

***National Forest Company contribution to  
Protect, Improve, Expand  
2013 -2014***

**What we set out to do**

The National Forest Company (NFC) has continued to successfully lead the creation of The National Forest during 2013. In line with the Government's Forestry and Woodland Policy Statement, the NFC planned to contribute widely and meaningfully in many areas around Protect, Improve and Expand agenda. These included:

- Increasing forest cover (woodland and other habitats)
- Increasing management of woodlands
- Tree health
- Developing the woodland economy and local timber markets
- Community engagement
- Developing the visitor economy and recreation

**Achievements**

A broad range of achievements were met whilst set against very tough conditions in the local land market and whilst balancing value for money in all that we do. Significant achievements to note include:

- 138ha of new Forest sites were created in the year
- A systematic approach to woodland management was instigated, with a Woodland Management Grant established, 20 landowners entering into woodland management as a consequence
- GIS recording of known tree diseases in the Forest
- The Forest's visitor economy is now worth £315m per annum largely based on the emerging forested landscape
- Community interest in management of woodlands was tested and developed

Further details can be viewed from the NFC's business plan summary of achievements paper (sent via email as an appendix).

**Lessons learned for the future**

On reflection, the successes and achievements realised through the first year of the NFC's Woodland Management Grant has highlighted how receptive woodland owners can be towards woodland management when they are personally encouraged and guided through the process. We believe that direct contact and a non-bureaucratic process are key to encourage management.

- Forest creation continued to be challenging in the year when set against ever increasing land values and competition for land
- Baseline figures obtained in the year found that 54% of mature woodlands in the Forest were unmanaged and needed to become a focus for engagement
- 1,550 hectares of woodland is between 15 and 24 years of age and approaching the critical first thinning phase

- Ash dieback was confirmed in the Forest and NFC is continuing to work closely with Forest research and Forestry Commission. Recording and monitoring of outbreaks will be increasingly important
- Squirrel management needs to be a focus in the coming years in line with increasing woodland management