WOODLAND TRUST

Woodland Trust response to:

'A Vision for Green Infrastructure' – Mid Devon District Council Green Infrastructure Strategy – March 2011

We are pleased to support this draft Green Infrastructure Strategy and we comment on the proposed four strategic Objectives below.

The Woodland Trust believes that native woodland creation is an especially important green infrastructure delivery tool because of the unique ability of woodland to deliver across a wide range of benefits – see our publication ***Woodland Creation – why it matters*** (http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/about-us/publications/Pages/ours.aspx). These include for both landscape and biodiversity (helping habitats become more robust to adapt to climate change, buffering and extending fragmented ancient woodland), for quality of life and climate change (amenity & recreation, public health, flood amelioration, urban cooling) and for the local economy (timber and woodfuel markets).

Objective 1 – To promote sustainable growth and economic development

We would like to see the role of the natural environment in green infrastructure recognised as a driver of sustainable economic growth.

In recent years, thinking on green infrastructure has moved from ecology to economics. Resources such as the countryside, coast, wetlands, urban parks, street trees and their ecosystems are seen as critical for sustainable economic growth and social goals, not just a way of supporting wildlife and 'the environment'. Native woodland can play an important role in this.

Research **by CABE Space** (previously funded by ODPM to champion the quality of our buildings and spaces) has shown that local parks can increase property values by up to 7%. When people vote with their money it shows what kind of places they want to live in – neighbourhoods with green spaces where children can play safely, where they can easily walk or jog from home to a park for exercise and relaxation. And where there are people, there is a market for businesses to thrive. In regenerating or creating new residential areas, green space is a vital part of the infrastructure for those living there (Does Money Grow on Trees? CABE Space,2005). The vast majority (83%) of the public believe the appearance of their local area is an important factor in deciding where to live and 91% of the public believes that parks and public spaces improve people's quality of life.

Research from **ECOTEC** and **AMION** brings together a wealth of evidence from many disciplines and provides strong grounds for seeing green infrastructure as adding real value to the economy of the North West. The research highlights green infrastructure's role in economic prosperity and stability, with a direct gross value added (GVA) from the environment calculated at £2.6bn, supporting 109,000 jobs in environmental and related fields.

Employment:

In total, the timber industry is estimated to employ about 55,000 people in Great Britain. About 54% of this is employment supported through multiplier effects (i.e., indirect and induced employment), while the rest is directly related to the forestry sector (including everybody from timber growers to processors through to employment in forest education and forestry-related Government employees

Regeneration:
Establishing new woodland is an inexpensive way of restoring the quality of the landscape and soil whilst contributing to wider goals of community and economic regeneration, often of prime concern in brownfield redevelopment. Woodland can also greatly enhance the visual appearance and amenity value of regeneration schemes.

A prime example of land regeneration using woodland is the Forestry Commission's Newlands Project (North West of England), which used a specially designed 'Public Benefits Recording System' to prioritise the planting and establishment of woodland on DUN sites (damaged, under-used and neglected land) in terms of which ones would provide the greatest benefits.)

Research by the Mersey Forest Brownfield Project ("Brownfield Remediation to Forestry") has shown that tree planting can be an important mechanism of reclaiming and regenerating contaminated brownfield land. Planting fast growing trees such as willows and poplars can markedly enhance the natural degradation of many pollutants in the soil, including petroleum residues, oil, industrial solvents and paint.

House prices:
Trees have been shown to have a positive impact in the urban environment. The benefits of trees to the community have traditionally been measured through their effect on real estate prices and business profits and it has been estimated that a 20% general tree cover added 7.1% to house prices in rural areas of central England and the Welsh Borders (Garrod, G. and Willis, K. (1992) Valuing Goods).

Rural development:
Forestry contributes to rural development directly through employment in timber production and processing and also indirectly through landscape benefits which attract tourist revenues and local visitors

Tourism:
Woodland recreation is another driver for rural development. Forests are amongst the UK's most popular visitor destinations, receiving about 350 million day visits a year (1). Forest-related tourism expenditure associated with tourism day visits, is estimated to be around £2.3 billion, over 3% of the total tourism expenditure in the
UK (Hill, Courtney, Burton, Potts (2003) Forests Role in Tourism: Phase 2.Summary Report-Final for the Forestry Group (Economics and Statisics) of the Forestry Commission).

In a key publication ***The Case for Trees in development and the urban environment*** (Forestry Commission – see reference above) the FC Chair Pam Warhurst states:
"*Trees can deliver a host of extraordinary economic, environmental and social benefits. Studies show that where work places include trees, employees are more productive and have a greater sense of job satisfaction.*"

Finally, the Government announced in March 2011 its Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI, Dept of Energy & Climate Change) which includes support for a range of technologies including biomass boilers, and is consequently likely to lead to a big increase in demand for wood fuel.

We would like to see the role of native woods and trees in promoting sustainable growth and economic development recognised in Objective 1.

Objective 2 – To encourage health and wellbeing

We support the use of green infrastructure to improve air quality, visual amenity and recreational open space, and we would like to see recognition of the role of woodland in delivering these benefits.

- The recent **Public Health White Paper** (Healthy Lives, Healthy People; Nov 2010) states that: "*Access to green spaces is associated with better mental and physical health across socioeconomic groups.*" and that "*Defra will lead a national campaign to increase tree planting throughout England, particularly in areas where tree cover would help to improve residents' quality of life and reduce the negative effects of deprivation, including health inequalities.*" The NHS Forest Initiative is already putting this into practice by greening the NHS Estates and planting 1 tree per employee amounting to 1.3 million trees within the next 5 years – see: http://nhsforest.org/.

- The Natural England Publication '**Our Natural Health Service – the role of the natural environment in maintaining healthy lives**' (Natural England, 2009) states that: '*If every household in England were provided with good access to quality green space it could save an estimated £2.1 billion in health care costs'.*

- **Air quality:** Trees further air quality through the adsorption of particulates from vehicle emissions and other sources – such that it has been estimated that doubling the tree cover in the West Midlands alone would reduce mortality as a result of poor air quality from particulates by 140 people per year. (Stewart, H., Owen S., Donovan R., MacKenzie R., and Hewitt N. (2002). Trees and Sustainable Urban Air Quality. Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Lancaster University)

- The huge number of benefits and services that urban trees provide is outlined in detail in guidance produced by the Trees and Design Action Group - **'No Trees, No Future' (Trees and Design Action Group, 2008,** http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7KDEHU):

  'There is a growing body of evidence that trees in urban areas bring a wide range of benefits.

Social benefits of urban trees:

- *Trees help create a sense of place and local identity.*
- *They benefit communities by increasing pride in the local area.*
- *They create focal points and landmarks.*
- *They have a positive impact on people's physical and mental health.*
- *They have a positive impact on crime reduction.*

Environmental benefits of urban trees:

- *Urban trees reduce the 'urban heat island effect' of localised temperature extremes.*
- *They provide shade, making streets and buildings cooler in summer.*
- *They help remove dust and particulates from the air.*
- *They help to reduce traffic noise by absorbing and deflecting sound.*
- *They help to reduce wind speeds.*
- *By providing food and shelter for wildlife they help increase biodiversity.*
- *They reduce the effects of flash flooding by slowing the rate at which rainfall reaches the ground.*
- *When planted on polluted ground they help improve its quality.*

[For research references see the full report: www.forestry.gov.uk/tdag]

'The benefits that trees bring to urban areas are proportionate to their size: in general, large, mature trees bring more benefits than small ones. They provide more shade and shelter, and catch more rain in their leaf canopies. However, in urban areas, our large, mature trees are under threat, while the new trees being planted tend to be smaller varieties ... One of the key problems, however, is that when planning a new development, trees are usually one of the last considerations. By then, it is usually too late to retain any existing mature trees or create an environment suitable for planting new large species trees.
'No Trees, No Future' (Trees and Design Action Group, 2008).

- In both urban and rural areas, the Woodland Trust believes therefore that proximity and access to woodland is a key issue linking the environment with health and other social and economic issues that are addressed by green infrastructure provision. Recognising this, the Woodland Trust has researched and developed the Woodland Access Standard (WASt) for local authorities to aim for. We believe that the WASt can be an important policy tool complimenting other access standards used in delivering community services and facilities for improving peoples' quality of life.

  The WASt is complimentary to Natural England's ANGST+ and is endorsed by Natural England. The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard recommends:

  - that no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size

  - that there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km (8km round-trip) of people's homes.

  Applying this standard in Mid Devon District, with equivalent comparisons for Devon County Council plus the South West as a whole, gives the following figures (see table below). It shows that Mid Devon exhibits a marked deficit in accessible woodland for both size categories. This presents an excellent opportunity for using both new and existing accessible woodland in order to support robust green infrastructure delivery for sustainable neighbourhoods in the Coalition Government's 'Big Society'. The data used can be supplied free of charge by the Woodland Trust both in map and in numerical/GIS form.

Accessibility to Woodland in Mid Devon District using the Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard

		Mid Devon DC	Devon County Council	All SW
Accessible woods	% population with access to 2ha+ wood within 500m	2.38%	8.55%	12.84%
	% population with access to 20ha+ wood within 4km	49.31%	67.78%	67.35%

'Space for People' is the first UK-wide assessment of any form of greenspace and, while the targets may seem challenging, they represent the result of detailed analysis. The full 'Space for People' report can be found at http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/about-us/publications/key-publications/space-for-people/pages/space-for-people.aspx.

We would like to see the role of native woods and trees in helping to deliver health & wellbeing recognised in Objective 2, and would be pleased to see the Woodland Access Standard used as a strategic tool for this.

Objective 3 – To adapt to and mitigate climate change

1. Any policy on climate change should recognise the value trees and woodland can provide in **mitigating** climate change. Woodland's role as a carbon sink for CO2 emissions is well known, while wood fuel production and product substitution (eg timber frame house construction) are other ways that woodland can help reduce carbon emissions.

   Woodland creation is a key delivery component of Government policy to mitigate climate change. **Caroline Spelman, Environment Minister** has set this out: *"Now let me turn to our environment and, specifically, to our trees. Because if ever organisms demonstrated their ability to multi-task, it's trees. They capture carbon and hold soils together, prevent flooding and help control our climate".* (Speech at Angela Marmont Centre for Biodiversity, 20 May 2010).

   The Government's **Carbon Plan** (HM Government, March 2011) reaffirms support for woodland creation: *'The forestry sector can deliver significant greenhouse gas abatement through carbon sequestration in new woodlands and increased use of timber and wood products, both to store carbon and to substitute for materials with high fossil fuel emissions associated with their production...Government will continue to support woodland creation through Rural Development Programme funding, and the Woodland Carbon Task Force..'.*

   An important publication from the Forestry Commission, ***The Case for Trees in development and the urban environment*** (Forestry Commission, July 2010), sets out *'The multiple value of trees for people and places – increasing greenspace and tree numbers is likely to remain one of the most effective tools for making urban areas more convivial'*, and lists (on p.10) climate change as one of the key benefits.

2. There are also a number of ways in which trees offer a particular and cost effective answer to **adaptation**:

- **Urban heat island:** Trees and woods can reduce the impact of the 'urban heat island effect' which occurs when hard surfaces in summer act as giant storage heaters, absorbing heat during the day and releasing it at night. Dramatic summer temperature differences of as much as 10°C between London and its surrounding areas have been recorded, which in turn exacerbate the symptoms of chronic respiratory conditions. Projections suggest this problem will get markedly worse. A study by the University of Manchester has shown that increasing tree cover in urban areas by 10% could decrease the expected maximum surface temperature in the 2080s by up to 4°C.
  (Handley, J and Carter, J (2006) Adaptation strategies for climate change in the urban environment, Draft final report to the National Steering Group, Centre for urban and regional ecology, University of Manchester
  www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/cure/downloads/asccue_final_report_national_steering_group.pdf)

- **Air quality:** Trees further improve air quality through the adsorption of particulates from vehicle emissions and other sources – such that it has been estimated that doubling the tree cover in the West Midlands alone would reduce mortality as a result of poor air quality from particulates by 140 people per year. (Stewart, H., Owen S., Donovan R., MacKenzie R., and Hewitt N. (2002). Trees and Sustainable Urban Air Quality. Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Lancaster University).

- **Water management – flooding**: Throughout the UK winter is predicted to be wetter and summers drier and there is also a predicted increase in the frequency of very heavy rainfall. Trees can reduce the likelihood of surface water flooding, when rain water overwhelms the local drainage system, by regulating the rate at which rainfall reaches the ground and contributes to run off. Slowing the flow increases the possibility of infiltration and the ability of engineered drains to take away any excess water. This is particularly the case with large crowned trees. Research by the University of Manchester has shown that increasing tree cover in urban areas by 10 % reduces surface water run-off by almost 6%. (*Using green infrastructure to alleviate flood risk, Sustainable Cities - www.sustainablecities.org.uk/water/surface-water/using-gi/)*

  Local Authorities should steer risk management towards developing green infrastructure, increasing tree cover and investment in the management of trees. Woodland can help adaptation strategies cope with the high profile threats to water quality and volume resulting from climate change. The Forestry Commission's publication, *The **Case for Trees in development and the urban environment*** (Forestry Commission, July 2010), explains how: *'the capacity of trees to attenuate water flow reduces the impact of heavy rain and floods and can improve the effectiveness of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems'.*

- **Energy:** The 'UK Low Carbon Transition Plan' (DECC, 2009) highlights the role of green space and trees in producing adapted buildings through providing shade and shelter; contributing to reduction in building energy budgets. Deciduous trees in particular provide shading during hot summer months, reducing the need for air conditioning, whilst allowing solar gain to buildings during the winter, reducing the need for heating. Research in the USA suggests a per tree saving in carbon emissions for shade and shelter trees as a result reduced building energy use of around 10-11kg per year.

3. A policy on climate change should also focus on adaptation strategies specifically for biodiversity and the natural environment. Climate change is the biggest threat faced by biodiversity and action to enable it to adapt will therefore be key to delivery of Section 40 of the **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2004**. This requires that: *'every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'.*

   Defra's Guidance for Local Authorities on Implementing the Biodiversity Duty (May 2007) specifically states that: '*Conservation of biodiversity is vital in our response to climate change and in the delivery of key ecosystem services such as food, flood management, pollination and provision of clean air and water'.*

   In addition, the report published by Defra on behalf of the UK Biodiversity Partnership, **'Conserving Biodiversity in a changing climate: guidance on building capacity to adapt' (2007)**, sets out six guiding principles of

which number four recommends that: '*Some species will need to move some distance from their current locality if they are to survive climate change; creating new habitat, restoring degraded habitat or reducing the intensity of management of some areas between existing habitat, will encourage this*' (p.10).

The South West Woodland & Forestry Framework (Forestry Commission 2005) supports a 'landscape-scale' approach - *"The creation of larger, landscape-scale habitats through extending and buffering existing large areas of ancient woodland and buffering other habitats may be the most sustainable response to the effects of climate change on native woods. These ideas are core to the SW Biodiversity Implementation Plan, the South West Nature Map and 'Rebuilding Biodiversity'* (Section 5/p.29).

We would like to see the crucial role of native woods and trees in helping climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies recognised in Objective 3.

Objective 4 – To improve biodiversity

We are pleased to support the aims of Objective 4 in protecting, enhancing and expanding priority biodiversity habitats, and this should include ancient and native woodland.

1. Protection of ancient woodland

Firstly, it is crucial that any green infrastructure strategy supports absolute protection of ancient woodland. Ancient woodland, together with ancient/veteran trees, represents an irreplaceable semi natural habitat that still does not benefit from full statutory protection: for instance 86% of ancient woodland in the South West has no statutory protection. With 2.1% of Mid Devon District comprised of ancient woodland compared to an average for Great Britain of 2.40%, and some substantial concentrations in the Exe Valley, it is vital that the Council does all it can to protect its remaining resource.

- The **Coalition Government** has signalled its intention to protect biodiversity: *'We will introduce measures to protect wildlife and promote green spaces and wildlife corridors in order to halt the loss of habitats and restore biodiversity'* ('The Coalition – Our programme for government', May 2010).

- Under section 74 of the **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**, the Government has a statutory duty to publish lists of priority conservation habitats. Under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, all public authorities now have a statutory duty to conserve biodiversity. The revised UK BAP targets includes a new Habitat Action Plan for Native Woodland which specifies a clear 'maintenance' target of no more loss of ancient woodland - http://www.ukbap.org.uk/BAPGroupPage.aspx?id=98. It is therefore axiomatic that Mid Devon District Council has a statutory obligation to protect ancient woodland.

- The **'UK Forestry Standard'** sets out the UK Government's approach to sustainable forestry. It states: "*ancient semi-natural woods...are of special value.*" The Standard has a series of UK-wide aims for semi-natural woodland and clearly states: "*the area occupied by semi-natural woodland should not be reduced.* " (Forestry Authority, 1998, UK Forestry Standard: Standard Note 5, pp.41-43).

- The **Biodiversity Strategy for England** clearly states that the Government will "*take measures to prevent loss or damage to ancient woodland and trees, and their uniquely rich biodiversity, from development.*" (DEFRA, 2002, Working with the grain of nature. A biodiversity strategy for England , para 6.9).

- **Planning Policy Statement 9 on Biodiversity and Geological Conservation** clearly states: " *Ancient woodland is a valuable biodiversity resource both for the diversity of species and for its longevity as woodland. Once lost it cannot be recreated. Local planning authorities should identify any areas of ancient woodland in their areas that do not have statutory protection (e.g. as an SSSI). They should not grant planning permission for any developments that would result in its loss or deterioration...Aged or 'veteran' trees found outside ancient woodland are also particularly valuable for biodiversity and their loss should be avoided. Planning authorities should encourage the conservation of such trees as part of development proposals.*" (ODPM, PPS9, 2005, paragraph 10).

- The **SW Forestry Framework (Forestry Commission, 2005)** contains a key objective to *'Protect, improve and manage Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland...".*

In terms of compensatory measures, it is impossible to replace ancient woodland as this habitat has evolved over centuries and we are not able to replace hundreds of years of ecological evolution by planting a new site or attempting to translocation.

For these reasons the Trust believes Ancient Woodland must be given absolute protection under Objective 4.

2. Protection of ancient trees

Secondly, ancient trees have an important resonance for green infrastructure strategies for cultural, landscape and biodiversity reasons -

- Old individual trees are an important part of our cultural and landscape heritage : ancient, veteran and notable trees resonate with the history of the landscape and form markers in the lives of individual people and communities. Ancient trees also have a special conservation value, supporting many species of epiphytes, invertebrates and fungi, whilst also providing a habitat for other animals including owls, woodpeckers, other hole nesting birds and bats. In addition, trees make a significant contribution to the urban environment both in visual terms and in helping to abate air pollution and create oxygen.

- There is a need in Mid Devon to ensure that this ancient tree heritage continues in a sustainable way so that future generations will be able to enjoy the benefits of ancient trees after the current specimens are gone. It has been estimated that Britain may be home to a majority of northern Europe's ancient trees and therefore we have a great responsibility in looking after them. Some ancient/veteran/notable trees have already been identified in Mid Devon such as the ancient the ancient trees in and around Knighthayes Court, Tiverton. Given the concentrations of ancient woodland generally in the District, there may be other ancient trees that we may not yet know about. The Ancient Tree Hunt (http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk/) is designed specifically for this purpose.

- It is important that there is no further avoidable loss of ancient trees through development pressure, mismanagement or poor practice. The Ancient Tree Forum (ATF) and the Woodland Trust would like to see all such trees recognised as historical, cultural and wildlife monuments scheduled under TPOs and highlighted in plans so they are properly valued in planning decision-making. There is also a need for policies ensuring good management of ancient trees, the development of a succession of future ancient trees through new street tree planting and new wood pasture creation, and to raise awareness and understanding of the value and importance of ancient trees.

- Central and local Government has committed to protecting ancient trees:-

- PPS9 clearly states that "Aged or 'veteran' trees found outside ancient woodland are also particularly valuable for biodiversity and their loss should be avoided. Planning authorities should encourage the conservation of such trees as part of development proposals." (ODPM, 2005, paragraph 10).

- The SW Woodland & Forestry Framework (Forestry Commission 2005) has as a key objective (N1A, p.29): *'Protect, improve and manage Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (including veteran trees)'.*

For these reasons the Trust believes that Ancient Trees must be highlighted and protected as key green infrastructure assets under Objective 4.

3. Woodland creation

Finally, we would like to see clear and unequivocal support for a significant increase in native tree cover in Mid Devon. The UK is one of the least wooded areas of Europe, with just 11.8% woodland cover compared to around 44% for Europe as a whole. The Woodland Trust is therefore working to achieve its ambitious aim of doubling native woodland cover over the next 50 years.

- Woodland creation is a key delivery component of Government policy to improve peoples' quality of life. **Caroline Spelman, Environment Minister** has set this out: *"Now let me turn to our environment and, specifically, to our trees. Because if ever organisms demonstrated their ability to multi-task, it's trees. They capture carbon and hold soils together, prevent flooding and help control our climate".* (Speech at Angela Marmont Centre for Biodiversity, 20 May 2010).

- The Woodland Trust believes that woodland creation is especially important because of the unique ability of woodland to deliver across a wide range of benefits – see our publication ***Woodland Creation – why it matters*** (http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/about-us/publications/Pages/ours.aspx). These include for both landscape and biodiversity (helping habitats become more robust to adapt to climate change, buffering and extending fragmented ancient woodland), for quality of life and climate change (amenity & recreation, public health, flood amelioration, urban cooling) and for the local economy (timber and woodfuel markets).

- The ***UK Biodiversity Action Plan*** (http://www.ukbap.org.uk/default.aspx) makes it clear that expansion of priority habitats like native woodland is a key aim. Under section 40 of the **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006**, all public authorities now have a statutory duty to conserve biodiversity under the definition of *'Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'*. It therefore follows that public bodies such as Local Authorities should support the creation of more native woodland.

- The Government's **Carbon Plan** (HM Government, March 2011) reaffirms support for woodland creation: *'The forestry sector can deliver significant greenhouse gas abatement through carbon sequestration in new woodlands and increased use of timber and wood products, both to store carbon and to substitute for materials with high fossil fuel emissions associated with their production...Government will continue to support woodland creation through Rural Development Programme funding, and the Woodland Carbon Task Force..'*.

- In a letter to all Local Authorities calling for support for the Government's National Tree Planting Campaign ('The Big Tree Plant'), the **Environment Minister Caroline Spelman** has extolled the many virtues of trees: *'Trees offer so many benefits to our citizens. They capture carbon and hold soils together, prevent flooding and help control our climate. They also add immeasurably to our quality of life by making areas more attractive and healthier places to live. In recent years the number of trees being planted annually across the country has declined, and could decrease further, unless action is taken to reverse this trend'* (letter to all Local Authorities, 12th November 2010).

- An important publication from the Forestry Commission, ***The Case for Trees in development and the urban environment*** (Forestry Commission, July 2010), sets out *'The multiple value of trees for people and places – increasing greenspace and tree numbers is likely to remain one of the most effective tools for making urban areas more convivial'*, and lists (on p.10) the benefits as –

- Climate change contributions
- Environment advantages
- Economic dividends
- Social benefits.

- The **South West Forestry Framework Implementation Plan 2009-2012** (Forestry Commission, 2009, Action 2.3) highlights the need to "*Encourage tree planting and woodland establishment*", and this is repeated in Action 3.6 -"*Develop spatial framework for targeting tree planting and woodland creation*".

- Support for woodland creation is becoming widely embodied in the Local Development Plans process across the country. The draft South East Dorset Green Infrastructure Strategy states that: '*Woodlands have suffered severe loss of area and are generally highly fragmented, albeit with some concentrated expanses on river valley sides and scarp slopes. Despite past*

losses woodland contributes substantially to landscape identity. Woodlands offer great scope for expansion, and can be restored or recreated on a wide range of soils and landforms'.

- **South Cambridgeshire District Council** have adopted a Trees & Development Sites Supplementary Planning Document (SPD, adopted January 2009) supporting the planting of trees within the built environment. **The London Borough of Islington's** goes even further with its *'A policy for trees in Islington – ensuring sustainable well cared for trees, for now and the future'* (London Borough of Islington, updated 2009) and sets out a comprehensive trees and woodland policy. **Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council** have prepared a Woodland Strategy (Solihull MBC, 2010) which states that: '*The Council will encourage new woodland creation and the management of neglected or declining woodlands to maximise their potential'.*

We also offer comment on delivery of new native woodland creation -

- The Trust has a flexible woodland creation delivery tool called **MOREwoods** (http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/plant-your-own-wood/morewoods/Pages/freewoods.aspx) that can be tailored to the requirements of individual landowners – private, public or corporate. We can promote, advise, manage and deliver a woodland creation scheme for you, creating vital areas of new woodland for your community. We can also help with flagship educational or community tree planting events.

- An example of a successful local authority woodland creation partnership is an ongoing partnership scheme developed in **South Hams District Council/Plymouth City Council** - http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/news-media/releases/Pages/south-hams-planting.aspx. The project will see more than 30,000 native trees create 50 acres of new native woodland.

We would like to see support for more native woodland creation, for all the benefits it delivers, under Objective 4 of the Mid Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy.

4. Landscape scale connectivity

We strongly support the objective to improve *'linkages and connectivity between habitats to address habitat fragmentation and isolation of vulnerable species'.* As mentioned above in our response to Objective 3 on climate change, adaptation to climate change is about developing resilient natural systems that can absorb and respond to change. The report entitled '**England Biodiversity Strategy Climate Change Adaptation Principles**' (Defra, 2008) sets out how to conserve biodiversity like ancient woodland in a changing climate. It proposes a number of key principles including "*...Maintain existing ecological networks.....Create buffer zones around high quality habitats...Establish ecological networks through habitat restoration and creation...*"

In their current state, key habitats such as ancient woodland are simply not sustainable given their fragmented character and the immobile nature of many of their characteristic species, which frequently "locked in" by a surrounding environmentally hostile landscape, exacerbated by the anticipated effects of climate change.

To this end we would like to see creation of new natural habitats around existing valuable conservation habitats such as ancient woodland, together with a reduction in intensity of

agricultural practice, so that species are better able to move around – or 'permeate' - into other natural habitats. This 'landscape scale' approach can deliver significant benefits as it enables both 'structural' (ie physical connectivity) and 'functional' (ecological connectivity) linkages to develop, particularly to the benefit of native woodland under pressure from climate change. It is complimented by the SW Nature Map initiative.

We would encourage green infrastructure support for improving habitat linkages and connectivity, particularly to benefit irreplaceable semi-natural habitats like ancient woodland.

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