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With the general election only months away, the political scramble for the green vote is imminent. How many times have we heard pre-election promises to be "the greenest Government ever" and then consistently seen politicians of all colours fail to deliver?

In recent years we have endured a catalogue of political blunders and misjudgements on the environment. Most shocking was the failed attempt to sell off our forests, but years before that the HTA warned of the risk from ash dieback only for it to be ignored until it was too late.

We have now been advised by the Forestry Commission that nearly 1,000 sites across the UK have been infected by the disease, with environment secretary Liz Truss stating: "We are doing all that we can on ash dieback. It is a serious issue ... we don't have a magic bullet." Do ministers really expect to be taken seriously when Defra now reports that tree imports are up by 25 per cent despite industry warnings of the heightened threat from fatal diseases on the near continent? In a recent Lords debate on the environment, Defra minister Lord De Mauley failed to offer any credible assurances in response to Lord Framlingham's concerns about biosecurity and in particular about a quarantine system for imported trees.

That debate identified Barcham Trees' unilateral stand on the issue of biosecurity (www.barchampro.co.uk/barcham-trees-biosecurity), with Lord Framlingham suggesting: "Perhaps the minister could look into the merits of that system." We all know that a better focus on trees is needed, but successive Governments have been in disarray over converting that aspiration into policy. For politicians fresh out of ideas we don't need a "magic bullet", we just need leadership and vision.

How about developing a national tree strategy to integrate the management of rural and urban trees under one policy?

Now that would be a manifesto promise with a difference.

