

## a growing partnership



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### Forestry Commission

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**English Partnerships** focuses on national and cross-regional co-ordination, where this adds value to the Government's regeneration agenda and the work of the RDAs. Our initiatives are developed alongside the RDA economic strategies, and in support of their priorities and programmes. We are committed to complementing and strengthening the RDAs' work and to making our expertise available to them, through Service Level Agreements and the provision of financial and logistical support.

We help to provide quality places for people to live and work, to the highest standards of design, sustainability and environmental benefit. When disposing of assets, we achieve the best net consideration reasonably obtainable, having due regard for the convenience and welfare of persons residing, working or carrying on business in the areas in which we are involved.

English Partnerships will deliver the Government's regeneration and development aspirations at three levels:

- by fulfilling all of our commitments to Ministers;
- by supporting an Urban Renaissance;
- by realising the full potential of our role as a national force for regeneration and development.

Our programme is kept under constant review to ensure compliance with the Modernising Government initiative and all other current and emerging Government obligations, strategies and policies.

**The Forestry Commission** is the Government Department responsible for forestry policy and for regulation and support of the forestry industry in Great Britain. In England the Commission reports to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, who is also the lead Minister responsible for forestry in Great Britain. In December 1998, the Government published its national Forestry Strategy for England and gave the Forestry Commission the lead role in its implementation. It has powers to buy and sell land and to manage land on behalf of others. The Commission provides advice, delivers grants and undertakes research.

- **Forest Enterprise** is the Forestry Commission's agency responsible for the National Forest Estate across Britain (in England extending to over 260,000 hectares). The agency provides over half of all the timber harvested in Britain each year and generates income of £120 million from timber sales, mineral royalties and recreation.
- **The Land Regeneration Unit** was launched in February 1998 aimed at encouraging the planting of millions of trees on former coal tips and other reclaimed land across England. The unit acts as a centre for advice, expertise and assistance in planting and managing such land. It helps identify and acquire regeneration sites on which Forest Enterprise can create new public-access community woodland as part of the national forest estate.



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### English Partnerships and the Forestry Commission

The purpose of this document is to detail how English Partnerships and the Forestry Commission (including its forest management agency, Forest Enterprise) will continue to work together to deliver shared regeneration objectives in support of Regional Development Agency strategies and the Government's England Forestry Strategy.

This document sets out areas of joint activity over the next three years with a focus on the regeneration, management and long-term ownership of land to help deliver the Government's social, environmental and economic regeneration objectives.

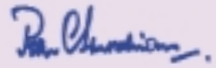
It is becoming widely recognised that woodlands can play a positive role in the sustainable regeneration of land.

Creating new sustainable environments can help to revitalise areas affected by industrial change and decline, whilst providing integrated green spaces which contribute to social and environmental improvement. The potential for this was clearly flagged up in the Government's Rural and Urban White Papers.

By working together, we believe our two organisations can achieve more in delivering our shared regeneration objectives.



**Sir Alan Cockshaw**  
Chairman  
English Partnerships



**Sir Peter Hutchison**  
Chairman  
Forestry Commission

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### The Coalfields

The National Coalfields Programme is managed by English Partnerships, in partnership with the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) who own many former British Coal sites, with close support from the Coalfields Communities Campaign. English Partnerships is investing £385 million for the regeneration of 86 former coalfields. Much of this land is unsuitable for 'hard' end uses, so there is a considerable opportunity for new public-access community woodland, which can complement adjacent urban redevelopment.

The Forestry Commission has identified the Coalfields as a key strategic target in delivering the England Forestry Strategy, and resources (including those of Forest Enterprise and grant aid through the Woodland Grant Scheme) will be used to complement English Partnerships' and the RDAs' objectives.

Forest Enterprise manages over 700 hectares of new woodland on former colliery land in Nottinghamshire as well as colliery sites in the Forest of Dean. Negotiations are underway to take on English Partnerships/RDA sites in Merseyside and South Yorkshire. There may be potential in other coalfield areas – e.g. East Kent, Northumberland and Durham.



### English Partnerships' land portfolio

English Partnerships has ownership of some 11,000 hectares of former Commission for the New Towns (CNT) land, much of it greenfield, as well as an inherited portfolio of sites in former Urban Development Corporation areas. During the next three years over 800 hectares will be disposed of to generate capital receipts. Certain sites can be enhanced by the development of integrated and surrounding green space and woodland. There are opportunities for linking forestry activity to longer-term landscaping, environmental improvement and future management of this portfolio.

### Forestry Commission estate

The England Forestry Strategy highlights increasing demand for new woodlands for public access and recreation close to where people live. Forest Enterprise has been creating new public-access community woodland as funding has allowed (e.g. through a Capital Modernisation Fund scheme in Thames Chase, the Mersey and Red Rose Community Forests). Its Land Regeneration Unit acts as a focal point for developing expertise in creating new woods on mineral and brownfield land, and identifying opportunities for acquisition.

Forest Enterprise periodically reviews the whole Forestry Commission estate

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in England (over 260,000 hectares) for development opportunities, consistent with Government policy of optimising use of public sector assets. Some of the estate coincides with English Partnerships and/or RDA priorities (e.g. the Forest of Dean coalfield area). English Partnerships may be able to contribute and participate in progressing the opportunities identified, which might include mobilising suitable land, as well as complementary arrangements for public access, and community-based initiatives.

### Other derelict or under-used land

There are also sites where a combined approach with partners may offer a more cost-effective and long-term solution for future development and management.

A strategic approach will ensure that such sites are considered properly when devising plans and development briefs so that green space is integral to the process rather than an afterthought. There might also be opportunities that arise in respect of national and/or regional priorities by addressing large national portfolios of under-used land – e.g. that owned by the Ministry of Defence.

### DTLR / DEFRA / DTI and the RDAs

English Partnerships and the Forestry Commission will continue to work closely with all relevant Government departments

and public sector partners to ensure national and cross-regional co-ordination, where this adds value to the Government's regeneration agenda and the work of the RDAs. This initiative continues to develop alongside the RDA economic strategies, and in support of their priorities and programmes.

### Important issues when addressing priority areas

#### Needs of the communities

Consultation with existing communities and integration with the needs of new communities is fundamental to sustainable development. We will seek to work with communities on any development we undertake as part of this initiative.

#### Land tenure and funding

Managing green space and woodland requires long-term commitment. We will explore tenure and funding arrangements, which maximise overall value in the long term.

#### Liability

Innovative mechanisms are required to ensure that pollution and other potential liabilities associated with regeneration sites do not hamper restoration to woodland where this is agreed as the best long-term use. Partnership working can help to overcome



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these obstacles. Along with other partners we will explore the concept of a 'trust' to hold the freehold of land, and to assemble funds.

### Research on regeneration and development issues

Both organisations will continue to develop national research programmes, working in close partnership with the RDAs, the Countryside Agency and other public and private sector partners. English Partnerships has a leading role in the promotion, co-ordination and dissemination of research on regeneration and development issues. Both organisations are committed to ensuring that the lessons learnt are reflected in the improved quality of best practice and dissemination of guidance.

### Action already in hand

- Established a senior level Inter-departmental Working Group to make recommendations to Ministers on the role of forestry in regeneration.
- Jointly commissioned a computer software project to aid preparation of specifications for establishing sustainable woodland on derelict and contaminated land, and we have established a steering group with representatives from the RDAs, local authorities and private sector to take this forward. The first

phase is concentrating on the provision of specifications for the regeneration of pyritic colliery spoil tips to community woodland.

- Developed a business plan to establish a demonstration project, in the form of a woodheat company, which will generate income from biomass, whilst contributing to remediation and greening of former coalfield sites.
- Developed a business plan for a demonstration project which will use green waste arisings to generate woodheat and create revenue and sustainable funding streams.
- Working with Yorkshire Forward to transfer the long-term management of former colliery tips in South Yorkshire to Forest Enterprise, either in partnership with local authorities or by direct acquisition. New community woodlands are being created on nearly 300 hectares of restored land at Bentley, Brodsworth, Dinnington and Kiveton collieries.
- Jointly supporting the development of the Leicestershire Forest Park in the National Forest in association with the Heart of the National Forest Foundation.
- Developing the Northwich Community Woodland Partnership, the Forestry



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Commission having acquired the freehold interest in two sites amounting to 49 hectares within the 370 hectare project area.

- Jointly initiated outline discussions with Warrington Metropolitan Borough Council and the Mersey Forest on the opportunities for strategic woodland planting as part of the Omega, Grappenhall Heys and Appleton developments in Warrington, Cheshire.
- Agreement to explore the scope for Forest Enterprise involvement in pre-development planting schemes, such as might be appropriate for the English Partnerships' Lightmoor Project at Telford, on former CNT land.
- Creation of a new 30 hectare community woodland as part of the Glasshoughton development project in Wakefield, West Yorkshire.
- Creation of over 100 hectares of new community woodland as part of reclamation schemes for sites at Monkton, Derwenthaugh, Rainton Bridge and Watergate in the North-East.



## A programme for future action

Over the next three years we will jointly undertake the following programme of action:

- We will work with Groundwork in developing a Land Reclamation Trust to assemble funds and help to cover liabilities **by December 2001**.
- We will review English Partnerships' land holdings against the relevant sections of the England Forestry Strategy, in the context of the Rural and Urban White Papers, **by May 2002**.
- We will assess current Forestry Commission holdings in relation to English Partnerships and RDA programmes and priorities. One current example would be the former Cannop Colliery site in the Forest of Dean on which Forest Enterprise is actively developing plans for a major new self-catering cabin development as part of its Forest Holidays unit, **by May 2002**.

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- We will identify further pilot areas to develop potential partnerships, covering large-scale planting and long-term management arrangements **by July 2002**. To include piloting 'advance' planting by Forest Enterprise of English Partnerships' sites earmarked for future development, so as to establish a ready-made woodland environment.
- We will explore opportunities for commercial and income-generating activities, such as development of renewable energy projects and sourcing of sustainable timber products for development, **by July 2002**.
- We will establish a strategy for the coalfields in partnership with the RDAs **by July 2002**. The strategy would:
  - (a) agree forestry related targets for coalfield reclamation projects in Yorkshire, the Midlands, North-West and North-East.
  - (b) agree basis for management of sites in Yorkshire, the Midlands, North-West and North-East by Forest Enterprise.
  - (c) consider joint venture arrangements between English Partnerships, the South West of England Regional Development Agency and Forest Enterprise on Forest of Dean sites.
  - (d) consider joint venture arrangements between English Partnerships, the South East England Regional Development Agency and Forest Enterprise on English Partnerships/RDA East Kent coalfield sites.
- We will consider further scope for joint working – e.g. through secondments between organisations and programmes, continued development of technical specifications, and research, **by September 2002**.
- We will monitor actions and publish a mid-term review of this document and progress made on the above actions, and assess targets against emerging policies and opportunities **by December 2002**.
- We will further assess viability for regeneration opportunities in English Partnerships and former Urban Development Corporation land, development of the Forestry Commission portfolio and other land **by February 2003**.
- We will conduct a final review of our combined actions **by December 2003**.

