

# MARCHES TIMBER STUDY

## Building the Evidence Base for a 'Woodland Enterprise Zone'<sup>1</sup>

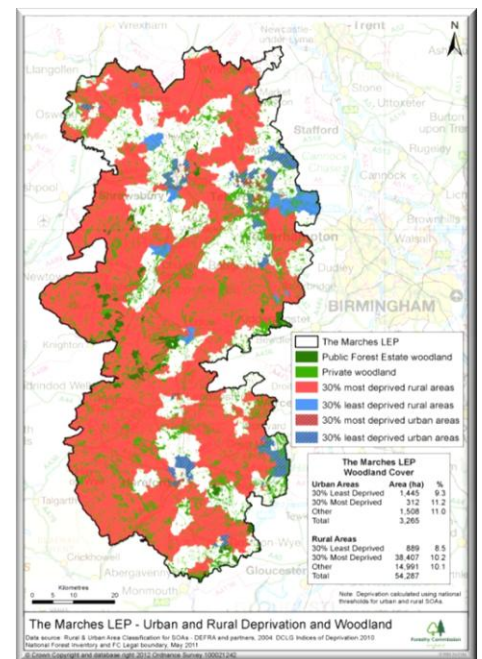
### The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to provide up to date information and a realistic and cohesive case in support of two linked aims (a) to assess and define the requirements of enhanced economic growth and job creation via woodland and timber to identify the 'offer', the opportunities and any barriers to achieving them and (b) utilise this to engage with the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership<sup>2</sup> including to help test and develop the Independent Panel on Forestry's 'woodland enterprise zone'<sup>3</sup> concept and its potential for helping advance greater local economic resilience, economic growth and employment.

The Marches has approximately 57,000ha of woodland (50% of the West Midlands total), much of it located in and around areas of nationally significant levels of rural deprivation. A significant percentage of this woodland is thought to be undermanaged and therefore underutilised economically. By identifying this unrealised potential and by fostering new and growing markets the aim is to make more effective use of the Marches' timber resource, adding value and thus creating jobs throughout the supply chain and fostering economic growth and innovation within the area.

### Principal Tasks

1. Establish a baseline position for harvesting, processing capacity and economic contribution for the Marches timber sector
2. identify the under-managed timber harvest potential
3. building on existing work, audit current supply chain activity, identify key players operating in and around the Marches and bring this information together in a usable and accessible way
4. identify all current wood and timber processing potential in, and drawing from, the Marches and their current and future plans, including under a 'non-intervention' scenario
5. identify key current and potential new end uses and markets in and around the Marches
6. quantify the current and potential future value of the timber resource in the Marches in financial and carbon terms, with particular reference to currently undermanaged woodlands<sup>4</sup>
7. examine the current and potential role of the Public Forest Estate (PFE)<sup>5</sup> in the Marches
8. identify any barriers and potential gaps and opportunities in the market and recommendations on how to exploit these, drawing on examples from elsewhere
9. develop a cohesive and credible plan to build jobs and growth opportunities for wood products in the Marches
10. stress test the proposal with stakeholders as a 'reality check' to test deliverability



### Timeframe

The study commenced on 6 Sept 2012 and is due to complete by 31 Dec 2012.

### Funding and Oversight

Funding for the study has been provided by Forestry Commission England. The study will be managed by the Forestry Commission with oversight provided by members of the West Midlands Forestry Forum.



<sup>1</sup> Independent Panel on Forestry final report: "Local Enterprise Partnerships should work together to bid for funding support from the Regional Growth Fund, and other Government or EU funding sources, to invest in the wood industry supply chain. This would enable them to develop woodland enterprise zones in areas where there are opportunities for a revitalised woodland economy to help create jobs in rural areas." Government plans to respond to the Panel's recommendations in January 2013.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.marcheslep.org.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 1 above

<sup>4</sup> To be derived from the Forestry Commission National Forest Inventory

<sup>5</sup> The PFE is the area of woodland managed by the Forestry Commission