



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

October 2019

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about Britain's woodlands.

I agree with you that our woods and forests are an invaluable national asset and I am proud of the action that has been taken in recent years to preserve and extend British woodland.

I am pleased that Ministers have committed to plant 11 million trees by the end of this Parliament, on top of a further 1 million urban trees. I also welcome the ambitious plans to create a new 'Northern Forest' along the M62 corridor with the aim to plant over 50 million trees over the next 25 years and I am encouraged by a commitment to consult and publish an England Tree Strategy.

In 2015 the Government introduced Countryside Stewardship which included a new Woodland Creation Grant Scheme. The new scheme provided funding to encourage farmers, land managers and foresters to create new woodland, while protecting existing woodland and restoring tree health. The Countryside Stewardship scheme also supports improvements to woodland as well as a range of capital items, including woodland infrastructure.

The Government is committed to ensuring stronger protection for our ancient woodlands and has taken a positive step in the revised draft National Planning Policy Framework. Subject to consultation, this will deliver on the manifesto commitment to strengthen protections for ancient woodland. Defra is also exploring opportunities from updating the Ancient Woodland Inventory. Officials are also working closely with the Department for Transport and HS2 to address the importance of ancient woodland when determining final routes.

I am also pleased to tell you that plant health is one of Defra's top priorities and has seen an increasing in funding since 2012 to tackle plant health threats.



In 2014 a new Plant Health and Biosecurity Strategy was published for Great Britain, providing a high level overview of the activity that Defra and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales are undertaking to improve plant biosecurity, which includes innovative approaches to detecting and diagnosing pests and pathogens.

The strategy also set out activities we are undertaking with other countries, at the border and inland in the UK to tackle plant health threats.

A major part of Plant Health work relates to managing pest and disease risk on trees. Ministers plan to publish a new a Tree Health Resilience Plan setting a new approach to building the resilience of our treescape.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Chris".

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY