

A JOINT ACCORD

Between the Forestry Commission and England's Community Forests





The Forestry Commission and England's Community Forests will work together to deliver the shared objectives of the England Forestry Strategy and the individual Community Forest Plans by creating well-wooded landscapes in and around our major towns and cities.

This will be achieved by working in partnership with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies, and with business, landowners, local communities and individuals.

NATIONAL FORESTRY OBJECTIVES – 'A New Focus for England's Woodlands'

The Government's England Forestry Strategy establishes two strategic aims:

- the sustainable management of our existing woods and forests – an important priority for England's Community Forests is to ensure that all existing woodland is properly managed and covered by a comprehensive management plan
- a continued steady expansion of our woodland area to provide more benefits for society and our environment – the overall target for England's Community Forests is to expand woodland cover in all forests from their historically low cover to 30% over the next 30–50 years.

These aims will be secured through four key programmes:

- 1 Forestry for rural development
- 2 Forestry for economic regeneration
- 3 Forestry for recreation, access and tourism
- 4 Forestry for the environment and conservation

Within these four programmes the England Forestry Strategy identifies certain key priorities relevant to England's Community Forests:

- The creation of a network of woodlands on the urban fringe
- The creation of larger woodlands, where they can bring enhanced social benefits
- The restoration of former industrial land
- Reversing the fragmentation of ancient woodlands
- Gaining public confidence and support for the benefits of well-managed woodlands and forests
- Enhancing the economic value of forest resources
- Encouraging and facilitating public access to woodlands
- Greening of major transport corridors
- Creating a robust and sustainable framework for future investment

A JOINT ACCORD BETWEEN THE FORESTRY COMMISSION AND ENGLAND'S COMMUNITY FORESTS

Purpose

The purpose of this Joint Accord is to describe how the Forestry Commission and England's Community Forests will work together to meet the shared objectives of the England Forestry Strategy and individual Community Forest Plans to create well-wooded landscapes in and around major towns and cities.

The Forestry Commission is the Government Department responsible for forestry policy in Great Britain. It is working to ensure the sustainable management of our existing woods and forests, and to deliver a continued steady expansion of our woodland area to provide additional benefits for our society and environment.



Benefits include: woodlands for timber production to strengthen local economies; woodlands for economic regeneration to ameliorate industrial dereliction; woodlands for access and recreation; and woodlands for biodiversity to enhance our environment.

This is being achieved through better targeting of resources to focus on areas of greatest opportunity and need, working in partnerships to create a framework for positive action and by the involvement of people to create public support.



The Forestry Commission believes that the Community Forest programme is a positive framework that will help to achieve the programmes within the England Forestry Strategy and provide a new focus to the management of land around our towns and cities.

England's Community Forests are a national programme, sponsored by the Countryside Agency and the Forestry Commission, to enhance the countryside around major towns and cities, by creating well-wooded landscapes for work, wildlife, recreation and education.

As they grow and mature, England's Community Forests will create high-quality environments for millions of people, revitalising degraded landscapes, enhancing biodiversity and creating new opportunities for recreation, cultural activity and economic investment.

This vision will be achieved by working in partnership with public, private and voluntary agencies, local communities and committed individuals within the context of an approved Forest Plan, to create a new environment, which delivers multi-purpose benefits to local people.

England's Community Forests are an important component of regional regeneration, creating sustainable landscapes for future generations.

FORESTRY COMMISSION AND COMMUNITY FORESTS SHARED PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Creating woodlands on the urban fringe

A priority of the England Forestry Strategy is to create new woodlands that bring the greatest benefit to the largest number of people. These woodlands should maximise public access, establish new landscapes, support urban regeneration and where possible help to integrate town and country. England's Community Forests are focused on the countryside closest to where people live – the urban fringe. They have a primary role in restructuring and enhancing these areas to improve the health, well-being and quality of life of local communities.

Restoring former industrial land

Forestry has an important role to play in reclaiming derelict, degraded and neglected land to a sustainable end use as well as the long-term restoration of active mineral workings. The revitalisation of such areas will deliver economic, social and environmental benefits. Community Forests contain significant areas of such land and reclamation will both improve the landscape and create new opportunities for access, recreation, habitat creation and sustainable economic investment.

Reversing the fragmentation of ancient woodlands

A priority of the England Forestry Strategy is to reverse the fragmentation of our heritage of valuable ancient woodlands. Management of existing woodland and the planting of new native woodlands will also make a significant contribution to local Biodiversity Action Plans. By their nature England's Community Forests focus on those landscapes which are historically low in tree cover. The conservation and management of these remaining woodlands is a key priority to maintain their landscape and ecological value and provide a foundation for woodland expansion and linkage.

Creating larger woodlands

It is important to the long-term sustainability and environmental diversity of our woodlands as well as future wood processing and market infrastructure, that we encourage the creation of large-scale woodlands. This will enhance the social and environmental benefits that they offer. It is agreed that the full benefits of urban forestry will only be realised through the creation of large areas of woodlands. England's Community Forests will establish extensive networks of large woodlands maximising their recreational, ecological and economic potential.

Gaining public confidence and support

As a major national resource, it is vital that people understand and appreciate the environmental, social and economic value of forests and woodlands as well as having the opportunity to be involved in their planning, management and enjoyment. The concept of community involvement through environmental education, arts and cultural activity and environmental volunteering is fundamental to the creation and future management of England's Community Forests.

Enhancing the economic value of our forest resource

The England Forestry Strategy emphasises the importance of enhancing the quality and sustainability of our existing woodland resource. This must be achieved by working with landowners and managers to encourage the development of new marketing initiatives and improved management systems. England's Community Forests will play a significant role in regional regeneration, securing economic investment and promoting job creation through the establishment of a sustainable woodland resource on which to develop viable timber, recreation and leisure enterprises. The benefits that England's Community Forests can contribute to regeneration programmes are already acknowledged.

THE JOINT ACCORD – A STATEMENT OF SHARED AIMS

2001 – 2005

The Forestry Commission and England's Community Forests will:

Work together to deliver the objectives of the England Forestry Strategy and individual Community Forests Plans by creating sustainable well-wooded landscapes in and around our major towns and cities. This will be achieved by working in partnership with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies and with business, farmers, landowners, local communities and individuals.

We will:

1. Ensure effective liaison to co-ordinate business planning and define mutually beneficial programmes and priorities by:
 - Supporting and participating in the national Community Forest Programme Group and aiding the implementation and evaluation of its annual Business Plan.
 - Supporting the national Community Forest Secretariat as a central co-ordinating mechanism for Community Forest related activity
 - Organising annual strategic planning meetings between the National Partners and representatives of the Community Forest Directors to agree priorities and programmes for the year ahead.
 - Holding annual liaison meetings between senior Forestry Commission staff (including the LRU and Research Agency) and all Community Forest Directors to share and exchange information and progress with implementation.
 - Arranging regular regional business planning meetings between Forestry Commission Conservators, Forest Enterprise District Managers and Community Forest Directors.
2. Support the development of a capacity building and skills training programme for the membership of the Community Forest Programme Group by working with the Community Forest Training and Professional Development Group
3. Engage with a wide range of appropriate interested parties at national, regional and local level to ensure the long-term advancement, security and impact of the national Community Forest partnership.
4. Enhance the profile of the Community Forest partnership at national, regional and local level by encouraging participation in other Government and non-Governmental agendas through conferences, seminars, meetings and partnership projects.
5. Ensure that the interests of the Community Forest partnership continue to be represented on the England Forestry Forum and are increasingly recognised and embraced by other Government departments.
6. Encourage Forestry Commission Conservancy liaison with Regional Development Agencies and other regional interests to promote Community Forests as the pre-eminent leader in the field of environmentally-led regeneration in and around towns and cities.
7. Promote the integration of woodland and related greenspace policies in relevant national, regional and local planning and development guidance.
8. Assess and develop appropriate and effective mechanisms to deliver woodland-based social, economic and environmental benefits to support sustainable development in the countryside in and around towns by working with the Community Forest Research Working Group.
9. Work to maximise awareness and uptake of woodland grants, to improve available incentives and to identify and secure new mechanisms and resources for community forestry.
10. Work with Forest Enterprise as a key deliverer of Community Forest targets to source funding, acquire land and develop it as open access woodland for the benefit of local communities, the environment and the economy.