



THE NATIONAL  
FOREST

## **ADAPTATION IN ACTION: the National Forest Company**

### *Key issues*

The National Forest was initiated with cross-party support in the early 1990s to demonstrate all the benefits of lowland forestry close to populations. The National Forest Company was set up in 1995 to lead the creation of this new, multi-purpose forest for England, across 200 square miles of the Midlands. Through the creation and management of a mosaic landscape of woodland and other habitats, on such a large scale, the forest achieves:



- the restoration of areas scarred by mining and other extraction, with community regeneration
- strengthened ecosystems: resilience and biodiversity gains through scale and quality
- economic investment and business activity including a new visitor destination
- a market for woodland products
- climate change adaptation and mitigation, including carbon abatement
- enhanced quality of life, health, social cohesion and engagement

The National Forest has always been about more than trees and is a national sustainable development exemplar.

### *How we are adapting and supporting adaptation*

The National Forest is leading the way in demonstrating successful adaptation, recognising the importance of:

- adaptation in both urban and rural environments through our planning policy, advice and response to planning applications – seeking up to 30% green and blue infrastructure as part of planning proposals and minerals site restoration schemes
- taking a landscape scale approach to adaptation through our strategies and plans and through targeting of our grant schemes
- taking a partnership approach across the private, public and voluntary sectors in terms of promoting key messages and engaging people living, working in and visiting the Forest

Trees and woods can play an important role in mitigation through locking up carbon in trees and soils, offsetting carbon by new tree planting and shifting energy generation to biomass systems. Since its inception, it has been estimated that at least 50,000 tonnes of carbon have been sequestered by The National Forest. This is equivalent to the net removal of 180,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> gas from the atmosphere. The amount sequestered per year equates to 0.05% of the UK's contribution therefore supporting the UK Government's Climate Change Act 2008



### *What we are doing*

*Increased forest and woodland cover*- Converting a proportion of land to mixed woodlands and conservation areas will help to create a more resilient landscape and counterbalance the potentially high carbon impact of food production, which is very important for the UK, and will remain a dominant land use in The National Forest. Woodland created with climate change in mind can serve as a buffer to help ameliorate the more extreme local effects on species and habitats. Trees will filter pollutants and reduce soil erosion by wind and water. Trees can provide shade that moderates temperatures in buildings and reduces energy costs (financial and environmental). Shade from trees in urban areas and school playgrounds will make hot summers more bearable. Selective planting in flood plains can help manage rising water levels and contribute to flood control. Planting specimen trees in parklands will anticipate any loss of older trees from increased storm damage.



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*Improved forest and woodland management*- A well-managed, mixed wooded landscape is strong and resilient in the face of climate change, with linked woodland allowing species to migrate to more suitable environments.

*Woodland economy*- We are developing and promoting locally grown wood fuel, providing a useful additional market for otherwise difficult or uneconomic to sell by-products of management (thinnings etc). Wood products, such as fencing and furniture, as promoted by the developing National Forest wood-based economy, also lock up carbon. In addition, we are developing and promoting tourism and the visitor economy that supports green business opportunities, woodland activity and low carbon.

*Community engagement and woodland culture*- Attractive woodlands for people to enjoy near where they live will provide a healthy environment and the opportunity to participate in leisure pursuits without intensive carbon-producing travel. There are many opportunities to support environmental education within The National Forest, which creates an increased awareness of the issues and a greater commitment to implement the necessary changes to our lifestyles eg Half a million schoolchildren have benefited from environmental education sessions in the Forest.

*Carbon reduction/off-setting*- The National Forest is sequestering carbon and 'locking it up' for the future.

#### *Intended outcomes for 2020*

*Increased forest and woodland cover* - We are working with landowners and businesses to increase the area of woodland created in The National Forest to close to 25% via forest creation using our grant schemes, planning gain and direct land acquisition. Increased woodland cover can support ecosystem services to cope with a changing climate, and mixed planting within woodlands increases resilience.

*Improved forest and woodland management* - We are working with landowners and their advisers to increase the resilience of the 7000ha woodland already created in The National Forest through advice, information, training and grants to encourage active management. We aim to have 115 management plans covering 1400ha of younger woods and 350ha of mature woods by 1/4/16. Active woodland management supports effective management of pests and diseases, enhancing biodiversity and increasing productive use.

*Woodland economy* - We are working with businesses, local authorities and others to establish viable economic use of woodlands to develop a new woodland economy for The National Forest that can take advantage of the services that woodland provides. We are aiming to create an established visitor destination for The National Forest that is based on sustainability principles.



*Community engagement and woodland culture* – We are working with communities to increase their engagement and understanding of forests and woodlands, along with understanding of the importance of a resilient Forest. Training and education and skills development required to meet targets above.

*Carbon reduction / offsetting* - We are working with a wide range of organisations and individuals to help reduce their carbon footprint by getting involved in creating the Forest with all its many benefits.

#### *Contact*

Simon West, Head of Forestry [swest@nationalforest.org](mailto:swest@nationalforest.org)