



EDUCATION, LEARNING AND SKILLS

Promoting the importance of trees and woodlands as an educational resource and addressing sector workforce skills needs.

7

Education, Learning and Skills (ELS)

Stakeholders generally consider that woodland and forestry does not have a high enough profile in the region.

The Framework provides an ideal opportunity to raise public awareness across society of the inherent benefits of and opportunities for woodlands and their sustainable management. A key related issue raised by stakeholders is the need to engage more with schools and other educational establishments to emphasise the importance of woodlands and forestry as an educational resource. This may include undertaking planting within existing school grounds and planning new schools with or with access to woodlands. The woodland and forestry sector recognised, through a recent benchmarking exercise, the skills that it needs to develop. These include modern business management skills (for example, marketing and IT) as well as more traditional woodland and habitat management techniques. With an emphasis on characterisation, practitioners need to develop technical skills. Some of these issues can be tackled relatively quickly (for example, training for some specific sector skills), but others (for example, improving the public perception of forestry) will take longer. The Framework provides a structured approach to addressing these wide-ranging needs.

Aims:

- The woodland and forestry sector to develop its own identity, complementing other land-based industries.
- To improve public access to information about woodland and forestry.
- To provide all the region's schools with access to woodland and forestry education on site or in woodlands.
- To upskill the woodland and forestry sector workforce, based on the benchmarking study, to meet current and future needs.

ACTION

Delivering the vision

Objectives	Actions
ELS 1 To increase public knowledge of woodland and forestry by education and raising awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop an action plan for life-long learning that raises qualification levels and engages wider groups, including education authorities and health organisations, with the Woodland and Forestry Forum.● Embed woodland and forestry in school and young people's activities so as to support initiatives such as the Forest Education Initiative, Forest Schools and Trees for All.● Identify and promote the contribution of trees, woodlands and forests for formal and informal education in urban and rural settings.
ELS 2 To maintain the woodland and forestry workforce and encourage new entrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop a regional training action delivery plan that includes actions for helping the sector gain new skills, such as in information communications technology (ICT) or landscape characterisation, and encourages employers, skill-providers and funders to update routinely skill-needs analysis, share good practice and modify provision.● Identify interest in and provide (with other land-based sectors) for new entrants, including through a Modern Apprenticeships Scheme.● Identify and meet the new opportunities for traditional skills arising in the growing craft and construction sectors.● Assess and meet the needs of the woodland and forestry sector for core skills in business management, numeracy, literacy, health and safety, certification and quality of life.

CASE STUDIES

Forest School in Worcestershire

Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities.

Forest School in Worcestershire is growing fast. It started as a pilot scheme in 2000 at Bishops Wood Environmental Education Centre, and there are now about 70 sites across the county. The first year entailed working with young children 3 to 6 years old, but the scheme was soon seen to be beneficial for pupils of any age. Varied natural resources in the woodlands are used to engage the children's interest and stimulate imaginative, creative and investigative activities. Evaluations show that Forest School children grow in confidence and self esteem and increase their physical and social skills. These benefits have positive effects on all areas of the children's lives and learning, and on their families, too. Many parents report that they now take children out for walks in local woodland in all weathers – unheard of before Forest School. Many schools are designing their grounds and planting trees with Forest School in mind.

Image: Jenny Doyle, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Worcestershire LEA



West Midlands Woodland Industries Benchmarking Study

Produced in 2003 as the result of collaboration between AWM, FC, Heartwoods, GOWM and Forestry Contracting Association, the West Midlands Woodland Industries Benchmarking Study sought to assess upskilling within the woodland and forestry industries in the region to enable more effective targeting of future assistance and training.



Image: Forestry Contracting Association

Based on a sample of 100 businesses, primarily in growing, haulage, contracting and primary processing, it found these businesses to be often small, fragmented and very varied, operating in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Training provision had not always met the needs identified by the industry; key future needs were identified as business development, marketing and ICT.

A five-year action plan was produced to improve communication between industry sectors and organisations and ensure optimal use of existing training frameworks and facilities to deliver industry-identified skills. Delivery of the action plan is co-ordinated by the Workforce Development sub-group of the Regional Woodland and Forestry Forum.