

# **Government Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement**

## **Implementation Plan – ‘One Year On’**

Prepared by Defra and Forestry Commission England for the National Forestry Forum on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014

January 2014

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## 1. Introduction

This ‘**One Year On**’ update marks the first anniversary of the publication of the Government’s [Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement](#). The Policy Statement responded to the [Independent Panel on Forestry’s report](#), but also set a clear direction for the future of English forestry policy, based around the hierarchy of priorities: **protecting**, **improving** and **expanding** our woodland assets.

The Statement set out 36 commitments that Government would pursue in partnership with the sector<sup>1</sup>. As this update shows, significant progress has been made in taking forward these commitments. The key indicators set out in the graphs (A-J) also provide clear evidence that together we are achieving our collective ambitions.<sup>2</sup>

**To protect our trees**, we have begun to address all of the recommendations from the Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Task Force, and are well on our way to appointing our first ever Chief Plant Health Officer and to publishing a new Plant Biosecurity Strategy. We have made real progress on the ground in dealing with Oak Processionary Moth, reducing nests last year by 53%. We have strengthened our controls on the import and movement of tree species presenting known risks, such as ash, sweet chestnut, oak and plane. We have also introduced new resources to help foresters to identify and plant more resilient species.

**To improve our woodlands**, we have worked with the sector to implement the UK Forestry Standard and provide the incentives for landowners to manage and create woodland. We have also supported the sector-led Grown in Britain initiative in its efforts to increase both the supply of, and demand for, wood and wood products and worked with partners to increase the use of woodfuel for energy generation. We are seeing a buoyant commercial forestry sector enjoying good prices for timber, bringing greater volumes to market, employing more people and increasing value to the economy

**To expand our woodlands**, we have announced that 2,000 hectares of new woodland will be created through the planting of 4 million trees as part of a £30 million government investment through the Rural Development Programme in the next financial year. This investment will be split between £6 million on new planting in 2014/15 and £24 million on woodland management, including maintaining the benefits of past woodland creation projects. The Big Tree Plant also remains on course to plant 1 million new trees by 2015, often in our most deprived and least green neighbourhoods. The Woodland Carbon Code now has 192 projects signed up, covering an area of more than 15,000 hectares and with cumulative carbon savings of 5.5 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> over their lifetime.

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<sup>1</sup> By sector we mean landowners, businesses, civil society organisations, local authorities, local communities, people who use woodland – anyone with an interest in and influence on forestry.

<sup>2</sup> Source unless indicated: Forestry Commission England (2013) Corporate Plan Performance Indicators and Woodland Indicators 2013, [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FC-England-Indicators-Report-2013.pdf/\\$FILE/FC-England-](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FC-England-Indicators-Report-2013.pdf/$FILE/FC-England-), accessed 24th January 2014.

The Statement also committed us to improving our delivery arrangements. Having carefully considered all the options, Ministers have decided that the Government's key Forestry Functions will continue to be delivered by the Forestry Commission, with enhanced working arrangements between Defra and the Commission to strengthen integration between policy and delivery.

Ministers have also confirmed that the Government remains committed to retaining the Public Forest Estate in public ownership and looked after by a body that is as closely aligned to the Panel's vision as possible. Defra and Forestry Commission officials have worked closely with a wide range of stakeholders over the past year and we have listened carefully to their views in developing our plans. The Government remains committed to publishing draft legislation as soon as possible and to submitting this to full Pre-Legislative Scrutiny.

**One year on**, there remains much more to do but real progress has been made over the past year. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our partners and stakeholders for their help and support so far.

## 2. Protecting Our Trees, Woods and Forests

We remain fully committed to protecting our trees, woods and forests from increasing threats such as pests, diseases and climate change, so that our woodland assets are resilient and can continue to deliver a wide range of economic, social and environmental benefits.

In the Statement, we reaffirmed that protection of trees, woods and forests is our top forestry and woodlands priority. To this end, we have made safeguarding plant health one of Defra's top four priorities and have allocated an additional £8 million for research into tree health and plant biosecurity over the next four years. In addition, we have responded positively to recommendations set-out in the final report of the Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Expert Taskforce, enabling us to review our strategic approach and put in place the best arrangements and resources needed for tree health.

### **Commitment 1: We will give greater priority to tree and plant health than ever before.**

Tree pests and diseases continue to present a clear and on-going threat to our nation's valuable woodland assets and the multiple benefits they provide. Recent outbreaks of *Chalara*, sweet chestnut blight, oak processionary moth and Asian longhorn beetle, on top of those already prevalent, have challenged us to respond quickly and robustly in the areas most needed. For example, we have:

- ⌚ Introduced new controls on imports of some native species (oak, sweet chestnut, plane, ash) in January 2013;
- ⌚ Continued to influence the ongoing review of the EU Plant Health regime;
- ⌚ Published the [Chalara Management Plan](#) in March 2013 and will update this in March 2014;

- ⌚ Funded actions last year to help contain the spread of [Oak Processionary Moth](#) (OPM) in London and Berkshire; including a 53% reduction in nest numbers, and a one third reduction in the annual rate of spread;
- ⌚ Redeployed our resources to increase numbers of our plant health field staff in Forestry Commission England;
- ⌚ Worked with the Food and Environment Research Agency, the Horticultural Trades Association, Confor and the Nursery Producers Group on a nursery/plant assurance scheme to further increase confidence that trees sold for planting are disease free. A scoping exercise will be completed and steering group set-up by March 2014;
- ⌚ Supported the Horticultural Trades Association 2013 UK Plant Biosecurity Conference;
- ⌚ Significantly stepped-up efforts to raise public awareness of key plant health messages through effective communication;
- ⌚ Made reporting threats easier by developing our Tree Alert pest and disease reporting app and [on-line form](#) to include pests such as Oak Processionary Moth.

### **Case Study – Communications work: National Tree Week tweet-a-thon**

The Forest Research agency took part in the [Tree Council's tweet-a-thon](#) on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2013, promoting their work on pests and diseases and fielding stakeholders' questions. Forest Research's tweets sent during the tweet-a-thon reached an estimated 120,000 Twitter accounts.

## **Oak Processionary Moth**

During 2013, we stepped up efforts to raise public awareness of the threat which Oak Processionary Moth poses to tree, human and animal health, how to avoid the health risks and how to report sightings of the pest. We also worked to engage more closely local authorities, tree owners, land managers and public health authorities in the effort to control this pest in London, eradicate it in Berkshire and ensure that health and veterinary professionals were aware of the risks, symptoms and treatments. Initial outcome reports suggest that the overall Oak Processionary Moth control programme has proved a success. Highlights include:

- ⌚ 200 sites and tens of thousands of trees sprayed;
- ⌚ 53% reduction in nest numbers;
- ⌚ One third reduction in the annual rate of spread;
- ⌚ Improved cost-effectiveness through central tendering and organisation;
- ⌚ Close cooperation with Natural England to gain assent for activity on Wimbledon Common;
- ⌚ Monitoring of nest building (and thus success of spraying) underway with 20+ surveyors;
- ⌚ The deployment of 50 pheromone traps in Bromley and Croydon;
- ⌚ The successful completion of aerial application at Pangbourne.

## Building Resilience

Recent outbreaks of pests and diseases within England's woodlands has highlighted the fact that only 10 tree species account for 80% of the woodlands canopy.

Core to our strategy for ensuring woodlands stay resilient to this challenge and the need to adapt to a changing climate is the recognition that we need more diverse woodlands both in species, genetics within species, stand and age structure.

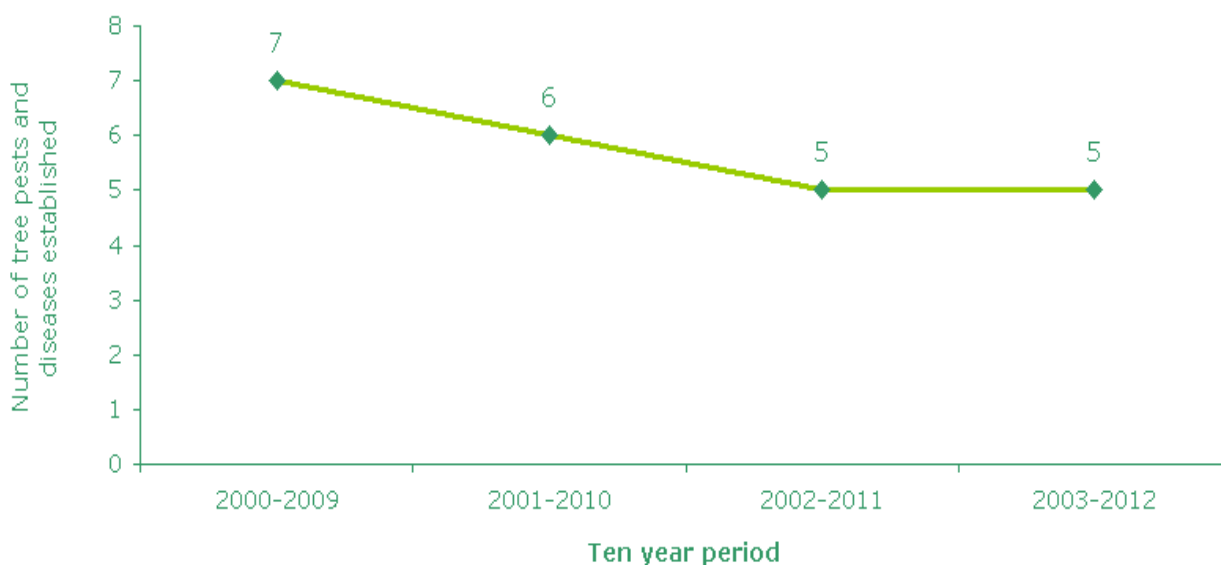
To encourage foresters to adopt new or novel tree species, the Public Forest Estate nurseries have grown young saplings of more than 21 different conifer species. This new suite of tree species should over time support the creation of much more diverse and resilient forests.

To complement this work, we have a comprehensive [web resource](#), supported by free to use electronic [tree species selection tools](#); a demonstration [database](#) of novel species; and the Royal Forestry Society, funded by Climate Ready, have launched a national competition to recognise excellence in plantings adopting current best resilience practice.

Experiences with these lesser known species are being shared in field meetings but also through media such as LinkedIn and Twitter.

### Graph A: Number of tree pests and diseases established in England in the last 10 years

Position at 31 March 2013; 5 tree pests and diseases established since 2003 in England. This includes *Chalara* dieback of ash in 2012. The total is one less than in the 10 years preceding the 1 April 2011 baseline point, as two earlier diseases have fallen out of the series and only *Chalara* dieback of ash added during the last year. While surveillance and monitoring identified the previously un-encountered Asian longhorn beetle, it was found early enough for eradication action to be taken during the year.



## **Commitment 2: We will review the arrangements and resources needed for tree health in light of the final report of the Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Expert Taskforce.**

In the Statement, we recognised that to safeguard our woodland assets, and the landscapes they are part of, we must radically reassess our approach and put in place a more robust, long term plant health regime. To do this, we convened a Tree and Health Biosecurity Expert Taskforce to review our strategic approach. Their final [report](#) published in May 2013, recommended that we:

- ⌚ Develop a UK Plant Health Risk Register and to provide strategic and tactical leadership for managing those risks;
- ⌚ Appoint a Chief Plant Health Officer to own the Plant Health Risk Register;
- ⌚ Develop and implement procedures for preparedness and contingency planning to predict, monitor, and control the spread of pests and diseases;
- ⌚ Review, simplify, and strengthen governance and legislation;
- ⌚ Improve the use of epidemiological intelligence from EU/other regions and work to improve the EU regulations concerned with tree health and plant biosecurity;
- ⌚ Strengthen biosecurity to reduce risks at the border and within the UK;
- ⌚ Develop a modern, user-friendly system to provide quick and intelligent access to data about tree health and plant biosecurity; and
- ⌚ Address key skills shortages.

We have made rapid progress in implementing the first three recommendations, through:

- ⌚ Producing and using a single, prioritised plant health risk register to identify risks from specific pests and diseases and agree priorities for action;
- ⌚ Putting in place new procedures for preparedness and contingency planning to ensure we can predict, monitor and control the spread of pests and pathogens. We will publish the results of this work in the summer to help ensure the UK is ready to deal effectively with future incursions of diseases into this country and is also able to respond better to those that are already established;
- ⌚ Starting recruitment for the senior post of Chief Plant Health Officer and expect to make an appointment early this year.

In December 2013, Defra's Secretary of State accepted the remaining taskforce recommendations and, in order to deliver these, we are developing an enhanced Plant Health Policy Programme. This will encompass all plants since the threats facing our plants are not restricted to trees. Working with stakeholders we will publish a new plant health strategy in spring 2014 which will include programme details and set out a new approach to biosecurity for our plants.



### 3. Improving Our Valuable Woodland Assets to Drive Economic Growth

We remain fully committed to sustaining, managing and improving our national woodland assets in ways that contribute to economic growth and realise benefits for people and nature.

In line with our commitments in the Natural Environment White Paper, we want to do more than just maintain our woodland assets. We want to improve them. This will help everyone derive the greatest possible economic, social and environmental benefit from them, whilst ensuring that these benefits are available for generations to come.

Since we published the Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement, we have made good progress against the commitments we set out to drive economic growth. We have worked with the sector to implement the UK Forestry Standard and provide the incentives for landowners to manage and create woodland. We have also supported the sector-led Grown in Britain initiative in its efforts to increase both the demand for, and supply of, wood and wood products and have worked with partners to increase the use of woodfuel for energy generation.

The last 12 months have seen timber processing businesses enjoy buoyant trading conditions and woodland owners have benefited from generally strong timber prices. Confor, who represent more than 2,000 forestry businesses, report that the British softwood processing industry is performing well at an international level too and is now the seventh largest in Europe, including Russia. Larger mills are beginning to export their products and the sector has invested in kilns, planing and grading equipment which add value to output.

This is good news and we remain fully committed to helping businesses sustain, manage and improve our national woodland assets in ways that contribute to economic growth and realise benefits for people and nature.

#### **Commitment 3: We will exchange knowledge with advisors from across the sector on how to take a low burden, risk-based approach to implementing the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS)**

In the Statement, we confirmed we had published a quick start summary of the UK Forestry Standard and guidelines to enable more landowners and businesses to understand and access the opportunities and benefits from effective woodland management. Since then, we have built on this by seeking, wherever possible, further opportunities to play our part in developing the forestry sector's knowledge and expertise. For example:

- 🕒 We have worked with the Institute of Chartered Foresters, Royal Forestry Society, and Confor to deliver 23 seminars and workshops to more than 1,200 participants. In addition, organisations such as the Royal Forestry Society, Smallwoods Association, Woodland Heritage and Royal Botanical Gardens Kew have

- independently held over 20 meetings that have discussed forest ecological resilience, reaching in excess of another 1,000 forestry practitioners;
- ⌚ We have provided articles by our Forestry Commission England's advisers to all the major forest industry magazines promoting the need for foresters to diversify their plantings to increase resilience;
  - ⌚ We have supported the Institute of Chartered Foresters in running a series of internet lectures to the Canadian Institute of Chartered Foresters showcasing the UK's work to ensure its forests are resilient. Our experts in Forestry Commission England have been invited to share their experience with other European practitioners at a conference in February 2014 in Paris;
  - ⌚ We are using social media to engage quickly with a wide audience, e.g. our LinkedIn site on forestry now has over 230 members discussing forest resilience;
  - ⌚ We published the [UK Forestry Standard for Planners](#) in May 2013;
  - ⌚ We have completed a programme of training for forestry professionals on how European Protected Species legislation is built into the UK Forestry Standard, with 10 sessions involving 287 participants. This included one for the Wildlife Crime Unit;
  - ⌚ We are continuing to provide training by our Forestry Commission landscape professionals on forestry and landscape - 6 events with over 87 participants were held between December 2012 and March 2013. There were 2 additional events in June and September 2013 attended by 35 people and a final session is planned for March 2014 when it is hoped to present to a further 20;
  - ⌚ We are rolling out in partnership with the Institute of Chartered Foresters a programme of [workshops](#) on the UK Forestry Standard and the new Woodland Management Plan template. The new template was developed with the sector as part of our response to the Forestry Regulation Task Force;
  - ⌚ Our Climate Ready Programme has funded a new Royal Forestry Society [Climate Change Excellence Award](#) for productive woodland for 2014. The entries are to be received by 31 March, with judging in May;
  - ⌚ We are supporting the sector to implement the new UK Forestry Standard Acidification Practice Guide, with publication due early 2014.

### **Case Study – UKFS and Woodland Management Plan Workshops**

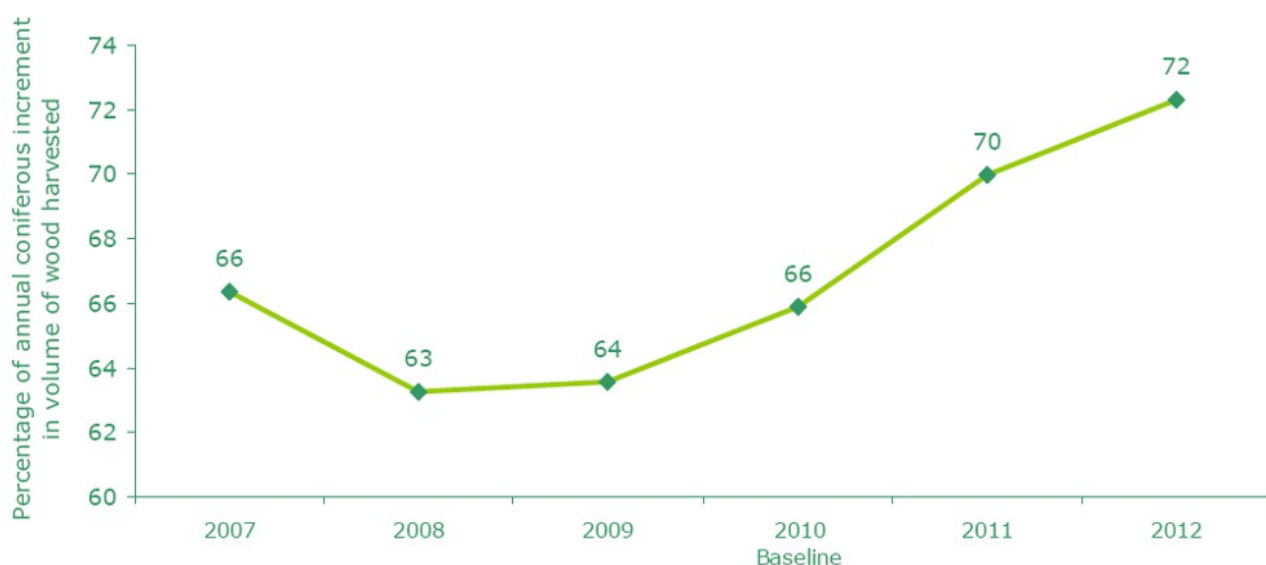
During January and February, the Institute of Chartered Foresters will host a series of workshops in partnership with our woodland experts in Forestry Commission **England, introducing the previously refreshed UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and new** woodland management plan templates. The events will be particularly valuable for forestry practitioners, agents and woodland owners.

The management plan templates aim to support more woodlands into UKFS compliant and sustainable management. Forestry Commission approved, UKFS-compliant management plans will be an important eligibility criteria for funding under the next Rural Development Programme.

This series of [seminars](#) will provide an insight on UKFS, hands-on workshops and the introduction of new mapping functionality that supports management planning. Attendees will learn more about templates enabling them to improve their plans, for both short and long term woodland management.

## Graph B: Percentage of the total amount of wood that grows in English woods that is harvested

This is going up, which is good (it is good to harvest wood from well managed woodland), but isn't above 100%, which would be bad, indicating overexploitation and a lack of resilience. So there is room to get even more benefit for England from England's woodlands while continuing to fulfil the UK Forestry Standard. Note the indicator does not yet include hardwood harvesting, which is believed to have a much lower percentage of annual increment harvested.



### **Commitment 4: We will work with businesses and civil society to increase the total capacity and capability available to provide targeted advice on woodland management.**

We are continuing to work with the sector to increase capacity and capability and provide advice. In September 2013, we initiated a comprehensive three-year programme building on the emerging evidence from Commitment 5 below. This works with the sector to bring more woods into active management, with a focus on market mechanisms and private sector involvement alongside grants and light touch regulation. The programme's seven work streams are:

- ⌚ Definitions of management and data recording;
- ⌚ The scope of management plans and land-registration;
- ⌚ The role of grants and advice;
- ⌚ Cross-compliance and targeting through other Departments;
- ⌚ Practical aspects of getting woodland into management;
- ⌚ Market pull and Skills Action Plan work, including Grown in Britain;
- ⌚ New approaches such as payments for ecosystem services.

Our first priority is producing tools for our Forestry Commission field teams to improve the prioritisation of their advisory and partnership work. We are also working with other organisations to explore how we can better deploy external advisers.

## Case Study – Working together to increase woodland management

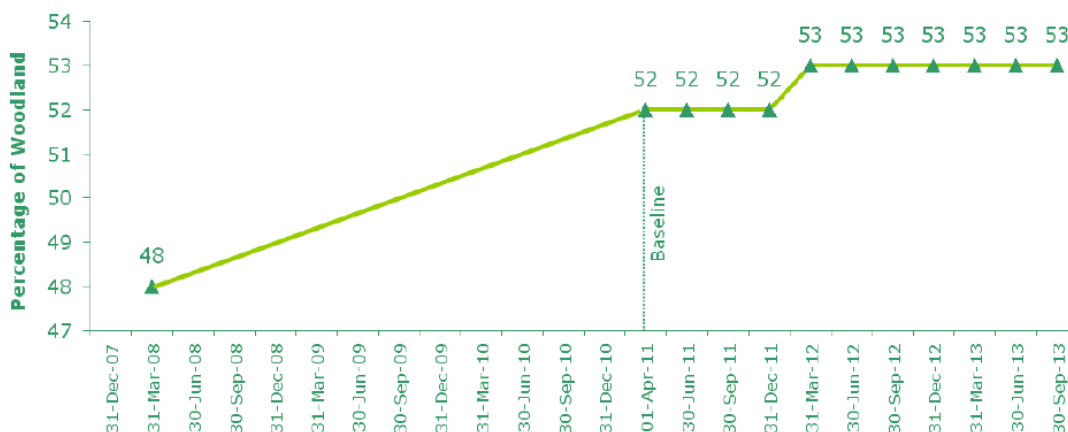
[Good Woods](#) is a ground-breaking project, launched in January 2013, aiming to breathe new life into UK woodlands. [Sylva](#) has teamed up with leading home improvement and garden centre retailer [B&Q](#) and sustainability charity [BioRegional](#) to improve the environmental, social, and economic values of our woodlands. The aim of the project is to improve levels of woodland stewardship through:

- ⌚ Providing 200 woodland owners with tools and training in woodland management, linked to the freely available myForest service;
- ⌚ Creating the new [Woodland Star Rating](#), based on the [UK Forestry Standard \(UKFS\)](#).
- ⌚ Encouraging sustainable forest management in all woodlands, and promoting greater understanding of good woodland stewardship among the general public;
- ⌚ Developing and promoting a *Community Engagement Toolkit* - guidance to help woodland managers communicate forestry activities to the public;
- ⌚ Supporting community woodland groups and increasing understanding of wood supply chain opportunities locally and nationally.

### Graph C: Percentage of woodland in active management (including the Public Forest Estate)

The percentage of woodland in active management has gradually increased since the April 2011 baseline (52%). This indicator of woodland in management includes woodlands where there has been Forestry Commission England grant or felling licence activity typically in the previous 5 to 10 years – it is recognised that other woodlands might be considered as managed as well.

In practice, we consider that a wood is likely to be in active management of the kind we want to encourage when the owner has decided their objectives for the wood; planned how they are going to achieve these objectives (i.e. produced a “management plan”); is putting this plan into practice; and objectives, plan and actions are consistent with the UK Forestry Standard. During 2014/15, we will work out how to further improve the indicator so it better reflects these principles



**Source:** Forestry Commission (2013) Corporate Plan Performance Indicators Headline Performance Update at 30 September 2013 (First Release), [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCEHEADLINEPERFORMANCEINDICATORS30SEP13.pdf/\\$FILE/FCEHEADLINEPERFORMANCEINDICATORS30SEP13.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCEHEADLINEPERFORMANCEINDICATORS30SEP13.pdf/$FILE/FCEHEADLINEPERFORMANCEINDICATORS30SEP13.pdf) , accessed 27th Jan 2014.

## Improving Forestry Skills

One outcome of RDPE investment in forestry is that many thousands of hectares of woodland are now under better management, so creating more opportunities for owners to earn greater amounts of money from efficient woodland harvesting. But it takes special training and skills to know how, and when, to fell or prune a tree, coppice, turn branches into woodchip, re-plant and so on. And that raises a human resources question - how to ensure there are enough people with the right know-how to keep wood-related industry vibrant, and enough up-and-coming foresters to step in for older workers as they retire?

In June 2011 Forestry Commission England launched the [Forestry Skills Action Plan](#) – an initiative to address skills issues in the forestry sector. Under the plan, signatory organisations agreed to undertake actions to improve the level of skills in the workforce. The ambitions in the Forestry Policy Statement has given new impetus to this work. One of Forestry Commission England’s key actions is to support apprenticeships - the Forestry Skills Initiative is one of the ways we are doing that (see case study below), the other being [Forest Enterprise’s Apprenticeship scheme](#). The rest of the forestry sector is also stepping up. The Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) is part of a successful bid for funding for a project to raise skills and drive economic growth across the sector. The primary focus is to establish a multi-faceted learning network and support professional development, particularly leadership and management skills. The project will be delivered by Rural Development Initiatives Ltd (RDI), and has an employer-led focus, ensuring a more coherent approach.

### Case Study – Apprenticeships

Leading from the pilot scheme, in the South West and the Midlands, a new style apprenticeship is helping to provide the next generation of England’s foresters. Additional Forestry Commission funding has been made available for more employers to offer apprenticeships and dozens of young would-be foresters in

different parts of England are now taking advantage of on-the-job training supervised by expert mentors and classroom work, leading to a Level Two Diploma in forestry as well as a useful range of professional competency certificates.

The pilot scheme resulted from a partnership led by the Forestry Commission and The Silvanus Trust with additional financial and practical support from Bicton College, the Making It Local and Neroche funding schemes and private forestry sector employers. As proof of the next generation's interest in forestry, more than 150 young people applied for the places and all four of the scheme's first graduates are still working in the sector.

**Commitment 5: We will publish research on the potential impact of different ways of incentivising landowners to manage and create woodland.**

We want to see more woodland sustainably managed and planted. To accelerate the rate of progress, the whole sector, including Government, must work more effectively together to provide the advice and incentives woodland owners need to plant more trees where it best suits them and their local conditions.

In summer 2012, we commissioned a research project to fill an important evidence gap about the ownership patterns, attitudes and motivations of private woodland owners and farmers towards woodland management and planting. During spring and summer 2013, approximately 2,000 landowners or managers were interviewed and models were developed to understand their likely behaviours and motivations. Additionally, the project delivered extra, high-value analysis of the results produced by its Woodland Management Survey. We expect to publish the final report shortly.

The research was carried out by URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited (lead), Ipsos MORI, Rural Development Initiatives (RDI), University of Aberdeen, CJC Consulting, and the James Hutton Institute and steered by representatives of Defra, Forestry Commission, and Natural England. We have already started to share and discuss the findings with others. For example, we held a seminar at Alice Holt Research Station in November 2013 and the Woodland Trust will report to the Woodland Carbon Task Force on the implications of the results on woodland creation.

We are now planning how to use the project outputs and evidence to help achieve the Government's woodland management and creation ambitions, for example through contributing to the implementation of the next Rural Development Programme for England.

**Commitment 6: We will work with businesses on industry-led actions which increase the amount of timber being sold and which help woodland owners manage their woodlands.**

We have worked very closely with the sector-led Grown in Britain initiative, chaired by Dr Peter Bonfield, OBE. In a [report](#), published in October 2013, some of the early successes were highlighted, including:

- ⌚ **A strong and enduring demand established for products from woodlands and forests.** Grown in Britain has established long-term commitment from over 30 UK companies in the retail, DIY, builders merchants, building contractors and building sectors for the preferential procurement of products from UK woodlands and forests. The total buying power of these companies is in excess of £50bn per annum and if realised this would overcome the existing problem of a lack of demand for UK wood products. This initiative is already contributing to a stronger economic engine to support planting and forest management.
- ⌚ **An identifiable UK forestry assurance logo.** A logo and brand representing Grown in Britain has been trademarked and is being trialled in a number of projects across the UK for hardwoods, softwoods, fuel wood and seed stocks. The Grown in Britain logo is a simple and clear mark that tells consumers that the products have been grown in Britain from trusted sources.
- ⌚ **A virtual presence established.** A [website](#) has been established to provide information, advice and a hub for people to go to for listing their events, demonstrating their commitment to the Grown in Britain cause, writing blogs and contributing to newsletters. A twitter account @GrowninBritain (linked to Facebook) has also been established, which has its own 'personality' and at the time of this report has reached more than 4.5 million twitter account holders.
- ⌚ **A traditional communication presence established.** Grown in Britain has been featured in articles in daily and Sunday newspapers, This England magazine, The Structural Engineer, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Journal, Forestry Journal, Timber Trades Journal and on Radio 4 and local television news.

We have worked with Grown in Britain to develop a '[UK Woodland Corporate Responsibility Reporting Standard](#)' that will be used over coming months to attract and pilot new business corporate responsibility investment into woodland projects that improve and enhance our woodlands and result in more tree planting. This will, for the first time, enable the true range of environmental, economic and social services provided by woodlands to be formally recognized and reported on by business investors. We are now working with the Sylva Foundation, BioRegional, National Forest Company, Community Forests and other organisations to trial use of the plan and to develop the concept further.

Government's contribution to Grown in Britain has also included helping owners of small woodlands by clarifying that woodland management based on the UK Forestry Standard can provide the necessary evidence of sustainability to meet the requirements of the Government's Timber Procurement Policy<sup>3</sup>. A clear statement has been published on the [Central Point of Expertise on Timber \(CPET\)](#) website.

Although Grown in Britain is a sector-led initiative, we will remain active partners during its next phase. Grown in Britain has the potential to yield significant and lasting benefits for our woodland economy. Alongside this, it can provide benefits for people, who gain

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<sup>3</sup> The Timber Procurement Policy mandates central Government departments, their executive agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies to procure timber and wood-derived products that are legal and sustainable. Local Government is encouraged to comply.

improved health and well-being from woods. It can also provide benefits for the environment and wildlife as more managed woods typically mean more biodiversity.

## Woodfuel

There is a fast growing market for woodfuel in the UK, with Heathrow Airport and the Waitrose supermarket chain being just two of the many property owners, large and small, who are switching over to woodfuel heating systems as a way to reduce their carbon footprints and take advantage of a readily-renewable and affordable source of heat. The same demand is also opening many new business and employment opportunities in rural areas – around harvesting, carriage, processing, storage, equipment needs, maintenance and even inflating the special tyres fitted to timber haulage vehicles. However, satisfying the demand and capitalising on it means guaranteeing a regular woodfuel supply and making sure that the supplies are backed by the right support chains.

We remain committed to encouraging greater use of woodfuel, where the market is not developed at the expense of other wood processing industries or creating unfair competition for our home grown products, and we are continuing to explore ways in which the market can be grown. For example, via the [Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant](#), which supports the sustainable production of woodfuel and other timber products. The main work supported is building roads, tracks and other infrastructure to assist the extraction of timber from woodland and woodland inventory and costs associated with managing harvesting contracts

### Case Study – Woodfuel

BioNErgy, a North East-based scheme, managed by the region's woodlands initiative Northwoods, is designed to give an unusually broad range of woodland owners and wood-related businesses access to sector development funding and advice.

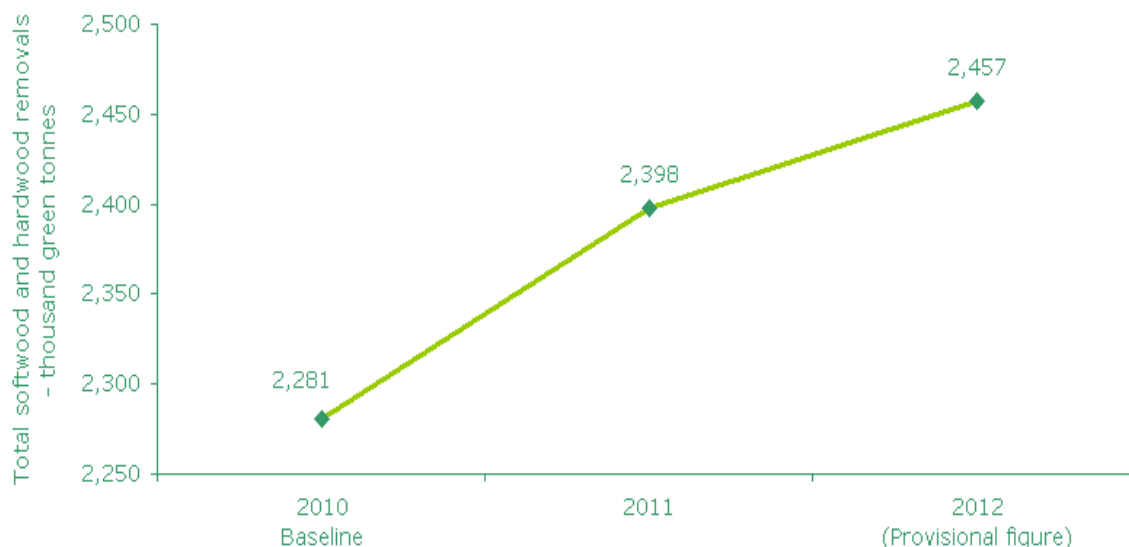
One sign of the scheme's success is that the Forestry Commission's initial investment of £1.4m RDPE funding has since attracted private sector funding worth another £3m. As a result, 58 applicants have been helped to improve or expand their operations, and 79 new projects have been started. The resulting growth is supporting more than 30 new jobs and securing many more in a region where unemployment traditionally stands above the national average. The grants have also encouraged more farmers to diversify into the wood market. For instance, one farm that was helped to buy a chipper has already sold 600 tonnes of chipped woodfuel.

## Graph D: Volume of timber brought to market per annum from the Public Forest Estate and other English sources

The Public Forest Estate achieved its Sales Plan volume and retained independent certification. As demand for woodfuel continues to increase private woodland owners are making use of interventions such as the Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant to begin or increase production. Many woodland owners now heat their businesses with wood



grown on their own land. The Grown in Britain initiative could result in additional volumes of timber coming to market in the short to medium term.



**Commitment 7: We will look for opportunities to take advantage of new initiatives such as the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).**

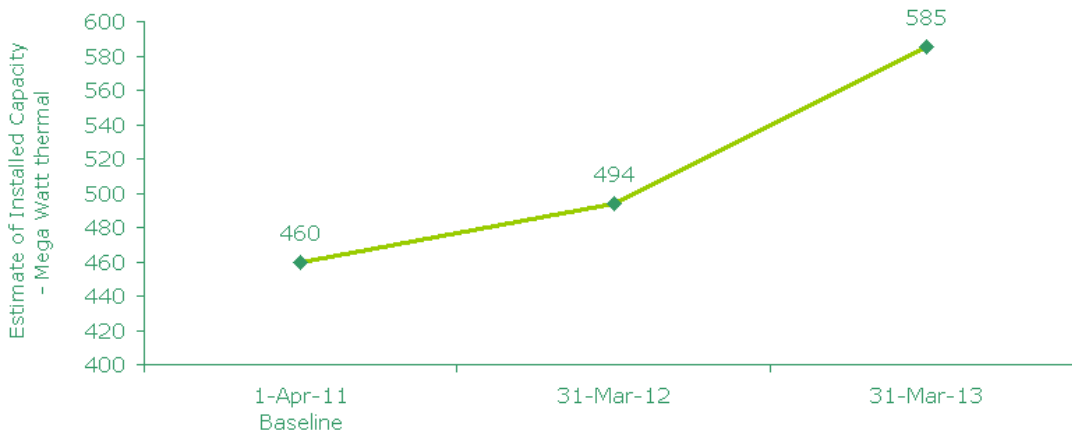
The RHI is the world's first long-term financial support programme for renewable heat. The RHI pays participants of the scheme that generate and use renewable energy to heat their buildings. By increasing the generation of heat from renewable energy sources (instead of fossil fuels), the RHI helps the UK reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet targets for reducing the effects of climate change. The RHI is the main scheme in the Government's heat strategy. The non-domestic RHI scheme has been open to commercial, industrial, public sector, not for profit and heat networks since November 2011. The scheme is designed to bridge the gap between the cost of fossil fuel heat installations and renewable heat alternatives through financial support for owners.

As at 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014, the non-domestic RHI had spent around £22 million supporting the installation of 2,034 boilers with an installed capacity of 432 MW in England. Very roughly they are likely to require around 300,000 green tonnes of wood a year, with a fuel value of around £20 million.

We will continue to encourage the sustainable production of woodfuel for the growing non-domestic RHI market. In addition, the domestic RHI will be made available later this year. This is aimed at increasing the number of households using renewable energy, including wood, as their primary heating source. This new market could provide further opportunities for woodfuel suppliers and woodland owners.

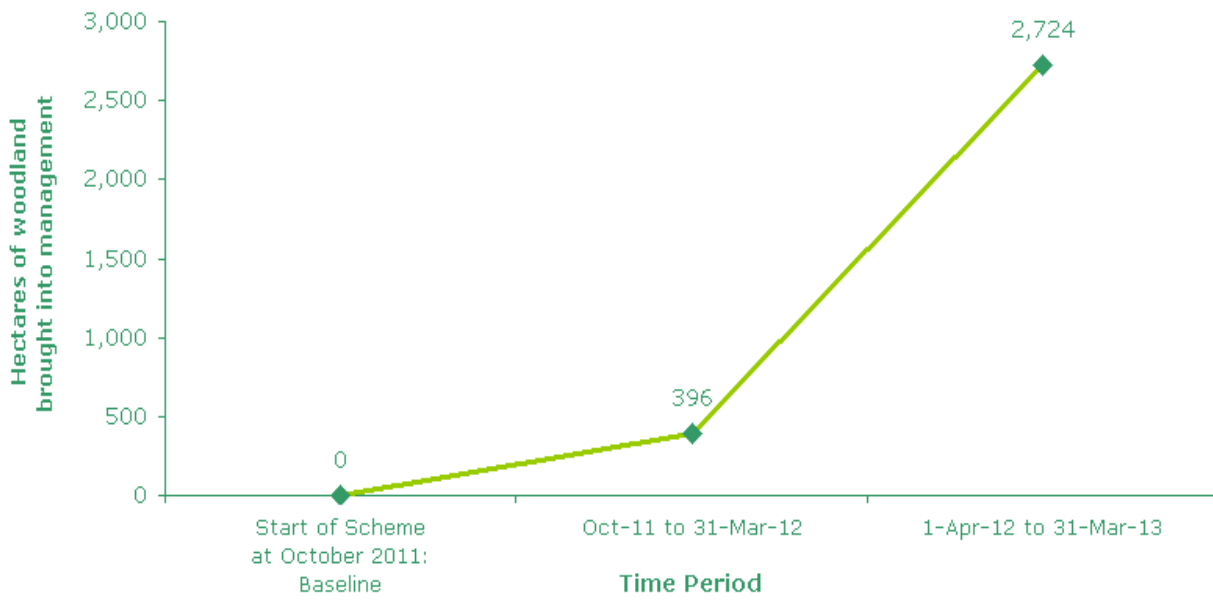
### Graph E: Installed capacity of medium sized wood fuelled boilers (Mega Watt thermal)

The Renewable Heat Incentive has helped drive the increase in installed capacity during 2012/13 and has added momentum to projects and actions highlighted in the Woodfuel Implementation Plan. Woodfuel is becoming a mainstream element of the wider forestry and renewable heat sectors.



### Graph F: Hectares of woodland brought into management by woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant.

The Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant supports the sustainable production of woodfuel and other timber products.



**Commitment 8: We will explore with National Parks the possibility that they might pilot locally-focussed woodfuel initiatives in their areas.**

National Park Authorities (NPAs) also recognise the potential for woodfuel in their areas and are involved in a range of woodfuel initiatives. They are working with partners to promote sustainable woodfuel, and help join up supply and demand. They are currently undertaking a range of initiatives. For example, Dartmoor NPA has been involved in setting up a Woodfuel Co-operative and in the [Ward Forester initiative](#). [The South Downs Forestry Partnership Project](#) aims to work with local landowners and enterprises to capitalise on the emerging wood-fuel market and reinvigorate the local wood culture.

We have met with NPAs to consider opportunities for sharing knowledge and expertise and we will continue to work with them to maximise the potential of this work.

**Commitment 9: We will give preferential consideration to woodfuel-based solutions being brought forward under the Rural Community Renewable Energy Fund.**

The £15 million Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) opened for bids on 28 June 2013, offering funding to community groups in rural areas of England for feasibility studies and for the pre-planning stages of renewable energy projects. All technologies are eligible for funding, including biomass, anaerobic digestion and ground and air source heat pumps; preferential consideration will be given to supporting woodfuel projects. Contact WRAP for more information: [renewables@wrap.org.uk](mailto:renewables@wrap.org.uk)

**Commitment 10: We will review the woodland management position in 5 years in conjunction with the sector and decide whether further joint action is necessary to bring more woodland under management.**

In the Statement, we recognised that increasing woodland management can support new markets and that new markets can drive woodland management, creating a virtuous circle of supply and demand.

We are tracking long-term progress using our indicator framework so that in 2018 we can review and assess the position. So far, together with the sector, we are achieving slow but steady uplift. A 1912 report<sup>4</sup> assessed the area of woodland in active management in the UK as just 3%. In England we are now at 53% showing the nation has come a long way in 100 years. We are committed to carrying on the transformation of domestic forestry for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and, in the shorter-term, we are ambitious for progress to accelerate further. The work set out under the commitments above is intended to enable the whole sector, including government, to achieve this acceleration.

**Commitment 11: We will work with industry to help highlight opportunities for investment in new bioenergy and energy efficiency projects, including the development of suitable forest-based supply chains.**

As noted under Commitment 7, the industry is already responding well to the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

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<sup>4</sup> From a memo. on development of forestry by the Board of agriculture and fisheries for consideration by the development commissioners, 1912.

Grown in Britain has forged promising links to match an increased demand for wood products to increased supply from the forest gate. Better connections are being made between wood product markets, processors and woodland owners and managers. This will mean that the market for wood heat works more efficiently, creates more jobs, reduces more carbon emissions, saves more fuel bills, and brings more woodland into management, which in turn will support more wildlife, more management to safeguard clean water, and help owners improve their woods in other ways.

**Commitment 12: We will establish a register of forestry-related projects that are being supported by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and disseminate examples of best practice and business opportunities widely across the LEP network.**

Local Enterprise Partnerships are playing an increasingly important role in driving the sustainable, long-term development of our local economies across the country. We are fully engaged in [the Single Voice initiative](#) which is helping to coordinate working between LEPs and the Forestry Commission, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation. As part of this, we maintain a register of LEP projects including those featuring woodland creation or management.

Our Forestry Commission England Area teams are developing several projects with LEPs, for example the [Marches LEP forestry initiative](#), which has built upon the original study to test the Woodland Enterprise Zone concept featured in our Statement last year.

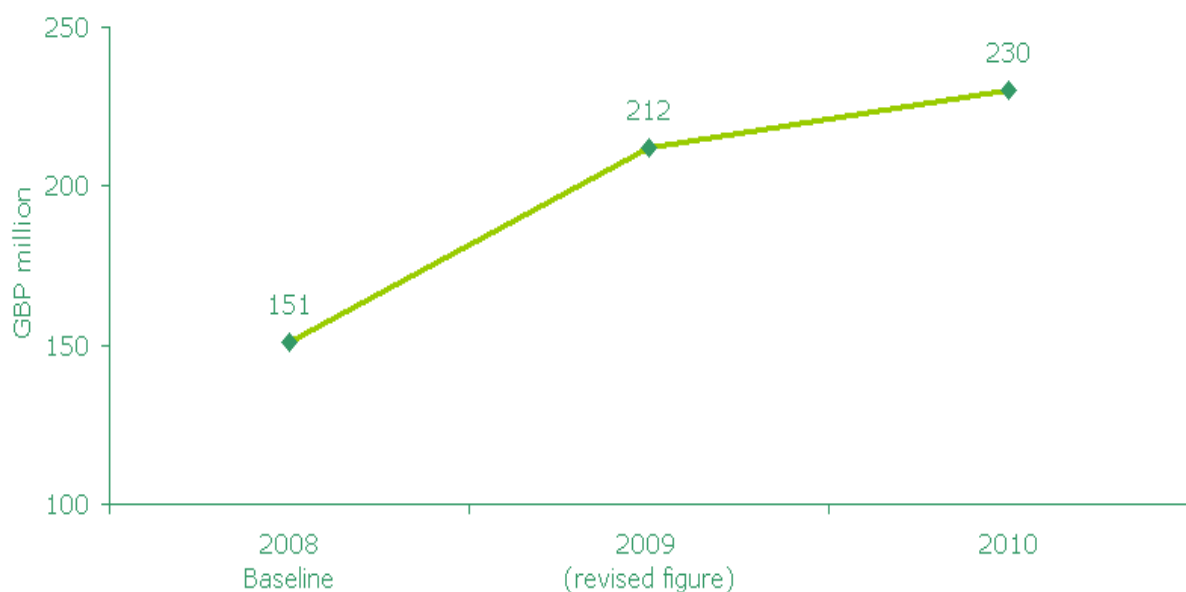
#### **Case Study – The Marches Timber Ground Truthing Study**

We are working with Heartwoods (West Midlands woodland initiative) to undertake follow up work to the Marches Timber Study that identified unmanaged woods that could readily be brought back into management (using criteria such as the proximity to road access, the slope of the ground and the size of the woodland). Heartwoods is visiting a sample of these woods to assess the timber volumes present and gauge landowners' willingness to bring timber to market, in addition to their views on developing recreation activities. Now nearly a third of the way through the study, early findings are that nearly half of owners see no barriers in principle to managing their woods and 40% have an informal shoot in their woods which could be enhanced through woodland management. We plan to use the findings to further develop the Marches Woodland Enterprise Zone concept and promote the results through a sector workshop in Spring 2014, with the aim of kick starting mobilisation of the under-utilised woodland resource.

LEPs have submitted draft strategic economic plans and these are currently being considered by Government with feedback to be provided at end of January. A number of these draft plans recognise the current and potential value of the forestry sector to the economy in their areas. There will then follow a period of iterative discussions between Government and the LEPs to support the finalisation of the strategies before final strategies are submitted by the LEPs at the end of March. All growth deals with the LEPs will be concluded by July.

### Graph G: Gross Value Added (GVA) from domestic forestry

The domestic forestry sector remains buoyant. Future years should see an improving GVA contribution as programmes such as Grown in Britain drive demand for and supply of home-grown timber and timber products.



### Commitment 13: We will publish the results of our research into wood products and their markets in summer 2013.

Developing new and existing markets for sustainably harvested home-grown wood products is of key importance to bringing more of our woodlands into active management. We commissioned a research project to develop an improved evidence base for understanding the behavioural, cultural, physical and economic barriers that may be limiting current levels of use of English wood products and the growth of their markets.

A draft final project report and recommendations was presented to Government in summer 2013. The project timeline was extended to allow more time to consider the volume of data generated and to respond to the extensive feedback and contributions received on the research findings from a range of government departments. The final project report will be published shortly.

We are now planning how the project outputs and recommendations can be best used in future policy making and other actions to increase woodland management and woodland creation, e.g. through contributing to the implementation of the next Rural Development Programme for England.

## **4. Improving Our Valuable Woodland Assets to Benefit People and Communities**

We understand and share the public's enthusiasm for our nation's trees, woods and forests, and fully recognise the many social, health and educational benefits that can be gained from interacting with them.

In the Statement, we said we would support and work with the sector to identify and deliver future initiatives to develop local assess, further local communities' involvement with the Public Forest Estate and run a pilot project to test social enterprise activities in woodlands. In addition we committed to undertake a number of steps to support local access to woodlands

### **Commitment 14: We will work with the sector in seeking funding for possible future initiatives aimed at developing local access, individual potential and community cohesion through engagement with trees, woods and forests.**

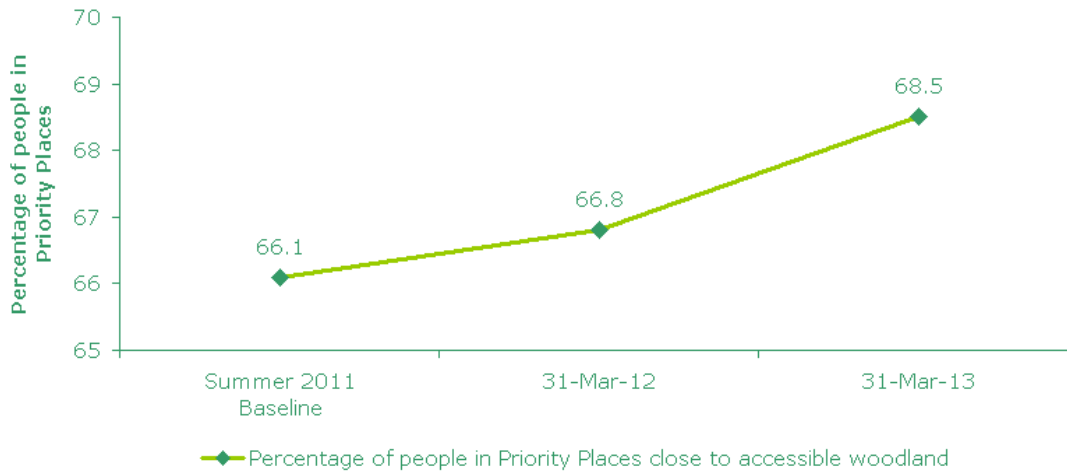
We have continued to work closely with the Woodland Social Enterprise Network and facilitated sector partners to make bids for funding. The Network is gathering strength and we look forward to it yielding positive results in the future (see commitment 16 below). In spring 2014, we will be holding a sector workshop to explore joint priorities and how to work together to achieve them.

In developing local access, the innovative Paths for Communities scheme, using £2m of Rural Development Programme for England funds, will deliver a total of 77km of new public rights of way from 44 projects. Over a quarter of these projects have a woodland element, and 2 are woodlands based. These are:

- ⌚ The [Steel Valley Project](#), (Wigtwizzle Bridleway), which will create 800m of bridleway through a local authority owned plantation near the Peak District creating a connection to existing bridleway.
- ⌚ [Sheffield Wildlife Trust](#) (Lady Cannings Plantation) will create new bridleways with a 400m loop designed for disabled riders in a Local Authority- owned plantation on edge of Sheffield.

### Graph H: Percentage of people in Priority Places close to accessible woodland

The Indicator demonstrates the progressive trend towards increasing access in Priority Places, through the work undertaken by our Forestry Commission Area teams in deploying sustainable forest management incentives.



### Graph I: Percentage of people actively engaged in woodland

This indicator demonstrates a positive upward trend from 2007 to 2013, with 10% of people now reporting their involvement in woodland consultations and organised events. This may reflect the increased interest shown by the public in forestry issues due to the Independent Panel on Forestry's report (2012) and increased activity by woodland civil society groups.



**Commitment 15: We will launch a new initiative to develop further the involvement of local communities with the Public Forest Estate.**

Forest Enterprise England workshops held early in 2013 generated a range of interesting and constructive ideas for new Community Involvement projects to deliver this initiative. A short list of ideas was externally tested with community stakeholder representatives already engaged with the Public Forest Estate and four Community Involvement projects were selected and initiated:

- ⌚ **Involving the Community through Volunteering** - The project aims to build on the Public Forest Estate's existing success with engaging volunteers, by setting up new volunteering initiatives, expanding the number of people volunteering on the PFE and making volunteering opportunities more consistently available across the PFE. Three locations have been chosen for pilot projects: Fineshade and Silverstone in Northamptonshire (Central Forest District) and Forest Centres at Grizedale and Whinlatter in Cumbria (North Forest District). The project officer is in place and a questionnaire has been launched for existing volunteers.
- ⌚ **Harnessing the Energy of the Community** – This project aims to pilot ways of involving stakeholders in helping to determine the strategic direction for the Public Forest Estate at a Forest District level. It will explore ways of involving stakeholders over areas which are geographically disparate and ecologically diverse. The project officer has been appointed and is undertaking initial scoping before determining, in conjunction with stakeholders, the new ways of working with them that can be trialled from mid-2014.
- ⌚ **Involving People through Digital Media** – This project aims to connect the Public Forest Estate more closely with people who have an interest in its management through digital media. The project officer has been appointed and baselining work has begun. We expect to publish a Digital marketing strategy Mid-2014.
- ⌚ **Forest Plans** – This project aims to achieve better strategic and forest plans for the Public Forest Estate through the involvement of the local community and national stakeholders and to make these plans more available and accessible to interested members of the public through the Forestry Commission web site. The project officer will be recruited and in-post by April 2014.

### **Commitment 16: We will contribute to a pilot project to test further social enterprise activities in woodlands.**

The Woodland Social Enterprise Network is developing a pilot project to directly support woodland-based social enterprises and provide broader advocacy on how they can engage communities with their woodlands and bring woods into management. To support this work, [new research](#) has been commissioned by our social forestry experts in the Forestry Commission to assess the baseline scale of woodland social enterprises in England, also Scotland and Wales and the results will be available by April 2014. The results will be communicated to all by the network, see:

[http://fieryspirits.com/group/woodlands-and-forestry?xg\\_source=activity](http://fieryspirits.com/group/woodlands-and-forestry?xg_source=activity)

The network is planning to test ways that the woodland social enterprise expertise can become more easily available to social enterprises locally later this year.



**Commitment 17: We will provide guidance to assist Local Authorities in reviewing Rights of Way Improvement Plans, with a particular emphasis on woodland access improvements.**

We are consulting with highways authorities to establish if they require guidance to assist them in meeting their statutory duty to review their Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) after ten years. Early indications suggest that there is no appetite for detailed guidance. However, a recent survey shows that a high proportion of highways authorities consider ROWIPs successful as a mechanism for identifying changes to be made in respect of the management of and improvements to their local rights of way network, which includes woodland access. We expect to have a clearer understanding of their needs by end of March 2014.

**Commitment 18: We will fund a pilot project to assess and improve the condition, quality, and connectivity of Public Rights of Way (PROW) for woodland access by foot, cycle and horse.**

We have scoped a pilot project, working with Woodland Trust, walkers, cyclists, horse riders and Institute of PROW officers and are currently working out the best way of delivering the project.

**Commitment 19: We will continue to provide data for the Woodland Trust's VisitWoods web gateway and work with the Woodland Trust to identify future funding.**

The Woodland Trust has committed to carrying on with [the VisitWoods](#) service and the Forestry Commission has undertaken to continue to provide the data it requires. This means that people wanting to visit woodland in England can quickly and easily find out about accessible woods near them and also contribute comments about their visit.

**Commitment 20: We will help to support a sector-led Forestry and Planning network, encouraging them to demonstrate how trees and woodlands contribute to sustainable development and help enable growth.**

We are working closely with a sector-led Forestry and Planning network to prepare a signposting website that will enable planners to access easily the information they need when dealing with trees and woodlands in the course of their work. This website will be available by April 2014.

**Commitment 21: We will support the Royal Forestry Society (RFS) to include an Urban Forestry category in their Excellence in Forestry Awards.**

We supported the RFS to include an Urban Forestry category for the first time in their 2013 Excellence in Forestry Awards. This award was sponsored by the Forestry Commission and attracted eleven high quality entries from the North West and West Midlands, showcasing the many benefits of urban forests. The award was won by Northwood Forest Hills in Kirkby, Knowsley. [Details of the winner and runners up](#)

## 5. Improving Our Valuable Woodland Assets to Benefit Wildlife and the Natural Environment

In the Statement, we underlined our commitment to the principles set out in the Natural Environment White Paper and Biodiversity 2020; highlighted the value of our native and ancient woodland and the importance of restoring open habitats; and confirmed our continued commitment to both the Open Habitats Policy and the policies set out in Keepers of Time, our statement of policy for England's ancient and native woodland.

During the last year, we have continued to implement the Natural Environment White Paper and Biodiversity 2020 and to seek to maximise the contribution Environmental Stewardship and the English Woodland Grant Scheme make to promote multiple benefits from ecological restoration of landscapes. We have also worked closely with Local Nature Partnerships, encouraging them, where appropriate, to identify forestry as a local level priority.

We have continued work to restore our native and ancient woodlands and open habitats in-line with the principles set-out in the Open Habitats Policy and Keepers of Time and we have published an Open Habitats Strategy on the Public Forest Estate (see below).

### **Commitment 22: We will continue to implement the Natural Environment White Paper and Biodiversity 2020, including by encouraging woodland management and creation that helps conserve and enhance wildlife.**

The actions in pursuit of nearly all of the other commitments in our Statement contribute to this commitment. Evidence suggests that our efforts appear to be working, with the Woodland Birds Index, a proxy measure of the health of our woodland wildlife, showing an improvement this year.

We have calculated the potential contribution of woodland to Biodiversity 2020 flowing from the commitments in the Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement. Subject to resources, we estimate that native woodland creation and conversion of planted ancient woodland sites to native woodland can contribute 30,000ha to the target to create 200,000ha of new priority habitat by 2020. A cross-cutting working group of all those organisations that can make significant contributions to Biodiversity 2020 is working on plans to achieve this target.

One of the main problems with woodland biodiversity in many places in England is overgrazing by some types of deer. Deer are great to see and a welcome part of our woodland fauna. However, if there are too many of them they can damage woodland wildlife by eating the ground flora and tree seedlings and preventing coppice regrowth. We fund the Deer Initiative, which helps landowners to collaborate to manage sustainable populations of deer.

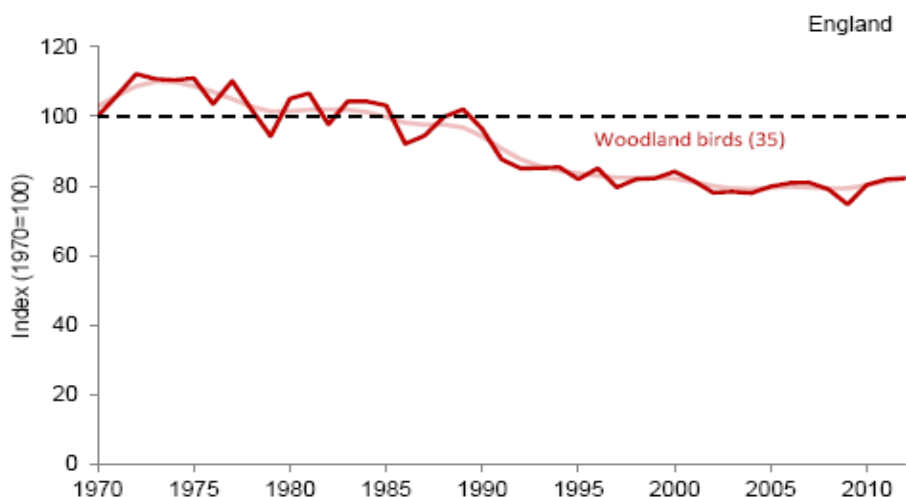
Unsustainable populations of grey squirrels can also be a problem for the protection, improvement and expansion of England's woodland. Grey squirrels are also a threat to our native red squirrels. Defra and Forestry Commission England first published a grey squirrel policy in 2006: [Grey squirrels and England's woodlands – policy and action](#). The

time is now right to review that policy as many people are telling us it isn't working and consider what changes should be made, if any, in the light of further evidence.

Following advice from us and other parts of the forestry sector, the Secretary of State has asked Forestry Commission England to review [grey squirrel policy](#) working with Defra and Natural England. The aim is to produce a five year plan shared with the forestry sector. In December 2013, we started working with our partners to review the evidence.

### Graph J: Long-term populations of breeding woodland birds (1970 – 2012)

In 2012, breeding woodland bird populations were 18% lower than their 1970 level and 15% below their 1990 level. However, populations have remained stable in the short term, rising by 2% between 2006 and 2011, as well as in the most recent year 2011 to 2012, when there was no change in the index. The greatest decline occurred from the late '80s until the mid-'90s and the index has been relatively stable since 2000. The long term decline of woodland birds in England has largely been driven by declines in 'specialist' woodland birds (those restricted to or highly dependent on woodland habitats, such as willow tit and lesser spotted woodpecker).



**Notes:**

1. Figures in brackets indicate the number of species in each measure.
2. Within each category, darker lines show unsmoothed data and paler lines of the same colour show smoothed trend data.

Source: Defra (2013) A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services, Biodiversity indicators, 2013 assessment, Annex 6, Woodland species.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/252291/6 woodland species](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/252291/6_woodland_species), accessed 24<sup>th</sup> Jan 2014.

The Natural Environment White Paper includes a commitment to 'maximise the contribution which Environmental Stewardship and the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) make to promote multiple benefits from ecological restoration at a landscape scale'. To achieve this, we are developing in conjunction with Natural England an integrated New Environment Land Management Scheme (NELMs) for the next Rural Development Programme in England.

**Commitment 23: We will work to improve and restore our native and ancient woodlands and open habitats through renewing our commitment to the policies set out in the Open Habitats Policy and Keepers of Time.**

We fully recognise the value of our native and ancient woodland and importance of restoring open habitats as well as the need to restore plantations on ancient woodland sites. We, therefore, remain committed to the policies in the [Open Habitats Policy](#) and [Keepers of Time](#)

In 2012/13, 1,791ha of planted ancient woodland sites were restored to native woodland. We approved 460ha of woodland for conversion to open habitat where the biodiversity benefits outweighed the negative impacts of woodland loss, ensuring this was linked to compensatory planting where appropriate. The National Forest Inventory is improving estimates of woodland loss using remote sensing and administrative records.

We are working to ensure both policies are implemented correctly through current and future incentive schemes. Additionally, we are mapping opportunities and constraints for conversion of woodland to open habitat on peat to help people decide where this might be worth doing.

**Commitment 24: We will publish a strategy for Open Habitat Policy delivery on the Public Forest Estate to set out the future priorities for development and management of open habitats across the Estate.**

A [Strategy for Open Habitat Policy Delivery](#) on the Public Forest Estate was published on 20 December 2013. This strategy outlines the actions Forest Enterprise will undertake to deliver a further 11,060 hectares of open habitat across the PFE and improve or maintain the quality of the existing 42,600 hectares of open habitat. It details the rationale for its deployment and timing of restoration and the mechanisms by which further public and stakeholder consultation on future open habitat creation can be undertaken.

**Commitment 25: We will encourage, where appropriate, Local Nature Partnerships to identify forestry as a local priority.**

We are continuing to work closely with Local Nature Partnerships and, where appropriate, encourage them to identify forestry as a local level priority. For example, Forestry Commission England staff are taking up Board roles in some areas, such as Cumbria and Morecombe. We also continue to maintain links through existing strong partnership working in other areas, such as the South Downs Forestry Partnership Project in Sussex.

## **6. Expanding Our Woodland Assets**

We stand by our view that there is scope for increasing England's woodland cover significantly to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits. In the Statement, we estimated that working together we could achieve 12% woodland cover by 2060, an average planting rate of 5,000 ha per year, provided investment in woodland creation increases in line with expectations. Over the last year, we have been working closely with the sector to find new ways to encourage landowners to plant more trees, reduce

regulatory burdens and, through the Woodland Carbon Task Force, put in place the conditions for a step change in rates of woodland creation and management through private finance.

In January we [announced](#) we will maintain levels of woodland planting that we fund in England through Pillar 2 of the Common Agricultural Policy, Rural Development, in financial year 2014/15. The total government investment in creating and managing woodland under the Rural Development Programme in financial year 2014/15 will amount to £30 million. This consists of £6 million on new planting and £24 million on woodland management, including maintaining the benefits of past woodland creation projects. This will fund the creation of 2,000 hectares of woodland, equivalent to about four million trees, and the protection or improvement of 200,000 hectares of existing woodland. This will support landowners – including charities, local authorities and businesses – in their commitment to planting and maintaining the country's woodland.

Through the [Big Tree Plant](#) we are continuing to support communities to plant one million new trees in England, often in our most deprived urban areas. During National Tree Week in November we celebrated the planting of the campaign's 500,000<sup>th</sup> tree and working in partnership with civil society we remain on-track to achieve the one million tree target by 2015.

**Commitment 26: We will work with the sector to find new ways of encouraging landowners to plant more trees where it best suits them and their local conditions.**

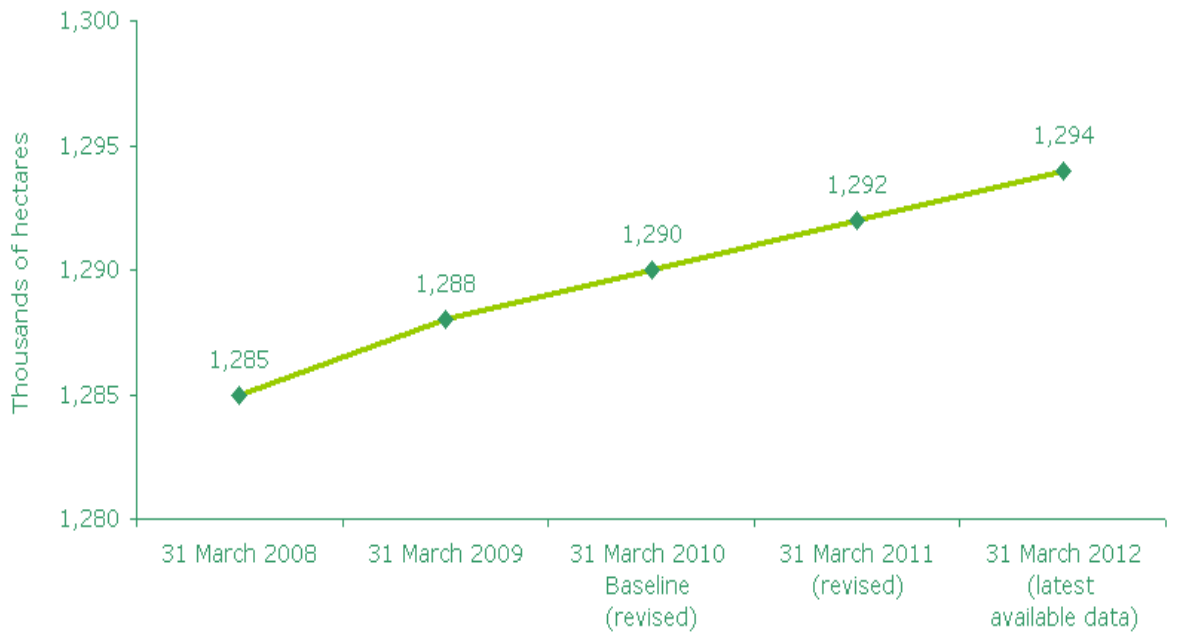
We continue to work with the sector to encourage landowners to plant more trees in the most suitable places. [The Woodland Carbon Task Force](#) (WCTF) is now well established with a refreshed scope and membership and is the national steering group for the pilot project outlined in Commitment 27 below.

Results from the Woodland Potential consultation have been collated and the outcomes suggest that there is potential for well in excess of 250,000 ha of woodland creation, even under conservative land use change assumptions. Consultation results will be published in March 2014.

In addition, we will continue to work with Country Land and Business Association on developing their [Carbon Accounting for Land Managers](#) (CALM) carbon calculator which will be published in March 2014. The calculator will set out how woodland planting can reduce a farm's carbon footprint over time, including through the self-supply of woodfuel as a source of renewable energy.

**Graph K: Area of woodland (total change over time)**

The area of woodland in England was 1,300,000 hectares in March 2013, an increase of 2,000 hectares on the estimate for the previous year. This is positive. Achieving 12% by 2060 requires a rapid acceleration in the rate of woodland creation to about 5,000 hectares per year.



**Source:** Based on National Forest Inventory and Forestry Commission administrative data.

**Commitment 27: We will pilot an approach that would reduce the regulatory burden on landowners who want to plant woodland by clarifying where a full Environmental Statement is unlikely to be required.**

A project description was agreed with key stakeholders in June 2013. In the pilot area selected (County Durham) the constraints mapping has been completed and the first stakeholder meeting will be held in spring 2014. We will publish an options report later in 2014. The project will explore how information exchange between regulators, stakeholders and landowners can reduce the apparent burden that is discouraging woodland creation and whether there are specific aspects associated with the process that could be addressed to make woodland creation more attractive and straightforward while maintaining its environmental integrity.

**Commitment 28: We will introduce a carbon registry and a group scheme for the Woodland Carbon Code (WCC), support further work on carbon accounting in wood projects and underpin new woodland planting guidance to businesses on reporting greenhouse gas emissions and reductions.**

The Woodland Carbon Code (WCC) is developing confidence in the private sector to invest in woodland creation to reduce carbon emissions and, in so doing, is bringing in extra funding to support woodland expansion.

In April 2013, an important milestone in efforts to promote woodland planting to combat climate change was reached with the first award of [Woodland Carbon Code group scheme validation](#). 192 projects, covering an area of more than 15,000 ha with cumulative carbon savings of 5.5 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> over their lifetime have now sought certification to the WCC. In June 2013, we published Internal Operational Guidance on the WCC, supported by training for Woodland Officers, and there was a successful launch of the Code on the Markit Registry. This move to the Markit Registry allows the issuance, tracking and

retirement (i.e. use) of carbon units, adding transparency and confidence for carbon buyers. Additionally, Grown in Britain's UK Corporate Responsibility Reporting Framework (see Commitments 6 and 32) provides a mechanism to extend the scope of the WCC and its attractiveness to corporate investors.

In early 2014, we will publish a report on 'Piloting the measurement of social and environmental returns from woodland creation' in order to examine how businesses might report the social and environmental impacts of investing in woodlands, and we will consider any implications for the Woodland Carbon Code in future. Informal consultation on a methodology for Harvested Wood Products (HWP) in the Carbon Reporting Framework is delayed to later in 2014 to allow implications of the Defra-funded project 'Furthering the Use of English Wood Products' to be taken into account.

**Commitment 29: We will consider the inclusion of a new tree canopy cover metric as a complement to woodland cover reporting in the National Forest Inventory (NFI) when the next cycle of the NFI is reviewed in 2014.**

The scope of a pilot study to work out how best to measure tree canopy cover was agreed in June 2013. This considered how the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership project on mapping small woodlands might be included within the design of the pilot. Pilot analysis was completed in December 2013 and a report on the pilot will be circulated to stakeholders in March 2014 to decide whether to take it forward. The National Forest Inventory work is now up and running, building on this pilot.

## **7. Realising more of Our Woodlands' Value**

We remain committed to valuing the many social and environmental benefits of woodlands and to developing new market opportunities to realise these benefits. This approach continues at the heart of developing Government policy to generate added benefits for the sector.

Woodlands provide valuable benefits across many sectors of the economy and society and we have made positive steps in supporting work to identify these values and explore new ways of enabling the outputs of woodlands to be recognised and valued in markets.

In the Statement, we recognised that the development of markets for the provision of ecosystem services has potential to help deliver the vision for forestry. To this end, we have developed an action plan to support the use of payments for ecosystem services.

**Commitment 30: We will work with the Natural Capital Committee and the office of National Statistics to develop a set of natural capital accounts for UK forestry and use this to develop a set of natural capital accounts for the Public Forest Estate.**

In November 2013, we started to develop a set of physical and monetary natural capital accounts for the Public Forest Estate in England, and for the UK. These accounts will establish a strong and policy relevant extension of the wider UK woodland accounts. The

accounts will cover both the stock of natural assets and the flows of services from them. We are also working to identify ways in which these accounts can be improved in terms of their potential to inform policy. This work will be completed by the end of 2014.

**Commitment 31: We will develop a woodland ecosystem market roadmap by summer 2013 to bring together actions by Government and our partners over the next 5 years to (a) build knowledge (b) develop wider networks of collaboration and expertise and (c) implement mechanisms and projects to demonstrate good practice.**

We have produced a draft woodland ecosystem market roadmap and a final version will be published in spring 2014. The roadmap sets out actions to help develop new markets; these are based around providing better evidence to understand the potential in such markets, developing capacity through networks and partnerships, and taking opportunities to pilot new initiatives and 'demonstration' projects.

**Commitment 32: We will work with other organisations and initiatives to support the further development of markets in forest carbon and other ecosystem services such as water and biodiversity.**

Voluntary markets for forest carbon are emerging and we are working with Enviromarket to develop a framework for assessing the social and environmental benefits of forestry. A pilot study is planned to do this, using a Woodland Carbon Code project linked to Grown in Britain. We are also engaging with corporate and representative bodies, such as the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, to improve understanding of corporate needs.

In addition, to help deliver this commitment we have:

- ⌚ Held a stakeholder workshop on the Woodland Carbon Code, in partnership with the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, in July 2013;
- ⌚ Included Woodland for Water measures in the draft Rural Development Programme proposals and supported the Environment Agency to contribute to local woodland creation initiatives;
- ⌚ Continued to improve woodland creation targeting to maximise water benefits. Our Forestry Commission England and Environment Agency experts are working together to promote the contribution that woodlands can make to safeguarding clean water. This includes work on the Catchment Based Approach to improving water quality and the Defra network project on how agriculture can further improve the way it safeguards clean water;
- ⌚ Delivered work associated with Grown in Britain which focused on how Corporate Responsibility investments and payments for ecosystems services can be used to fund British forestry projects (more detail is provided under Commitment 6).

In March 2014, we will establish a forum for forest finance, and in April 2014 we will update the national Woodland for Water opportunity map.



## 8. Developing Strong and Resilient Delivery Arrangements

We remain committed to developing strong and resilient delivery arrangements that achieve better quality outcomes for the economy, people and nature. In the Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement, we recognised that this includes simplifying our current structures and stepping back from unnecessary day-to-day involvement by Government. We recognised that reforms are needed, not least to reflect changes in the way in which forestry issues are managed in devolved nations but also in line with findings of both the Triennial Review of Natural England and the Environment Agency and the Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Expert Taskforce. With both having reported, we are now able to present a clearer picture of future forestry policy delivery arrangements.

The Statement also reaffirmed our commitment that the Public Forest Estate will continue to benefit from public ownership and our intention to establish a new, separate Public Forest Estate management body to hold the Estate in trust for the nation. Working with our stakeholders, we have made significant progress towards achieving this objective which will give the new body the freedom to achieve a more sustainable financial position and manage its resources to best effect within a clear long-term remit to maintain and enhance the land, trees and other assets under its care.

### **Commitment 33: We will retain a core of forestry expertise within Government with the capacity to deliver a range of functions, duties and powers.**

The conclusions of the [review of Government's forestry functions](#) in England were published in July 2013. The review was completed to a timetable aligned with that of the Triennial Review of the Environment Agency and Natural England, so that each review could inform the other.

The review concluded that the Government's forestry functions remained important in supporting the Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement's aims and should remain together as an integrated whole. It also concluded that achieving those aims could be strengthened further by simpler governance and providing ministers with a clearer "line of sight" between policy and delivery. Ministers subsequently asked for further views from all interested parties on those conclusions before making a final decision on their future delivery arrangements.

Having carefully considered the options and the views received on the review's conclusions, Ministers have decided that the Government's key Forestry Functions will continue to be delivered by the Forestry Commission; with enhanced working arrangements between Defra and the Commission at all levels to strengthen integration between policy and delivery.

The review report also acknowledged that other changes within the Defra network of bodies, including strategic alignment of back and middle-office functions, could offer increased organisational resilience and efficiencies. In December 2013, through a

separate work stream, Ministers decided to improve the way future EU payments are delivered in England by Defra and its delivery bodies. The decision has been made so that we can provide a simpler system with fewer organisations involved in the transactions, creating a more customer friendly process. The key changes are that desk based transactional functions will move from Forestry Commission and Natural England to the Rural Payments Agency, whilst technical functions on land-based schemes will be focused in Natural England. The Forestry Commission will remain the principal source of expert forestry advice driving delivery of the policy aims of protecting, improving and expanding England's woodlands.

**Commitment 34: We will confirm the organisational arrangements through which the Government's on-going forestry expertise and functions will be delivered in the future after the Triennial Review reports its preliminary conclusions in spring 2013.**

As noted in Commitment 33, the Triennial Review of the Environment Agency and Natural England concluded that Forestry Commission England should not be merged with either body. We accepted this conclusion and then sought further views from key interested parties on implementing the separate conclusions of the review of Forestry Functions in England.

**Commitment 35: We will work with the devolved nations to ensure that vital cross-border functions in areas such as research, standards and tree health can continue to be delivered centrally, where this is appropriate.**

We recognise the importance of adequate and integrated provision to support cross border cooperation in Great Britain, particularly on key areas such as research, inventory and forestry standards, where this represents the most efficient and effective means for their delivery.

In its conclusions, the review of Government's forestry functions acknowledged that such functions continued to be needed at cross-border level. The rationale for that was affirmed through a cross-border working group, involving representatives from the Forestry Commission, Defra, and Scottish and Welsh Government. Having concluded that there are significant benefits for both efficiency and/or effectiveness from continuing to deliver those functions on a cross-border basis, the officials are now exploring scope to further improve delivery arrangements for these cross-border functions to ensure that they best meet the needs of all involved.

As an example of good cross-border cooperation, a revised version of the Forestry Commission's Science and Innovation Strategy for Forestry in Great Britain was consulted on in 2013 and will be published in February 2014.

**Commitment 36: We will establish a new, operationally-independent Public Forest Estate management body to hold the estate in trust for the nation and manage its resources effectively to maximise the value of the land, trees and other assets under its care.**

We remain fully committed to establishing the new Public Forest Estate management body via legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allows. We have been developing our plans for the new body in conjunction with stakeholders over the past year and published a short [consultation paper](#) on our initial plans for the new body in summer 2013. We received over 250 helpful responses, suggesting improvements in several areas. Copies of these responses and a summary of the [key messages](#) emerging from them have been published on the Forestry Commission's website.

We have reviewed our proposals in the light of the responses we received and have identified ten core principles underpinning our plans. These principles are that the new PFE management body should:

1. conserve and enhance the estate for the benefit of people, nature and the economy.
2. be publicly-owned and operationally independent of Government.
3. be underpinned by statute and have a Charter.
4. be managed by experts and have access to the best advice.
5. have commercial freedoms but will be required to protect the estate.
6. be able to buy and sell land, but any land sales must be for the benefit of the estate.
7. be a pioneer in natural capital accounting and payment for ecosystem services.
8. work closely with local communities, estate users and businesses. It will have consultation at its heart.
9. be an exemplar of sustainable forest management.
10. build on the strengths of Forest Enterprise England.

These principles are being used to inform the development of our legislative plans which include undertaking pre-legislative scrutiny. This process provides stakeholders with an opportunity to comment on draft provisions and allows the relevant Parliamentary Select Committee to take evidence from interested parties in preparing its report. Government reviews the draft legislation in light of the Committee's report.

## 10. Conclusion

The Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement published a year ago was the first step on a much longer journey. Since then, working in close partnership with others, we have acted positively to take forward all 36 commitments and more widely to meet the clear challenges issued to Government by the Independent Panel on Forestry in July 2012.

In this update we have highlighted a range of positive actions already in hand, such as the work we are doing to progress plans for the new Public Forest Estate management body, supporting the sector to improve and expand our woodland assets to benefit economic growth, people, communities, wildlife and the natural environment, and to better realise our woodlands' value. We have also showcased a range of key indicators that illustrate the impact of these actions in making progress towards the ambitions we all want to achieve.

However, there is still much to do to as we seek to establish the new woodland culture that the Panel advocated. We remain committed to turning the Panel's vision and ambitions into reality but, as we said last year, Government cannot and should not do this on its own.

Over the last year, we have worked constructively with partners from across the sector, including businesses, landowners, voluntary bodies and community groups. This collaborative approach is helping to achieve our common goal of creating healthy, resilient and sustainable woodlands that are good for people, nature and the economy. We remain absolutely committed to this goal and to working in partnership with others to achieve it.