

The Northern Forest

Resourcing the future



Trees are a source of shade, a carbon store and an object of beauty. They're a wildlife habitat, grow fruit and can stabilise soils. For some, trees are just there to climb. But they can also create beautiful buildings, be a source of renewable energy, and underpin many thousands of jobs. For the Northern Forest, wood represents the pivotal resource for the future.

The more active the forestry sector, the more economic, social and environmental benefits it produces. More and better-managed forests protect flora and fauna, become places for play and escape, produce more timber products, lock up more carbon and create more jobs.¹ And this ability to create jobs is key. Quite simply, planting and maintaining our trees and woodland creates opportunities.

The Northern Forest is a partnership of:



Manchester
City of Trees



THE MERSEY
FOREST
more from trees



WOODLAND
TRUST

The future is timber

In England alone, the forestry sector supports around 80,000 jobs and is worth £2 billion to the UK economy every year.² Hardly insignificant, and a sector with the capacity to grow and stimulate the economy even further.

So what are these ‘green-collar’ jobs? They range from the fundamental job of growing trees to the work of woodland owners and estate managers. They include the contractors who maintain, harvest and buy the timber; those who run sawmills and timber processing plants; and those who produce wood chips and other forms of fuel. The forestry sector is truly vast.

It’s important to note that many of these people are employed in small family-run businesses, providing jobs in rural areas where work is often scarce. And it’s also worth noting that many are increasingly in innovative businesses that offer sustainable products and services.

Look at Cumbria, for example. BSW sawmill in Carlisle employs 140 people. Every year, BSW spends £15 million on logs and processes 320,000m³ of timber, generating an annual turnover of £32 million. In nearby Workington, Iggesund makes paperboard products, employs 500 people and has an annual turnover of £144 million. And in Penrith, AW Jenkinson is a timber products and by-products merchant employing 350 people and boasting an annual turnover of £150 million.³

A critical resource

Wood is also a critical resource in the green economy. Timber frames, furniture, flooring, fuel and paper are all products we can create from wood. So what is the potential for the Northern Forest to contribute to this green economy?

Take the environmental impact of using timber for construction. Concrete uses five times as much energy to produce as timber; steel six times as much. Switching to timber frame construction could save four tonnes of carbon dioxide per house. There are plans to build 650,000 new homes across the Northern Forest area in the next 20 years; switching to timber could save over two million tonnes of carbon dioxide. That’s equal to the annual carbon footprint of more than 200,000 UK citizens.

And that’s not all. Timber is organic, it enhances biodiversity, it’s recyclable, and it doesn’t leave great extraction scars across the landscape. All in all, it’s the ultimate sustainable construction material. One of the oldest building materials in the world clearly has a place in our modern landscape.

Over in Hull, they know exactly how remarkable timber can be.



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The new Hull History Centre has a public arcade running the full length of the building – constructed from glue laminated timber (or ‘glulam’). Timber was the perfect solution for the structure with smooth, sweeping curves cocooning the walk beneath. The choice of wood also had an intimate connection to Hull’s maritime heritage. As a trading port, Hull was the gateway for the import of Baltic timber into the UK. The timber used on this project is Norway spruce and the laminate was manufactured by the Kingston Craftsmen in their workshop. To top it all off, the building was the Structural Award Winner at the 2010 Wood Awards.⁴

The potential exists

Plans for the Northern Forest are unique. No other forest creation scheme in the UK comes close to the proposed 50 million trees.

But the National Forest gives some idea of its potential. In 2016, the National Forest celebrated its 25th anniversary. During that time, over 8.5 million trees have been planted, increasing forest cover in the region from 6% to 20%. To date, the Forest has delivered £140 million of net public benefit, secured 333 jobs in forestry, farm diversification and woodland businesses, and has nine fuel installations using wood renewable energy source.⁵ By 2030, wood fuel from the National Forest is expected to produce enough energy to supply electricity to 26,900 homes. That’s the equivalent of a town the size of Loughborough.⁶

If that’s what planting 8.5 million trees can do, the Northern Forest, with a planned 50 million trees, could make a huge impact on employment rates and the forestry sector right across the North of England. And the type of timber matters. At a time when timber growers are concerned that restocking of productive forests is not happening at sustainable levels, the careful planning and management of softwood forests is key. In the UK around 50% of felled woodland is being restocked with softwood, while 52,200 hectares of new forests have been planted, just 12,100 hectares are conifers needed for the industry.⁷

Fuelling the fire

Alongside timber for construction, the demand for wood fuel is also a key growth area. Gone are the days when we ripped out our old wood-burning fires for a gas or electric imitation. Sales of wood and multi-fuel burning stoves have more than doubled since 2005.⁸ It’s estimated that the wood fuel supply chain could generate £1bn GVA (Gross Value Added) and add more than 15,000 jobs to the UK economy by 2020.⁹

The Northern Forest is primed to take advantage of this growth.

Essential investment

Trees have lifecycles that span decades, even centuries – a powerful argument why the public forest estate should not be at the mercy of the electoral cycle. The policy changes every five years as governments come and go. It will never allow our forestry sector to reach its full potential to create jobs and skills, resource and income.

No matter how you look at it, trees are an essential resource. Yes, there are alternatives, but a healthy, vibrant and commercially viable forestry sector is essential to the health of the UK economy. And across the towns, cities and rural areas of the Northern Forest, this investment in natural capital could signal a new chapter of prosperity.

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The time to create a Northern Forest is now.

We can't do this on our own. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity and we need your support.

If you would like to get involved in delivering the Northern Forest – whether as a financial supporter, landowner, partner, or in any other way – please visit thenorthernforest.org.uk

Join us



Footnotes

1. Confor (2011). Forestry: Fit for the 21st century. Available at: http://heartwoods.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/22_ForestryFitfor21stcenturyDec2011.pdf
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3. Northwest Regional Forestry Framework (2011). Our Future Canopy: A Forestry Manifesto for England's Northwest. Available at: [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/OurFutureCanopy.pdf/\\$file/OurFutureCanopy.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/OurFutureCanopy.pdf/$file/OurFutureCanopy.pdf)
4. Wood Awards (2010). Hull History Centre: Structural Award Winner 2010. Available at: <http://woodawards.com/portfolio/hull-history-centre/7>
5. National Forest Company (2016). The National Forest: Headline Facts and Figures - March 2016. Available at: www.nationalforest.org/forest/grow/facts.php
6. National Forest Company (2014). The National Forest – Economic impact and future economic potential. Available at: www.nationalforest.org/document/research/Summary_Economic_Impact_and_Potential%20April_2014.pdf
7. Confor (2017). The Softwood Dilemma: Restocking and New Planting of Conifers in the UK. Available at: <http://www.confor.org.uk/media/246421/the-softwood-dilemma-january-2017.pdf>
8. Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2012). Independent Panel on Forestry: Final Report. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-panel-on-forestry-final-report
9. Centre for Economics and Business Research (2010). The economic value of the woodfuel industry to the UK economy by 2020. A report for the Forestry Commission. Available at: [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FC_The_economic_value_of_the_woodfuel_industry_to_the_UK_economy_by_2020_2010.pdf/\\$file/FC_The_economic_value_of_the_woodfuel_industry_to_the_UK_economy_by_2020_2010.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FC_The_economic_value_of_the_woodfuel_industry_to_the_UK_economy_by_2020_2010.pdf/$file/FC_The_economic_value_of_the_woodfuel_industry_to_the_UK_economy_by_2020_2010.pdf)