

## Written evidence submitted by Mr Terry Davis (TPW0063)

### Let's Plant Tree's

Tree planting is seen as one element in combating climate change and the biodiversity crisis. Highlighted during the recent election campaign with all parties pledging to plant millions. Mass tree planting is essential, however local initiatives are equally important. Whether as an individual or coming together as a community. Everybody must be encouraged to support the planting of trees.

Tree planting peaked at 30,000 hectares in 1989. Since when it has consistently fallen. Only 13,400 hectares were planted last year.

Regardless of whatever target is set. We continue to delay at our own peril and that of the planet.

Remember it takes trees over 10 years to start sequestering carbon in any meaningful amounts.

But most importantly we must plant the right trees in the right place. Sourced from UK seed and grown in UK nurseries (reducing the risk from pests and diseases. As well as boosting employment in this sector). And planted where they do not damage other important carbon capture sites such as peat bogs.

These priorities may delay the ramping up of mass planting. But it should not stop us starting now. And planting in areas already identified as suitable.

Just as importantly we need to protect our existing trees. As a result of Ash dieback and other problems. We are looking at a huge loss of trees. Which means we are already on the backfoot making up for these losses.

To this end as well as planting. We must without fail make all existing Ancient Woodland a complete no-go area for developers. As well as investing in accurate data. To ensure we are able to protect irreplaceable habitats.

We must also use the planning system to protect other important (i.e. non-ancient) woods and trees. And individual trees designated as Notable, Veteran or Ancient.

Mature trees have already absorbed huge amounts of carbon. It makes no sense to cut them down. It just means even more trees need to be planted to catch up.

We also need to ensure developers only use trees from UK sources. And are monitored to ensure 95% of all trees planted survive.

Delivery against targets is key. To stand any chance however of achieving them. Will require long term commitment and funding. Covering (at a minimum) the period up to the end of 2025. And once agreed should be independent of any political interference.

Funding should include support for local councils. For existing tree planting charities already leading the way. And very importantly proper aftercare. Or a significant number of trees will die or fail to fulfil their full potential. Done correctly the investment in trees will repay the investment in them.

I am reminded of a couple of truisms. "the true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to rest" Or "the best time to have planted a tree was fifty years ago, the next best time is now" Newly planted trees absorb very little carbon to begin with. It remains to be seen whether we

have missed an opportunity since 1989 to get trees into the ground. Which by now would be established and working for us. Let's not waste another 30 years. We need to get planting, if not for us then for the sake of future generations.

Finally let's not forget trees are beautiful we should plant them anyway. They enhance our lives and well-being.

Let's stand up for trees. Stand up for the plant.

Terry Davis 4/12/2020