

Growing Together

England's
Community
Forests





Greenwood Community Forest

Introduction

We are delighted to share our prospectus outlining the background and impact of England's Community Forests network and the powerful partnerships we are fostering across the country.

Our mission is to deliver economic and social impact in and around many of our largest towns and cities – and we have a proud 30-year history of doing so. We are particularly proud of the progress we have made over the past five years in delivering our Defra-funded Trees for Climate programme, part of the Government's wider woodland creation drive and Nature for Climate fund.

Community Forests are responsible for a significant proportion of Nature for Climate tree planting, working alongside other woodland creation partners including the National Trust, Woodland Trust, Natural England, and the Forestry Commission. We have planted around ten million trees since the programme began – that's over 35% of all government-funded tree planting since 2020 – and have consistently increased our numbers over the first six years of the Trees for Climate programme.

Our work has a significant impact on community access to nature, flood prevention, carbon sequestration and nature recovery. Our 'One Team' approach with the Forestry Commission, Natural England and others continues to evolve, allowing increasingly efficient delivery and a strong foundation for future activity.

Our work is now more important than ever, and we are committed to doing more. Thanks to the partnerships, people, and processes we have developed through Trees for Climate, and confirmation that the programme is set to continue, we are confident in our ability to deliver even more woodland towards the national target. Importantly, we will maximise the positive impacts on people and communities through our education, health, adaptation, jobs, skills and training programmes.

We hope this prospectus offers an understanding of who we are, what we care about, our approach and where we do it. It covers our broad strategic aims as a network, running to 2050, including what we hope to deliver in the next five years to help us get there – and, crucially, how you can support our efforts and help us grow.

The Directors of England's Community Forests network



Who are England's Community Forests?

We are a diverse network of 15 unique Community Forests, each working in partnership with local communities, landowners and businesses to help nature recover and regenerate the landscapes in and around our largest towns and cities. We are supported by the Community Forest Trust, a national charity that supports, enables and champions our network.

Our roots go back over 30 years, with Community Forests now forming the biggest environmental regeneration initiative in England. We are recognised in the Planning Policy Framework and highlighted in the Government's 25 Year Plan for the Environment, playing a key role in shaping woodland creation and nature recovery policy both locally and nationally.

We provide free guidance and support to landowners and land managers to help plan, fund, and plant new woodland of all sizes in both rural and urban settings. Our long-term commitment to the areas where we work ensures that trees and woodlands are at the very heart of communities up and down the country, unlocking countless benefits for people and planet.



What is Community Forestry all about?

Community Forestry is unique in that it is a landscape-scale, long-term programme focused on working in partnership and with people to establish and care for trees, woodlands and other habitats in and around towns and cities.

By planting trees and bringing woodlands back into use for both people and wildlife, it provides new opportunities for leisure, recreation, and cultural activities, enhancing biodiversity, helping us become more resilient to climate change and improving education and healthy lives.

Crucially, it's not simply about planting trees everywhere we can. It's about working to really understand the local landscape, ensuring the right solution for the right place and, in turn, fostering ownership and love for woodlands in the local community.



City of Trees



15 unique place-based organisations

with local teams delivering some of the most complex schemes.



65% of the population

lives in or close to England's Community Forests (within 15km).



Over 35%

of all Government-funded tree planting in England since 2020.

What makes us unique

- **Long-term strategy and plans:** Underpinned by 25-Year Forest Plans aligned to national policy and targets, and focused on delivering social, economic and environmental transformational outcomes.
- **Culture of partnership:** Formed by partnerships and with partnership working at the core of what we do. Our 'One Team' approach is at the heart of our delivery model.
- **Local expertise:** Teams with expert knowledge of forestry, community engagement, and the areas they are based, using their skills and insights to build strong partnerships with landowners that really benefit our local communities.
- **Flexible delivery model:** Local, bespoke, flexible delivery model and solutions designed in partnership with landowners and other delivery partners, driven through strong, collaborative relationships.
- **Innovation and value for money:** Constant innovation to both improve the way we do things and push ourselves to deliver more.
- **Support and sponsorship:** Strong local political support and mandate, including from Metro Mayors. We have been successful in generating local and national sponsorship.
- **Complementary, not competitive:** Able to deliver smaller, complex schemes that fit well with large national programmes, our delivery model works well to drive performance, outputs and value for money.



Humber Forest



Our approach: The power of partnerships

England's Community Forests are founded on the unique partnership approach we take, from collaborating with our many local communities and delivery partners to working alongside national colleagues, including the Forestry Commission, Natural England, National Trust, and Woodland Trust, and ongoing support from Defra and the UK Government.

Our local partnerships see us working with communities, landowners, and businesses to create woodlands around England's cities, focusing on nature recovery, climate change, and wellbeing through large-scale tree planting. Many of our Community Forest areas also link into wider national forest initiatives such as the Northern Forest and Western Forest to deliver landscape-scale environmental regeneration. We are continually seeking to strengthen, develop, and establish new partnerships, acknowledging that they are central to our work and to achieving real and enduring change.



City of Trees



The Mersey Forest

How our partnerships work:

- **Local and national collaboration:** Each Community Forest is a unique partnership led by a local team, working with local authorities, charities, and landowners to ensure delivery is informed by local context, and with support from national partners to ensure our efforts align with national woodland creation aims.
- **Diverse partners:** We work with a wide range of public, private, research, charitable, and community organisations, from local to national and international levels, and from delivery to supporting work.
- **Alignment with national targets:** We align our partnerships with England's woodland creation and nature recovery goals, contributing to targets including the Environment Act's aim for 16.5% woodland cover by 2050.
- **Focus on urban areas:** We develop partnerships in and around towns and cities to connect people with nature, improving mental health, biodiversity, and flood management.



Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest





Derbyshire's Heartwood



White Rose Forest



City of Trees



Forest of Avon Trust



Raise: Cumbria



North East Community Forest



Great Western Community Forest



The Mersey Forest



Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest



Humber Forest

Trees for Climate

Trees for Climate is our core delivery programme, sitting at the heart of what we do and the partnerships we nurture.

The programme launched in November 2020 and is playing a significant role in the Government’s commitment to address climate change and carbon mitigation through tree planting and woodland creation. It forms part of the national Nature for Climate Fund, which aligns with the England Tree Action Plan and the Environmental Improvement Plan and their aims to increase tree cover, improve woodland management, and enhance forest resilience. The programme is also bringing about much wider social, economic and environmental transformation across the country.

We are currently delivering a sixth year of the programme, which will see us pass ten million trees planted. Preparations are also underway for a new phase of Trees for Climate, launching in April 2026. With greater involvement from our strategic partners – the Woodland Trust and National Trust – we believe Trees for Climate can have an even greater impact on the lives of people and communities across the country.

What is the programme delivering?

- **Mitigating carbon** through tree planting, and making a significant contribution to net zero
- **Improving climate resilience** by supporting natural flood management, providing shade and reducing the heat island effect
- **Improving water and air quality**
- **Supporting increased public access to woodland**, especially for those in areas of greatest need
- **Enhancing habitats for wildlife and biodiversity**
- **Increasing opportunities for community engagement**, supporting better levels of health and wellbeing, especially in areas of greatest health inequality
- **Taking innovative approaches and delivery practices**, and sharing learning to advance the whole sector
- **Supporting employment and skills development**, including aiding a reduction in reoffending through targeted schemes



Forest of Marston Vale

Over the first five years of the programme...



- Planted over 8 million trees across 2,720 different local schemes and 6,590 hectares of new woodland.
- Provided an estimated 520,513m³ of flood water storage capacity each year, equivalent to roughly 667 Olympic swimming pools.
- Planted trees that are expected to sequester 64,855 TCO₂e per year – valued at £18.70m and roughly equivalent to what 47,200 cars emit each year.
- Ensured that 849,734 households are now near accessible woodland, unlocking £94.9m in welfare benefits.
- Delivered £8 worth of economic benefit for every £1 invested by Defra into England’s Community Forests.



Forest of Avon Trust



Our vision

Each of our fifteen Community Forests has its own Forest Plan, a long-term strategic guide that will set the course for the next 25 years. Think of these plans as a roadmap for each Community Forest, detailing exactly what we want to achieve and how we'll get there, guiding the work of the local team and partners.

No two Forest Plans are exactly alike, as they reflect our deep understanding of and connection with the different communities we serve. But whilst each Community Forest is defined by its unique boundary and specific vision, these plans collectively outline our shared objectives and targets for how Community Forests can drive tree and woodland establishment and management across England.



Forest of Mercia

Our high-level aims as a network:

- **Support regeneration and growth:** Making towns and cities more attractive places to live, work and do business; attracting new investment and creating jobs.
- **Support local communities:** Harnessing the enthusiasm, commitment, and knowledge of local people, helping them improve their local area and enhancing health and wellbeing.
- **Create better places:** Enriching and enhancing biodiversity and the environment, creating new facilities for recreation and leisure, and making our towns and cities more sustainable and resilient to a changing climate.
- **Generate further funding for woodland creation:** Attracting private investment in tree planting and landscape restoration to ensure we can go further and faster for greater impact and increased return on investment.

Our ambitious but achievable plans will continue to make a significant contribution to the Government's national goals – increasing woodland cover, improving biodiversity, and creating a healthier and happier society. We will continue to establish thousands of new woodland areas, bring existing woodland under sustainable management, connect with and engage a million people, and increase access to woodland for more than 40% of the population. In addition, we will increase habitat connectivity by 25% and support species recovery, helping to reverse nature loss whilst delivering £1 billion of natural capital benefits.

England's Community Forests network is innovative and adaptive – and we are ready to help shape a future where trees and woodlands are an even greater priority for us all.

More detail can be found in each of the Forest Plans. If you are interested in finding out what your local Community Forest is planning and how those plans align with your ambitions, please get in touch.



Working with us

Our network offers one of the most flexible grant schemes for tree planting. With years of experience and locally based support, our teams help landowners plan, fund and deliver woodland creation projects of all sizes that will bring real value to the land.

As well as grants that cover up to 100% of costs, we can provide 15 years of establishment payments to help ensure that planting continues to deliver long-term value.

We can support a range of woodland creation schemes, whether large-scale planting, low-density or mixed habitat schemes, hedgerows, orchards or woodland pasture. Our teams listen, provide advice, and support landowners through the whole process of planning, funding and delivering their scheme.



📍 Tees Community Forest

Our partnerships work closely with a range of landowners – from planting at schools and sports clubs to partnering with local authorities and farmers to improve their land – and with the regulator, the Forestry Commission, offering advice and support on:

- **Woodland creation and management:** Guidance on suitable tree species, planting schemes, and sustainable woodland management practices.
- **Farm diversification:** Exploring opportunities for integrating woodland into existing farm businesses, such as agroforestry, woodfuel production, or nature-based tourism.
- **Whole farm planning:** Developing integrated land management plans that maximise the benefits of woodland creation for landscape, biodiversity, and farm income.
- **Access management:** Advice on managing existing access, including public rights of way, options for new access where the landowner is providing access, and advice on Environmental Impact Assessments with the Forestry Commission.

We can also unlock a range of funding schemes to support woodland creation and management, including:

- **Trees for Climate:** A multi-million-pound woodland creation programme with one of the most competitive grant schemes for tree planting available today.
- **Forestry Commission grant – the England Woodland Creation Offer:** Grants for creating new woodlands, including support for planning and preparation.
- **Environmental Land Management Schemes:** Including Countryside Stewardship, managed by the Forestry Commission and Natural England, and offering funding for a range of environmental land management options, including woodland management, hedgerow creation, and water quality improvements.
- **Green Finance:** Green finance can support Community Forests through direct grants, innovative mechanisms, and carbon markets to fund woodland creation and management.





Great Western Community Forest



Derbyshire's Heartwood

Grow together with us

We hope this has illustrated the incredible impact that the Community Forest approach can have for people, place, and planet. We're proud of what we've achieved to date, but we want to go even further – and your support can help us get there.

Whether you are a landowner keen to plant trees, an organisation eager to establish partnership opportunities with your nearest Community Forest, or an investor looking to invest in green initiatives, we'd love to hear from you.

If you want to learn more about our work and opportunities to get involved, please get in touch with your local Community Forest:



-  **North East Community Forest** – covers Northumberland, Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, Sunderland and Durham:
info@necf.org.uk | www.northeastcommunityforest.org.uk
-  **Raise: Cumbria Community Forest** – covers over 1,300 square miles of Cumbria: info@raisecumbria.co.uk | www.raisecumbria.co.uk
-  **Tees Community Forest** – covers the Tees Valley:
enquiries@teescommunityforest.org.uk | www.teescommunityforest.org.uk
-  **White Rose Forest** – covers North and West Yorkshire:
whiteroseforest@kirklees.gov.uk | www.whiteroseforest.org
-  **Humber Forest** – covers Hull, East Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire:
humber.forest@eastriding.gov.uk | www.humberforest.org
-  **City of Trees** – covers Greater Manchester:
team@cityoftrees.org.uk | www.cityoftrees.org.uk
-  **Derbyshire's Heartwood** – covers the eastern and southern fringes of Derbyshire: heartwood@derbyshire.gov.uk | www.derbyshire.gov.uk/heartwood
-  **The Mersey Forest** – covers Merseyside and North Cheshire:
mail@merseyforest.org.uk | www.merseyforest.org.uk
-  **Greenwood Community Forest** – covers around 41% of Nottinghamshire:
greenwood@nottsc.gov.uk | www.greenwoodforest.org.uk
-  **Forest of Mercia** – covers Staffordshire and the West Midlands:
info@forestofmercia.com | www.forestofmercia.com
-  **Forest of Marston Vale** – covers Bedfordshire:
info@marstonvale.org | www.marstonvale.org
-  **Great Western Community Forest** – stretches from the North Wessex Downs to the River Thames: CommunityForest@swindon.gov.uk | www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20059/land_and_premises/1134/great_western_community_forest
-  **Thames Chase** – covers Brentwood, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Thurrock and Essex: enquiries@thameschase.org.uk | www.thameschase.org.uk
-  **Forest of Avon Trust** – covers the West of England:
info@forestofavontrust.org | www.forestofavon.org
-  **Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest** – covers South Devon, encompassing Plymouth, Dartmoor, Tavistock and The South Hams:
psdcf@plymouth.gov.uk | www.psdcf.com



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