

Our ambition is to strengthen the connections between people and nature. We want to see every child in England given the opportunity to experience and learn about the natural environment.

Natural Environment White Paper - June 2011

Vision for the Forestry Commission learning strategy

To enable **everyone, everywhere**, to **connect** with the nation's trees and forests so that they **understand** their importance and the role of the Forestry Commission in their management, and **act** positively to safeguard forests for the future.

The aim of the Forestry Commission's new national learning strategy is:

to provide a clear direction and purpose for learning on the public forest estate in England

The strategy consists of:

- this summary document, providing an overview of the strategy for internal and external stakeholders
- a national learning plan, which provides the detail needed by FC staff to deliver the strategy
- district learning plans, which outline how the strategy will be implemented around England.



Learning with the Forestry Commission in England

Past

For many years, the Forestry Commission has provided high quality learning experiences for people of all ages. The quantity and type of learning provision has varied greatly across England, dependent on the resources available in terms of staff, equipment and suitable sites.

Much of the learning activity has been in the form of traditional ranger-led direct delivery of programmes such as shelterbuilding, habitat and wildlife discovery, environmental art and sensory exploration. Forestry Commission staff have also been responsible for the delivery of family events programmes, Forest School projects and guided walks and talks. In recent years, staff at some sites have begun to offer other modes of delivery including self-led trails, and work in partnership with other providers in order to reach wider audiences.

Present

Learning teams covering the Forestry Commission's South, West, East and Central Districts are based at learning centres (Alice Holt, Bedgebury, Cannock, Sherwood Pines, Westonbirt Arboretum and Wyre). The other two districts (North and Yorkshire) have designated rangers with a particular responsibility for overseeing learning activity. In addition, a new post of national learning officer has been created to co-ordinate learning activity across the public forest estate in England. Several other staff around the country devote varying proportions of their time and work to the provision of learning opportunities, both formal and informal.

The public forest estate provides high quality educational opportunities, and we are looking at ways in which we can make it even more readily available and attractive to groups as a learning location and resource through developing a more facilitated approach and a new education strategy.

Government Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement - January 2013

Future

Through this strategy, we want to encourage everyone, everywhere to connect with trees and their local forest, by providing a wide variety of learning opportunities, not just at our learning centres but at forests and woodlands across the country.

Learning in and about the forest will be made more accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ability or location. Schools and other groups, families and individuals will be encouraged to make use of Forestry Commission learning opportunities.

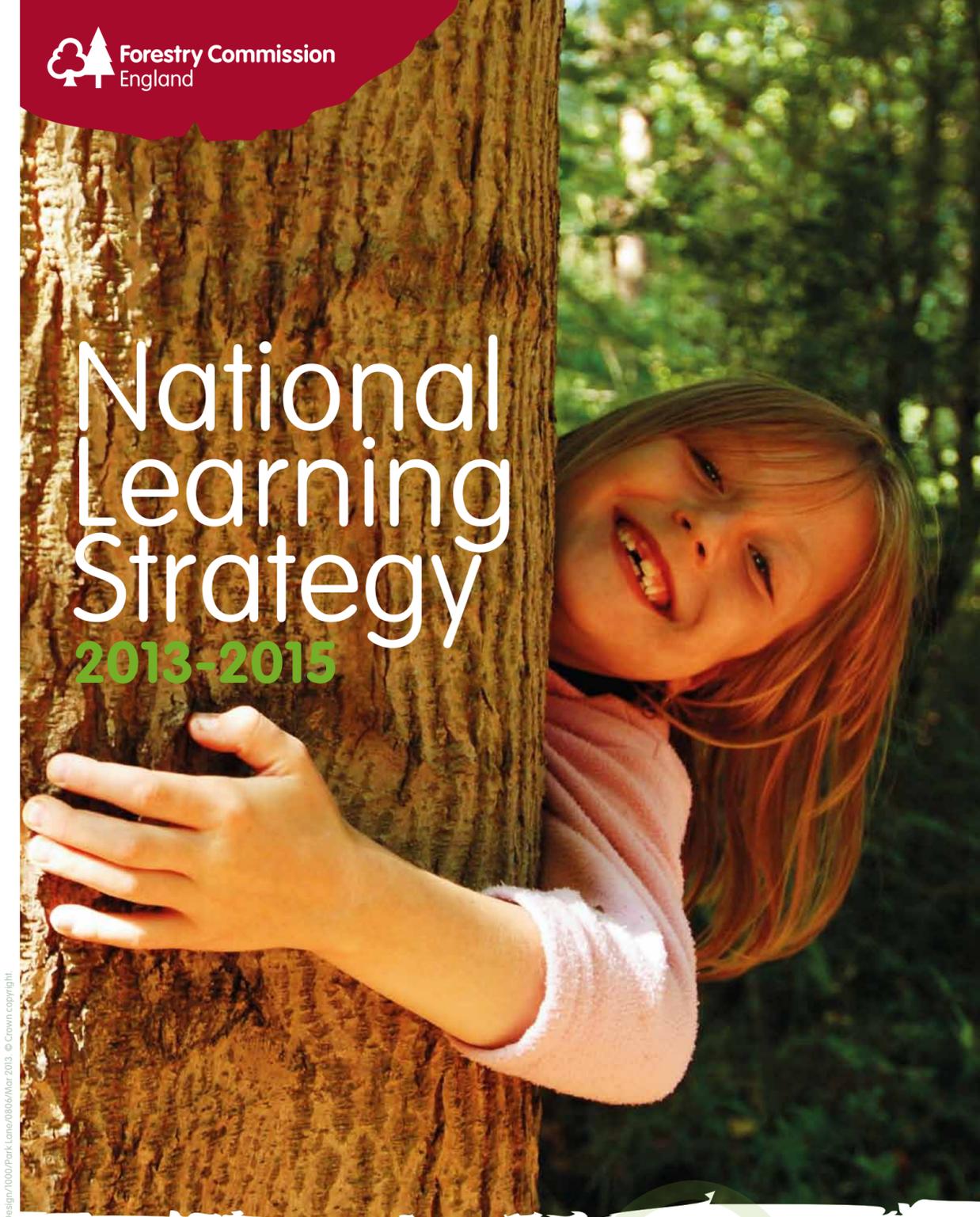
Our provision will focus on learning messages, about the importance of trees and forests, how they are managed and about how people can enjoy and safeguard them.

If you need this publication in large print or in another language please contact the Diversity Team.
Tel 0131 314 6575
Email diversity@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

For more information about learning opportunities on the public forest estate in England, please email learning.England@forestry.gsi.gov.uk or visit forestry.gov.uk/england-learning



National Learning Strategy 2013-2015



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Your forest is cared for by the Forestry Commission for people, wildlife and timber

Learning
in your Forest

England's Forests

The **public forest estate** in England is managed by the Forestry Commission and is made up of more than 1500 forests and woods.

Among these forests are 40 key sites, with visitor centres, events programmes, cafes, play areas, and cycling and walking trails. Facilities at hundreds of other smaller sites include picnic tables and toilets, seasonal refreshments, car parking and miles and miles of trails for people to explore.

Some sites have hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, while others are used mainly by local walkers.

The Forestry Commission also manages a number of internationally important tree collections and arboreta.



Definition of a learning activity

Forests are wonderful places to learn, and every visit can be a learning experience. However, for the purposes of this strategy, where we want to evaluate progress towards achieving our vision, a learning activity is defined as:

an activity in which the primary aim is to increase knowledge and understanding of trees and forests, with particular emphasis on promoting the themes within our learning message.



Forestry Commission National Learning Strategy 2013-2015

Our vision is: to enable **everyone, everywhere**, to **connect** with the nation's trees and forests so that they **understand** their importance and the role of the Forestry Commission in their management, and **act** positively to safeguard forests for the future.

Forestry Commission England's learning message

The purpose of the learning message is to describe what is special and unique about the trees and public forests in England and the way they are managed sustainably (to UK Forestry Standards) by the Forestry Commission.

Our trees and forests are essential for people, wildlife and the green economy.

They are for... ..recreation...learning... communities...health...habitats... biodiversity...timber... jobs...sustainability... climate change...tree collections... research...aesthetic value...

The unique way the Forestry Commission manages them on behalf of the nation will ensure they remain so for the future.

Learning opportunities

The Forestry Commission's national learning plan explains how we will create a wide variety of opportunities, through which schools, groups, families and individuals will be able to engage with, and learn about, trees and forests.

Learning opportunities will include:

- **Self-guided learning** – leaflets, worksheets and resource packs will be provided so that learners can follow trails by themselves, learning about the forest on the way
- **Downloadable resources** – activity ideas to download before a visit
- **Local woods for local groups** – establishment of sites in the forest for local schools and other community groups to use
- **Curriculum-linked school visits and activity sessions for other groups** – led by Forestry Commission staff, partner organisations and volunteers
- **Teacher / leader training** – to enable teachers and leaders to plan self-guided visits to the forest with confidence
- **Work experience and graduate training programmes** – to highlight potential career opportunities within the forestry sector, and to raise awareness among student teachers of the benefits of outdoor learning
- **Innovative interpretation** – including use of modern technology such as QR codes, apps and podcasts
- **Public events** – led by Forestry Commission staff, partner organisations, volunteers

Actions and priorities

The Forestry Commission's national learning plan identifies a number of actions, which set out how we will achieve our vision.

We will:

- maintain and expand the Forestry Commission's **excellent reputation** as a provider of high quality environmental education activities;
- identify who our **customers** are and work to ensure that they all have access to learning opportunities;
- identify **specialised learning topics** and activities to be delivered by Forestry Commission learning teams at main learning centres;
- encourage **third party professional environmental educators** and other **partners** to offer learning opportunities on the public forest estate;
- develop, promote and evaluate **self-led opportunities** for schools, groups, families and individuals;
- extend learning provision to **smaller woodlands** and the schools and communities who may wish to use them;
- develop and promote a nationally recognised **brand** for Forestry Commission learning;
- **monitor and evaluate** in order to ensure that the learning provision meets the needs of our customers;
- provide **value for money** to our customers, while aiming to make learning activities financially sustainable.

Monitoring and evaluation

The purpose of the monitoring and evaluation process is to evaluate our progress towards the vision for the strategy. We will concentrate on gathering the following quantitative and qualitative data:

everyone...

...diversity information about participants (age, ethnic background, disability etc)

everywhere...

...number (and location) of learning opportunities on the public forest estate

connect...

... number of people who participate in a learning activity on the public forest estate and their satisfaction

understand...

...number of people who understand our learning message following a learning activity

act...

...number of people who want to find out more about forests, or who return to the forest for a future visit

