

## CHARTER

### For Trees, Woods and People

It's over three years since the Independent Panel on Forestry produced its report. Although all the main political parties supported its recommendations we have yet to see them translated into legislation.

The Government says it is committed to keeping the Public Forest Estate in trust for the nation which was our principal recommendation. In order to do this we proposed drawing up a Charter in Parliament for the future of trees.

A hundred years ago Parliament set up the Forestry Commission to meet the needs of the last century. A hundred years on those needs have changed. The A B C of our priorities today are different.

Ancient Woodlands (protect them), Biodiversity (preserve it), Climate Change (Combat it), Disease (save our trees from this biggest threat), Ecosystem services (value them), Forests (expand both public and private) Guardians (needed to champion the forests), Health (trees breathe life into mind and body), Industry (wood is good for the economy), Leisure (trees give enjoyment to all).

In the preface to the Panel's report I wrote,

“Our forests and woods are nature's playground for the adventurous, museum for the curious, hospital for the Stressed, cathedral for the spiritual and a livelihood for the entrepreneur. They are a microcosm of the cycle of life in which each and every part is dependent on the other; forests and woods are the benefactor of all, purifying the air that we breathe and distilling the water of life. In short, trees are for life.”

As Chair of the Independent Panel I WELCOME THE WOODLAND TRUST'S INITIATIVE IN SETTING UP THE WOODLAND CHARTER to take forward the Panel's recommendation. If this receives the widespread support that we anticipate it will show the Government that Britain is ready for new legislation to secure not just the future of our forests and woodlands but to gain a better quality of life for us all.

John Clare wrote a beautiful poem called 'The Hollow Tree' about how on a rainy day he found shelter in an old ash tree. It speaks to me as a parable about how our own common future depends on us finding refuge in the trees and forests of our own time.

How oft a summer shower hath started me  
To seek for shelter in a hollow tree  
Old huge ash-dotterel wasted to a shell  
Whose vigorous head still grew and flourished well  
Where ten might sit upon the battered floor  
And still look round discovering room for more  
And he who chose a hermit life to share  
Might have a door and make a cabin there  
They seemed so like a house that our desires  
Would call them so and make our gipsy fires  
And eat field dinners of the juicy peas  
Till we were wet and drabbled to the knees  
But in our old tree-house rain as it might  
Not one drop fell although it rained all night

