

New national forest charter

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[beech trees](#) You've heard of the Magna Carta probably but have you heard of the forest charter? The Magna Carta was forced on King John of England in 1215 and is thought of as one the foundations of democratic rights. A couple of years later Henry III signed another act, a forest charter. This guaranteed the peasants a right to use the royal forests. In those days tree cover was increasing, or certainly the area of the country which was royal forest was. By 1217 the Royal Forest cover alone was a third of England's' land area. An astounding figure. The point was the royal forest was reserved for the King to hunt in. Any incursions on were punishable by extreme measures up to and including death. This charter guaranteed the ordinary people the use of the forests for firewood and grazing. It was read out in churches every week for the next 100 years, The irony is by doing this forest charter they probably helped to reduce the cover to the level of 10% today. 2017 being a year of lots of significant anniversaries the Woodland trust has come up with a new forest charter. This one which can be seen [here](#) is all about both appreciating trees and increasing the tree cover. England, Scotland and Wales have all [pledged](#) tree cover but things are going slowly. One thing we thought as impossible when we wrote our [book](#) was the idea of there being sufficient indigenous wood for heating/power. This is why we were cautious about the use of biomass. However the sustainable use of wood particularly for building is to be welcomed. This ties up carbon for a very long time. Apart from all this there are health and landscape benefits of adding more forest. All this has led to me signing and supporting this new forest charter. Neil

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