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**SOUTH EAST WOODLAND FUNDAMENTAL TO SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

The South East needs to make more of its woodlands, as they can have a fundamental impact on sustainable development in the region, according to the Forestry and Woodlands Partnership.

Woodlands provide many social, environmental and economic benefits and have the potential for many uses including recreation, providing sustainable construction materials, as a source of renewable energy, a wildlife habitat, and to offset carbon dioxide emissions.

Inspired by a policy in the South East Plan, the 20-year planning vision for the region by the South East England Regional Assembly, the Partnership has produced a guide to ensure the planners and others can protect and enhance woodland across the region for example by giving it statutory protection.

It is only through economically viable management that woodlands can contribute to a diverse rural economy and secure non-market benefits such as access for recreation and health and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

“The South East is the most heavily wooded region in the country, and supports 40% of England’s ancient woodlands. Woodland management traditionally falls mainly outside the planning system. This guide will help protect and make the most of this valuable natural resource,” said Christine Field, Chairman of the South East England Regional Assembly Planning Committee.

The Forestry and Woodland Partnership includes the Regional Assembly, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), the Forestry Commission, Natural England, the Woodland Trust, South East Protected Landscapes and ConFor.

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Notes to Editors:

- 1) The Forestry and Woodlands Partnership is the Steering Group overseeing delivery of the Regional Forestry and Woodlands Framework for the South East. The Partnership consists of the South East England Regional Assembly, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), the Forestry Commission, Natural England, the Woodland Trust, the South East Protected Landscapes, and ConFor.
- 2) The Regional Forestry and Woodlands Framework has four themes - Better places for people to live, Enhanced Environment and Biodiversity, A stronger contribution to the economy and A secure future for our woodland resources. To focus delivery, a priority topic has been selected from each theme. Regional Spatial Planning is the current priority topic under the theme 'A secure future for our woodland resources' and this publication is part of the delivery under this topic.
- 3) For more details on the Regional Forestry and Woodlands Framework, and the work to deliver it, see www.seeingthewoodforthetrees.org.uk or contact Jane Hull, Framework Development Officer, jane.hull@forestry.gsi.gov.uk / 01296 696543.
- 4) The Forestry Commission is the government department responsible in England for protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable management of woods and forests and increasing their value to society and the environment. Forestry makes a real contribution to sustainable development, providing social and environmental benefits arising from planting and managing attractive, as well as productive, woodlands. To find out more visit www.forestry.gov.uk
- 5) The South East is home to 40% of England's most important woodland. These ancient woodlands have been wooded since at least AD1600.
- 6) The South East England Regional Assembly is the "voluntary regional chamber" for the South East. It was established in January 1999 to give a representative voice to the South East region, which covers Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East and West Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, and Surrey.
- 7) The Regional Assembly is made up of 112 members including elected councillors nominated by the region's local authorities and 37 representatives from other sectors of the community (including business, trades unions, education, housing, health, sports, culture, tourism, faith groups, environmental, community and voluntary organisations) as well as the New Forest National Park Authority.
- 8) The Assembly has four key roles:
 - **Advocacy** – pressing the South East's interests in London and Brussels.
 - **Accountability** – scrutinising the plans and performance of regional bodies such as SEEDA to align the region's priorities.

- **Regional planning** – preparing and delivering the South East Plan - the 20-year statutory plan for the region that sets the framework for the sustainable development of the South East.
 - **Regional policy** – advising Government on the co-ordination of regional strategies and spending priorities for housing, transport, planning and economic development to improve the impact of public expenditure.
- 9) The South East Plan will be going through Examination in Public in late 2006 – early 2007. It is expected that it will be adopted in early 2008. For further details see <http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/index.html>
- 10) For more information, see the Assembly's website www.southeast-ra.gov.uk