

# WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL FORESTRY FRAMEWORK 2006-2007 DELIVERY PLAN Annual Report

## Headline achievements in the past year:

- Over £1.65 million distributed under the new England Woodland Grant Scheme; £1.57 million under the Environmental Stewardship Scheme for woodland creation and management in the region;
- The Regions Woodland Opportunities Map (Version 2) comprising 6 themed maps: woodland creation, Ancient Woodlands, Landscape, Access, Biodiversity & Cultural Heritage;
- Wood fuel has become the fastest growing renewable energy alternative in the West Midlands with exponential growth in wood heating installations;
- A regional Green Infrastructure Planning Prospectus and Technical Guide was developed, published and distributed to local authorities and stakeholders;
- Estimated 4 million visitors to Forestry Commission woodlands in the West Midlands – most involving physical activity/mental stimulation. Four further schemes have been supported through the Active Woods health challenge funding;
- Education visits are increasing and sites in Wyre Forest and Cannock Chase have hosted upwards of 30,000 schoolchildren visits;
- 123 forestry workers being trained via a regional workforce programme;
- Using the information gleaned thus far, the rolling three-year Action Plan 2007-2010 for the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework has been developed;
- The breadth of stakeholder interest and active engagement has continued; there are now seven specialist task groups developing and implementing action plans and agenda in support of the Framework:
  - Woodland Opportunities Mapping
  - Woodland & Forestry Industries
  - Wood Energy Task Group
  - Recycling Task Group
  - Workforce Development Group
  - Green Infrastructure Planning Task Group
  - Trees, Woods and Forests Biodiversity Task Group

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To share with stakeholders and other interested parties the emerging findings from the second year of implementation of the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework and, in particular the first year's achievements within the rolling 2006-2009 Delivery Plan.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The West Midlands Woodland & Forestry Forum commends this Annual Report to all lead partners and stakeholders suggesting the following be noted:
- i) The progress made towards the achievement of objectives within the Forestry Framework and, in particular the 2006-2007 Delivery Plan Summary, capturing progress through the use of smiley/grouchy faces assists this process];

- ii) The few activities that are flagged up as making little or no progress and provide advice to Lead Partners on how best to make amends;
- iii) Using the information gleaned thus far, together with the rolling three-year Action Plan 2007-2010 for the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework, continue to progress and support the actions and activities.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 Growing our Future, the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework was published and launched in October 2004 with the first Delivery Plan guiding actions for the 2005-2006 year period following thereafter. The Delivery Plan, launched at the National Memorial Arboretum at the end of June 2005, set out detailed activities spread across the eleven themes, each with targets and success indicators identified for monitoring performance.
- 3.2 Early in the planning process the Delivery Plan Steering Group (DPSG) agreed that every partner organisation contributing to one or more activities would be asked to report on progress at six monthly intervals, with an Interim Report being published by the end of December and the Annual Report available by 30 June of each year. In practice, that meant the collection, collation and quality assurance of data in respect of a range of indicators described by the WMRFF Delivery Plan in the spring and in the autumn of each year. This process and the tight time constraints presented a significant challenge to the resources available at all levels and it was decided that annual reporting alone would be sufficient in future.
- 3.3.1 A summary version of the process to achieve this, the first Annual Report is presented below:

<b>Activity</b>	
Monitoring pro-forma Email and Post to all stakeholders	14 March 2007
Reminders sent - generic	26 April 2007
Reminders sent - personal	21 May 2007
Collection and collation of responses	May/June 2007
Preparation of draft Annual Report	w/b 11 June 2007
Presentation of draft Summary to WMWFF	27 June 2006
Presentation of draft Annual Report to DPSG	03 August 2007
Collating responses, editing and preparation for publication	w/b 27 August 2007
Publication and lifting on to Website	w/b 03 September 2007

### 4. Methodology

- 4.1 In order to collect the relevant information from the many stakeholders involved, the previously used monitoring proforma and guidelines were used with additional information on the overall investment in trees, woods and forestry for 2006-2007 being sought. As before, it was agreed that a small number of people and organisations might wish to log achievements in a different format, e.g. making summary progress notes against each objective in narrative form, and this would be perfectly acceptable. Where necessary it was also agreed to facilitate focus groups so that information could be gathered.
- 4.2 The proforma and guidelines were sent to some 145 individuals and organisations across the region. Individual Task Group members were included as well and this inevitably resulted in multiple approaches being made to some organisations.
- 4.3 These were followed up by gentle reminders towards the end of April with further personal Emails to lead partners and major stakeholders a couple of weeks later.
- 4.4 Data was collected centrally by the Forestry Commission and the report duly compiled.

## 5. Summary of Responses

- 5.1 This, the third monitoring exercise since 2004, has been very encouraging with again an excellent level of responses in geographical and sectoral terms. The total number received was 54; made up of 15 from the private sector, 15 from public agencies and a further 24 from regional and sub-regional partnerships, conservation bodies and initiatives.
- 5.2 Lead partners responding included:
- Advantage West Midlands
  - Department of Health West Midlands
  - English Heritage
  - Environment Agency
  - Forestry Commission
  - Government Office West Midlands
  - Heart of England Tourism
  - Lantra
  - Local Authorities – Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire, and Telford & Wrekin
  - National Forest Company
  - Natural England
  - Physical Activity Network West Midlands
  - West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership
  - West Midlands Regional Assembly
  - West Midlands Woodland & Forestry Forum & Task Groups
  - Woodland Trust
- 5.3 Just over two years into the implementation phase of the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework, the significant buy-in and engagement of stakeholder individuals and organisations who seek to realise the benefits that trees, woodland and forestry can bring to the region continues. It is through their individual activities, projects and influence that any progress has been charted and future plans incorporated into the three-year rolling Delivery Plan 2007-2010.
- 5.4 We particularly welcome the responses from the many others including: AONB Cannock Chase, AONB Malvern Hills, AONB Shropshire Hills, BIFFA, British Horse Loggers, Butterfly Conservation, Childer Wood, CLA, ConFor, David Lovelace, Deer Initiative, Energy West Midlands, Envirowise, Forest Enterprise, Forester Services, Forest of Mercia, Forest Schools, Fountains, Green Arc Partnership, Green Wood Centre, Heartwoods, Herefordshire Sustain, A F Hill & Son, Midlands Wood Fuel Ltd, Merevale Estates, National Farmers Union, National Trust, RSPB, Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, Small Woods Association, Sport England, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Walford & North Shropshire College, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Whitney Sawmills, Woodland Initiatives Network, Worcestershire Rural Hub
- 5.5 The format of monitoring pro-forma proved generally acceptable with 52 organisations using it. Two responses were submitted using a different format. Both the latter were from individuals whose focussed objectives were relatively few and who were put off by the length and language of the pro-forma.
- 5.6 It is intended that objectives the Delivery Plan will contribute directly to the regional strategic outcomes in the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy. It is therefore wholly appropriate that the outcome indicators reflect those set regionally and that the Delivery Plan will continuously evolve, developing and continuing refinement through the input of the wide range of interested persons and organisations. It is highly pleasing to report that during this, the third monitoring exercise carried out under the auspices of the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework, that some comment or progress has been reported against each and every objective, i.e. 100% coverage has been achieved.

## **6. Emerging findings of the Annual Monitoring Report April 2006-March 2007**

Now two years into the implementation phase of the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework, proposed activity which might have been regarded as ambitious at the outset has turned into meaningful progress towards the achievement of the Forestry Framework objectives. It is through the individual activities, projects and influence of the many stakeholders that any progress has been charted and future plans incorporated into the three-year rolling Delivery Plan 2007-2010.

In general, the enthusiasm displayed throughout the scoping and Framework development process has not faltered during these first couple of year's of implementation with high expectancies and ambitions remaining for what it can deliver.

Woodland growers and managers are delighted that there has been a substantial upturn in the UK timber markets over the period – perhaps the most positive for more than ten years. This has helped sustain the enthusiasm for the Regional Forestry Framework throughout the most recent stages of implementation with high expectancies and ambitions remaining for what it can and will deliver.

Headline findings in respect of the 11 themes are described below. Please note that these have been compiled from the information supplied by individuals and organisations and report against the period April 2006 – March 2007.

### **6.1 WOODLAND COVER**

6.1.1 Most woodland resources in the West Midlands are under private management with the Forestry Commission owning and managing just short of 20%. The total growth in woodland area since 1980 is a favourable 17%. This year £320,000 under the new England Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) has been approved for woodland creation. Excluded from this figure but worthy of note is 12 Ha of additional woodland that has been gained in the National Forest through development planting, minerals restoration and landscaping.

Natural England has also been promoting woodland options as part of their Environmental Stewardship Scheme with 42 agreements containing woodland creation options. Thousands of additional individual and hedgerow trees have been planted through initiatives and programmes such as those of the Woodland Trust, Shropshire AONB's Blue Remembered Hills and Local Provenance Tree Schemes whilst the Environment Agency have carried out a small amount of riparian buffer strip planting.

Formal responses have been made on behalf of the Woodland & Forestry Forum in respect of incorporating woodland creation and green infrastructure into work on Growth Points, West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phases I and II, and the West Midlands Economic Strategy Policy Options.

6.1.2 The Woodland Opportunities Mapping Task Group, following the publication of the composite of four maps in March 2006, has developed Version 2 which was launched at the Forum Meeting in June 2007. This comprises 6 themed maps: Woodland Creation, Ancient Woodlands, Landscape, Access, Biodiversity & Cultural Heritage. Further work and refinement are ongoing as concern has been expressed about the over simplification and the need for finer grain detail if more precise targeting for woodland creation and management is to be realised. The Group are also working closely with the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership's Landscapes for Living Group to ensure maximum synergy between the Woodland Opportunities Map and their mapping processes.

The EWGS Regional Grant Prospectus was published in June 2006 with regional discretionary points being agreed, specific to the West Midlands.

6.1.3 Forest design and management plans and characterisation assessments have been ongoing with others developing and expanding initiatives such as the Woodland

Trust's Ancient Tree Hunt contributing to the surveying of veteran trees in the region. The National Trust, for example, has been putting succession plans in place for farmland trees for approximately half their estate over the period.

Work has proceeded on the development of a "Landscapes for Living" that aims to co-ordinate and summarise all the associated work on biodiversity that is going on, promote the concept at regional level and make connections to regional strategies. Ongoing county-based historic landscape characterisation (HLC) projects in Worcestershire and Warwickshire – once completed will provide full regional coverage of HLC in shire counties

- 6.1.4 Extensive local activity including restoration activity, heritage trails, field meetings, walks and talks across the region has taken place. The Greenwood Centre, the Green Arc Partnership, the Wye Wood Project, Wildlife Trusts, Forestry Commission, AONBs and others have engaged people raising the profile of trees and woodlands in relation to the historic environment. In turn, the Heritage Lottery- Funded Wyre Forest Project has identified the value of restoration of ancient woodland and veteran trees in the Wyre landscape thus informing future management.
- 6.1.5 Similarly, Forest Enterprise, the Woodland Trust and a host of others have produced guides and leaflets, held activities and provided press and media opportunities for the contribution that trees and woodland can make to the culture of those living in and visiting the West Midlands. Notably, Forest Enterprise has issued in excess of 50 press releases through the local media and a substantial events programme reaching local communities.

Advocacy is a key output of many projects and initiatives – often illustrated through a variety of means; from website based information to guided walks, talks and demonstrations. For example, The National Forest Woodfair 2006 attracted 70 exhibitors and 2,500 paying visitors whilst the promotion of bluebell woodlands in Yoxall attracted 5,000 visitors over a 6-week period.

- 6.1.6 The Green Infrastructure Task Group, promoting greenspace and the urban forestry agenda, has developed and published the Green Infrastructure Planning Prospectus and accompanying Technical Guide.

A number of organisations have highlighted particular examples of their work e.g. Green Arc Partnership's work on the regeneration of brownfield sites in Birmingham and North Warwickshire and the National Forest's looking at opportunities associated with the Burton Growth Point. Other key stakeholders have been responding to local plans, Local Development Framework consultations and regional land use consultations.

## 6.2 THE WOODLAND & FORESTRY INDUSTRY

- 6.2.1 The government's objectives in the recently published England's Trees, Woods and Forests Strategy can only be delivered by a healthy woodland and forestry sector with viable businesses actively engaged in sustainable management and processing at national, regional, sub-regional and local level. The sector's greatest strength often lies in its green credentials and the contribution it can make to the recovery of economically lagging rural areas. These assets should be harnessed to promote new business opportunities.

Sensitive and sustainable management of woodlands can contribute to meeting the UK targets for reducing greenhouse emissions, by replacing fossil fuels with wood fuel as a source of heat and energy, and by substituting timber materials that have higher CO2 emissions associated with their production, for example those used in house building. The sector very much needs AWM and partners to stimulate and add value to private investment through facilitating partnerships, capacity building and knowledge transfer.

The Woodland & Forestry Industries Task Group (WFITG), bidding to increase the level of support for the “do-ers” in the industry and to improve the economic viability of woodland businesses themselves, has met quarterly. Formal responses have been made to WMES Policy Options, England’s Trees, Woods and Forests Strategy, RDPE Regional Implementation Plan consultations (RIP) and representation has been made to the England Forest Industries Partnership to access the data and recommendations from the Jaako Poyry Study.

Forestry Commission Partnership funding for sub-regional initiatives has continued, e.g. Biomass WM Adviser, Marches Deer Project, Regional VTS Wood Works, and Heartwoods.

- 6.2.2 In order to achieve exemplary management of assets, Management Plans, based on the UKWAS Standard, are being produced by AONBs, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, ConFor members and other woodland owners across the region. Meanwhile, the audit on the Forestry Commission’s public estate district compliance was successfully undertaken.

Heartwoods has been working to increase access to UKWAS certification for small woodlands and is keen to set up Chain of Custody Certification for small wood-using businesses. In terms of encouraging high standards and best practice, a Health & Biodiversity Conference was held in Warwickshire in May 2006 and a Woodland Birds Seminar in June 2006 at Ludlow.

- 6.2.3 A number of examples for developing new opportunities have been highlighted, not least the identification of potential new working methods to incorporate a wood fuel product alongside traditional timber products. Organisations such as the National Farmers Union have been actively promoting new opportunities and markets, particularly woody biomass and using small woodlands for wood fuel.

Both Forestry Commission and NE staff have been working closely and closer alignment with Natural England is ongoing. Further advice and guidance has been available through WIN, the woodland initiatives co-ordinated service of networking and advice, through the Learning Network software and through the bi-monthly updates.

The Forestry Commission have been directly engaged in drafting process for the RDPE RIP to ensure that woodland and timber related activity is recognised across the whole programme; the RDPE has the potential to support the forest sector and strengthen supply chain links. Meanwhile the WFITG have been providing support and guidance as necessary.

- 6.2.4 Limited FC EWGS funding and the continuing absence of Harvesting Processing and Marketing Grants continue to deny seed-corn investment for new initiatives and existing businesses. However, the Wood Energy Task Group has been facilitating options for increased markets for wood products, particularly wood fuel. The Forestry Commission’s own production forecast has been updated to ensure smooth supply and even volumes to market.

The Marches Deer Project, has been improving the viability and connectivity of the wild venison supply chain in the Marches. The venison price has increased in the region and is now one of the highest in the region.

Approximately £14,000 of Sustainable Development Fund grant was provided to help establish and support the Malvern Hills Coppice Network. Fundamentally this is about putting woodland owners and managers in the AONB in touch with those who use coppice/woodland products, thus helping to develop the forestry business. The purchase of woodland management equipment by network members was also subsidised.

- 6.2.5 Ongoing alignment and business planning between the Forestry Commission and Natural England partners has continued. Natural England’s advice and incentives for tree and woodland owners/managers are deployed through the county Land

Management Teams via SSSIs, Agri-Environment Schemes and specific projects e.g. Marches Deer Project, and indirectly via the Natural England -supported woodland work of the four AONBs. All woodland SSSI owners now have a single contact point (nominated officer) for all business with NE.

Business Link's new Gateway and Brokerage service has been launched; linkages with Heartwoods are currently under development as this may facilitate and encourage the smaller and micro-businesses to seek help and support. The Woodland Initiatives Network continues to provide an excellent co-ordinated networking and advisory service.

- 6.2.6 In order to secure the integration of agri-environment, woodland and forestry, and rural delivery mechanisms the Forestry Commission, Natural England and other Rural Accord partners have been developing and implementing the Regional Rural Delivery Framework which encourages integration and streamlining of delivery mechanisms. The recognition of forestry and woodland in the RDPE RIP offers further opportunities and Rural Accord partners are set on aligning corporate and business plans to ensure integration and landscape scale interaction, e.g. BEA pilots and river basin management.
- 6.2.7 To raise the levels of skills and knowledge to enable exemplary woodland management, a number of local and regional initiatives have occurred. For example, Lantra have promoted skills training and careers within the trees and timber sector through new websites and the Land-based Sector Skills Agreement (for Trees & Timber); Heartwoods have, under development, a suite of exemplar sites/case studies for woodland and biodiversity management; ConFor, RFS and NFU have all held field and technical meetings; specialist training has been offered by others (Veteran Tree Master Classes, Deer Management, OCN Coppice Products, Woodworks VTS, Continuous Cover Forestry, Arboricultural Techniques, etc.).

### 6.3 **WOOD ENERGY**

- 6.3.1 Over the period there has been major and increasing interest by woodland owners and processors in the wood fuel market. However, it must be emphasised that there is a need to discourage a perception in the wider industry that woodlands might be managed JUST/ONLY for wood fuel. The WFITG feels strongly that wood fuel should be placed very firmly as a by-product or sideline of good holistic woodland management.

The Woodland and Forestry Forum's Wood Energy Task Group's work programme updated their action plan for the next three years. They have working ever closer with the Bio-Energy Network. Holding a series of workshops, demonstrations and open days, they have also provided updates on regional events, best practice, networking opportunities and business opportunities. Meanwhile, the Forestry Commission produced and updated the Suppliers List of sources of wood fuel.

Sub-regional initiatives are underway, including the installation of a wood fuel district heating system at the Green Wood Centre, and the new wood combustion system installed in the Innovation Centre, Forest of Mercia and, through advocacy and best practice exemplars, will improve awareness, understanding and hopefully support for wood energy. A 25kW boiler included as part of extension to the Worcestershire Countryside Centre, opened July 2006, expected to save 4.5 tonnes carbon/year. This uses locally harvested wood chip from the Countryside Services own sustainably managed woodland. This project is acting as a pilot for use of wood fuel boilers of this size; if successful similar boilers could be included in other council buildings e.g. schools, thus attracting and supporting wood supply from other sustainable sources.

- 6.3.2 Across the region wood fuel has become the fastest growing renewable, with the successful supply of wood chip fuel to boilers throughout the region, and an expanding network of fuel depots. This involves continually increasing the numbers of sources of wood for processing, on a commercial (not subsidised) basis. The Heritage Lottery Fund Project has started in Wyre Forest which will further install a

wood fuel heating system using timber produced from the restoration of Ancient and Native Woodlands.

- 6.3.3 In terms of helping new initiatives and sharing knowledge for market creation, the Warwickshire Biomass Support Group and Rural Hub Supply Group has been set up. BIG funding has been secured by Midlands Woodfuel Ltd and a number of organisations have published information and further case studies. The Wood Energy Task Group have examining issues and impacts of new England Wood Fuel Strategy and look forward to being involved in the development of the Action Plan.

#### 6.4 **RECYCLING**

- 6.4.1 The Framework encourages all stakeholders in the woodland and forestry sector to minimise waste and re-cycle as a matter of course and there is increasing regional and sub-regional interest and activity reported; NFU Greener Futures, Local Authorities, Health Trusts, and carbon-neutral communities. Across the region significant progress is being made in increasing the amount of household and other waste being recycled, and there is a substantial requirement for new waste capacity.

With the assistance of GOWM the Wood Recycling Task Group was established with wide representation and held its inaugural meeting in March 2006. The Networking Adviser bid was unsuccessful but the Group has continued as an e-network.

- 6.4.2 The opportunities for developing closer links between energy and recycling remain and the forestry sector has gained representation on the National Symbiosis Programme Advisory Group. Earlier this year, the Forestry Commission produced an updated Recycled Wood Sources/Suppliers List.

With regards to developing opportunities to promote waste minimisation, Envirowise report working with a number of businesses; WRAP have a regional officer supporting small businesses; and Biffa report an increase in the volume of waste wood recycled. Meanwhile the NFU, through Greener Futures, are promoting best practice in farm waste management reducing the diffuse pollution impacts on farm woodlands.

- 6.4.3 Eco-centre status has been achieved by both Forest Enterprise Wyre and Cannock Chase centres for recycling and sustainable practices. Ludlow is working towards accreditation.

There has been increasing sub-regional activity with more recycling centres separating timber and green waste. An increased volume of waste wood recycled is reported with an increased number of West Midlands' businesses encouraged to segregate waste and recycling rates of wood products.

There is an increasing number of partners and stakeholders leading by example within own offices and work places.

#### 6.5 **RECREATION & TOURISM**

- 6.5.1 Utilising the Space for People and Woods for People data in GIS format has contributed to the delivery of Access section of the regional Woodland Opportunities Mapping. The Woodland Trust's Space for People publication has provided a Woodland Access Standard with locational and numerical targets for increasing accessible woodland in the UK and this has been fed in to Local Development Framework and land use consultations.

Across the region the drafting of the Rights of Way Improvement Plans are completed or nearing completion. Both Staffordshire's and Herefordshire's have been out for consultation. Meanwhile, liaison with local Highways Authorities and Local Access Fora continue over local community access to woodlands and support for the retention of trees and woodland as well as new planting. There are also some indications that local community access is becoming an increasingly important part of the parish planning process.

- 6.5.2 The Forestry Framework gained recognition in Culture West Midland's Vision for Action, 2005-2006, and stakeholders are preparing to take part in the review of the Regional Culture Strategy later this year.

Meanwhile, the strategic lead for Tourism in the West Midlands has been withdrawn from the Tourist Board (Heart of England Tourism) and taken back in-house by the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands. Currently identifying priorities, links have been forged in terms of e-tourism, rural sustainability, green tourism and destination management. The woodlands of the West Midlands are very much regarded as a "sleeping giant" – a major green resource which currently underutilised and full of untapped potential.

- 6.5.3 Recreational activities and opportunities for diversification are increasingly attractive to woodland owners but very real concerns are expressed concerning public liability insurances, health and safety and risk management. The private sector is also unable and/or unwilling to carry out improvements at substantial cost with little or no financial gain; best illustrated by only £2,400 EWGS WIG Access Grant being awarded.

However, there are an estimated 4 million visitors to Forestry Commission woodlands in the West Midlands – most involving physical activity/mental stimulation. The new concert arena has been developed at Cannock with cycling initiatives in both Cannock and Wyre. Meanwhile, the Green Wood Centre has undertaken a £250,000 redevelopment on site for a woodland interpretation centre and visitor café. The National Forest promotes visitor attractions as an ongoing exercise and this year has concentrated on the National Forest Wood Fair, Yoxall Lodge, Jackson's Bank and the National Memorial Arboretum

- 6.5.4 With the CRoW Area 7 (West Midlands) Map launched at the end of October 2005 on Cannock Chase, and all FC freehold land dedicated for right of access in perpetuity a little earlier, the emphasis on the benefits of trees and woodlands to recreation and tourism received a welcome boost. Coupled with this, a breadth of activity has been highlighted by both woodland initiatives, organisations and individuals e.g. Forest Enterprise support for cycling events in the Welsh Marches and the franchised cycle centre at Cannock Chase have created new job opportunities.

There is ongoing participation in Rights of Way Improvement Plans Consultations with a number of local authorities leading project development on footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes through or giving access to woodlands.

## 6.6 **HEALTH & WELLBEING**

- 6.6.1 There is ongoing work regarding the development of monitoring and evaluating physical activity interventions, including discussions with the British Heart Foundation regarding monitoring frameworks for GP referral systems, and initial discussions have been held regarding the development of a physical activity risk surveillance system in the region however significant funding would be required to set up such a system. The PAN-WM Research group has not been fully established to date, with a potential event later in 2007 to showcase research happening in the region and developing new research potential.
- 6.6.2 There has been involvement in scoping and development of the Regional Health & Well-Being Strategy which will be launched later in 2007. Meanwhile, a further four Health Woodland Improvement Grants were approved and linked to the Active Woods Initiative and the Wye Wood the Wider Wood Project was selected to run as a national rural pilot with evaluation.

We were delighted to announce the winner of our first regional Active Woods Award – the Mayfield Community Centre in Church Stretton. Qualifying for one of the Health WIGs and exhibiting multi-partnership working, improving the health and well-being of the community through the upgrading of footpaths, woodland management and the training of walk leaders, the judges congratulated everyone concerned.

PAN-WM's annual conference focussed on partnership working using the natural environment to increase physical activity levels and there is increasing evidence of stronger linkages with GPs, Primary Care Trusts, Community Mental Health Trusts, Schools and community groups.

## 6.7 **EDUCATION, LEARNING & SKILLS**

- 6.7.1 Substantial reports of activities increasing public knowledge of woodland and forestry are reported throughout the region. Local Heritage Initiatives, AONB projects, Butterfly Conservation, RSPB, the Deer Initiative's promotion of sustainable wild deer management, and the activities of other local authorities and woodland initiatives have all handsomely contributed.

The Forest Schools Initiative has continued to win particular acclaim and Forest Schools project has been further funded by the Forestry Commission in the Wye Valley AONB. The Forestry Commission education sites at Wyre and Cannock have hosted in excess of 20,000 schoolchildren, whilst the National Forest's Rosliston and Conkers Centres environmental education programmes have attracted in excess of 40,000 children.

The Woodland Trust's "Tree for All" scheme continues and 1049 copse planting packs were distributed to schools in the West Midlands. Their Phenology Network and Nature Detectives Project has engaged people and schools with the issue of Climate Change through the recording of phenological events – many associated with trees. A number of Wildlife Trusts deliver on-site national curriculum work too.

- 6.7.2 The Woodland Forum's Workforce Development Group has been playing an active role with much closer linkages to the Woodland & Forestry Industries Task Group. The wider regional Wood Works project has continued and has delivered training to 123 existing forestry workers with 841 training days during the period. The Green Wood Centre led on the development of National Occupational Standards for the greenwood trades and has developed the Green Wood Centre Apprenticeship to support new entrants to the coppice industry.

Many of the skills of the timber trade have been traditionally taught within the trade – yet there is still little training in sawmilling or the complexities of marketing wood products available now. There is concerned urgency on the topic of recruitment and career development opportunities (or current lack of them) within the forest industry and at all levels. There is an acute shortage of contractors available to undertake the work in both public and private sectors. Meanwhile, the Regional Sector Skills Agreement for the land-based industries has been developed and launched; needing engagement with stakeholders to ensure training and upskilling delivery is demand led. Lantra, based in the region, is continuing to develop a new vocational diploma for the 14-19 age range which will encompass the environmental and land-based sector and is due to be delivered in schools from September 2009. Sadly, the advanced modern apprenticeship programme for forestry and treework has been shelved.

## 6.8 **FOSTERING SOCIAL INCLUSION**

- 6.8.1 The Forestry Commission have been active partners in the Rural Affairs Forum and the Rural Accord, implementing the Rural Delivery Framework set to improve access to support and services for all. The Quality of Environment monitoring indicators for the Regional Spatial Strategy have been reviewed.

The Woodland & Forestry Forum responded to the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase II Consultation and has contributed to the development of the Phase III Revision programme. Further responses have been made to the England's Trees, Woods and Forests Strategy and the England Wood Fuel Strategy and stakeholders have been involved in responding to Local development Frameworks and Local Area Agreements' consultations

6.8.2 With regard to promoting examples and inspiring people about the benefits of trees and woodlands and securing community involvement, regional and sub regional activities include:

- Health Walks and coppicing projects set up with local communities
- Tree warden schemes and “free tree” schemes
- Audience Development Plan for Wyre Project
- Work of Woodland Initiatives, Green Arc Partnership, New Life, Forest of Mercia, Coombes Valley & Churnet RSPB, Community Tree Schemes and more.

6.8.3 Forestry Commission Partnership Funding has been provided for Wye Wood the Wider Wood, Country Parks for All, Forest of Mercia, Green Arc Partnership, Herefordshire Sustain and the Green Wood Centre Marched Coppice Projects. BIG Lottery Funding, Heritage Lottery Fund for the three year Wyre Forest Project has been forthcoming too.

Wider community involvement has been detailed by woodland initiatives, through local authority activity and the work of AONBs through their Sustainability Development Fund, available for 2006-2007. SITA funding for woodland environmental work has been provided for projects in the region, as has money from the Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund and Section 106 funding for Green Arc Partnership Projects. Through gaining a higher profile and the improved communications and networking with Government Office, Regional Assembly, Natural England partners and other agencies identification of funding incentives has become easier.

6.8.4 A number of best practice examples have been highlighted, particularly demonstrating how to attract the “hard to reach” groups, e.g. the delivery of Forest Schools to excluded pupils and VTS programmes excluded groups; woodland work with prisoners from HMP Hewell Grange; New Horizons, working with adults with learning difficulties; and woodland work with older people, probation service, young offenders, and for families and mother & toddler groups – particularly those with mobility problems.

6.8.5 The Wyre Forest Project has been set up providing active links between the public estate and private landowners looking to operate on a landscape scale on a variety of projects. Successful links have also been made with the Duchy of Cornwall over the use of Aconbury Wood for coppicing projects with probation service participants and Mental Health Service users.

## 6.9 **ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY**

6.9.1 This year has seen the establishment of the Trees, Woods and Forestry Biodiversity Task Group and they have set about developing an action plan which will ensure the synchronisation and alignment of many of the proposed activities under both the Regional Biodiversity Strategy and the Regional Forestry Framework.

Steady progress has been detailed from several sources on improving the overall quality of woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest reflects initiatives by Natural England, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, Local Authorities and other partners, although these woodlands represent only a very small proportion of the Region’s area. Examples include the Marches Deer Project bringing 1000Ha into recovering condition; Sustainable Development Funds being used for fencing and coppicing at Westhope and on the Wrekin; significant progress achieved for a number of Lepidoptera species, snakes, dormice and bats; and native woodland restoration in SSSI woodlands in Woolhope Dome BEA.

6.9.2 “Keepers in Time”, England’s Ancient and Native Woodland Policy was announced in June 2005 and guidelines issued. The former task and finish group set up to take the design and development of a regional expression of this policy forward has been subsumed into the new Task Group and will incorporate this as one of their major work streams.

The regional Woodland Opportunities Map – Version 2 incorporates biodiversity issues as well as additional ones for woodland creation and for Ancient Woodlands. The Woodland Trust's "Woods Under Threat" initiative continues and there are 10 ongoing cases in the West Midlands reported.

Natural England's Environmental Stewardship through both the entry level and higher level schemes has introduced and considerably increased interest in protection and enhancement of trees and farm woodlands with applications for maintenance and restoration for 194 Ha; and 216 agreements for woodland fencing. The Forestry Commission's EWGS Woodland Management, Woodland Regeneration, Woodland Improvement SSSI and Biodiversity extended to 441 Ha approved.

6.9.3 Forest design planning and written management plans are announced or ongoing for several stakeholders with particular emphasis on working to UKWAS standards, Habitat Action Plans and Biodiversity Action Plans with reporting on BARS. For example, Forest Enterprise has identified and committed 850 ha of woodland restoration to native broadleaves with 100Ha of restoration thinning in PAWS sites undertaken during the year.

6.9.4 The profiles of the region's 14 Biodiversity Enhancement Areas (BEAs) were redrafted, all quantifying the woodland biodiversity value. Of the two being piloted (Woolhope Dome and Cannock Chase to Sutton Park), woodland in the Woolhope Dome is a significant element and assessment has been made of the barriers and opportunities with small woodland management. Attention to these issues is central to the success of the project's landscape and wildlife objectives and landscape-scale.

Similar landscape-scale examples are highlighted by the AONBs, Forestry Commission, Local Authorities, the Deer Initiative (Woolhope Dome, The Doward, Dinmore, Needwood, and Mortimer Forest) and the Green Arc Partnership. Research has also been commissioned on indicative regional habitat networks including woodland.

6.9.5 The Forestry Commission is now linked to county biological Local Record Centres for two-way exchange of information. Together with the Biodiversity Partnership they are actively involved in a number of pieces of work including the integration of local and regional targets for habitat creation and restoration. There has been an increase in resource to make improvements to SSSIs and a bid to increase the areas for native species and additional open space in all Forest Design Plans.

The repeat Woodland Bird Survey was completed in May 2005 and regional guidance prepared. This culminated in a Woodland Birds Seminar held in Ludlow June 2006 for woodland owners, managers and advisers. Meanwhile, in an effort to improve data on other habitats and species, new Coleoptera and Lepidoptera surveys have been undertaken

6.9.6 A number of events programmes and training days have been reported as increasing public awareness and participation. For example, Communications Plans have been completed and adopted for both the Forestry Framework and Biodiversity Strategy. There have been extensive events programmes and training days throughout the region, e.g. the RSPB reported 800 volunteer days of work, the Woodland Trust's Trees for All programme, the Worcestershire Vision Mapping Project involving individuals and community groups (biodiversity) as well as numerous walks, talks, events and newsletters delivered by other stakeholders.

6.9.7 Wide ranging examples for raising the levels of skills and knowledge have been reported. For example, biodiversity skills levels of NFU farmer members have been raised through Greener Futures and other events. The Deer Initiative has been training woodland and land managers to identify signs of deer and to understand the fundamentals of deer management. Wet woodland research and an associated good practice guide have been produced by the National Forest in conjunction with Severn Trent Water and Middlemarch Environmental. Veteran Tree Master Classes have been held by Shropshire Hills AONB. Heartwoods have embarked upon setting up best practice exemplars for woodland and biodiversity management.

- 6.9.8 Information gathering and monitoring is a key challenge of the West Midlands Regional Biodiversity Strategy and the Forestry Framework. Natural England has co-funded five out of the six Local Biodiversity Record Centres for specified services and products and longer term funding is currently being sought. The programme of SSSI condition assessment continues and reporting to show progress against the Government's PSA target.

National guidance and literature is available through Natural England and Forestry Commission websites. At regional level, there has been development of landscape character assessment websites which contain detailed ecological profiles thus increasing access to ecological information in the public domain.

## 6.10 **NATURAL, CULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS**

- 6.10.1 The Regional Cultural Strategy has started the revision process with the aim of producing a new version in late 2007. As a pre-cursor to this, a number of meetings have been held with CultureWM and the Forestry Commission were included in their Vision for Action Work Plan. Meanwhile, stakeholders continue with rural environmental economy work that highlights sustainable management of the environment; increasing investment in wooded areas promoting heritage, leisure, recreation, tourism and cultural assets.
- 6.10.2 The River Trent Catchment Flood Management Plan was launched in September 2006 and acknowledges that floodplain woodlands can have a positive effect on floodwater control. The plan provides opportunities for working with the National Forest and Forestry Commission in developing ways of reducing surface run-off, increasing flow attenuation and providing opportunities for flood storage through land use.
- 6.10.3 Woodland and landscape management has been actively promoted through the Environmental Stewardship and England Woodland Grant Schemes. At the same time, the Forestry Commission has been working on the West Midlands Regional Sustainable Development Framework, Version II Revision, ensuring that sustainability is at the heart of trees and timber activities in the region.
- The significance of trees, woodland and forestry to landscape, historic, biodiversity and other environmental designations has been constantly appraised at both local and regional levels and work on synchronising and embedding with other strategies ongoing. Meanwhile the Landscape, Biodiversity, Access and Cultural Heritage themes have been further developed as part of the Woodland Opportunities Mapping Version 2.
- 6.10.4 At local authority level, climate change strategies and action plans have been prepared. Endorsed by Local Strategic Partnerships performance indicators are being included in Local Area Agreements. We trust this will provide real opportunities to advance local forestry contributions to carbon off-setting and climate change in the public sector. Meanwhile the Woodland & Forest Industries Task Group have been developing a West Midlands Climate Change leaflet – a practical guide for woodland owners and agents.
- 6.10.5 Green Infrastructure Planning, the National Forest and some Local Area Agreements already in place have focussed on air quality issues. Through the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), most significantly through the development of Biodiversity Enhancement Areas and the review processes for both the RSS and the Regional Economic Strategy, quality of environment is becoming an increasingly important factor and, in turn, the contribution of trees and woodland.
- 6.10.6 Natural England, through the employment of Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers have advanced this objective as have the Environment Agency through their Water Framework Directive work. A primary focus is on water quality of freshwater SSSIs threatened by diffuse pollution and the major promotion of wooded riparian zones and strategic woodland creation on arable land is being undertaken in the catchments of

the Lugg, Teme, Shropshire Meres and Mosses. A low level of creation and sustainable management of wet woodlands is reported.

## 6.11 **SUPPORTING THE REGENERATION OF THE WEST MIDLANDS**

- 6.11.1 The Green Infrastructure Planning Task Group set up an external contract for scoping the issues and a stakeholder workshop was held. Further research and studies were undertaken resulting in the Green Infrastructure Prospectus, together with Technical Guidance being published and disseminated to Task Group members, stakeholders and, in particular Local Authorities. This was especially pertinent and relevant to the identified Growth Point Areas, 7 of which are in the West Midlands Region, and active promotion has been ongoing.

Active steps have also been taken to raise awareness amongst Local Strategy Partnerships of the role of trees and woodland in contributing to green space and, it is hoped, that Local Area Agreements will have included some reference.

The 'Woods for People' and the 'Space for People' data from the Woodland Trust have been especially valuable and have further contributed to the Woodland Opportunities Mapping exercise. Many of the stakeholders respond to planning and aftercare proposals for local development and the opportunities for woodland to be used as a transitional stage in land management is being encouraged. As woodland initiatives mature they are increasingly feeding in to steering groups and public sector networks on matters concerning local development and regeneration.

Section 106 Planning Gain money has been available in a number of reported instances for woodland creation, management and public access improvements. These include the provision of environmental improvements in the urban fringe areas and the M6 Toll transport corridor.

- 6.11.2 Encouraging woodland as an afteruse on mineral and waste management sites is part of the advisory work undertaken by the Forest of Mercia in respect to the restoration of Brereton Colliery (20Ha). The Green Arc Partnership has three quarry restoration plans under development including one which will incorporate large scale woodland creation. Meanwhile the third phase of the Site Opportunities mapping – Brownfield sites has been agreed and taken forward by the West Midlands Regional Observatory.
- 6.11.3 With regards to joining up activity and sharing best practice, the Forestry Commission has been actively promoting RegenWM awards amongst the woodland initiatives and the National Forest has a case study placed on the RegenWM website. Examples of greater collaboration have been cited particularly between the Environment Agency, Natural England, RSPB, Local Councils, AONBs, Woodland Initiatives and the Forestry Commission.

## **7. Delivering the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework**

- 7.1 In adopting a broad-based partnership approach attracting maximum support from all stakeholders for the Regional Forestry Framework we have concentrated on developing a thriving and pro-active Woodland & Forestry Forum and Task Groups: Woodland Opportunities Mapping, Woodland & Forest Industries, Wood Energy, Recycling, Workforce Development, Trees Woods and Forests Biodiversity, Green Infrastructure Planning. The Task Groups have evolved over the lifetime of the Framework and all have active work programmes and action plans. During 2007-2008 the Steering Group will be putting similar in place for the Woodland & Forestry Forum.
- 7.2 During the year the Forum and Framework have been informing, assisting, reinforcing and supporting the development of the RSS, WMES and the RSDF through responding to a series of consultations to ensure alignment and co-ordination between the Framework and other regional, local and national priorities.

- 7.3 With regards to performance management, the Annual Monitoring Report 2005-2006 was published on time and quarterly Progress reports have been submitted throughout the 2006-2007 period. Four Steering Group Meetings (May, July, October and January) and two Woodland & Forestry Forum Meetings (June and November) have been held.
- 7.4 In order to ensure that funding streams and incentives have been properly coordinated and integrated to deliver the agreed Regional Forestry Framework priorities, the Forestry Commission have been working closely with natural England partners to ensure that ESS and EWGS are effectively delivered. Meanwhile, Forestry Commission, Natural England, West Midlands Regional Assembly and Government Office West Midlands continue to financially support the WMRFF Action Plan Management Post and, with all the other stakeholders the delivery of RFF objectives.

For the first time, as part of the monitoring exercise we attempted to collect information of the overall investment made by stakeholders in trees, woods and forestry activity 2006-2007. The recent EFIP Forest Industries Mapping Study estimated that the economic contribution of the woodland and forest industries sector in the West Midlands is some £1.1 Billion GDP. This refers to the most tangible value derived from the sector and consists of resources and resource expansion (including timber, woodlands and recycled wood and fibre), value of processing (primary, secondary, retail, crafts), value of services to the sector as well as direct and indirect employment. Furthermore, the contribution is enhanced by innovation, skills and enterprise as well as urban and rural regeneration. An encouraging response was recorded but insufficient, in terms of geography or sector, to collate accumulative figures:

- Forestry Commission: £1.65 million EWGS
- Natural England: £1.57 million ESS
- Forestry Commission (Public Estate) £3.50 million total invested
- Substantial investment from AONBs, Local Authorities, Woodland Initiatives and NGOs
- For every £1 grant to the private sector, they spend £3-£11 of their own money

- 7.5 To ensure that future decision making is informed by best practice from both within and outwith the region we have strived to keep in touch with local, regional and national partners. The Woodland Birds Seminar at Ludlow attracted both regional and national representatives. Consultation responses to the England's trees, Woods and Forests and the Wood Fuel Strategies will help future alignment of the Forestry Framework with National Action Plans.

## 8. Evaluation of the Monitoring Process

- 8.1 The SMARTness of the objectives and activities contained within the Framework has been well tested through the first three monitoring exercises. Some refinement was adopted for this phase – the development of the three-year rolling Delivery Plan 2006-2009 - via better specific targeting, timescales and using, where possible, a proper baseline. This certainly enabled better effectiveness in the ability to monitor the framework and the progress being made towards its expressed vision.
- 8.2 In many ways a great deal of the 2005-2006 monitoring focused around process - "we are doing such and such" which did illustrate activity but proved difficult towards demonstrating in any meaningful progress. The Steering Group consider how best to balance the complementary contributions of the following types of monitoring of the framework. Each has a role and will contribute to the "what" and "why" of measurement:
- process - this is where the balance was lying and gave us a broad indication of stakeholder buy-in - giving a view of activity but not effectiveness;

output - this has now started to give a quantification of impact, e.g. number of educational contacts, trees/hectarage planted, grant monies accessed, etc.;  
outcomes - in many ways this is what we are seeking to ultimately establish over time and ultimately gives a view of success or failure. By adopting a three-year rolling Delivery Plan we can better assess these, i.e. improved biodiversity; community engagement or activity improved; contribution to regional economy etc.

- 8.3 Although the Framework and the fore-runner study "A Growing Resource" expressed a decent Baseline position, there needs to be a lot more underpinning information available. Many of the lead partners and stakeholders realise this and are actively striving to provide this. Equally, we very much hope that the data and findings from the EFIP Study quantifying the economic contribution of the sector in the West Midlands, highlighting the potential for closing the output gap, bridging the rural-urban divide and identifying trees and woodlands as being primary contributors to the quality of life in the region using the most sustainable of natural resources, can considerably improve on this over the coming year.

Appendix A: Summary Annual Report 2005-2006 WMRFF

Sara Roberts  
Action Plan Manager  
West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework  
July 2007

## APPENDIX A: SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007

Growing our Future, the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework launched the rolling three year Delivery Plan guiding actions for 2006-2009 at the end of June 2006. This set out detailed activities spread across the eleven themes, each with targets and success indicators identified for monitoring performance at twelve monthly intervals.

This, the third monitoring exercise since 2004, has been very encouraging with again an excellent level of responses in geographical and sectoral terms. The total number received to date is 54; made up of 15 from the private sector, 15 from public agencies and a further 24 from regional and sub-regional partnerships, conservation bodies and initiatives.

Lead partners responding include:

- Advantage West Midlands
- Department of Health West Midlands
- English Heritage
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Government Office West Midlands
- Heart of England Tourism
- Lantra
- Local Authorities – Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire, and Telford & Wrekin
- National Forest Company
- Natural England
- Physical Activity Network West Midlands
- West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership
- West Midlands Regional Assembly
- West Midlands Woodland & Forestry Forum & Task Groups
- Woodland Trust

We particularly welcome the responses from the many others including: AONB Cannock Chase, AONB Malvern Hills, AONB Shropshire Hills, BIFFA, British Horse Loggers, Butterfly Conservation, Childer Wood, CLA, ConFor, David Lovelace, Deer Initiative, Energy West Midlands, Envirowise, Forest Enterprise, Forester Services, Forest of Mercia, Forest Schools, Fountains, Green Arc Partnership, Green Wood Centre, Heartwoods, Herefordshire Sustain, A F Hill & Son, Midlands Wood Fuel Ltd, Merevale Estates, National Farmers Union, National Trust, RSPB, Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, Small Woods Association, Sport England, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Walford & North Shropshire College, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Whitney Sawmills, Woodland Initiatives Network, Worcestershire Rural Hub

Just over two years into the implementation phase of the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework, the significant buy-in and engagement of stakeholder individuals and organisations who seek to realise the benefits that trees, woodland and forestry can bring to the region continues. It is through their individual activities, projects and influence that any progress has been charted and future plans incorporated into the three-year rolling Delivery Plan 2007-2010.

Woodland growers and managers are delighted that there has been a substantial upturn in the UK timber markets over the period – perhaps the most positive for more than ten years. This has helped sustain the enthusiasm for the Regional Forestry Framework throughout the most recent stages of implementation with high expectancies and ambitions remaining for what it can and will deliver. Headline findings in respect of the 11 themes and the overarching Delivering the Framework assessment are described overleaf.

**KEY:**

☺	Substantial Progress
☹	Some Progress
⊗	Little or no progress

Woodland Coverage:	Progress ☺☹☹	Regional Headlines
WC 1 To increase significantly regional woodland cover linked to the Regional Spatial Strategy	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EWGS £320k approved woodland creation</li> <li>• ESS woodland options promoted; 42 agreements containing woodland creation options; 30Ha</li> <li>• ESS contributing to health/survival of hedgerow or infield trees: 55 agreements</li> <li>• NFC woodland gained through development planting, minerals restoration and landscaping: 12 Ha</li> <li>• Formal responses incorporating woodland creation and green infrastructure into work on Growth Points, RSS Phases I and II, WMES Policy Options</li> </ul>
WC 2 To collaborate in developing more precise targeting for woodland creation	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodland Opportunities Map Version 2 comprising 6 maps [Woodland Creation, Ancient Woodlands Restoration, Landscape, Access, Biodiversity &amp; Cultural Heritage] let for consultation March 07</li> <li>• Regional Grants prospectus produced June 2006</li> <li>• Regional discretionary points agreed</li> <li>• Representation on the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership's Landscapes for Living Group, is helping to ensure maximum synergy between WOM and their Landscapes for Living mapping processes</li> </ul>
WC 3 To develop the landscape characterisation process, mapping the character of woodlands	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing county-based historic landscape characterisation projects in Worcestershire and Warwickshire – once completed will provide full regional coverage of HLC in shire counties</li> <li>• Work proceeding on the development of a "Landscapes for Living" that aims to co-ordinate and summarise all the associated work on biodiversity that is going on, promote the concept at regional level and make connections to regional strategies</li> <li>• Woodland Trust/Ancient Tree Forum working on expanded version of Ancient Tree Hunt tree audit. Supported by HLF</li> </ul>
WC 4 To raise the profile of trees and woodlands in relation to the historic environment	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional reports for 2006 Heritage Counts</li> <li>• English Heritage input on environmental stewardship agreements</li> <li>• Wyre Forest Project, supported by HLF, launch and ongoing project activity</li> <li>• Restoration activity, heritage trails, field meetings, walks and talks across the region</li> <li>• Regional Scheduled Monuments at Risk survey completed</li> <li>• Provision of English Heritage funded management agreements</li> </ul>
WC 5 To actively promote the contribution that woodland and forestry makes to the culture of those living in the West Midlands	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50-60 people engaged in health walks and coppicing activities as part of Wye Wood Projects</li> <li>• Forest Enterprise 50+ press releases promoting forestry and local communities</li> <li>• Public talks, Wood Fairs, Visits and Walks e.g. bluebell woodlands at Yoxall attracting 5,000 visitors over 6-week flowering period</li> </ul>

WC 6 To promote woodland and forestry in support of regeneration and development

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Infrastructure Planning Prospectus and Technical Guide published</li> <li>• Site Opportunities Phase II (brownfield to greenspace) underway</li> <li>• Working with local authority partners to embed trees and woodlands into Section 106 agreements and Local Development Frameworks</li> <li>• Incorporating green infrastructure and woodland creation into Growth Points, e.g. FC National support for Burton Growth Point Study</li> <li>• Continued support and development of National Forest, Forest Of Mercia, Green Arc Partnership, New Life</li> </ul>
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**The Woodland and Forestry Industry:**

**Progress**

**Regional Headlines**

WFI 1 To improve the efficiency and viability of the woodland and forestry sector

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WFI Task Group formed to improve engagement with the private sector; 4 meetings</li> <li>• England Forest Industries Partnership Study completed; outputs and recommendations awaited</li> <li>• Partnership funding for sub-regional initiatives e.g. Biomass WM Adviser, Marches Deer Project, Regional VTS Wood Works, Heartwoods</li> <li>• Formal responses made to WMES Policy Options, England's Trees, Woods and Forests Strategy, RDPE Regional Implementation Plan consultations (RIP)</li> </ul>
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WFI 2 To achieve exemplary management of assets through UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS)

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management Plans based on the UKWAS Standard being produced by AONBs, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, ConFor members and other woodland owners across the region</li> <li>• Heartwoods setting up Chain of Custody Certification for small wood-using businesses</li> <li>• Forestry Commission Woodlands successfully audited by FSC</li> <li>• Woodland Birds Seminar, June 2006</li> <li>• Health &amp; Biodiversity Conference, May 2006</li> </ul>
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WFI 3 To develop new opportunities

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FC directly engaged in drafting process for the RDPE RIP to ensure that woodland and timber related activity is recognised across the whole programme</li> <li>• WMWFF and WFI Task Group responses to ETWF Strategy Consultation</li> <li>• WMWFF responses to WMES Policy Choices and WMRSS Phase II Policy Options</li> </ul>
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WFI 4 To develop sustainable woodland and forestry markets, products and enterprises

☹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited FC EWGS funding and the continuing absence of Harvesting Processing and Marketing Grants deny seed-corn investment for new initiatives and existing businesses</li> <li>• Wood Energy Task Group facilitating options for increased markets for wood products, particularly wood fuel</li> <li>• Improving the viability and connectivity of the wild venison supply chain in the Marches</li> <li>• FE production forecast updated to ensure smooth supply and even volumes to market</li> </ul>
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WFI 5 To encourage effective use and interaction with advice and incentive mechanisms, and adaptation to working within a changing policy, regulation and incentive network	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing alignment and business planning between FC and Natural England partners</li> <li>• Business Link's new Gateway and Brokerage service launched; linkages with Heartwoods</li> <li>• Woodland Initiatives Network provide a co-ordinated networking and advisory service</li> <li>• Natural England's advice and incentives for tree and woodland owners/managers deployed through county Land Management Teams – single contact point (nominated officer) for all business.</li> </ul>
WFI 6 To secure the integration of agri-environment, woodland and forestry and rural delivery mechanisms	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of forestry and woodland in the RDPE RIP</li> <li>• Rural Accord partners aligning corporate and business plans to ensure integration and landscape scale interaction, e.g. BEA pilots and river basin management</li> </ul>
WFI 7 To raise the levels of skills and knowledge to enable exemplary woodland management	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lantra promoting skills training and careers within the trees and timber sector through new websites and the Land-based Sector Skills Agreement (for Trees &amp; Timber)</li> <li>• Heartwoods development of a suite of exemplar sites/case studies</li> <li>• ConFor/RFS/NFU field and technical meetings</li> <li>• Specialist training, e.g. Veteran Tree Master Classes, Deer Management, OCN Coppice Products, Woodworks VTS, Continuous Cover Forestry, Arboricultural Techniques, etc.</li> </ul>

#### Wood Energy:

#### Progress

#### Regional Headlines

WE 1 To improve awareness, understanding and support for wood energy	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major and increasing interest by woodland owners and processors in the wood fuel market</li> <li>• Wood Energy Task Group providing updates on regional events, best practice, networking opportunities and business opportunities</li> <li>• BioenergyWM networking event and 4 workshops throughout the year targeting planners, specifiers</li> <li>• EnergyWM led biomass support group in Warwickshire, meeting 3 times to take forward a number of installations</li> <li>• Workshops, demonstrations and open days throughout the region; media coverage</li> <li>• FC produced and updated the Suppliers List of sources of wood fuel</li> </ul>
WE 2 To develop the wood energy industry	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exponential growth in the number of wood heating installations (fastest growing alternative energy provision in the West Midlands)</li> <li>• Successful supply of wood chip fuel to boilers throughout the region; expanding network of fuel depots</li> <li>• Continually increasing numbers of sources of wood for processing on a commercial (not subsidised basis)</li> <li>• Worcester CC bringing forward proposals for 2.5MW Power Station at Tenbury Wells</li> <li>• FC funding for region-wide market development study</li> </ul>

WE 3 To help new initiatives and share knowledge

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warwickshire Biomass Support Group &amp; Rural Hub Supply Group set up</li> <li>• BIG funding secured by Midlands Woodfuel Ltd</li> <li>• Published information and further case studies</li> <li>• Wood Energy Task Group examining issues and impacts of new England Wood Fuel Strategy</li> </ul>
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**Recycling:**

ReC 1 To gather and share information

**Progress**

**Regional Headlines**

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wood Recycling Task Group continues with wide representation but only one meeting this year</li> <li>• Representation on National Industrial Symbiosis Programme Advisory Group</li> <li>• Networking Adviser bid unsuccessful</li> <li>• Participation in Waste Forums at Local Authority level &amp; Regional Forum February 2007</li> </ul>
☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing sub-regional activity – Local Authorities, Health Trusts, carbon-neutral communities</li> <li>• Production of the updated Recycled Wood Sources/Suppliers List</li> <li>• Envirowise working with a number of businesses to promote waste minimisation; NFU through Greener Futures</li> </ul>
☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing sub-regional activity with more recycling centres separating timber and green waste</li> <li>• Increased volume of waste wood recycled; WM businesses encouraged to segregate waste and recycling rates of wood products</li> <li>• Increasing number of partners and stakeholders leading by example within own offices and work places</li> </ul>

ReC 2 To develop opportunities to promote waste minimisation and recycling

ReC 3 To develop recycling activity

**Recreation and Tourism:**

**Progress**

**Regional Headlines**

RT 1 To agree and secure a commitment to work towards a standard and priorities for local community access

RT 2 Embed the Framework in regional cultural and tourism strategies

RT 3 To develop tourism opportunities

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodland Opportunities Mapping process – Version 2 completed</li> <li>• Formal input to Local Development Frameworks, Rights of Way Improvement Plan Consultations and regional land use consultations</li> </ul>
☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening relationship between WMWFF and tourism and cultural stakeholders</li> <li>• Promotion of woodlands as a tourist destination, as detailed in WM Visitor Economy Strategy</li> </ul>
☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-regional exemplars noted, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Concert arena developed at Cannock Chase woodland with licence to hold events</li> <li>○ Green Wood Centre re-development with £250k as a woodland interpretation centre</li> <li>○ Cycling initiatives continue to draw visitors at Cannock and other Marches FC venues</li> <li>○ Ongoing National Forest promotions included National Memorial Arboretum, National Forest Wood Fair, Yoxall Lodge and Jackson's Bank</li> <li>○ Regional and sub-regional economic development work includes support for tourism initiatives supporting green tourism</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

RT 4 To take up opportunities for long term access

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All FC freehold land dedicated under CRoW Act for right of access in perpetuity</li> <li>• Only £2.4k WIG Access Grant awarded; private sector unable/unwilling to carry out improvements at substantial cost with little or no gain</li> <li>• Medium to longer distance/circular routes identified in draft ROWIPs and Parish Plans</li> </ul>
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**Health and Wellbeing:**

**Progress**

**Regional Headlines**

HW 1 To maximise the use of woodland and forestry to deliver a healthier region (both physically and spiritually)

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimated 4 million visitors to FC Woodlands in the region – the vast majority involve some form of physical activity and mental stimulation/relaxation</li> <li>• Involvement in scoping and development of the Regional Health &amp; Well-Being Strategy and the monitoring and evaluating physical activity interventions</li> <li>• Sub regional initiatives increasing</li> <li>• 4 Health Woodland Improvement Grants approved and linked to the Active Woods Initiative</li> <li>• Wye Wood the Wider Wood being run as a national rural pilot with evaluation</li> </ul>
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HW 2 To develop further links between wooded green space and health

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active Woods Award Winner: Mayfield Centre, Church Stretton</li> <li>• PAN-WM's annual conference focussed on partnership working using the natural environment to increase physical activity levels</li> <li>• Evidence of increasing linkages with GPs, PCTs, Community Mental Health Trusts, Schools and community groups</li> </ul>
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**Education, Learning and Skills:**

**Progress**

**Regional Headlines**

ELS 1 To increase public knowledge of woodland and forestry by education and raising awareness

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deer: awareness raising events for landowners and the public</li> <li>• Delivery of programmes on environmental education in the National Forest to 40,000 schoolchildren</li> <li>• 2 education sites at FC Cannock and Wyre have hosted 20,000+ children</li> <li>• Many examples of educational visits, involvement of schools and communities detailed including many from the private sector</li> <li>• Woodland Trust's "Tree for All" continues: 1049 copse planting packs sent out to schools in WM</li> </ul>
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ELS 2 To maintain the woodland and forestry workforce and encourage new entrants

☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many of the skills of the timber trade have been traditionally taught within the trade – there is still little training in sawmilling or the complexities of marketing wood products</li> <li>• Regional Sector Skills Agreement for the land-based industries launched; engagement with stakeholders to ensure engagement is demand led</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional VTS programme; 123 people trained; 841 training days</li> <li>• Green Wood Centre Apprenticeship developed to support new entrants in the coppice industry</li> <li>• Developing new vocational diploma for 14-19 age range in environment and land-based sector</li> </ul>
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**Fostering Social Inclusion:**

**Progress**

**Regional Headlines**

FSI 1 To set a regional target for percentage of tree/woodland cover as a quality of life indicator



- Quality of Environment monitoring indicators for Regional Spatial Strategy reviewed and refreshed
- Responses to RSS Phase II Consultation, the development of the Phase III Revision
- Response to England Trees, Woods and Forest Strategy and England Woodfuel Strategy consultations
- Responses to Local Development Frameworks and Local Area Agreements

FSI 2 To promote examples and inspire people about the benefits for trees and woodlands and secure community involvement in establishing trees for local communities



- Regional and sub-regional exemplars include:
- Health Walks and coppicing projects set up with local communities
  - Tree warden schemes and “free tree” schemes
  - Audience Development Plan for Wyre Project
  - Work of Woodland Initiatives, Green Arc Partnership, New Life, Forest of Mercia, Coombes Valley & Churnet RSPB, Community Tree Schemes, etc.

FSI 3 To identify and/or provide some funding incentives



- FC Partnership funding for Wye Wood the Wider Wood, Country Parks for All, Forest of Mercia, Green Arc Partnership, Herefordshire Sustain Project, GWC Marches Coppice Project
- AONB’s Sustainable Development Fund to support local woodland initiatives
- SITA funding for woodland/environmental work
- Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund & Section 106 funding for Green Arc Partnership projects
- BIG Lottery Funding; Heritage Lottery Fund for Wyre Forest Project

FSI 3 To identify and/or provide some funding incentives *[continued]*

FSI 4 Develop a programme of specific initiatives for hard to reach groups



- Several examples detailed in the responses:
  - Forest school for excluded groups
  - VTS for permanently excluded groups
  - Woodland work HMP Hewell Grange
  - New Horizons – work with adults with learning difficulties
  - Woodland work with older people, probation service/young offenders/mother and toddler groups

FSI 5 Link private and other woodland owners to develop access initiatives for excluded groups



- Sub-regional examples highlighted:
  - Work with West Mercia Probation Service based in privately owned Shropshire woodland
  - Links with Duchy of Cornwall over use of Aconbury Wood for coppicing projects
  - Forest School pilot at the Catton Estate
  - Forest of Mercia – use of local private woodlands for special needs group

**Enhancing Biodiversity:**

**Progress**

**Regional Headlines**

EB 1 Meet national targets for SSSIs and the priority habitats and species of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan



Establishment of the Trees, Woods and Forestry Biodiversity Task Group – 2 meetings and action plan under development

Ongoing planned activity restoring the region's SSSIs to favourable condition, e.g.

- Marches Deer Project bringing 1000Ha into recovering condition
- Sustainable Development Funds being used for fencing and coppicing at Westhope and on the Wrekin
- Progress achieved for a number of Lepidoptera species, snakes, dormice and bats
- Native woodland restoration in SSSI woodlands in Woolhope Dome BEA

EB 2 Protect and enhance ancient and/or semi-natural woodland, including through the creation of new native woodland in targeted locations to create networks and increase semi-natural woodland cover



- Woodland Opportunities Mapping Version 2, including Woodland Creation and Ancient Woodland Maps
- Involvement with the development of Landscapes for Living Mapping process
- Woodland Trusts' "Woods under Threat" initiative continues: 10 ongoing cases in WM
- ESS Woodland Maintenance & restoration 194Ha; Woodland fencing 216 agreements
- EWGS WMG/WRG/WIG SSSI and Biodiversity: 441 Ha

EB 3 To develop a programme for the improvement and restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)



- Increased take up of EWGS Woodland Regeneration Grants linked to PAWS restoration
- FE Forest Design Plan for 2500 Ha; 100Ha undertaken
- Increased number of woodland management plans for identified ancient woodlands

EB 4 To target action through landscape-scale improvements



- 14 BEA profiles and boundaries redrafted; quantifying woodland biodiversity value
- 2 BEA pilots continuing: Cannock Chase to Sutton Park and Woolhope Dome
- Biodiversity sensitivity maps included in Woodland Opportunity Mapping Version 2 and Landscapes for Living Project
- Landscape scale deer management exemplars include: Wyre Forest, The Doward, Woolhope Dome, Needwood and Mortimer Forest

EB 5 To increase contributions and commitment to wildlife gain



- Increase in the resource to make improvements to SSSIs – increasing the area for native species and open space in all Forestry Commission Forest Design Plans
- Woodland Birds Seminar June 2006
- New Lepidoptera and coleoptera surveys underway in Herefordshire

EB 6 To increase public awareness and participation



- Communications Plans completed and adopted for Forestry Framework and Biodiversity Strategy
- Biodiversity Strategy Draft Delivery Plan developed
- Events programmes and training days throughout the region:
  - RSPB 800 volunteer days of work

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Woodland Trust's Trees for All; 1049 copse packs sent to WM schools</li> <li>○ Worcestershire Vision Mapping Project involving individuals and community groups (biodiversity)</li> <li>○ Numerous walks, talks, events and newsletters</li> </ul>
EB 7 To raise the levels of skills and knowledge to enable exemplary biodiversity management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Veteran Tree Master Class – Shropshire Hills AONB</li> <li>● Heartwoods set of best practice exemplars under development</li> <li>● Greener Futures-raising biodiversity skills levels</li> </ul>
EB 8 To improve information to support ecological sustainability and biodiversity enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National guidance/literature available through Natural England and Forestry Commission websites</li> <li>● Development of landscape character assessment websites which contain detailed ecological profiles increasing access to ecological information in the public domain</li> </ul>

**Natural, Cultural and Environmental Benefits:**

**Progress**

**Regional Headlines**

NCEB 1 Include woodland and forestry issues in the revision of Regional Cultural Strategy	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rural environmental economy work highlighting sustainable management of the environment; increasing investment in wooded areas promoting heritage, leisure, recreation, tourism and cultural assets</li> </ul>
NCEB 2 Clarify and develop the role and effectiveness of trees in reducing flood risk and flood management	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● River Trent Catchment Flood Management Plan in place acknowledging woodlands can have a positive effect on floodwater control – reducing surface run-off, increasing flow attenuation and provide opportunities</li> <li>● River Teme Catchment Management Project ongoing</li> </ul>
NCEB 3 Actively promote the significance of woodland and forestry to landscape, historic, biodiversity and other environmental designations	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consultation responses to RSS Phase II and WMES review; assisting with RSS Phase III development</li> <li>● Landscape, Biodiversity, Access and Cultural Heritage themes further developed as part of Woodland Opportunities Mapping Version 2</li> <li>● Woodland and landscape management actively promoted through ESS and EWGS</li> </ul>
NCEB 4 To gain a clearer understanding of the impacts of climate change in relation to trees and woodlands	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Forest have updated their carbon sequestration figure and have produced a policy statement on carbon offsetting</li> <li>● WFI Task Group developing a Climate Change Guide for woodland owners and managers</li> <li>● Green Infrastructure Planning Task Group publishing Prospectus and Technical Guide helping to combat the impacts of climate change in the region</li> </ul>
NCEB 5 Clarify the contribution of the woodland and forestry sector to air quality both nationally and locally	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Data capture patchy across the region and across the public/private/other sectors</li> </ul>

NCEB 6 Maintain soil quality and prevent soil erosion, reduce flood risk, protect water quality and conserve water resources through appropriate woodland creation and management	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water Framework Directive: FC representation on both Severn and Humber River Basin Liaison Panels</li> <li>Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative: Advice and delivery in the catchments of the Rivers Lugg and Teme, Shropshire Meres and Mosses</li> <li>Low levels of creation and sustainable management of wet woodlands reported</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting the regeneration of the West Midlands:</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Regional Headlines</b>
SR 1 Develop a regional greenspace strategy (urban & rural) with a strategic approach to forestry for regeneration integrated with woodland opportunities	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green Infrastructure Planning Task Group: workshop held; studies undertaken; Prospectus and Technical Guide published</li> <li>Active promotion of the Prospectus with local authorities and Growth Points</li> <li>Response to Local Delivery Frameworks and land use consultations</li> </ul>
SR 2 Encouraging woodland as an afteruse on mineral and waste management sites	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site Opportunities Phase 2 completed and Phase 3 scoping finalised. Funding package for Public Benefit Recording System being developed</li> <li>Responding to planning and aftercare proposals</li> <li>Section 106 money from M6 Toll providing environmental improvements in urban fringe areas – woodland creation, management and public access improvements</li> </ul>
SR 3 Join-up activity and share good practice, identify gaps in knowledge, agree priorities to target public resources	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting RegenWM awards amongst Woodland Initiatives: National Forest used as Case Study</li> <li>Sub-regional instances of better networking and opportunities for raising awareness</li> </ul>
<b>Delivering the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework:</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Regional Headlines</b>
DS 1 To adopt a broad-base partnership approach attracting maximum support from all the stakeholders for the Framework	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thriving and pro-active Woodland &amp; Forestry Forum and Task Groups: Woodland Opportunities Mapping, Woodland &amp; Forest Industries, Wood Energy, Recycling, Workforce Development, Trees Woods and Forests Biodiversity, Green Infrastructure Planning</li> </ul>
DS 2 To align the Framework and co-ordinate plans that will inform and assist, re-inforce and support the RSS, WMES and the RSDF	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level monitoring indicators for RSS reviewed and refreshed</li> <li>Consultation responses for WM Economic Strategy Review, Spatial Strategy Phase II policy Options; England Trees Woods and Forests Strategy</li> </ul>
DS 3 To performance manage the Framework and the Delivery Plans effectively to ensure that regional added value is achieved	☺	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Monitoring Report 2005-2006 published</li> <li>Quarterly Progress Reports throughout 2006-2007 period</li> <li>4 Steering Group Meetings</li> <li>2 Woodland &amp; Forestry Forum Meetings</li> </ul>

DS 4 To ensure that funding streams and incentives are properly co-ordinated and integrated to deliver the agreed regional RFF priorities



- Working with Natural England partners to ensure ESS and EWGS are effectively delivered
- Forestry Commission, Natural England, West Midlands Regional Assembly and Government Office West Midlands continue to support the WMRFF and its delivery

DS 5 To ensure that future decision making is informed by best practice from both within and outwith the region



- Active Woods – Best practice examples provided by Health WIG-funded projects in the region
- Woodlands Bird Seminar at Ludlow for both regional and national representatives

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