

**THE NATIONAL  
FOREST**

# **THE NATIONAL FOREST**

## **STRATEGY AUDIT**

**1994 – 2002**

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# NATIONAL FOREST STRATEGY AUDIT

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## **Chapter 1) NATIONAL FOREST STRATEGY AUDIT**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 “A symbol of hope for the nation” was how Sir John Johnson, Chairman of the Countryside Commission described the Forest in his preface to the National Forest Strategy, which was produced in 1994.
- 1.2 Of the planned Forest, Sir John wrote: “It will enhance a region, in the heart of the country, in which nearly 200,000 people live. It will stimulate physical and economic regeneration in an area much affected by mineral working and the demise of deep coal mining. It will be a major new resource for leisure and tourism. It will contribute to our supplies of home-grown timber, create rich, new wildlife habitats and offer alternative productive uses of farmland.”
- 1.3 The best part of a decade later this ‘Forest vision’ is being substantially realised. The words of the Forest Strategy are being put into practice, through hundreds of projects on the ground.

### **2 Forest Strategy Review**

- 2.1 The original Strategy has proved remarkably robust and has stood the test of time. However, the policy context has changed rapidly over the years and the Forest itself has, by its very development, moved the Strategy on.
- 2.2 In March 2002, the National Forest Company (NFC) announced that the Strategy was to be reviewed, with a view to publishing a revised Strategy in 2004. Like the original one, this new Strategy will aim to set out the future vision for the Forest over the next 10 years.

### **3 Forest Strategy Audit**

- 3.1 Before looking forward however, it is important to first take stock of the progress that has been made towards achieving the original Strategy. During 2002 the NFC instigated an audit of progress (up to 31.3.02), to put on record what has been achieved and to provide the platform for developing the revised Strategy.
- 3.2 This audit set out to identify:
  - what is on-course and whether the intentions of the Strategy have been followed
  - what has been achieved or started
  - what has not been achieved, or is no longer relevant, and
  - what still needs to be tackled and taken forward
- 3.3 This report sets out how the Strategy audit was undertaken and presents its findings.

## **4 The Audit process**

4.1 There have been two main aspects to the audit:

- an assessment of progress by the NFC, and
- an independent, strategic assessment of progress by ENTEC consultants.

4.2 The NFC's work has entailed looking in detail at all of the proposed actions and aspirations set out in each chapter of the Forest Strategy. Progress has been assessed and quantified (wherever possible) and has drawn supporting information from a wide range of NFC records.

4.3 ENTEC's role has been to undertake an independent verification of progress, set against the Forest Strategy's seven main objectives:

- to enhance and create a diverse landscape and wildlife habitat
- to create a major recreation and tourism resource
- to provide alternative productive uses for agricultural land, in a manner that meets environmental objectives
- to contribute to national timber supply
- to stimulate economic enterprise and create jobs
- to stimulate community involvement and educational use of the Forest
- to contribute to wider environmental objectives such as reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

4.4 ENTEC took the NFC's audit as its starting point. They then identified a number of evaluation questions related to each Strategy objective and measured progress against a series of key indicators. This involved:

- an independent review of NFC data and records
- field survey of the Forest's six landscape zones
- a sample survey of 24 Forest sites, selected by ENTEC from NFC records
- interviews with NFC staff and 17 partner organisations
- process-based evaluation (for example, examining NFC's approach to partnership building)
- comparing progress with other Forest creation projects.

4.5 Full details of the methodology are set out in ENTEC's Strategy Review report (Appendix 2).

## **5 The Audit Results**

5.1 The findings of the audit are set out in the remainder of this report. They include:

- an executive summary
- a report on overall progress towards achieving the Forest vision
- reports on progress against each Strategy topic.

5.2 The audit has been produced by the NFC. At the end of each progress report ENTEC's independent evaluations are also included.

- Two detailed appendices also support this report. Appendix 1 sets out the NFC's detailed tabulations of progress against each section within the Strategy; and Appendix 2 is ENTEC's full Strategy Review report.

## **Chapter 2) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - HEADLINE FACTS AND FIGURES**

### **1 Overall Vision**

- The National Forest is happening. In less than 10 years the concept has become a reality, as there is now a growing, physical entity called 'The National Forest'.
- Progress towards the 'Forest Vision' has been significant. This is reflected in the dramatic environmental, economic and cultural change that has taken place in the area.
- The area has been transformed from one that was sparsely wooded, scarred by dereliction and badly affected by economic and social decline; into an area where woodland cover has more than doubled, a major new recreation and tourism resource has been created and where more people now want to live, work and spend their leisure time. The Forest is creating a new sense of community spirit and pride, particularly in the Coalfield area.
- The scale and pace of activity is setting the Forest apart from similar projects of its kind.

### **2 Forestry**

- Woodland cover has increased from 6% (1991) to 13.3% (2002).
- 3,675 ha of land has been committed to the Forest and 4.8m trees have been planted.
- 85% of planting has taken place in Preferred Planting Areas.
- The innovative National Forest Tender Scheme has accounted for 51% of all new woodland planting.
- 84% of tree planting has been broadleaf and 16% conifer.
- There has been widespread planting on derelict and mineral worked land, on farmland, in the urban fringe and to a lesser extent in urban areas.

### **3 Landscape**

- Woodland planting is being designed to relate to the Forest's landscape character and planting design guidance is being followed.
- Some areas may have reached their optimal tree cover, given the cumulative effect of new planting linked with existing woodland. Methods to model and visualise landscape change will need to be developed to monitor the Forest's expansion.

### **4 Agriculture**

- 96 farm forestry schemes have been developed since 1995 covering 1,640 ha. From less than 10 ha of planting per year in 1990, private landowners have averaged 230 ha of woodland planting per year since 1995.
- 28 multi-use farm diversification schemes have been developed to leisure; tourist accommodation; conservation/heritage schemes; and catering/business ventures.
- Over £18m has been invested by the NFC and Forestry Commission into the rural economy through the National Forest Tender Scheme and National Forest Premium.
- 82% of new farm woodland by area (1,350 ha) provides open public access and private landowners have dedicated 8 new Public Rights of Way.

## **5 Recreation, Access and Tourism**

- The Forest has developed far quicker than expected into a major, new recreation and tourism resource. A diverse range of attractions have been created:
  - the highly acclaimed, £16m, CONKERS Discovery Centre, attracting 250,000 visitors in its' first year.
  - a total of 19 new tourism attractions.
  - 30 new sport and recreation facilities including fishing, mountain biking, orienteering, carriage driving, cross country horseriding and sledging.
  - 65% of new Forest sites provide public access, and 85% some form of access.
  - 300 km of new trails – benefiting walkers, cyclists, horseriders and disabled users.
- Visitors to the Forest area have risen from 5.4m in 1997 to 5.7m in 1999.
- Visitor spending has risen from £105m to £128m over the same period and supports 3,680 jobs in tourism.
- Awareness of the Forest is also increasing. Between 1996 and 2000 local awareness rose from 82-86% and national awareness from 33-37%.

## **6 Nature Conservation**

- Over 600 ha of grasslands, wetlands and heathlands and 243 ha of woodland have been brought into management.
- Over 400 ha of new grassland, wetland and heathland habitats have been created.
- 21 sites totalling 170 ha have been specially purchased for their biodiversity interest.
- The National Forest Biodiversity Action Plan was one of the first to be produced (1998). Progress is being made towards both habitat and species targets.
- The NFC is promoting a local provenance trees policy (produced in 2000). Initial monitoring in 2002 indicated that 97% of the 340,000 trees planted at Tender Scheme sites used UK tree stock.

## **7 Cultural Heritage**

- New woodland schemes are helping to protect and manage archaeological sites including: ridge and furrow, a water ram, a windmill site, an iron-age hill fort and a stone bothy.
- Major restoration has been undertaken at Moira Furnace and Grace Dieu Priory and 2 km of the Ashby Canal has been re-watered.
- Parkland restoration schemes are underway at Catton Hall, Calke Abbey, Staunton Harold and Dunstall Hall.
- The NFC has made a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Forest-wide history project.

## **8 Planning and Economic Development**

- The National Forest is written-in to national and regional planning guidance and county and local development plan policies.
- 100 ha of development-related planting has been achieved and £840,000 secured for Forest projects through commuted sums.

- More success has been achieved with housing-related planting than commercial development schemes. Implementation of the National Forest development planting guidelines has been patchy.
- The Forest has been a positive force for economic regeneration. Over £32.5m has been won for the area since 1995 and 580 jobs have been created or protected through Single Regeneration Budget and Forest-related schemes.

## **9 Minerals and Derelict land**

- 267 ha of derelict land has been reclaimed to forest, recreation, tourism and conservation uses - 76% of the Forest Strategy target.
- 697 ha of mineral worked land has been similarly restored - 42% of the original, long-term, Forest Strategy target.
- The Ashby Woulds area of Leicestershire has been transformed into the central Forest focus. Around 240 ha of land has been restored, with the new CONKERS Discovery Centre at its heart. In 2002 the area won the Royal Town Planning Institute Silver Jubilee Cup for Community Regeneration.

## **10 Transport and Traffic**

- Progress towards developing sustainable transport systems has been slow. There remains the need for an Integrated Transport Strategy.
- The NFC has campaigned for the opening of The National Forest rail line for passenger use.
- Rural Bus Grants are being targeted in the area and new services have been trialed to provide links to CONKERS and Rosliston Forestry Centre.
- A Forest-wide Cycling Strategy has been produced and over 30 km of cycle trails have been created.
- Forest boundary and some settlement road signs have been installed, to help raise the identify of the Forest.

## **11 Community Involvement, Environmental Education and the Arts**

- Since 1995, 46,000 people have been involved in a wide range of Forest-related community activities. These have included:
  - community projects – the NFC has grant aided 142 projects since 1995 worth a total of £429,000. In addition 92 community events have been funded through National Forest Tender Schemes.
  - conservation volunteering – the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers completed 2,500 volunteer workdays in 2001/2.
  - ‘Walking the Way to Health’ initiative – focused on South Derbyshire, this pioneering initiative has involved 240 people in health walks since 2001.
- Environmental education activity has also grown dramatically. Since 1995, 1,350 school and other groups have made educational visits to the Forest.
- Major environmental education centres have been established at CONKERS and Rosliston Forestry Centre, accounting for 800 school visits involving 30,000 children in 2001/2.

- Highly imaginative arts projects have been used to celebrate and interpret the Forest. Since 1995 more than 100 community and school groups have participated in numerous arts projects including: sculptures (eg the Flame for Dunblane), village features, site signage and creative arts events.

## **12 Forest Zones**

- Good progress is being made towards realising the vision for each of the Forest's six landscape zones.
- Some zones have seen considerably more activity and change than others, notably the Midland Coalfield, Mease Lowlands and Calke Uplands; but activity has been well spread across the Forest area and the intentions of the Strategy are being met.

## **13 Monitoring and Review**

- High importance is attached to monitoring the Forest's creation. The NFC has established a Geographic Information System to help monitor environmental, landuse and landscape change and has also commissioned visitor and awareness surveys and socio-economic monitoring.

## **Chapter 3) THE NATIONAL FOREST VISION**

### **NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS**

#### **1 From concept to reality**

- 1.1 The National Forest is happening. In less than 10 years the concept and ‘Forest Vision’ have started to become a reality, as there is now a growing, physical entity called ‘The National Forest’. Progress towards the vision has been significant and this is reflected in the dramatic environmental, cultural and economic change that has taken place within the area, as a result of the Forest initiative.

#### **2 Philosophy of Approach**

- 2.1 The Forest is, quite literally, transforming the physical character of the area and the way it is perceived. The area has changed from one that was sparsely wooded, scarred by dereliction and badly affected by economic and social decline; into an area where woodland cover has more than doubled, a major new recreation and tourism resource has been created, and where more people now want to live, work and spend their leisure time. The Forest is proving a positive force for environmental and economic regeneration and is contributing to a new sense of community spirit and pride, particularly in the Coalfield area.
- 2.2 The Forest is being created, as intended, by integrating it within the cultural and ecological character of the area. Ecological and cultural assets have been retained; and there have been extensive biodiversity and heritage gains, through the creation and management of habitats and the restoration and management of archaeological features.
- 2.3 Progress is also being made to link the rural and urban aspects of the Forest’s creation. In particular, urban forestry initiatives, development-related planting and new urban fringe woodlands are starting to weave forestry into the physical and economic fabric of the area.

#### **3 Forest Creation**

- 3.1 The Forest is achieving landscape-scale change and woodland cover has risen from 6 - 13.3% (3,675 ha). Target areas for planting are largely being met. There has been extensive new planting on derelict and mineral worked land, creating many new sites for recreation. Large-scale commercial plantations and farm woodlands have been targeted in rural areas. Planting along transport corridors has also seen progress, but now needs a higher priority.

## **4 Agriculture**

- 4.1 The National Forest Tender Scheme and National Forest Premium have been instrumental towards helping to retain a healthy and viable agriculture. Over £18m has been invested into the rural economy, which has supported 124 farm diversification schemes. A wide range of forestry, leisure, tourism and conservation ventures have been established; and over 65% of the total Forest creation has been achieved on farmland.

## **5 Biodiversity**

- 5.1 The National Forest area was one of the first to produce a Biodiversity Action Plan (1998) and was unique in setting very ambitious targets for both habitat creation and management.
- 5.2 Great care has been taken to integrate existing wildlife habitats into new woodland schemes; and over 600 ha of previously unmanaged nature conservation sites have been brought into management through Countryside Stewardship and National Forest Tender Schemes.
- 5.3 Significant progress has also been made towards creating new habitats. Alongside substantial woodland planting the Forest Strategy also set a 5% target for non-woodland habitats (eg heathlands, wetlands, meadows). Over 400 ha have been added, moving the 3% starting point to 3.8%.

## **6 Access**

- 6.1 The creation of an accessible and welcoming Forest is a key Forest objective. Over 65% of the land planted/committed to the Forest has open public access and 85% some form of access. In addition around 300 km of new Forest trails have been created. This has created extensive new recreation opportunities for walkers, cyclists, horseriders and disabled users. A series of publications have been produced to promote the new access that the Forest has created.
- 6.2 The access objectives of linking key recreation and tourism attractions with trails and targeting derelict railway lines for multi-use trails are also being achieved.

## **7 Recreation and Tourism**

- 7.1 The development of the Forest as a major, new recreation and tourism resource has happened much quicker than was expected. The successful development of Conkers as a major, new visitor attraction (250,000 visitors in first year) has given the Forest an early tourism focus. This has been complemented by a wide range of new recreation attractions, Forest sites and trails.
- 7.2 This new layer of Forest activity, combined with existing and 19 newly developed tourist attractions, has put the Forest area on the tourism map. Between 1997 and 1999 visits to the area rose from 5.4m to 5.7m.

- 7.3 The original target areas for tourism and recreation development have largely been tackled. Derelict and mineral worked land has been targeted for tourism attractions (eg Conkers) and active sports; and rural woodlands have been developed for more informal activities (eg, fishing, horseriding). Over 650 ha of new Forest sites have been developed to include tourism or recreation activities.

## **8 Economic regeneration**

- 8.1 The Forest is a major, positive force for economic regeneration. Over £32.5m has been won for the area since 1995 and over 580 jobs have been created or protected through Single Regeneration Budget and Forest-related schemes. Much of this activity has been focused in the Coalfield, transforming its outlook and aspirations.

## **9 Community activity**

- 9.1 Community involvement has been a key aspect underpinning the Forest's successful development and is one of the main reasons why there is continued popular support for the Forest. Since 1995, 46,000 people have taken part in a wide range of Forest-related community, conservation, healthy walking and arts activities.
- 9.2 Environmental education activity has also grown dramatically. Major education centres have been established at Conkers and Rosliston Forestry Centre. These accounted for 800 school visits involving 30,000 children in 2001/2.

## **10 Summary Assessment**

- 10.1 The long term vision for The National Forest is on course towards being achieved. Significant progress is being made across the key areas of activity. What is also remarkable is the scale and pace of activity. This is setting the Forest apart from any other similar projects of its kind.

## **ENTEC EVALUATION**

The key message from our Strategic review is that, in large measure, The National Forest is achieving (and in many respects exceeding) the objectives set for it in the National Forest Strategy. This is most apparent through tree planting activity, but equally aspirations for biodiversity, tourism and recreation, community and regeneration activity are being realised through direct partnership working, much of it stimulated by the work of the NFC.

The planting of trees has created a focus for activity and initiative which might not otherwise have happened. The National Forest offers a common language, and hence identify, for local and regional communities, creating a synergy of effort and outlook. The work of the NFC has demonstrated how a diverse programme of physical, economic and social regeneration can be pursued through a programme of tree planting.

By its nature The National Forest is a collaborative venture, seeking the generation of activity through establishing networks and targeted investment, often in partnership with a wide range of bodies from the voluntary, public and private sectors. This is demonstrated most clearly in the regeneration of the Midland Coalfield. Here a range of partnerships have been established through which the NFC has had an important influence, complemented by a range of initiatives specific to The National Forest.

Recasting the identify of impoverished landscapes across the Midland Coalfield, Mease Lowlands and Trent Valley is an ambitious task but one which is seeing the steadily growing signals of progress. This is widely recognised amongst the partners in the Forest project, along with their acceptance that this is a long-term enterprise which demands careful nurturing.

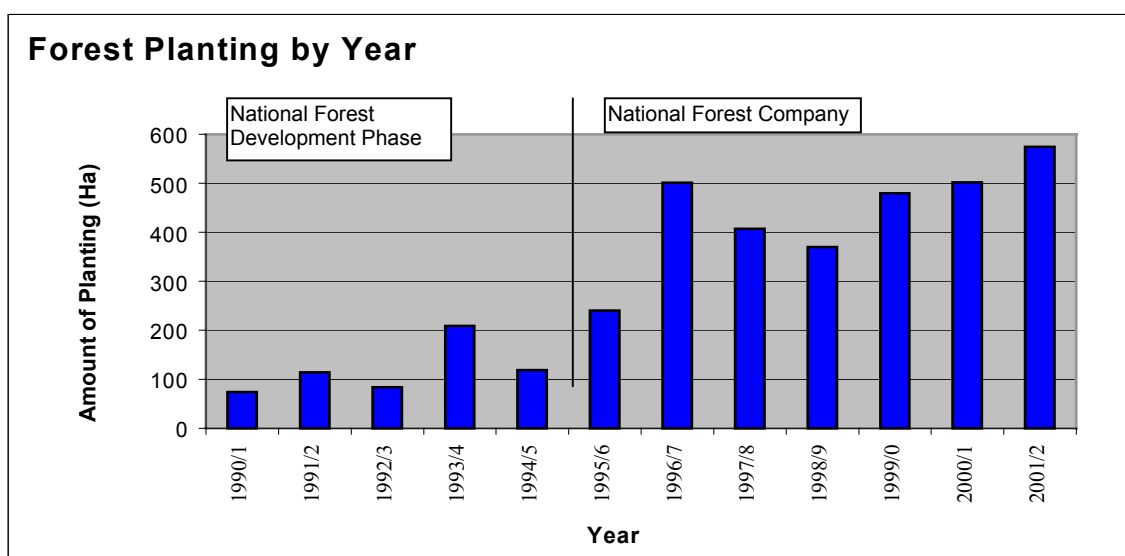
The evidence compiled for this review amply demonstrates both aspiration and success across a wide range of initiatives, both in quantitative and qualitative measures.

## Chapter 4) FORESTRY AUDIT

### NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS

#### 1 Planting Targets

- The Strategy set an overall woodland target of 33% (16,566 ha), comprising 6% (3,012 ha) existing woodland and 27% new planting (13,554 ha).
- Significant progress has been achieved with 3,675 ha of land planted or committed to the Forest and 4.8 million trees planted (as at 31.3.02). This has more than doubled woodland cover from 6% to 13.3%.
- The target to plant 70% of the new planting target (13,554 ha) in the first 10 years has not however, proved possible. This is largely due to the full range of financial incentives, as recommended in the Forest Business Plan (1994), not being available to the NFC. The target was revised in 1998 to 500 ha per year. This target is now being met and based upon this annual figure, 38.2% of the planting target (5,175 ha) should be achieved in 10 years (2004). This would take overall wooded cover to 16.3% (including the 6% of existing woodland that was the starting point).



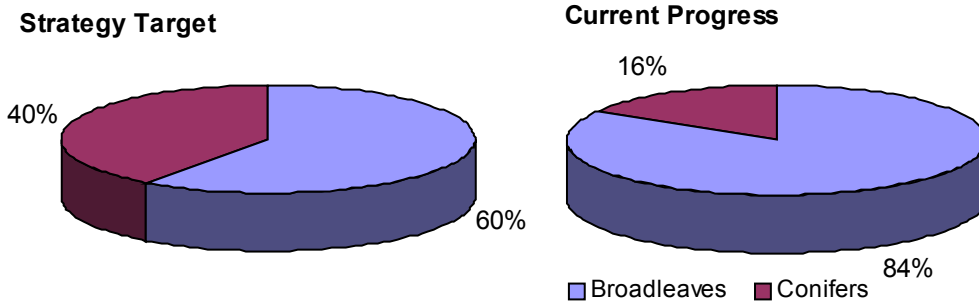
#### 2 Preferred and Sensitive Planting Areas

- The greatest potential for planting was identified in Preferred Planting Areas. This objective is being achieved, with around 85% of planting in Preferred Planting Areas.

#### 3 Species Choice

- The final planting mix aims to achieve around 60% broad-leaves to 40% conifers.
- The current planting mix is 84% broad-leaves to 16% conifer. This split is to be expected at this point, as more earlier schemes on derelict, mineral worked and publicly owned land were broad-leaved; whereas more recent commercial woodlands

have seen more conifer planting. The trend for more mixed broad-leaved and conifer commercial planting is expected to increase.



#### 4 Types of Planting

- Good success has been achieved with commercial plantations and farm woodlands (eg. Grangewood, Rosliston Forestry Centre and Battram Wood); recreation and amenity woodlands (eg. Donisthorpe and Sence Valley Forest Parks and Bagworth Heath Woods); and conservation woodlands (eg. Willesley Wood, Money Hill Wood and Ratby Burroughs).
- There has been some success with urban forestry (eg. in Burton upon Trent and Swadlincote); development planting (see Planning and Economic Development chapter); gateway planting (eg. A42 roadside, Vale Farm Wood and Grey Lodge Wood); symbolic planting (eg. National Memorial Arboretum, NFC's Plant and Adopt a Tree and Milestones planting schemes); and historic parkland management (eg. Calke, Catton and Dunstall estates).
- But there has been little or no progress with energy forestry; woodlands for game; agroforestry; and hedgerow tree planting.

#### 5 Planting Strategy

- The geographic targeting of planting for different planting purposes across the Forest (ie areas for mainly commercial, recreation, conservation and urban forestry planting) is being achieved.

#### 6 Natural Regeneration/Local Provenance

- Natural Regeneration was to be particularly encouraged on derelict land and adjacent to Ancient Woodlands. Natural Regeneration has been achieved on 25 sites, contributing just over 1% to the total new planting area.
- For several years there has been anecdotal evidence of local provenance tree stock being used, particularly by the Woodland Trust and some local authorities and private landowners. In 2000 however the NFC put in place a detailed local provenance policy which is being systematically monitored. The first year's results showed that 13 of the 15 Round 7 Tender Schemes had used local provenance stock; and that 97% of the 340,000 trees planted on those schemes were sourced from U.K. stock.

## **7 Woodland Management**

- 243ha of woodlands have been brought into management. Small farm woods and Ancient Woodlands have been targeted, as intended.

## **8 Timber production and marketing**

- Species choice in commercial planting schemes is being undertaken with future markets in mind. However further research is needed into the potential timber volumes, products and values of tree species that are being planted.
- The aim of establishing a Timber Marketing Association has not yet been tackled. A number of landowners are involved in marketing timber through the national Woodlots scheme.

## **9 Carbon Sequestration**

- It was envisaged that by year 50 one million tons of carbon will have been fixed as a result of the Forest's creation. New research is needed to identify how many tons of carbon have been fixed by the planting achieved so far. The amount is likely to be a small but important symbolic contribution towards helping to reduce national carbon dioxide emissions.

## **10 Demonstration and Research**

- Three Demonstration Woodlands have been created by Forest Research, NFC and public/private landowners, to examine establishment techniques for new woodlands on different soil types. The results have been published as national guidance by Forest Research and a long-term monitoring programme has been set up.
- The NFC has also trialed and successfully demonstrated the use of the National Forest Tender Scheme as a new mechanism for Forest creation.

## **ENTEC EVALUATION**

### **Planting targets**

The National Forest met its planting targets for the years 2000/01 and 2001/02, with new planting now reaching just over one quarter of its intended total planting target (7.3% of the area is newly planted compared to the target of 27%). Previous years targets (along with the original target of 70% of planting activity in the first ten years) were not achieved for a variety of reasons leading to the targets for 1999/00 and subsequent years being reduced. Field survey evidence reveals an appropriate balance being achieved between wooded and open land uses.

## **12 Timber production**

The field sample of sites indicates that timber production is a high priority amongst Tender Scheme applicants and that, through the mix of coniferous and mixed broadleaf planting, there are short, medium and longer-term opportunities for timber production.

## **13 Site management**

Conditions attached to the Tender Scheme in respect of maintenance are ensuring that the basis of good site management is established.

Some evidence of poor management was observed in the field sample of sites, but this would have to be corroborated by further survey work by a trained silviculturalist. The impact on the image of The National Forest could be compromised by these problems.

The recent establishment of a formal monitoring programme for National Forest planting provides a robust mechanism for identifying management problems and initiating action for these to be addressed. There remains scope for the NFC to influence the site monitoring programmes undertaken by partner organisations for sites sold-on following acquisition and those in the ownership of minerals companies.

## **14 Carbon fixing**

There is no research evidence as yet for the fixing of carbon dioxide emissions directly attributable to the activities of The National Forest, although the trees planted to date will have an impact.

## **Chapter 5) LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND DESIGN AUDIT**

### **NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS**

#### **Landscape Character**

- The original National Forest landscape character assessment (LCA) carried out in 1992 has proved a robust framework for guiding the Forest's creation (see map 1 overleaf). It fits into the national landscape character framework (published in 2000) and is recognised in this as a priority area for landscape change.
- The LCA would however benefit from updating, as some of the Forest's zones have changed significantly (eg the Coalfield); and some of the Forest's landscape types (eg the Industrial Farmlands) may need re-categorising in the light of major landscape improvements through Forest planting.
- Since the LCA was published detailed character assessments have also been undertaken by Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire County Councils. These should help to inform an update of the LCA.

#### **Regional Character Areas**

- The Forest's six zones remain valid. However, the naming five of the zones should be reviewed, as it would be better to use the Countryside Agency's national character map names.

#### **Landscape Types - Forest Design Guidance**

- The overall impression is that planting design guidance is generally being followed on a scheme by scheme basis within the Forest's six landscape types. However, this would benefit from more systematic and independent monitoring.
- It is also becoming apparent that there may be enough trees in certain areas, given the cumulative landscape effect of new planting schemes linked with existing woodland. This will require new GIS-based landscape research and monitoring to be able to model and visualise how new planting will develop over time.

#### **Urban fringe landscapes**

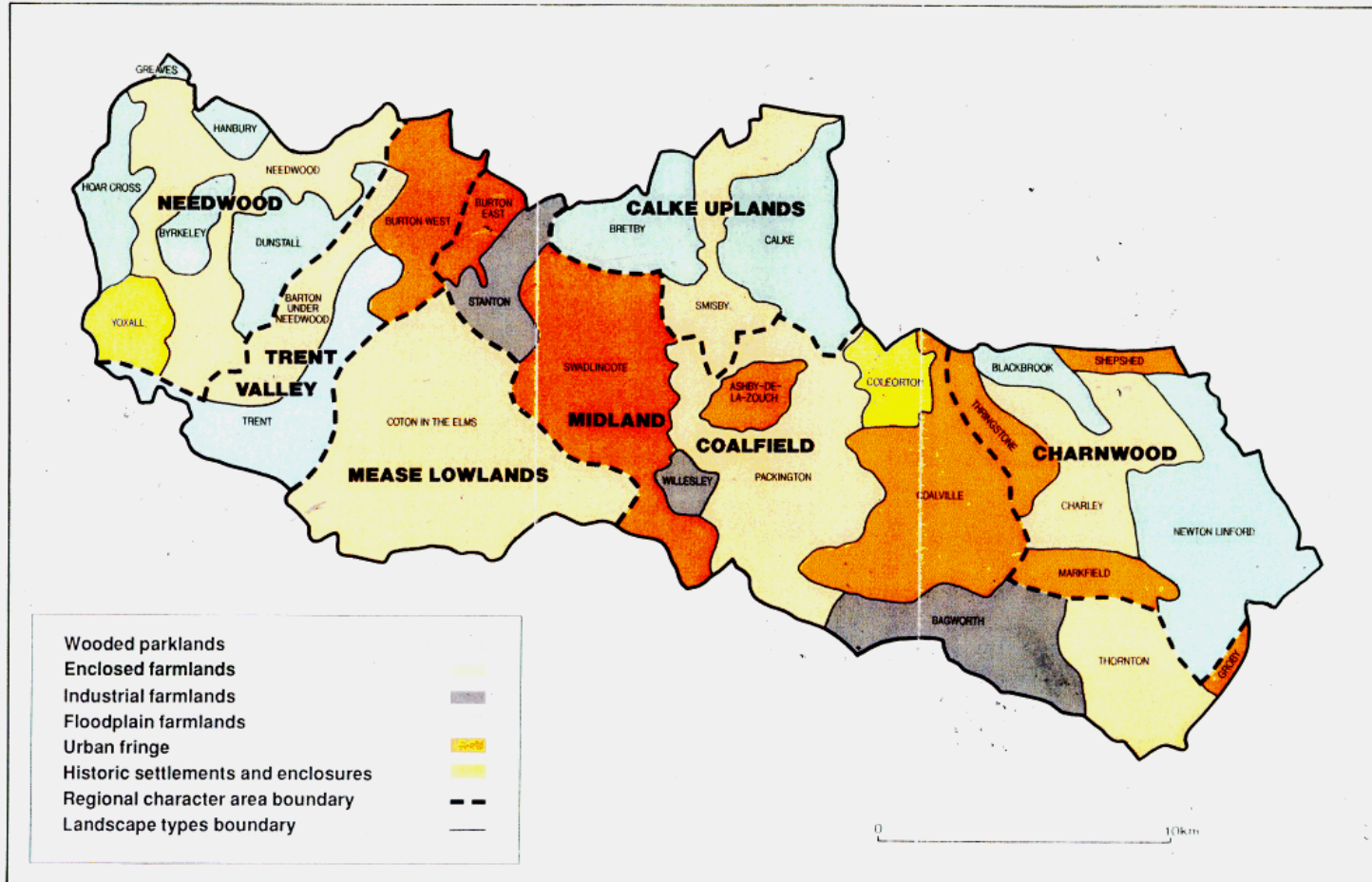
##### *Scale of planting*

- Larger scale planting is being achieved in open and degraded landscapes with smaller scale planting in small, intact landscapes.

##### *Types of planting*

- Being achieved - community woods on mineral worked land; large plantations on reclaimed mining sites and arable land; country/forest parks; farm woods in open farmland landscapes; natural regeneration along derelict railway lines; and hedgerow gapping-up.

**THE NATIONAL FOREST STRATEGY  
MAP 1 - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**



- Some progress - development landscaping; amenity planting in and around villages; and natural regeneration along watercourses.
- Little progress - new parkland; agroforestry; short rotation coppice (SRC); and hedgerow tree planting.

#### *Design guidance*

- This has been followed, notably:
  - the design philosophy of grading planting from urban sites - country parks - to rural woodlands; and interlinking urban fringe and rural planting.
  - contouring spoil heaps and designing planting to accentuate the landform.
  - maintaining a balance between wooded and open habitats on restored mineral sites.
  - using quick growing pioneer species and retaining natural regeneration on derelict/mineral sites.
  - incorporation of hedgerows.

#### **Historic settlement and enclosures**

##### *Scale of planting*

- Small-scale planting is being achieved, though there are few schemes so far.

##### *Types of planting*

- Being achieved - farm woodlands.
- Some progress - hedgerow tree regeneration and replanting of gappy hedges.
- Little progress - riverside copses and parkland reinstatement.

#### *Design guidance*

This has been followed, notably:

- incorporating new field-sized woods or planting to landform where this is dominant.
- designing woods with irregular shapes.
- interlocking new planting with the hedgerow pattern.

#### **Wooded parkland**

##### *Scale of planting*

- Small to medium sized woods are generally being planted. However, the coalescence of several new woods is creating areas of large-scale planting in some areas (eg south of Foremark and Tatenhill). Whilst these plantings are in large-scale, generally open landscapes that can take the scale of planting, it will be important to review whether these areas now have enough planting.

- The aim of achieving a balance of around one third trees to two thirds open space is generally being achieved. However, concerns were expressed at Deans Lane, Charnwood about too much planting. As a consequence Martin's Wood was re-designed to include more open ground and to retain views.
- Sensitive small-scale planting in parkland settings has been achieved.

#### *Types of planting*

- Being achieved - farm woodlands, estate forestry and commercial plantations; parkland replanting and management; and maintaining a strong hedgerow pattern.
- Some progress - hedgerow tree regeneration.
- Little progress - game coverts; streamside planting/regeneration.

#### *Design guidance*

This has been followed, notably:

- planting to accentuate valley sides and create new hill top woods.
- avoiding planting on open summits in Charnwood.
- planting to landform and of irregular shapes.
- avoiding straight lines on contoured slopes.
- using hedgerow/shrub planting and incorporating mature trees along woodland edges.

### **Floodplain farmlands**

#### *Scale of planting*

- Small-scale planting is being followed for small-scale pastoral landscapes and large-scale planting in open agricultural landscapes.

#### *Types of planting*

- Being achieved - small floodplain woods; recreation/conservation planting on mineral worked sites; riverine woods and pollards; and farm woods.
- Some progress - development landscaping; riverside Black Poplar planting.
- No progress - SRC; agroforestry.

#### *Design guidance*

- The following has been achieved:
  - planting has been used to accentuate rising ground on the floodplain margins.
  - floodplain woods are designed to meet Environment Agency requirements.
  - a balance of wetland habitats, grassland and trees is being achieved adjacent to open water.
  - development landscaping has not been commensurate with the scale of new building along the A38 corridor. As a consequence this planting is not of a scale to link into the wider rural landscape.

## **Industrial farmlands**

### *Scale of planting*

- Large-scale planting has been achieved to reflect the medium - large-scale agricultural landscapes and mineral worked sites.
- Small-scale planting is being undertaken around villages.

### *Types of planting*

- Being achieved - commercial plantations on farmland; community woods on derelict/mineral worked land; amenity tree planting in villages.
- Some progress - farm woodlands; hedgerow tree regeneration; golf course planting (planned at Nadins, Swadlincote).
- No progress - SRC; linear watercourse planting.

### *Design guidance*

- Guidance is being followed:
  - mineral/derelict land sites are being contoured and planting is used to accentuate the landform; a balance of open land and planting is being met; and progressive planting is underway at several long-term mineral workings.
  - in agricultural landscapes, whilst planting often follows field boundaries, it also reflects the landform. Irregular shaped woods are being created and hedgerows are being incorporated within schemes.

## **Enclosed farmlands**

### *Scale of planting*

- Large-scale planting is being achieved to reflect the medium to large-scale landscape character.
- Small-scale planting is being achieved on country estates, around villages and in parklands.

### *Types of planting*

- Being achieved - commercial plantations; estate forestry; and farm woodlands.
- Some progress - hedgerow tree regeneration; replanting of parkland trees; parkland agroforestry; and planting of waterside Black Poplars.
- No progress - game coverts; instant spinneys; SRC; and parkland reinstatement.

### *Design guidance*

- Guidance is largely being followed:
  - planting is linked well to landform and the hedgerow pattern.
  - an even scatter of small (out of scale) woods has been avoided.

- planting has accentuated landscape features; and been designed to retain views from prominent hilltops (by incorporating open ground); and has retained vistas of prominent features (eg church spires).
  - woods are designed with irregular shapes; and hedges and hedgerow trees are included - often forming woodland edges.
  - hedgerows are being used to link new woods into the landscape.
- A balance of one third woodland to two thirds open space has also been achieved. However, it is questionable whether some schemes should have been planted as close to village edges as they have been (eg Park Farm, Linton).

## **ENTEC EVALUATION**

Evidence from the field survey suggests that there has been an appropriate application of planting to the character of the receiving landscape.

## Chapter 6) SPORT, RECREATION AND TOURISM AUDIT

### NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS

#### A Forest for recreation and tourism

- The Forest has developed far quicker than expected into a major new recreation and tourism resource. A diverse range of new attractions and facilities have been created:
  - 19 new tourism attractions, including the highly acclaimed Conkers Discovery Centre (see below), the National Memorial Arboretum, Hough Windmill, Safari Parties and Home Farm, Nanpantan.
  - 30 new sport and recreation facilities (see below).
  - 3,675 hectares of new forest sites, with 65% providing open public access and 85%, some form of access.
  - 300 km of new trails (see below).

#### A new visitor destination

- The Strategy estimated that at its peak the Forest may attract around 5.9 million (m) visits per year, 90% of which will be day trips. Already visitor numbers have reached 5.7m (1999) and 93% of these are day visits. Tourism growth is summarised below:

**Tourism growth in The National Forest**

	<b>National Forest Strategy (1994) projections</b>	<b>Volume and Value Study 1997</b>	<b>Volume and Value Study 1999</b>
Visitors	5.9 million	5.4 million	5.7 million
% of Day Visitors	90%	94%	93%
Day Visitors	5,310,000	5,074,538	5,346,541
Overnight visitors	590,000	311,149	346,854
Total visitor spend		£106 million	£128 million
Jobs supported by Tourism		3,260	3,680

- Target visitor markets were identified as local residents; surrounding towns and cities; and short breaks and longer stays. Surveys indicate that the majority of visitors are local, but with visits increasing from nearby towns and cities to major attractions. However, there is only limited impact so far on short breaks and longer stays.
- A distinct lack of attractions with family appeal was a particular concern. Several new attractions are specifically meeting this need, including Conkers, Rosliston Forestry Centre and Beehive Farm.

## **Central Forest focus and visitor centre**

- A central Forest focus formed by a National Forest visitor centre was a key target.
- The £16m Conkers Discovery Centre has met this target. It has become a major new tourist attraction in its own right, with 250,000 visitors in 2001; it has also proved a major stimulus to the 'hub' of linked tourism and recreation activity in the Ashby Wolds area; and is a major factor in helping to put The National Forest on the tourism map.

## **Trails**

- New trails for walkers have been created, which have been designed to connect major access, recreation and tourist locations. Steady gains have also been made for cyclists, horseriders and disabled users.
  - Walkers – 5 medium distance trails and 4 local walks from Conkers have been developed; there is an extensive network of trails on new forest sites; and new trails have been created by local authorities.
  - Cyclists – 31 km of routes have been created including Sustrans Route 54 between Alrewas and Burton upon Trent; part of Sustrans Route 63 between Leicester and Burton upon Trent; and 4 new off-road routes.
  - Horseriding – 20 new linear routes have been established.
  - Disabled – 27 sites or trails offer some disabled access.
- In addition 14 new dedicated rights of way, mainly for walkers have been established.

## **Sport and Recreation**

- A wide variety of sport and recreation facilities have been created or are planned, including:
  - 2 new permanent orienteering courses, with 20 sites mapped in total.
  - 7 fishing lakes, plus 2 sites for disabled fishing.
  - 2 new cycle hire facilities.
  - sites developed for mountain biking, carriage driving, cross country horseriding, sledging and bird watching; with a new golf course planned at Swadlincote.
  - several woodland adventure play areas and an assault course at Conkers.
  - water sports are planned at Donington Lake and Barton Quarry (including motorised sports); and there are new leisure boating facilities at Barton Marina and on the rewatered Ashby Canal.

- No progress has been made on new sites for land-based motor sports (despite various attempts), though an existing motor scrambling site has been retained as part of a National Forest Tender Scheme.

### **Areas of Opportunity**

- Clusters of derelict land and mineral worked sites were identified as areas of opportunity for reclamation to leisure, tourism or access uses.
- All of the target areas are being tackled. There has been substantial progress in the Ashby Wolds, Heather/Bagworth and Lount areas; with on-going work in the Trent Valley and at Nadins (Swadlincote).

### **Accommodation**

- Some progress has been made in adding new visitor accommodation with seven new caravan/camping sites established; improvements to some hotels; and discussions are being held with the Youth Hostels Association regarding a new youth hostel.
- Balanced against this, some accommodation facilities have closed and as a result there has been little overall gain in provision.

### **Forest awareness and usage**

- Surveys show that awareness of the Forest is increasing. Between 1996 and 2000 local awareness rose from 82-86% and national awareness rose from 33-37%.
- A partnership approach is also being developed towards coordinated marketing and branding of the Forest, particularly through the National Forest Tourism Working Group and Tourism Marketing Forum.

### **Transport**

- Having exceptional accessibility both to and within the Forest is essential to maximise the Forest's tourism potential.
- At present the car remains the dominant mode of transport; but better public transport is essential for the sustainable development of the Forest as a tourism resource.

## **ENTEC EVALUATION**

A wide range of recreation and tourism facilities have been established within The National Forest which position it as a significant resource at local, regional and national scales. Targets set for the establishment of facilities have been met or exceeded in most years.

Clearly there has been significant progress in developing The National Forest as a major tourist attraction and in many respects this has by some margin exceeded expectations. The key challenge rests with attracting overnight visitors by creating a sufficiently diverse and interesting set of attractions.

Major recreation and tourism resources have been created as a direct result of the establishment of The National Forest, many of which are sited on derelict colliery land. These are part of a diverse range of recreational opportunities promoted by The National Forest.

The National Forest is attracting significant numbers of visitors to the area, many of which are day visitors and focused on key attractions such as Conkers. Equally, a range of recreational opportunities are being developed which help to engender a sense of ownership by local communities.

## Chapter 7) AGRICULTURE AND RURAL ENTERPRISE AUDIT

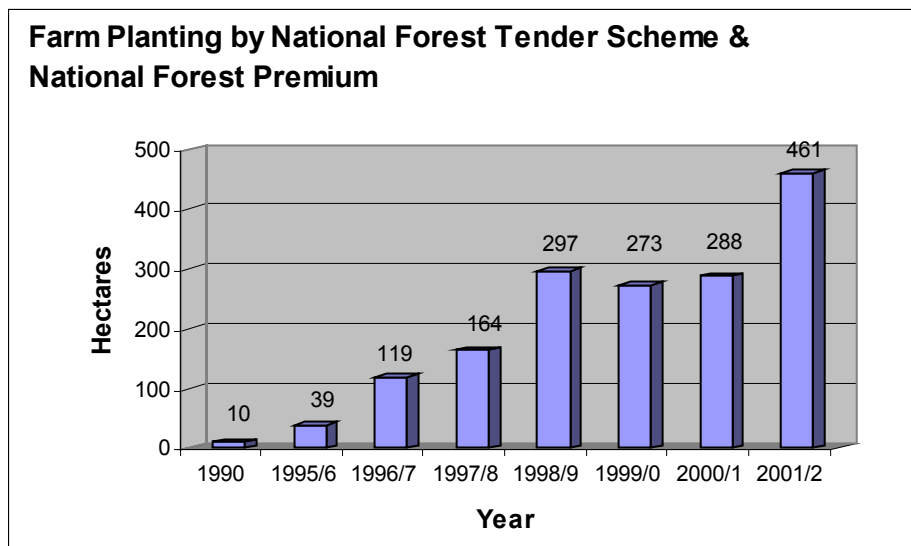
### NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS

#### Potential Constraints

- The Strategy highlighted the fundamental need to overcome private landowners' concerns about getting involved in the Forest's creation:
  - forestry could de-value agricultural land.
  - large-scale forestry could affect farm business viability.
  - planting incentives (1994) were not attractive enough.
  - Set Aside was a major constraint, limiting planting options.
  - there was no culture of woodland planting in the area.
- The NFC has worked closely with private landowners and their representative organisations to overcome these concerns. The National Forest Tender Scheme, in particular, has provided an attractive incentive that has taken into account agricultural land values, enhanced farm business viability and complemented Set Aside requirements.

#### Farm Woodland Creation

- 96 farm forestry schemes have been implemented since 1995 covering 1,640 hectares. From less than 10 ha of planting per year in the early 1990s, private landowners (alone) have averaged 230 ha of woodland planting per year since 1995.



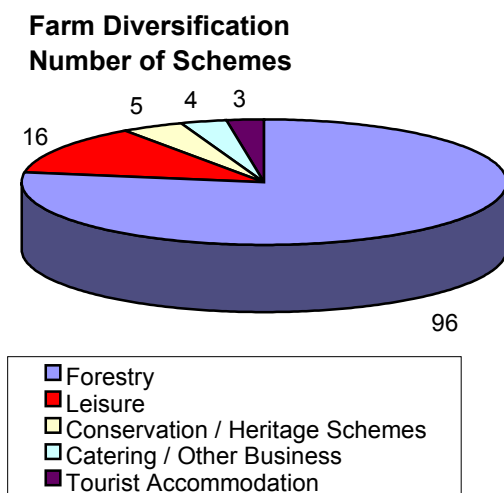
#### Public Access

- There was also initial concern that landowners may be reluctant to increase public access on their land. This has proved unfounded, due largely to the success of the Tender Scheme.

- 82% of new farm woodland by area (1,350 hectares) provides open public access; and private landowners have dedicated 8 new Public Rights of Way.

### **Farm Diversification**

- Unprecedented opportunities for farm diversification were seen, especially in the medium to long term, with forestry providing the setting for a range of activities.
- The following progress has been made:-
  - 96 forestry diversification schemes have been created (with most including conservation and public access elements), and
  - 28 multi-use schemes have been developed involving diversification to leisure activities, tourist accommodation, catering and business ventures and Countryside Stewardship and Local Heritage Initiative schemes.



### **Timber-related industries**

- No significant impact has been made on developing new timber-related industries and timber marketing outlets. This now needs to be given a higher priority.

### **Landowner Support and Skills Training**

- Various landowner support mechanisms have been set up – with specialist advice available from NFC and Forestry Commission staff; and landowner involvement through the Tender Scheme Club and Tourism Marketing Forum.
- Skills training for farmers is being taken forward through the Leicestershire Rural Partnership, with funding for a farm business advice scheme and IT training needs assessment; an East Midlands based EU vocational training scheme; specialist courses (eg timber marketing and deer management); and a training needs assessment undertaken by the NFC (2002).

## **Voluntary Participation**

- The success in engaging private landowners has been founded on sticking to the principle of voluntary participation with:
  - no compulsory purchase of land.
  - no compulsory public access.
  - securing agreement between landlords and tenants over forest-related schemes.

## **ENTEC EVALUATION**

Farm diversification has been stimulated through the National Forest Tender Scheme, enabling opportunities in forestry, conservation, recreation and tourism.

The intensity and range of farm-based access and recreation activity has grown throughout the life of the Tender Scheme, probably reflecting the declining agricultural incomes of many farmers and the opportunities provided by Forest-related development.

## Chapter 8) NATURE CONSERVATION AUDIT

### NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS

#### Protecting biodiversity

- Protecting biodiversity is fundamental to creating The National Forest. New schemes have been sensitively designed so as not to lose or damage ecological sites.
- Existing habitats have in many cases been incorporated within new woodland sites thereby ensuring their long term protection and management (eg at Willesley Wood, Manor Farm Wood and the Bass Millennium Woodland).
- 21 sites totalling 170 ha have been specifically purchased to enhance their biodiversity interest, including wetlands (Croxall Lakes, Kelham Bridge); grasslands (Altar Stones, Billa Barra); ancient woodlands (Ratby Burrough, Charley Woods); and wood pasture (Oakwood Pastures).
- Buffer zones have been included on new woodlands adjacent to SSSIs (eg at Lount Wood, Sim Bailey Wood and Buildings Farm).

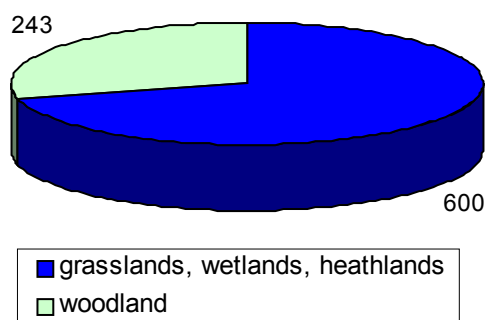
#### Conservation designations

- There have been several new designations giving added protection to ecological sites, including:
  - The River Mease being designated an SSSI and Special Area for Conservation.
  - Charnwood Lodge gaining National Nature Reserve status.
  - Local Nature Reserves have been designated at Lount, Nature Alive and Billa Barra.
  - 16 roadside nature reserves have been designated in Staffordshire.

#### Habitat management

- Over 600 ha of open habitats (grasslands, wetlands and heathlands) have been brought into management through Countryside Stewardship and Tender Schemes.
- In addition 243 ha of existing woodland has been brought into management including 85 ha of Ancient Woodland (eg at Ratby Burroughs, Sheet Hedges Wood and Charley Woods).

#### Habitats brought into management (ha)



- There has also been good progress in managing wildlife corridors, with 66 km of hedgerow management and management guidelines drawn up for roadside verge nature reserves in Staffordshire.

### Habitat creation

- 3,675 ha of woodland habitat creation has been achieved. Sites are typically designed to create habitat diversity by including shrub planting, open ground habitats and hedgerows where appropriate.
- Over 400 ha of open habitats have been created. These include wetlands in the Trent Valley (eg Barton Quarry); heathlands in Charnwood (eg West Beacon Fields); meadows (eg Rough Hill Wood); plus areas of rough grassland within new woodlands.
- 53 kms of new hedgerows have been planted.
- Habitat creation is also starting to connect fragmented habitats notably in the Grangewood, Ratby, Needwood scarp and Calke Uplands areas.

### Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

- The National Forest BAP was produced in 1998 and is the focus for targeting and monitoring conservation and management of habitats and key species.
- Progress towards implementing the BAP includes:

<p><b>BAP Habitats</b></p> <p>Wet woodland Wood pasture/parkland Meadows Heathland  Ponds and wetland scrapes</p>	<p><b>Achievements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 6.2 ha created (target 50 ha by 2010).</li> <li>- 21.5 ha created (target 100 ha by 2010).</li> <li>- 56.4 ha created (target 50 ha by 2010).</li> <li>- 32.1 ha created/brought into management (target 100 ha by 2010).</li> <li>- 31 ponds and 4 ha of wetland scrapes created (51% of 2010 target achieved).</li> </ul>
<p><b>BAP Species</b></p>	<p><b>Achievements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Noctule Bat and Redstart – bat and bird boxes installed Forest-wide, plus woodland management.</li> <li>- Otters – 4 new otter holts built, a Forest-wide survey completed and streamside management undertaken.</li> <li>- Adder – 2 new hibernacula built, plus heathland management.</li> <li>- Ruddy Darter Dragonfly – significant pond creation and management and new breeding sites identified.</li> <li>- Bluebell – 17 new sites planted and 2 extended.</li> <li>- Black Poplar – 18 new sites planted and a database created of all known sites in the Forest area.</li> </ul>

### **Local Provenance**

- NFC produced a local provenance policy in 2000 and is promoting this to tree planting partners. Initial monitoring (2002) suggests that this policy is being achieved with 97% of the 340,000 trees planted at 13 of the 15 Tender Scheme sites being of UK stock.
- NFC is also co-funding with Charnwood Borough Council a Local Provenance Officer to develop this initiative.

### **Ecological surveys.**

- Phase I ecological surveys have been completed in Staffordshire and Derbyshire and special grassland surveys have been undertaken in Derbyshire.
- Three Forest sites – Willesley Wood, Sence Valley Forest Park and Croxall Lakes have been the focus of detailed, baseline ecological surveys. These sites will be systematically monitored every 3-5 years.

### **ENTEC EVALUATION**

Existing and potential biodiversity interests are being taken into account through established criteria as part of the National Forest Tender Scheme and reflected in the results of the sample sites survey. Targets for biodiversity enhancement are being progressively realised with The National Forest offering a forum for discussion amongst a wide range of partners through the Nature Conservation Working Group.

## **Chapter 9) CULTURAL HERITAGE AUDIT**

### **NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS**

#### **Protection of archaeological sites**

- Creation of the Forest should not damage archaeological sites and should avoid planting that affects the visual setting of sites and historic buildings.
- This approach is being achieved, in particular due to very good support from County Archaeologists. NFC encourages prospective planters to have early discussions with County Archaeologists and schemes are then assessed through the Woodland Grant Scheme consultation process.
- The NFC is unaware of any adverse effects on archaeological and historic sites and indeed two planting proposals were turned down on archaeological grounds.

#### **Records and surveys**

- A high priority was to supplement County Sites and Monuments Records with fast track survey work to identify unrecorded archaeological sites.
- This was achieved through specialist survey work undertaken by the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments in England.
- Preparing an historic landscape character assessment to complement this work was also identified as an early priority.
- Specialist work has been undertaken in Derbyshire and Staffordshire but not in Leicestershire.
- In addition the NFC has made a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Forest-wide history project that will involve a wide range of organisations and local communities. This will focus on how the historic and cultural heritage is blending with the new sense of place being created through the Forest's development.

#### **Improving heritage sites**

- The Forest's creation offers opportunities to enhance the setting, and to improve the condition and management of heritage sites.
- Steady progress has been made, with a range of archaeological features now protected and managed as part of woodland creation schemes. These include:

Archaeological feature	Forest sites
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ridge and furrow.</li> <li>- Park pale fence.</li> <li>- Water ram.</li> <li>- WW2 pill box.</li> <li>- Stone bothy.</li> <li>- Windmill site.</li> <li>- Iron-age hillfort and earthwork.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>East Hill Wood and Yoxall Meadows.</li> <li>Old Parks Farm.</li> <li>Grange Wood.</li> <li>National Memorial Arboretum.</li> <li>Norwood.</li> <li>Windmill Wood.</li> <li>Borough Hill Wood.</li> </ul>

- There has also been major renovation of Moira Furnace and Grace Dieu Priory and the re-watering of 2 km of the Ashby canal.

### **Interpretation and public enjoyment**

- New public and educational access has been secured to a number of previously inaccessible heritage sites; and many of these sites also provide on-site interpretation or special information leaflets.

### **Parkland restoration**

- Parkland restoration schemes are underway at several sites, including Catton Hall, Calke Abbey, Staunton Harold and Dunstall Hall, with others planned (eg Byrkley Park).
- The NFC has also researched the wider potential for parkland restoration, as part of a parkland restoration bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

### **Historic landscape features**

- Sensitive restoration and management of landscape features has been promoted, resulting in 84 ha of Ancient Woodlands and 66 km of hedgerows being brought into management; plus repairs to dry stone walls in Charnwood.

### **Buildings at Risk**

- The Sharpes Pottery project in Swadlincote has secured new arts and community heritage uses for a major heritage building at risk.

### **ENTEC EVALUATION**

Existing and potential cultural heritage interests are being taken into account through established criteria as part of the National Forest Tender Scheme and reflected in the results of the sample sites survey.

## **Chapter 10) PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUDIT**

### **NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS**

#### **Planning Policy**

- The planning system is recognised as having a vital part to play in realising the Forest, but the Forest has no statutory planning status.
- Nonetheless the Forest has been written-in to national planning guidance – Planning Policy Guidance Note 7, The Countryside and Rural Economy; Minerals Planning Guidance (MPG) Note 1, General Considerations and the Development Plans System; and MPG Note 7, Reclamation of Mineral Workings.
- A regional and local planning policy context has also been achieved with Forest-related policies written-in to Regional Planning Guidance for the East and West Midlands, County Structure, Minerals and Waste Plans and Local Plans.

#### **The Regional agenda**

- The NFC has promoted the Forest as part of the new regional agenda, for example by getting the Forest written-in to the economic development strategies of emda and Advantage West Midlands and promoting the Forest as part of strategic sub-regional partnerships. This will be a growing and increasingly important area of work, as strong links are needed in relation to Forest-related economic development activity; transport planning; and regional development planning that could affect the Forest (eg planned development activity around East Midlands airport).

#### **Development-related planting**

- Development proposals should generally include substantial on-site or off-site planting and a consistent approach is needed across the Forest area.
- Local authorities have generally developed consistent development-related planting policies, which have been included in the Appendices to Local Plans or published in Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- The implementation of these policies has however been patchy. Better success has been achieved in the Hinckley and Bosworth, North West Leicestershire, Lichfield and Charnwood parts of the Forest.

#### **Development planting guidelines**

- 100 ha of development-related planting has been secured, through implementation of the National Forest development planting guidelines by local authorities and developers.
- For the development planting guidelines to be fully effective however, a change in national planning policy is needed. This has not materialised. The NFC has promoted the need for national planning policy guidance for forestry through the Planning

Working Group of the England Forestry Forum. This Group has recommended to Government how best to update Circular 36/78, Trees and Forestry.

- Implementation of the planting guidelines has been mixed:

Housing developments – there has been some good progress with several schemes (eg. at Moira, Bagworth, Edingale and Coalville); but also examples with little or no planting (eg. Albert Village).

Industrial/commercial developments – the planting guidelines have proved too onerous. They have only been achieved at one scheme (Melbourne Sewage Treatment Works), with reasonably good contributions secured at Ashby and Bardon 22 business parks. Elsewhere results have been poor eg. Barton and Centrum 100 business parks.

Forest-related developments – the guidelines have not really been tested through planning obligations, but they have been achieved in terms of the settings created for the Conkers, National Memorial Arboretum and Barton Marina developments.

Commuted Sums – these have been negotiated in lieu of Forest planting in several instances. Around £840,000 has been secured towards the development and/or maintenance of new Forest sites.

### **Planning guidance**

- A Planners and Developers Guide has been produced (and updated in 2001) by the NFC Planning Technical Working Group. This has been well received in providing advice to planners and developers on how to implement development-related planting schemes.

### **Economic Regeneration**

- The Forest is proving to be a positive force for economic regeneration. Socio-economic monitoring by the NFC has identified a number of direct and related contributions that the Forest is having:

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
Inward Investment Jobs	- £32.5m won since 1995. - 500 jobs created or protected through SRB schemes. - 44 jobs created and 15 protected through NFC investment. - 22 forestry and landscaping jobs created.
House building	- 3,000 houses are being built each year, especially evident in coalfield communities, reflecting the vastly improving environment of this part of the Forest.
Unemployment	- levels have fallen from 7.6% in 1996 to 4.1% in 2000.

## ENTEC EVALUATION

Planning policy at national, regional, county and district levels is supportive of the aspirations of The National Forest and in turn the NFC seeks to influence planning policy at these scales. Implementation of policy, for example in the enforcement of aspirations for planting associated with new development, falls short of expectations in some cases.

The National Forest has provided a focus for regeneration activity built on a broad range of partnerships at a variety of scales. The establishment of diverse partnerships has established the basis for continuing activity amongst local communities and delivery by Government and its agencies.

A range of skill needs relating to three key elements of NFC work - Tender Scheme winners, farm diversification and leisure and tourism - has recently been identified. It is too early to evaluate their implementation.

## Chapter 11) MINERALS AND DERELICT LAND AUDIT

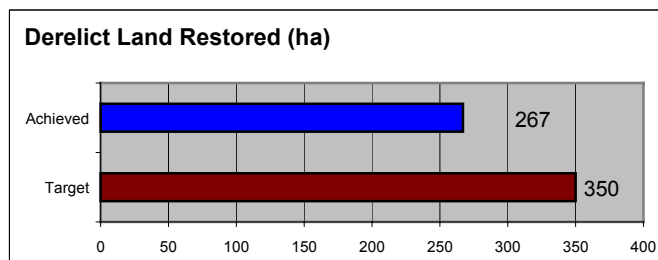
### NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS

#### Landscape and Economic Regeneration

- There has been substantial progress in restoring derelict and mineral worked land which is improving the landscape and encouraging economic regeneration. A wide variety of new woodlands, wetlands, other wildlife habitats and recreation/tourism facilities have been created, covering a total of 964 ha.
- Since 1991, £32.5m of inward investment has been attracted to the area towards economic regeneration, much of which has gone to derelict areas of the Coalfield.

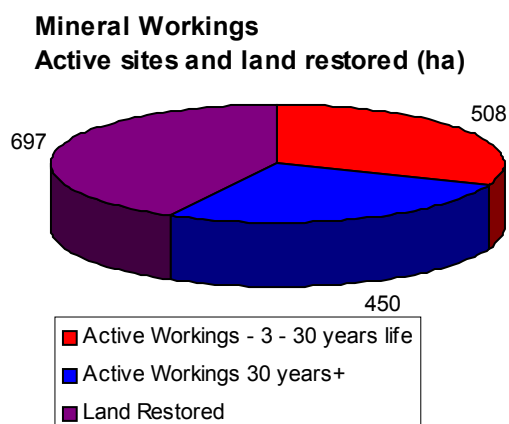
#### Derelict land Reclamation

- Derelict land was targeted to provide around 350 ha for Forest-related uses. 267 ha has been reclaimed (76% of target).



#### Mineral land Restoration

- It was estimated that around 1,655 ha. of mineral workings might be available for Forest-related uses. This included around 450 ha of very long-term workings that would not be restored for 30-50 years.
- 697 ha of land has been restored or landscaped (42% of target).



- A particular issue is that large parts of some mineral workings are being restored to agriculture. This effectively represents ‘land lost’ to the Forest, as restoration to Forest-related uses is often not maximised. This issue requires changes to national minerals planning guidance to favour Forest-related restoration in the Forest area. Without this the overall contribution of restored mineral land is unlikely to be as substantial as was hoped for.

### **Ashby Woulds Focus**

- The Ashby Woulds was identified as a critical area to tackle due to its substantial concentration of derelict land.
- This area has been transformed through a variety of partnerships into the major tourism and recreation focus for the Forest, with the £16m Conkers Discovery Centre at its heart. Around 240 ha of derelict and mineral worked sites have been restored embracing new forest parks, trails and cycleways, the re-watering of the Ashby canal, wildlife sites and the restored Moira Furnace.
- The Ashby Woulds was recognised by the Royal Town Planning Institute in 2002, when it won the RTPI Silver Jubilee Cup for Community Regeneration.

### **Policy Framework**

- The restoration of mineral workings in The National Forest has been written-in to National Minerals Planning Guidance (MPG 1 – General Considerations and the Development Plan System; and MPG 7 – Reclamation of Mineral Workings).
- Policies reflecting the restoration of sites to Forest-related uses are also written-in to the Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire Minerals and Waste Plans.

### **Integrated Restoration Strategies**

- The potential for area-based, integrated restoration strategies was highlighted for the Ashby Woulds and Trent Valley areas. Wide partnership – based strategies (the Ashby Woulds Strategy and the Central Rivers Strategy) have been developed for both areas and are guiding long term restoration of sites to multi-purpose uses.

### **ENTEC EVALUATION**

Land reclamation activity and associated planting within The National Forest has exceeded targets set, employs a variety of end uses, and must be regarded as one of the notable successes associated with the implementation of the Forest. Through a combination of grants and land acquisition, the NFC has been directly involved in land reclamation activity at a number of sites throughout The National Forest.

Major recreation and tourism resources have been created as a direct result of the establishment of The National Forest, many of which are sited on derelict colliery land. These are part of a diverse range of recreational opportunities promoted by The National Forest.

Many of the scars which defined much of the Midlands Coalfield have been ameliorated through planting and on-going work is addressing the peripheral landscaping of active workings in anticipation of restoration. Full restoration of some mineral sites is not to be expected as these could be subject to on-going applications for working.

## **Chapter 12) TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC AUDIT**

### **NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS**

#### **Sustainable Transport**

- The original Forest Strategy highlighted transport, and particularly new traffic generated by visitors, as one of the critical sustainability issues for the Forest. This still remains the case and transport now needs a higher priority.
- Partnership working is essential for transport planning as the NFC has no direct control over this aspect of the Forest Strategy.
- Progress has been made across a number of areas, but progress overall has been slow:
  - The National Forest is written-in to Local Transport Plan policies.
  - The NFC has been a leading partner in the campaign for the opening of the National Forest rail line for passenger use and has supported work to prepare a business case.
  - Rural Bus Grants are being targeted in the area.
  - Significant road improvements have been made (eg. the Ashby by-pass) and multi-modal studies are underway for the A38 and M1.
  - A Cycling Strategy has been produced with good progress made on cycling and walking trails (see Sport, Recreation and Tourism Audit).

#### **Road traffic**

- Increased road traffic by visitors has not been a significant issue as yet, but localised problems are experienced around Conkers on busy Bank Holidays.

#### **Public Transport**

- The opening of the National Forest rail line remains an important element for improved public transport. The changed methods of national revenue support for new rail lines has proved a major stumbling block to this being achieved.
- New bus links have been trialed from Ashby de la Zouch to Moira (for Conkers) and Swadlincote to Rosliston (for Rosliston Forestry Centre). A bus quality partnership has also been established by local authorities and bus companies between Burton upon Trent and Swadlincote.
- The National Forest Visitor Guide, walks and access publications and visitor marketing publications produced by partner organisations promote the use of public transport to reach the Forest.

#### **Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS).**

- An ITS for the area has not yet been produced. The NFC is however undertaking initial scoping work on what an ITS should cover. Partnership working is essential to taking this initiative forward.

### **Switching from cars**

- Park and ride facilities on the Forest periphery, linked to public transport have not yet been progressed;
- Integrating public transport with visitor attractions (eg. Conkers and Rosliston Forestry Centre) and with walking trails is starting to happen;
- Over 30km of new cycle trails have been created; plus two new cycle hire facilities have been established – in Ashby de la Zouch and Rosliston. A cycle hire facility at Conkers is also being considered.

### **Car Parks**

- Car parks, as planned, are being located at visitor attractions, recreation sites and linked to Forest walks. Vandalism has been experienced at some car parks, which may deter some landowners from providing car parks at some sites in the future.
- Some car parks also provide on-site interpretation, but provision is variable and is in need of a more consistent approach.

### **Signage**

- Progress has been made towards creating a Forest identity through new road signage. National Forest roadside boundary signs have been placed at the main entry points into the Forest and settlement entry signs cover around 40% of the Forest's settlements.

## **ENTEC EVALUATION**

The challenge of integrated transport provision is a potent issue which, in the context of sustainability, poses a challenge to the rationale of The National Forest.

In many respects, the work of The National Forest is dependent upon the Local Transport Plans developed by the three County Councils and dialogue between the NFC and County Councils in respect of consultation over Local Transport Plans.

A particular concern is carbon dioxide emissions resulting from traffic associated with increasing numbers of visitors to the Forest. The NFC has been aware of the latter impact since the production of The Forest Strategy, although there is limited scope to influence underlying transport policy challenges.

## **Chapter 13) COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND ARTS AUDIT**

### **NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS**

#### **Community Involvement**

- There has been extensive community involvement in the Forest's creation through a wide range of environmental and arts projects. Around 46,000 people are known to have been involved in Forest-related activities since 1995 (with 10,000 alone in 2001/02).
- The NFC has grant aided 142 community and schools projects worth a total value of £400,000, as well as funding a further 92 community planting events and educational visits through National Forest Tender Schemes.
- The NFC also recognises that community involvement needs to balance community 'ownership' of the area with the need for National Forest branding, in order to create an overall "sense of place" that marries existing local distinctiveness of the area with the creation of a new Forest identity for the future. To help realise this opportunity the NFC has successfully bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding for a National Forest History project.

#### **Voluntary activity**

- The Forest Strategy highlighted the importance of harnessing voluntary activity by local people. This is being achieved in many different ways.
  - grant-aided community projects – including community tree planting, growing trees from seed, free trees schemes, community orchards, village features, parish maps and arts projects.
  - conservation volunteering – through the work of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers' project officer (2,500 volunteer workdays were achieved in 2001/2).
  - 'Walking the Way to Health' initiative – focused on South Derbyshire, this has involved 240 people in health walks since 2001.
  - community fora – including the Ashby Wolds Regeneration Forum and 'Friends of' groups, such as at Swadlincote Woodlands.
  - voluntary site wardens – for example at Willesley Wood; footpath wardens – the Leicestershire County Council network; and tree wardens – the Derbyshire and Leicestershire networks.
  - community involvement in site design – for example at Shepherds Close and Swadlincote Woodlands.
  - surveying researching and waymarking trails – Ramblers Association volunteers.

#### **Social Inclusion**

- It was recognised that particular efforts would be needed to involve minority, disabled and handicapped groups and people of all ages. The following progress has been made:

- Handicapped groups have been involved in sculpture projects (eg at Conkers and Thornton Reservoir) and a community garden in Swadlincote.
- HANDSTAND disabled group has undertaken disabled access surveys at 16 Forest sites and advised on site design at Sarah's Wood.
- Retired people have been involved in parish mapping (Overseal over 50s group) and voluntary staffing at the National Memorial Arboretum.
- BTCV run midweek conservation projects involving unemployed volunteers.
- Ethnic minority school groups, particularly from Leicester, are regular visitors to Conkers.

### **Environmental Education**

- Environmental education activity has also grown dramatically. Major education centres have been established at Conkers and Rosliston Forestry Centre. These accounted for 800 school visits involving 30,000 children in 2001/2; and since 1995 a total of 1,354 groups have made educational visits.
- 120 school and youth groups have been involved in Forest tree planting and school grounds projects.
- An Education Cluster Group has been established to coordinate partnership working. This Group has undertaken an audit of sites suitable for environmental education visits and facilitated teacher training events.
- An Education Visits Guide was produced in 1999 (updated in 2001) and promoted to 3,000 schools in and around the Forest area.
- Each year the NFC replies to scores of requests from students for information about the Forest for specialist studies. Good links have been established with Loughborough, Derby, Leicester and Aston Universities.

### **The Arts**

- A Forest Arts Plan was produced in 1995. Since then more than 100 community and school groups have participated in numerous arts projects.
- A wide range of highly imaginative arts forms have been used to celebrate and interpret the Forest including:
  - sculptures – individual features (eg. the Flame for Dunblane and Westminster Woodland sculptures) and sculpture trails (eg. the Burton Washlands and Thornton Reservoir trails).
  - village features – 12 highly individual features have been created (eg. at Ibstock, Newborough, Ravenstone).
  - creative arts – including Beating the Bounds (Linton), Wassailing (Swadlincote Woodlands), Tree Dressing (Burton upon Trent), Stiches in Time tapestries (Linton) and video projects (Rosliston).
  - music – “From Coal to Trees” in Coalville, with music specially composed by the BBC Philharmonic orchestra.

- signage – including a feature ceramic entrance sign at Swadlincote Woodlands; village entry signs (eg. Barton under Needwood); and new village/town notice boards (eg. Walton-upon-Trent).
- specially designed benches – used to interpret the Forest (at Foremark Reservoir); and unique National Forest benches which are available for purchase.

### **Information Strategy**

- Keeping people informed about the Forest is a high priority and the NFC undertakes wide-ranging PR activity including:-
  - publications – such as Forest Scene (7,000 mailing list); public access, trails and visitor guides; Landfile (for farmers); education and group visits guides; site guides.
  - media relations – with frequent press and radio exposure; and TV coverage, especially of Conkers.
  - campaigns – including Milestones, Adopt and Plant a Tree.
  - on-site interpretation of Forest sites.
- This activity has so far had most impact locally and sub-regionally. There is a far bigger challenge ahead in making the Forest better known regionally and nationally.

### **ENTEC EVALUATION**

Outputs for community activity have exceeded targets set in almost every respect with well-established mechanisms for community engagement.

## **Chapter 14) FOREST ZONES AUDIT**

### **NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS**

#### **General**

- Wide-ranging progress is being made towards realising the vision for each of the Forest's six landscape zones (see Map1, Landscape Character and Design Audit).
- Some zones have seen considerably more activity and change than others, notably the Midland Coalfield, Mease Lowlands and Calke Uplands, but activity has been well spread across the Forest area and the broad intentions of the Strategy are 'on track'.

#### **Needwood**

- The approach in Needwood has been to subtly enhance the existing landscape, with new planting blending with rural farmland.
- The target of planting on unwooded farmland is being met, with examples of estate forestry, farm woodlands, hedgerow planting and some parkland replanting.
- An emphasis on quiet, informal recreation (on new Forest sites) and the development of trails (linking key sites) is being achieved. Important vistas are also being retained and made accessible (eg the Needwood scarp).
- Leisure-related farm diversification has so far been limited, but a long term, whole-estate diversification strategy has been developed at Dunstall.
- The opportunity for high-quality leisure developments in wooded settings was identified. The Football Association's planned development at Byrkley Park and the Dunstall estate's plans provide good opportunities for this.
- Biodiversity progress is being made, with the pastoral landscape character being enhanced by two Countryside Stewardship schemes (35 ha); the purchase of Oakwood Pastures (10 ha); and incorporation of grasslands in several new woodlands.

#### **Trent Valley**

- The Trent Valley was identified as a prime focus for water-based recreation and visitor attractions. This is starting to be achieved with the new marina at Barton under Needwood; development of the National Memorial Arboretum; the creation of new fishing pools; improvements to the Trent and Mersey canal; and plans for a major water sports venue at Barton Quarry.
- New trails and cycle routes (including Sustrans route 54) are also being created, that link to key sites in the Valley and in Needwood.

- The Trent Valley is also a priority area for nature conservation. Substantial biodiversity gains have been made including, Croxall Lakes Nature Reserve (60 ha); Barton Quarry wetlands (50 ha); and several floodplain woodland and wet grassland conservation schemes. Otter holts and Black Poplar planting have also been achieved.
- Planting priorities are generally being met with amenity planting framing recreation areas; conservation woodlands; poplar plantations; community woods and urban forestry in and around towns; and farm woodlands. Less successful have been A38 roadside and development-related planting.
- The relatively quiet, unspoilt part of the valley west of Alrewas has been retained and subtly enhanced through wet woodland and wet grassland conservation schemes.
- However, the overall impression of the valley remains fragmented. To help address this the Central Rivers Strategy and Partnership has been established to give focus and coordination to future landscape enhancement.

### **Mease Lowlands**

- There has been substantial progress towards the objective of creating a new, large-scale Forest landscape in the Mease Lowlands.
- There has been significant planting of commercial plantations and farm woodlands. These range from 10-80 ha in size and complement the large-scale field pattern. Riverside woodlands, hedgerow planting and amenity planting in villages have also featured.
- Care has been taken to design new planting to retain landscape vistas and the characteristic views of church spires.
- Informal recreation (eg fishing, horseriding and picnic areas) and the creation of forest trails have been developed to retain the quiet, peaceful character of the area.
- The potential for farm diversification is also being realised with several leisure and tourism businesses established.
- Conservation activity has focused upon the management and creation of grasslands and wetland habitats (notably field ponds), by incorporating features into new woodland schemes.

### **Calke Uplands**

- Progress has been made towards the overall aim of linking the large wooded estates with substantial new planting. Large-scale plantations, farm woodlands, hedgerow planting and parkland management have all featured.

- Leisure and tourism was seen as a key theme for the Calke Uplands. This is being achieved. New visitor centres have been built at Foremark and Staunton Harold reservoirs; recreation facilities have been created (including an equestrian centre, BMX course, a carriage driving course and new horseriding routes); and new Forest trails have been created that link key sites.
- However, only limited progress has been made towards developing farm-based tourist accommodation in the area.
- In terms of biodiversity progress has been made towards managing and creating new grasslands with notable schemes at Buildings Farm, Manor Farm and Nut Wood.

### **Midland Coalfield**

- The Coalfield has been transformed from an area blighted by dereliction into a major new forested landscape that is creating a new Forest identity for the area.
- There has been substantial landscape enhancement, with particular target areas being the reclamation of derelict land and the restoration of mineral workings. 267 ha of derelict land has been reclaimed, with many sites created for multi-purpose Forest uses, including new woodlands, recreation areas, wildlife habitats and tourism uses.
- Planting priorities are being met with examples of community woodlands; forest parks; urban forestry; amenity planting in villages; development-related planting; large-scale plantations and farm woods in rural locations; small-scale planting fitting into the historic Coleorton landscape; corridor planting along roadsides (A42 and A511) and derelict railway lines; plus new hedgerow planting.
- The area has also developed as a major focus for leisure and tourism. The showcase of activity has been the highly successful Conkers Discovery Centre. But many other visitor facilities have also been developed including: a wide variety of new sport and recreation facilities (eg fishing, orienteering, cycling and horseriding, with water sports planned at Donington Lake); new visitor attractions (eg Moira Furnace refurbishment, Ashby Canal rewatering, Thornton Reservoir Visitor Centre); a wide network of trails and new woodlands with public access; plus farm diversification activity.
- Despite various attempts however, there has been no progress in developing a new motor sports venue.
- Biodiversity progress is being made with new heathland restoration schemes (eg Newfield Colliery, Bardon Quarry); wetland creation (eg Sence Valley Forest Park, Conkers, Roecliffe Wood); and grassland management (eg Swadlincote Woodlands and Tender Scheme sites). Local Nature Reserves have also been designated at Lount, Nature Alive and Billa Barra.

### **Charnwood**

- Forest creation in Charnwood is being designed to retain and enhance the area's special landscape character.

- Managing nature conservation habitats is particularly important. There have been extensive areas of meadow/heath grassland brought into management through Countryside Stewardship and nature reserve management schemes (eg Bradgate Park and Charnwood Lodge nature reserve); plus smaller areas through the creation or acquisition of new Forest sites (notably Billa Barra, Home Farm, Altar Stones, Spring Barrow Lodge and Hill Hole Quarry).
- There has also been success in bringing Ancient Woodlands back into management (eg. Charley Woods, Ratby Burroughs and Sheet Hedges Wood); and extensive hedgerow management at new Forest sites.
- There have also been new wildlife habitats created, with heathland/acid grassland schemes (eg Bardon Hill and West Beacon Fields); new meadows (eg Vale Farm); ancient woodland extension by natural regeneration (eg Charley Woods and Ratby Burroughs); and new broadleaved woodland planting (eg Martins Wood, West Beacon Fields, Home Farm).
- Planting priorities are being met with a focus on farm woodlands, new nature conservation woods, recreation and amenity planting and large-scale planting on open farmland and mineral sites.
- Most new Forest sites (apart from active mineral workings) have been developed with public access. Those around Beacon Hill and Bradgate Country Parks will help in relieving visitor pressures at these heavily visited sites.
- There has been no wider use however, of the reservoir sites for recreation.
- There has also been limited impact as yet upon Forest-related farm tourism diversification, (notwithstanding two new ventures at Home Farm, Nanpantan and Vale Farm).

## **ENTEC EVALUATION**

Planting activity, the enhancement of biodiversity and development of recreation and tourism opportunities are being realised across the Forest Strategy Zones in a fashion which is sensitive to their inherent character.

### **Needwood, Charnwood, Calke Uplands**

Needwood, Charnwood and to a lesser extent the Calke Uplands, are ‘ancient’ landscapes which in large measure retain their attractive parkland qualities. They are, however, vulnerable to decay and evidence of the senescence in the tree stock is widespread. Equally, the work of The National Forest in subtle interventions in the landscape is becoming apparent, although the product of intervention will perhaps need to be incremental. Here recreational opportunities are centred on quiet, informal activities such as those promoted around the Staunton and Foremark reservoirs and the protection and enhancement of public rights of way.

## **The Trent Valley**

The Trent Valley, in contrast, is an urbanised and disturbed landscape, which demands substantial efforts in the re-creation of character. Here tree planting is already turning around this impoverishment although there is considerable potential for more work, challenged by continuing mining activity and insensitive development activity. Evidence of the emergence of biodiversity potential centred on wetland habitats is particularly apparent in this Forest Strategy Zone. Equally, the opportunities for water-based recreation are substantial.

## **Mease Lowlands**

In the Mease Lowlands, the beginnings of the creation of a significantly more wooded landscape is much in evidence. However, the challenge of the hedgerow tree remains to be addressed, particularly recharging the historic landscape resonance of such villages as ‘Coton in the Elms’. Opportunities for farm diversification are being developed in the Mease Lowlands, readily fitting into this busy farming landscape.

## **Midland Coalfield**

It is in the Midland Coalfield that the greatest strides have been made in the re-casting of a disturbed landscape, both visually and functionally. Rapid tree growth and extensive stocking draws the eye to what will become an impressive context for emerging leisure and tourism developments, which are both part of the rationale of this wooded landscape and follow its evolution. Here, the work of The National Forest is emerging apace with a wide variety of planting activity - on farmland, derelict land, roadsides, the urban fringe and in urban areas.

The visual impact of tree planting and Forest branding (through signage for example) is reviving the identity of landscapes which have been long-abused and stitching together those with superficially little in common.

It is here that extensive tourism and recreation opportunities are emerging focused on a number of reclaimed colliery sites, but progressively extending to other sites as the type and range of facilities broadens and deepens. Equally, opportunities for the enhancement of biodiversity potential have clearly been grasped, with notable resources such as Lount Local Nature Reserve emerging.

## **Chapter 15) MONITORING AND REVIEW AUDIT**

### **NATIONAL FOREST COMPANY REPORT ON PROGRESS**

#### **Forest Strategy Monitoring**

- It was suggested that the Strategy would benefit from being monitored annually with a fixed review perhaps every 5 years.
- Annual monitoring of progress against the Strategy is undertaken through the NFC's Corporate Plan process and publication of the Annual Report.
- The fixed review of the Strategy has started 7 years after it was published. The Strategy has remained robust and valid and has not needed an earlier review.

#### **Monitoring change**

- Loughborough University was commissioned in 1997 to identify monitoring needs and priorities for the Forest over time.
- In response to this a GIS system has been developed to monitor landuse changes; a part-time research and monitoring officer was appointed in May 2000; Loughborough University's priorities of ecological, visitor and socio-economic monitoring have been given high priority; and research into different aspects of change is undertaken annually.

#### **Monitoring environmental, landuse and landscape change**

- A wide range of research and monitoring has started:
  - GIS is used to monitor the creation of the Forest and maintain database records of new Forest sites.
  - A demonstration woodlands project has been established at three sites. Arising from this Forest Research has published national guidance on woodland establishment techniques related to different site conditions.
  - BAP annual monitoring has been undertaken since 1999.
  - Specialist ecological surveys have been commissioned covering areas of the Forest, habitats and BAP species that require updated information.
  - Baseline ecological surveys and wildlife recording have been undertaken at several sites.
  - A photographic record is being kept of the Forest's creation.

#### **Visitor monitoring**

- Economic Impact Assessments of tourism were undertaken in 1999 and 2001.
- National Forest Awareness Surveys were undertaken in 1996 and 2000.
- Visitor surveys have been undertaken in 1999 and 2002 at selected Forest sites; surveys are also undertaken periodically at tourism attractions (eg Conkers).
- Audits have been undertaken of public access, recreation and tourism developments and GIS is used to monitor these.

- Databases have been established to monitor public requests for information about the Forest and to monitor uptake of NFC campaigns (eg. Adopt a Tree).

### **Socio-economic Monitoring**

- A socio-economic study of the impact of the Forest's creation was undertaken in 2000 and is due to be updated in 2003.
- Community views are monitored through feedback from grant aided projects, talks, volunteer questionnaires (BTCV), visitor surveys and through a press cuttings service.

### **Research and Monitoring Action Plan**

- In 2002 the NFC produced a Research and Monitoring Action Plan to look ahead at future priorities in the short (2002-4) and medium term (2004 onwards).
- More sophisticated monitoring of the Forest's impact will be required in the future as Forest activity continues to broaden in scope and the Forest environment starts to mature.
- Partnership working will be fundamental to this, with the need to continue to develop links with Government monitoring initiatives (eg. Multi Geographic Information System for the Countryside - MAGIC); local authority monitoring; research institutions; and academic organisations (eg. Universities).

### **ENTEC EVALUATION**

The NFC has established a GIS-based monitoring system which, despite some technical and resource difficulties, holds the potential to provide a significant day-to-day information and management tool.