

Implementation

19. The Forest partnership

20. Mechanisms and targets

21. Co-ordination and implementation



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In order to achieve the vision for the Forest outlined in previous sections and to continue to implement the strategies and proposals, there will need to be a sharp focus of new energy and new resources from a number of organisations, groups and individuals over a long period. This part of the Plan will identify how this might be achieved.

This part also outlines how a wide range of people and organisations can be brought together to help to create the Forest, using resources which might otherwise be unavailable.

The concept of a new and bigger partnership is explored, as well as the means to co-ordinate the work and progress towards the achievement of the Plan's vision.

Some broad targets are set out which give an indication of the scale of the task to be undertaken. These are ambitious, but achievable. A more detailed business plan will be drawn up in negotiation with partners to identify specific aims, objectives, resources, participants, performance measures and their monitoring for a rolling 3-year period.

The Forest Plan will be revised in the light of experience and changes in related policies as indicated by national partners but probably after 10 years. The business plan will be revised on an annual rolling basis.

THE FOREST PARTNERSHIP

- 19.1** The existing partners have sown the seed of the Forest and will act in a key role in its future. This partnership will need to be expanded if the ambitious programme is to be realised. A whole range of national and local organisations, groups and individuals will be needed to play their part. For some, the Forest will be the core of their work and effort. For others, it will be an element for focus in relation to their existing specialism, e.g. teachers and planners. People may be involved through voluntary effort, either as individuals or as part of organised groups. Others may be involved through sponsorship, donations or direct business activity. Most importantly, people will be involved simply by getting out and enjoying and using the Forest as it grows and develops.
- 19.2** Central government has made clear its commitment to sustainability and biodiversity. The community forest programme is a real opportunity to practice these principles in all twelve forests approved and supported by government.
- 19.3** MAFF plays a key role already in supporting the transfer of appropriate land from agriculture into forestry through the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme. The Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA) implements Agri-Environment schemes, several of which can help achieve Forest targets. They will need to consider the merits of further advice and incentives to target these changes into the countryside around towns and cities. Their contact and advisory and consultancy relationships with the farming community will be essential elements in encouraging farmers to consider new approaches to land management within the context of the Community Forest. MAFF, FRCA or their contractors, are closely involved with working with farmers on a day-to-day basis and will be able to play a critical role in explaining Forest objectives and opportunities to farmers.
- 19.4** The Department of Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR) has important influence over grant aid programmes which relate to community forest objectives and is responsible for interpreting and giving guidance on planning matters, particularly through the Government Office for the South West (GOSW). Similarly, partners will need support and the co-operation of the DETR in relation to road schemes and public transport.
- 19.5** The South West Regional Development Agency is a new body of tremendous influence in the economic, social and environmental regeneration of the region. Many elements of the Forest's vision will directly relate to SWRDA's strategy, and the Forest partnership can not only help achieve the strategy around Bristol but act as a model of sound sustainable development for other cities and towns in the region.
- 19.6** Both the Countryside Agency and the Forestry Commission play key roles as leading partners and through their funding, including the WGS, can focus new resources into the Forest area. Forest Enterprise is an important partner, continuing its sympathetic management of existing woods in the Forest and through acquisition of land for the planting of new woods and the purchase of freeholds on leasehold land.
- 19.7** Other national agencies which offer grants include the Arts Council, English Heritage, English Nature, the Environment Agency and Sport England. They will all need to become active partners in the Forest, both at a policy, research and advice level as well as by giving resource support to programmes

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and projects which achieve mutual objectives. Delivering and focusing this range locally will be of significant importance.

- 19.8** Locally, the continued involvement of the local authorities will be critical to the success of the Forest Plan. They were key partners in the first phase of the Forest, the production of the Plan and are continuing to lead implementation. The local authorities are responsible for many statutory and non-statutory functions which are the main building blocks of the Forest Vision and they will remain as essential partners as custodians of the Plan, its vision and its implementation.
- 19.9** Local authorities own significant areas of land both outside and within the urban areas, including farmland, open spaces and woodland. These sites continue to offer opportunities to reap Community Forest benefits. They fund many programmes and projects which are working towards the same objectives as the Forest initiative. It has become increasingly important to dovetail these together.
- 19.10** The challenge for the local authorities will be to build and maintain a new impetus towards achieving the Forest, over and above existing activity levels. Authorities will also play a crucial role through the statutory planning system by recognising and supporting the Forest through enabling policies within statutory plans, through documents which can be Supplementary Planning Guidance and through development control. Indeed the Forest Plan itself will be a material consideration. Partnership working will add value to the work of all the planning authorities.
- 19.11** Assisting in the steering, creation and management of the Forest will not, however, be exclusively the territory of local authority planning departments. Arts, leisure, recreation, health community development, transport, education, land and estate management and other activities will also be involved within the Forest, and the Plan gives broad indications of how these elements could integrate. More detailed work will be needed to make more specific links on both a Forest-wide and a local basis.
- 19.12** Farmers and landowners are probably the most important group of all, as most of the new woodland, wildlife areas, recreational routes and other facilities will rely on their commitment, enthusiasm and voluntary participation to be brought into existence. Contacts with the National Farmers' Union, Country Landowners Association

and Tenant Farmers Association are well established, but the Forest partners will have to build relationships with individuals. Work will include helping to assess financial models in relation to farm businesses providing advice and practical support for diversification activities, meeting training needs, developing demonstration areas and running events. FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group) is a key partner in working with landowners to achieve Forest objectives. The BASC is best placed to provide information, advice and training in relation to sporting shooting. Common Agriculture Policy reforms will help to speed the changes in land use needed to create the Forest. Forestry and landscaping contractors, consultants, nurseries and advisors will become important partners in the Forest as they are well placed to promote the Forest concept in their dealings with landowners.

- 19.13** The business sector has a crucial role to play, and on several levels. As landowners and developers, significant areas of land are under their control and influence, including their own offices or manufacturing centres, many of which may be suitable for woodland establishment, energy crops or nature conservation. The benefits of an improved environment, both for existing firms, their employees and families are widely accepted as are the benefits to inward investment. The Forest itself will offer investment opportunities, assisting with new jobs and a more diverse local economy.
- 19.14** Businesses can also take an active role in the Forest by supporting specific programmes and projects which work towards mutual objectives. The Forest will offer to businesses, of all sizes and in all locations, the opportunity to provide direct support, secondment and sponsorship, often releasing matching funding from other agencies. The plan indicates some of the types of project and areas where support could be concentrated, for example gateways, greenways and areas for new woodland.
- 19.15** The business sector can also become involved through bringing its expertise, contacts and energy in facilitating the work of others, particularly local communities. Forest partners will need to develop a relationship which looks beyond the short term and bottom line, and views the Forest as a key investment to the future prosperity of the area.



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- 19.16** A Charitable Company, with members from all sectors including the business community, offers both a vehicle to involve business people at a strategic level and to carry out fundraising, land ownership and management which the local authority partnership may not always be best placed to do.
- 19.17** Parish and town councils are already active in improving their local environment and facilities which help local people to enjoy it. They are the obvious focus for local action and in representing the views of local people. The Forest can only benefit from improvements and extensions to this partnership.
- 19.18** Local groups and communities already contribute an enormous amount of skill, energy and enthusiasm to environmental projects within the Forest area. A highly professional support network exists to enable people to take responsibility in their own patch. The Wildlife Trust is a major partner and mobilises considerable resources already towards achieving Forest objectives and will continue to do so in the future. The BTCV is also a current partner, bringing expertise in the practical involvement of people in environmental work. A wider net of groups and support organisations will need to be brought into the Forest's planning and implementation process.
- 19.19** Individual people have much to offer and several have already contributed to this plan. The Forest will need to be able to respond to, accommodate and direct the energies of willing individuals.
- 19.20** This broad partnership is dynamic and will continue to shift and change over time as new organisations appear, new agendas are agreed and new resources become available. The essential job of the existing Forest partners is to adapt to, respond to and involve these new partners in understanding and helping achieve the Forest vision over the coming years.