

2. A Strategy for the West of England's Trees and Woodlands

2.1 The Vision

National and local policy and priorities, a strong evidence base including Nature Recovery Network mapping, combined with community and business interest and need, make this the time for transformative action for trees and woodlands in the West of England.

Our vision is of more, better managed and connected trees and woodland making a vital contribution to a thriving natural environment, society and economy in the West of England.

Drawing upon our record of collaborative working and project delivery, we will work together towards an aspiration of doubling the West of England's semi-natural tree and woodland cover, including open wooded landscape and mosaic habitats¹⁹, by 2050 – equivalent to an additional 8,000 ha of tree and woodland cover.

This is an ambitious vision that reflects the scale of action that is needed to meet the challenge presented by the climate and ecological emergencies, and which is consistent with national, regional and local goals. Its delivery will require coordinated action from organisations and communities across the region.

The aspiration to double tree and woodland cover would provide significant benefits to the region, including an estimated additional **£540 million worth of carbon sequestration, air quality improvements and hazard regulation**²⁰. This is in addition to the as-yet unquantified benefits from increasing biodiversity, providing health and wellbeing benefits, improving water quality, and providing goods and services such as timber and recreation. The value of the quantified benefits alone far exceeds the costs of delivery²¹.



19 A mosaic habitat is one that is heterogeneous in terms of vegetation composition and structure, including tall trees, scrub, herbs and grasses, as well as wet areas, which benefits biodiversity. For a woodland, this may mean incorporating glades, meadows and scrubby areas. We also include wood pasture in this definition.

20 As estimated by the EA Natural Capital Accounting Tool

21 Assuming costs of establishment per hectare of £12,000, the total cost of establishing 8,000 ha of woodland would be £96 million. £12,000/ha is at the higher end of planting costs, and this calculation does not consider natural regeneration, which will likely be cheaper. Even if we assume all the land had to be bought at an average price of £25,000/ha (a 'typical' agricultural land value in the West of England, although this will be lower if planting on marginal land), the value of the quantifiable benefits still exceed the costs of land purchase and planting by a factor of two.

To help achieve this vision, we aim to work towards the following ambitions for the West of England:

- Establish 580ha of native woodland to close connectivity gaps in the Nature Recovery Network by 2050.
- Plant one tree for every person in the West of England (that is 1.1 million trees, or around 650ha) by 2030, and repeat this in the decades up to 2040 and 2050.
- Establish at least 1,000ha of new woodland habitat through natural processes by 2050.
- Support the creation of open wooded landscapes and mosaic habitats, including wood pasture and areas where natural processes are allowed to unfold ('rewilding').
- Contact all woodland owners to support them in managing their woodlands and creating new woodland, with at least 1,000 more hectares of woodland having approved management plans (including approved low intervention wildlife plans) and/or felling licences by 2030.
- Ensure all woodland SSSIs are in favourable condition by 2030.
- Improve the presence and management of trees in farmed areas, including through hedgerows, orchards, and agroforestry.
- Plant individual and small groups of trees in 6,000 streets and green spaces, within 500m of where people live, by 2050.
- Ensure all new developments have green (and where possible, tree-lined) streets.
- Be operating an accredited pathway to work in woodland management and planting by 2025.
- Develop a single evidence base identifying the priority areas for woodland creation in the West of England.

Although not formally adopted targets, these outline our ambition and will inform a partnership approach towards delivery. Improvements in the evidence base and future delivery will inform iterations of these ambitions.

In working towards the vision, the guiding principle will be the right tree established²² and cared for in the right place.

We will be further guided by consideration of the following:

- The critical contribution that trees and woodlands make to the region's ecological network and the benefits they provide to wildlife.
- The role that woodland and trees play in climate change mitigation (sequestering carbon) and adaptation (increasing resilience to increased flooding, heat and other impacts of a changing climate).
- The contribution that strategically located trees and woodlands can make to natural flood management.
- The benefits that woodlands and trees can provide to people's health and wellbeing, and to culture.
- The economic value that is created through production of timber, recreation, agroforestry and other products and services derived from trees and woodland.
- The use of management techniques to maximise the value of woodlands across all ecosystem services, including tackling pests, disease and invasive species.

These ideas are the basis for the Principles for Tree and Woodland Establishment and Management, as set out in Section 4.

²² I.e. planted or established through natural regeneration.

We also need to recognise that nature does not see borders. Therefore, it is imperative that we **continue to coordinate with neighbouring regions (Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset) to join up our work**. The South West Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Network and working closely with the Cotswolds and Mendip Hills AONBs are existing examples of cross-border working, which should be supported and built upon.

By working together and drawing upon the commitment and expertise of individuals, government, charities, businesses and many others, transformative change is within our reach.

2.2 Delivering the Vision

Action for Trees and Woodlands to Date

Local authorities, the Forest of Avon Trust, the Woodland Trust, Forestry England, Avon Wildlife Trust and many other partners in the West of England have a successful track-record of caring for existing trees and woodlands, and establishing new ones. This enables us to make an effective early start and sustain action in the long-term.

Examples of previous and ongoing work in the West of England include:

- The work of the [Forest of Avon Trust](#), which draws upon business, charitable and other funding to deliver woodland projects and activities. Since 2010 the Trust has produced approved Woodland Management Plans for 850 ha of local woodland, many of which have been implemented through grant funding.
- Charities such as Avon Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust and the National Trust, as well as governmental organisations including Natural England, securing and managing many of the region's our best-quality ancient woodland for wildlife.
- Urban tree initiatives including [One Tree per Child](#) in Bristol, which has supported

the planting of 60,000 trees since 2015; the Defra Trees for Learning programme run by the Forest of Avon Trust, which planted 10,000 trees with primary children across the West of England between 2015 to 2019; and 77 Woodland Trust tree packs distributed to schools and communities across the area by 2018.

- [Bristol's Greenstreets](#) project, funded by the Forestry Commission's Urban Tree Challenge Fund, which will plant 590 street trees in the areas of lowest canopy cover in the city in 2020, as part of an ongoing approach to street tree planting in Bristol.
- Commitments from local authorities to plant more trees and better manage existing trees, including Bath and North East Somerset Council's ambition to plant 100,000 trees by May 2023; North Somerset Council's commitment to plant 50,000 trees by 2021 as part of its 'Rewilding' programme; and South Gloucestershire Council's Tree Asset Management Plan 2018, which comprehensively sets out how the Council manages its tree assets and how it will maximise the value of existing trees and increase tree cover.
- Community organisations including [Bristol Tree Forum](#), [More Trees BaNES](#) and [Chew Valley Plants Trees](#) campaigning for trees and/or working locally to get more trees planted; and the charity [Avon Needs Trees](#) buying land to create new, permanent woodland throughout the Bristol-Avon catchment area.
- The Forest of Avon Community Forest team, which, through partnership working, helped plant one million trees in the West of England from 1992 to 2005 and established local community groups working for trees, many of which are active today.
- Successful fundraising campaigns, including [One Tree per Employee](#) run by Replant Bristol partners, providing private sector funding for tree planting.