1. **The construction industry needs productive & diverse working woodlands**
   1. **The government should commit to building with homegrown timber to assure nurseries and foresters of diverse demand.** The England Tree Strategy recognises that *‘only 23% of homes in England are built with timber frames’.* Timber is a viable construction material for new builds and retrofits of all buildings, not simply homes. The French government has made significant commitments to use bio-sourced materials in large developments[[1]](#footnote-0), the UK should make comparable commitments. The government must address and resolve the reticence of insurance providers for timber buildings by supporting tests for fire safety and durability[[2]](#footnote-1). The UK’s Timber Procurement Policy should be revised to incentivise procurement from diverse working woodlands in Britain. British grown timber for construction can include a range of products including timber framing elements, engineered timber products, wood fibre insulation and internal finishes, fixtures and fittings.
   2. **We should prioritise construction over combustion.** The construction industry is responsible for 39% of UK carbon emissions[[3]](#footnote-2), and needs to make significant reductions to help achieve the UK’s net-zero carbon commitments.Buildings can act as carbon sinks for upwards of 60 years beyond a tree’s life[[4]](#footnote-3). Timber-framed buildings can reduce embodied carbon by 30% compared to typical masonry construction, while for taller buildings, structural timber systems can offer carbon reductions of 50% compared to concrete structures[[5]](#footnote-4). These huge levels of carbon reductions can help the construction industry to reach net-zero whole-life carbon, and fast. Timber can even be harvested without felling, using techniques such as coppicing to retain tree cover. The CO2e sequestered in a tree grown for biomass is released into the atmosphere upon combustion.
   3. **Forests must not be tools for carbon offsetting to allow polluting companies to continue business as usual.** The emerging interest in ‘carbon credits’ to offset the impact of polluting companies should play a secondary role in the growth of England’s woodland sector. The construction industry will not be able to get to Net Zero by using biogenic materials if the sequestered carbon has already been used to offset polluting practices.
   4. **There must be a firm commitment to supporting the biodiversity of England’s working woodlands.** The government should make a firm commitment to supporting woodland management strategies that restore and support biodiversity to meet the dual needs of people and wildlife. Training new and existing woodland professionals in emerging methods of ecological regeneration will be critical to addressing the climate crisis, and must be supported by the government.
   5. **We should target much more than a 2% increase in woodland by 2060**. The Strategy proposes an increase of woodland cover from 10 to 12%. The average European forest cover exceeds 30%, whilst the UK is being deforested[[6]](#footnote-5). The UK climate is highly conducive to growing trees, and there is a historical precedent of vast tree cover in the UK[[7]](#footnote-6). To retain food security, we suggest intensive planting within green belt areas, an ambitious reduction in food waste and incentivised planting in low-grade agricultural land. A thriving forestry industry in England will attract finance to support afforestation. These new woodlands need to work well under sustainable management, whilst extensive mapping of existing British tree cover is needed (see 2.5).
2. **We need to increase tree canopy cover in our towns and cities**
   1. **Trees help our homes and cities be more resilient to climate change.** This includes helping to reduce the urban heat island effect[[8]](#footnote-7), reducing air pollution, offering shade to our buildings and streets in summer (and dropping leaves in winter to allow solar gain when it is most needed), acting as urban drainage, helping to reduce surface run-off induced flash flooding, and providing carbon stores comparable to rainforests[[9]](#footnote-8). These benefits help to reduce the energy it takes to cool buildings, helping us to reduce operational carbon associated with building services.
   2. **Urban tree planting should embody the biodiverse nature of woodlands**, supporting a variety of species. We should be planting trees to produce fruit, and to support pollinators wherever possible. We need to plant species that will be resilient and able to cope with rising temperatures (the best trees may sometimes be non-native). The Mayor of Paris’ commitment to urban tree planting[[10]](#footnote-9) sets a standard which all of England’s cities should meet, with a profound commitment to urban ecological regeneration.
   3. **Mature urban trees should be retained and protected**. Canopy cover should be used as the primary measure for strategically planning around and protecting existing trees, not the number of trees (one 150-year-old plane tree is not equivalent to one 6-year-old birch tree). We would like to highlight that there is an existing conflict of interest - councils are responsible for planning and maintaining trees, as well as validating Tree Preservation Orders. A new body equivalent to Historic England is needed for the preservation of existing mature urban trees and to manage TPOs.
   4. **Increased green space should be a universal right** and not a tool to increase property values; street trees should benefit existing communities and not simply new developments. Trees are proven to improve air quality, whilst the biophilic properties of urban green space reduce stress and anxiety. Mature trees act as important landmarks within towns and cities. The physical and psychological benefits of living amongst trees are clear[[11]](#footnote-10), and the government must make firm commitments to leveraging them[[12]](#footnote-11). We should be sharing the benefits of any new tree planting equitably in our communities, ensuring that those who stand to benefit the most are prioritised in planting strategies. Ambitious afforestation, if partnered with other strategies of ecological regeneration, will create destinations and tourism trade.
   5. **We need to raise awareness of the value that trees bring** and the protections that exist for trees in urban areas within the wider general public. To facilitate this, open-source data needs to be made available and connected between British towns and cities. This data needs to be maintained and managed by a central body, and used not only to plan future tree planting but to educate the general public on the value of trees. With data and knowledge, we can better market and promote the value of trees and our woodlands.

1. Ministry of Ecological Transition and Ministry of Territorial Cohesion and Community Relations, *Matériaux De Construction Biosourcés Et Géosourcés*. 2016. ([ww.cohesion-territoires.gouv.fr/materiaux-de-construction-biosources-et-geosources](http://ww.cohesion-territoires.gouv.fr/materiaux-de-construction-biosources-et-geosources)) [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. ACAN have previously opposed the Government’s proposal to ban the use of safe structural timber in the external wall of buildings with a floor above 11m, with 200 professionals supporting this campaign. ([Save Safe Structural Timber | ACAN](https://www.architectscan.org/safe-timber)) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. UN Environment Programme and IEA, *2019 Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction Sector* , 2019. (<https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/publication/2019-global-status-report-buildings-and-construction-sector>) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. The government has been advised to ‘Develop plans to rapidly scale up the levels of wood used in construction and support the assessment and benchmarking of whole-life carbon in buildings.’ Reducing UK emissions: 2020 Progress Report to Parliament, p.39. 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Isaac, J & Hawkshaw, P. Scaling Low Carbon Construction, 2020. (<https://www.istructe.org/IStructE/media/Public/TSE-Archive/2020/Scaling-low-carbon-construction-materials.pdf>) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Friends of the Earth propose doubling UK forests, 2020. ([www.friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/doubling-trees-will-help-stop-climate-chaos](http://www.friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/doubling-trees-will-help-stop-climate-chaos)) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Forestry Commission. *A Brief History Of British Woodlands.* 2015([www.rfs.org.uk/media/441738/7-a-brief-history-of-british-woodlands.pdf](http://www.rfs.org.uk/media/441738/7-a-brief-history-of-british-woodlands.pdf)) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. ARUP, *Reducing Urban Heat Risk,* 2014. ([www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/reducing-urban-heat-risk](http://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/reducing-urban-heat-risk)) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. Disney and Wilkes, *UK Urban Forest Can Store As Much Carbon As Tropical Rainforests*. 2018. ([www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2018/jun/uk-urban-forest-can-store-much-carbon-tropical-rainforests](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2018/jun/uk-urban-forest-can-store-much-carbon-tropical-rainforests)) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. City of Paris, *Des Forêts Urbaines Bientôt Sur Quatre Sites Emblématiques,* 2019. ([www.paris.fr/pages/des-forets-urbaines-bientot-sur-quatre-sites-emblematiques-6899](http://www.paris.fr/pages/des-forets-urbaines-bientot-sur-quatre-sites-emblematiques-6899)) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Centre for Sustainable Healthcare. , 2020. (<https://nhsforest.org/evidence-benefits>) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. O'Brien, Liz & Atmiş, Erdoğan, *Wellbeing benefits from urban forests and greenspace for diverse sections of society.* 2017.([www.researchgate.net/publication/318259557\_Wellbeing\_benefits\_from\_urban\_forests\_and\_greenspace\_for\_diverse\_sections\_of\_society](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318259557_Wellbeing_benefits_from_urban_forests_and_greenspace_for_diverse_sections_of_society)) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)