



THE TREE COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE



FORESTRY PANEL CAN'T SEE THE TREES FOR THE WOODS

89 MILLION non-woodland TREES ignored by the Forestry Panel in their interim progress report, published on the 8th December: absence of allusion to character trees in both the terms of reference for, and the areas of expertise within, the Government's Independent Panel on Forestry results in a lost opportunity that could have serious repercussions for urban and field trees.

A strategy that incorporates individual trees in urban and rural locations is a prerequisite in any coherent policy and yet this important group seem to have been completely overlooked, despite representations from The Tree Council at a very early stage. "Sadly, the Panel members appear not to have afforded the role of individual trees any degree of significance in the call for views or the interim report, compounding the omission by those who appointed and briefed them" observed Director-General Pauline Buchanan Black. "This absence of relevant expertise or direct involvement in urban tree strategy is an omission that risks damaging the credibility of an otherwise worthwhile undertaking".

The previous Government's *Policy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests*, published in 2007, observed in its introduction that there were about 89 million individual trees in urban parks and streets, orchards and gardens as well as in fields, hedgerows, rural parklands and wood pastures. Such trees provide many benefits. They offer habitats for wildlife, give character to the landscape - urban and rural - and make cultural links to our past. Hedgerow trees are associated with 55% of the priority Biodiversity Action Plan species whilst veteran park trees support a high proportion of our Red Data List and Nationally Scarce species.

Trees in the right urban location make a big difference to the quality of people's lives, improving the places in which they live and work and giving a sense of identity to areas where new housing is being developed. Growing populations will increasingly rely on urban trees as an integral element of sustainable green infrastructure; trees regulate the urban microclimate and reduce air pollution whilst grass roots involvement in planning and executing tree planting schemes helps build cohesive and engaged communities.

"Individual trees are hugely important and should have been specifically referenced" commented Jackie Cocken, volunteer Tree Warden. "Here in Walsall, we are fortunate to have strong local authority support but we need the Forestry Panel to listen harder, give a strong lead on the immense value of individual urban and rural trees and validate the concerns of volunteers, environmental organisations and members of the public across the country".

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For **further information**, please contact (press enquiries only)

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Notes to Editors:

1. The **Independent Forestry Panel** was established on 17 March 2011 by the Secretary of State, Caroline Spelman, to advise government on the future direction of forestry and woodland policy in England. It published its interim report on findings, in which the Panel members "share [their] first thoughts", on 8th December 2011. <http://tiny.cc/0255m>

2. **Panel members** are reported to have a "wide range of experience, knowledge and interests relating to the economic, social and environmental aspects of forestry and woodlands" yet there is no urban tree expertise evident within the group.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/about/members/>

3. **Terms of Reference** for the Panel and the published Panel meeting minutes contain no allusions to the individual trees, in urban or rural settings, that are so crucial to quality of life and biodiversity.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/about/terms-of-reference/>

4. **Call for Views** to The Forestry Panel offered a list of questions under which headings it asks for a response; none encourage mention of individual trees, framing replies in terms of woods and forests.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/views/>

5. **Analysis of the report** shows that there are 416 occurrences of the words "forests" or "forest"; 385 of "wood", "woods" or "woodland"; and just 11 uses of "urban" and two of "non-woodland".

6. **2009 Forestry Commission statistics** indicate that there were estimated to be around 3,814 million trees in Great Britain. The majority of these (56%) are in Scotland, with a further 34% in England and the remainder in Wales. Individual trees therefore make up approximately 7% of the England total.

7. **The Tree Council** ([website](#))

Environmental charity **The Tree Council** is the UK's lead charity for trees in all settings, urban and rural, promoting their importance in a changing environment and it works in partnership with communities, organisations and government to make trees matter to everyone. As the coalition body for over 180 organisations working together for trees, it focuses on getting more trees, of the right kind, in the right places; better care for all trees of all ages and inspiring effective action for trees.

Its national volunteer **Tree Warden Scheme** and member organisations engage people in biodiversity and environmental issues and promote planting and conservation of trees and woods in town and country. Its annual **Community Action Programme** includes Walk in the Woods month, Seed Gathering Season and **National Tree Week** and support for groups organising local events.

It operates a tree-planting grants programme for UK schools and communities to plant trees and create woodland habitats, as well as working on an agenda for change that includes its annual Tree Care Campaign, begun in 1999, the Green Monument Campaign and Hedge Tree Campaign.