



# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Promoting woodland based opportunities for people's health and wellbeing.

# 6

## Health and Wellbeing (HW)

Improving the region's health is high on the regional political agenda, and there is increasing recognition of the importance of the link between health and access to green space, including trees and woodlands.

Better efforts to understand the links between woodland and forestry and health are being developed. The region has been innovative in looking at its existing support mechanisms and using them to develop and improve health outcomes from existing and new local woodlands.

### Aims:

- To secure recognition, understanding and commitment at a strategic level for the contribution of woodland and forestry to the health and wellbeing of West Midlands residents.
- To develop woodland-based health opportunities for people living in, working in and visiting the region.

# ACTION

## Delivering the vision

| Objectives  | Actions   |
|---|---|
| HW 1 To maximise the use of woodland and forestry to deliver a healthier region (both physically and spiritually) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Identify and develop a system, for example through the Regional Observatory, to update routinely data and understanding on health and woodland and forestry, including assessing benefits from GP referrals.</li><li>● Encourage a regional health plan that includes woodland and forestry.</li><li>● Advise community plans to include care of existing trees, increasing numbers of trees and optimising locations in streets and open spaces to maximise health and wellbeing benefits.</li></ul>   |
| HW 2 To develop further links between wooded green space and health.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Develop the Woodlands and Health pilot and other woodland- and forestry-related health initiatives into a Forestry for Good Health programme, contributing to the Government target of getting 70% of people physically active.</li><li>● Investigate with the Tourist Board the potential for woodland-based health holidays.</li><li>● Set out targets with health managers to maintain and increase trees and woods on land managed by or for hospitals or public health.</li><li>● Devise a long-term strategy for promoting the value of trees and timber products and the historic and biodiversity components of woodlands to the health and wellbeing of individuals and the community.</li></ul> |

# CASE STUDY

## Wye Wood – Newton Coppice

This was one of seven projects run in the West Midlands under the Forestry Commission's Woodland and Health Woodland Improvement Grant Pilot Scheme 2003-2004. It was developed by the Herefordshire Sustain Project.

South Wye is the most disadvantaged area of Hereford City. Average weekly earnings are at least 12% less than the West Midlands average. Many residents are employed in manual or partly skilled jobs. More than 16% of South Wye households are lone parents with dependant children, representing a rate of 1 in 14 households.

The Wye Wood Project worked with the local community, encouraging healthier lifestyles by:

- engaging young families in healthy activities that included walking;
- engaging young families in an arts project to encourage use of the woodland;
- offering training opportunities in woodland management, which resulted in one hectare of coppice being cut by volunteers;
- offering community training opportunities to make seating;
- enabling a community group to install information panels about the wood, its history, wildlife and management;
- creating a Walking for Health Initiative (WHI) walk on Hereford's urban fringe;
- offering additional health opportunities to the community by calorie-counting 11 WHI walks, which will be used as part of the LIFT GP referral programme

- creating all-weather paths to enable wheelchair users/pushchairs to have easy access to woodland in South Herefordshire.

The project's success was due to its ability to deliver a number of objectives for each participating organisation, adding value to their projects through engaging with local woodland. As a result, organisations such as the Primary Care Trust, Probation Service and mental health charities have begun to realise the health potential of woodlands and are keen to see further, expanded projects. Innovative training, employment and health opportunities for the socially excluded are being developed to increase understanding of the potential for woodlands, both for local communities and business.



Image: Herefordshire Sustain Project