

An aerial photograph showing a lush green landscape with several dirt paths crisscrossing a field. In the background, a city skyline is visible under a cloudy sky. The foreground is dominated by dense green trees and bushes.

# REGENERATION

Embedding woodlands and forestry as a key component of new and revitalised green space and development sites in and around our towns and cities.

# 11

## Supporting the Regeneration of the West Midlands (SR)

With a long history as the industrial heartland of the country but with a large extent of countryside, the region includes urban areas with a decreasing but extensive legacy of industrial dereliction and brownfield land.

Four distinct drivers arise: (1) the amount of land-use change planned over the coming decades in the major urban areas to deliver the Regional Spatial Strategy; (2) the value of trees as a tool to help reclaim brownfield land; (3) the potential value added to housing or business development by creating leafy environments that increase the liveability of neighbourhoods and provide buffers between buildings and the countryside; (4) the opportunity to use woodland and forestry to regenerate sites currently in the land bank and to contribute to the development of a greenspace network across the major urban areas into the surrounding countryside. The West Midlands has long been a leader in regeneration, through initiatives such as the Black Country Urban Forest and the Black Country Derelict Land Rolling Programme. The concentration of regeneration initiatives linked to sustainable growth in the region's urban areas is an opportunity to embed woodland and forestry good practice as a key part of a revitalised public space.

### Aims:

- To ensure that woodland and forestry becomes embedded in regional regeneration and planning policy for the urban and rural environment.
- To use existing and new trees and woodlands as a key greening tool to improve the physical environment of the West Midlands for investing, living and working in.
- To encourage the regeneration of brownfield and reclaimed open land to make full use of woodland, while retaining its intrinsic value, reflecting local character, ensuring local ownership and sustainable communities.
- To share the experience gained around the region.

# ACTION

## Delivering the vision

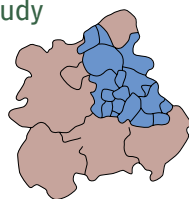
Objectives	Actions
<p>SR 1 To develop a regional greenspace strategy(s) (urban and rural) with a strategic approach to woodland and forestry for regeneration integrated with the woodland opportunities map (see 5.1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Co-ordinate existing woodland information and assess the woodland and forestry potential of brownfield land through continuation of Sites Opportunities mapping co-ordinated with woodland opportunity mapping work.</li><li>● Develop implementation of the above as part of the development of greenspace strategies (including finding funding), utilising the Regional Biodiversity Strategy, drawing on the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan and linking with current Advantage West Midlands and regional planning priorities (clusters, corridors, zones etc, and New Deal for Communities, Housing Pathfinders etc. to link with most deprived communities).</li><li>● Promote the role of trees and woodlands in planning (Local Development Documents, Section 106 agreements etc)</li><li>● Make active links locally (local distinctiveness, local engagement etc) and regionally with adjacent regions and local communities.</li></ul>
<p>SR 2 To encourage woodland as an after use on mineral and waste management sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Promote cost effective and best practice woodland after-use to mineral and waste planners, companies and practitioners, targeting them with advice and assistance based on national and regional latest research information and tools.</li></ul>
<p>SR 3 To join-up activity, identify and share good practice, identify gaps in knowledge, and agree priorities to target public resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Engage with the Regeneration Centre of Excellence for the West Midlands and share the region's woodland and forestry and greenspace regeneration experience.</li></ul>

# CASE STUDIES

## Potential of brownfield land for use as greenspace

In response to the growing problem of brownfield land, the FC in partnership with AWM, the Environment Agency and Groundwork commissioned a survey of derelict, under-utilised and neglected land in the more industrialised parts of the West Midlands.

Map showing study area in blue

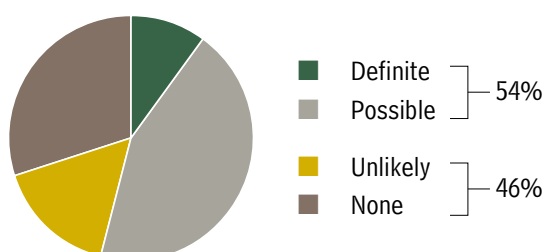


The survey assessed which sites had potential for conversion into community greenspace and/or to enhance development. The study found that, of more than 900 sites (almost 5000 hectares or three quarters of the West Midlands total) identified as brownfield land sites within the study area (blue on map above):

- 54% (almost 2700 hectares) have definite or possible potential for greenspace end use;
- 46% (2300 hectares) are unlikely to have or have no potential for greenspace end use.

The next step, following a seminar with key regional stakeholders, is to home in on those sites where creating quality greenspace will have the highest community benefit.

### Breakdown of Area (ha) by potential



## Hednesford Brickworks

The Hednesford Brickworks site has a long history of industrial usage, from coal mining in the 1850s, followed by clay extraction and more recently landfill; it was reclaimed in the mid-1980s.



Image: Simon West

Cannock Chase District's Local Plan identified the site for employment use and estimated that 8.5 hectares of the 16.75-hectare site would be available. The Forest of Mercia was involved at an early stage, because the Forest Plan identified the area as a key site where future development could be provided within a woodland setting.

Cannock Chase Council's Green Network Draft Strategy identified the site as an area for habitat creation and enhancement. The Strategy identified two local recreational routes, including footpaths and cycleways, which would provide wildlife corridors to the adjacent countryside and a visual link to the Hednesford Hills to the north.

A detailed landscape plan for the development of the site was drawn up, and funding was secured from English Partnerships and the Woodland Grant Scheme. Soil was loose-tipped and new woodland planted to reinforce existing areas of woodland and provide recreational and landscape benefits for the new housing estates surrounding the site. Wildflower mixes helped to increase the wildlife value.