

THE NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY

CORPORATE PLAN 2010 – 2011

Targets and Key Activities for 2010 - 11, Deployment of Resources 2010 – 2011 and Outline of Activity to 2014

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Introduction

The Corporate Plan is the annual working document for the National Forest Company. This paper outlines proposed targets and key activity for 2010 – 2011, the deployment of resources 2010 – 2011 and includes indications of activity to 2014. After the year end, out-turn figures for 2009 – 2010 will be added.

Progress 2009 - 2010

The National Forest's Delivery Plan to 2014 was launched in March 2009, with Ministerial endorsement. A strong start has been made in 2009 – 2010 to delivering against the plan. The year included significant activity against the five themes underpinning the plan, all of which need to be maintained in a steady and sustained manner to 2014:

- **Keep creating The National Forest**
The annual target range for Forest creation to 2014 of 200 – 250ha was met in 2009 – 2010.
- **Look after what has been created**
Woodland management was further embedded in the work of the Company and with landowners; a major new woodland economy programme was initiated; two major capital projects were progressed, (a cycle centre and a long distance trail). A new Forest-wide tourism partnership began to implement a new vision for sustainable tourism and the construction of the most sustainable National Forest buildings so far commissioned, (workshops at Rosliston Forestry Centre) began.
- **Communities at the heart**
Pilots were initiated to deepen local engagement in communities' woodlands.
- **Telling the story**
All households in The National Forest received information through the door about the Forest; national media coverage was also particularly strong.
- **A national showcase**
The Efra Select Committee reported on The National Forest as a 'national success story'. Summaries of the varied multidisciplinary research undertaken by the Company over a period of years were published.

Overall approach to 2010 – 2011

Given this strong start in implementing the Delivery Plan and the results beginning to be evidenced, from 2010 to 2014 the strategy is to continue to build on this approach. Therefore 2010 - 2011 will not see any major shift in direction. In particular, the focus on Forest creation and looking after the asset which has been created will be to the fore.

However, there are some new activities in 2010 – 2011 to take forward the five themes:

- Evolving a single charity for the Forest, and exploring the feasibility of a friends' / membership scheme, both of these in partnership with the Heart of the National Forest Foundation.
- An assessment of the overall public value of The National Forest, commissioned by Defra.
- A programme to disseminate the learning from The National Forest, with Defra.
- A feasibility study for a new and sustainable base, for education and potentially to accommodate the National Forest Company and partners. It should be emphasized that this is only at this stage an exploration of whether a well-chosen base could contribute to the sustainability of The National Forest, financially, in effective delivery and in terms of wider engagement.

Cross-cutting themes

Climate change

The National Forest, whilst not reducible to a climate change adaptation or mitigation project, contributes to both these critical national objectives. The year will include continuing to understand more about this contribution as well as implementing best practice in all aspects of the work of the Company.

- Carbon accounting for NFC (office and operations, including updated sequestration figures) in line with best practice.
- Developing the long-term species project with FC.
- Participating in national work on how to implement a step change in national tree planting rates for carbon adaptation and mitigation.

Sustainability

The National Forest is above all a sustainable development exemplar. This includes sharing the learning, so that investment is not wasted, embedding sustainability further in operations and continuing to monitor the sustainable development impact of the Forest.

- A dissemination programme with Defra to share the learning from the project.
- An assessment of the public value generated by The National Forest and the options for replicability.
- Update of the Sustainable Development Exemplar Study 2007.
- Further consideration of sustainability criteria in contracting.
- Further attention to fuel and other consumption by NFC.
- Sustainability as the key criterion in a feasibility study for a National Forest operations base.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

These are not only requirements for a publicly funded project such as The National Forest (reinforced by the Equalities Act which comes into force in 2011) but have always been key themes for The National Forest and intrinsic to the needs and nature of the area. The National Forest Company seeks to reflect this fully in its own operations and to encourage and influence partners in their delivery to push for equality, diversity and inclusion.

- Implement good practice in access for black and minority communities, with partners, following participation in a national training programme.
- Review the promotion of planting schemes to disability and minority groups.
- Implement an updated Company Disability Equality Scheme.
- Maintain a focus within grant programmes on inclusion, equality and minority communities.

The National Forest Company's leadership role 2010 - 11

The reputation of the Company for strong delivery and forward-thinking will continue to be carefully pursued. The leadership role will continue to reflect the requirements of the Delivery Plan to 2014,

Key leadership responsibilities of the National Forest Company will be:

- To drive the continuing creation of The National Forest, delivering an ambitious target of 200 – 250ha a year. New opportunities to be developed, including targeting connectivity, schemes to blend agriculture and forestry; and green infrastructure in the context of proposed housing growth and private sector investment.
- To promote with partners a systematic, long-term approach to woodland management and quality across the Forest, deeper community participation and effective communication about the Forest to all relevant parties.
- To consolidate the role of The National Forest as a national exemplar of sustainable development, including reflecting fully the knowledge base on climate change and the national aspiration to increase the rate of tree planting to combat climate change, (as reflected in the cross-cutting themes, above).
- To push forward the methodology for comprehensive valuation of environmentally-led regeneration, through assessing the public value of The National Forest, with Defra.
- To take a responsible and imaginative approach to ongoing constraints on public sector funding, anticipating the period from 2011; in doing so, preparing the best governance arrangements for the long term and continually increasing skills in partnership working, so that momentum in creating The National Forest is maintained.

Contribution to national policy objectives 2010 – 2011

The National Forest continues to sit within and make a contribution to national policy objectives.

1. England's Trees, Woods and Forest Strategy: the NFC increasingly focuses on 'the right trees in the right place', ensuring that where more appropriate habitats pertain, these are preserved or created, and sensitivity is exercised in the landscape; it is developing a systematic approach to woodland management; it continues to work on accessibility of woodlands to urban populations and local communities. It works within the Regional Forestry Frameworks of the East and West Midlands.
2. The Low Carbon Transition Plan: The National Forest is referenced for its work with the private sector and is ready to contribute to the implementation of the Read Report 'Combating Climate Change – a role for UK Forests'.
3. Defra's Climate Change Plan: The National Forest contributes through building adaptive capacity (including research with Forest Research) and mitigation (including building the demand for and supply of woodfuel); it provides a test bed for emerging knowledge on landscape. 2010 – 2011 should see significant national developments in climate change and forestry and the NFC will be ready to play a full part in shaping and implementing these.
4. Increasingly, in the context of proposed growth and the need for green infrastructure, the NFC contributes to CLG's sustainable communities agenda.

Targets and Key Activities 2010 - 2011

Forest Creation

Targets

1. 200 – 250ha Forest creation through mechanisms including the Changing Landscapes Scheme, (CLS), land acquisition, mineral site restoration, development-related planting, small scale schemes and targeting for connectivity.
2. 35 - 50ha nature conservation sites created or brought into management.
3. 125 - 150ha of new and/or planned public access.

Key Activities

1. Develop new ways to market CLS and Freewoods to a wider audience, considering any amendments to the schemes which may increase their appeal to landowners.
2. Devise a parkland/wood pasture creation scheme, to meet Forest creation and nature conservation targets, where Higher Level Stewardship may not be applicable.
3. Update the National Forest Biodiversity Action Plan.

4. Monitor and influence local development frameworks and work closely with planning authorities on masterplanning sustainable urban growth and securing high quality green infrastructure.
5. Update the National Forest Planners' and Developers' guide, to include the NFC's planning obligations guidance, revised as necessary in the light of national planning policy amendments to Section 106 funding.
6. Develop a Design Charter for The National Forest.

Quality and making the most of the Forest

This section incorporates all those key areas which together ensure that the most is being made of the asset that is being created. It includes forest management, capital projects, tourism and the woodland economy.

Targets

1. Increase participation in the Woodland Owners' Club: three meetings focused on management and networking by 31/03/11, with total attendance increased compared with 2009 - 2010.
2. Support five further feasibility studies for new woodfuel installations, identify new woodfuel supplies and hold two events to promote woodfuel use and supply.
3. Implement squirrel control using different methods across the Forest with 8 landowners and evaluate results; implement a plan for deer management based on monitoring in 2009 - 10; promote management plans with landowners, for prioritised sites.
4. Work in partnership to deliver the 2010 National Forest Wood Fair: 100 exhibitors, 5,000 visitors and incorporating a woodland economy advice area, (part of the Making Woods Work woodland economy programme).
5. Produce an action plan to promote and implement an approach to sustainable transport, with partners.

Key Activities

1. Consult on the route of the long distance trail, securing funding to enable planning for implementation in 2011.
2. Progress the National Forest Cycling Centre to enable it to open by Spring 2011.
3. Progress the 'Making Woods Work' (MWW) woodland economy programme, including two industry events and contact with businesses related to the woodland economy in and around the Forest, as per the project plan.

4. Review and if appropriate extend the BTCV land management training programme in the Heart of the Forest Park; engage partners and funders to explore further collaborative land management, social enterprise and training opportunities.
5. Deliver the first year of the National Forest sustainable tourism strategy through the National Forest Tourism Partnership. Activity to include: reviewing marketing, to inform mechanisms to be used in 2011; developing the destination brand's use by all stakeholders; producing a 3 year research plan.
6. Undertake a feasibility study for a sustainable National Forest education and accommodation base, including NFC and partners.
7. Develop a new action plan for public sector funding opportunities related to identified major projects.
8. Audit and update information on horse riding, cycling and accessible woodland sites, to improve usage and inform future provision.

Participation ('Communities at the heart')

The need for widening and deepening participation continues to be crucial to a Forest which is sustainable in the long-term. A commitment to deeper community engagement in the care of Forest sites is now embedded in the Delivery Plan and some success has been demonstrated through new mechanisms and partnerships this year.

This section includes participation with businesses as well as local communities and residents.

Targets

- Progress five projects, building on the successes of pilot work undertaken in 2009 -10, to widen and deepen community participation, working with key partners to develop and promote community participation and awareness-raising in the management and care of Forest sites.
- Engage 20,000 people in positive practical action in support of the Forest.
- Engage 40,000 children in environmental education in the Forest.
- Promote the use of the logo to 50 businesses in the Forest.

Key Activities

- Continue to develop and promote a wide-ranging community involvement programme, including conservation volunteering, healthy walking, community tree planting schemes, environmental education and arts and heritage initiatives.
- Continue to maintain a focus of working with residents and partners in the urban settlements of the Forest, in a range of local Forest creation and site development

projects.

- Explore the feasibility of a Friends'/membership scheme in partnership with the Heart of the National Forest Foundation.

Communication ('Telling the story')

Again, this represents continuity with last year's plan and the Delivery Plan to 2014. The Company will continue to speak to all its audiences systematically and relevantly.

Targets

1. Review and refresh communication methods and publications to residents, local communities, partners and businesses, with a view to value for money and reach by September 2010.
2. Publish a new Marketing and Communications Strategy by September 2010.
3. Refresh the content of www.nationalforest.org in the light of corporate priorities, current programmes and access promotion; launch the enhanced tourism destination section of the website by Spring 2010.
4. Explore with Government a dissemination programme.

Key Activities

1. Continue to develop signage and information where important and possible, communicating the evolving Forest, its management and how to explore it.
2. Ensure that cross party support for The National Forest remains strong and informed.

Research and Exemplar Role ('A National Showcase')

This continues to be a critical area for the Company, with an expectation from Defra and partners that learning is shared, particularly given national interest in increasing woodland creation on a large scale to combat climate change.

Targets

1. Research summaries published at the end of 2009 - 10 effectively disseminated and publicised, online and elsewhere.
2. Work with Defra and other partners on an integrated approach to assessing the Forest's leverage and public value, to be published by the end of 2010.

3. Update of the Sustainable Development report 2007, incorporating new socio-economic data, by September 2010.
4. Develop and implement an action plan for sustainable transport in the first half of 2010 – 11, based on scoping work undertaken in 2009 - 10.
5. Update carbon research, including NFC carbon account and sequestration figures by end of September 2010 in line with best practice.
6. Participate in national work to consider how to implement the national aspiration for more tree planting to combat climate change.

Key Activities

1. As part of being a test bed for national research on multi-purpose forestry, develop further the joint climate change tree provenance research project with FC Forest Research.
2. Continue to play a lead role in UK engagement in the European Landscape Convention; monitor opportunities for dissemination of experience and for entering an award by August 2010.
3. Explore appropriate international links to share learning, including twinning and transnational projects.
4. Complete an interim breeding bird survey to maintain monitoring between major surveys.
5. Complete geology of the National Forest landscape publication with British Geological Survey.

Governance, Efficiency and Organisational Sustainability

This includes long term governance and organisational planning as well as the short to medium term priorities of vfm and efficiency.

Targets

1. With Heart of the National Forest Foundation, help evolve and launch an independent charity for the whole of the Forest by the end of 2010.
2. Increase involvement in Business Benefits and Plant a Tree campaigns and restore contributions to pre recession levels, and introduce three new sponsors to the work of The National Forest.
3. Make initial contact with up to 20 individuals as part of the implementation of a cultivation campaign for high value donors.

Key Activities

1. Implement efficiencies identified through internal review of procedures undertaken in 2009 - 10.
2. Continue to plan for budget constraints from 2011.
3. Review operations, including contracting and tendering, in relation to value for money, sustainability, equality of opportunity and health and safety.
4. Continue to evaluate existing fundraising schemes to deliver maximum impact.

Deployment of resources 2010 - 11

The Board has agreed that the indicative £3.51 million grant in aid allocation should be divided between running costs of £1.302 million and programme expenditure of £2.208 million.

Running Costs

The budget of £1.302 million is slightly below that agreed for 2009 - 10 (£1.306 million).

Staff costs account for over 70% of the running costs budget. It is proposed that the staff complement remains unchanged with 14 full-time, 5 part-time and one graduate officer post. This is seen as the minimum level needed to progress the wide ranging programme of planned activity and highlights the importance of engaging external support and resources through effective partnership working.

The remaining 30% of running costs (i.e. non-staff costs) divide almost equally between non-discretionary (e.g. accommodation, ICT, telecommunications) and discretionary costs (e.g. marketing). These have remained at a reasonably constant level over recent years, attributed in part, to effective procurement practices. In the past year savings were secured by linking to public sector procurement arrangements for print requirements and these efforts will continue throughout the coming year when it is proposed to review various bought-in ICT services and the Company's banking arrangements.

The main area of discretionary costs relates to marketing activities. The marketing budget for 2010 - 11 has been set at £177,000, 13% lower than that for 2009 - 10. The budget allows for the continuing commitment to 'telling the story' of the Forest's creation. Activity in 2010 - 11 will see further dissemination of information on the Forest to residents; launch of the new tourism destination section of the website aimed at tourists and the tourism industry; and production of a new National Forest Biodiversity Plan, an updated guide for Planners' and Developers' and an update to the 2007 Sustainable Development report.

Programme Expenditure

The budget available of £2.208 million will be utilised to best effect to maximise the prospect of achieving the Forest creation target. There will be a need for flexibility in year as to how the budget will be spent. It is, however, evident that the target range will not be achieved by utilising the grant in aid allocation alone and will necessitate securing third party funding and spending donations/sponsorship reserves.

An indicative breakdown of expenditure in 2010 - 11 if the Forest creation target is to be achieved is as follows:

	£'000
Tender Scheme stage 2 payments	380
CLS (cost of securing 60 – 80ha)	700 – 900
Land acquisition (cost of securing 70 – 80ha)	1,200 – 1,400
Small scale schemes (cost of securing c20ha)	200
Site development and management	100
Development of woodland economy	150
Programme Development Fund	120
Research	80
	2,930 – 3,330

The above assumes that land acquisition, CLS and small scale planting schemes will deliver 150 - 180ha of Forest creation. To achieve the target range, it is assumed that planning/mineral restoration will deliver c30ha and that a further c20ha will be secured by other means. It will be possible to make a better assessment of what may be secured via the CLS once the April closing date for applications arrives.

The grant in aid allocation available for programme expenditure is £2.208 million, leaving a shortfall of c£700 – 900k against the above. The year end balance in the donations/sponsorship account projected to be c£0.6 million of which £0.3 million is ring-fenced for the cycle centre project. This leaves a shortfall of c£0.4 – 0.5 million if the lower end of the target range is to be achieved which will need to be secured from external funding and fundraising.

Outline of Activity 2011 – 2014

Forest creation

Forest creation will be pursued strenuously and will need consistency of resource to meet the 200 – 250ha target range. New means of delivering maximum impact through targeting and sensitive habitat creation will be increasingly implemented. By 2014, overall Forest cover should be approaching 20%, with some areas needing little further landscape change.

Making the most of what has been created

The long distance trail and cycling centre will be operational and will need careful marketing and nurture in their early years. Landowners will continue to be educated and encouraged in making the most of their woodlands and the long-term viability of the latter will be actively pursued. The

tourism economy will continue to grow.

Communities at the heart

The most successful approaches to deeper community engagement, following pilot work, will be further pursued and priority areas requiring the most local involvement will be given the most attention. This includes a continuing focus on the Heart of the National Forest as a microcosm and essential part of the whole.

Telling the story

Resources will continue to be put into telling the story of the Forest so its purpose is widely understood.

A national exemplar

The national exemplar role will be increasingly focused on learning the lessons of The National Forest and the extent to which it may be replicable elsewhere or aspects of it adopted to meet policy objectives. Alongside this, the National Forest Company will play its full part in national policy debate on domestic forestry and climate change mitigation.

The implications of these streams of activity are:

1. There are many opportunities arising organically out of progress to date and little risk that the Forest will not continue to advance towards the agreed strategy.
2. Consistency of resource, recognising that in real terms this is likely to continue to mean a reduction, is essential for this achievement to 2014. Otherwise the aim of making the most of the asset being created will not be realised.