

GROWING THE FUTURE

A WOODLAND TRUST MANIFESTO

The natural environment matters.

It belongs at the heart of Government policy because it is the life support system upon which society depends. Far from being a secondary issue at election time, it should be central to political debate.

The environment should inform policy across all Government departments and across all parties.



WOODLAND
TRUST

What this means...



As part of the natural environment, woods and trees in particular are crucial to sustaining life on our planet and their presence or absence plays a central role in determining people's perceptions of their quality of life. They generate oxygen, store carbon, provide a renewable resource of timber and energy, offer green spaces for relaxation and reflection, and play host to a spectacular variety of wildlife, as well as visually enhancing the environment and inspiring our minds and souls. The enhancement and expansion of our native woodland resource, enabling it to flourish and enrich all our lives, should be explicit in all parties' environment policies.

The Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity, calls upon those aspiring to political office to commit to the actions set out below. These actions will ensure a more sustainable future and a better quality of life by delivering a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits across the United Kingdom which reflect people's everyday needs and aspirations.



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Protect and enhance our life support system

The pursuit of both **individual and community well-being** is now seen as a core function of Government. Its achievement depends on the protection and enhancement of natural resources. This occasionally means taking difficult decisions in the face of competing policy interests and ensuring that Government structures and funding are in place to reflect the importance of the environment, but the long term benefits to society will endure and provide a lasting legacy.

This means:

- Ensuring that the land use planning system delivers effective protection and enhancement of key natural resources such as our irreplaceable ancient woodland and ancient trees.
- Continuing to pursue CAP reforms that will deliver environmentally friendly farming and a countryside rich in wildlife, whilst properly rewarding land managers for the delivery of these public benefits.
- Ensuring that strong and independent minded Government agencies are in place which have the protection and enhancement of the environment as a key purpose of their work.
- Increasing woodland cover. The UK has one of the lowest levels of woodland cover in Europe. Taking action to increase this will deliver a wide range of benefits to society from improved air quality to greater recreational opportunities.
- Investing in the environment. This means recognising the range of Government policies which the environment delivers upon and providing the resources to place it upon a sustainable footing to realise these benefits. It also means ensuring a fair share of Lottery funding which reflects the importance to the public of a healthy, wildlife-rich environment.

Addressing the reality of climate change

Climate change has been described by the Government's Chief Scientific Advisor as a bigger threat than international terrorism. Action right across Government and strong leadership from No 10 are critical. Widely accepted evidence shows that climate change is already with us and mitigation alone will not be enough. Forward looking government will not just mean action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also promoting strategies that enable nature to adapt as well as seeking to harness the wider social and economic benefits to society that adaptation offers. Good communication is also critical to seek heightened public engagement with the issue.



This means:

- Taking action to enable nature to adapt to climate change. This involves a shift away from focussing work on individual sites towards action at a landscape scale. All parties should recognise the exciting opportunities this offers for delivery of other agendas including flood management, air and water quality, enhanced leisure and recreation, and carbon sequestration.
- Achieving at least 60 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as proposed by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution.
- Engaging the public through effective, well targeted communication strategies and the promotion of 'citizen science', such as recording the effects of climate change in people's everyday lives through the UK Phenology Network.





An environment that delivers on public priorities

Health and education remain high amongst people's priorities and rightly so. People also wish to protect the environment for its own sake but there is a growing awareness that these priorities are increasingly interdependent. Accessible green spaces, for example, can promote public health and community development, whilst outdoor learning fosters self esteem, team working skills, awareness of the natural world and citizenship. Innovative environmental programmes are needed which promote the well-being of individuals and communities, realise the opportunities for enhanced public health and personal development and provide value for money by delivering multiple objectives.



WTPL/Maurice Gordon



WTPL/Niall Benvie



WTPL/Paul Carter

This means:

- Ensuring that access to quality green space for all is central to regional and local development strategies. Best use of resources should be achieved through targeting according to need. This will mean using tools such as the Woodland Trust's 'Space for People' which sets targets for access to woodland down to local authority level having mapped the extent of accessible woodland across the UK (copy available online or on request).
- Ensuring that every child is able to experience the natural world as part of their formal education. This will mean Government providing leadership and direction to Local Education Authorities and schools, and ensuring that teacher training for outdoor learning takes place. It will also mean ensuring that the best use is made of existing initiatives such as the Woodland Trust's 'Tree For All' campaign which is inspired by the belief that every child should have the opportunity to plant trees and aims to plant 12 million trees over the next five years.



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