



THE NATIONAL  
FOREST



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delivering *the* strategy

THE NATIONAL FOREST 2004 > 2014

# Contents

## Concise Strategy

1	Introduction	1
2	Forest Creation	2
3	Landscape	5
4	Biodiversity	5
5	Access, Sport and Recreation	6
6	Historic Environment	7
7	Community Participation	8
8	Regeneration and the Economy	8
9	Agriculture	9
10	Tourism	10
11	Minerals	11
12	Planning	12
13	Transport	12
14	Research and Monitoring	13

## Delivering the Strategy

1	Introduction	14
2	Principles of Implementation	14
3	The National Forest Company	14
4	Key Tasks and Means of Achievement	15
5	Direct Action by the NFC	16
6	Indirect/Partnership Action	18
7	Summary	21

## Appendices

1	Delivering the Strategy - Summary	22
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## 1 Introduction

This is a summary of the second National Forest Strategy which covers the second decade of the creation of the Forest, 2004 – 2014. It is the result of a thorough audit and review of the original Strategy published in 1994 and a nation-wide consultation on the draft, revised Strategy. Like its predecessor it provides a framework for the continuing creation of the Forest rather than a site-specific blueprint. The update is now necessary as a result of the major changes already brought about by the Forest itself and the evolving policy and land use context within which it is developing.

### *The Vision*

It is not the intention to alter radically the overall vision depicted in the original Strategy. Nor is it proposed that the boundary should be changed; the Forest stretches over 200 square miles, linking the remnant ancient forests of Needwood and Charnwood. As it grows it will create a new forested landscape framing a mosaic of farms, open land, towns and villages, for the pleasure of all and great benefit to the community, environment and economy.

### **The main objectives are to:**

- create a coherent and identifiable new entity known as The National Forest;
- transform the area through a purposeful conversion of land use on a significant scale and at an exceptional rate;
- be a recognisable forest – by expanding wooded cover from 6% to about one-third of the area;
- enrich a diversity of landscapes and wildlife habitats;
- be enjoyable, welcoming and accessible for all;
- involve communities in the Forest's creation;
- stimulate and add value to social and economic development;
- be a working forest – contributing to national timber supplies and biofuels/biomass;
- be sustainable – environmentally, economically and socially;
- be geographically diverse and sensitive to landscape, natural and cultural history and
- help to integrate urban and rural environments.

### *The principles*

### **The creation of The National Forest should continue to:**

- have sustainable development at the heart of its philosophy;
- be a project of national significance fulfilling a wide range of Government policy objectives;
- be implemented through voluntary participation involving a range of incentives – with the Government-sponsored, non-statutory National Forest Company (NFC) acting as the catalyst and enabler;
- involve people of all abilities, ages and social and economic backgrounds in its creation and enjoyment;
- be promoted and marketed as an exemplar of new ideas and best practice as well as an exciting new visitor destination and
- be monitored in terms of its environmental, social and economic impact and for posterity; and as a basis for demonstrating best practice in terms of sustainable development.

## 2 Forest Creation

The Forest is creating a major new wooded environment where new trees and woodlands make a significant contribution to enriching landscapes and wildlife habitats; stimulating a new woodland-related economy; providing for recreation, tourism and community involvement; and contributing to global environmental objectives such as reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Wooded cover has already been more than doubled from 6% (3,012 ha) to 14.3% (7,189 ha) with over 5 million trees having been planted on 4,177 ha of new land (31/3/03).

### *Tree Planting and Woodland Creation*

- The overall target of achieving about a third wooded cover - comprising mixed, multi-purpose woodland with open-ground habitats, recreation sites and parkland - will be retained. Over the life of the Forest this will require a further 10 million trees on 9,377 ha.
- This target will be reviewed towards the end of the next 10-year period, when wooded cover should be approaching 22 - 25%. Public consultation will then be carried out to test acceptable levels of planting as the woodlands become more apparent in the landscape.
- For the next 10 years a new aspirational target will be set of 4,000 - 5,000 hectares of Forest creation. Over 75% of this will be on agricultural land. The target will be reviewed in 2009.

As parts of the Forest approach optimal planting levels, tree planting will increasingly be related to need and planting potential in the landscape. The appropriate scale and design of tree planting will continue to be encouraged according to landscape character, environmental constraints and visual impact.

- A wide range of types of planting will continue to be encouraged, including new farm woodlands, commercial plantations, community woods, urban forestry, development-related planting, conservation woodlands, plus regeneration of hedgerow and parkland trees.
- Woodland creation will be encouraged with regard to the planting areas on Map 4 (for planting options related to each area refer to the full Strategy document). The Indicative Planting areas will be reviewed at regular intervals dependent upon the take up of new planting schemes.

The aim of Forest planting is to create a diverse forest of predominantly broadleaved character. The majority of woodlands will be either broadleaved or a mixture of broadleaves and conifers.

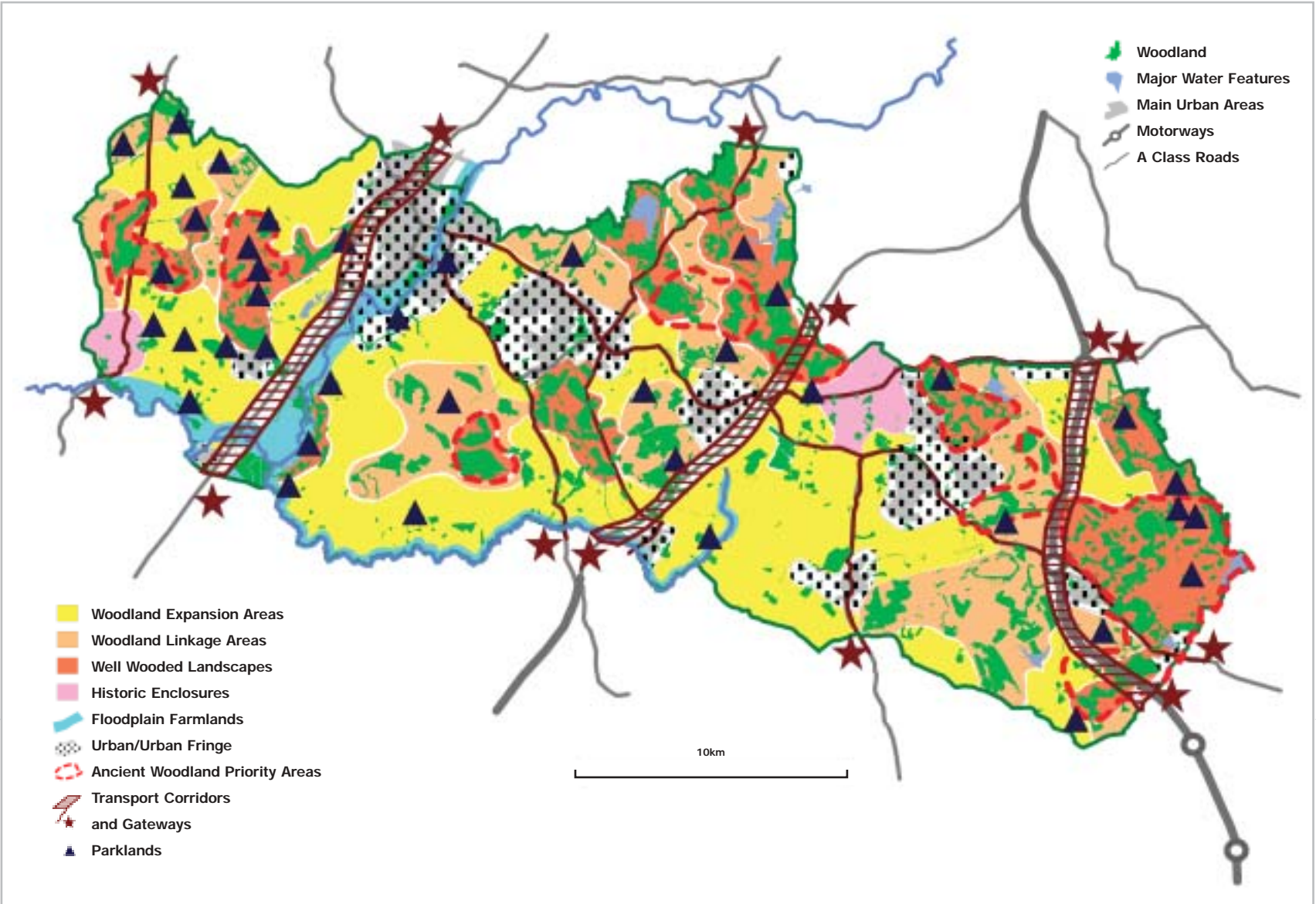
- In the short term the original proposed mix of 60% broadleaves to 40% conifers will be retained although this will be reviewed in the medium term (once the impacts of the new English Woodland Grant Scheme and CAP reforms have been established) given the fact that at the end of the first decade the ratio, in practice, was 84% broadleaved to 16% conifer.

### *Woodland Management*

Woodland management will be encouraged to grow high quality timber, to develop the local woodland economy and for conservation and amenity reasons. In these interests the NFC and its partners will:

- undertake research to identify unmanaged mature woodlands and assess their management options and timber potential;
- make available advice on drawing up and fulfilling management plans for newly-planted woods;

Map 4 Indicative Planting Areas



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- give assistance in the development of a forestry and rural skills base for the Forest area;
- provide specific advice and assistance towards the sensitive management of Ancient Woodlands;
- identify demonstration woodlands as a means of spreading best management practices;
- raise the profile of the Forest's valuable ancient trees, by commissioning survey work to identify their location and condition and promoting best management practice for landowners;
- promote best management practice for the control of wildlife pests and injurious weeds;
- promote National Forest fire guidance to woodland owners and
- disseminate best practice and experience arising from forestry initiatives in The National Forest within and outside the Forest.

### *Area-based strategies*

- Building on the success of a number of area-based strategies in the first decade, further such strategies will be considered for:
  - Urban/urban fringe forestry.
  - Woodlands located in the central 'heart of The National Forest' including the proposed Park around CONKERS Discovery Centre.
  - Ancient Woodlands.

### *Woodland Economy*

The National Forest offers a long-term opportunity to grow high quality timber and develop a new woodland economy centred on the Forest area and contributing to regional and national markets. The stimulation of the market will require concerted effort but is vital as a means of encouraging essential woodland management. This new woodland economy will be part of the broader Forest-related economy embracing tourism, leisure, farm diversification and rural business development.

In addition to co-ordinating and assisting marketing and promotion effort, and stimulating partnership working the NFC will, specifically:

- prime the establishment of a National Forest-focused Wood Marketing Association;
- commission research to assess the current and planned timber resource and establish systems to monitor timber potential and
- encourage the use of wood as a renewable energy resource by using woodland thinnings and short rotation coppice as wood fuel.

### *Climate change and Carbon sequestration*

A better understanding of the impacts of climate change on woodland and its future management is required, both by private owners and national and international organisations. The Forest also has an important symbolic role to play in helping to fix carbon dioxide in the atmosphere through woodland planting but more research is required. The NFC can contribute by:

- working with relevant partners to produce best practice advice for owners on managing the possible effects of climate change on trees and woodlands;
- contributing to national research by encouraging monitoring of tree growth, health and condition in a sample of mature and newly-planted woodlands and
- commissioning research to assess the carbon sequestration progress and future potential of the Forest and developing a framework for long-term monitoring.

### 3 Landscape

The National Forest is dramatically changing the landscape of its 200 square mile area. Nevertheless it remains fundamental that its creation continues to respect and enhance the existing diverse character of the landscape.

The original Strategy identified 6 Landscape Character Areas and 6 landscape types. The Character Areas coincide with the national Countryside Character Map of England produced by the Countryside Agency. The Forest's landscape assessment also relates to county-based assessments undertaken by Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire County Councils. In 2004 the landscape assessment was updated in response to woodland and habitat creation having dramatically changed parts of the Forest landscape.

#### As a consequence:

- The National Forest landscape character framework will continue to guide the Forest's creation. (*Forest Design Guidance according to Landscape Character is included at Appendix 3 of the full Strategy document*).
- The National Forest landscape character areas will be re-named to reflect the national terminology and will become –
  - Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands (formerly Needwood).
  - Trent Valley Washlands (Trent Valley).
  - Mease and Sence Lowlands (Mease Lowlands).
  - Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield (Midland Coalfield).
  - Melbourne Parklands (Calke Uplands).
  - Charnwood.
- The NFC will use its grant mechanisms to develop Forest related schemes which add to the character and quality of the Forest's landscapes.

#### Landscape change

Assessing and monitoring the overall scale of landscape change and its acceptability, will be vital, particularly in those areas where several woodlands coalesce to make a significant impact on an area. Whilst accepting that some landscapes are capable of absorbing more planting than others, it is important that there is a spread of woodland across the Forest and to avoid an over-domination in certain areas. To inform this process the NFC will:

- consult residents and the visiting public on optimum levels of tree planting;
- develop GIS-based systems to assess, monitor and demonstrate the landscape effects of the Forest's creation and
- commission research to assess the landscape effects of new planting and habitat creation across the Forest landscape zones.

### 4 Biodiversity

Biodiversity – the variety of life on earth – is central to the Forest's creation and its sustainable growth and development. The knitting together of some 19,000 ha of new and existing woodlands, hedgerows, meadows, heathlands and wetlands offers a rare opportunity to create landscape-scale biodiversity change. Not only will this bring interest and pleasure to present and future generations, it will attract and support thousands of more common wildlife species as well as declining and rare species and help redress the loss of habitats the area has suffered in the past. The NFC and its partners will therefore ensure that:

- wildlife sites and protected species will continue to be safeguarded;

- The National Forest area Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) will continue to provide the focus for habitat and species conservation action;
- biodiversity will be maximised in accord with English Nature's Natural Areas framework and
- biodiversity change will be monitored as an important aspect of the Forest's sustainable development.

**To further the goals for biodiversity, the NFC will:**

- promote and encourage habitat management through its own grant mechanisms and by targeting those mechanisms operated by other organisations;
- within new woodlands, encourage woodland flora habitat creation to demonstrate and promote best practice;
- encourage the creation of new habitats through its own grant schemes, agri-environment schemes, restoration of mineral, landfill and derelict sites, development landscaping and riverside improvements;
- in partnership, promote best practice through demonstration projects;
- with conservation partners, periodically review the BAP habitat and species to target for conservation action;
- encourage the production of a Geodiversity Action Plan for the Forest area;
- encourage and support the development of urban wildlife projects;
- encourage and support the promotion of greater public awareness of biodiversity and involvement in nature conservation projects;
- with conservation partners, develop a local provenance flora policy and promote its use in biodiversity schemes;
- encourage appropriate sites to be submitted as Local Nature Reserves;
- work with partners to help improve the condition of designated wildlife sites and
- encourage and support ecological monitoring work.

## 5 Access, Sport and Recreation

Creating a welcoming and accessible Forest is a top priority. The aim is to develop a major new resource for public access and recreation that will appeal to local residents, day visitors and longer-staying visitors. It will provide a diverse range of high-quality recreation and sporting experiences based on outdoor activity. These will contribute greatly towards health and fitness promotion and the Government's sustainability objective of 'a countryside for all to enjoy'.

High priority will be given to securing access to Forest sites in perpetuity, whilst recognising the value of permissive public access and its acceptability to the private landowner.

**In the pursuit of these objectives the NFC will:**

- promote land acquisition to develop Forest sites that provide access in perpetuity;
- encourage access to Forest schemes developed on restored mineral and derelict land and linked with built developments;
- encourage the dedication of land for access in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;
- explore options for retaining access on National Forest Tender Scheme sites when their contract periods expire;
- encourage the continued development of a systematic programme to improve, maintain, waymark and promote Rights of Way; and encourage the dedication of new Rights of Way;

- continue to work with partners to develop a Forest-wide network of short walks and to complete and promote the medium distance trails network;
- facilitate the development and promotion of a National Forest long distance path;
- work to co-ordinate the implementation of the Forest-wide Cycling Strategy;
- co-ordinate the development and implementation of a National Forest horse-riding strategy;
- encourage the development of multi-use trails;
- encourage site owners to provide all-abilities access and promote the opportunities available;
- evaluate with key partners the benefits of Forest-branded waymarking of Rights of Way and trails;
- encourage the development of sites for a range of water sports;
- help to develop new land and air-based sport and recreation activities;
- support the identification and development of suitable new venues for motor sports and
- promote and raise awareness of the sport and recreation opportunities in the Forest.

## 6 Historic Environment

The National Forest area has a rich historic environment which the Forest will help protect and enhance. Through its creation the Forest will also add a whole new layer of landscape history.

### **Respecting the area's heritage is fundamental to creating the Forest. Thus:**

- through the Forestry Commission woodland grants scheme process, it will be ensured that new woodlands avoid damaging or obscuring archaeological remains or unduly affecting the historic character of the landscape.

### **Furthermore the NFC will:**

- use its own grant schemes to encourage the inclusion of heritage features in Forest projects;
- encourage the siting, design and management of new woodlands to respect the setting of historic sites;
- encourage the restoration and management of historic parklands;
- encourage local authorities to bid for funding to renovate public parks;
- encourage local authorities to include policies within their Development Plans for the restoration of built heritage features and the re-use of historic buildings for Forest-related uses;
- encourage interpretation and public access to heritage sites through its own grant schemes and the work of other organisations;
- work with partners to develop GIS-based archaeological records and
- encourage and support historic landscape character assessment work.

In order to capture the new 'heritage in the making' that is underway with the creation of The National Forest, the NFC is carrying out a major three-year project (commenced 2003), funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The LANDshapes project will record and celebrate the diverse history of the area and tell the story, with the help of its resident community, of the evolution of what is now The National Forest.

## 7 Community Participation

Community participation in the Forest is vital as the Forest's success depends upon continued public support and enthusiasm for it both locally and nationally. Participation contributes to public enjoyment and understanding of the Forest, environmental education and lifelong learning and health promotion. It is also an important part of raising awareness of The National Forest.

Essential to this is the continuation of an all-inclusive approach to community involvement. This includes all socio-economic groups and people of all abilities and ages. Special efforts are being made to involve minority interests including ethnic minorities, disabled and inner city communities.

Local community involvement remains a high priority, to foster a sense of ownership and pride and to harness voluntary activity. However, there is an increasing need to encourage more regional and national participation to develop the concept of 'a Forest for the nation'.

### **In order to stimulate this widespread involvement the NFC will:**

- aim to continually improve ways to engage local communities, including researching local residents views on the impacts of the Forest's creation;
- encourage and support Forest-related community projects, activities and events;
- encourage participation in the Forest's creation by local communities, visitors and public supporters from around the country;
- encourage and support volunteer involvement in woodland schemes and other Forest-related projects – including working with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers to expand the volunteering programme;
- encourage and support the expansion of the 'Walking the Way to Health' Scheme;
- encourage, support and seek outside funding for Forest-related initiatives that contribute towards health promotion and healthy living;
- use its grant schemes to support the involvement of young people in the creation and educational use of the Forest;
- encourage sustainable growth in educational visits to Forest-related education centres and woodlands offering educational access;
- support the work of the Education Cluster Group and promote environmental education facilities through its Group Visits Guide;
- undertake joint working with Universities and colleges on collaborative projects;
- use its grant schemes to encourage and support Forest-related arts initiatives and
- continue to promote the Forest to a wide range of communities of interest using a variety of techniques.

## 8 Regeneration and the Economy

The National Forest is already beginning to make a significant contribution to the local economy through the creation of new Forest-related jobs, particularly linked to tourism, leisure and the woodland economy; development of new skills training; and the creation of a more attractive environment for business growth and inward investment. Indeed economic change in the Forest area has been more rapid than was envisaged in the original Forest Strategy. Socio-economic studies confirm that the Forest's creation has been a significant factor in this.

Nevertheless notable socio-economic problems remain and new opportunities generated by the Forest itself need to be understood and seized.

**The NFC must focus primarily on the physical creation of the Forest. However, it is also well placed to spur others on to act together to maximise the economic and social benefits of creating the Forest. To do so, it will:**

- seek to maximise the economic development potential of the Forest through joint working, especially at regional, sub-regional and county levels;
- draw up and regularly review a strategy and action plan to develop the Forest-related economy (including wood products, wood fuel energy development, tourism and leisure);
- continue to support targeted regeneration programmes aimed at addressing pockets of economic and social deprivation in the Forest area;
- encourage town centre improvement and management programmes which support tourism development and offer opportunities to promote and market the Forest;
- encourage the provision of training and business development programmes for local people, to address the particular needs and opportunities arising from the Forest's development and
- undertake regular monitoring of the economic and social impact of The National Forest.

## 9 Agriculture

Farmers and farmland remain key to the Forest's future development. Even with around a third of the area planted with trees, substantial tracts will remain in some form of agricultural land management with farmers continuing to have an important land management role. Agri-environment schemes will help meet the Forest's biodiversity targets and encourage new public access. Unprecedented opportunities exist for landowners to help fulfil the multiplicity of Forest objectives through diversification into forestry, recreation, tourism and environmental initiatives.

Changes to the support for agriculture and rural land-based activities, notably the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) could work either to the advantage or disadvantage of the Forest's creation. Much of the detail remains to be established and assessed as it is implemented. What is clear is that there will be continuing change in the structure, pattern and profitability of farming and a growing need for farmers to find other sources of income and, in many cases, new uses for their land.

**In order to assist farmers to take what opportunities there are in the new order and in The National Forest in particular, the NFC will:**

- encourage farm diversification to woodland, sport, recreation, farm tourism, Forest-related business and biodiversity uses;
- promote The National Forest as a venue for trialing and developing farm diversification best practice;
- develop, with partners, business advice and support networks to assist Forest-related farm diversification;
- encourage the development of training for landowners to support diversification and
- encourage the involvement of tenant farmers in the Forest's creation.

## 10 Tourism

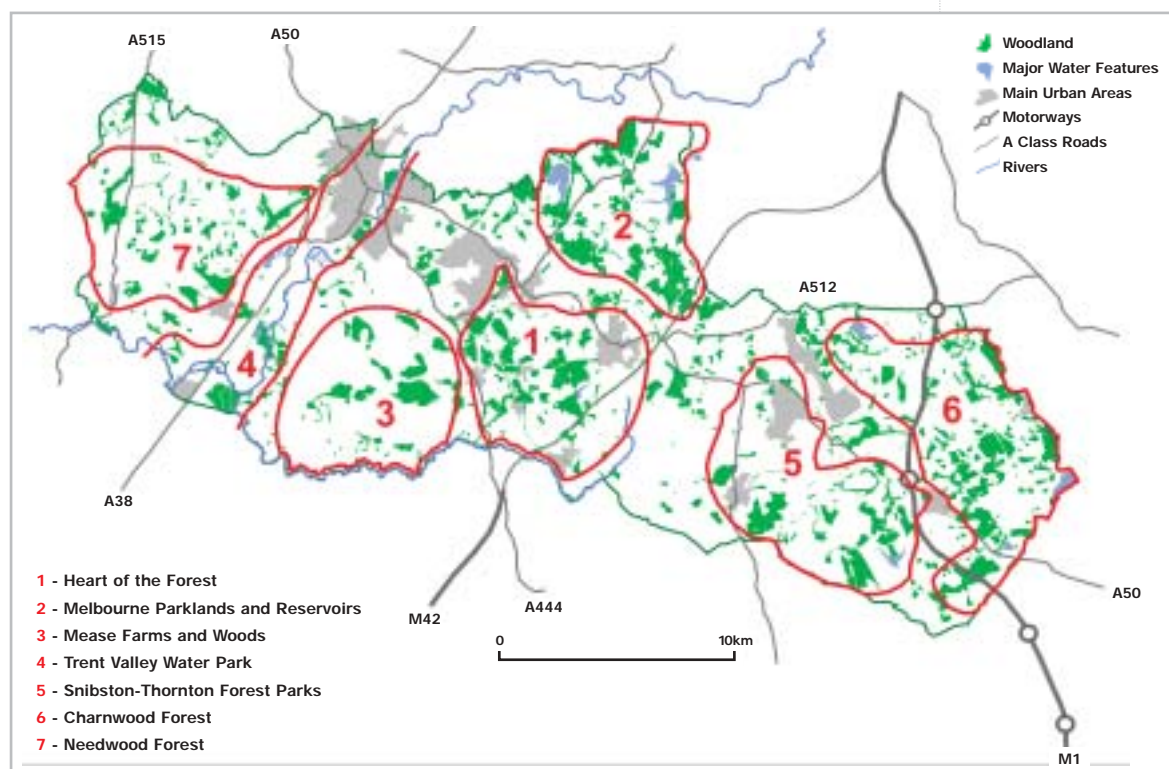
The Forest area is developing far faster than predicted into a major new tourism resource. Based on the growing range of visitor attractions and opportunities for outdoor activities, tourism in the Forest is set to grow in the next decade. Existing tourism attractions will blend with new Forest attractions and a growing and changing network of new woodlands, trails and sport and recreation facilities.

The Forest will be developed as an exemplar of sustainable tourism offering the highest quality standards. It will need to be based upon developing easy and sustainable access both to the Forest area and within it.

Developing a strong National Forest brand is essential for 'growing' the tourism product and marketing it to visitors. The unique selling point is the sheer scale and planned diversity of what the Forest has to offer together with its ever-changing environment. Visitors can come and see, enjoy, learn about and literally help create this new 'Forest in the making'.

### **In order to fulfil these aspirations, the NFC and its partners will:**

- develop the National Forest tourism product around specified themes relating to the special facilities and attractions it has to offer;
- encourage regular site maintenance audits for woodlands with public access to maintain high standards of visitor welcome;
- give priority to ensuring sustainable growth and development of visitor attractions and assessing, with site owners, the suitability of certain attractions as Forest 'gateways';
- encourage phased and careful expansion of a wide range of high-quality, inspected accommodation, appropriate to its setting;
- encourage private owners to create new visitor access to historic places of interest;
- identify, with conservation partners, locations for showing the Forest's wildlife to visitors with associated high quality visitor facilities;
- press for the inclusion within Local Development Plans of policies to encourage small-scale tourism enterprises in villages and rural areas;
- promote the Forest as a venue for year-round events and festivals;
- focus upon priority cluster areas for specified tourism development (see Map 8);
- aim to achieve 5.8 million visitors to the Forest area by 2014 and increase overnight stays to 10%;
- with the National Forest Tourism Working Group, review visitor market segments every 3-5 years;
- promote uptake of the National Forest logo licensing agreement;
- with the National Forest Tourism Working Group, co-ordinate visitor marketing of the Forest and its surrounding area and attractions;
- identify locations for new Tourism Information Points (TIPs) and develop a programme to standardise TIPs within a Forest related themed design;
- undertake periodic Economic Impact Assessments of tourism;
- undertake periodic local and national awareness surveys;
- undertake periodic visitor surveys at selected Forest sites and encourage similar surveys at visitor attractions and
- develop a visitor management strategy and assess the feasibility of developing a National Forest ranger service.



## 11 Minerals

Mineral workings and to a lesser extent derelict land and landfill sites remain a prominent feature of the land use of the Forest. Restoration of such land provides a major opportunity to provide for a wide range of Forest-related uses.

Planning permission for mineral and landfill workings would not, and should not, be acceptable merely because an applicant expresses a willingness to restore a site to Forest-related uses. However the appropriateness of a proposed restoration scheme will be a material planning consideration. Wherever possible, restoration should be designed to reflect the National Forest Strategy and favour Forest-related after-uses.

### Specifically:

- the NFC should remain a non-statutory consultee on minerals, waste disposal and derelict land policy, planning applications and site restoration plans.

### The NFC will:

- seek the restoration of 480 ha of mineral and landfill sites to Forest uses by 2014;
- continue to urge the Government to consider amending national Mineral Planning Guidance to favour restoration to Forest-related uses in the Forest area;
- seek the restoration of 150 ha of derelict land to Forest uses by 2014;
- advocate the consideration of Integrated Restoration Strategies for certain areas of the Forest;
- encourage site owners to develop long-term site management plans for restored sites and
- establish a mineral landowner liaison group.

## 12 Planning

Development and the planning system that controls it have a vital part to play in the realisation of the Forest. Development activity is buoyant in the area due to its central location in the country combined with its increasingly attractive environment. The new leisure and tourism facilities spurred by the growth of the Forest are themselves adding to the development activity.

Land use, economic and social planning and development control in the Forest area should remain the responsibility of the appropriate tier of central/regional/local Government. Nevertheless, specific policies relating to The National Forest and the visionary Strategy that governs its creation, need to continue to be included in all tiers of the planning policy framework. This is particularly pertinent as the planning system is reformed through the enactment and implementation of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill.

### Specifically, the NFC will:

- promote the inclusion of the National Forest Strategy as a policy consideration in National Planning Guidance/Statements and in Regional Planning Guidance/Spatial Strategies;
- encourage the early revision of Circular 36/78 – Trees and Forestry;
- promote the inclusion of consistent National Forest policies within Local Development Plans/Frameworks, including Forest-related development and farm diversification policies;
- encourage the inclusion of National Forest planting in Local Development Plans/Frameworks and in the development of landscaping schemes;
- encourage the inclusion of a model development planting policy in Local Development Plans/Frameworks and
- encourage the protection of important woodland and ecological resources from development proposals.

## 13 Transport

Creating a viable transport system, and in particular managing traffic generated by visitors, is one of the most critical sustainability issues for the Forest. The National Forest Company has no direct powers to implement transport initiatives and should therefore seek to influence policy and encourage initiatives that meet the special, sustainable transport needs of the Forest over time.

### The NFC will, therefore:

- promote National Forest transport issues in relevant transport policy documents;
- work with transport authorities and other partners to produce a Forest-wide Transport Strategy;
- work with transport partners to agree a framework for rural transport initiatives in and around the Forest area;
- continue to encourage rail authorities, rail companies, regional agencies and local authorities to pursue implementation of the National Forest Line;
- encourage provision of dedicated bus services to recreation and tourism attractions, from local towns and adjoining urban areas;
- encourage transport partners to support the development of recreational routes, linked to public transport and car parks;

- promote the completion of a Forest-wide programme of National Forest boundary and settlement signs;
- seek audits of brown and white signs and encourage a comprehensive approach to signing groups of attractions;
- explore the potential for joint marketing initiatives with tourism and public transport providers and
- comment on major transport infrastructure projects that affect the Forest and promote new planting and other environmental improvements to offset any impacts.

## 14 Research and Monitoring

The NFC places a high priority on ensuring that the Forest's creation is well-researched and monitored including the contribution it is making towards national sustainability aspirations. This will continue to be the case throughout the 10 year-life of the Strategy. The Company's Research and Monitoring Action Plan identifies annual priorities; issues that need to be reviewed every few years; and strategic long-term programmes of activity. Actions from this Plan are incorporated throughout the Strategy within relevant chapters.

Many research and monitoring actions require the NFC to take the lead role but partnership working is crucial to achieving an effective and comprehensive programme of activity.

Essential to the monitoring work is the NFC's Geographic Information System (GIS). This will need to be expanded to meet longer-term research and monitoring needs. Spatial monitoring and visualising of the scale and effects of landscape change will be especially important.

Progress towards implementing the Forest Strategy will be monitored annually by the NFC through its Corporate Plan process. The NFC will respond to changing circumstances and policy context as required. A formal review of the Strategy itself will take place in 2014.

## 1 Introduction

This section sets out the means by which the continuing creation and promotion of The National Forest will be undertaken. It should be read in conjunction with the new Forest Strategy for the 10 year period 2004 – 2014 and summarises the mechanisms for fulfilling the Strategy that have been established and developed throughout the years since the National Forest Company (NFC) was established by Government in 1995.

The document provides a framework upon which the annual Corporate Plans for the NFC and its activities will be based over the next 5 years. Towards the end of this period it will be reviewed. The Corporate Plan reviews progress and sets the annual priorities and targets for the NFC and can also accommodate changes in implementation mechanisms as they are required.

The first National Forest Strategy, produced by the then Countryside Commission's National Forest Development Team in 1994, has been brought to reality by a variety of means spearheaded by the NFC. These means have proved remarkably successful and should continue to be used until such time as change is necessitated by changing circumstances, policies or resources.

Such change may be needed as a result of amendments to European or national policy or support schemes, the introduction of new schemes or when strategic or tactical aims of the Forest development itself require particular mechanisms to be introduced. These will be accommodated by means of consultation with partners, working groups and the annual Corporate Plan discussions with Defra.

The work of the NFC depends on a wide range of partnerships and co-operative ventures. These partnerships, too, will require continuous revision as organisational change occurs over the Strategy period.

## 2 Principles of Implementation

### The guiding principles remain:

- On-going Government support.
- Leadership by the National Forest Company.
- Voluntary participation by landowners and other partners.
- No compulsory purchase of land.
- Targeting of financial incentives within the Forest boundary.
- Partnership working with public, private and voluntary sectors.
- Involvement of local communities.
- Multiple ownership and management of land.
- Promotion of social inclusivity and equal opportunities.
- Delivering value for money through Government grant in aid and funding for projects generated from other sources.

## 3 The National Forest Company

### *Structure and Purpose*

The NFC was established in April 1995 both as a public company limited by guarantee and a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). Its single member is now the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whose Department, Defra, sponsors the Company.

The Chairman and non-executive Directors of the NFC are appointed by the Company, subject to the approval of the relevant Minister. The NFC's Corporate

Plan is also agreed with the Minister each year. The Department provides financial support for the administration costs of the Company and contributes special project funding. The relationship between the Company and its sponsoring Department is governed by a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum.

The Company has a predominantly permanent staff equating to 17.5 full-time equivalents. It is not the intention that this level of staffing should be significantly changed for the initial 5 year period of delivering the new Forest Strategy.

**The Company's mission is:**

*'Creating, through working partnerships and with community participation, a new 200 square mile multi-purpose forest for the nation in the heart of England.'*

The Company may own land and manage facilities but its primary role is as an enabler, rather than as a substantial or long-term landowner. It works with and encourages local authorities, other statutory agencies, landowners and farmers, voluntary bodies, private industry and individuals to plant and purchase land and to develop projects which achieve Forest objectives. Its role encompasses the promotion of the Forest itself and its objectives to potential participants, partners and investors and direct involvement in the implementation of projects.

The National Forest helps to meet the objectives of its sponsoring Department, wider Government policy objectives and a wide spectrum of statutory and other bodies. The Company works closely with relevant public sector organisations, private companies and individuals to attract funding for projects within the Forest area that fulfil the Strategy.

The Forest is growing rapidly as a new tourism resource and the NFC has joined forces with its tourism partners to promote the Forest and its existing and new attractions to visitors from the locality, the surrounding region and further afield. This and other marketing activity is covered in more detail below.

*Access to Information on the NFC*

In addition to the agreed Corporate Plan, which is lodged in the House of Commons Library and posted on the Company's website ([www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org)), the NFC publishes and distributes widely an annual report and accounts. This reports on the Company's performance against key targets and performance measures agreed in the Corporate Plan.

To meet the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the NFC has produced a Publication Scheme which has been approved by the Information Commissioner. This describes the information published by the Company, the form in which it is published (hard-copy, website, CD etc), and whether or not there is a charge for it. The Scheme itself is posted on the Company's website. The information covers a wide range of material including matters of corporate governance and accountability, minutes of meetings of the Board and its sub-groups, research findings, promotional literature and media releases.

**4 Key Tasks and Means of Achievement**

**The key functions of the NFC will continue to be:**

- spearheading and stimulating the implementation of the National Forest Strategy;
- land conversion to woodland and other Forest-related uses;
- encouragement of public access, recreation and sport;
- promotion of viable agriculture and rural enterprise;

## delivering the strategy

- promotion of nature conservation and the historic heritage;
- stimulating economic regeneration and the enhancement of built development through related landscaping;
- encouraging reclamation of mineral works, derelict land and landfill sites;
- promotion and marketing of The National Forest and its attractions for visitor enjoyment;
- promotion of community participation; social well-being and healthy living; environmental education; and voluntary action;
- ensuring that the Forest is a test bed for new ideas and an exemplar of sustainable development and best practice and promoting it as such and
- undertaking or commissioning research as required and monitoring and recording progress and the impact of the Forest on the area.

### **These will be achieved through:**

- direct action by the executive team of the National Forest Company;
- the forging and maintenance of strategic partnerships in the public and voluntary sectors and engagement in the Forest of business corporates;
- working with landowners – corporate and private – to achieve land conversion to Forest purposes;
- working with local planning authorities to facilitate the Forest's development;
- operating the NFC's own incentive schemes and promoting other available grant schemes to encourage land conversion, site development, facilities for public access and recreation, partnership activity and community participation;
- engagement in the open land market directly for strategic land purchase or indirectly by assistance to other appropriate bodies wishing to buy land for Forest purposes;
- management and promotion of the NFC's own land for public benefit;
- promotion of forestry and timber-related initiatives and development of the local market for woodland products and
- assistance in the development of the wider Forest economy.

## **5 Direct Action by the NFC**

### *Forest Creation*

Each year, via the Corporate Plan, a target will be set for land conversion to woodland and other Forest purposes. The primary direct means of achieving this are:

#### **National Forest Tender Scheme**

This well-tested competitive tendering scheme, pioneered in the Forest, has proved its worth by achieving 62% of the total woodland creation since it was introduced in 1995. It encourages a wide range of participants to establish new woodlands on their own land that meet the Forest Strategy objectives and provide public benefits.

Based on the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) run by the Forestry Commission, the Tender Scheme incorporates additional funding from the Company itself to cover the cost of the difference between the WGS entitlement and the overall sum bid. In return the successful bidders enter and fulfil a 25-year contract to plant and develop their scheme.

The Tender Scheme, together with other incentives, will need to evolve to meet changing circumstances and are under review at present. A revised or successor scheme will be introduced early in the period of the 10-year Strategy and strongly promoted to provide the necessary incentive to stimulate continuing landowner participation.

### **Land Acquisition**

The Company's Land Acquisition Policy has been agreed with Defra and can be viewed on the National Forest website ([www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org)).

The NFC is empowered and funded to purchase land, in its own right or in partnership. However, it is not intended that it should become a major landowner and nor should it hold land in the long term.

The Company can also grant aid other appropriate organisations to purchase land for Forest purposes.

### *Grant-aided Action by Partners/Community*

#### **Programme Development Fund**

The NFC's Programme Development Fund is allocated each year, in a manner defined in the Corporate Plan, amongst 5 main programme areas:

- Community and Arts.
- Access and Nature Conservation.
- Site Development.
- Management Grants.
- Partnership Grants.

The nature of these grants ranges from grants for specific projects, amounting, normally, to up to 50% of the costs, to the payment of an annual fee to appropriate organisations to undertake the delivery of specified targets. Partnership grants contribute to the work of partnerships in which the NFC is involved and wishes to contribute financially to the overall costs involved in whatever the partnership is seeking to achieve.

### *Marketing and Promotion*

The NFC takes the lead role in promoting both The National Forest itself and its objectives. A rolling Strategic Marketing and Communications Plan, covering all aspects of promotion, commenced with the first three-year plan being produced in 2003. This, together with the annual Action Plans attached to it will be updated as appropriate.

Promotion is taken to include a broad range of activities encompassing awareness-raising, information, interpretation, exhortation, advertising and briefing of politicians both locally and nationally.

#### **The main purposes behind this marketing effort are:**

- to inform a wide range of audiences as to the objectives the Forest is serving; how it is progressing year on year; and the public benefits that are being realised as a result through the use of public and private money invested in its development;
- to encourage continuing involvement in the Forest's creation, by national, regional and local government, businesses, partner organisations, communities and individuals;
- to market the Forest as a growing resource for leisure, tourism and business opportunities and
- to create, over time, a stronger and more widely known profile for the Forest.

#### **An integrated marketing strategy for the Forest includes:**

- a coherent, targeted and purposeful publications and distribution programme;
- up to date and readily accessible Website;
- media/public relations;

- public events;
- briefing opportunities;
- local interpretation at Forest sites/visitor attractions;
- advocacy of the licensed use of The National Forest's strong and well-respected logo and
- monitoring through awareness and visitor surveys.

### *Raising External Funds*

Although the NFC is directly sponsored by Defra for its core funding, the attraction of partnership participation and funding remains fundamental to its approach and key to the achievement of its ambitious targets.

A systematic approach is adopted for bidding for external funds by means of a National Forest Development Strategy with accompanying annual plans. This includes national, regional and local public sector funds, Lottery funds, Tax Credit schemes and levies. Opportunistic bids are also made for campaigns and activities that lie within the current or proposed agreed work programme.

The NFC is also anxious to work with the private sector and has had success in attracting financial contributions and other active participation of a number of major and smaller companies. This effort will become more systematic with a concentration on particularly appropriate geographical locations and sectoral interests.

The NFC also raises revenue via its 'Plant a Tree' and 'Adopt a Tree' schemes whereby members of the general public are able to support the Forest's creation by participating in one of the tree planting schemes.

### *Research and Monitoring*

The NFC will continue to place a high priority on sustained and high-quality research and monitoring. Much of this activity will require the NFC to take the lead role but partnership working with research agencies, universities and specialist organisations will be essential to achieve an effective and comprehensive programme.

Progress towards implementing the Forest Strategy will be monitored annually by the NFC through its Corporate Plan process.

## **6 Indirect/Partnership Action**

Partnership working will be crucial to help fulfil the Forest Strategy. The NFC will continue to work with a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations, specialist bodies, landowners, community groups and the general public to meet the Strategy's objectives.

### *Forest Creation*

#### **Concordat between the NFC and the Forestry Commission**

The important partnership between the NFC and the Forestry Commission was formalised in 2001 by means of an action-orientated Concordat. This includes an annual Action Plan covering targeted commitments relating to land acquisition, site management and joint working to promote best practice, training and support initiatives, development of woodland-based economy opportunities and raising public awareness. The introduction of the new English Woodland Grant Scheme in 2005 and the development of Regional Forestry Frameworks in the East and West Midlands is likely to result in further opportunities for joint working.

Partnership working with the Forestry Commission and Forest Enterprise will continue to be a high priority. This activity helps to meet a wide range of the Forest Strategy's objectives.

### **Mineral, landfill and derelict land restoration**

In an area rich in minerals (granite, coal and clay and sand and gravel) the restoration of worked mineral land, landfill sites and residual derelict land has made a significant contribution to Forest creation. Each year a target is set in the Corporate Plan to achieve further restoration, albeit with a diminishing resource and competition for use of such land by agriculture and built development, where feasible.

The NFC seeks to influence restoration policies and schemes, in its role as a non-statutory consultee and in discussion with mineral companies, to gain maximum Forest creation. It will also advocate, with local authorities and the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), continuing programmes to reclaim derelict land.

### **Development- related planting**

With its local authority partners in the NFC Planning Technical Working Group (PTWG) the Company has reviewed the original planting guidelines defining the amount of planting that would be "expected" according to the size and nature of a proposed development. The NFC will seek to ensure that these are adhered to by the planning authorities and developers across the Forest area.

Planting secured through the planning system is usually through a Section 106 Agreement or Planning Conditions. In instances where there is insufficient space for the required planting, the local authority and developer can agree a commuted sum being paid in lieu of planting. A protocol has been developed between the NFC and local planning authorities to use such sums towards other Forest-related projects, near to the development site.

The PTWG has also produced a guide, with exemplary case studies, for developers and planners to encourage development-related Forest creation. This will be updated and promoted as required.

### *Landscape*

The NFC will work with a wide range of partners to respect and enhance the landscape character of the area. Monitoring landscape change and the effects of the Forest's creation over time will require new partnership working with specialist organisations to develop landscape visualisation techniques. Community involvement will also be important to gauge public perceptions on the changing landscape.

### *Biodiversity*

Another priority for the NFC, the encouragement of nature conservation and, in particular the fulfilment of the agreed Biodiversity Action Plan targets for the area involves strong partnership working with the various statutory and voluntary conservation bodies. This partnership is well-established, through the work of the Nature Conservation Working Group, and will continue - although not necessarily in this formal Group structure.

### *Public Access, Recreation and Sport*

Again a Working Group was established by the Company to draw together the various interested parties involved with the provision of formal and informal recreational activities in the Forest. Co-operative working has achieved a great deal and the partnership approach will be continued although not necessarily in its present form.

## *Historic Environment*

The NFC will continue to work in partnership with the various statutory and voluntary heritage organisations to protect and enhance the historic environment. The Heritage Lottery Fund will also be a key partner in the fulfilment of the NFC's LANDshapes project.

## *Community Participation*

Originally the NFC took a strong lead in encouraging community participation (projects, education, healthy living initiatives, volunteering etc) in Forest activities to stimulate a sense of place and ownership of that place. With participation in events specifically run by or with the NFC running at some 12,000 people a year, this work continues to be an important element of the Company's work. Nevertheless, increasingly partners and the community themselves are initiating their own schemes within the Forest context – as should be the case. The NFC will give active encouragement and, where necessary, financial support to such activity as well as continuing with its own schemes and those in partnership with other organisations.

## *Regeneration and the Economy*

Within the overall development of the Forest economy, the development of a woodland economy will have a high priority. This will require new partnership working with a wide range of landowners and organisations throughout the forestry industry. This could result in the establishment of a formal Woodland Economy Working Group. New business and marketing initiatives need to be pursued both regionally and nationally and links will be made with best practice initiatives, business support networks and wood marketing initiatives.

Work will also continue with local authorities, the Regional Development Agencies, Local Strategic Partnerships and other economic development initiatives to realise the potential of the Forest as a key contributor to the broader economy of the area. This potential embraces the development of leisure and tourism enterprises and increasing inward investment as the environment improves and healthy living opportunities emerge.

## *Agricultural Diversification*

The NFC will continue to place a high priority on engaging farmers, private landowners and their representative organisations in the Forest's creation. As well as using its own grants, the NFC will promote other national funding schemes for agricultural diversification and environmental land management including the England Rural Development Programme and its associated new grant schemes.

## *Tourism*

The NFC's Tourism Working Group includes representatives from the private and public sectors across the Forest. By working together there have been great advances in marketing the Forest as a new, ever-changing, destination and promoting its increasing number of visitor attractions. The Group has also published an agreed Visitor Strategy for the area which will be updated regularly. Joint publications and the latest tourism campaign with Forest local authorities (National Forest and Beyond) are proving both more effective as well as better value for money than individual, often competing, campaigns.

Joint working at the local and regional level will continue, alongside the NFC's own specific publications and events promoting leisure access to the Forest and the process by which this new resource is being created.

### *Planning Policies*

Through discussion with the Statutory Planning Authorities, work with the NFC's long-standing Planning Working Group and by submitting comments on national, regional and local policy documents relating to economic and spatial planning, the NFC has achieved recognition for the National Forest Strategy throughout the cascade of planning policy. The Company will seek to ensure this recognition is retained with the introduction of new planning documents.

The commitment to influence planning policy and decisions, as a non-statutory consultee, will also continue.

### *Transport*

Again, the NFC has no direct powers to implement transport initiatives but will continue to seek to influence policy and encourage initiatives that meet the special, sustainable transport needs of the Forest over time. In particular the Company will work with all transport authorities covering the Forest area and other partners to incorporate Forest-wide policies into all transport plans.

### *Sustainable Development*

The cross-cutting nature of the Forest's creation contributes to a wide range of Government sustainable development indicators, related to the economy, the environment and social involvement. To help maximise the Forest's contribution to sustainable development, consideration will be given to establishing a specialist working group involving partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

## **7 Summary**

Appendix 1 summarises the direct action that the NFC will undertake (**section 5**) and the indirect/partnership action (**section 6**) that will be needed to meet the key tasks of creating the Forest (**section 4**).

### DELIVERING THE STRATEGY - SUMMARY

KEY UNDERTAKINGS	DIRECT ACTION BY THE NFC	INDIRECT/PARTNERSHIP ACTION
Implementing the Forest Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leadership.</li> <li>■ Deployment of NFC staff and resources.</li> <li>■ Setting targets.</li> <li>■ Forging partnerships.</li> <li>■ Bidding for/attracting additional resources.</li> <li>■ Research and marketing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Policy setting to promote Forest objectives.</li> <li>■ Involvement in projects and partnerships.</li> <li>■ Contributing funding and resources.</li> </ul>
Land conversion to woodland and other Forested related purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ National Forest Tender Scheme.</li> <li>■ Land acquisition.</li> <li>■ Utilising other NFC grants.</li> <li>■ Promoting other grants.</li> <li>■ Influencing planning policies and proposals.</li> <li>■ Identifying opportunities and working with landowners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Acquiring/leasing and managing land for Forest purposes.</li> <li>■ Implementing planning/development policies, including Planning Obligations, to favour Forest purposes.</li> <li>■ Bidding for funds to develop Forest projects.</li> </ul>
Encouragement of public access, sport and recreation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Tender Scheme and land acquisition.</li> <li>■ Utilise NFC grants.</li> <li>■ Running appropriate Working Groups.</li> <li>■ Publish promotional/information literature and website.</li> <li>■ Work with interest groups and landowners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop appropriate policies and implement schemes to Forest-users' advantage.</li> <li>■ Co-ordinate policy and activity to add value to Forest experience.</li> <li>■ Participate in Working Groups.</li> <li>■ Bid for and invest funding.</li> </ul>
Promotion of viable agriculture and rural enterprise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Encouragement of diversification through the Tender Scheme and other NFC grants.</li> <li>■ Develop, with partners, business advice, training and support networks.</li> <li>■ Development of woodland economy.</li> <li>■ Promote other available grants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Development and promotion of policies conducive to successful diversification and marketing.</li> <li>■ Inclusion of NFC in policy setting.</li> <li>■ Development of Forest-related schemes.</li> <li>■ Targeting other available grants.</li> </ul>
Promotion of nature conservation and historic heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Use of Tender Scheme and other NFC grants.</li> <li>■ Land acquisition by NFC or other partners.</li> <li>■ Bidding for funds.</li> <li>■ Promotion of other available grants.</li> <li>■ Involving partners in Working Groups.</li> <li>■ Commenting on policy and planning proposals.</li> <li>■ Lead the compiling, updating and publishing of the Biodiversity Action Plan for the Forest.</li> <li>■ Fulfilment of LANDshapes project.</li> <li>■ Commissioning of research.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Consideration of National Forest objectives and opportunities in own policy formation and implementation.</li> <li>■ Involvement in NFC Working Groups.</li> <li>■ Stimulating action through other grant aid.</li> <li>■ Contributing to fulfilment of NF BAP.</li> <li>■ Engagement in LANDshapes project.</li> </ul>
Stimulating economic regeneration and enhancement of built development through related landscaping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Use of Tender Scheme and NFC grants.</li> <li>■ Influencing planning policy and development landscaping schemes.</li> <li>■ Publishing case studies of best practice.</li> <li>■ Liaising with local authority partners, developers and economic partnerships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Consideration of opportunities offered by the Forest's development in policy formulation and implementation.</li> <li>■ Consultation of NFC on development proposals.</li> <li>■ Implementation of Forest-related schemes.</li> </ul>

KEY UNDERTAKINGS	DIRECT ACTION BY THE NFC	INDIRECT/PARTNERSHIP ACTION
Encouraging reclamation of mineral works, derelict land and landfill sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Use of Tender Scheme and other NFC grants.</li> <li>■ Land acquisition.</li> <li>■ Seeking to influence restoration schemes.</li> <li>■ Contributing to local partnerships and liaison groups.</li> <li>■ Promotion of best practice.</li> <li>■ Liaison with mineral companies, landowners, local authorities and Regional Development Agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Consideration of special needs and opportunities offered by the Forest in formulating and implementing policy – at national, regional and local level.</li> <li>■ Implementation of Forest-related schemes by site-owners.</li> </ul>
Promotion and marketing of The National Forest and its attractions for visitor enjoyment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop, with partners, the NF tourism product in accord with the Strategy.</li> <li>■ Seek to maintain the high quality of the Forest experience and encourage site maintenance audits and sustainable growth of range of good-quality 'inspected' accommodation.</li> <li>■ Promotion of Forest as a visitor resource via information/promotional literature, website, media and at events/exhibitions.</li> <li>■ Co-ordination of Tourism Working Group.</li> <li>■ Periodic awareness and satisfaction surveys.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Inclusion of policies to encourage appropriate tourism enterprises.</li> <li>■ Joint working to promote the Forest as a visitor destination.</li> <li>■ Promoting high quality in tourism infrastructure and visitor welcome.</li> <li>■ Targeting funding to develop and promote the Forest's tourism resource.</li> </ul>
Promotion of community participation; social well-being and healthy living, environmental education; and voluntary action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provision of and support for a range of Forest-related projects and events to stimulate participation by wide-ranging interests and communities.</li> <li>■ Supporting volunteer involvement – including working with BTCV.</li> <li>■ Supporting, through NFC grants and bidding for funds, an expansion of healthy living schemes.</li> <li>■ Encourage and support sustainable growth of Forest-related education centres and woodlands offering educational facilities and support the work of the Education Cluster Group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Initiating Forest-related community and environmental education projects and activities.</li> <li>■ Liaising with NFC to co-ordinate efforts to promote participation, social inclusion, education and healthy living.</li> <li>■ Participating in Working Groups.</li> </ul>
Ensuring the Forest is a test bed for new ideas and exemplar of sustainable development and best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Utilise NFC resources, work in partnerships and help develop and test the ideas of others.</li> <li>■ Promulgate results and host visits to the Forest.</li> <li>■ Liaise with related projects to exchange ideas and experience.</li> <li>■ Carry out or commission research.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Utilise the Forest as a focus for research and experimentation and as a case study.</li> <li>■ Help promote the Forest as an exemplar of sustainable development.</li> </ul>
Undertaking or commissioning research as required, monitoring and recording progress and the impact of the Forest on the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Utilise NFC resources to carry out or commission necessary work.</li> <li>■ Report regularly in the Corporate Plan.</li> <li>■ Develop the NFC's GIS.</li> <li>■ Bid for funding.</li> <li>■ Co-operate with colleges and universities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Encourage appropriate partners to use the Forest as a venue for research.</li> <li>■ Bidding for external funding to develop Forest-focused research and monitoring activities.</li> </ul>



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