

The Northern Forest

Green growth. Delivered.

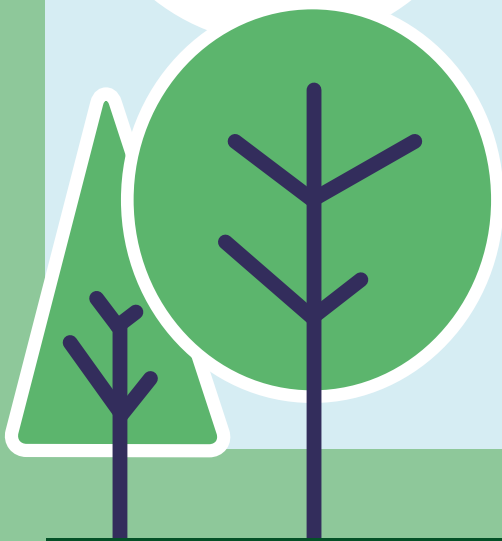


SEVEN YEAR IMPACT REPORT: 2018 to 2025

The Northern Forest is an ambitious programme of environmental and economic transformation. Together, the Woodland Trust, the Community Forest Trust and four Community Forests in the north of England – The Mersey Forest, City of Trees (Greater Manchester), the White Rose Forest and Humber Forest – are aiming to plant at least 50 million new trees across 10,000 square miles of land over 25 years.

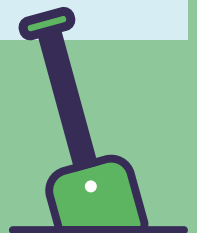
At the seven-year mark, over 10 million trees have been established between Liverpool and Hull, covering Merseyside, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Yorkshire and the Humber, Lancashire, and parts of Cumbria, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire.

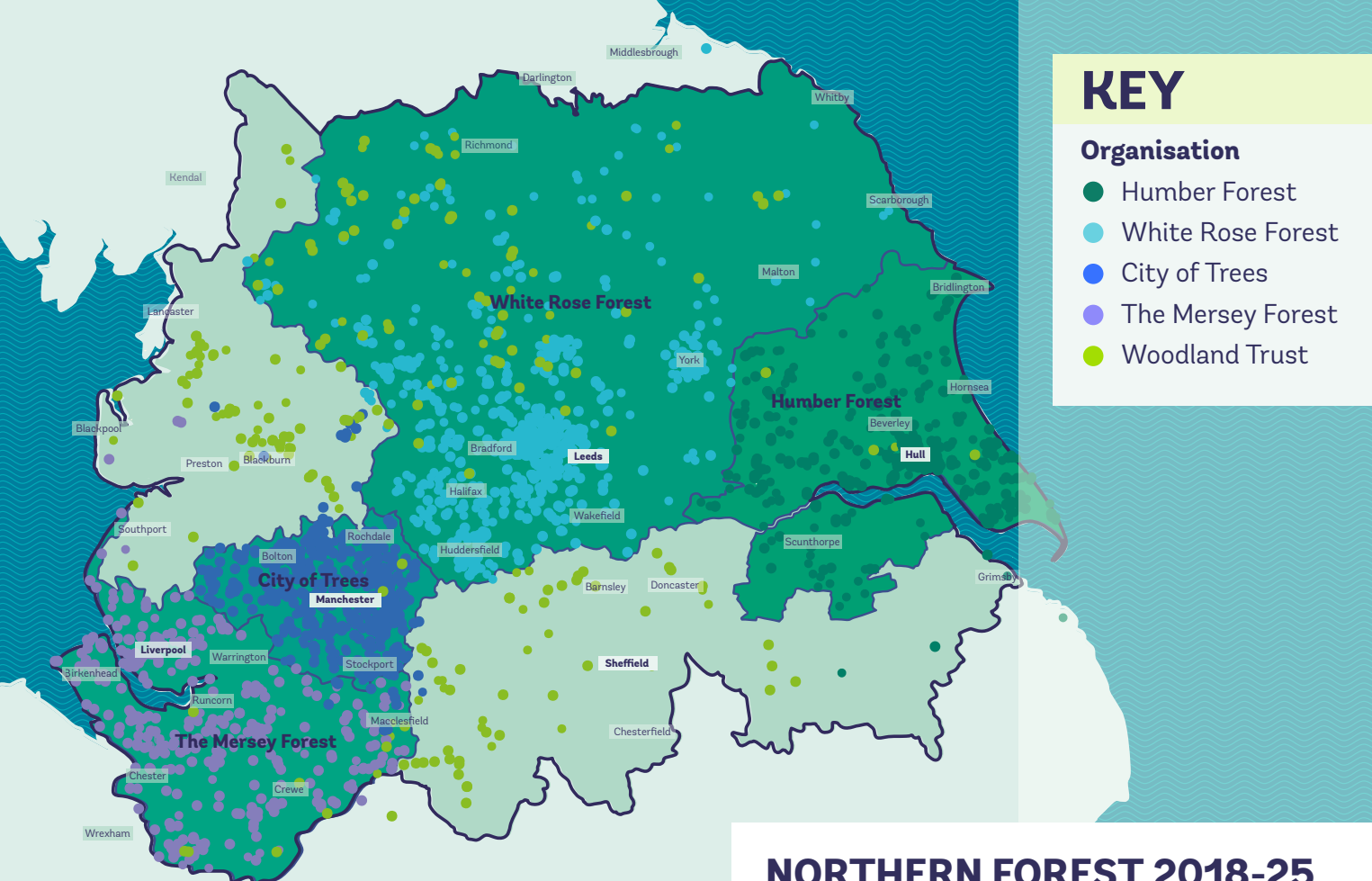
The programme's impact has been significant. Liverpool John Moores University has assessed the benefits that the Northern Forest has generated since its launch to show an impressive and increasing return on investment.



From 2018 to 2025 key achievements include:

- **Over 10 million trees** have been planted across the Northern Forest area since 2018, **creating 4,669 hectares of woodland**.
- Every year since its inception, the Northern Forest has increasingly planted more trees – **460 hectares in 2020-21, rising to 1,160 hectares in 2024-25**.
- **339,000 extra households are now less than ten minutes walk away from a publicly accessible woodland**. This means around one million people – about the same as the population of Leeds – now have better access to nature, cleaner air and better health as a result of the Northern Forest.
- **92,000 extra households** within the most deprived areas are now **within 500 metres of woodland**.
- Working in some of the most deprived areas of the UK, the Northern Forest is contributing **£50 million of economic uplift every year** through natural benefits such as flood mitigation, improved air quality and access to nature.
- **55,000 tonnes of carbon are being locked up every year** by the trees we have planted, equivalent to the carbon footprint of over **25,000 flights from London to Dubai**. This supports both national and local governments' carbon reduction ambitions.
- As the trees grow, **1.5 million cubic metres of additional water storage is being created**, creating natural flood management across these areas equal to an **annual water storage cost of £700,000**.





KEY

Organisation

- Humber Forest
- White Rose Forest
- City of Trees
- The Mersey Forest
- Woodland Trust

The power of the Northern Forest lies in its ability to deliver transformation on a huge scale, while staying rooted in local communities. Each partner designs projects to meet local needs, supporting the delivery of the Northern Forest.

The partnership has been supported by core funding from Defra, which has contributed to the majority of woodland creation in the Northern Forest since 2018, complemented by funding from corporate partners such as Aviva and Lloyds Banking Group. The Forestry Commission has funded projects through its grant schemes and provides regulatory guidance on new woodlands in the Northern Forest. Other partners, such as the South Yorkshire Woodland Partnership, have also enabled planting outside of the areas covered by the four Community Forest partners.

The Northern Forest is delivering incredible benefits to people and wildlife. It is playing a vital role in mitigating the impacts of climate change, addressing the biodiversity crisis and building stronger, more equitable, healthier communities – all alongside delivering genuine, sustainable economic value and supporting the Government's mission for growth.

NORTHERN FOREST 2018-25



More than 10 million trees



339,000 more homes now a short walk away from nature



One million people with better access to nature



£50 million of economic uplift every year



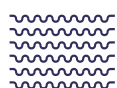
55,000 tonnes of carbon locked up every year



4,669 hectares of woodland created



10,000 hectares of wildlife networks



1.5 million cubic metres of extra water storage



180 tonnes of harmful air pollutants captured every year

A major green uplift

The Northern Forest covers an area that is home to 13 million people and represents 19% of our country's economic activity.¹

There is a clear and powerful link between the quality of the environment and people's health, which in turn has a direct impact on the economy. Across the Northern Forest, poor health is holding back potential and productivity.

The communities here have less access to trees and woodland than the rest of the country. In 2018, the Northern Forest area had an average of just 7.6% woodland cover – far below the figures for the UK (13%) and Europe (30%).²

This programme helps to address these health, economic and environmental inequalities. For every 100 hectares of woodland planted, research shows that 25 temporary and the equivalent of six one-year jobs are created.³ Meanwhile, trees and nature help underpin our valuable visitor economy, worth £12.3 billion annually.⁴ Accessible urban green space in northern England is also estimated to provide £780 million per year in avoided costs of physical and mental health conditions.⁵



Photo: Eric Wright

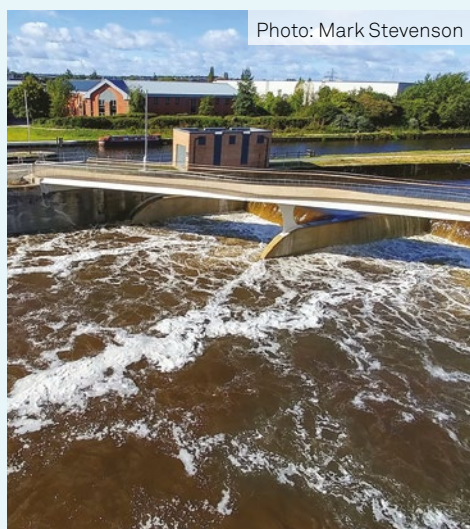


Photo: Mark Stevenson

Tackling flood risk in Leeds, helping build climate resilience to reduce the impact of flooding in the future.



Photo: City of Trees

Supporting the creation of green jobs in Greater Manchester through the City of Trees' Roots to Work project.



Photo: McCoy Wynne

£1.2m investment to turn contaminated land in Birkenhead into a biodiverse, thriving housing and office development.

1 <https://www.transportfornorth.com/economic-growth/>

2 <https://thenorthernforest.org.uk/>

3 https://www.camecon.com/hubfs/145725293/The-economic-costs-benefits-of-nature-based-solutions_final-report_FINAL_V3.pdf

4 https://transportfornorth.com/wp-content/uploads/Visitor-Economy-and-Transport-in-the-North-of-England_Full.pdf

5 <https://www.naturenorth.org.uk/unlocking-the-power-of-green-spaces-in-northern-towns-and-cities/>

Breathe in nature

One of the most striking aspects of the Northern Forest is its ability to bring nature closer to people and communities. Planting trees and establishing woodland in the Northern Forest area means that **339,000** more households are now within 500 metres of a publicly accessible woodland, and almost one third of these are within the top 10% of most deprived areas in England.

Giving people free, easy access to nature means a greater chance of them having better physical and mental health.

In urban areas airborne pollution comes largely from traffic, and poses a significant health risk. The Royal College of Physicians estimates that air pollution causes around **40,000** premature deaths every year. Taking trees to the heart of urban areas cleans the air that millions of people breathe. They also cool the temperature and quieten the noise of city life.

An investment well made

The Northern Forest demonstrates the transformative power of investing in nature. It is delivering jobs, health, nature recovery and greater resilience in the face of a climate emergency; it is also helping address that emergency by locking up thousands of tonnes of carbon.

Working together and with others, the Woodland Trust, The Mersey Forest, City of Trees (Greater Manchester), the White Rose Forest, the Humber Forest, and the Community Forest Trust are celebrating seven years of sustained impact on the ground, and planning for the next phase of consistent, measurable and innovative delivery for people, places and prosperity.

If you would like to support the Northern Forest, there are many ways to get involved – please get in touch for a chat about how you or your organisation can help make it grow. To find out more, visit: thenorthernforest.org.uk



Making space for nature

The UK Government is committed to protecting **30%** of UK land for nature by 2030. The Northern Forest directly contributes towards this goal. The trees planted so far are helping to create an additional **10,000** hectares of better-connected habitat networks for wildlife, contributing to a total of **672,000** hectares of woodland networks, which are critical for nature recovery.



humberforest.org



cityoftrees.org.uk



woodlandtrust.org.uk



merseyforest.org.uk



whiteroseforest.org



communityforest-trust.org

This report has been produced in partnership with:

