

A sunlit forest path with tall trees and dappled light. The sun is shining from the right, creating a bright glow and long shadows on the path. The trees are lush green, and the overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Woods for the world:

Seizing the moment to double tree cover in **The Marches**

A bold ambition

Planting billions of trees across the globe is one of the most effective ways to tackle the climate emergency. As they grow, trees remove carbon from the atmosphere. A world-wide tree planting programme is urgently needed to maximise the potential gain from this approach.

Expanding tree cover is a key element of the government's 25-year Environmental Plan and will bring multiple benefits for society as a whole. In addition to mitigating against climate change, tree planting will:

- Contribute to nature recovery networks
- Play an essential part in flood alleviation
- Bring economic benefits
- Improve public health
- Provide recreational opportunities
- Enhance the landscape

We will develop a strategy to empower landowners and communities throughout the region to get involved in planting and woodland restoration schemes and to take advantage of available grant funding.



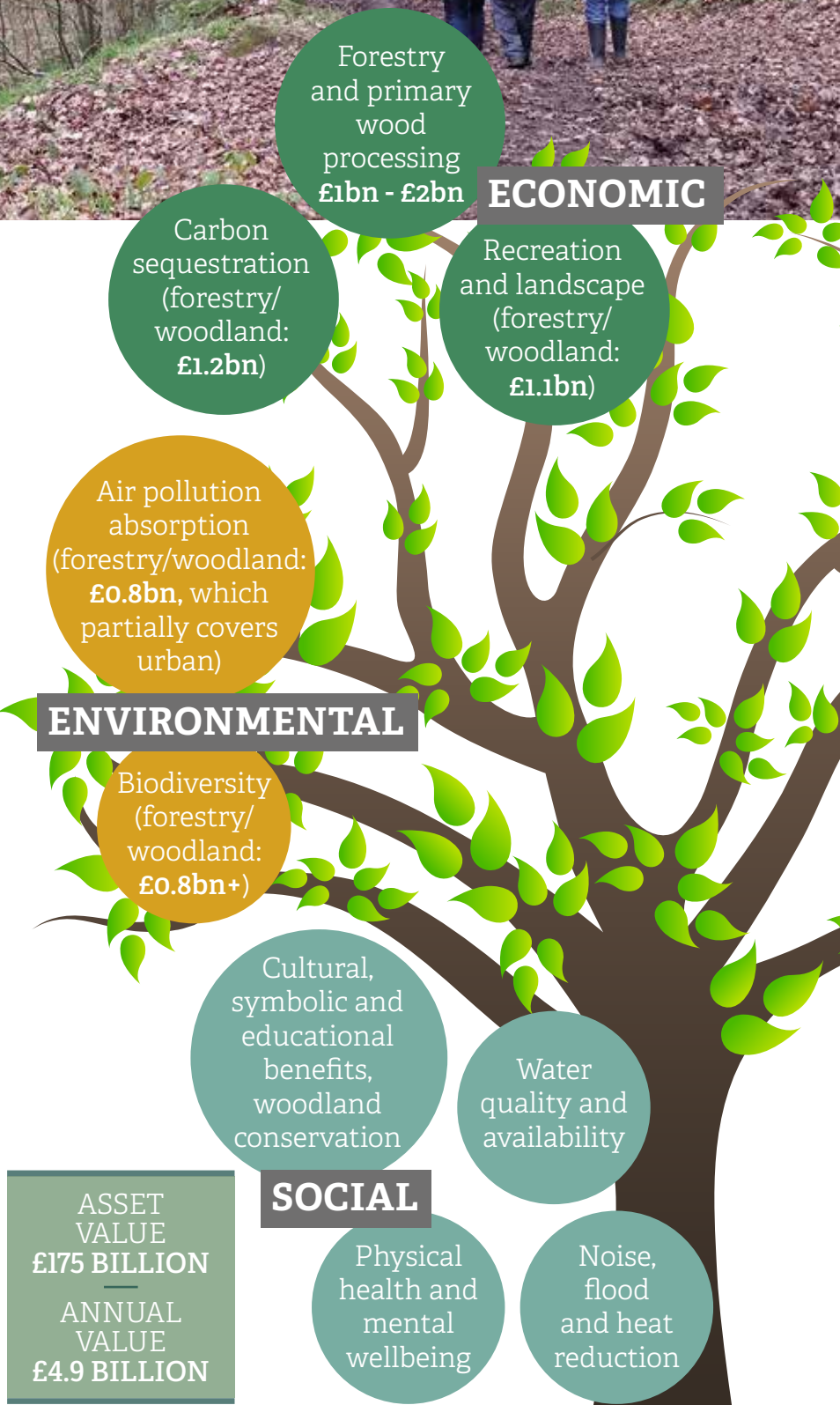
Drivers for action

Increasing woodland cover will play a significant part in mitigating climate change and is supported by:

- Government carbon targets for 2030-50
- Woodland for Wales Strategy
- English and Welsh Governments planting targets for the Forestry Commission and Natural Resources Wales
- New and pending legislation including the Climate Change Act and Environment and
- Agriculture Bills
- Local authority-led land use and development allocation strategies
- Carbon offsetting requirements

The private sector wishes and needs to engage and be involved. This includes the farming industry, which is going through a period of unprecedented change. The National Farmers Union is aiming for agriculture to be carbon neutral by 2040.

There is enormous public support for tree planting. The desire to do something ambitious, practical and personal in response to climate change is palpable.



Shropshire Council



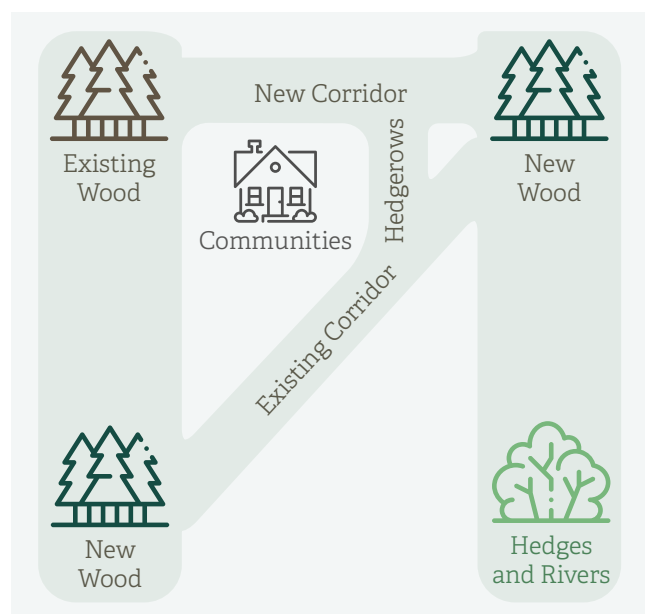
Principles

Woodlands must be planted in the right places and meet UK Forest Standard guidelines. Specific landscapes such as deep peatland, that absorb carbon and undisturbed, herb-rich meadows are to be avoided. Agroforestry can bring great benefits for farmers but a high percentage of land will continue to be concentrated on food crops.

Tree species must be carefully chosen, with consideration given to their ability to withstand climate change, as well as their value to wildlife, suitability for location and economic purpose.

- Trees are desirable in towns and villages, promoting wellbeing and better air quality.
- Trees planted in floodplains and the headwaters of rivers help slow the flow of water in times of heavy rainfall.
- Woodland cover will include hedgerows, which provide a network of wildlife corridors throughout town and country.
- Connectivity between woodlands should be integrated into plans.
- Woods should be planned to integrate farming and forestry and help sustain the rural economy.

Schematic approach to woodland creation



Aiming high

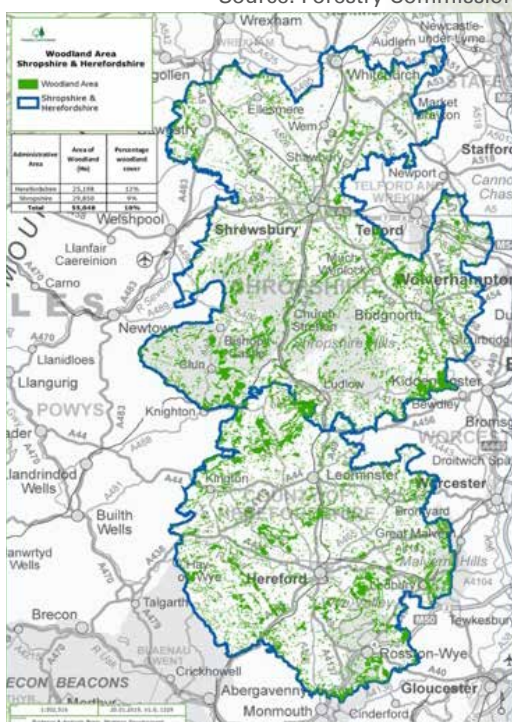
Marches Woodland Creation

Our minimum aim is to match the England-wide target of 12% woodland cover by 2050, which ties in with Welsh aspirations. The Marches currently has 55,048 hectares of woodland.

Low ambition: increase woodland cover to 12%, bringing it to 66,057 hectares overall. This would mean an additional 11,009 hectares by 2050, planted at 367 hectares per year.

High ambition: increase woodland cover to 17%, bringing it to 93,581 hectares overall. This would mean an additional 38,533 hectares by 2050, planted at 1,284 hectares per year.

Source: Forestry Commission



Practical considerations

A significant number of practical issues exist. Woodland resilience is threatened by climate change and tree disease which will make it necessary to consider different and evolving planting strategies. Warmer and wetter winters, drier summers and flash floods will affect the tree species that can thrive in The Marches.

- Disease is a growing concern with, for example, ash die-back possibly leading to a 25% loss in tree cover.
- The availability of suitable seed and tree stock may also be an issue.
- Trees in the urban environment are also coming under pressure due to safety concerns, in part related to the increased occurrence of extreme weather, resulting in more drastic removal and pruning policies.
- Financial barriers will always be a concern. Incentives and tax implications need addressing. New investment from public, private and individual giving looks likely to emerge but a readiness to grasp the opportunities is essential.

- The legal approach and status of woodland creation and hedgerow extension needs a more innovative approach. Conventional lease or freehold arrangements will need to be written to give long-lasting agreements for a mix of potential partner organisations or individuals to deliver new planting.
- Disseminating information about which species are appropriate in a variety of different situations is critical.
- An opportunities map showing a Woodland Nature Recovery Network is essential. It must not be overly prescriptive – we do not wish to alienate or antagonise landowners.
- A carbon fact baseline must be introduced so progress can be measured.

Summary

The strategy will take an integrated approach to land-use in The Marches and open up dialogue on how to increase woodland cover from the current average of 10% to 12% or even 17% by 2050.

It will seek to encourage landowners and community interests to come forward to work together to develop and deliver annually 220ha to 312ha of new multi-purpose woodlands.

These woodlands need to be established to meet a variety of needs: climate change, health, nature recovery, recreation, tourism, and economic growth. This will include timber production as laid out within the UK Forest Standard:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard>



Shropshire
Wildlife Trust

