

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

March 2017

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about Britain's woodlands and trees.

I agree with you that our woods and forests are an invaluable national asset and I am proud of the Government's record of action to preserve and extend British woodland.

Over 11 million trees were planted in the last Parliament and the Government has pledged to plant a further 11 million in this one. England's woodland cover is now expanding at a rate that has not been seen since the fourteenth century.

I especially welcomed the Woodland Capital Grants programme which provided funding to encourage farmers, land managers and foresters to create new woodland, while protecting existing woodland and restoring tree health. From 2016 these grants have been incorporated into the Countryside Stewardship scheme, which supports improvements to woodland over a period of years, as well as a range of capital items, including woodland infrastructure.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning permission should be refused for development that would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees. This can only be overridden if the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

I am also pleased to tell you that plant health is one of Defra's top priorities. In the last Parliament a new strategy was published, setting out innovative approaches to detecting and diagnosing pests and pathogens. These include activities overseas in exporting countries, at the border and inland in the UK. The Defra budget was increased to fund this work, and a tree health management plan was issued at the same time.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY