



England Forestry Strategy in Action

Improving the Region's Health

Woodland & Health Pilot – West Midlands

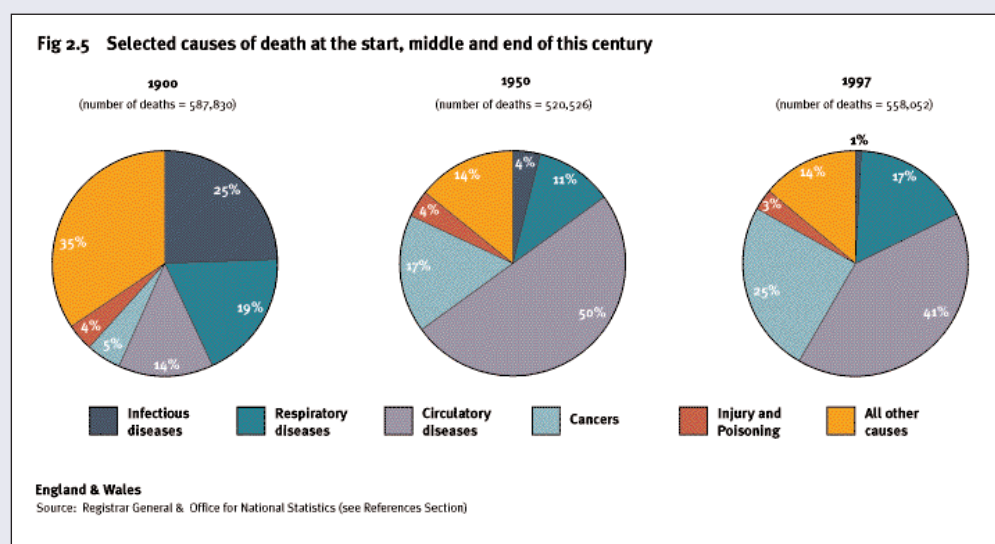


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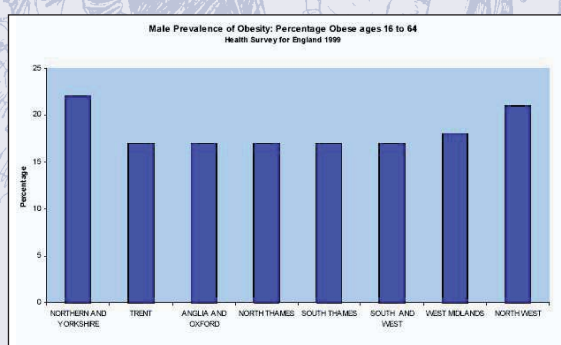
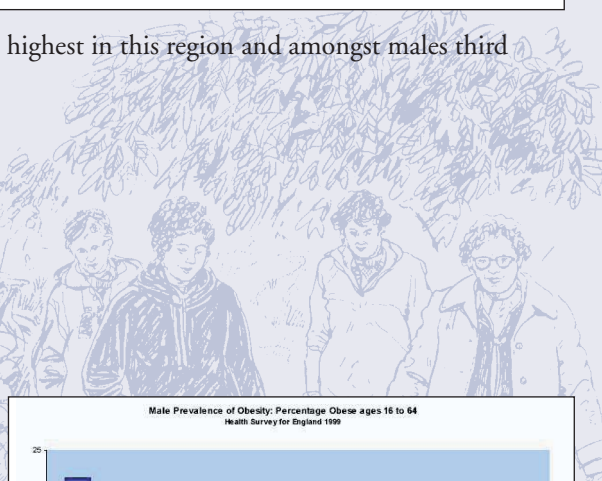
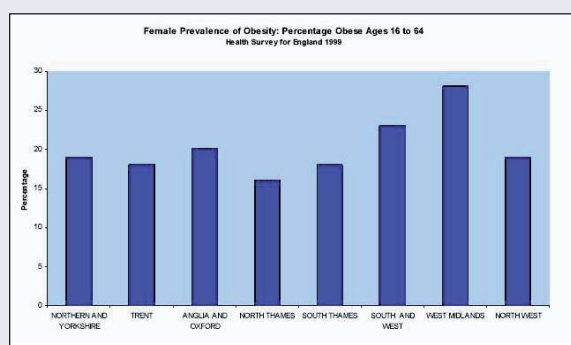
According to the recent national census¹, 1 in 10 people now consider their general health as 'not good'.

The recent Government White Paper², Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation, flags up a commitment to improve the health of the nation and reflects on how our health has changed over the last 100 years.

The main causes of death and reduced quality of life now are circulatory diseases, cancers and respiratory diseases. Modern life is also prone to increased levels of stress and mental illness, together with obesity, which in turn increases the likelihood of developing circulatory and other diseases, such as diabetes. Together these illnesses impact on the economy through lost days at work and direct costs to the health service.



Prevalence of obesity amongst females is highest in this region and amongst males third highest in England³:



Studies have shown that greater physical activity amongst all of the population, but particularly amongst 'at risk' groups, can⁴:

- Halve all causes of mortality
- Halve coronary heart disease
- Halve strokes
- Decrease high blood pressure by 30%
- Halve type II diabetes
- Decrease colon cancer by up to 40%
- Decrease hip/vertebral fractures by 30-50%
- Reduce stress
- Improve mental/social health
- Reduce the risk of falling and fractures

The Walking Your Way to Health Initiative (WHI) has successfully demonstrated ways to encourage people to undertake regular walks as a means of improving health or aiding recovery from illness. (www.whi.org). The Forestry Commission has been actively involved in this initiative in the West Midlands through the Forest Enterprise at Wyre Forest:

Case study: Wyre Forest Stride & Stroll

Rosemary Winnall is Education Manager for the Forest Enterprise at Wyre Forest, near Bewdley. She has worked in partnership with the Wyre Forest District Council and the Wyre Forest Primary Care Trust to set up the **Wyre Forest Stride and Stroll Walks** with funding from the **Walking the Way to Health Initiative** administered by the Countryside Agency. Volunteer walk leaders have been trained and regular health walks set up in the district. As part of this scheme free health walks take place in the Forestry Commission's woodland in Wyre Forest every Tuesday and Sunday throughout the year. These events benefit the participants not just physically, but also socially, mentally and emotionally.

The Wyre Forest Discovery Centre organises a weekly Forest Friends event for pre-school children and their parents or carers. This morning event encourages children to walk in the woods throughout the year. It also helps accompanying adults to meet new people and have fun in the forest with their children.

Rosemary is currently working with a local GP, Dr Malcolm Rigler, and the Brambles Bereavement Trust to develop new initiatives in the field of health promotion and mental health. In 2000 the centre was awarded a Year of the Artist Award for the Forest Heart Project to promote health in the forest through the arts. Sculpture, music, drama and poetry were the media used in the project with the general public and school children from the local rural area and from urban Dudley. As a result there is now a permanent Heart Monitor in the porch at the Wyre Forest Visitor Centre for visitors to check their blood pressure, pulse, height, weight and body mass index (an indicator of obesity).

Project Partners



Forestry Commission Woodlands & Health Pilot

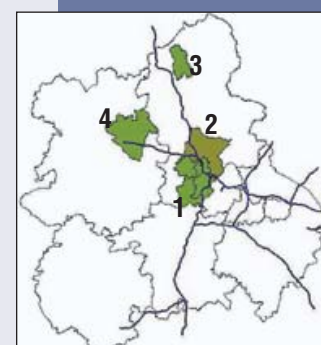
The Forestry Commission West Midlands Conservancy has secured £150 000 to run a woodland based health pilot in the region, linking with the regional WHI. This will pay for promoting and encouraging health-related activity in woodlands. One of the key indicators is people's perception of their own health. In the recent national Census, almost 1 in 10 responded that their health was 'not good'. Therefore the pilot is being targeted at areas in the West Midlands that ranked poorly for general health in the National Census and where there are already some WHI walk groups established. Target areas have also been selected to tie in with existing woodland initiatives that are able to offer support.

The aim is twofold:

- 1 to encourage existing, and new, groups of users to use woodlands in developing a healthier lifestyle, and
- 2 to encourage existing woodland owners within the target areas to link with new and established groups of users and benefit from their experience

The target areas and WHI contacts are shown below:

Woodland Initiative	Local Authority	WM rank	% responding 'not good'	WHI Contact
1 Black Country Urban Forest	Dudley	8	10.0	Gareth Mapp 01952 247161 gareth.mapp@countryside.gov.uk
	Sandwell	2	11.9	Dene Stevens 0121 500 1660 Sandwell Stride dene.stevens@rrt-pct.nhs.uk
	Walsall	4	10.9	Lindsay Broom 0121 360 4740 Walsall Walk On brooml@walsall.gov.uk
	Wolverhampton	3	11.7	Hayley Scott 01902 444601 Wolverhampton Health Action Zone Office hayley.scott@wolvespct.nhs.uk
2 Forest of Mercia	Cannock Chase	7	10.2	Graham Hunt 01543 370737 forest.of.mercia@staffordshire.gov.uk
	Lichfield	24	8.1	
	South Staffordshire	23	8.1	
	Walsall	4	10.9	
3 New Leaf	Stoke on Trent	1	12.8	Gareth Mapp 01952 247161 gareth.mapp@countryside.gov.uk
	Newcastle-under-Lyme	6	10.6	
4 Telford Trees & People	Telford & Wrekin	12	9.3	Stephen Prosser 01952 226013 Walkabout Wrekin jenny.stretton@telford.gov.uk



You can apply for grant if you own or manage woodlands, or are involved in running health walks that could be extended to include woodlands, and can act on behalf of the owner of the woodland. The following sections detail how to apply for the grant, which is administered through the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme.

References

1. National Census 2001, quoted on www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nscl.asp?ID=5014
2. Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation at www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm43/4386/4386-00.htm
3. Health Survey for England 1999
4. Presentation to the West Midlands Multi-disciplinary Public Health Forum July 2002 by Gareth Mapp at www.wmpo.org.uk/information/resources.htm



Woodland & Health Pilot – West Midlands

Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) Rules

DO EXISTING RULES APPLY?

Existing WIG rules apply to a single discretionary payment to encourage health related activity in woodlands or for activities designed to enhance the value of woodland for health related recreation.

WHAT IS THE GRANT FOR?

Work that will help to encourage informal (and formal) health related recreation, linked where possible to a local WHI group. It can be paid to create new health walks or to bring existing walks up to the standard for WHI accreditation - www.whi.org.uk/indexgen.asp?key=fq001298

WHERE WILL THE PROJECT OPERATE?

The pilot will operate only in the West Midlands region.

WHERE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS WILL IT BE TARGETED?

This grant is available in the following areas (see map):

- New Leaf project area
- Telford & Wrekin Unitary
- Forest of Mercia/Walsall MBC
- Black Country Urban Forest (Black Country MBCs)

Suitable proposals outside these target areas may also be eligible, at the discretion of the Forestry Commission, if there is a high demand for health related public access (eg linking with other WHI projects).

WHAT TYPE OF WORK WILL BE ELIGIBLE?

We will give grant for work which will improve health related access to the woodlands, by providing or improving access for groups with specific health problems (eg mental illness, heart disease) or creating or improving access to woodland based activities intended to promote healthy living. Examples include:

- holding community involvement events, eg guided walks, promoting the role of woodlands in healthy living
- producing publicity (leaflets, adverts, etc)
- construction and upgrading of paths (eg improving access for all abilities)
- construction of 'trim trails'
- providing signs and waymarking paths
- removing rubbish
- thinning and small scale felling to encourage access and make views more pleasant
- making the wood safer for the public
- providing seats and picnic areas
- creating car parks
- enhancing the value of the experience for users eg walk leaders courses
- reasonable professional fees for planning and carrying out the work

WHAT PROPORTION OF THE COST CAN BE PAID?

We will agree with you the package of work that needs to be carried out and a reasonable cost for that work. The WIG payment will be between 50-100% of the agreed cost of the work to a maximum payment of £30,000 for each separate project.

HOW WILL YOU KNOW WHAT PROPORTION OF COSTS WE WILL PAY?

Applications will be scored against a set of public benefit criteria (see scoring form): lower scoring applications will be funded closer to the lower end of the range, higher scoring applications at the higher end. Once your application has been assessed, we will write to you to inform you what proportion of grant you will receive and invite you to confirm that you wish to proceed.

IS THERE A TIME LIMIT?

Funds are limited to the financial year April 2003-March 2004 and work must be undertaken and your claim submitted by 28 February 2004.



DO I NEED TO USE SIGNS?

We will expect you to put up signs that clearly show that people are welcome to walk in the woodland. We can give you guidance on what is required and provide some suitable signs as part of our Walkers Welcome initiative.

HOW CAN I LET PEOPLE KNOW THAT THE WOODLAND IS OPEN?

You must tell us your plans for letting people know that your woodland is open to the public, for example by providing leaflets or articles in local papers. It may be appropriate to hold community involvement events to encourage people to use the woodlands and explain what is available.

DO I NEED TO PUT IN A CARPARK?

It must be easy for people to visit the woodland. Often there may need to be safe car parking close by. If you plan to build a new car park, or a new access on to a public road, you should discuss this with the local planning authority.

CAN I MAKE A CHARGE?

We can only pay WIG if you allow the public free access on foot. However, you can make charges where special facilities or services are provided, but we don't expect you to charge for providing all ability access. You may carry out other activities in the woodland so long as these do not interfere with free public access. We will agree when you can close off access for a short time for woodland management.

How do I apply?

This WIG project will be available for a limited period. Because funds are limited applications will be accepted on a "first come - first served" basis.

Which form do I need?

You must complete the WGS1 & 2 Application and Proposals Forms and the Scoring Form. You must also give detailed information about your plans for giving access to the woodland. The larger the woodland, the more information we will expect you to provide. We will use this to draw up a WGS contract with you.

You will need to apply for the health WIG work as a separate application to other work you might wish to undertake in your woodlands.

When can I claim?

You should claim the grant as a lump sum when you have completed all, or the major part, of the work agreed in the Contract. We will require you to claim by 28 February 2004. You must do all the work agreed and maintain the recreation facilities to our reasonable satisfaction. We will expect you to allow free public access to your woodland for not less than 10 years. During this period you may apply for Annual Management Grant payments for the maintenance work on the recreation facilities.

You will need to complete and submit a Monitoring Report along with your final claim.

These details, the Scoring Form and the Monitoring Report are available online at www.forestry.gov.uk/health

Where can I get more information?

If you are interested in applying you should check with your local FC office that your woodland lies in a suitable area and whether we are still accepting applications.

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