

5. Understand the main aims/objectives of community woodlands and forests.

5.1. Identify the main aims/objectives of community Forests/woodlands as outlined by government and national policy

There are about 700 community woodland groups in the UK, of which about 300 are in England. Scotland has about 250 community woodlands and Wales about 150.

<https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/community-forest-governance-rer.pdf>

Community forests and woodlands, as outlined in government and national policy, serve a variety of purposes. These objectives often intersect with broader environmental, social, and economic goals. Here are some key aims:

Environmental Advantages

Climate Change Mitigation: Capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Biodiversity Conservation: Offering habitats for a variety of plant and animal species.

Water Management: Mitigating soil erosion and enhancing water quality.

Air Quality Enhancement: Removing pollutants from the air.

Social and Community Advantages

Health and Well-being: Supporting physical and mental health through recreational opportunities.

Community Engagement: Cultivating a sense of belonging and connection among local inhabitants.

Education and Learning: Facilitating opportunities for environmental education and outdoor experiences.

Social Inclusion: Promoting involvement from diverse community groups.

Economic Advantages

Local Economic Development: Generating employment in forestry, tourism, and related sectors.

Timber Production: Supplying a sustainable source of timber for local consumption and markets.

Property Values: Enhancing the value of adjacent properties due to improved amenities.

Additional Objectives

Urban Greening: Improving the visual appeal of urban environments.

Flood Prevention: Lowering the risk of flooding by managing water flow.

Cultural Heritage: Safeguarding and promoting local cultural traditions linked to forests.

It is important to note that the specific aims and objectives of community forests and woodlands may differ based on location, local context, and the priorities of the governing authorities. Nevertheless, the overarching goals typically correspond with these broad categories.

There are currently more than 650 community woodland organizations across England, Scotland, and Wales. These groups are eager to share insights from their experiences, while policymakers are looking for evidence regarding the success of both historical and ongoing policies.

Community forests and woodlands have been developed through the following methods:

1. Policy-driven strategies aimed at revitalizing socially and environmentally disadvantaged regions.
2. Community-driven initiatives that may be inspired by economic, aesthetic, or ideological factors.

3. Conservation-focused efforts where environmental non-governmental organizations collaborate with local communities to fulfil their goals.

Five distinct categories of **community woodlands** can be identified, which we define as follows:

1. Urban regeneration: Typically, public land that involves community participation in its management.
2. Community resource: Woodlands that are owned and managed by the local community.
3. Economic partnership: Land that is owned by external parties but managed by the community to generate economic advantages.
4. Community place: Land owned by others, managed by community volunteers, primarily for conservation purposes.
5. Lifestyle alternative: A collective that resides and engages in activities within the woodland.

There is an ongoing research project, funded by forest research which highlights community woodland involvement.

Community woodlands and the engagement of local populations in forestry represent a rapidly developing and increasingly vital area. This research aims to investigate how communities and community organizations participate in the *decision-making processes and management* of woodlands and forests. Additionally, it seeks to compile evidence regarding the attributes, extent, and significance of community woodlands and forestry in Great Britain.

The study sought to enhance the comprehension of Community-Based Food Enterprises (CBFE) in Great Britain by categorizing various types of enterprises and pinpointing the factors that promote and hinder their growth. Additionally, it examined the policy ramifications of the results obtained.

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/community-woodlands-and-forestry/>

This research presents, for the first time, a comprehensive collection of evidence regarding the diversity of *Community Based Forest Enterprises (CBFEs)* in Britain. It outlines two classifications of CBFEs: one grounded in enterprise business models and the other focused on *governance and ethical attributes*. The research advocates for policy recognition of a wide *range of woodland enterprise types*, rather than limiting it to social enterprises. Furthermore, it calls for policies that offer the necessary technical and legal guidance to communities, as well as support systems that facilitate innovative approaches to capital generation.

Modern forestry policy highlights the significance of decentralized strategies for sustainable forest management, which are bolstered by economic incentives and the development of enterprises. Various approaches have emerged in response, including Community-Based Forest Enterprise (CBFE). This concept refers to scenarios where communities participate in *decision-making processes* or the *practical management of forests, actively producing goods and services that generate income, social benefits, and other assets for those communities*.

Five distinct categories of Community-Based Forestry Enterprises (CBFEs) were recognized:

- community woodlands that engage in trading on the open market or via competitive tender
- contracted services on woodlands owned by others, aimed at delivering benefits to the community and the public
- forestry enterprises that are community-owned but not linked to a specific woodland
- partnerships with businesses where community-owned woodlands are utilized to generate profits for the community through collaborations with local enterprises and investors

- subsistence trading to secure funds necessary for specific projects and the operational costs of the community group.

Additionally, *four* different *governance models* and *ethical frameworks* were identified:

- social enterprises that focus on generating social and environmental benefits
- community benefit enterprises that engage specific woodland users or interest groups while prioritizing public benefits
- community-governed concessions that aim for profit maximization for the community, although woodland management is conducted by a third party.

Factors that facilitate the establishment of CBFs include policies that offer financial and other forms of support for community woodland acquisition:

- educational initiatives on woodland management that empower groups to recognize the potential for sustainable revenue generation
- reforms to legal and governance structures that create new opportunities for trading, asset holding, and community involvement.

However, there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that social and community enterprises yield a greater variety of benefits from woodlands.

The findings of the research suggest:

Policies should acknowledge the diverse range of woodland enterprise business types. They ought to facilitate mechanisms that empower communities to discover innovative methods for capital generation and offer the necessary technical and legal guidance. Additionally, policies should promote social networks and create opportunities for knowledge exchange between the social economy and the land-based sector.

https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/fr_ambroseoji_community_based_enterprise_summary_2014.pdf

The England Community Forest Organisation has listed community forests on its website to engage the public.

<https://englandscommunityforests.org.uk/where-are-the-forests/>

Community Forests

The Community Forest Trust is dedicated to all Community Forests in England located in and around the principal urban areas of the country. Collectively, these Forests embody the most significant environmental restoration initiative in England. “For nearly thirty years, we have supported urban, economic, and social renewal, advocated for green infrastructure, and created high-quality environments for millions of people. By planting trees and restoring woodlands for the benefit of both humans and wildlife, we continue to provide new opportunities for leisure, recreation, and cultural activities, thereby improving biodiversity, enhancing our resilience to climate change, and promoting education and healthier living.”

<https://www.communityforest-trust.org/englands-community-forests>

An example of the Community Forest of Mercia
<https://www.forestofmercia.com/>

Forest of Mercia CIC is a member of the National Community Forest Partnership and implements environmental initiatives in Staffordshire and the West Midlands. The Forest of Mercia CIC offers a diverse range of courses designed for individuals of all ages and skill levels.

As a Community Interest Company, we strive to maintain affordable course fees to ensure accessibility for a wide audience. This is made possible through the support of external funding.

All profits generated are reinvested into the organization, allowing us to sustain and enhance the valuable services we provide.

Key Points

- They use the natural environment to educate the public on ecological preservation, offering courses and workshops for all ages.
- The organization promotes the benefits of nature for health and well-being through various activities.
- They encourage outdoor engagement with activities suitable for all abilities, ensuring everyone can benefit from nature.

The Community Forest of Mercia has several main aims and objectives:

- **Environmental Improvement:**

Increase tree planting and woodland creation to improve air quality, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration.

Enhance existing green spaces and create new ones, providing recreational opportunities for local communities.

Restore degraded landscapes and promote sustainable land management practices.

- **Community Engagement:**

Involve local communities in decision-making processes and project implementation.

Offer educational programs and volunteer opportunities to raise awareness about environmental issues and foster a sense of stewardship.

Create inclusive spaces for people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy the outdoors.

- **Economic Development:**

Support local businesses and job creation through sustainable forestry and tourism initiatives.

Attract investment in green infrastructure and renewable energy projects.

Promote the region's natural assets to boost tourism and leisure activities.

- **Health and Wellbeing:**

Encourage physical activity and outdoor recreation to improve physical and mental health.

Provide opportunities for people to connect with nature and reduce stress.

Promote healthy lifestyles through education and awareness campaigns.

By achieving these aims and objectives, the Community Forest of Mercia strives to create a greener, healthier, and more sustainable future for the region.

Outlook trees for Climate woodland creation scheme.

Forest of Mercia CIC is proud to have already planted 90,065 trees across 68.3 Ha towards the government's commitment to increase tree planting to 30,000 hectares per year, across the UK, by 2025.

We will continue to maintain these trees and plant more over the next few years.

UK Government

This is the press release from 2022

Press release

Major expansion of woodlands for communities across England

Millions of trees are set to be planted nationwide, thanks to £44.2 million in funding for Community Forests and woodland creation partners.

From: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Forestry Commission and Lord Goldsmith
Published 5 August 2022

This was published under the 2019 to 2022 Johnson Conservative government

However, the reality is that these millions of trees were never planted in the first place.

National tree planting statistics summarized in Read et al. (2009) show annual rates of around 5000 ha/yr in England during the 1990s and early 2000s. Data from Lawrence et al. (2009) indicate that 20-25% of new planting from 1995-2003 was due to community forests. Both total tree planting and community forest planting have **greatly decreased since** that time.

In Scotland, until 2004, the focus was on physical inputs and outputs, with the Central Scotland Forest Trust achieving significant results, including 50 km of hedgerows and 13 million trees planted. Recent programs emphasize woodland quality over creation. In Wales, the Cydcoed program exceeded its management targets but did not meet its woodland creation goals.

https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/understanding_the_effects_of_community_woodlands_and_forests_in_great_britain.pdf

The government has listed several **Community Forests** momentarily on their website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/englands-community-forests-overview-table/englands-community-forests-overview-table>

The White Rose Forest
Covers North and West Yorkshire

City of Trees
Covers Greater Manchester

The Greenwood Community Forest

Covers 161 square miles of west Nottinghamshire

The Great Western Community Forest

Covers over 168 square miles stretching from the North Wessex Downs to the River Thames

HEYwoods

Covers Kingston upon Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire

The Forest of Marston Vale

Covers Bedfordshire

Forest of Mercia

Cover Staffordshire and the West Midlands

Forest of Avon Trust

Covers West of England/former Avon catchment, including Bristol and Bath

Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest

Cover Plymouth and part of South Devon

The Mersey Forest

Covers Merseyside and Cheshire

Thames Chase Community Forest

Covers 40 square miles in Brentwood, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Thurrock and Essex

Cumbria Coastal Community Forest

Covers the districts of Barrow, Allerdale, Copeland and South Lakeland

North East Community Forest

Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, Sunderland and Durham

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61bb50d3e90e070441bcf9f5/Woodland_Creation_Partnership_-_England_s_Community_Forests_Gov.uk_page.pdf

The locations and details of England's Community Forests



<https://www.communityforest-trust.org/englands-community-forests>

England's Community Forest Organisation dedicates its organization to facilitating the Community Forests, which possess the ability to deliver results and enhance this capability through suitable organizational structures and teams. These entities may take the form of charities, social enterprises, or local authority teams. They develop spatial and business plans that bolster their capacity to deliver and enable collaboration with others. In each Community Forest, a team exists that fosters partnerships with like-minded organizations. This team acts as a catalyst, leveraging its organizational capacity to attract and support partners. The Community Forests strive to integrate the Community Forest Plan effectively within local government policy and vice versa. Spatial plans play a crucial role in this collaborative relationship, ensuring that planning authorities adequately consider them. As members of England's Community Forests, they collectively engage in various initiatives to maintain credibility, exert influence, and promote creative sharing and learning.

<https://englandscommunityforests.org.uk/>

Natural England serves as the government's consultant on matters concerning the natural environment in England. Their role involves assisting in the protection and restoration of our natural ecosystems. It states in one of their research findings for creating woodlands that the overall expanse of forest and woodland in England is experiencing a gradual increase, yet the percentage of forest cover remains one of the lowest in Europe. Currently, forest cover across Europe stands at 44.3% of the total land area, while the United Kingdom reports a coverage of 11.8%. In 2006, England's forest and woodland cover was recorded at 8.6%, a slight rise from 8.4% in 2000.

file:///C:/Users/skust/Desktop/Tidy%20Up%20Assignments/6%20Woodland/LO%205/NERR030%20edition%201%20-%20Chapter%2012%20Woodland%20creation%20(1).pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>

The Government's Green Space Initiative under Sunak Conservative government between 2022 and 2024.

Commitment and Goals:

Environmental Improvement Plan: The government is committed to increasing access to green spaces, particularly woodlands.

15-Minute Access: The goal is for everyone to have access to a green or blue space within a 15-minute walk.

Tree Planting: The government aims to plant 30,000 hectares of new woodland annually.

Funding: A £750 million Nature for Climate Fund supports these initiatives.

Programs and Initiatives:

Urban Tree Challenge Fund: Supports tree planting in urban areas.

Community Forests: Encourages community-led woodland creation.

Woodland Creation Partnerships: Facilitates partnerships for woodland development.

National Forest Competition: A competition for large-scale woodland development.

Challenges and Considerations:

Equitable Access: Ensuring everyone has equal access to green spaces, regardless of socioeconomic status or location.

Public Safety: Ensuring new and existing woodlands are safe and accessible to the public.

Long-Term Sustainability: Considering the long-term management and maintenance of new woodlands.

The following are some of the strategies the government employs to enhance the availability of responsibly managed and accessible woodlands:

- Providing support to landowners for access through our England Woodland Creation offer

- Implementing the Farming in Protected Landscapes program and Countryside Stewardship
- Expanding our public forests through the Forestry England Woodland Partnership and the establishment of new freehold Coronation Woods.

With the new government in place, we need to wait for their publication and update about their concept.

Resources:

<https://englandscommunityforests.org.uk/news/>

https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/fr_ambroseoji_community_based_enterprise_summary_2014.pdf

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/community-woodlands-and-forestry/>

https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/se_report_july_2011.pdf

<https://www.laisygoedwig.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PR-11-What-does-Community-Forestry-mean-in-a-Devolved-Great-Britain-International-Forestry-Review-2009.pdf>

<https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/community-forest-governance-rer.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>

<file:///C:/Users/skust/Desktop/Tidy%20Up%20Assignments/6%20Woodland/LO%205/NERR030%20edition%201%20-%20Chapter%2012%20Woodland%20creation.pdf>

<https://silviculture.org.uk/key-references-in-silviculture/>

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/13169496/>