

# Public Perceptions of Urban Trees

## Results of Focus Group Discussions in England, Scotland and Wales

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# 1 Introduction

Despite a growing understanding of the significant range of societal benefits that trees offer, trees in British urban centres are under threat from a range of natural and man-made pressures. Included here are trees in private gardens, public streets and parks and those situated alongside important infrastructure such as road-side verges and railways lines. Over the last few years policy initiatives across British governments and the actions of national organisations have promoted trees in urban landscapes. For these policies and programmes to be successful it is important for the public and local communities to understand and support those aims and actions. However, this support is not assured. Urban trees can be perceived positively as well negatively. There is limited knowledge about contemporary individual and community attitudes to urban trees and how they might vary by region, locality and type of tree (e.g. street tree or park tree versus railway lineside tree), as well as the socio-demographic characteristics of those individuals and communities. Existing knowledge about British attitudes is largely drawn from, somewhat limited, studies conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, a comprehensive re-investigation is lacking (Moffat, 2016). Swanwick (2009) suggested that there might be a polarisation in society: older, more affluent, better educated and more environmentally aware people appear to value trees as part of an urban landscape, whilst younger and ethnic minority groups may have less regard for them. Such a polarisation between 'tree lovers' and 'tree haters' has also been reported from Portugal (Fernandes et al., 2018; Graça et al., 2018). Certainly, as the tree stock in many towns and cities gets older, there is an increasing tendency to see trees as a risk (for example to health and safety, property or infrastructure) rather than an essential element of the urban landscape (Britt and Johnston, 2008).

The aim of this project is to fill these evidence gaps by building a statistically robust contemporary perspective on individuals' attitudes to trees in the urban landscape.

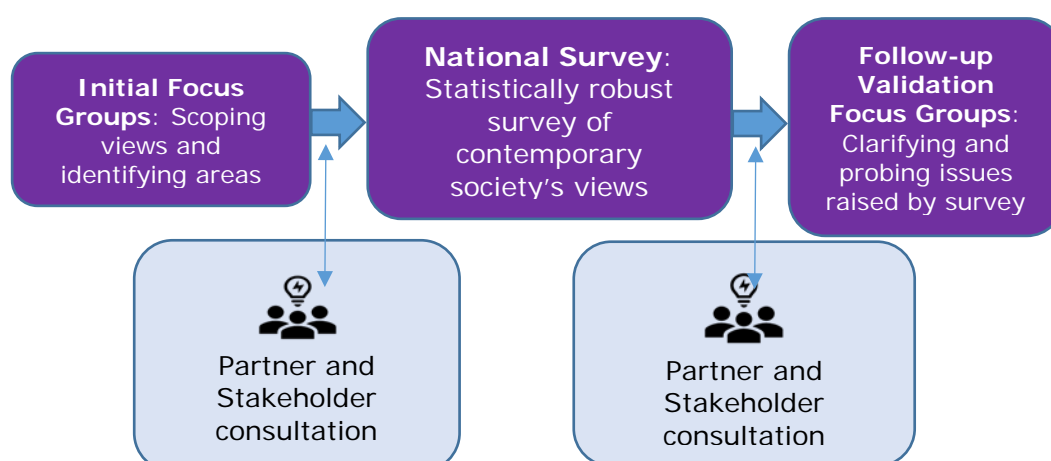
## 1.1 Research objectives

- Produce a synthesis of existing research and evidence to create a state-of-the-art overview of public perceptions of urban trees.
- Organise meetings with key stakeholders to understand their evidence needs and use these to shape research questions, analysis approach, reporting, and onward communication.
- Generate in-depth qualitative data from focus groups that reveals key issues and topics around urban trees.
- Use a national survey to generate statistically robust evidence about individual's views of urban trees, disaggregated by spatial and socio-demographic characteristics.

## 1.2 Methodological approach and research outputs

The research took a three-step approach as outlined in the Figure 1 below. An initial round of focus groups scoped out the general issues of concern to urban communities, this information informed the scope and question wording included in a national survey. After analysing the survey data, a second round of validation focus groups were held to explore in greater depth some of the interesting and unexpected results from the survey. Partners and stakeholders took part in the co-design of the focus groups, survey and interpretation of results.

Figure 1. Schematic diagram of 3-step methodological approach



The research produced three outputs that are expected to inform organisations interested in developing their urban tree policies and actions, these are:

1. Summary Report providing an overview of the key messages to come through from the focus group and survey evidence
2. A survey Data Dashboard displaying key analyses from the national survey
3. Focus Group Summary Report (i.e. this document) providing a short summary of the initial and validation focus groups.

The project webpage with links to the resources is:

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/public-perceptions-urban-trees/>

## 2 Initial Focus Groups

### 2.1 Objectives and Research Questions

The initial focus groups aimed to answer the following questions:

- i. Do urban populations engage with trees and woodlands in their immediate environment?
- ii. How do urban populations engage with these trees and woodlands? Has this been impacted by COVID-19?
- iii. Do urban populations think differently about trees in different locations and habitats, and of different kinds, e.g. on the continuum from single tree, line of trees, tree cluster to woods? What influences any differences in perception and attitude?
- iv. What are the specific positive or negative characteristics of urban trees and woodlands do urban populations recognise, e.g. size, quality of tree management, risks, opportunities for activities etc.?
- v. Do urban populations feel they understand or are included as much as they want to be in tree management and governance?

## 2.2 Method

### Sample and recruitment

Four focus group discussions (2 in England, 1 in Scotland, and 1 in Wales) were organised in December 2020. Recruitment to the focus groups was organised by a specialist company who also handled participant incentives, consent, and personal protected data. Consultation with the research company ensured a pool of 12 potential participants for each discussion with a suitable composition of urban context, age, ethnicity and employment status was achieved. Each focus group was run with 8 participants. Basic demographic characteristics of the participants were later forwarded by the recruitment company.

### Evidence collection and analysis

Before joining the focus groups, participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire (see Annex 1), which gathered basic metrics indicating their level of engagement with trees and woodlands and nature more generally.

A Discussion Guide (see Annex 2) was prepared with input from project partners, and this was used to structure the discussion in each of the focus groups. Focus Groups lasted for approximately 1.5 hours and were conducted over Zoom during the early evening. A slide pack was used to facilitate discussions and show images of trees and woods to prompt participant engagement. At least two FR research staff, including one facilitator and an observer, were present during each of the focus groups.

Discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed. A summary synthesis was prepared using research notes after all four Focus Groups had been conducted. In addition, transcripts were coded using a pre-determined codebook for in-depth content analysis.

## 2.3 Summary of Sample Characteristics

Table 1 shows that nearly all participants resided in major conurbations or major cities (31 of 32), with roughly two thirds (n=21) residing in urban



rather than suburban areas. The proportion of urban to suburban participants was similar across all three countries.

Table 1. Initial focus group participant locations and urban context

	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>
City/ies	London & South East Manchester	Central belt, Glasgow and Edinburgh	South Wales Valleys and Cardiff
Location	11 urban, 5 suburban	4 urban, 3 suburban, 1 edge of town	6 urban, 2 suburban

England and Scotland groups had representation across ethnicities, and with proportions of ethnic minority participants of 75% and 37.5% respectively were significantly greater than averages of 30.5% in major built up areas in England (Office for National Statistics, 2013) and 10.6% to 17.9% in major cities in Scotland (Dundee, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow) (National Records of Scotland, 2013). The Wales focus groups did not achieve representation for ethnic minorities, which is 5% nationally, but higher in urban areas at 20.1% in Cardiff, and 13.2% in Newport (StatsWales.gov, 2021).

Levels of educational attainment were slightly higher compared with national figures in England and Scotland, and significantly lower in Wales. 75% of England and Scotland groups held GCE A-level or equivalent, compared to national figures of 64% and 71%, respectively. 37.5% of Wales participants were educated to GCE A-level or equivalent, compared to 60% nationally (Office for National Statistics, 2020). Overall, all levels of education were represented, but postgraduate degree holders were only represented in the England groups.

Higher numbers of younger age groups representative of urban populations was achieved; of a total 32 participants, 22 (68.8%) were under the age of 50, which is roughly equivalent to the proportion in the UK's urban population overall (Champion, 2014).

## 2.4 Key discussion points from Initial Focus Groups

### 2.4.1 Engagement with trees, woods and nature

Respondents were able to describe varying levels of engagement with urban trees in their local environment. What they described ranged from a general appreciation of the presence of trees, to descriptions of how they chose to spend time in a variety of urban greenspaces where trees were a specific component. Trees were generally seen to be very important for the neighbourhood, it was important and valuable to have trees close to home. Street trees and trees in gardens or close to their homes were particular features of importance. Respondents mentioned a range of emotional responses as they characterised their engagement with urban trees, including admiration, relaxation, rejuvenation, and feeling closer to nature. Trees were also shown to be important building respondents' connections with nature, for instance, in appreciating and marking changing seasons. In some cities, e.g. London and Cardiff, there was a good level of awareness of trees, but in Glasgow and Edinburgh, there was a more mixed appreciation of trees in those contexts.

There was unanimous agreement across country focus groups that attitudes to urban trees and woods had changed significantly over the last year because of COVID-19. Lockdown and travel restrictions were a real catalyst for first-time appreciation of trees or enhanced engagement. For some respondents this meant they felt they had taken trees for granted. More connection to trees and woodland during the last year meant that even where respondents had familiarity with the trees around them, they were engaging in some new experiences. These responses were typical:

*I'm 64, I actually watched a conker from a horse chestnut tree falling. I'd never watched that before, and it must happen every day, but I just stood there and there it went! (Scotland, male, 60's)*

*I think I've been walking more... I've found it's such a great achievement that I've walked from my own house in Rumney to where*

*my mum and dad live in Pentwyn. The sights that I've seen, and I grew up in Pentwyn so I know the area, but didn't take any notice of it until doing that walk. (Wales, female, 40's)*

*I just feel like I can.. breathe more and easier because it's big, it's green, it's all shapes and sizes... It just feels like you're in a different world. I also feel relaxed when I'm there. I sleep really well. (England, female, 30's)*

#### 2.4.2 Perception and attitudes around trees of different sorts and in different places

As well as people recognising street trees and trees in gardens, they also mentioned roadside trees, parkland and woodland trees, and there were two mentions of trees beside the railway. No participants in any focus groups voiced an opinion that there are too many trees. In one group it was suggested that privately owned trees perhaps warranted more protection than currently given.

It was difficult to draw out comparisons between how people regarded trees in one environment compared to another, and between habitats with or without trees. However, there were some contexts or specific situations that participants commonly disliked, including:

- Building and housing development. The significant increase in development of brown field and greenfield sites was recognised as an important issue across all country focus groups. Respondents perceived these spaces to be poorly endowed with trees, for trees to have been removed in the process of development, and for trees not to be a concern in these contexts. As one person put it:

*...more and more trees are being cut down. I'd like to, as residents who enjoy trees, be given some say so. What do you want? More trees? More flats? It's becoming a concrete jungle, that's what we call it, without our trees. (England, female, 60's)*

- Cages on newly planted trees. Respondents in both England focus groups saw these as unnatural and ugly barrier to engagement and appreciation.
- Larger trees closer to housing. Respondents across all groups recognised a variety of associated problems with having larger trees close to residential buildings, including: subsidence, blocking of light, clogging of drains, and general damage to homes.

There was some preference for:

- Smaller trees closer to housing or in dense urban areas
- Older, larger, more mature trees in parks and woodlands

A very clear theme to come through from the discussions was that tree management is an important issue influencing people's perceptions and attitudes to trees. Poor management, including both excessive intervention as well as neglect, can lead to dissatisfaction and contributes to recognition of disbenefits:

*[Some very old trees] may be nice to look at, but they're a hazard so what do you do with them? And of course quite rightly people locally are quite annoyed about it because there are these lovely old trees that are probably 100 years old or so, and they've known them throughout all their life and suddenly they're going to be chopped down. (England, male, 60's)*

*I think I would like to see them spending more time on the leaves because I fell over once on the leaves and I had a nasty injury. There were some council workers a bit further down and they came over to make sure that I was okay. I said they should be cleared away. He turned around and said it's an act of God. We just leave them where they are. That's not right. (Wales, female, 60's)*



## The positive and negative characteristics of urban trees and woods people recognise

Many positive ecosystem goods and services were recognised and appreciated, and given more emphasis than the negative aspects. The most commonly mentioned positive benefits were:

- physical and mental health benefits
- providing habitat for and attracting wildlife
- air pollution mitigation and, to a lesser extent, climate change mitigation
- aesthetics, especially in connection with changing seasons
- providing quiet and tranquillity
- benefits for children, e.g.: social, educational, entertainment

The age and size of trees were appreciated strongly by some participants, particularly in connection with their personal memories or local history. For example,

*I remember, in fact, the area where we lived, my grandad used to always sunbathe, and he would take his deckchair under a [tree]. And although they're totally rebuilding the full area now, the full scheme is getting turned upside down, they're putting millions and millions of pounds into it – I don't know if you've heard of the area, Sighthill? It's getting totally regenerated. But the tree that my grandad sat under's still there, and it's so nice just to still see that tree there, you know. It just takes you back. (Scotland, gender and age not recorded)*

In terms of negative aspects participants recognised, those most discussed were:

- street tree roots and leaves creating trip/slip hazards
- overhanging branches blocking pathways
- overhanging trees blocking light in residential properties

- possible damage to property including homes and cars, e.g. from subsidence or falling limbs/trees

Discussing the management of trees, it was generally welcomed and seen as positive for humans and ecosystem services. However, although trimming was perceived favourably, severe and poorly executed “chopping back” was observed and regretted by many participants.

*If you've ever seen a tree of sprouts, sprouts at Christmas... that's literally how they leave the trees. (Wales, male, 20's)*

Some issues regarding neighbours' trees were raised, though many participants expressed a limited willingness to complain and generally preferred to avoid confrontation. In all focus groups participants did not appear well-informed about why maintenance was undertaken, and they were unclear about where responsibility lay. There was some recognition that resources may be limited for higher frequency, lower intensity maintenance. Participants in the Welsh focus group were most satisfied with the management of trees in their local areas, though multiple people noted problems with leaves causing people to slip.

### Understanding of, and inclusion in tree management and governance

A clear message from the Focus Groups was that respondents have little understanding of who owns and manages trees in different locations, how they could become involved in the care of trees, and whether they felt they had the power to influence tree management.

Respondents perceived very limited ability to influence decision making around management; generally they mentioned being able to complain to the council or on social media about particular management activities which were perceived as undesirable, e.g. sudden “topping” or removal of trees, or which had occurred without prior notice. Participants felt poorly informed about trees and their management. These comments were typical:

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*I wouldn't say there's a good communication with those kinds of things with the council... You'll just wake up one day and there'll be a guy across the road chopping a tree on a cherry picker. You'll be like, ah, yeah, that tree's been a bit overgrown for a while. That's it. (Wales, gender and age not recorded)*

However, there was a degree of confidence in the local authority, recognised as the most likely manager of trees in public spaces, that their staff knew what they are doing, so that there was little need for local communities to be informed. However, information about the more significant changes to trees, such as tree removal or when management activities are targeted close to their homes, was expected, appreciated and perceived as a common courtesy.

Regarding funding for tree planting, management and maintenance, this was not something that participants had generally thought about. There was broad support for local authority spending on trees at existing levels, but when discussing increasing council tax for trees, this was opposed. In the Scottish focus group in particular, it was more important to alleviate the economic impacts of COVID-19:

*...every council throughout the UK is close to going bankrupt, so if they wanted to spend more money on trees, I think they're probably doing the wrong thing. I think they should be spending it on other things first. (Scotland, male, age not recorded)*

*People don't have money for food, you know. They can put their electricity or gas on, or they can have food, and we're discussing the tree maintenance money, which – I'm sorry, the government's got lots of money for that. They're just not using it in the way they should be. (Scotland, gender and age not recorded)*

Across all groups, participants agreed there was little or no transparency about council tax spending for the management and maintenance of urban trees. Participants attested in many cases that they would potentially be more

supportive of funding (at current or possibly increased levels) if this were rectified. Some expressed a desire that citizens should be involved in decision making if funding comes from council tax. Respondents had some suggestions for alternative funding, e.g. hypothecated road tax. It was also suggested that the private sector, or appropriate charities could provide support as well. There was recognition that some big businesses have environment policies and can fund things like maintenance or tree planting.

There was strong support for government plans to plant new trees and woodlands. Generally, participants discussed area types and neighbourhoods where they felt there weren't enough trees, with the overall consensus being that new planting should focus on these areas. However, there were concerns about how this would be funded, especially given economic impacts of COVID-19. Some participants suspected that costs for planting or later maintenance of new trees would fall on their local authority, but the ability of cash-strapped councils to respond was questioned. Some doubts were expressed about how larger-scale increases in tree planting could possibly be achieved in denser urban areas, both in terms of the space required as well as funding. There was some recognition that in contemporary urban society, population density is increasing, particularly numbers of residents in flats and in houses in multiple occupation, so provision of greenspace, trees and woods must be planned for this type of resident.

There were very limited levels of involvement in action for urban trees and woods. However, participants expressed a willingness to get involved in various ways and recognised the benefits of doing so. This included recognition of social and educational benefits for children and the possibility of getting involved as a family activity. Some suggested that if local authority money for planting and maintenance of trees is in short supply, perhaps citizens would be motivated to volunteer in support. However, very few participants demonstrated concrete knowledge of how to find out about getting involved, nor could many point to particular organisations or existing initiatives. This suggests that relevant organisations are not effectively



communicating ways of getting involved. Local authorities were perceived to be “missing a trick” by not promoting voluntary initiatives. Some participants suggested it would be good to capitalise on the goodwill for local authorities, for volunteering, and for nature post-COVID. It was suggested that involving schools could help with planting, and funds should support initiatives involving schools. The tree for each new-born child project (Plant!) was warmly supported in Wales.

### 2.4.3 Implications of Initial Focus Group findings for survey design

The following conclusions were taken forward for consideration in the design of the survey:

- i. It is important to explore attitudes around the level and perceived effectiveness of management and maintenance. The initial focus group evidence suggests that trees are viewed more negatively where and when management is performed poorly or not at all. There is also some evidence that large/mature trees outside of parks are viewed more critically for negative ecosystem services – this may be connected to management issues.
- ii. It would be interesting to explore attitudes to new urban tree planting programmes and urban woodland creation, and to see if there are any links with the distribution and management of current tree stock.
- iii. It is important to establish the degree of interest in, and engagement with trees. The initial focus group evidence suggests people take urban trees for granted. This could mean that the public are unlikely to register a view about tree retention or expansion, and they may not feel motivated to get involved in tree support activities, nor will they notice or worry when a tree is threatened. It's important to understand whether there is a connection between these views and engagement levels and social, economic or environmental factors.

- iv. It would be useful to know more about citizen knowledge, understanding and appreciation of those third sector agencies whose job it is to promote trees and voluntary action in support of these aims.
- v. It would be useful to know more about citizens attitudes to their local authority and the tree work they perceive is their responsibility, and the extent to which they feel included in discussions about tree matters.
- vi. On funding for urban trees, it would be useful to ask if citizens are prepared to support higher taxes (e.g. council tax), but also broaden the questions to include an exploration of whether people think there is a responsibility for others to support tree planting and management, e.g. developers, but also polluting sources such as industry, car owners, etc..
- vii. More detailed questions about the communication of tree matters at local level would be useful. Evidence from the initial focus groups suggests there is big gap here, and that there are differences in opinions about the best ways to achieve effective communication. Who should be responsible and/or who would people trust the most?

## 3 Validation Focus Groups

### 3.1 Objectives and Research Questions

The Validation Focus Groups were designed to explore in greater depth some of the patterns and trends seen in the survey data. The specific research questions addressed were:

- i. Why do people value urban trees in different locations in the way they do? What accounts for the differences?
- ii. How do people feel about tree management and how do they think this should be funded?
- iii. How have people been involved in tree planting, management and governance?

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- iv. What methods of communicating about urban trees and woods do people prefer?

## 3.2 Method

### Sample and recruitment

Four Validation Focus Group discussions (2 in England, 1 in Scotland, and 1 in Wales) were organised in March 2020. There were 8-10 participants in each focus group. Recruitment to the focus groups was organised by the same specialist company as in the initial focus groups. Focus group participants were selected using the same criteria, and incentives for participation and consent were handled by the company. To explore differences by ethnicity that were revealed in the national survey results, the focus groups in England were organised to include one with white participants and one with BAME participants.

### Evidence collection and analysis

The same pre-task as used in the initial focus groups was administered by the recruitment company to collect additional data about participant connection with nature (Annex 2).

A second Guide (see Annex 3) was prepared with project partners and used to structure the discussion. As with the initial groups, discussions lasted for approximately 1.5 hours and were conducted over Zoom during the early evening. A slide pack was used to facilitate discussions and show images of T&W to facilitate participant engagement. At least two FR research staff, including one facilitator and at least one observer, were present at all groups. As with the initial focus groups discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed. A summary synthesis was prepared after all four Focus Groups had been conducted.

## 3.3 Summary of Sample Characteristics

As Table 2 shows, of 36 participants, roughly half resided in major conurbations or major cities (17 of 36), with roughly one third resided in

urban areas (n=12). The proportion of urban to suburban participants varied across country groups, with higher numbers of urban participants in England.

Table 2. Validation Focus Group participant locations and urban context

	England	Scotland	Wales
City/ies	London & South East Manchester	Central belt, Glasgow and Edinburgh	South Wales Valleys and Cardiff
Location	8 urban, 9 suburban	1 urban 8 suburban	3 urban, 7 suburban

England and Scotland groups had representation across ethnicities, and with proportions of ethnic minority participants of 52.9% and 33.3%, these were significantly greater than national averages of 30.5% in major built up areas in England (Office for National Statistics, 2013) and 10.6% to 17.9% in major cities in Scotland (Dundee, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow) (National Records of Scotland, 2013). The Wales focus groups achieved 20% representation of ethnic minorities, compared to figures of 5% nationally, 20.1% in Cardiff, and 13.2% in Newport (StatsWales.gov, 2021). However, these participants came only from Asian backgrounds.

Levels of educational attainment were higher than nationally in England, Scotland, and Wales. 76.5% of England, 88% of Scotland, and 70% of Wales groups held GCE A-level or equivalent, compared to national figures of 64%, 71%, and 60% respectively. (Office for National Statistics, 2020). Overall, all levels of education were represented, but postgraduate degree holders were not represented in Wales and school leavers were not represented in Scotland.

Higher numbers of younger age groups representative of urban populations was achieved; of a total 36 participants, 28 (77.8%) were under the age of 50, which is slightly higher than the current distribution of the UK's urban populations (65.2%) (Champion, 2014).



### 3.3.1 Why do people value different kinds of urban trees in the way they do?

What do respondents mean when they say there are enough trees, or not enough?

The national survey data suggested that most people felt there were too few trees, too few large trees, or that the level of tree cover in their town or city was about right. In all focus groups deep concern or disappointment was expressed regarding the decreasing number of trees in urban areas because of new developments, and there was a general perception that developments failed to compensate for these removals by planting new trees. It was also felt that developers had failed to incorporate green spaces into new developments. Participants discussed these issues:

*Well, I think there always seems to be money available to build massive buildings. I don't see why, as part of the permission to build that building, there shouldn't be an obligation on whoever is building it to include [trees] - These days, you see a tower block go up, or a new office block or something, and there's no green... I think the money is there; it's a case of whether or not it's actually funnelled into the right place. (England, gender and age not recorded)*

*When you come into the new developments where I live, there are very few trees and it seems to me that there's a distinct lack of planning when it comes to new areas, etc. The balance that I see is - old and new are very different. (Scotland, male, 40's)*

*Recently, we found out that there's going to be property development going in there, so that's really disappointing. ... Not just small estates either, there's hundreds of homes going into those plots. Everyone is up in arms, saying they love walking around those particular areas. Especially with lockdown, everyone's become a lot more aware of these spaces... and suddenly they're being barriered off. (Wales, gender and age not recorded)*

The Wales focus group perceived the cost of maintenance was passed onto the residents of these new accommodations, but with poor landscape quality and poor maintenance this was not considered good value for money.

In line with survey results, most residents were open to the idea of more trees in their neighbourhood, but many seemed to feel that existing levels of tree cover were adequate in their vicinity. However, participants noted the lack of tree cover in many other built up areas, and the equitable and more even distribution of trees was raised as an issue. Respondents discussed the lack of tree cover in less wealthy neighbourhoods:

*I think the master plan is also really important for more equitable distribution of trees because some councils are very rich and other councils aren't. Why should poorer neighbourhoods have lesser trees? I think that's a problem. There needs to be more equitable distribution? Definitely. (England, male, 40's)*

Participants recognised the importance of increasing tree cover not only for human well-being, but for a wider suite of ecological benefits, with benefits for wildlife and pollution mitigation most often mentioned. It was also recognised that trees, especially larger ones, pose many challenges in city centres, for instance in terms of securing adequate space, or maintaining them to prevent damage or nuisance. Participants generally understood it might not always be possible to increase tree cover in city centres and dense urban contexts.

Many participants demonstrated awareness that species need to be appropriate for the areas where they are planted, and some provide more ecological benefit than others. Native species were generally perceived more positively than others.

*I just think, tapping into the history of the local areas. So making sure that you respect and celebrate that, as well. So not introducing completely random species that don't necessarily have a link or a reason to be there (England, male, age not recorded)*

### Why are trees in parks and urban woodlands of particular benefit?

The national survey showed a clear preference amongst the public for trees in parks, and for urban woodland. When this was discussed in the focus groups, participants asserted that these locations are an important destination for various activities, including exercise, family outings, and other types of recreation. They also allow an escape from the “concrete jungle” of urban life. It was also noted such spaces are particularly important for those without access to a garden. The evidence showed that it was the frequency and duration of engagement, the size of trees, different management regime, the wider landscape context, and the overall balance of benefits over disbenefits that sat behind this clear preference. Parks and urban woodlands were also mentioned as prospective areas for further tree planting. The following quotes were typical:

*going to the park is like escapism for me. I used to wear size 26 jeggings. I now wear size 14 and I was able to do that by going on long walks in the park. (England, female, 40's)*

*I think you've got more time when you go somewhere like that, you're doing it for enjoyment. You're going to a park - for me, I take my son to the park, I usually meet a friend there. We've got time to sit, you listen to the things around you, the children are in a safe environment, they're running around on the grass or wherever it is, the environment, in those areas, you obviously stop. Whereas in a day-to-day life.. you're busy, you're not really looking at what's around you. (Wales, gender and age not recorded)*

However, it's not that trees within parks and urban woodlands do not have disbenefits. Two of the focus groups raised the issue that more densely wooded areas could promote antisocial behaviour and constitute an unsafe environment for park users, especially for lone women.

Participants in two of the focus groups noted the importance of trees integrated into “daily life,” pointing out that not everyone has time to visit parks, and perhaps the only nature they will be exposed to is the tree outside

their office window or the trees they pass by while commuting or during shopping trips. Urban landscapes without trees were regarded as “lonely” and “barren”.

#### Why are trees around railways and other transport infrastructure not seen as providing as much benefit?

The benefits of trees around railways and roads were recognised, for instance in providing cleaner air, noise screen for local residents, or making for a pleasant journey. It was also noted that more severe, extensive removal of trees had been conducted around some railway areas, and this was perceived negatively. On the other hand, participants across most groups had also experienced train delays due to fallen leaves and this was perceived as a failure to manage trees around railways properly:

*Why do they plant trees that shed their leaves next to railway lines?*

*The amount of trains I've had cancelled because of leaves on the line, over however many years I've worked in London. (England, male, age not recorded)*

*...the only time I don't like trees is when they are by the railway station, by the train tracks, and you are told the reason, at times the reason there are some problems on the track because of the fallen leaves.*

*(England, female, 50s)*

*...we get leaves on the rails, and of course then trains don't run. You wonder how some of these other countries, who are heavily forested, ever cope. (Wales, gender and age not recorded)*

#### How important are the cultural and historical values of urban trees and woodlands?

There was little indication in the survey of the wider cultural and historical values attributed to trees, likewise there were very few mentions of historic trees and woodlands in the validation focus groups, and those that came up were not necessarily in the urban areas respondents lived, e.g. the Sherwood Oak. The particular trees which were of importance to individuals and the community were much the same as mentioned in the initial focus groups, that



is, trees related to personal memories and anecdotes, particularly childhood and family experiences. Whether the incidents referred to were positive or negative (e.g. one participant's childhood friend falling out of a tree and breaking his arm), these trees were seen as having particular value and, when removed, this was met with sadness and regret. The other cultural connection participants expressed was noticing trees and connecting with British traditions and sayings, for example:

*there's lots of berries on the trees so whether we have a cold winter, I don't know, but they give us other kinds of pointers, if you like, to nature and things that maybe we wouldn't pick up otherwise. (England, female, age not recorded)*

### 3.3.2 How do people feel about tree management and how do they think this should be funded?

#### What management practices annoy people?

The survey showed that the public were most annoyed about tree removal, and lack of maintenance of dangerous or damaged trees. In the initial focus groups, maintenance activities were generally looked upon positively, and recognised as important for: promoting tree health; mitigating nuisances, e.g. bird mess; preventing harm to people; and preventing damage to property. Anti-wildlife measures such as spikes and nets, were however, almost unanimously disliked, and seen as negating the wildlife benefits of trees as well as being deemed highly unpleasant on aesthetic grounds. In terms of poor management or a lack of management, participants complained about: train delays they had experienced due to leaf fall; aggressive trimming and tree removals which were seen as unnecessary and ugly; and a lack of appropriate planning and coordination by authorities to maintain and protect trees and increase tree cover in the long-term. Participants discussed the latter issue:

*I think that it's pretty important to have a long-term plan from the beginning, like you [other participant] mentioned, because where I used to live, the local council actually planted quite a few trees along the*

*main road in the town centre. Over a few years.. they had to take them out and now there aren't any trees there. Essentially what happened is the council wasted a lot of money for something that didn't really bring much benefit, presumably because they didn't do enough planning from the beginning. (England, female, age not recorded)*

*What I'm seeing now is more and more of them that have been taken down because of a whole lot of different reasons. Partly disease, partly decay, partly per-maintenance but, also as I said earlier, there's nothing there to support it. I agree with [other participant] that there's not, within cities, a lot of planning capabilities, but there still are enough grey areas, brownfield sites [for trees]. (Scotland, gender and age not recorded)*

### Who do people think should be managing trees?

Local authorities were again the most commonly mentioned organisation responsible for trees, with most types of work undertaken by them viewed positively. It was felt that sometimes a better job could be done of certain types of work, such as fallen leaf removal and trimming around road signage. Some complaints about excessive cutting (crown reduction) were noted. Councils were understood to be legitimate because of their responsibility for public trees. It was felt by some that council did not do enough for trees in light of their importance, and that more energy and resources ought to be channelled towards them. The differences between councils' approaches to tree management and planting were recognised. In the Scotland group a lack of policy coordination between local authorities was perceived with respect to urban trees, especially in addressing supra-local problems such as air pollution and climate change.

The group perceived that developers of newer properties, where participants had experience of these, were not fulfilling their responsibilities to trees. For instance, they were seen not to be devoting enough of their development budgets to planting and maintaining trees, and to be shifting tree and

grounds maintenance costs onto the consumer in the form of additional management fees.

Private owners were also recognised as the main responsible authorities for managing the trees on their property, and it was recognised that both over- and under-management could become problems, resulting in blocking of light, damage to property, or unnecessary removal of trees appreciated by neighbours. It was noted that private land ownership sometimes interfered with the proper management of trees; participants perceived the benefits of trees on private property and often saw private owners as having a responsibility to continue to provide such benefits. The additional costs of maintaining trees on properties owned by participants was important, but in most cases this was not regarded as a significant expense or much a disincentive when weighing up the benefits of having one's own trees. Some noted a social pressure by themselves and others in their neighbourhoods to keep trees. Some also noted the inadequacy of legislation protecting trees:

*There is a tree. .... I can just about see it from my window, ..... There's a big sign on it at the moment to say they want to pull it down for development. It's a hundred-year-old oak tree. .... that's a big story in our little suburb at the moment. (England, female, age not recorded)*

*We had to apply for permission, etc. I decided that I wanted to keep the crowns of them, just to preserve the actual tree itself. Next door did the same thing, got a different company in, and they've literally just - the trees are all still there in so much as the trunks are - they've totally ripped the trees out, but it still complies with the legislation that's in place. (Scotland, male, age not recorded)*

Awareness and mentions of other agencies responsible for trees was generally low or non-existent; there were a few mentions of the Forestry Commission, the RHS, and no identification of specific third sector organisations. Some groups recognised, however, that an overall strategy and coordination at government/national levels was needed.

### Who do people feel should pay for tree planting and management?

Respondents across the focus groups tended to feel that more funds ought to be dedicated to urban trees. While a few participants voiced their willingness to pay more council tax for additional management and tree planting, as in the initial focus groups, the idea of an increase was generally rejected. Some pointed out that many government (local or national) initiatives and policy campaigns wasted significant quantities of money because of poor planning, poor delivery or lack of follow-up.

Survey results revealed strong agreement with the proposition that polluters should bear more of the costs associated with trees. Respondents across the focus groups identified different polluters they felt might contribute, and this included private sector polluters who could contribute more; developers, oil companies, large logistics companies such as Amazon were identified. But private car drivers were mentioned most frequently, and there were many suggestions as to how to hold drivers accountable, such as additional carbon tax, and a traffic surcharge in urban centres (such as in London). Developers were mentioned again, it was felt they did not adequately accommodate, replace, or maintain trees on newer developments. Many participants perceived that profit usually preceded concerns around trees or environment/community. In this vein, most groups did not display high levels of trust in private entities, and the consensus was that while corporate entities ought to take more responsibility by devoting more funds to environmental issues and tree maintenance/planting in particular, they were not felt to be responsible entities in deciding how to use such funds. However, there was a degree of tension in the deliberations around assigning responsibility to corporate entities or individual consumers, as one person put it:

*I am! I am a polluter. I drive a 3.5 petrol engine, but I drive a people carrier because I have four kids. I don't have a choice, unless I go to a horse and carriage, I can't transport my family around. I'm more than happy to plant trees and things, but there are people that are going on*

*their bicycle, what are they supposed to do? Yes, we should be paying.*  
(Scotland, female, 30's)

Groups did not strongly support a subsidy for homeowners to incentivise tree planting in gardens, generally seeing this as homeowners' responsibility, or seeing potential for such a subsidy being exploited:

*I just think it would be rife to abuse. People living on tenth floor flat with no garden saying, 'Yes, I'll plant a tree,' but not actually do it and just claim the money.* (England, gender and age not recorded)

### 3.3.3 How have people been involved in tree planting, management, and governance?

The survey suggested that people don't get very involved in actions for trees or engage in governance, with those who have got involved most frequently describing planting trees in their own gardens and volunteering to plant trees. Amongst the focus group participants, existing levels of involvement for urban trees appeared quite low as well. Most participants struggled to provide examples of their own involvement, and often pointed to involvement of friends or family, the most frequently mentioned type of involvement was tree planting in private gardens, reflecting the survey findings. Other examples included initiatives or schemes organized by workplace or in connection with schools, and to a lesser extent there was involvement lobbying local councils to protect particular trees or woodlands. Many pointed to getting involved in environmental, actions such as community gardening or litter picking initiatives rather than those specifically oriented towards trees.

Participants identified the following barriers to engagement: a lack of time, having children, lack of awareness, simply taking urban trees for granted, a lack of emotional connection, or a lack of experience working with trees or plants.

In addition, participants felt they lacked control over public spaces and did not feel they could ask permission to get involved, or that they might face repercussions from authorities in some cases. Many participants seemed to

find involvement daunting, that it would require too much of a commitment of time to organise, or that many activities were not appropriate to bring children along to.

*I do feel as though, in the UK, if you did want to plant trees in a park or anything, it definitely wouldn't be up to you. That's the general feeling I get. I feel like it's very much controlled by the government and the council, and that if you do try and disrupt or dig a tree just to plant it, I almost feel like someone might come up and be like, 'What are you doing?' Get a fine, you know. It is quite controlled like that, I think, regarding parks. (England, gender and age not recorded)*

When discussing where people might begin to look for opportunities to get involved in actions for trees and woods, awareness of existing organisations and avenues for involvement was low, but participants did demonstrate interest, and recognised the importance of greater involvement. As one person put it:

*We never thought we'd get rid of microplastics and what would happen with plastics, we thought there was an inevitability of plastics being pervasive right the way through the whole ecosystem until we actually stood up and said no. When you calculate how long it takes for one acorn to survive and the life of an oak tree, to actually survive, what right have we not got to stamp our feet, and it really churns my acorns when I hear and see what is happening. (Scotland, male, age not recorded)*

Participants said they would use Google, or council websites and social media, to find information about involvement, but many pointed out they "*wouldn't know where to begin,*" or that they had not been made aware of any opportunities. This echoes findings initial focus groups, that communication around urban trees is not effective in reaching the broader population. Some pointed to their low awareness of environmental issues in general when compared to younger people.



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**What type of engagement approaches were seen as particularly effective?**

Children were a persistent theme generating much discussion, including the importance of promoting children's involvement from a young age. This was both for their education and benefit but also in fostering agents for an environmentally viable future. It was noted that those caring for children are busy, and it was felt volunteering activities need to be accessible across a range of ages to be effective. It was also recognised that children's awareness and involvement with respect to environmental issues often exceeded that of adults, but that adults ought to take more responsibility and be more involved because of the urgency of environmental issues:

*I think we'd be staggered if you actually spoke to the average eight, ten, 12, 13-year-old and their interest in the environment, and their concern and worry about these things is amazing. Absolutely amazing. They are much more aware.* (Wales, male, 60's)

*When children come of age in a couple of decades, we want them to value these kinds of things, but we also don't necessarily have a couple of decades to spare. We need to properly derail the current way of doing things today, essentially. So kids definitely, but also everybody, immediately.* (Scotland, male, 40's)

Another important theme was that of clarity of purpose. The importance of a coordinated plan, coherent involvement with tangible, measurable goals and outcomes for those involved to be able to see and feel a part of. This was strongly connected to discussions around tree management authorities. In creating opportunities for involvement, partnerships were emphasized. Some focus group participants advocated or raised examples of partnerships between private companies, government (local or national), and third sector organizations, with a strong emphasis on schools. There was some support for the creation of more jobs in support of urban trees and more green jobs in general. The Green New Deal was mentioned. Many remarked on the importance of meaningful participation in connection to such discussions; of being able to see the results of one's efforts, and this applied to specific

actions such as planting a tree and being able to see that tree years later, as well as involvement in support of broader goals such as supporting wildlife and cleaner air.

While some focus group respondents said they had donated to particular tree-related causes in the past and saw the value of donation, many pointed out the lack of emotional connection, and lack of connection to outcomes, of donating.

There was a sense that participants were not particularly interested in participating in the organisational aspects of action for trees, and that due to time constraints, many would simply prefer for initiatives and volunteer opportunities to be completely organised by other entities, and to simply to be able to show up and participate:

*I, for one, would love to have to be part of, if the park would say, what on a Saturday morning you could come and you could help out. We would just dig a bed and put some things and learn something from the gardener and ask him questions. I think that would be a good exchange. Things like that, I would love to be able to do, but the offering should be small in a way that time is spent well, and it's not a huge commitment in terms of time. (England, female, 40's)*

### 3.3.4 What methods of communicating about urban trees and woods do people prefer?

Focus group participants displayed little awareness of campaigns or communication regarding urban trees, or of organisations conducting such campaigns. In all four focus groups the topic of communication was recognised as important to raising awareness, enabling engagement, and understanding roles and responsibilities. However, participants did not offer many examples of receiving such information, and it did not seem that many of them had actively sought out information about urban trees.

### Why are social media and council websites preferred means of finding out about urban trees and woodlands?

The survey suggested that television, printed media, the websites of national organisations and local authority websites were the forms of communication found most effective. The survey results suggested that word of mouth was not a particularly important means of communication about urban tree issues. Focus group participants indicated that word of mouth and using social media and messaging platforms (e.g. WhatsApp, Nextdoor), are one and the same thing. Participants in all groups validated the survey results by emphasising their use of social media and internet searches for local information:

*I still personally think that the comments about social media, all the various types, not just Facebook, is it's a fact of life now. Over the last ten years or so, I think this is the way that so many people pick up their news or what's going on in the local area, what's happening, or what's been advertised or what shows are on or anything you like. (Wales, gender and age not recorded)*

Participants confirmed social media and internet searches (e.g. Google) were the most commonly identified sources of information about tree issues and engagement with trees, because of their convenience, speed, and wide reach. Many participants seemed well-connected to neighbourhood and other community groups through various social media platforms. Some respondents recognised a potential downside was the possibility of unreliable information. So recognised organisations, e.g. local authority webpages and social media played a part in confirming and legitimising information. There was recognition that the effectiveness of different types of media depends on exactly what information is being presented. Participants noted the importance of using various forms of communication, including paper-based media, as some issues are better communicated using particular platforms, and for reaching those they perceived to be hard-to-reach audiences, e.g. the elderly/less tech-savvy individuals. Many participants had noticed placards and signage placed on urban trees, and one idea discussed by the second

England group was to include a QR code on such signage linking to more information and other media.

The focus groups were not able to provide clear insight as to why some forms of communication were ranked very low in the survey. It was felt in the first London group that the aesthetic aspects of trees lend themselves to visual rather than non-visual media such as podcasts. All but one group noted the effectiveness of documentaries and programmes when presented by enthusiastic and charismatic figures, e.g. Sir David Attenborough, and identified this as an effective mass media approach for generating broad public interest in environmental topics.

#### What features of and types of tree-related campaigns are seen as most effective?

Participants felt that social media constitutes a very powerful platform on which to carry out campaigns for urban trees. They also emphasised the importance of clear messaging and goals. As with the views they shared around public engagement, it was felt that more “holistic” organisations which understand the big-picture problems and solutions needed, should be leading such campaigns.

Participants did not respond strongly to the idea of campaigns focusing on culture or history. More importance was placed on having tangible goals and creating opportunities for meaningful personal connections and memories with trees and nature in certain places through various forms of interaction, amplifying peoples’ existing interests. For instance, the Welsh Plant! programme (planting trees for every child in Wales) was remembered because it was perceived as particularly meaningful. Throughout the group there were numerous mentions of involvement and campaigns related to gardening and planting. One group recognised the limitations of social media, pointing out that gardening and planting promoted deeper levels of engagement, because of emotional and sensory connections with planting and plants more generally:

*people want to swipe right in 0.9 of a second, they're not going to engage. Until you get your hands dirty and smell the soil, and feel the soil, you're not going to emote with it. (Scotland, male, age not recorded)*

The importance of clear messaging and particular hooks or slogans was also noted. The idea of rewilding was particularly well-received in the Scotland focus group, and they raised the idea of campaigns for rewilding some urban areas.

## Annex 1. Focus Group Participant - Pre-task "Homework"

### Information about you

We are investigating public attitudes to trees and woodlands where most people live – in towns and cities. Surprisingly, this is a topic that we know little about. It is important to understand public attitudes so that local authorities and other agencies are better able to provide what people want. Studies like this one can also lead to better decision-making and fairer, more effective management of existing trees in urban areas.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in a Focus Group – these have been designed so that we can gather the views of people living in towns and cities. We would be grateful if you would answer the questions below so that we can better understand your contribution in the Group session.

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_ *We will only use this information to learn more about your neighbourhood. Your address is not revealed by giving us your postcode.*

1. Are you a registered disabled person? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? ☐ Yes, limited a lot  
☐ Yes, limited a little ☐ No
3. What type of home do you live in? ☐ Flat ☐ House ☐ Other: -  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you an owner occupier? ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Do you have a garden of any size? ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Does it have a tree in it? (These can be in pots) ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Do you care for any children in your household below 16 years of age? Please say how many \_\_\_\_\_

**Thinking about nature** *By 'nature' we mean all different types of natural environment and the things that live there. It can be close to where you live or further away, and includes green spaces in towns and cities (such as your own and other people's gardens, parks, playing fields and allotments); the countryside (such as farmland, woodland, hills and mountains); and watery places (such as streams, canals, rivers, lakes, the coast and the sea).*

**Please rate your agreement with each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree):**

I always find beauty in nature	Choose an item.
I always treat nature with respect	Choose an item.
Being in nature makes me very happy	Choose an item.
Spending time in nature is very important to me	Choose an item.
I find being in nature really amazing	Choose an item.
I feel part of nature	Choose an item.



**To what extent are the following important to you?**

	Please score from 1 (very low/not important) to 7 (very high/very important) or N/A (not applicable)
Trees in my garden	Choose an item.
Trees in my and nearby streets	Choose an item.
Trees in my local park	Choose an item.
Trees along footpaths / waterways	Choose an item.
Trees along railway lines	Choose an item.
Woodlands near my home	Choose an item.

**Woodland Visits**

	Please chose an option from the drop-down box
How often do you visit woodlands? This can be for any reason, e.g. taking a walk, meeting friends, outdoor class room?	Choose an item.
Do you usually visit woodlands in the countryside or woodlands in and around your city/town, or both?	Choose an item.

**Impacts of COVID-19**

<b>Have any of these changed due to COVID-19 restrictions?</b>	Please chose an option from the drop-down box
Exercising outdoors	Choose an item.
The amount of time you take to appreciate nature (e.g. listening to bird song, noticing butterflies)	Choose an item.
Spending time in your local woodland/forest	Choose an item.
Spending time in your garden	Choose an item.
Your feeling of connection to nature	Choose an item.
Your level of happiness when in nature	Choose an item.
Going outdoors and being in nature with children	Choose an item.
Going outdoors and being in nature with friends	Choose an item.
Going outdoors and being in nature by myself	Choose an item.
Going outdoors and being in nature with my dog	Choose an item.

## Annex 2. Initial Focus Group Discussion Guide

### Forest Research

#### Focus Group Question Guide – Public Perceptions of Urban Trees

##### Timetable

**10 mins: Introduction to facilitators, the research, show the powerpoint slides of different types of treescapes**

After the introduction ask people to introduce themselves – first name and where they live – town/city

3 main sections to the Focus Group we want to focus on: give 20 mins per section (Prompts are there if needed)

#### A. Engagement with Trees and woods

1. Do you notice trees in your local area? Where?
  - Prompts: do you take notice of trees in your garden/neighbours' garden if you have one, trees in your street, in nearby streets, lines of trees along footpaths, railways, waterways, in your local park or your local wood.
  - How you connect with trees and woods – (i.e. views/visits, walking/sitting under, appreciating certain aspects of trees)
2. Do urban trees matter to you in your everyday life? If so how/why?
  - Weighing up benefits and disadvantages: Make area more/less attractive, issues with leaves in autumn, bird droppings on car, roots. [only if needed]
3. How important or unimportant do you think urban trees are for your local area?
  - Prompt: Make the neighbourhood more attractive, screen buildings, nice places to visit. Not important – other issues that need attention.

*Only ask this if time allows*

4. What is it that connects you with, or builds your connection to urban trees?
  - Prompt: having time to take notice/visit, interest in nature, knowing where to go, friends/family, some tree related problem your concerned about etc)?
  - Prompt: Any within walking distance?
5. Are there places where you think there are too many trees?

#### B. Management/Maintenance/funding

[Show slides of examples of management and maintenance.]

6. Are you aware of any management of trees and woods in your neighbourhood? If so, what have you noticed and are you generally happy with it, or not?
  - E.g.: pruning, taking care of trees, bird netting/spikes
  - Do you notice when trees are removed?
7. Is the management/maintenance of trees in your local area an important issue for you or not? Do you feel you have any influence on how these trees are managed?
  - Prompt: Why/why not? Would you like to have more say in this?
8. (Explain: About half the trees in cities are publicly owned – e.g. by council/local authority) How supportive are you of public spending for the management and maintenance of trees and woods in your local area?
  - Prompt: What if this meant a council tax increase?

*Only ask this if time allows.*

9. What other organizations make decisions about these trees and woods and organises their management?
  - (who is mentioned beyond local authority? – network rail, highways agency, woodland trust, etc) (how comfortable are you with this?)
  - Are there some places you would like to see fewer trees? [only if not asked in 5]

<b>C. Tree planting, woodland creation and action for trees</b>
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10. What do you think about the current government desire for more tree planting?
  - Prompt: If positive, where would you like to see more trees in your neighbourhood (in the wider town/city)
    - (in streets, along footpaths, railways, waterways, in parks, new woodlands, expand existing woodlands)
  - Prompt: If negative, why? (enough trees already, not sure where they would go)
11. Do you think more trees and woodlands in your neighbourhood would be of value?
  - Would it be good or not good for you personally?
  - Would it be good or not good for the community?
12. Have you ever got involved in action for trees and woods? Is so what did you do. If not - what is your reason?
  - Prompt: tree planting, protest about tree removal, complaints about tree maintenance or management
13. Would you be interested in getting involved in tree and woodland – management, monitoring, campaigning?
  - If yes, in what ways? Prompts: tree planting, supporting campaigns to get more trees planted, planting in own garden, etc.
14. Are your feelings of connection with trees and woods in your local area the same today as they were last year, or the year before? (Why not?)
  - Prompts: by not having a garden, street trees, or woods nearby to visit or by having a garden, nearby park/woods or COVID restrictions prompted you to take more notice of trees and woods or other nature?

*We have come to the end of our questions. Is there else anything that any of you would like to say about trees and woods in your neighbourhood that we haven't touched on already? Is there anything you would like to ask us about the research?*

*Thank you very much for your participation, we really appreciate the time you have taken to talk to us. We are talking to a range of people face to face like yourselves and then we will be running an online survey early next year. If you would like to be kept in touch with the research, then please let Schlesinger (the market research company) know as they have requested.*

<b>END</b>
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## Annex 3. Validation Focus Group Discussion Guide

### Question Guide

#### Timetable

**10 mins: Introduction to facilitators, the research, show the powerpoint slides of different types of treescapes**

After the introduction ask people to introduce themselves – first name and where they live – town/city

4 main sections to the Focus Group we want to focus on: give 15-20 mins per section (Prompts are there if needed)

Wrap-up with questions/concerns, big thank you

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*\*It should be noted that questions marked with an asterisk will be given priority during the focus group sessions\**

#### **1. Spaces and places for urban trees**

- 1.1 \* *When you think about trees in your town or city, do you think there are too many, or too few? What does the right amount of trees look like, and why do you say that?*
- 1.2 \* *Do you think trees in parks and woodlands have more value than urban trees in other locations?*
  - *Why is that, why are other spaces for trees valued differently?*
  - *Are trees around transport infrastructure (such as railways) important or to you, or not so much? Why/why not?*
  - *What about trees in private gardens, is there any benefit to you/the wider community? Do you stop to notice them?*
- 1.3. *Are there any places you can think of in your town or city where trees have specific cultural or historic value?*

#### **2. Looking after urban trees**

- 2.1. \* *Are you pleased or annoyed when you see trees being managed? When we talk about management we mean, cutting and trimming branches, pollarding/crown reduction, using anti-wildlife measures – (Explore around what kind of management, what kind of trees and which kinds of spaces)*  
Note: Pictures of different management practices will be shown
- 2.2. \* *Who do you think should be managing trees and funding their management? Why do you see them as legitimate?*
- 2.3. *Does anybody in this group have tree/s they are responsible for? Do you maintain those trees yourself or have you ever paid for a tree surgeon to do work? (Have you ever had to manage your tree because of home insurance?)*
- 2.4. *What about those who don't own trees of their own, have you worked, or paid for work on a tree you don't own? If so, why?*

- 2.5. *If there was more money for the maintenance of urban trees and tree planting, how would you like to see this money spent?*
- 2.6. *\* Where should money for trees come from? Council, Central government\* UK government or national e.g. Scottish government, elsewhere? Polluters?*
- *Would you be willing to pay more Council tax to fund this? How much more?*
  - *Who are the polluters who might contribute, and would this best be organised at a national or local level/levy?*

### **3. Getting involved with urban trees**

- 3.1. *\* Has anybody in the group today been actively involved in urban tree issues? (Prompt: We are thinking of all kinds of actions, from the practical e.g. planting trees, being part of a community group looking after trees or a woodland, to things like protesting against tree felling, donating money to a tree charity).*
- 3.2. *\* If you wanted to get involved in actions for trees where would you go, or who would you contact?*
- 3.3. *If you are not really interested in getting involved in action for trees, why is that? Can you say more about why that might be difficult, or why you don't have any interest?*
- 3.4. *What kinds of initiatives or campaigns would you be most interested in seeing (or supporting) and why? What is most important in such initiatives? (prompts: historical, cultural importance, interesting species, etc.)*
- 3.5. *\* What kinds of support might be helpful for you to be able to plant trees in your garden, or in public places? What sorts of things would put you off? (prompt: monetary incentive)*

### **4. Finding out more about urban trees**

- 4.1. *\* Have you ever searched for information about a tree or trees in your neighbourhood or town/city? If so, where did you look and were you successful?*
- 4.2. *\* Where would you look for information about proposed or current tree planting or maintenance happening in your neighbourhood and town/city? Why look here vs. somewhere else? (e.g., council, social media, word of mouth)*
- 4.3. *Why would you prefer to receive information about urban trees in one format vs. another? (e.g., visual, audio, text)*
- *Do you (watch TV programmes) about urban trees issues? (Listen to podcasts); (Read articles)*

<b>END</b>
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