



Trees remain integral to our well-being. This is particularly the case in and around our towns and cities, where populations and pressure from development are greatest. The environmental benefits of trees within the urban environment are already well documented, but they also contribute at a social level as well, playing a vital role in forming the character and identity of an area itself, and in providing a positive focus with which communities can engage. An urban environment might therefore be seen to be all the poorer without trees.

making a difference

Trees and Woodlands have a valuable role to play in the regeneration of urban areas, and in the development of new sustainable communities with a green infrastructure which can support and engage local people.

The Forestry Commission can make a real difference to people's lives by enhancing their surroundings (Quality of Place) and how they use them (Quality of Life).

We work with national, regional and local partners to deliver greenspace as an important resource for local communities.

delivering benefits

Trees and woodlands have unique qualities to enhance the urban environment:

- species are robust enough to grow on reclaimed industrial land;
- they are a cost effective way of converting unused land into greenspace;
- they have huge "carrying capacity" - they can absorb hundreds of people and still feel quiet and secluded;
- they can shield noise, unwelcome views, and even reduce airborne pollution;
- they create valuable habitats for a wide range of species from birds, mammals and insects, to fungi and other plant life;
- they are valued by local communities, creating attractive and varied settings, and can connect people with their local area;
- they bring opportunities to deliver a wide range of other community benefits, including voluntary conservation work, health and recreation options, and learning benefits;
- they can contribute to localised climate moderation, providing a renewable source of energy, as well as protection from UV rays.

our role

The Forestry Commission estate comprises over 76,500 hectares of existing woodland within or adjacent to identified social and regeneration priority areas. This includes over 3500 hectares of land within urban areas which has been purchased since 1998. 54% of this land is brownfield - that is, it has been reclaimed from industrial or commercial use.

Since 1999 the Woodland Grant Scheme has also created 7,452 hectares of new woodland (including on brownfield land), and established public access on a further 56,800 hectares - all in areas adjacent to identified social and regeneration priority areas.

Through our work, we have been able to build on experience gained, to create a range of tools, and expertise, to support future work and build up best practice to be used throughout the wider sector.

supporting growth

At a national and local level, we are working with authorities looking at the planning of housing and infrastructure to ensure the role and value of trees and woodlands is maximised, to bring most benefit to local communities.

We are working with the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) teams on the implementation of Growth Area projects, and the new Growth points.

Regionally and locally, we are informing strategies alongside regional assemblies, Development Agencies and Government Offices, and delivering the Regional Forestry Frameworks, which place trees and woodlands within a strategic framework of development for each region in England. We are also using and expanding the Public Forest Estate to deliver effective green spaces as part of these plans.

regeneration

Trees and Woodland can bring enormous benefits to regeneration projects and the re-use of former industrial and brownfield land, due to their robustness, cost-effectiveness, and flexible landscaping properties. They can play a valuable role in engaging communities with their local areas, through consultations, tree-planting events, and management; as well as creating flexible green spaces for a wide range of activities, from walking the dog, to outdoor learning and natural play.

advice and expertise

The Forestry Commission has established itself as a leading authority on the reclamation of industrial and agricultural land into community woodland and greenspace. It has developed a series of tools and support services through its experience and expertise, which it promotes to others working in this area.

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