

A photograph of a park with people walking, a dog, and a bench. The scene is set in a wooded area with tall trees and a grassy path. In the foreground, a woman in a dark vest and jeans stands with her back to the camera, looking at a brown dog. To her right, another woman in a white shirt and dark pants is walking away. In the background, a person is riding a bicycle on a path, and a wooden bench is visible. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and recreational.

RECREATION AND TOURISM

Increasing the diversity, quality and accessibility of woodland recreation.

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Recreation and Tourism (RT)

Trees, woodlands and forests are popular for a diversity of recreational activities. Their potential for recreation, tourism and other benefits are being realised by a wide range of policy-makers.

Woodlands are key to some areas of recreation, for example, walking, shooting and cycling. But there can be tensions between certain activities and access for wellbeing, as well as with the costs incumbent on the landowner and farming practices. There may also be some conflicts between land management practices and designations such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is some disparity between the principal concentrations of people and the locations of accessible woods.

Aims:

- To work for the woodland and forestry sector to become recognised as a significant contributor to the region's recreation and leisure opportunities.
- To encourage greater support to the economy through development of woodland and forestry-related tourism in the region.
- To increase opportunities for all West Midlands residents to enjoy woodlands and forests.
- To reduce pressure and protect environmental assets in some places by developing opportunities in others.

ACTION

Delivering the vision

Objectives	Actions
RT 1 To agree and secure a commitment to work towards a standard and priorities for local community access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Utilise the work on Woods for People to define a vision and priorities for accessible woodland in the region, and create a regional woodland opportunities map.
RT 2 To embed the Framework in regional cultural and tourism strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop the relationship between the woodland and forestry sector and those responsible for tourism and cultural strategies.
RT 3 To develop tourism opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Link woodland management, wood products and services to regional and sub-regional brands, including through certification to add value.● Improve and develop the facilities and infrastructure of targeted woodlands as key visitor attractions and education facilities for the region, and get these recognised as such by West Midlands Life and Visit Heart of England.● Improve the image of the region and support tourism by encouraging the greening of transport corridors, including waterways.● Encourage short-break visits to woodlands and woodland-based activities by collaboration with other providers and by targeting promotional activity at key markets.● Expand the opportunities of woodland (field) sporting potential and encourage investment.
RT 4 To take up opportunities for long-term public access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Identify areas for inclusion within the woodland opportunities map, where there are opportunities for increased access and interpretation and the potential to generate income through woodland access, linking woodlands with other public access land and encouraging owners to make Section 16 dedications.

CASE STUDIES

The National Forest Tender Scheme

The National Forest Tender Scheme has created 484 hectares of new accessible woodland. The scheme is a unique woodland incentive that enables landowners to diversify their business interests and create commercial and/or amenity woodland.

It can be linked with opportunities for recreation, access and tourism. For example: Lawns Farm, Tatenhill, offers a motorbike scrambling course, sledging run and paths; Eland Wood, Draycott in the Clay, provides equestrian trails and a cross-country course; Swarbourn Meadow, Woodhouses, provides a wildlife haven with full informal access and a viewing platform; Postern House Farm, Burton upon Trent, is close to housing and has opened a maize maze; and Norman's Wood, Woodhouses, has created space for camping and caravanning near a lake, as well as opportunities for horse-riders and walkers.



Swarbourn Meadow viewing platform.

Image: The National Forest, Photographer – Christopher Beech

Shooting

Many well managed woodlands owe their existence to shooting, and managing a woodland for a shoot often increases the value of that woodland for conservation generally.



Image: Forestry Commission

Woore Shoot in North Shropshire, for example, provides opportunities for people from all over the UK and Ireland to participate in shooting or to attend training events. The shoot manages the local woodlands primarily to support game, which means that the rides are maintained and the wood is encouraged to have a good structure and to provide shelter from high winds. These practices make the woodland, through its varied habitats, a haven for wildlife and for the pheasants that are released there.

Shooting provides recreation for a wide variety of local people as well as tourists who visit the area because of the shoot. Some locals are involved with all-year round management, while others shoot or help on shoot days, for example in the beating line or picking-up team. The gamekeepers encourage wildlife and are taking part in specific conservation projects, including the use of summer nest-tubes to discover if endangered dormice are found in the area.