

# Forestry Commission and England's Community Forests - An Agreement for Joint Working

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## **Areas for agreement:**

This accord sets out what is and will be done, identifying actions where joint work and a developing partnership will be of mutual benefit for Forestry Commission and England's Community Forests.

The partnership should be flexible, responding to new needs and reflecting on progress. It will be reviewed annually and provide a rolling 3 year accord.

There are numerous examples of joint work between our organisations, from Land Reclamation to Community and Health Projects. This agreement builds on the experience to date to create an effective partnership to meet future challenges.

## **What will Community Forests provide for the Forestry Commission?**

England's Community Forests (CF) provide the Forestry Commission (FC) with a wide range of examples of local, neighbourhood scale working across the country, a link into local communities, local government and sub national organisations.

The Forests can support DEFRA "Single Voice" work by FC with new entities such as Local Enterprise Partnerships as well as with existing partnerships and organisations. The CFs can provide a mechanism for engagement at a local level, and act as a test bed for new ideas and ways of working. A rich source of case study material and research opportunities can be found from within the CF Partnerships.

CF networks therefore will be utilised to assist the FC in developing new ways of exchanging knowledge, which will require less direct intervention by FC.

The Natural Environment White Paper 'The Natural Choice' highlights a range of opportunities for the CFs and FC working together to develop positive action to help implement NEWP proposals further. For example, Local Nature Partnerships and

Nature Improvement Areas for improving the connectivity and quality of the natural environment will need to have trees and woodlands as integral parts of their activities. Also the proposed Green Infrastructure Partnership, the biodiversity Offsetting Pilots and New Markets for Ecosystem Services all provide opportunities for the CFs to work with the FC to enable community forestry to further action for the natural environment as outlined in the White Paper.

Through the delivery of their long term Forest Plans, the CFs will assist in the delivery of national policy and indicators, interpreted at a local level. This will gear up existing resources and help to achieve woodland protection, improvement, expansion, community empowerment and engagement, economic activity and support the Big Tree Plant. Similarly, the CFs will act as a mechanism to promote and enhance the role of trees and woodlands as part of green infrastructure networks, providing a range of ecosystem services. Increased joint work with the PFE can help to unlock benefits and link to wider strategic initiatives and embed the estate in key local strategies.

## **What will Forestry Commission provide for Community Forests?**

FC provide important political engagement nationally, highlighting the role that CFs play in the urban and urban fringe of England in delivering against a wide range of key strategic issues, particularly in relation to localism and engagement of wider civic society in forestry. This partnership is to be recognised through all parts of FC nationally and locally. FC will ensure CFs are engaged and informed and are regarded as important partners for delivery, including FC funding resources nationally and locally where and as appropriate and subject to budgets, which for the foreseeable future will be extremely limited.

Forest Research also has a role to play in helping to improve the evidence base for the CFs to support the delivery of Forest Plans and joint FC/CF projects and programmes. Engagement by FR will only be possible where suitable funding support is identified.

FC will take up its role as national champion of CFs as part of the wider promotion of the benefits of community engagement and active participation. This will include encouragement of long term thinking by existing partnerships to enable the Forest Plans to be achieved.

FC will ensure that Defra (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) are well sighted and informed in respect of the role and potential of CFs and where appropriate and necessary provide a means for direct engagement by CFs with other Government Depts. FC will, where appropriate look to work closely with CF partnerships on the Public Forest Estate (PFE), to

add value, secure resources and maximise the value of the estate in line with the results of the 2011 Independent Panel Review.

## **What will we do?**

- a. Regular meetings between CF and FC staff at local level to decide local priorities for this partnership
- b. Three Case Studies on agreed areas of joint interest and importance produced by March 2013
- c. CFs promoted where appropriate as a test bed for new ideas and approaches
- d. Joint work on gearing resources
- e. Joint work on influencing LEPs, engaging with the Localism agenda and maximising civil society input to forestry development and delivery
- f. FC will champion CFs' delivery role in meetings with other agencies and departments, whilst CFs will promote the multiple benefits of woodlands, including those managed by FC, at a local level.
- g. Increased joint work on PFE, subject to the outcomes of the Independent Panel on Forestry
- h. Annual review between CF Chair and FC (senior manager)
- i. Annual discussion of progress in delivery of CF plans
- j. Sharing of good practice on engagement and access to networks
- k. Interact on NEWP local planning work where appropriate
- l. Promote local nature partnerships and biodiversity offset pilots that involve woodland
- m. Sharing of intelligence on what is working and what is not
- n. Shared joint messages and work on communications priorities.

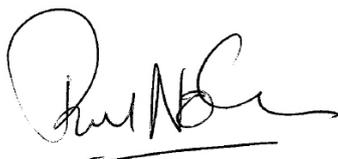
## How we will do it

The partnership will thrive with an approach that is active and open, able to reflect on progress and constructively encourage change. It will be based on an understanding of each other's business models and pressures.

## NB

England's Community Forests is used as a term to cover the forests that regularly share information through an organised network and includes the original 12 Community Forests, White Rose, Heywoods, Pennine Edge and Green Light Trust. The group is not exclusive and other forests with community forest plans, partnerships and teams are welcome to join.

  
CEO-FC  
August 10. 2011

  
on behalf of England's  
Community Forest Partnership  
20.8.2011