



SOCIAL INCLUSION

Enhancing opportunities for everyone to experience and enjoy trees and woodlands.

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Fostering Social Inclusion (FSI) Encouraging Social Justice and Environmental Equity

Stakeholders would like everyone to have the opportunity to experience and enjoy trees, woodlands and forests.

The value of these resources in creating an environment that the public wants is widely recognised, and examples of good practice are already present in the region. But some groups are disadvantaged by poor knowledge and understanding of what is available, absence of the means to get there or no confidence in how to use the resource. Improvements to address these constraints and enhance urban/urban-fringe woodland and forestry (as part of efforts to foster Accessible Natural Greenspace) are a priority.

Aims:

- To provide greater opportunity for West Midlands residents to appreciate and have access to trees, woodlands and forests close to where they live.
- To remove the barriers to access so that no groups in the population feel disenfranchised.
- To enable people to connect to the historic environment and natural world through the experience of trees, woodlands and their wildlife.

ACTION

Delivering the vision

Objectives	Actions
<p>FSI 1 To set a regional target for percentage of tree/woodland cover as a quality-of-life indicator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek for inclusion of the target as a regional quality-of-life indicator in the Regional Sustainable Development Framework, linking to national Accessible Greenspace targets.
<p>FSI 2 To promote examples and inspire people about the benefits of trees and woodlands and to secure community involvement in establishing trees for local communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raise awareness and encourage the engagement of communities with local trees and woods, and secure community involvement in decision-making about planning, planting, managing and using trees for leisure, ensuring engagement with disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups. ● Target Registered Social Landlords/housing associations (RSLs), Community Trusts, other community development organisations (including conservation volunteering bodies, tree wardens etc), parish councils, residents associations and other resident networks to include trees in open-space planning, such as local authority open/green-space strategies.
<p>FSI 3 To identify and/or provide some funding incentives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and implement demonstration pilot projects.
<p>FSI 4 To develop a programme of specific initiatives for hard-to-reach groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop actions leading from national research on what would be needed to overcome the barriers for groups who feel socially excluded from using trees, woodlands and forests (with groups to include girls aged 9-14; older women from black and minority ethnic groups). ● Identify and actively promote woodland and forests to hard-to-reach groups, using existing specialist community services. ● Help people use rural skills (such as working with wood products) to set up their own businesses.
<p>FSI 5 To encourage woodland owners to develop access initiatives for excluded groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Find and promote model initiatives to owners/occupiers. ● Encourage owners to provide attractions for all abilities, particularly in terms of access, information and marketing.

CASE STUDIES

Greenwood 2000 – a wood-based community project

Greenwood 2000 was a lottery-funded Green Wood Trust (GWT) programme targeting deprived wards in Telford, with a specific brief to engage with the Asian communities.

Green Wood Trust staff taught green wood crafts, timber frame construction and woodland management to a range of groups.

As a result:

- more than 1,000 people experienced natural woodland habitats; 600 of these learnt woodland craft skills to enhance their neighbourhoods;
- a timber framed extension was built on a Telford mosque;
- Green Wood Branch was set up post-project to continue the training, meeting weekly in GWT's workshop and making birdboxes, benches and willow dragonflies for disadvantaged groups;
- young people who were labelled troublemakers found they could escape their labels at the GWT site in Coalbrookdale and receive basic training in working with wood;
- awareness increased of the need for a community support framework for the areas of deprivation in Telford; this is now in place.



Image: Greenwood Trust

Forest of Mercia RESET Project

Since 1999, the Forestry of Mercia Community Forest has been using woodland and forestry as a mechanism for engaging children currently excluded from mainstream school life.

The RESET project provides a combination of teaching and training that enables excluded pupils to continue their lessons in national curriculum areas as well as participate in practical woodland activities. This has proved to be an attractive combination that has successfully engaged young teenagers with a range of needs relating to learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural problems. Initially targeted at year 11 pupils in September 2004, the project will be expanded to provide for year 9 and 10 pupils.

Mike was an early participant in the scheme. He had been excluded from school and was fairly typical of those taking part in having a history of failure, low self-esteem and quite severe learning difficulties. By the time he left the project, he had obtained qualifications in horticulture, tractor-driving and forestry and had secured a job at a local farm. Mike's success has been mirrored by many of the participants in the project; through forestry work, they have developed their skills and become part of the local community again, helping to create the Forest of Mercia.



Image: Forest of Mercia