans for trees are being developed alongside those to support an agricultural sector that provides food security, with trees and farming alongside each other within land holdings. It is by taking an integrated approach to the various demands on our land that we can make best use of it, balancing the demands for sustainable food with numerous other demands such as trees, nature recovery, and peat restoration. Integration is also key to helping avoid perverse effects stemming from the inappropriate use of land.

As we leave the EU our new Environment Land Management Scheme (ELMS) will replace the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). ELMS will operate on the basis of payments for public goods, and integrate with Nature for Climate Fund grants. Government is committed to ensuring that those currently in a Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement or planning on entering into an agreement will not be unfairly disadvantaged when we deploy the Nature for Climate Fund and transition to ELMS. Signing a Countryside Stewardship agreement provides a viable, long-term source of income for providing environmental benefits and is the best way to prepare for ELMS. We also want to support further development of private investment and green finance, to pay for the ecosystem services trees provide.

The consultation is split into four pillars outlined below - the roles of delivery partners and the power of good partnerships in meeting our ambitions is crucial to all four.

Expanding and **Connecting** trees and woodland	**Protecting** and **Improving** our trees and woodland	**Engaging** people with trees and woodland	**Supporting** the economy
• Establishing more trees and woodlands and ensuring they are resilient to our future climate, pests and diseases • Addressing barriers to woodland creation • Creating space for nature	• Protecting our trees and woodlands • Managing woods to recover biodiversity and increase resilience • Developing our domestic nursery capacity	• Increasing access to trees in and around towns and cities • Education and engagement with woodlands • Enabling investment in and protection of green infrastructure	• Diversifying rural economies • Enabling agro and energy forestry • Supporting our timber industry • Increasing forestry skills

Expanding and connecting our trees and woodland

Trees and woodlands deliver benefits for all of us by capturing carbon and creating space for nature. The government recognised this in the 25 Year Environment Plan and committed to increase woodland cover in England from 10% to 12% by 2060. Most new woodlands are currently created on private land, so expansion relies on the establishment of trees being an attractive option for landowners, especially as land managers look at how they manage their land holdings as we leave EU grant schemes. Increased planting on public land will also make an important contribution to delivering targets for tree and woodland expansion. This section invites your views on proposed approaches to enable woodland creation and how both public and private finance can provide support.

Ambition

The government's manifesto commitment is to increase tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares of tree planting per year by 2025. This reflects Committee on Climate Change (CCC) advice that the UK should increase planting rates to between 30,000 and 50,000 hectares per year and maintain these to 2050 to reach net zero emissions. Reaching this rate by 2025 puts us in a good position to adapt flexibly to future requirements to balance the decarbonsiation pathways of all sectors to deliver our net zero target.

Forestry is a devolved matter and so the government is working with the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to determine how best to achieve the UK manifesto commitment. Whatever approach is agreed it will mean an unprecedented increase in afforestation for England.

We must go well beyond recent and historic planting rates in England. This will require collective effort across government, stakeholder groups and land managers to pull together to meet this national challenge. It will also require building the capacity of the nursery sector and increasing the size of the forestry workforce. We recognise that England needs to play its full part and significantly ramp up planting, to contribute to the UK target, with our colleagues in the devolved governments. We will work together with them to address shared strategic challenges like workforce development and building nursery capacity.

Creating space for nature

Trees and woodlands provide space for nature. Trees and woodlands, both within and outside protected sites, are or are frequently part of priority habitats and are vital for nature and conservation. Others have a role in buffering and connecting habitats, providing essential corridors, food and sanctuary for a range of species. For example, hedgerows and trees within them, can not only store carbon but host significant biodiversity. They sustain lichens, rely on fungi, and in time their holes and wood decay provide homes and shelter for insects and animals and provide a passageway between woodland habitats.

Existing and new trees and woodlands may therefore contribute to the Nature Recovery Network (NRN). As well as restoring the protected sites at its core, the NRN aims to create or restore an additional 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat to support a coherent, national ecological network. This is a goal in our 25 Year Environment Plan which will be supported by a Nature Recovery Fund investment of up to £25 million. This Fund will bring together businesses, landowners and communities to protect and restore habitats, species and landscapes to allow nature to thrive everywhere.

In some places, natural approaches to woodland creation and management can offer opportunities to meet multiple objectives. These might include the natural colonisation of land with trees to connect and expand habitats and woodlands. It may also include the reintroduction of formerly native species, such as pine martens and encouraging the spread of others such as goshawks where they will help enhance biodiversity and protect new woodlands from damage by grey squirrels.

At the same time, when planning for new trees and woodlands, we must be sensitive to existing features and habitats, ensuring the condition of priority habitats, such as peatland are not compromised. The Natural Capital Committee recently pointed out the potential for tree planting on deep peat to increase carbon emissions[4], and since 1998 the UK Forestry Standard has included a presumption against the conversion of some priority habitats to woodland, such as deep peat or active raised bogs. In 2017 this was revised to include avoiding establishing trees on sites where doing so would compromise the hydrology of adjacent bogs and wetlands. The same also applies to pre-historic and historic landscape features and artefacts, where the UKFS expects the impact of woodland creation and forestry on historic landscape features and artefacts to be considered to ensure they are appropriately conserved.

We recognise that where woodland has been planted on, or adjacent to, high value open habitats in the past, these sites may be a priority for restoration. Balancing these interests in our land use decision making will be important, as will be spotting opportunities where woodland creation and management can be integrated with other objectives, to

4 www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-natural-capital-approach-to-attaining-net-zero-nature-based-interventions

deliver multiple benefits. An example is establishing native wet woodland on peatland edges where doing so will help to maintain the peat-body's hydrology integrity – keeping emissions locked in the ground. It is therefore vital that the England Tree Strategy is integrated with the forthcoming Peat Strategy.

Building on existing practice, we propose to explore how mapping, and local partnerships and strategies, can identify the best and most appropriate areas for new trees and woodland, including in protected landscapes such as National Parks. This work should be at a landscape-scale which considers woodland creation alongside wider objectives for those landscapes; such as supporting the rural economy, recovering nature, and improving the quality of landscapes. As a result the partnerships that develop these plans might include representatives from Local Enterprise Partnerships, County Councils, National Park Authorities and Local Nature Partnerships.

The Environment Bill is creating a new system of spatial strategies for nature called Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). These could be an important new tool for identifying suitable locations for tree planting. LNRS will create a compulsory requirement for responsible authorities to map the most valuable existing habitat for nature, set out proposals for creating or improving habitat and agree priorities for nature's recovery. These priorities will include consideration of the role that nature based solutions can play in addressing wider environmental issues such as carbon sequestration for climate mitigation.

Planting trees for rivers and water

Establishing the right trees and woodlands in the right places along rivers and within water catchments presents great opportunities to help regulate water flow to reduce flood risk, stabilise riverbanks, cool water with their shade, reduce pollutants that might otherwise drain into watercourses. They can also provide homes for wildlife and corridors along which they can pass. In places these could be created using a mix of direct seeding, planting and natural colonisation.

Where water courses pass close to trees and through existing woodland they can pick up woody debris. This can serve as natural leaky dams which slow water flow, providing a natural form of flood management, helping sediment settle, and providing new habitats within the water course.

The government is therefore keen to support tree planting along watercourses and rivers and within water catchments where this will deliver these benefits. Linking back to the need to plan at a landscape-scale, we want to encourage partnership working that can deliver corridors of riparian woodland, building on existing partnerships that work to

improve the water environment through the catchment based approach[5], and best practice advice on woodland planting in the Evidence Base on Working with Natural Processes[6] to reduce flood risk.

Helping landowners establish trees and woodlands

The government recognises that establishing trees and woodland represents a significant investment and land use change for landowners, and this has constrained the level of tree planting historically. We therefore welcome views on the barriers to establishing trees and woodlands that farmers, land managers and land owners face, and how government can overcome these to increase tree cover and deliver wider ecosystem benefits.

We want tree establishment and woodland creation to be economically attractive for all farmers, land managers and land owners, be easy to access, and ensure the quality of woodland design and planting is sustainable and delivers multiple benefits. To help achieve this we believe we need to simplify our offer of grant support for tree establishment and woodland creation.

In the longer-term the establishment of trees will be an important pillar of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) which is replacing the Common Agricultural Policy. ELMS will operate on the basis of payments for public goods, and we will be working hard to ensure the support it offers aligns with that under CS and the grants for woodland creation provided under the Nature for Climate Fund so there is a consistent offer of support. This will provide certainly to those considering tree planting - there is no time like the present, economically as well as environmentally to establish trees.

We also want to explore the potential for new partnership models between land owners and investors that can bring more land owners into forestry, developing further the ideas which Roots to Prosperity[7] has developed in the north of England[8].

The Environment Bill[9] will introduce an exciting new mechanism for the environment: Conservation Covenants. These will be private agreements entered into voluntarily, but which become legally binding once agreed. They are made between a landowner and responsible body, such as a conservation charity or public body or for-profit body. They conserve (protect, restore or enhance) the natural or heritage features of the land for the public good. Forestry bodies, charities and landowners have engaged with the

[5] www.catchmentbasedapproach.org/

[6] www.catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/working-with-natural-processes-evidence-base/

[7] www.rootstoprosperity.org/
[8] See England Tree Strategy Consultation - Technical Annex for an introduction to this work
[9] https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2019-21/environment.html

development of this approach and we are interested to see how these may be used to create and manage woodlands, delivering public goods.

Over the past ten years, only 1% of woodland creation proposals have required consent under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations in order to proceed. Despite changes to the regulations that control woodland creation, aiming to provide greater confidence in the timeframes for decision making, concerns remain that there is uncertainty in the regulation of woodland creation, which is a barrier to woodland expansion. We want to look at how we can improve the process to obtain consent, while still protecting valuable habitat. Local partnership working to determine where woodland would be best located could help with this.

In all cases, demonstrating compliance with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) is essential to enabling woodland creation plans. We believe the UKFS remains the key benchmark that proposals should be prepared against and doing so can address the perception that regulation is a barrier to woodland creation.

Working together to create landscape level change

Increasing tree and woodland cover at the scale required by net zero, and our international and domestic commitments to recover biodiversity, will require woodland restoration and creation that will result in changes to our landscapes. The benefits of creating new woodlands and the management of existing woodland will need to be understood and planned for at a landscape scale. This is an exciting opportunity which will require collective effort to encourage widespread interest and support for woodland creation across land owners, business and the local communities that will see the change.

We believe part of the approach to this should be to bring together the energies of local communities, local government, businesses, farmers, other land managers and investors in empowered and informed local partnerships. These partnerships could decide local priorities for woodland creation, identifying the best places to plant the right trees. For example, they could map and plan tree planting to protect, create and connect habitats as a contribution to the Nature Recovery Network, safeguard pre-historic and historic features, provide access for people, and naturally manage water flow and quality as part of a catchment based approach. Around urban areas they might consider the potential for more trees and woodland on greenbelt land which provides opportunity for wider public access to woodlands closer to where people live. By empowering local communities through this process we hope to generate local support for, and where possible participation, in afforestation at a new scale.

This partnership approach is supporting the new Great Northumberland Forest where the county council, is bringing together key stakeholders in farming, forestry, land management, conservation and other sectors together to develop plans for woodland expansion. In time, this approach could be integrated with Local Nature Recovery Strategies, as being proposed in the government's landmark Environment Bill.

Expanding tree and woodland cover on public land

The Public Forest Estate

Woodlands provide public goods and require long-term investment. The Public Forest Estate, of over 253,000 hectares in England, is managed by Forestry England for the benefit of the nation. Originally created through government investment, expansion in recent years has been slower and funded through reinvesting returns from Forestry England's commercial activities. Given the need to increase the rate of woodland planting immediately to meet net zero commitments and to recover biodiversity, we propose to use public money to expand the PFE faster by acquiring land on the open market, in line with our strategic objective to create new public woodlands that deliver for people, biodiversity and the economy.

Planting trees on other public land

To achieve our environmental aims, including tree planting, we must consider how government can work together to recover nature on the land available to us. We propose to look at where trees can be established on the existing public estate. This will need to balance with the operational requirements of that estate – whether as training areas for the armed forces, or the green surroundings of hospitals and schools.

As part of the development of the next round of Greening Government Commitments, we are reviewing the inclusion of a commitment for each department to identify where it can increase tree planting across its estate. Public and charitable organisations could have an important role to play in helping to plant and manage new woodlands on such land.

Restoring degraded land

Land is a finite and precious resource in our island nation, and we need to find space to establish more trees. Where industrial use has degraded land we should restore it. This has been achieved by the National Forest Company and Forestry England, who have planted former coal mines, and the Community Forests, who have turned many areas of degraded land into varied woodland landscapes for local people to enjoy and wildlife to thrive in. We therefore propose to build on these examples and create woodland on degraded land, including landfill sites.

We estimate there could be at least 13,000 hectares of vacant and derelict land and 84,068 hectares of historic land fill sites in England. Such restoration projects tend to be complex, require sustained investment, but can deliver significant benefits if done in the right way.

Funding future woodland creation

Woodland creation and tree establishment in England has historically relied on government support, which will continue to be provided in this parliament, and by the future ELMS. But as interest grows in green finance for ecosystem services, such as offsetting carbon emissions, improving water management, or improving air quality, and with biodiversity net gain soon to be introduced by the Environment Bill, there is an opportunity to fund woodland creation through private investment.

Combining public and private finance will be an important objective for the support provided through the Nature for Climate Fund and ELMS. We want to understand how private investment for ecosystem services can be leveraged and channelled into woodland creation, for example by further developing the market for domestic carbon credits, which are generated as trees grow.

Supplying the trees we need to plant and assuring their biosecurity

The UK's nurseries currently produce over 100 million trees each year for forestry. This seems a lot but the market for planting stock operates across the UK and demand over recent years has usually outstripped supply. A significant increase in capacity is required to meet increasing demands for new woodland creation.

The nursery sector lacks the certainty of demand needed to invest in increasing its capacity and to grow a wider variety of species to diversify our woodlands. Providing such certainty will need strong co-operation and planning between government and the nursery industry to plan ahead for species and volume requirements; with information that provides nurseries with early warning of shortfalls in demand.

Planting stock needs to be bio secure and from a known provenance. That is why we want more planting material to be sown and grown in the UK and support the Plant Healthy Assurance Scheme launched in February 2020.

Expanding and connecting our woodlands: questions

6. Which actions would address the financial barriers that prevent the creation of new woodland? (*select all that apply*)

a) Consolidating the current range of woodland creation grants into one
b) Increasing the payment rates for incentives for woodland creation
c) Widening the eligibility criteria for applicants to our woodland creation grants so more applicants can apply
d) Widening the eligibility criteria for the type of woodlands and tree planting that can be funded
e) Providing a clear explanation and guarantees of how trees planted between now and 2024 will be considered under Environmental land management Scheme
f) A quicker approval process for grant agreements
g) Support if trees fail to establish due to no fault of the owner (for example, due to tree health or severe weather)
h) Introducing mechanisms that provide an annual cash flow in the woodlands' early years
i) Introducing mechanisms to realise a secure long-term cash flow for ecosystem services
j) Introducing measures to stimulate more private investment (e.g. green finance) in woodland creation
k) Developing new approaches to partnerships between land owners and woodland investors or managers which enable the landowner to derive an ongoing annual income from the land
l) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

7. **Which actions would be most effective in addressing the financial barriers that prevent the creation of new woodland? (*select a up to three options*)**

a) Consolidating the current range of woodland creation grants into one
b) Increasing the payment rates for incentives for woodland creation
c) Widening the eligibility criteria for applicants to our woodland creation grants so more applicants can apply
d) Widening the eligibility criteria for the type of woodlands and tree planting that can be funded
e) Providing a clear explanation and guarantees of how trees planted between now and 2024 will be considered under Environmental land management Scheme
f) A quicker approval process for grant agreements
g) Support if trees fail to establish due to no fault of the owner (for example, due to tree health or severe weather)
h) Introducing mechanisms that provide an annual cash flow in the woodlands' early years
i) Introducing mechanisms to realise a secure long-term cash flow for ecosystem services
j) Introducing measures to stimulate more private investment (e.g. green finance) in woodland creation

k) *Developing new approaches to partnerships between land owners and woodland investors or managers which enable the landowner to derive an ongoing annual income from the land*
l) *Other (if added, your own entry to question 6)*

8. Woodlands provide a range of ecosystem services that provide benefits to businesses and society. How could government better encourage private investment in establishing trees and woodland creation? (*Maximum 150 word response*)

9. Which actions would address the non-financial barriers to the creation of new woodland? (*select all that apply*)

a) *Consolidating the current range of woodland creation grants into one*
b) *Providing access to better information on the income streams well managed woodland can provide*
c) *Providing land managers with better access to expert advice on woodland creation and forestry knowledge and skills*
d) *Providing the investment community with access to expert advice on woodland creation and forestry knowledge and skills*
e) *Outreach to present the benefits of trees and forestry to land managers*
f) *Outreach to present the benefits of trees and forestry to the investment community*
g) *Outreach to present the benefits of trees and forestry to local communities*
h) *Changing policy so it does not treat afforestation as a permanent land use change*
i) *Increasing availability and access to contractors to plant and maintain the trees*
j) *Increasing availability of desired bio secure planting material*
k) *Educate and enthuse a new generation to expand the forestry industry*
l) *Developing new approaches to partnerships between land owners and woodland investors or managers which enable the landowner to retain ownership of the land*
m) *Developing a supply of diverse and locally-appropriate seed and planting material by supporting community tree nurseries and other small nurseries that provide UK sourced and grown trees.*
n) *Providing best practice guidance on how best to achieve tree cover through natural establishment (e.g. most suitable locations, ground preparation, fencing requirements and decisions on management over time).*
o) *Other - please specify in no more than 25 words*

10. **Which actions would be most effective in addressing the non-financial barriers to the creation of new woodland? (*select up to three options*)**

a) *Consolidating the current range of woodland creation grants into one*
b) *Providing access to better information on the income streams well managed woodland can provide*
c) *Providing land managers with better access to expert advice on woodland creation and forestry knowledge and skills*

d) *Providing the investment community with access to expert advice on woodland creation and forestry knowledge and skills*
e) *Outreach to present the benefits of trees and forestry to land managers*
f) *Outreach to present the benefits of trees and forestry to the investment community*
g) *Outreach to present the benefits of trees and forestry to local communities*
h) *Changing policy so it does not treat afforestation as a permanent land use change*
i) *Increasing availability and access to contractors to plant and maintain the trees*
j) *Increasing availability of desired bio secure planting material*
k) *Educate and enthuse a new generation to expand the forestry industry*
l) *Developing new approaches to partnerships between land owners and woodland investors or managers which enable the landowner to retain ownership of the land*
m) *Developing a supply of diverse and locally-appropriate seed and planting material by supporting community tree nurseries and other small nurseries that provide UK sourced and grown trees.*
n) *Providing best practice guidance on how best to achieve tree cover through natural establishment (e.g. most suitable locations, ground preparation, fencing requirements and decisions on management over time)*
o) *Other (if added, your own entry to question 9)*

11. Which actions would address the regulatory barriers that prevent the creation of new woodland? (*select all that apply*)

a) *Providing access to better guidance on how to meet the UK Forestry Standard*
b) *Local partners agreeing and setting priorities for woodland creation and other habitat restoration across landscapes*
c) *Enabling regulatory decisions by the Forestry Commission which reflect the national obligation to meet net zero emissions by 2050 and achieve the investment in natural capital set out in our 25 Year Environment Plan*
d) *Implementing a joint approach to land management across central government and its agencies including those responsible for protected landscapes*
e) *Providing a clear explanation and guarantees of how trees planted between now and 2024 will be considered under Environmental Land Management Scheme*
f) *Reduce the time and costs associated with Environmental Impact Assessment for afforestation*
g) *Other -please specify in no more than 25 words*

12. Which actions would be most effective in addressing the regulatory barriers that prevent the creation of new woodland? (*select up to three options*)

a) *Providing access to better guidance on how to meet the UK Forestry Standard*
b) *Local partners agreeing and setting priorities for woodland creation and other habitat restoration across landscapes*
c) *Enabling regulatory decisions by the Forestry Commission which reflect the national obligation to meet net zero emissions by 2050 and achieve the investment in natural capital set out in our 25 Year Environment Plan*
d) *Implementing a joint approach to land management across central government and its agencies including those responsible for protected landscapes*

e) *Providing a clear explanation and guarantees of how trees planted between now and 2024 will be considered under Environmental Land Management Scheme*
f) *Reduce the time and costs associated with Environmental Impact Assessment for afforestation*
g) *Other (if added, your own entry to question 11)*

13. How can we most effectively support the natural establishment of trees and woodland in the landscape? (*Maximum 100 words*)

14. Are there any other actions - beyond the options you have already selected or submitted - that would help land owners and managers to transform the level of woodland creation and increase the number of non-woodland trees in England? (*Maximum 150 words*)

15. Which of the following actions would be most effective in helping expand woodland creation in locations which deliver water, flood risk benefits and nature recovery? (*select up to three options*)

a) *Widening the eligibility criteria for woodland creation grants so more applicants can apply and more forms of woodland are eligible*
b) *Widening the eligibility criteria for woodland creation grants so more sizes of woodland are eligible*
c) *Increasing grant payments for tree planting along water courses, steep sided slopes and difficult sites*
d) *Quicker approval process for grant agreements*
e) *Providing a clear explanation and guarantees of how trees planted between now and 2024 will be considered under Environmental Land Management Scheme*
f) *Implementing a joint approach to land management across government, including authorities responsible for protected landscapes*
g) *Providing better access to advice and guidance on woodland creation, forestry expertise and training*
h) *Other - please specify in no more than 25 words*

16. What role could the nation's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) play in increasing woodland cover? (*Maximum 150 word response*)

Protecting and improving our trees and woodlands

We want our trees and woodland ecosystems to thrive in the 21st century. As we embark on a great national effort to increase tree planting and cover, we must ensure that the trees and woods we have now, and those we establish are protected and improved, continue to support wildlife and deliver ecosystem services.

Improving protection for trees and woodland

The vast majority of tree felling is overseen by the Forestry Commission, through a licencing system. This system requires a licence to fell trees where the volume of timber in the trees that would be felled is over a certain threshold (five cubic metres – around five telegraph poles). The licenses ensure the felling is appropriate and, where necessary, replanting will take place.

Despite this system, our trees and woodlands can be over exploited or even lost through unlicenced felling. Given the range of benefits trees and woodland provide, their high heritage and amenity value to residents, and the time it takes for them to develop, we need to be alert to potential overexploitation and respond accordingly.

Our ancient woodlands are home to biodiversity which has built up over centuries, at least 400 years, making them very special and irreplaceable habitat. Similarly our ancient and veteran trees are heritage features with great ecological value which is also irreplaceable. The value of these woodlands and trees is recognised in the 25 Year Environment Plan. Restoration of ancient woodland sites currently planted with non-native trees back to native tree cover is a long standing aim of government policy and could ensure such woodlands better contribute to the Nature Recovery Network.

There are already strong protections for ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees in the planning system. The government remains committed to their protection and in 2018 we strengthened the protections; recognising them as irreplaceable habitats in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and accompanying guidance. The NPPF also requires that any development resulting in the loss or deterioration of such irreplaceable habitats should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and only if a suitable compensation strategy exists.

This update to the NPPF reflects an important milestone and we want to ensure that these strengthened protections are applied appropriately throughout the planning system. We would also like to better understand the different factors which influence the size and use of buffer zones between ancient woodlands and developments to maximise their effectiveness.

One particular risk to all trees and woodland is the unlicenced pre-emptive clearance of trees ahead of planning applications to develop land[10]. Development is an important part of our economy as we build houses, towns and infrastructure to support our population and economy. We want to ensure that development invests in the environment and we need to see trees as a key feature in towns and cities with equal status to green and other built infrastructure. The requirement for development to achieve biodiversity net gain[11], which is being introduced through the Environment Bill should help to discourage the loss of woodland to development, reduce the risk of pre-emptive habitat and tree clearance, and help to ensure that any losses are properly compensated for. Ensuring that environmental protections are not sidestepped in advance of development is key to safeguarding habitats and spatial planning. Biodiversity net gain will seek to address the risk of pre-emptive habitat and tree clearance in advance of development.

Preparing for our future climate

Our climate is changing at a faster rate than many of our native trees may be able to adapt to. In the future, an average global temperature rise of four degrees Celsius may result in UK woodlands facing summer days at least five degrees warmer than present day; increasing risks of drought in summer and conversely, flooding in the winter months.

To reduce these risks we must adapt our management of woodlands to the future climate, and maximise the benefits woodland creation can provide to support adaptation measures, such as natural flood management.

We will also ensure that trees and woodlands improve the resilience of our wildlife by expanding habitats and improving their connectivity, so species can migrate between areas in response to a changing climate and other pressures. We propose a range of approaches to diversify treescapes and woodlands in a bio-secure manner. This includes using natural processes and sourcing disease-free seed to grow in England. By sourcing seed from trees in countries with climates similar to that we expect the UK to have in future, we can prepare our trees and woodlands for that future climate.

[10] At least 43% of the reports of alleged illegal felling in 2019-20 were promoted by development (source: Forestry Commission)

[11] www.gov.uk/government/consultations/biodiversity-net-gain-updating-planning-requirements

Protecting plant health

Pest and diseases such as ash dieback, *Phytopthora ramorum,* and oak processionary moth, which are all present in England, illustrate the damaging impacts pest and diseases have. We will continue to lead efforts to strengthen biosecurity and build resilience to protect and enhance our trees, woods and forests, to establish and manage diverse and healthy treescapes for the future. In the Tree Health Resilience Strategy we set out an action plan to reduce the risk of threats occurring and to strengthen our natural resource to better withstand future threats.

To minimise the risk of future plant health outbreaks, we need to maintain high standards of biosecurity in the supply chain. This is why we have supported the development of the Plant Healthy assurance scheme, launched in February 2020, and the underpinning Plant Health Management Standard. It takes two to three years from seed collection to a sapling being ready to plant and 15 years for the larger 'standards' often used for landscaping, so we need a pipeline of disease free and diverse seeds and saplings. We therefore propose to support enhanced domestic tree nursery capacity and find ways to allow suppliers and tree planters' time to source appropriate planting stock.

Managing our woodlands and trees

Managing woodlands can support the timber industry and improve habitat. In England there has been a long-term trend of woodland falling out of management – today only 59% of England's woodlands are in active management. This has had negative impacts on habitat quality. Surveys of ecological condition for the National Forest Inventory survey show only 9% of woodland generally and only 36% of woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)[12] are in 'favourable condition'. The 25 Year Environment Plan set a target of 75% of all SSSIs being in favourable condition by 2042.

To improve the biodiversity and resilience of woodlands, we need to increase woodland management in general and encourage continuous cover forestry[13] which increases the woodland's diversity in terms of the trees' age and species. This diversity maximises the woodland's resilience to climate change and pest and disease outbreaks.

Woodland management will involve harvesting some trees to use as timber – a sustainable building material which locks in captured carbon – and fuel to displace fossil fuels. In appropriate locations, pieces of felled timber can be used to create leaky woody dams to support flood alleviation.

[12] These designations are made by Natural England when a site is considered to have features of special interest, such as its wildlife, geology or landform.
[13] Continuous cover forestry is an approach to sustainable forest management where the forest is maintained in a permanently irregular structure through the selection and harvesting of individual trees.

Management also needs to ensure there is sufficient deadwood and enough veteran trees to support the specialist organisms that depend on them. Where invasive non-native plants pose a threat to woodland's health and biodiversity we need to control their spread.

Outside woodland - in fields, hedges, wood pasture, orchards and parkland - trees are key features of the landscape and natural environment. However they are at risk. Research shows the number of hedgerow trees is falling, with losses increasing due to the impact of pests and disease while ancient and veteran trees are also at high risk from climate change and neglect. We need to retain and expand this resource ensuring they are resilient to our future climate, pests and diseases; and make sure that management of land around them does not result in damage – taking action in the short term to protect a future generation of ancient trees.

We need to diversify our treescapes and woodlands through planting and replanting, including using provenances of native species and new species that are better suited to the future climate, and also by making more use of natural regeneration where this is effective. This will help ensure trees and woodlands continue to grow vigorously in our future climate and contribute to the mitigation of climate change.

Protecting young trees and woodland condition

Young broadleaf trees are vulnerable to browsing from mammals such as deer which eat young shoots and saplings while grey squirrels strip tree bark, deforming trees, reducing their economic value. Too many deer can also decimate woodland's flora and structure, eating away the ground and shrub layers, stripping away food and shelter for wildlife, and preventing the natural regeneration of trees.

The successful management of deer and grey squirrels takes time and effort and requires a co-ordinated approach across land holdings. This activity is important if we are to expand and regenerate our woodlands, increase the range of plants that live in them and reduce the need for other forms of tree protection.

In many situations tree guards are required for successful tree establishment, and experience to date shows that plastic tree guards are very effective: protecting trees in their early years and providing a sheltered micro climate that supports early growth. While current practices seek to ensure plastic tree guards are recovered after use, we need to explore and encourage the development and use of effective plastic free alternatives.

Regulation

Forestry Act

Tree felling is governed by the Forestry Act. This works well for the most part but dates from 1967 and can be limiting. For example, once issued, a licence to fell trees cannot be revoked. The Act also limits the conditions which can be placed on a felling licence so they can relate only to the replanting of the felled trees. We believe there would be benefit in looking at the Act again to allow for the withdrawal or suspension of licences and widen the conditions that can be included in a licence to cover other activities, to support woodland management in line with the UK Forestry Standard. Examples of this could include conditions on the timing of forestry works, actions to control pests and diseases, biosecurity and record keeping.

UK Forestry Standard

The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) brings together all of the requirements for sustainable forest management; including the design and planting of new woodland and forests. It is presented in an easily accessible format that highlights those activities required to comply with regulation. It also offers guidance and encourages best practice.

Implementation of the UKFS is largely self-regulating. It is only monitored when land managers require regulatory approvals and many of the practices expected in the UKFS are not required by regulation. Compliance with the UKFS, however, is a condition for the receipt of government funding for tree planting and woodland management.

Tree Preservation Orders

Local planning authorities can make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) if it appears to them to be ‘expedient in the interests of amenity to make provision for the preservation of trees or woodlands in their area’.

Government guidance sets out how to assess amenity and determining expediency, but ‘Amenity’ is not defined in law, so authorities exercise judgment when deciding whether it is within their powers to make a TPO. Factors include visibility and the public impact of removal. Tightening the criteria for TPOs could improve consistency in the application of the policy, and provide the opportunity to include more relevant factors to the environment, such as carbon sequestration.

Feedback from stakeholders has shown us that TPOs are valued as a way to protect trees, but work is needed to bring the system up-to-date and ensure they are applied and enforced with consistency. Greater clarification of the criteria for making a TPO, including consideration of ecosystem service values, would be helpful.

Protecting and improving our woodlands: questions

17. Which actions would be most effective to increase protection for trees and woodland from unsustainable management? (*select up to three options*)

a) Introducing measures to support compliance with the UK Forestry Standard
b) More effective information sharing between government departments and their delivery bodies to inform decisions impacting on woodland, including to prevent woodland loss
c) Introducing clearer processes for licencing tree felling, with felling licences that can be suspended, withdrawn or superseded
d) Greater penalties for non-compliance with the requirements of the Forestry Act
e) Powers to set wider felling licence conditions, for example to enable enforcement of compliance with the UK Forestry Standard
f) A clearer policy presumption that all trees felled without a licence will be replaced (except in exceptional circumstances)
g) Refining the process of making Tree Preservation Orders, and clarifying the criteria to improve consistency in application of the policy across local authorities
h) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

18. Which actions would best help the planning system support better protection and enhancement of the ancient and wider woodland environment and trees? (*select up to two options*)

a) Providing support to fully complete revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory (to include ancient woodlands under two hectares in area)
b) Commissioning research into effective size and use of buffer zones around woodland for different impacts
c) Providing better monitoring and recording of decisions on planning applications affecting ancient woodland
d) Sharing best practice guidance and training to support implementation of National Planning Policy Framework policy on ancient woodland with local authority planners
e) Encouraging more woodland to be brought into management where impacted by development
f) More effective information sharing between agencies and local planning authorities to inform decision making impacting on woodland including to prevent woodland loss
g) Refining the process of making Tree Preservation Orders, and clarifying the criteria to improve consistency in application of the policy across local authorities.
h) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

19. What actions would be most effective in reducing the use of plastics in forestry? (*select one option*)

a) Providing support to land managers for deer control and fencing
b) Supporting further testing and trial of non-plastic alternatives such as tree guards
c) Introducing stronger control on the recovery and disposal of plastics in grant agreements and public sector contracts for woodland creation and management
d) Promoting the use of non-plastic tree guards
e) Other (please specify in no more than 25 words)

20. Which actions would overcome financial barriers to woodland management? (*select all that apply*)

a) Providing better information on timber prices, grant schemes and market opportunities for wood and non-wood products
b) Providing grant support for a wider range of management activities
c) Providing grant support for the restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodlands Sites (PAWS)
d) Providing support for woodland infrastructure such as roading
e) Providing grants or loans for equipment, for example, harvesters
f) Support to increase the productivity/supply chains for woodland products
g) Support for land owner collaboration in woodland management
h) Government requiring more domestic timber through procurement policies
i) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

21. Which actions would be most effective at overcoming the financial barriers to woodland management? (*select up to three options*)

a) Providing better information on timber prices, grant schemes and market opportunities for wood and non-wood products
b) Providing grant support for a wider range of management activities
c) Providing grant support for the restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodlands Sites (PAWS)
d) Providing support for woodland infrastructure such as roading
e) Providing grants or loans for equipment, for example, harvesters
f) Support to increase the productivity/supply chains for woodland products
g) Support for land owner collaboration in woodland management
h) Government requiring more domestic timber through procurement policies
i) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

22. Which actions would address the non-financial barriers to woodland management? (*select all that apply*)

a) Providing user friendly woodland management services aimed at 'non forester' woodland owners

b) *Ensuring public recognition of woodlands that are managed sustainably (for example, like Green Flag awards[14])*
c) *Providing better communication of the benefits and need for woodland management with land managers and investors*
d) *Providing better information on timber prices, grant schemes and market opportunities for wood and non-wood products*
e) *Training to increase the forestry skills capacity in agricultural workers*
f) *Other - please specify in no more than 25 words*

23. Which actions would be most effective at overcoming the non-financial barriers to woodland management? (*select a maximum of three options*)

a) *Providing user friendly woodland management services aimed at 'non forester' woodland owners*
b) *Ensuring public recognition of woodlands that are managed sustainably (for example like Green Flag awards)*
c) *Providing better communication of the benefits and need for woodland management with land managers and investors*
d) *Providing better information on timber prices, grant schemes and market opportunities for wood and non-wood products*
e) *Training to increase the forestry skills capacity in agricultural workers*
f) *Other (if added, your own entry to question 21)*

24. Which actions would overcome the regulatory barriers to woodland management? (*select all that apply*)

a) *Streamlining delivery of current regulations (for example, self-service felling licences for tree felling proposals that would not reduce woodland cover)*
b) *Placing responsibility for complying with woodland regulation on the woodland manager rather than the woodland owner*
c) *Placing a legal obligation on all land owners to manage their woodland*
d) *Other - please specify in no more than 25 words*

25. Which actions would be most effective at overcoming the regulatory barriers to woodland management? (*select one option*)

a) *Streamlining delivery of current regulations (for example, self-service felling licences for tree felling proposals that would not reduce woodland cover)*
b) *Placing responsibility for complying with woodland regulation on the woodland manager rather than the woodland owner*
c) *Placing a legal obligation on all land owners to manage their woodland*
d) *Other (if added, your own entry to question 23)*

[14] www.greenflagaward.org.uk/

26. If you own and/or manage woodland(s) that is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) what actions would help you most to bring that woodland(s) into management? (*Maximum 100 word response*)

27. Which of the following actions would be most effective in improving plant biosecurity across England's trees and woodlands? (*pick up to two options*)

a) *Increasing the number of nurseries that meet the 'Plant healthy' management standard*
b) *Providing better best practice guidance and information about biosecurity*
c) *Introducing conditions which require suppliers to meet the "Plant Healthy' management standard for those public sector contracts and government grants that relate to tree planting and restocking*
d) *Amending planning policy to encourage local planning authorities to source trees from suppliers who meet the 'Plant healthy' management standard*
e) *Sharing the Forestry England's experience and case studies*
f) *Managing the impact of invasive non-native plants which provide a pathway for disease through targeted action, ongoing management and monitoring, and wider education*
g) *Developing a supply of diverse and locally-appropriate seed and planting material by supporting community tree nurseries and other small nurseries that provide UK sourced and grown trees*
h) *Other - please specify in no more than 25 words*

28. Which of the following actions are or would be most appropriate for England's trees and woodlands to contribute to climate change mitigation and helping to achieve net zero? (*pick up to three options*)

a) *Bringing woods into management to enhance their future resilience to climate change and secure greenhouse gas emissions reduction in other sectors through wood replacing 'carbon intensive' materials (acknowledging that this will lead to a short to medium reduction on carbon stored in the woodland)*
b) *Planting UKFS-compliant productive forests to provide a strong carbon sink over the coming decades and then a source of sustainable timber to meet the needs of future generations*
c) *Planting predominantly native woodland to act as a long term store of carbon*
d) *Establishing 'energy forest' plantations (short rotation coppice and short rotation forestry) to satisfy future biomass demand for bioenergy with carbon capture and storage*
e) *Encouraging agroforestry to increase the amount of carbon stored on productive farmland*
f) *Strengthening the protection of all woodland to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation*

29. Which of these actions would be most effective in reducing damage to trees and woodlands caused by deer? (*select up to two options*)

a) Develop a national policy on sustainable deer management and control measures
b) Facilitate landscape scale control by land managers
c) Deer control as a requirement of grant or felling agreements
d) Incentives for the management of deer
e) Supporting a range of approaches to tree protection, including fencing and other alternatives to plastic tree guards
f) Better advice and guidance on the value of and options to control damage by deer
g) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

30. Which of these actions would be most effective in reducing the damage to trees and woodlands caused by grey squirrels? (*select up to two options*)

a) Making grey squirrel control a requirement of grant or felling agreements
b) Providing incentives for the management of grey squirrel
c) Researching contraception to prevent breeding
d) Reintroducing animals to help control squirrels, such as pine martens and goshawks
e) Providing better advice and guidance on grey squirrel control
f) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

Engaging people with trees and woodland

Trees should benefit everyone, in our daily lives - wherever we live. In our 25 Year Environment Plan we stated that the provision of more and better quality green infrastructure[15] - including urban and suburban trees - will make towns and cities attractive places to live and work, and bring about key long-term improvements in people's health. As part of this, our manifesto sets an ambition to see all new streets lined with trees, and we wish to see more trees planted in urban and suburban areas overall.

The urban forest – all the trees in urban areas, in public and private spaces – is a key part of our green infrastructure. It provides services for us such as cooling the air and providing shade, improving our health and wellbeing and make more attractive places for us to live, travel and work. Evidence shows that these benefits can also lead to wider economic gains, for example reducing costs associated with flood damage and potential increases in the values of properties.

The urban forest also improves biodiversity by creating habitats and urban tree planting will be an important tool for ensuring the Nature Recovery Network reaches into towns and cities. Greening the urban landscape is also a critical part of climate change adaptation; managing increasing risks from over-heating and surface water flooding.

Tree canopy cover in England is 16% on average in urban areas, but this varies greatly between and within towns and cities. To help address this, we need to find ways to better value, plant, and protect trees. We also need to find ways to address the cost and funding challenges of planting and maintaining urban trees, ensuring appropriate guidance enables there to be enough space for trees. We need to see them as a key feature in towns and cities with equal status to green and other built infrastructure.

Street trees

Street trees are a key component of the urban forest and critical in delivering its services. The government therefore set out a commitment that all new streets should be lined with trees. The planting and longevity of street trees requires appropriate skills and resources, from early planning, through effective planting and maintenance.

We welcome the report by the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission on how to promote and increase the use of high-quality design for new build homes and neighbourhoods. This included recommendations to plant more street trees, create urban orchards and plant fruit trees for homes. We want to ensure that government, communities and businesses can come together to see how these can be delivered.

[15] Green infrastructure in new development, upgrading of existing green infrastructure, retrofitting of new green infrastructure where provision is poor.

The National Design Guide recognises the importance of trees in new development, and sets out how landscaping, including streets being tree-lined wherever possible, will be considered as part of the forthcoming National Model Design Code. To help deliver our commitment, we also intend to amend the National Planning Policy Framework to set clear expectations for new developments.

We need to ensure appropriate trees are incorporated in developments, in ways that they can thrive, be easy to maintain, and minimise the risk of damage or interference with buildings or infrastructure. Once planted, maintenance then needs to be appropriately funded and managed - responsibilities for this maintenance tends to sit with highways authorities where the road has been adopted, or through alternative mechanisms on private roads.

With appropriate steps taken, our commitment to tree-lined streets, and the benefits these will bring, can be realised. As we want to see all new streets lined with trees, we welcome views on any barriers to establishing and maintaining street trees, from the early stages of planning through to the effective planting of the trees and maintenance over their lifetime. We also welcome views on how these barriers can be overcome.

Developing green and healthy places to live

Urban trees provide immediate benefits to those living and working nearby, and given the varying potential for tree planting between local areas, we believe leadership to increase tree cover is best taken at the local level. Tree canopy cover targets could help local authorities to value trees as green assets, and set out achievable ambitions to plant and protect more trees - responding to the climate emergency. Tree and Woodland Strategies produced by some local authorities demonstrate that local authorities value trees as green assets. Production of these by more Local Authorities could then be used to engage communities and businesses in common action to achieve their ambitions.

All Government departments developing new policy are responsible for considering whether there will be a new duty on local government as a result, and if so, must consider any cost implications through the New Burdens process. We stand ready to ensure LAs are appropriately funded in line with the New Burdens Doctrine by scrutinising the potential additional costs to local authorities through the new burdens assessment process.

Mandatory biodiversity net gain, proposed in the Environment Bill, will help to ensure that developers can demonstrate the biodiversity benefit of trees and woodland delivered through development. We know that trees need care and maintenance to become established and that their different benefits will be maximised at different points in time. Therefore the approach to implement net gain, in all its forms, must recognise this to help trees secure the funding they require.

Government could also go further to ensure urban trees are better recognised as green infrastructure, promoting their value and benefits as part of wider green infrastructure

planning, as demonstrated in the National Design Guide. Such an approach supported by valuation methods can help developers and local authorities consider urban trees as assets rather than burdens. This can ensure trees are funded and designed into developments and our urban landscapes, supported where necessary by using appropriate engineering solutions. These could include repairs in highways that accommodate trees, and using techniques like pile and beam rather than trench fill foundations in areas with soils that can shrink. These measures will help deliver our manifesto commitment for every new street to be lined with trees.

Creating woodlands in and around towns and cities

England's existing network of Community Forests are located in and around towns and cities. They bring together local authorities, planners, business and charities to plant trees in places of greatest public need, using brownfield, green belt, derelict and reclaimed land. We believe that new funding for community forests will help to create woodlands for people - for our enjoyment, education and recreation - close to where many of us live. There is also growing interest from other community groups and social enterprises to take on the creation of new woodlands, as well as the ownership and management of existing woodlands.

We want to support existing and new Community Forests to create even more new woodlands and to facilitate increased access to existing woodlands, by supporting local land owners. This may enable new corridors of woodland along water courses for the benefit and amenity of local people and wildlife.

Engaging people with nature

People feel strongly about woodlands, which are great places to be active, or relax, and explore, and learn about the natural world. The 25 Year Environment Plan seeks to connect people with the natural environment, and has programmes in place to improve health and well-being and encourage children to be close to nature. This work includes a project to increase the outreach of Community Forests with schools, and the forestry sector offers many opportunities for people to benefit from woodlands.

Forest School, for example, is an approach which has grown and developed, exceeding expectations for the benefits children and young people experience. We believe the forestry sector could achieve more through closer engagement with the education and health sectors, developing its skills and expertise to support health programmes for social prescribing. For example, including by offering more for children and young adults to cope with increasingly common mental health challenges, like anxiety and depression.

Engaging people with trees and woodland: questions

31. Are any of the following significant barriers to securing and maintaining street trees? (*select up to three options*)

a) Appropriate standards and guidance for securing the right trees in the right places
b) Practical challenges in terms of street design, planting requirements and compatibility with other infrastructure provision
c) The adoption of street trees by local highway authorities, or alternative arrangements where streets are not adopted
d) The skills and resources needed to deliver new street trees, including funding for planting
e) The funding and skills for ongoing maintenance of street trees over their lifetime
f) Other – please specify in no more than 100 words

32. How could government overcome the barriers to securing and maintaining street trees you have identified in question 30? (*Maximum 150 word response*)

33. Which of these actions would be most effective in increasing the number/coverage of trees in and around urban areas? (*rank the following options in order of preference*)

a) Promotion through national policy (including England Tree Strategy and national planning policy) including recognition that trees and woodlands are key components of green infrastructure, with equal status to other green and built infrastructure
b) Promotion through national guidance (such as green infrastructure, planning and design, and code/street guidance, e.g., Manual for Streets) - stronger inclusion of appropriate engineering solutions
c) Development and implementation of Local Tree and Woodland Strategies and local planning policies - setting local targets for tree canopy cover and recognition that trees and woodlands are key components of green infrastructure, with equal status to other green and built infrastructure
d) Training for practitioners, including highways engineers and others
e) Providing better support for community forests in areas of greatest need
f) Creating new community forests in areas of greatest need
g) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

34. Which actions would most help the preparation and implementation of local Tree and Woodland Strategies? (*rank the following options in order of preference*)

a) Preparing national guidance on developing Local Tree and Woodland Strategies
b) Setting local targets for tree canopy cover
c) Using canopy cover as a measure to monitor the scale and development of the urban forest
d) Agreeing national data standards for urban trees
e) Standardising the approach to measuring the value of the urban forest resource

f) *Adopting Local Tree and Woodland Strategies as supplementary planning documents*
g) *Strengthening technical expertise in tree and woodland management in local authorities*
h) *Recognising trees and woodlands as key components of green infrastructure, with equal status to green and built infrastructure*

35. Which actions would most effectively engage people in the management and creation of their local woodlands? (*rank the following options in order of preference*)

a) *Providing more training opportunities to support woodland management and creation*
b) *Providing legal support to community groups for the acquisition or lease of woodland*
c) *Enabling community groups to influence decision making about the management of their local woodland*
d) *Enabling community groups to participate in the management of their local woodland*
e) *Facilitating networks to exchange ideas and share good practice*
f) *Providing better support for community forests in areas of greatest need*
g) *Creating new community forests in areas of greatest need*
h) *Supporting the growth of woodland social enterprise*16 *in and around towns and cities*

36. Which actions by government would be most effective in addressing barriers to peoples' access to trees and woodlands? (*rank the following options in order of preference*)

a) *Supporting woodland access through existing incentives and rights of way*
b) *Offering more generous woodland management incentives for those woodlands with public access*
c) *Creating new accessible woodlands in and around towns and cities*
d) *Supporting woodland access with bespoke incentives, simply to allow access*
e) *Improving the quality of access by investing in infrastructure (car parks, trails, path surfacing, signage, seating)*
f) *Regulating to maintain access rights when creating new woodland*
g) *Supporting people to become trained/accredited to better facilitate contact (learning and health) with nature*

[16] Woodland Social Enterprises: these work with communities in a woodland setting and are driven by social or environmental objectives, reinvesting profits to meet these, earning income through trade as well as grants and charitable activity (see: www.sharedassets.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Woodland-Social-Enterprise-in-England-Final-Report1.pdf).

37. Which of the following do you most value about trees and woodland? (*select up to two options*)

a) Places to exercise and relax and engage with nature
b) Places for nature
c) A source of sustainable products and employment
d) A resource that provides water management
e) A resource that cleans the air
f) A resource that stores carbon
g) As a feature within towns and cities
h) As part of urban green space
i) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

38. Which of these actions would best address the funding challenge for the planting and on-going maintenance of trees in urban areas? (*select up to two options*)

a) Making central funding available to supplement private finance for establishing trees in existing developments.
b) Using planning levers to require developers to plant trees relating to new development on streets and other public spaces
c) Using planning levers to raise funds for on-going maintenance
d) Ensuring the value of tree's longer term benefits are captured to access financing
e) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

Supporting the economy

This chapter lays out areas where forestry can directly support national economic recovery as well as our 25 Year Environment Plan, which committed to encourage larger scale woodland creation and commercial investment in productive forestry. A wide range of environmental benefits flow from productive forestry planting; these will be maximised if investment can be planned at a landscape scale, consistent with catchment-based approaches to water and flood management, for example.

The challenge of meeting net zero by 2050 and ambitious targets for biodiversity mean we need to create woodlands at a rate not seen in the level since 1989. A significant amount of land, especially in rural areas, must be planted. This is a challenge, but also an opportunity - to support our national economic recovery and jobs in our communities, especially in rural areas. Our investment for the climate and biodiversity through the Nature for Climate Fund will create jobs across the rural economy and wider environmental sector.

This is also an investment in the long-term health and economic stability of the forestry sector – creating and protecting jobs for those who plant seeds, care for saplings, manage woods, harvest timber, haul logs, process timber and build homes – the whole way through the supply chain. Alongside this we need to grow the market for domestic wood products, support farmers and other land managers considering planting trees and increase the number of people with forestry and wood manufacturing skills.

We also need to find ways to address the cost and funding challenges of planting and maintaining urban trees, ensuring appropriate guidance enables there to be enough space for trees. Contributions from development may help to fund the provision and maintenance of trees in urban areas, provided it is balanced alongside the need to fund other infrastructure requirements and maintains the viability of development projects.

Timber

Timber is a sustainable and eco-friendly building material. By using it in construction we lock the carbon captured by the tree into the building, and avoid the high carbon costs of bricks and steel. Currently however, only 23% of homes in England are built with timber frames, compared to 83% in Scotland[17]. At the same time the UK currently imports 81% of its timber and wood products[18], so our demand far exceeds domestic supply. Building on commitments in the 25 Year Environment Plan and the Clean Growth Strategy we want to take measures to increase the use of all domestic forest products including timber in construction in line with fire safety regulations[19].

We are aware of the effect of the recent changes to the Buildings Regulations with regards to fire safety. The Government is keen to ensure a coordinated approach to these issues taking into consideration our wider aims and objectives, such as in our building safety programme led by MHCLG.

We want to see the expansion and use of the Grown in Britain Certification mark throughout the supply chain. This will reduce the carbon footprint of the construction industry and further encourage the market to invest in our domestic timber industry and home grown forest products.

Energy

Energy forestry uses fast-growing trees which are planted and specially grown on a short rotation to provide biomass for power generation. This has an important role as we green the UK's electricity and heat systems, moving away from fossil fuels. This is desirable because unlike burning fossil fuels which simply release carbon into the atmosphere, biomass is a renewable resource which take carbon back out of the atmosphere through photosynthesis as the plants regrow.

---

17 www.forestryscotland.com/media/370371/annual%20survey%20of%20uk%20structural%20timber%20markets%202016.pdf - Chart 10.

18 www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/forestry-statistics/forestry-statistics-2019/trade/apparent-consumption-of-wood-in-the-uk/

19 Including changes to Buildings Regulation with regard to fire safety led by the MHCLG building safety programme.

It is therefore vital that biomass is produced in a sustainable way and government support for biomass heat and power require this. The Biomass Suppliers' List[20] (BSL) provides a register of woodfuel suppliers able to demonstrate their woodfuel is from a sustainable and legal source, compliant with the UK Forestry Standard and international schemes which certify sustainable forest management. This also includes certain classes of Grown in Britain licence.

Short-rotation forestry (SRF) and short-rotation coppice (SRC), harvesting fast-growing trees for biomass, provides a potential option for farmers looking to diversify their business. Current policy designed to permanently preserve woodland cover, which is supported through the regulatory system, is seen as a potential blocker which discourages farmers from trying SRF and SRC. We believe amendments to policy and regulation could allow farmers to try SRF and SRC, and return land to other crops afterwards if they choose to.

We are interested to understand how other forms of government support could promote famers growing biomass crops. This would help farmers to diversify their businesses, and produce the biomass we need for net zero while leaving better-quality timber for other uses. We also understand that lack of confidence in future demand for biomass can be a barrier to establishment of such crops. Greater security in demand, through forward contracts guaranteeing a market for biomass, could address this.

Agroforestry

Agroforestry refers to growing trees among crops or livestock. It can increase farm productivity, provide extensive environmental services (carbon capture, water quality for example), increase tree cover and diversify farm holdings. Despite this, it is not widely practiced in England and there are no dedicated incentives for agroforestry. We believe measures, such as grants and clearer policy for regulation, could increase the uptake of agroforestry – offering farmers and land owners, who may be new to forestry, an entry point into the environmental and economic benefits trees can provide.

Tenant farming

We recognise that tenant farmers may not be able to establish more trees and woodland under the terms of their tenancy without first gaining agreement from their landlord. This is because tree planting can affect the value of land and change the land holding's status for agricultural use. In addition, tenant farmers may not occupy the holding for a time period long enough for management control and rights to any trees that are planted. Therefore, it is important tenants and landlords work together to agree how to treat trees under the

[20] Evidence for land criteria - https://biomass-suppliers-list.service.gov.uk/Content/Documents/BSL%20Evidence%20for%20Land%20Criteria%20v1.1.pdf

tenancy and enable appropriate diversification into agroforestry and forestry where both parties understand and agree on the long-term implications and benefits of this.

About a third of the farmland in England is managed by tenant farmers. A vibrant tenanted sector is therefore vital to a successful future for our farming industry while renting land provides a way into farming for new entrants and a flexible way for existing farmers to expand. It is also presents an important land area for the expansion of trees and woodland. We are therefore keen to ensure that our policies and schemes to encourage tree planting do not negatively impact on tenanted farm businesses. We want to work with tenants and agricultural landlords to understand how we can best support them so all land managers and farmers can add trees to their business if they wish to.

Productivity and supply chains

To underpin increased woodland management and the expansion of woodland creation, including through systems such as agroforestry, we believe we need to grow the market for wood, especially hardwood, and non-wood products. With around 92% of UK forest holdings being less than ten hectares in size[21] we understand that the size of woodland(s) can make cost effective management a challenge.

To help address this we would like to look at options to increase supply chains through increased productivity (more material supplied to markets and more efficiently), collaboration and co-operatives. This might include helping land managers work together to access the machinery and skills to manage their woodlands and to develop and enter markets and obtain Grown in Britain Certification.

Workforce

As the need to plant trees, create the forests of the future and manage woodland grows, so does the need to develop and expand our workforce of skilled and expert foresters, and forest workers. Forestry can be a diverse and lifelong career that offers great job satisfaction by working toward long-term environmental and economic goals by planning and delivering forestry on the ground. We would therefore like to encourage more people towards a forestry career; building a new cohort of foresters and forest workers to restore and protect our natural world, manage the changing landscape, and provide vital timber resources.

[21] 2010 UK data, 2010 NIWT, The State of Europe's Forests report (2015) - https://www.foresteurope.org/docs/fullsoef2015.pdf

Work on this is already under way through the Forestry Skills Forum[22] which promotes skills and learning across the forestry sector. This Forum has developed the Forestry Skills Action Plan which brings together actions to take opportunities to grow the workforce, improve forestry education provision and speak with a unified voice for the forestry sector. To take this forward the Forestry Commission is currently working with the Institute for Chartered Foresters[23] and employers, and, through the apprenticeship Trailblazer Group to develop a new 'Professional Forester' degree-level apprenticeship. This will open up new pathways into forest Higher Education and employment. The Forestry Skills Forum is also working to ensure that the technical content of apprenticeship standards and T-Level qualifications is appropriate for the needs of the forest industry.

We want to continue this work and, because forestry is a devolved matter, are keen to work with the Devolved Administrations to establish an approach to increasing the workforce which will span the UK.

[22] https://www.rfs.org.uk/skills-forum/
[23] https://www.charteredforesters.org/

Supporting the economy: questions

39. What could the England Tree Strategy do to encourage the use of timber in construction? (*select up to two options*)

a) Improving, encouraging or incentivising the growth of necessary skills such as those in green construction, design or forestry
b) Promoting and incentivising Grown in Britain Certification
c) Encouraging planning requirements to incorporate sustainable materials
d) Amending public procurement standards to support Grown in Britain certified forest products, incorporate sustainable materials and signal long-term demand
e) Increasing the availability of knowledge and stimulate an understanding of sustainable building practices
f) Supporting new innovations in developing timber building materials such as cross laminated timber
g) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

40. How could policy about the permanency of woodlands better support tree establishment for agro forestry or energy crops? (*select one option*)

a) Changing policy so it does not treat afforestation as a permanent land use change
b) Adjusting policy so energy forestry crops (short rotation coppice and short rotation forestry) are not permanent land use change
c) Retaining the current position whereby afforestation is generally a permanent land use change
d) Not sure

41. Which actions would best increase the uptake of energy forestry? (*select up to two options*)

a) Providing financial support for the capital costs of energy forestry
b) Clarifying the taxation of energy forestry (as either agriculture or forestry)
c) Clarifying the regulatory position for energy forestry (for example, can I change land use in the future)
d) Providing support to develop a secure supply chain (such as forward contracts for feedstock)
e) Providing better advice and guidance on energy forestry
f) Increasing skills capacity in energy forestry
g) Other - please specify in no more than 25 words

42. Which actions would best increase the planting of more trees on farms? (*select up to two options*)

a) Clarifying the regulation of agroforestry as either agriculture or forestry
b) Clarifying the implications for the land holding's tax status of planting more trees
c) Providing better advice and guidance on woodland creation and management
d) Providing incentives for a wider range of tree planting on farms
e) Funding for the advice and the design of schemes for trees on farms and agroforestry

f) *Providing better advice and guidance on how woodland creation and management can contribute to farm business models*
g) *Other - please specify in no more than 25 words*

43. Which actions would best increase agroforestry, woodland creation and management on tenanted farmland? (*select up to two options*)

a) *Providing industry led guidance, best practice and case studies of how tenants and landlords can work together to deliver benefits for both parties from diversification into tree planting and agroforestry on tenanted land*
b) *Providing eligibility criteria for tree establishment grant agreements to discourage the proactive resumption of tenanted farmland*
c) *Reviewing how tenancy agreements approach the responsibility for and rights to trees*
d) *Confirming the property rights to long-term carbon benefits*
e) *Other - please specify in no more than 25 words*

44. What are the most urgent shortages in the workforce capacity needed to increase woodland creation, maintenance and management? (*select up to two options*)

a) *Professional forester*
b) *Supervisor for forest works*
c) *Machine operator, for example, tractor/harvester/forwarder drivers*
d) *Hand cutter / chainsaw operator*
e) *Tree planter*
f) *Tree nursery workers*
g) *Forestry educators*
h) *Land agents, surveyors and architects with specialist forest knowledge*
i) *All of the above*
j) *Other - please specify in no more than 25 words*

45. Which actions would best strengthen productivity in forestry supply chains? (*select up to three options*)

a) *Providing grant support for wider range of management options*
b) *Providing support for woodland infrastructure such as roading*
c) *Providing grant or loans for equipment (for example, harvesters)*
d) *Providing support for productivity/supply chains for woodland products*
e) *Providing better information on market prices and opportunities*
f) *Training to increase the skills capacity in agricultural workers*
g) *Facilitating collaborative working between woodland owners*
h) *Developing options for private investment for ecosystem services that drive woodland management*
i) *Other - please specify in no more than 25 words*