

Our Trees Deserve Better: a collective response to the England Tree Strategy consultation

We welcome the consultation on the England Tree Strategy. However, the multiple-choice format of the consultation is restrictive, and some key areas do not receive the attention they deserve, including: urban, landscape and lone trees; the presence of clear targets; and engagement of people with trees and nature. We, a coalition of environmental organisations, are asking for a further opportunity to engage with ministers on the development of this landmark Strategy to ensure it does our present and future treescapes justice.

If feedback on the strategy is to be meaningful, stakeholders must be able to see and comment on the full written draft. If there is not sufficient time/resource for a second, full, public consultation, **we would respectfully propose a roundtable with the Minister for representatives from up to six coalition groups, including the undersigned coalition, to review the Strategy's principles and ultimately the written draft.** We also propose that at least those who respond to the public consultation are offered the chance to comment on the written draft.

This coalition believes the England Tree Strategy must:

- 1. Have 'teeth' - bold, clear statutory targets which are monitored by the new OEP:** Including appropriate and ambitious targets to establish both the right quantity and quality of tree, and sub-targets for hedgerow establishment and urban, peri-urban and street trees.
- 2. Appreciate trees for everything they are and do:** Recognising the value of the entire English treescape, with its mix of species and ages from seedling to ancient tree, and its importance to wellbeing, heritage, culture, tourism, ecology and biodiversity (that is all the ecosystems services trees provide – both monetised and non-monetised). This must not simply be about carbon capture, timber or energy crops. It also means planting the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason.
- 3. Empower and fund local authorities and communities to establish and care for local trees, for local benefit:** Including support and funding for local authorities to develop Local Tree Strategies and management plans (with targets for canopy cover) to help deliver the national strategy
- 4. Offer the same or greater level of recognition and resource to establishing thriving hedgerows, urban and street trees, orchards and wood pasture and parkland** as is provided to woodland trees and timber crop trees.
- 5. Take long-term, managed natural regeneration establishment seriously and make it part of the solutions for developing new treescapes.**
- 6. Offer a strong commitment and funding for the long-term maintenance and protection of trees and hedgerows, including ancient and veteran trees:** Without proper care, a significant number of trees will die or fail to fulfil their full potential. Done properly, investment in trees can deliver a great return.
- 7. Increase support for the UK nursery industry and community-based local tree nurseries, to ensure that few, if any, trees are imported, reducing risks from pests and diseases.**

8. Encourage and support world-leading research on sustainable methods of tree protection and planting, with practical applications in the UK.
9. Give green infrastructure, including trees, equal standing as other forms of infrastructure (e.g. utilities, civil engineering) in planning policy. Only by doing so will trees be given the consideration they deserve.
10. Ensure all the strategies, policies and frameworks which affect trees – such as ELMs, the Environment Bill, the England Tree Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework – support and reinforce one another to prevent duplication or confusion.

Coalition partners:

