

# Consultation and engagement on The Mersey Forest Plan

2014



The Mersey Forest Plan and consultation were part funded by the EU Interreg IVB GIFT-T! (Green Infrastructure For Tomorrow – Together!) project



## Executive Summary

The consultation and engagement on The Mersey Forest Plan was thorough and robust, with people engaged early on and throughout the process. It provided a range of opportunities, both formal and informal, for people to get involved. It had a large reach of about one million people of the 1.7 million people living in The Mersey Forest; across three key audiences of The Mersey Forest team, core partners, and wider community and partners.

In terms of both the team and partners, a particular success was engaging early in the process and continuing to engage and consult on key elements throughout. For the team consultation, useful aspects were using team meetings and away days to get input on key aspects, and asking individuals to check on the specific policies most relevant to their specialism. For the partners, The Mersey Forest Steering Group meetings provided a good mechanism to enable ongoing engagement, as well as ad hoc email discussions with individuals. The early partner meetings were felt to be an especially important aspect; these were organised by the partner authorities, with individuals invited from within each organisation, so representing a range of departments. These meetings provided timely input to help shape the Plan. They also helped to reinforce the nature of The Mersey Forest, as being a partnership organisation with a team put in place by the partnership to coordinate delivery. In terms of the wider community and partner consultation, the interactive map was deemed to be a particularly innovative and successful approach, enabling people to engage at a scale which was meaningful for them. As such, it is being kept live and used to inform ongoing work of the team and partners.

The consultation and engagement had both an online and offline presence, to encourage a wide range of people to get involved. Whilst the online methods gained most responses, the offline versions were also deemed essential to try and reach people without internet access.

Overall, it is estimated that 771 individuals had active involvement in at least one step of the consultation and engagement, whereas many were involved in more than one step or submitted more than one response. 84% of these people were from the wider community and partners, rather than The Mersey Forest team and core partners. In total 55 organisations were actively involved. We had over 1,600 individual responses. 316 people signed up to be supporters of The Mersey Forest during the period, accounting for 18% of all of our supporters at the time.

The contributions made a real difference to the final Mersey Forest Plan, helping to shape the structure, policies, content, and presentation of the document. The vast majority of the comments received were positive and supportive, with some comments being helpfully constructive and challenging us to amend specific aspects of the wording. We have kept a record of all of the contributions and how we responded to each.

This thorough engagement and consultation was made possible through part funding via the EU Interreg IVB GIFT-T! project. As well as enabling us to be more thorough, involvement in the GIFT-T! project encouraged us to think more carefully about the different techniques used to reach each audience and to learn and adapt experiences from elsewhere in Europe.

# Contents

1. Introduction .....	4
2. Team consultation .....	8
2.1 Initial e-mail .....	8
2.2 Team meetings.....	9
2.3 Recommendations review .....	9
2.4 Specific policy input .....	10
2.5 Team away day.....	11
2.6 Summary of team consultation.....	12
3. Core partner consultation.....	14
3.1 Initial e-mail .....	14
3.2 Partner meetings.....	15
3.3 Steering Group .....	19
3.4 E-mail prior to wider consultation .....	20
3.5 Summary of partner consultation .....	20
4. Wider community and partner consultation.....	23
4.1 Initial campaign to raise awareness in the wider community .....	24
4.2 Mapping campaign .....	27
4.3 Wider consultation .....	40
4.4 Summary of wider community and partner consultation .....	52
5. The connection with the GIFT-T! project .....	53
6. Conclusion .....	54
Appendix A – Initial e-mail to the team (section 2.1).....	55
Appendix B – Initial e-mail to key partners (section 3.1) .....	56
Appendix C – Message sent to partners asking them to organise a partner meeting (section 3.2.1) .....	57
Appendix D – Example of a partner meeting agenda (section 3.2.1) .....	58
Appendix E – Steering Group papers (section 3.3).....	59
Appendix F – Example of partner e-mail about policies, prior to wider consultation (section 3.4).....	66
Appendix G – Covering letters for libraries etc as part of wider consultation (section 4.3).....	67
Appendix H – Press release for wider consultation (section 4.3).....	69
Appendix I – Example of e-mail sent to contacts for wider consultation (section 4.3) .....	71
Appendix J – Team kit for wider consultation (section 4.3) .....	73
Appendix K – Frequently asked questions for wider consultation (section 4.3) .....	76

# 1. Introduction

There was significant consultation and engagement as part of the co-creation of the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan. This was carried out throughout the process of refreshing The Mersey Forest Plan. As such, the final Plan ([www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan)) is a product of this co-creation process. This document is a record of the consultation and engagement undertaken and lessons learned. A record of all the responses and how they were dealt with has been kept, but these are not included in this document. As the process of drafting the Plan and asking for comments has been iterative, it must be stressed that some of the notes on how the earlier comments were taken into account may have been superseded by a subsequent iteration of the Plan.

The consultation and engagement consisted of four broad stages (Figure 3):

- Start of process and pre-consultation (from September 2011 to January 2013)
- Consultation (from February to April 2013)
- Post-consultation (from May to September 2013)
- Post-approval and launch (from October 2013 to January 2014).

In addition, there has been ongoing engagement following the launch of The Mersey Forest Plan, but this is not documented here.

The consultation and engagement was intended to reach a range of different audiences. We had different reasons for consulting each group, and, as such, we used different approaches for reaching each; whilst also being mindful of time and budget constraints in doing this. The process was designed to reach three broad groups (Figure 1 and Figure 3):

- The team (section 2)
- The core partners (section 3) – especially those represented on The Mersey Forest Steering Group, but also other partners and key agencies
- The wider community and partners (section 4).

In the sections below we set out why we wanted to consult each group, how we went about the consultation, key statistics and a critical analysis of the various approaches.

Overall, it is estimated that 771 individuals had active involvement in at least one step of the consultation and engagement, whereas many were involved in more than one step or submitted more than one response. Of these individuals, the team constituted 4%, the core partners 12%, and the wider community and partners 84% (Figure 2; N.B. in the figure the wider community and partners group is split up into wider partners, community organisations and members of the public). In total 55 organisations were actively involved, including 10 core partners, 30 wider partners and 15 community organisations (Figure 4 and Table 1). We had over 1,600 individual responses to the wider community and partner consultation. The comments received were overwhelmingly positive and helpfully constructive in their tone. 316 people signed up to be supporters of The Mersey Forest during the period, accounting for 18% of all of our supporters at the time.

Whilst these individuals were actively involved, the reach of the consultation and engagement activities was much wider. As many as 1 million of the 1.7 million people living in The Mersey Forest may have been reached, although this number is speculative as some people were reached using a variety of methods (e.g. in press articles, newspaper advertisements, Facebook posts, etc.).

The development of The Mersey Forest Plan, including the consultation and engagement set out in this document, was part funded by the EU Interreg IVB GIFT-T! (Green Infrastructure For Tomorrow – Together!) project ([www.gift-t.eu](http://www.gift-t.eu)). This funding has enabled a thorough consultation and engagement process, which would not have been possible otherwise. See section 5 for more information on GIFT-T!.

Figure 1. The Mersey Forest Partnership – as set out in The Mersey Forest Plan, and showing the three broad groups who were consulted on the Plan

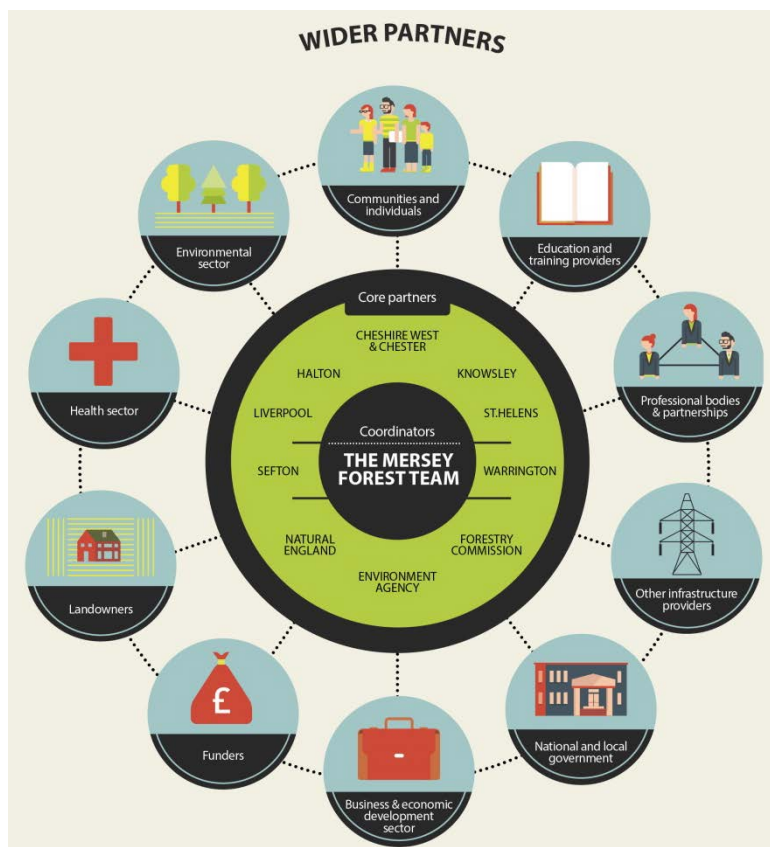


Figure 2. It is estimated that 771 individuals were actively involved in the consultation and engagement, this graph shows the split of the different types of organisations these people were from

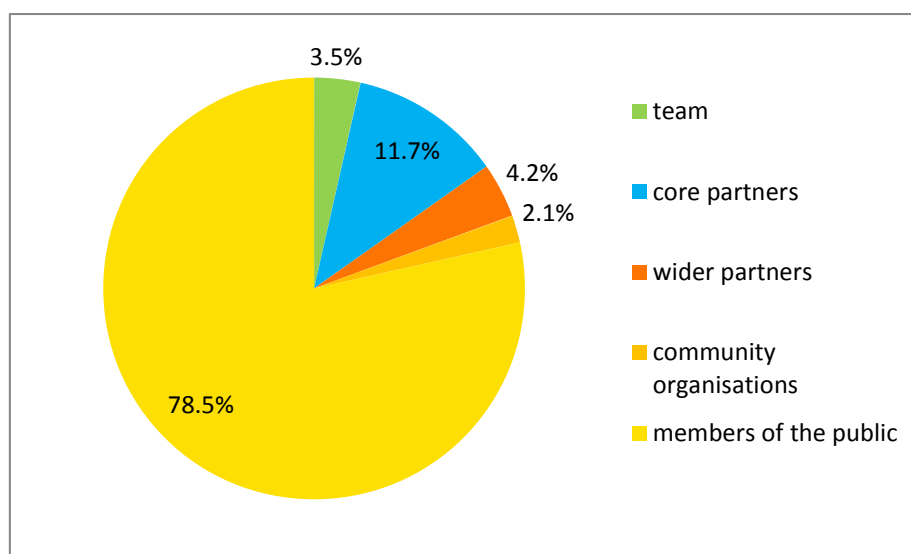


Figure 3. Overview of the consultation and engagement activities undertaken as part of the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan, and the sections of this document which relate to each

	STAGE A: Start of process & pre-consultation																STAGE B: Consultation				STAGE C: Post-consultation					STAGE D: Post-approval & launch				
	2011				2012												2013												2014	
Target	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	
2. Team	2.1 Initial e-mail		2.3 Recommendations							2.4 Specific policy input				2.5 Team away day																
	2.2 Team meetings																													
3. Partners (primarily core partners)		3.1 Initial e-mail	3.2.1 Partner meetings					3.3 Steering Group			3.2.3 Individual meeting	3.2.3 Individual meeting	3.2.2 Partner meetings				3.3 Steering Group			3.3 Steering Group			3.3 Steering Group			3.3 Steering Group		3.3 Steering Group		
		3.3 Steering Group		3.3 Steering Group							3.3 Steering Group	3.2.3 Individual meeting	3.4 E-mail prior to wider consultation																	
4. Wider community & partners			4.1 Initial awareness campaign							4.2.1 Mapping campaign (online)							4.3 Wider consultation													
										4.2.2 Mapping campaign (offline)		4.2.2 Mapping campaign (offline)																		

Figure 4. A total of 55 organisations were actively involved in the consultation and engagement, split into community organisations, wider partners, and core partners

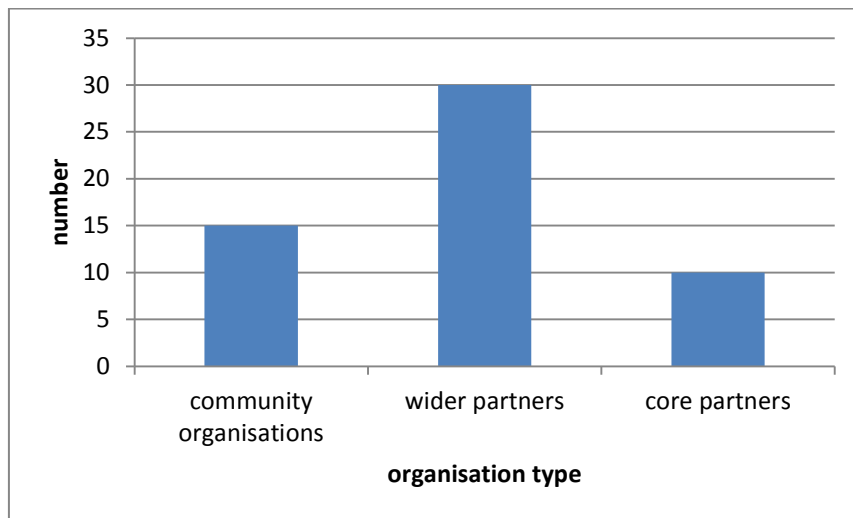


Table 1. Organisations who were actively involved in the consultation and engagement process

Core partners	Wider partners	Community organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cheshire West and Chester Council</li> <li>Environment Agency</li> <li>Forestry Commission</li> <li>Halton Borough Council</li> <li>Knowsley Council</li> <li>Liverpool City Council</li> <li>Natural England</li> <li>Sefton Council</li> <li>St.Helens Council</li> <li>Warrington Borough Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aintree NHS</li> <li>Bowdon Church School</li> <li>Cass Associates</li> <li>Community Forest Trust</li> <li>Charlotte's Forest School</li> <li>Cheshire East</li> <li>Cheshire Landscape Trust</li> <li>Corporate Culture</li> <li>Faiths4Change</li> <li>Groundwork Cheshire</li> <li>Groundwork Merseyside</li> <li>Halewood Town Council</li> <li>Lancs Wildlife Trust</li> <li>Cheshire Wildlife Trust</li> <li>Landlife</li> <li>Liverpool Hope University</li> <li>Liverpool Vision</li> <li>MEAS</li> <li>MEP</li> <li>Mersey Care</li> <li>Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority</li> <li>Merseytravel</li> <li>Norton Priory Museum Trust</li> <li>Peel</li> <li>TCV</li> <li>The Land Trust</li> <li>Trees and Design Action Group</li> <li>University of Liverpool</li> <li>Walton Parish Council</li> <li>Woodland Trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Scouts Group (unspecified)</li> <li>Family Voices = Family Choices</li> <li>Friends of Anderton and Marbury</li> <li>Friends of Gorse Covert</li> <li>Friends of Penny Wood</li> <li>Maghull Scout Group</li> <li>Mid-Cheshire Bridleways</li> <li>Middlewich Heritage</li> <li>SAFE Productions</li> <li>St Lukes Church Volunteers</li> <li>Sutton Beauty</li> <li>Warrington Cadets</li> <li>Warrington Nature Conservation Forum</li> <li>Weaver Sailing Club</li> <li>Woolton Village Residents Association</li> </ul>

## 2. Team consultation

Consultation and engagement with The Mersey Forest team was considered important, as it is the team that works most closely to deliver The Mersey Forest Plan. The team were familiar with the existing Plan and what helped them to do their job, or what was not useful in it. They could also provide insight into their areas of work to inform the refreshed Plan. In addition, the process of engaging the team was also deemed useful as a reminder of the Plan and to build ownership of the refreshed Plan. As such, it was important to consult and engage the team throughout the process.

The team were consulted and engaged in the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan in a number of ways:

- An initial e-mail questionnaire was sent as we started to refresh the Plan (section 2.1)
- Updates on progress at fortnightly team meetings throughout the process (section 2.2)
- Specific input to review the existing recommendations (section 2.3)
- Specific input to inform the policies (section 2.4)
- Team away day to discuss which case studies to include in the Plan (section 2.5).

The team also played an active role in promoting the wider consultation. The draft Plan was presented at a team meeting and the team were asked in a workshop setting what supporting material they would need to confidently promote the wider consultation to their contacts. As such, supporting material was produced (see section 4.3 for more information on this).

### 2.1 Initial e-mail

At the outset of the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan, an e-mail was sent to the 14 people in The Mersey Forest team at the time (not including the team members who were directly involved in the refresh of the Plan) (Appendix A). The e-mail was sent in late September 2011, with a reminder in mid-October. It asked a series of questions to find out the teams' views on the existing Plan, what they liked about it and what needed to change. It asked the following:

- (1) Do you currently use the Plan?  
a. If so, please describe how  
b. If not, please let us know why you don't currently use it – e.g. too hard to find relevant parts, I don't see it as useful in my job, etc
- (2) What do you like about the current Plan (and would like us to retain)?  
(3) What do you dislike about the current Plan (and would like to see changed)?  
(4) What could make the Plan more useful to you and colleagues?
- (5) As part of the refresh we are also trying to make better connections between the Plan and: (i) TMF Delivery Plan, (ii) Objectives Hierarchy, (iii) Little Book of Messages. Please can you also comment on these with regard to qus 1-4 above.
- (6) Have you any other thoughts or comments to guide the refresh of the Plan?



### **Critical analysis of approach:**

With prompting, the majority of the team responded to this e-mail; 12 of the 14 team members it was sent to for comments responded, with the 2 non-responders being members of the administrative team who, arguably, used the existing Plan less.

The comments were collated into a word document (and these were eventually also merged into one document alongside the responses from partners (from sections 3.1 and 3.2)). These comments helped to shape the structure, tone and content of the Plan, and were referred back to throughout the drafting of the Plan. A record was kept of the individual comments and a note of how these were taken into consideration in the Plan. This record is not presented in this document.

It was very useful to gather the teams' opinions early on in the process of refreshing the Plan. This meant that their opinions could really shape the Plan and produce a more useful document which is owned by the team. This also gave everyone the chance to have their voices heard in a more formal way.

## **2.2 Team meetings**

Throughout the refreshing of The Mersey Forest Plan we have used our fortnightly team meetings to keep the team informed of progress and give them a chance to respond and get involved at appropriate stages.

### **Critical analysis of approach:**

A total of 27 team members were involved in this step of the consultation and engagement. This included 14 team members who were present throughout the process, and 13 who were not (either because their contract started or ended during the process, or because they were temporarily employed).

This approach was easy to implement as these meetings were already established and are used as an opportunity for team members to update each other on significant issues. The team meetings therefore provided a clear mechanism to keep the team informed of progress in drafting the refreshed Plan, therefore keeping them involved in the process, aware of key changes. It provided the team with the opportunity to discuss issues at timely points (e.g. issues we discussed included the emerging partner diagram (Figure 1), the emerging 20 headline policies, the approach to the community mapping exercise (section 4.2), the approach to and team involvement in the wider consultation (section 4.3), etc). The team meetings also provided a mechanism whereby key emerging issues in the team or that the team were aware of could be fed into the Plan.

## **2.3 Recommendations review**

The team were sent an email in November 2011 asking them to comment on a document in advance of the first set of partner meetings (section 3.2.10). The document reviewed the 69 forest-wide recommendations from the 1994 and 2001 versions of the Plan, with initial suggestions of how they could appear in the refreshed Plan (with the idea being to reduce the number of recommendations presented) and why this change was suggested.

### **Critical analysis of approach:**

Only five team members sent a response to this step. Whilst this number is low, the e-mail request came very shortly after the initial email sent to the team (section 2.1) and the team were only given a week to respond, so it would have been difficult to respond if workloads were high at this time. However, the comments that came in helped to shape the direction of travel, and through the subsequent meetings with the partners (section 0) and drafting of the Plan, the recommendations were gradually refined into 20 policies that applied across the whole of The Mersey Forest. In addition, there was ongoing discussion throughout the process between the core writing team and individual team members as required for each of the policies (section 2.4).

### **2.4 Specific policy input**

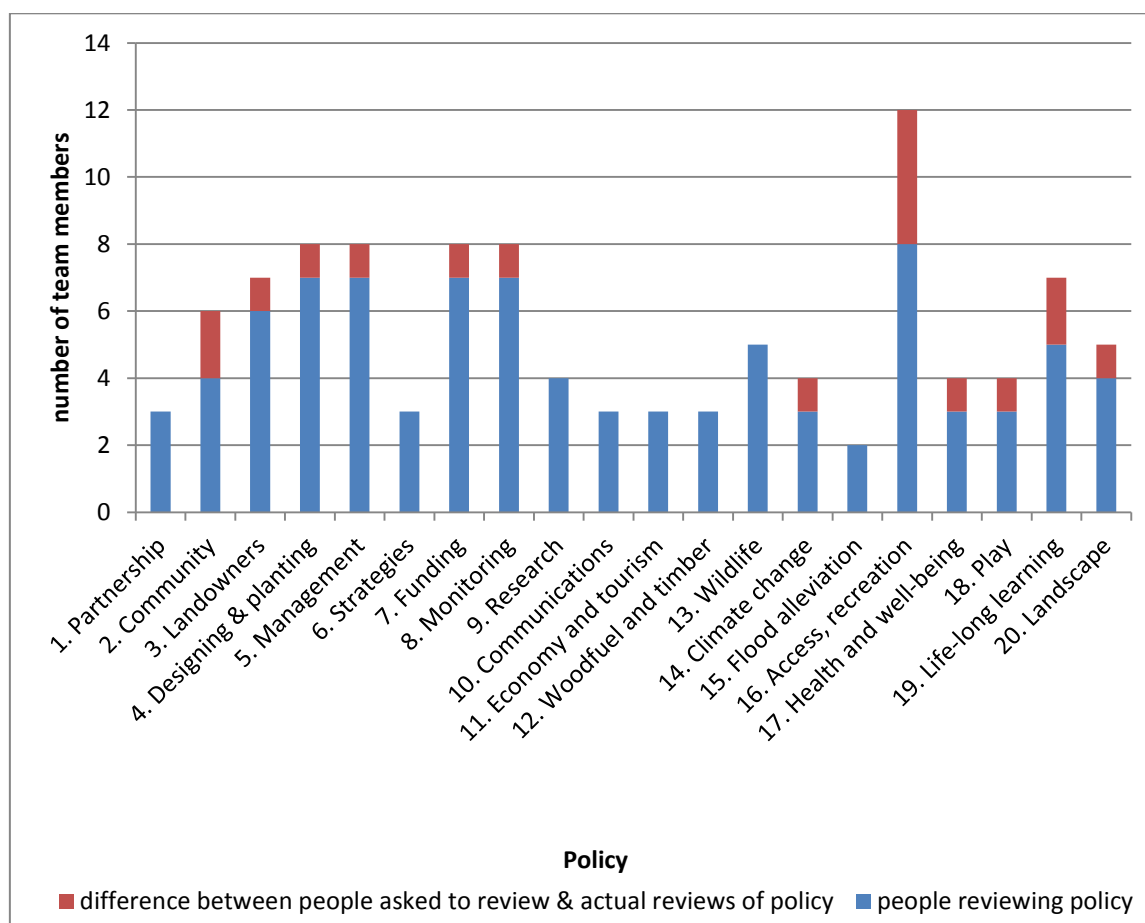
An e-mail was sent to the team in June 2012 asking them to comment on the draft 20 policies that covered the whole of The Mersey Forest; subsequent reminder e-mails were sent to encourage more comments. The team were asked to comment on the policy wording and supporting text, and to suggest images to support the text. Team members were asked to comment specifically on suggested policies (that were selected to be most relevant to their areas of work) although they were welcome to comment on others. For each policy, at least two team members were asked to review it, although in many cases the number was higher.

### **Critical analysis of approach:**

12 out of the 14 team members asked for input commented on at least one policy. On average, the people who did respond commented on 6.1 policies each (with this ranging from people commenting on only one policy, to two team members who commented on all 20 policies). All policies had at least two reviewers (Figure 5), with an average of 3.7 reviewers per policy. Policy 16 on access, recreation and sustainable travel had the most reviewers, with 8 people commenting on it. Policy 15 on flood alleviation and water management had the least reviewers (2 people), which is to be expected as it is a more specialist field.

Asking team members to respond to specific sections according to their expertise helped them to target their efforts to where they were most needed to inform the policies. However, due to the fact that the team is busy with other work, they required considerable prompting to respond. This was not a major issue as we asked for comments as each policy section was completed. This meant that the writing team could continue to work on other policy sections as team members provided their comments. This phased approach was also planned as such so that lots of comments were not received all at once at the end of the drafting process. However, the phased approach may have led to some confusion amongst team members as they received multiple e-mails about different policy sections and links to different (latest) versions of the Plan. This meant that some team members commented on old sections of the Plan, so led to some wasted effort. Overall though, team members commenting on sections which best suited their expertise led to an improved and better informed refreshed Plan.

Figure 5. Number of team members reviewing each policy in The Mersey Forest Plan (and asked to review each policy)



## 2.5 Team away day

In October 2012 a team away day was held. One of the main items discussed on the day were the case studies that were to be included in the Plan (as was suggested by partners during meetings; see section 3.2.1). At the away day, there was a short presentation setting out where the Plan was up to and an introduction to the workshop session. The team were asked to brainstorm case study ideas that showcased different aspects of our work. They then split into smaller groups, selected to have a mixture of long-standing team members and newer team members within each group. Each group chose several case studies and answered the following questions for each:

- Which local authority or local authorities was it in?
- Tick all policies (from the 20 policies) that the case study touched on; then highlight the 3 most important of these
- Expand on each of the policies (e.g. Which partners were involved and how? What was the local community involvement? Who was the landowner and what was their role?, etc)
- What is the special selling point of this case study?
- When was it?
- Where was it (more specific than local authority)?
- What was the legacy of it? Is it still relevant?
- Are there good pictures to accompany it?
- Has it already been written up somewhere?
- Any other information / brainstorming?

At the end the groups came back together to present their case studies, and they were compiled onto one sheet which set out their names, local authority areas and key policy relevance, to enable further comparison and selection. All the case studies and the comparator information were typed up and used as the basis for developing the case studies in the Plan.

### **Critical analysis of approach:**

17 team members were present at the away day (Figure 6); this was all the team members employed at that time. Nine case studies were developed and compared to each other. Six of these case studies developed on the day directly informed the final case studies in the Plan, although their emphasis may have been changed to suit the final selection. In total the final Plan had eight case studies. It was very useful to engage the team on this, as they were best able to suggest case studies which truly showcased the breadth and depth of the work done to date, and the individual team members knew the detail on the key aspects of each case study.

Figure 6. The Mersey Forest team, as present at the October 2012 away day



## **2.6 Summary of team consultation**

Team members were involved in all steps of the team consultation (Figure 7). Team meetings (step 2.2) involved the greatest number of people, but this is largely due to the fact that the team members changed during the process of refreshing the Plan (so, during the whole process there were a total of 27 team members, but they were never all working for The Mersey Forest at the same time). The lowest response was elicited for comments on the recommendations (step 2.3). This is likely to be because this request came shortly after the initial email (step 2.1) and required a very quick turnaround; so did not give team members adequate time to respond. In general, the team engaged well throughout the consultation (Figure 8), with individuals taking part in an average of 2.7 steps (out of a total of five) when all team members were considered, and 3.8 steps when team members who were not present throughout the process and the core writing team were excluded.

A particular success was engaging the team early in the process and continuing to engage and consult on key elements throughout, making use of team meetings and away days, and asking for input on specific input on policies most relevant to the expertise of individual team members.

Figure 7. Number of team members actively involved in each step of the team consultation

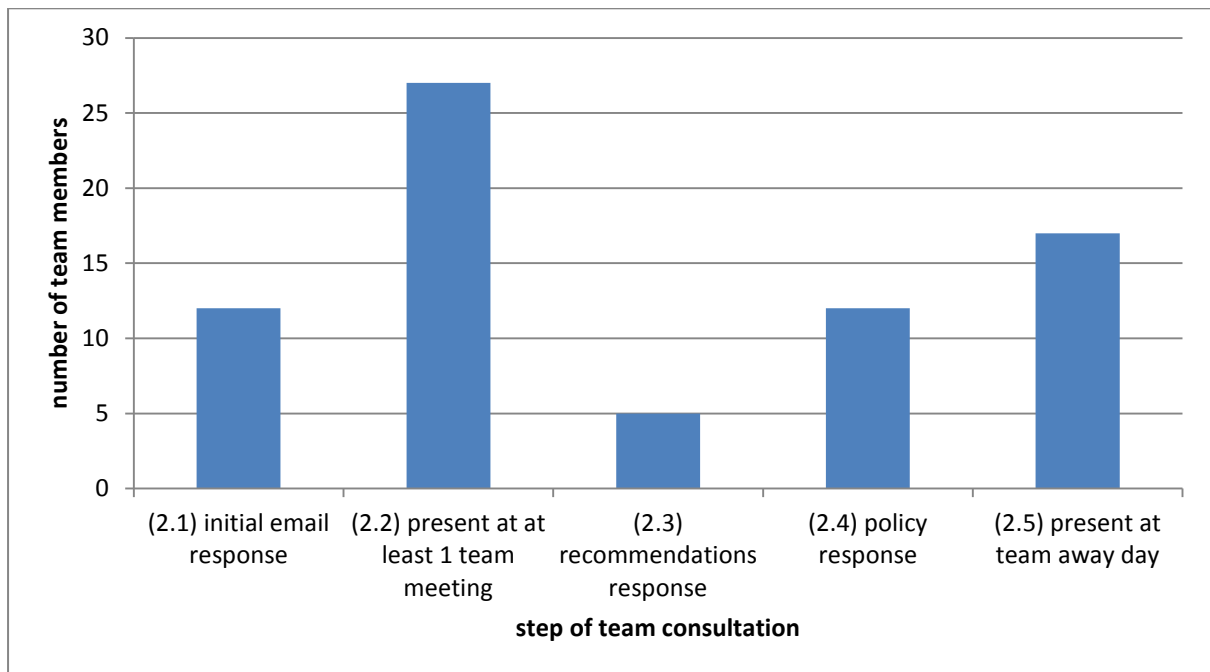
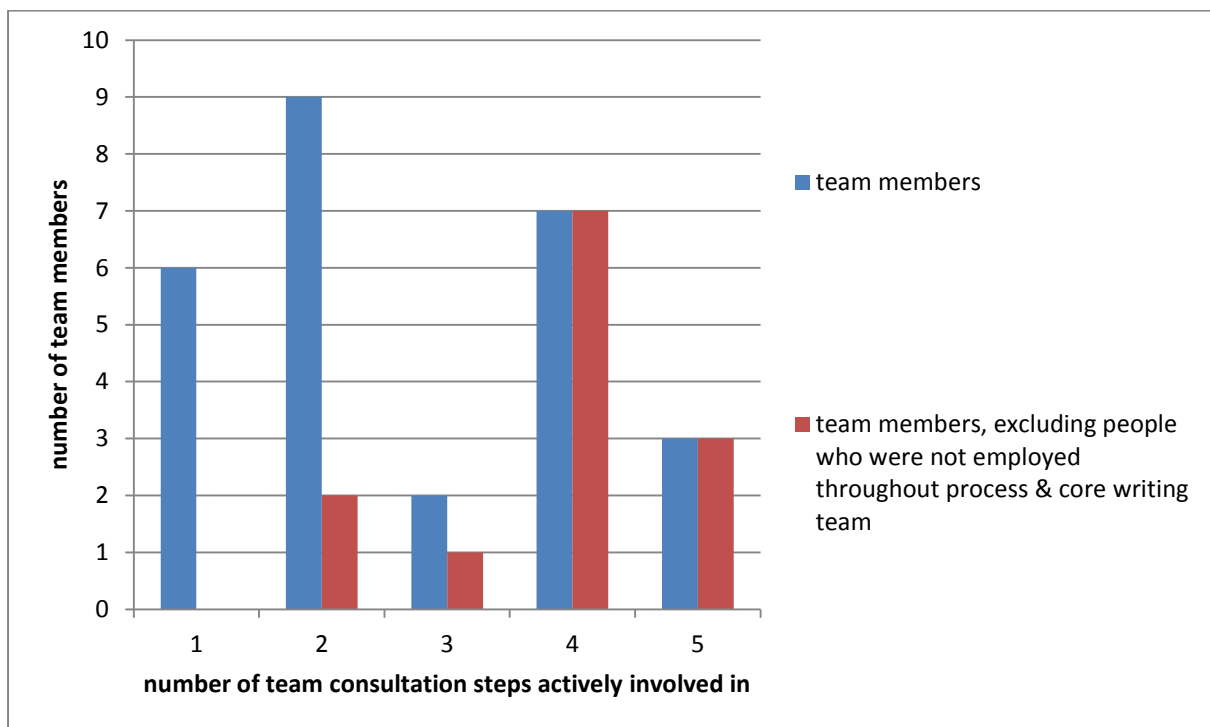


Figure 8. Number of team consultation steps people were involved in



### **3. Core partner consultation**

Consultation and engagement with core partners on the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan was deemed essential as the Plan is delivered through partnership working. The policies set out in The Mersey Forest Plan are those of the partnership, which has put the team in place to help them to deliver it, rather than the policies of the team itself. The partners work to deliver the Plan, so we needed to involve them and their colleagues in the discussion as to what it should be like. This was also felt to be important to help to strengthen the sense of ownership and awareness of The Mersey Forest within the partnership. In the political climate at the time, with the recent introduction of the Localism Act, a greater local ownership of the Plan was considered especially important. Demonstrating a robust local consultation and closely matching the statutory consultation approach for Local Plans would help if The Mersey Forest Plan was a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications (as stated in the National Planning Policy Framework); although the Plan itself is not a statutory document. Finally, the Plan needed to be approved by The Mersey Forest Steering Group; so their involvement throughout the process would help to gain this. As such, it was considered important to consult and engage the core partners throughout the process.

This section sets out the consultation and engagement that was undertaken predominantly with the core partners (who are those represented on The Mersey Forest Steering Group; see Figure 1). The consultation with the wider community and partnership is set out in section 4, although some other partners are also included in this section. The partners were consulted and engaged in the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan in a number of ways:

- An initial e-mail questionnaire was sent as we started to refresh the Plan (section 3.1)
- Partner meetings (section 3.2) – we held individual meetings with our local authority and other key partners at an early stage in the process (section 3.2.1); subsequent meetings were also held with the partners (section 3.2.2); as well as meetings with other individual partners (section 3.2.3)
- Updates on progress and key decisions taken through papers and updates at The Mersey Forest Steering Group (held quarterly throughout the process) (section 3.3)
- E-mail prior to wider consultation (and other ongoing e-mail dialogue) (section 3.4).

The partners also played an active role in engaging their colleagues and networks in the wider consultation process (section 4.3).

#### **3.1 Initial e-mail**

At the outset of the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan we sent an e-mail to The Mersey Forest Steering Group and some key partners. This included the seven local authorities within The Mersey Forest (Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St. Helens, Warrington), plus the Forestry Commission, Natural England, Environment Agency, TCV, Groundwork Cheshire, Groundwork Merseyside, and the Wirral Borough Council. The e-mail was sent in mid-October 2011 (Appendix B). As the people questioned were involved in The Mersey Forest and work closely with the team, we wanted to find out their views. It asked a series of questions (similar to those asked of the team; see section 2.1) to find out the partners' views on the existing Plan, what they liked about it and what needed to change.

It asked the following:

- (1) Do you currently use the Plan?  
a. If so, please describe how  
b. If not, please let us know why you don't currently use it (e.g. too hard to find relevant parts, I don't see it as useful in my job, etc)
- (2) What do you like about the current Plan (and would like us to retain)?
- (3) What do you dislike about the current Plan (and would like to see changed)?
- (4) What could make the Plan more useful to you and colleagues?
- (5) The draft National Planning Policy Framework (July 2011) states that:  
"Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife. An approved Community Forest plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications. Any development proposals within Community Forests in the Green Belt should be subject to the normal policies controlling development in Green Belts."
- Is there anything in particular that you would like/need to see from The Mersey Forest Plan if it may be material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications?
- (6) Have you any other thoughts or comments to guide the refresh of the Plan?

### **Critical analysis of approach:**

The e-mail message was sent to 43 people in 14 organisations, and we know that it was forwarded to at least 2 other people within these organisations (as they sent responses). Only 5 responses (from 3 organisations) were received, representing 11% of the people who were sent the message.

The comments were collated into a word document, and these were eventually also merged with responses from the team and partners during meetings (see sections 2.1 and 3.2.1). These comments helped to shape the structure, tone and content of the Plan, and were referred back to throughout the drafting of the Plan. A record was kept of the individual comments and a note of how these were taken into consideration in the Plan. This record is not presented in this document.

Whilst the response rate was low, this consultation step provided some useful comments. It was also useful as an early exercise to inform partners of the refresh, and to start engagement and ownership of the Plan. Some of the responses suggested that the partners currently did not really work with the existing Plan, which could explain a low response rate if there was little familiarity with the Plan. The meetings subsequently held with the individual partners (see section 3.2.1) proved to be a more useful way to engage partners.

### **3.2 Partner meetings**

This section reports on meetings that were held with the partners. It is grouped into three sub-sections which keep a record of the first set of partner meetings (December 2011-January 2012), the second set of partner meetings (October-November 2012), and individual meetings held at different times.

### 3.2.1 First set of partner meetings

Following on from the initial e-mail questionnaire sent to both the team (section 2.1) and partners (section 3.1), and in the early stages of drafting the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan, we held 11 individual partner meetings. These meetings were held with each of our seven local authority partners, as well as with Natural England, the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency, and Groundwork Cheshire and Merseyside in turn. They were held in December 2011 and January 2012. We asked the officer who attends The Mersey Forest Steering Group, or one other person, to arrange the meeting and to invite key colleagues to attend (Appendix C). We circulated an agenda in advance (Appendix D), as well the latest available draft of the refreshed Mersey Forest Plan. The agenda was fairly generic across all meetings but was tailored slightly depending on the partner.

An example of the discussion points for the meetings was:

1. Introduction to the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan – key timescales etc
2. Overview of the emerging Plan (see Refresh 2011.doc)
3. Discussion of strengths and weaknesses of the existing Plan from the partners' perspective. Does the current Plan help the partner and how could it better help them?
4. Discussion of key strategies that the Plan ought to try to influence in the partner or be aware of. How best to get the Plan recognised / endorsed by the partner (e.g. logo, website, etc).
5. Discussion of Forest-wide policies (see relevant chapter of Refresh 2011.doc)
6. Discussion of Local Authority specific policies (see relevant chapter of Refresh 2011.doc)
7. AOB

At least two Mersey Forest team members attended each meeting. We took notes of the meetings and circulated these to the attendees afterwards as a record of the meeting.

#### **Critical analysis of approach:**

49 people from across 11 organisations were involved in these early partner meetings, including all of our local authority partners (Table 2). The majority of these people (40 people or 82%) were from our local authority partners. Each local authority meeting had 4-8 attendees, including 3 councillors and 2 sets of additional comments sent after the meeting by people who were unable to attend. We also met with 9 people from our non-Local Authority partners. At least 71 people from across the partners were included in the e-mail invitations to these meetings, meaning that the attendance rate was 69% of the people invited, but also that a wider number of people will have become aware that the Plan was being refreshed (even if they were unable to attend the meeting).

The notes from the meetings were collated as comments into a word document along with the comments from each of the partner meetings. When broken down into individual comments, there were at least 235 comments arising from these meetings. These comments were eventually also merged into one document, along with the responses from the team and partners to the initial e-mail (see sections 2.1 and 3.1). We grouped the comments into similar categories, so that we could best make use of these whilst drafting the refresh. The main categories were:

- General / tone
- Uses / potential uses
- Links to make to other Mersey Forest documents
- Legislative and policy context
- Look / format / images
- Other documents which may be relevant
- Forest-wide policies (comments were grouped into individual policies)
- Local authority sections / policies



- Key achievements / case studies.

Table 2. Number of attendees at early partner meetings

Partner	Date	Number of attendees		Additional comments sent by other officers	TOTAL
		Officers	Councillors		
Sefton	06/12/2011	7	0	0	7
Environment Agency	14/12/2011	3	0	0	3
Natural England	16/12/2011	2	0	0	2
Groundwork Cheshire & Merseyside	19/12/2011	3	0	0	3
Liverpool	20/12/2011	5	0	1	6
Halton	22/12/2011	3	1	0	4
Knowsley	13/01/2012	6	1	1	8
Warrington	16/01/2012	6	1	0	7
Forestry Commission	19/01/2012	1	0	0	1
Cheshire West & Chester	20/01/2012	4	0	0	4
St.Helens	23/01/2012	4	0	0	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>44</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>49</b>
Total Local Authority		35	3	2	40
Total non-Local Authority		9	-	0	9

The comments helped to shape the structure, tone and content of the Plan, and were referred back to throughout the drafting of the Plan. A record was kept of the individual comments and a note of how these were taken into consideration in the Plan. This record is not presented in this document.

The process of engaging partners through these meetings was more time consuming than originally anticipated, but both the process and the outcome was deemed very valuable. The process really helped to engage our partners in the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan, and at an early stage where they could really help to shape it. We asked the partners to organise the meetings, which gave control to the partners as to who should attend. As such, the meetings had a number of partner authority officers (and in some instances councillors) present, and not just The Mersey Forest Steering Group officers who tend to have a closer direct contact with the team. In many cases it would be very unusual for all of these officers to be present at the same meeting, and to discuss The Mersey Forest collectively.

At the meetings, a useful dialogue emerged whereby, during the course of the meetings, many of the partners recognised that they (not the team) were The Mersey Forest, and that the team worked to help them to deliver The Mersey Forest Plan. The discussion at the meetings broadly followed the agenda and generated lots of very useful comments to take forward and embed into the refresh Mersey Forest Plan.

### **3.2.2 Second set of partner meetings**

The second set of partner meetings were held as part of the annual 1:1 meetings between The Mersey Forest director and the local authority Steering Group representatives. As such, The Mersey Forest Plan was one of a number of issues to be discussed on the agenda. The meetings served as a useful update for the partners on the stage that the draft document had got to and provided an opportunity to discuss any pertinent issues for each local authority, along with issues concerning the timescales and how to seek final approval / endorsement from each authority.

In addition, at these meetings, we shared a document detailing how we were refining the local authority specific policies, the proposed amended wording for the individual policies and indicative woodland cover target maps, and notes on how these policies had been developed in each local authority area (including supporting maps). Following the meeting we sent a copy of the document to the partner for them to share with their colleagues and provide any further feedback prior to a wider consultation; this process is discussed further in section 3.4.

#### **Critical analysis of approach:**

10 people, representing all of the seven local authorities attended the meetings. As these meetings were held as part of the annual 1:1 meetings, the invitation list was restricted to the officers who normally attend these meetings. They are the main Steering Group representatives from each partner and, as such, are the officers who tend to work most closely with The Mersey Forest team.

The focus of the meetings was not solely on The Mersey Forest Plan. As such, the resulting comments were not detailed but they did provide an opportunity for partners to raise any issues that were important for them that would not necessarily be raised at Steering Group meetings (section 3.3). They also provided a useful opportunity for us to introduce the local authority policies and approach taken and to prompt further comments on this (section 3.4) prior to the wider consultation (section 4.3).

### **3.2.3 Individual meetings**

In addition to the more formal first and second partner meetings documented above, we also held other meetings with individual partners as necessary throughout the process. These meetings were more ad hoc in nature. They were held in July, August and October 2012.

#### **Critical analysis of approach:**

Three partners were met with on an individual basis. In fact, the number of additional meetings will be higher than this as The Mersey Forest Plan was discussed with different partners throughout the refresh. However, we did not keep a record of this, as these meetings were ad hoc in nature, and often joined on to existing meetings. Two of the meetings recorded were with ex-team members, who were involved in writing the original Mersey Forest Plan. These meetings were useful to find out information about how the original Plan was developed, in order to inform what we did for this Plan. For example, we discussed the development of The Mersey Forest Landscape Character Assessment and the original woodland cover target maps. A further meeting was also held with an MEP to brief him about the update of The Mersey Forest Plan and its relevance to a wide range of agendas.

In hindsight, it would have been useful to keep a record of the meetings where team members mentioned that the Plan was being refreshed or gave a brief update on this. Whilst many of these meetings will not have been active engagement in the Plan, they will have increased awareness of the fact that the Plan exists and was being updated.

### 3.3 Steering Group

The Mersey Forest Steering Group meets quarterly to steer the progress of The Mersey Forest and includes both officer and councillor representatives from our core partners. It was really important that we kept the Steering Group updated with our progress and key issues, and provided them with the opportunity to respond, as they were responsible for approving the Plan and for championing The Mersey Forest within their organisations.

As such, progress on the refreshing of The Mersey Forest Plan was presented at each Steering Group meeting throughout the process (either as a paper, a verbal update, or part of a general update on team activity). This was a total of 9 meetings (in October 2011; January, April, July and October 2012; January, April, July and October 2013). In particular, formal papers with recommendations for the Steering Group were presented at 5 meetings; in October 2011, January 2012, July 2012, January 2013, and October 2013 (Table 3 and Appendix E). All the recommendations from the papers were approved. In addition, the Plan was formally approved at the meeting in October 2013 and launched prior to the meeting in January 2014. Minutes and a record of attendees were kept for each meeting.

**Table 3. Summary and recommendations of the five papers presented at The Mersey Forest Steering Group during the refreshing of The Mersey Forest Plan**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Paper summary and recommendations</b>
Oct 2011	Discussing the intentions to refresh the Plan, the project plan, progress to date, and recommendations that partners: support and promote the refresh of The Forest Plan; ensure that the departments and individuals who may have an interest in the Plan (e.g. planners, ecologists, tree officers, parks, etc) are involved in the refresh (e.g. by asking them to respond to consultation e-mails, inviting them to meetings, etc); and work with The Forest Team to embed the MF Plan into key partner strategies and plans.
Jan 2012	Updating on progress, next steps, and recommendations that partners: support and promote the refresh of The Forest Plan; ensure that the departments and individuals who may have an interest in the Plan (e.g. planners, ecologists, tree officers, parks, etc) are involved in the refresh; start to explore the most appropriate mechanisms for getting endorsement for The Mersey Forest Plan in their authorities; work with The Forest Team to embed the MF Plan into key partner strategies and plans.
Jul 2012	Updating on progress, discussing the proposed approach for the local authority specific policies, and recommendations that partners: approve approach to revising planting strategy maps and policies; suggest (and ask colleagues to send) other GIS data we should use to inform policies; comment on local authority planting strategy maps and policies as they become available (this could be done as part of the 1:1 meetings in autumn).
Jan 2013	Updating on progress, discussing the consultation draft of the Plan, and recommendations that: partners approve the draft to enable it to go out to wider consultation to coincide with the Government announcement on the response to the Independent Panel on Forestry; partners help in dissemination of the documents for comment; the team report back at the July Steering Group on the consultation and how responses have been taken into account in the final draft version of the document; partners provide information to the team on how the plan could/should be formally approved within individual authorities.
Oct 2013	Discussing the overall process of refreshing The Mersey Forest Plan and recommendations that partners: approve the final Forest Plan; support the launch of the plan at the January Steering Group on 23 January 2014; continue to promote the Plan and the programme of activity within their organisations.

### **Critical analysis of approach:**

32 people from 11 organisations (the seven local authorities, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Environment Agency, and TCV) attended at least one of the nine Steering Group meetings held whilst the Plan was being refreshed. 23 were from local authorities, with 10 councillors and 13 officers attending at least one meeting. A further four people were e-mailed about Steering Group meetings but did not attend any. In addition, nine Mersey Forest team members also attended at least one meeting during this period.

The partners who attended at least one meeting, attended an average of 3.3 meetings during the period (or just over a third of meetings), with the range between one and eight meetings attended. Due to changes in staff and councillors within the partner organisations over the period, it is to be expected that not everyone would attend every meeting. That said, the Steering Group was a useful forum to keep partners updated on the progress with the Plan and to approve key steps in the process. Key partners who are actively involved in The Mersey Forest and champion it within their organisations are represented on the Steering Group. This representation is made up of officers, and also importantly of elected local councillors. The regular meetings throughout the process meant that there was continuing engagement with the Plan. The Steering Group also played a key role in engaging other officers and councillors within their organisations, and in approving the final Plan.

### **3.4 E-mail prior to wider consultation**

E-mail dialogue was maintained with key partners throughout the process, as required by the stage the Plan was at. This was sometimes ad hoc in nature (e.g. contacting a specific individual about a specific question). On a number of occasions all the key partners were e-mailed. One such occasion was prior to the wider consultation (section 4.3) when partners were e-mailed to approve the draft Plan for wider consultation. These e-mails were sent in October to December 2012 to the core partnership of the seven local authorities, Forestry Commission, Natural England, and Environment Agency; as well as to Groundwork Cheshire, Groundwork Merseyside, Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service, and Lancashire Wildlife Trust (Appendix F).

### **Critical analysis of approach:**

32 people were sent the message directly and, from the messages we saw, we know that at least 25 other people were forwarded the message. We received a response from 22 people, or 39% of all the people who were sent or forwarded the message. Responses represented 12 of the 14 partner organisations the message was sent to. In order to achieve this response rate we had to send out reminder e-mail messages.

This step was very important to then get approval by the Steering Group in January 2013 to commence the wider consultation, starting in February 2013. It gave partners the opportunity to be reasonably happy with the Plan before it went to a wider consultation.

### **3.5 Summary of partner consultation**

A total of 121 individuals from across the partner organisations were engaged in the process of refreshing The Mersey Forest Plan. Of these, 82 people (or 68%) were actively engaged, either by attending a meeting or responding to an e-mail. Partners were involved in all steps of the partner consultation (Figure 9). The first partner meetings had the most people involved (step 3.2.1), but this is largely due to the fact that this step had the largest invitation list – not all individuals were invited to take part in each of the steps. The least number of people were involved in the individual meetings (step 3.4) – but these were largely ad hoc meetings, and many with specific individuals; similarly the second partner meeting had only a small invite list (step 3.2.2). Very few people responded to the initial e-mail (step 3.1); this is despite it being sent to a large group.

However, the comments we received back suggested that the partners did not really work with the existing Plan, so this could reflect why people were not engaged by questions about this.

In general, many partners who were actively involved (i.e. those who engaged in at least 1 step) engaged well throughout the consultation (Figure 10), taking part in an average of 1.5 steps out of a total of 6; but it must be remembered that not all partners were invited to engage in all of the steps.

Figure 9. Number of people actively involved in each step of the partner consultation

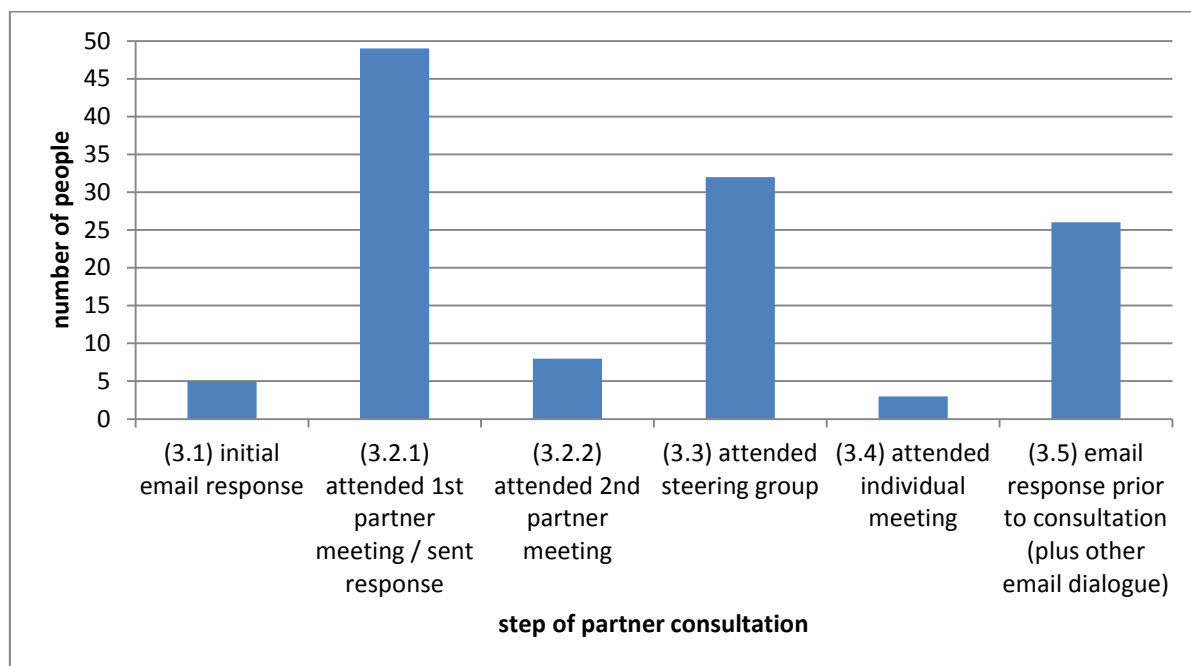
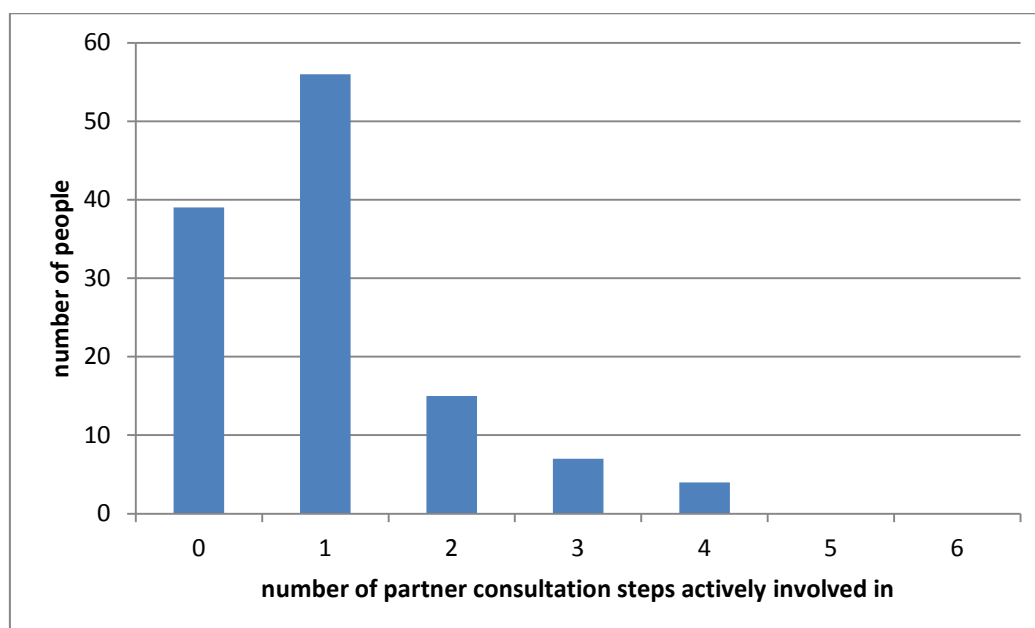


Figure 10. Number of partner consultation steps people were involved in (N.B. not possible to take part in all steps)



A particular success was engaging the core partners early in the process and continuing to engage and consult on key elements throughout. The Mersey Forest Steering Group meetings provided a good mechanism to enable this, as well as ad hoc email discussions with individuals.

The early partner meetings were felt to be especially important aspect; these were organised by the partner authorities, with individuals invited from within each organisation, so representing a range of departments. These meetings provided timely input to help shape the Plan. They also helped to reinforce the nature of The Mersey Forest, as being a partnership organisation with a team put in place by the partnership to coordinate delivery.

## 4. Wider community and partner consultation

Consulting the wider community and partners on the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan was essential as empowering communities is central to The Mersey Forest; communities within The Mersey Forest have the most to gain from its success and also have the most to offer in order to make it a success. In the political climate at the time, with the recent introduction of the Localism Act, a greater local ownership of the Plan was considered especially important. Demonstrating a robust local consultation and closely matching the statutory consultation approach for Local Plans would help if The Mersey Forest Plan was a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications (as stated in the National Planning Policy Framework); although the Plan itself is not a statutory document. Consulting the wider community on the refresh of the Plan was also thought to be useful in order to help to build up a “supporter” base for The Mersey Forest. A strong supporter base and community involvement are important aspects for securing funding for the ongoing delivery of The Mersey Forest.

It was recognised that, in comparison to consulting The Mersey Forest team (section 2) and partners (section 3) who work closely with The Mersey Forest, engaging the wider community would require a different approach. The Mersey Forest covers 1,370 km<sup>2</sup> and is home to 1.7 million people. A small number of these people will have been actively involved in The Mersey Forest, whereas others may have less awareness. By way of context setting, an awareness survey conducted in 2010<sup>1</sup> found that:

- 46% of respondents had heard of The Mersey Forest
- 93% support the idea of having a Community Forest in their area
- 76% agreed to sign up as ‘supporters’ of The Mersey Forest to show their backing
- 67% have noticed an improvement in their local environment in the last decade thanks to the work of The Mersey Forest Partnership (this is up 5% since the survey in 2006)
- 86% of respondents had visited woodlands created by The Mersey Forest
- 39% of people visiting these woodlands arrive on foot
- 85% said planting more woodland trees should be a very high priority
- 56% thought planting more street trees should be a very high priority.

Given time and budget constraints, it was not possible to contact everyone within The Mersey Forest to ask their opinions. As such, our approach to wider community consultation was very different to the approach taken for the team and core partners. The wider community and partners were consulted and engaged in the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan in a number of ways. The main elements of the wider community and partner consultation were:

- An initial campaign to raise awareness in the wider community by asking for woodland stories (section 4.1)
- A mapping campaign (section 4.2) to gather information on where and why people loved trees and woodlands, would like to see more planted, or improvements made to sites (this had online and offline versions)
- A wider formal consultation period, lasting for three months (section 4.3).

A variety of media were used to reach people, with different media employed to a greater or lesser extent depending on the element of the consultation. Examples of each of the media are given in the following sub-sections, but the media employed included:

- Dedicated webpages
- Links from the main Mersey Forest website
- E-mails to existing contacts

---

<sup>1</sup> Vision 21 (2010). Awareness Survey. Based on 1,121 telephone interviews across The Mersey Forest.

- Social media – Facebook posts and adverts, Twitter, Project Dirt Liverpool
- Leaflets
- Libraries and community centres – with hard copies of the Plan, posters, leaflets, and freepost response postcards
- Press releases and articles
- Newspaper adverts
- Local authority websites
- Community and partner newsletters, websites and network e-mails
- Summer shows
- Team e-mail signatures
- E-newsletter.

We used our e-newsletter to supporters during the period to update on progress, with stories in the following editions:

- Winter 2011 ([www.merseyforest.org.uk/partnerreports/report.asp?code=1211&la=mft](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/partnerreports/report.asp?code=1211&la=mft)) – Contained briefing on the refresh, including the outcome of the initial awareness raising campaign (section 4.1)
- Winter 2012 ([www.merseyforest.org.uk/newsletter-winter-2012](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/newsletter-winter-2012)) – Contained information on the outcome of the mapping campaign (section 4.2) and progress in refreshing the Plan
- Spring 2013 ([www.merseyforest.org.uk/spring-2013-newsletter-forest-plan-special](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/spring-2013-newsletter-forest-plan-special)) – This edition was a Forest Plan special, featuring information about The Mersey Forest Plan, feedback from the wider consultation so far (section 4.3), and prompting people to send their comments
- Winter 2013 ([www.merseyforest.org.uk/forest-wide-newsletter-winter-2013](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/forest-wide-newsletter-winter-2013)) – Gave an update on the outcome of the wider consultation and steps remaining to finalise the Plan.

In each of the sub-sections below, we set out the main aspects of each stage of the wider community and partner consultation in turn, including the various media employed and a critical analysis of the approach.

#### **4.1 Initial campaign to raise awareness in the wider community**

As we started to refresh The Mersey Forest Plan we felt that it would be good to let the wider community know that we were doing this. We decided to run a “Love Your Woods?” campaign, which asked for peoples’ comments and stories about the trees and woodlands in the area (Figure 11). The campaign pointed people towards The Mersey Forest Plan, and the fact that their comments would help us as we updated the Plan. The campaign was run in late autumn 2011, and we offered a prize of a free Christmas tree for the best comment as an incentive to take part.



Figure 11. Front and back of the freepost postcard from the initial awareness raising campaign

# Love your woods?

## We'd love to hear about it.





“

I fully approve of having any woodlands and the more the better!

”

“

Northwich's woodlands are the lungs of the town and the area.

”

**The Mersey Forest would love to hear your **comments** and **stories** about Merseyside and North Cheshire's trees and woodlands.**

Whether you have a particular favourite woodland, or have seen your local greenery change over the years, or simply want to share your thoughts on why woods are important, it would be great to hear your views below (or at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/views](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/views)).

Name:

Email:

Tel (in case you win):

Tick to add yourself to The Mersey Forest's list of supporters (it's free)

**No stamp necessary**

**Best comment wins a Christmas tree!**

The Mersey Forest Project  
FREEPOST WA1839  
Mossgate  
Birchwood  
Warrington  
WA3 6BR

**Why should I take part?**

- ☐ Your comments will help us as we update The Mersey Forest's long-term Forest Plan to plant millions of trees to make Merseyside and Cheshire an even better place to live.
- ☐ The best comment received before 1st December will win a free Christmas tree from Delamere Forest (competition rules are at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/rules](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/rules)).
- ☐ Your comment will be added to our feedback page at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/views](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/views)




25

The campaign was disseminated using a variety of media:

- The Mersey Forest website – link from homepage banner to a dedicated page [www.merseyforest.org.uk/views](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/views)
- The Mersey Forest supporters list – an e-mail was sent to people who had previously signed up as supporters
- Project Dirt Liverpool – an online active social media community, linking environmental projects [www.projectdirt.com/person/8619/mike-bray#!/journal\\_entry/9498](http://www.projectdirt.com/person/8619/mike-bray#!/journal_entry/9498)
- Facebook post – in November 2011 [www.facebook.com/notes/the-mersey-forest/love-your-local-woods-say-it-loud-and-win-a-christmas-tree/230045030394975](https://www.facebook.com/notes/the-mersey-forest/love-your-local-woods-say-it-loud-and-win-a-christmas-tree/230045030394975)
- Twitter – Tweet in November 2011 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/136418185728638976>; and four re-tweets
- Freepost postcards (Figure 11) – handed out at 2 community tree planting events, at 10 community meetings, displayed in 1 visitor centre
- Local press release – sent to 21 papers [www.merseyforest.org.uk/files/Love%20your%20woods.pdf](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/files/Love%20your%20woods.pdf).

### Critical analysis of approach:

In total, we received 25 comments ([www.merseyforest.org.uk/views](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/views)). Although relatively few in number, the comments were passionate and varied, both in terms of content and geography, coming in from across The Mersey Forest area. We also later fed 12 comments that were geographically specific into our online map (section 4.2.1). The winning comment was:

“I am always going for long walks through woodland areas, sometimes alone but often with my 7yr old daughter. I love the quiet and having the opportunity of seeing our wonderful wildlife, especially the types of birds that are not seen near busy streets and roads. I love educating my daughter on what we see and she has learnt to have respect for her environment.”

Overall this exercise was deemed a solid, if an unspectacular, success. It is estimated that a total of 213,824 people were reached through the different media used (Table 4); this is equivalent to 13% of the people who live within The Mersey Forest.

Table 4. Potential reach through the different media in the initial awareness raising campaign

Media	Number of people reached	% of total	% of total (excluding local press)
Local press	206,032	96.36	-
Twitter (including retweets)	6,080	2.84	78
Mersey Forest supporters list	666	0.31	9
Mersey Forest website	400	0.19	5
Project Dirt Liverpool	370	0.17	5
FREEPOST postcards	200	0.09	3
Facebook	76	0.04	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>213,824</b>		

The press campaign was worth doing as it garnered a couple of good pieces of coverage (in Runcorn Weekly News, Warrington Worldwide ([www.warrington-worldwide.co.uk/articles/11950/1/Love-your-local-woodland/Page1.html](http://www.warrington-worldwide.co.uk/articles/11950/1/Love-your-local-woodland/Page1.html)), The Leader, Southport Visitor, Wirral News, Crosby Herald, and Formby Times). The local press stories accounted for the vast majority (96%) of the people reached, and was estimated to be worth £4,534. However, there was not a wide uptake of the story in the press, with only a third of the

papers the press release was sent to running a story. This could be because competitions like this arguably do not have huge news value.

Social media appeared to be effective. Of the other media employed, Twitter (including re-tweets) reached the most people; although this (as well as the e-mail sent to The Mersey Forest supporters list, Project Dirt Liverpool, and Facebook) may fall into the trap of hearing from the usual suspects or existing converts. The freepost postcards were an important medium to use in terms of their accessibility to people without access to the internet, but yielded very few results in terms of comments. This may partially be to do with squeezed timescales of the project meaning that people did not have a very long window in which to respond.

Having a prize was probably a useful incentive to get people to comment, and also may have helped to make the story more press-worthy; especially with the prize being a Christmas tree in the run up to Christmas. Lessons learnt included requiring people to provide telephone as well as e-mail contact details if possible, as contacting the winner took several days.

## **4.2 Mapping campaign**

During summer 2012 we ran a mapping campaign, as part of our pre-consultation on the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan. This encouraged people to map where and why they love trees and woodlands, would like to see more planted, or improvements made to sites. We encouraged people to submit their thoughts at events we attended over the summer, and also using our on-line map created especially for this campaign (Figure 12 and Figure 13; the on-line map is now available at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/about-the-mersey-forest/plan](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/about-the-mersey-forest/plan), but this webpage looks different to how it did during the mapping campaign). We also added all of the comments submitted at events to the online map, as well as 12 geographically specific comments from the initial awareness raising campaign (section 4.1). We designed both the 'off-line' (section 4.2.2) and 'on-line' (section 4.2.1) versions of this campaign so that they mirrored each other.

### **4.2.1 The 'on-line' version**

The on-line version consisted of a dedicated website created for the purposes (Figure 12 and Figure 13). This was launched in June 2012, at the same time as the off-line version for the Cheshire Show (section 4.2.2). We offered a prize of a trip to Chester Zoo as an incentive to take part. The website displayed a map of The Mersey Forest area. Mirroring the off-line version, it asked people to add pins to the map to show one of three things:

- Their favourite trees and woodlands, and why they think it is great (pink pins in Figure 13)
- Where more trees are needed, telling us what it's like now and what they'd like to see (orange pins in Figure 13)
- How sites can be made even better (blue pins in Figure 13).

When a pin was added to the map, we also asked for comments (Figure 14), and for personal information, including their name/nickname, home postcode, e-mail address, and telephone number. We used pre-ticked boxes to add them to our ongoing supporters list, so that we could keep in touch with them in the longer term and add them to the total number of people who "support" The Mersey Forest. In addition, people were able to hover over the existing pins on the map to see what people were saying (Figure 15), vote for these if they agree with them, and add their own comment to those already there.

Figure 12. Full screenshot of the website set up for the mapping consultation


[Contact us](#)
[Privacy and Cookies](#)
[Accessibility](#)
[Get our app](#)

[About The Mersey Forest](#)
[News](#)
[Things to do](#)
[Our work](#)
[Support us](#)
[Work with us](#)
[Library](#)

[Home](#)
[Help to map a woodland wonderland](#)
[Vote and comment](#)
[Add a pin](#)


### ADD YOUR FAVOURITE TREES & WOODS

Don't see your favourite existing tree or woods on the map yet? Click to add them and tell us why they're important to you.

### SUGGEST WHERE TREES ARE NEEDED

Add a pin where you'd like to see more trees on new streets. Tell us about how you'd like to see them grow.

### SUGGEST HOW TO MAKE SITES EVEN BETTER

A third of people say their woods every month. What could be done to encourage even more?

### Add a comment or a pin for your chance to win

**Win tickets to Chester Zoo**

Add a pin, vote or comment to our map this summer for your chance to win a pair of adult tickets to Chester Zoo. By adding to the map, you'll also help shape The Mersey Forest Plan, our blueprint to create woodlands and street trees across Merseyside and North Cheshire.

(View competition rules)

### YOUR FAVOURITE WOODS SO FAR...

1. Delamere Forest	Cheshire West and Chester	50 votes
2. Risley Moss	Warrington	49 votes
3. Formby Pinewoods	Sutton	27 votes
4. Marbury Country Park	Cheshire West and Chester	15 votes
5. Sankey Valley	Warrington	12 votes

## Creating the woods you love since 1991

The Mersey Forest Partnership has been creating woodlands, planting trees and improving the area's existing green spaces for more than 20 years. Here's a snapshot of what's been achieved so far.



**Almost 9 million trees planted**

**Two thirds of people** have noticed an improvement in their local environment in the last decade thanks to The Mersey Forest.

**65%** of woods in The Mersey Forest have been brought into management to secure their long-term future.



**PEOPLE**

We help people explore the woods on their doorstep, and get kids learning outdoors to reconnect with nature.



**WILDLIFE**

We create habitats for all kinds of wildlife, from the smallest bugs to our best bird friends.



**ECONOMY**

We make our towns and cities attractive places to live, work and visit, helping to boost the local economy.

**1000** new street trees planted

**93% of people support having a Community Forest in their area.**

**Want to play your part? Zoom to our map and add a pin!**

**Full competition rules**

The competition is open to all residents of Cheshire, Merseyside and North Cheshire, who are 16 years of age or over by the deadline (23 September 2022). Residents of the Mersey Forest Partnership area are eligible to enter. Residents of the Mersey Forest Partnership area are eligible to enter. Residents of the Mersey Forest Partnership area are eligible to enter.

For a full list of rules and regulations, please visit [the Mersey Forest Partnership website](#). The Mersey Forest Partnership is a charity registered in England (1130101) and limited by guarantee. The Mersey Forest Partnership is a charity registered in England (1130101) and limited by guarantee. The Mersey Forest Partnership is a charity registered in England (1130101) and limited by guarantee.

The Mersey Forest Partnership is a charity registered in England (1130101) and limited by guarantee. The Mersey Forest Partnership is a charity registered in England (1130101) and limited by guarantee. The Mersey Forest Partnership is a charity registered in England (1130101) and limited by guarantee.













































































































































































































































































































































Figure 13. Screenshot of part of the website set up for the mapping consultation



[Contact us](#)
[Privacy and Cookies](#)
[Accessibility](#)
[Our other websites](#)

[About The Mersey Forest](#)
[News](#)
[Things to do](#)
[Our work](#)
[Support we offer](#)
[Work with us](#)
[Library](#)

Home > Help to map a woodland wonderland

## Help to map a woodland wonderland

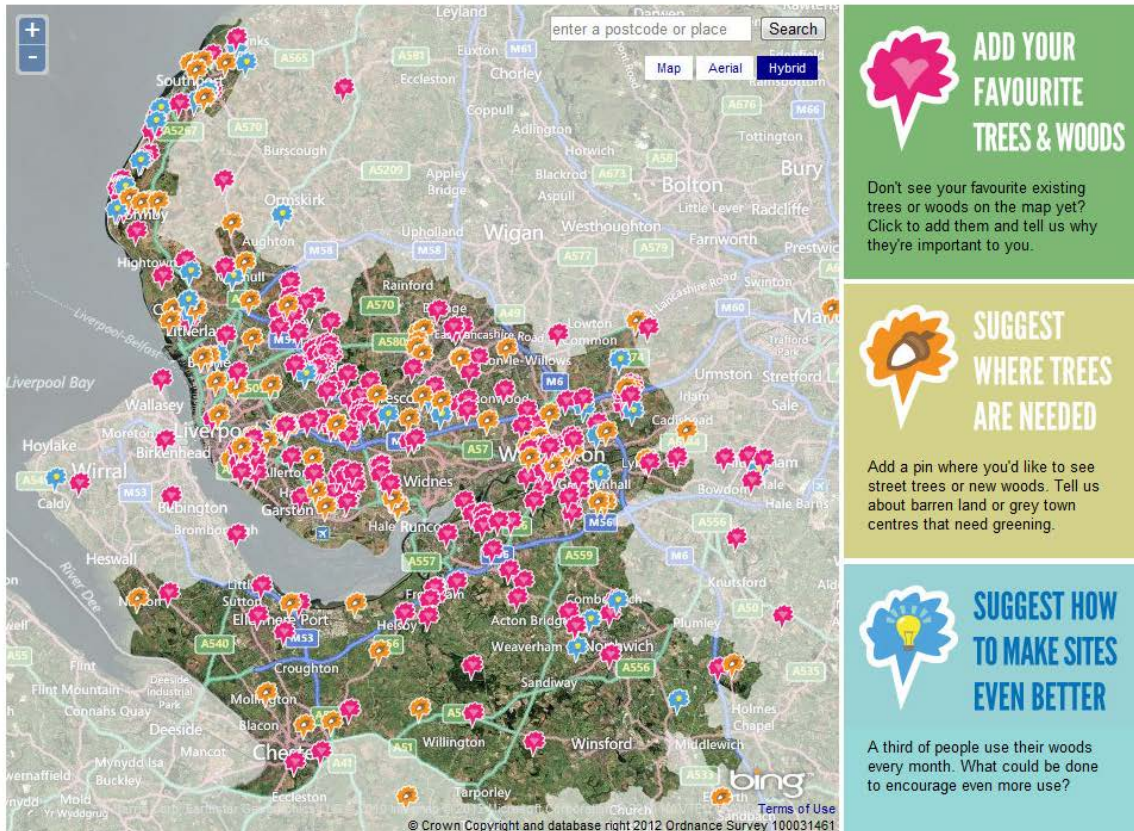
Add your favourite local woods and where you'd like to see more trees to our **people-powered map**, and you could win a pair of tickets to **Chester Zoo**.


**Making your ideas a reality**

As well as helping find Merseyside and North Cheshire's favourite woodland, the map will also help shape [The Mersey Forest Plan](#) - a blueprint to create more woodlands and street trees across the local area. Over time we hope to make many of your suggestions for new trees (see orange pins) come true - although inevitably not all will be feasible due to land ownership, funding etc. All comments are welcome though, no matter how ambitious!

**Vote and comment**


**Add a pin**






**ADD YOUR FAVOURITE TREES & WOODS**

Don't see your favourite existing trees or woods on the map yet? Click to add them and tell us why they're important to you.



**SUGGEST WHERE TREES ARE NEEDED**

Add a pin where you'd like to see street trees or new woods. Tell us about barren land or grey town centres that need greening.



**SUGGEST HOW TO MAKE SITES EVEN BETTER**

A third of people use their woods every month. What could be done to encourage even more use?



### Add your favourite woods

Add your favourite woods for your chance to win a pair of tickets to Chester Zoo:

☒ Happy to be a supporter of The Mersey Forest? (it's free and you'll get our quarterly news)
 ☐ Do you own or help manage this site?

### Suggest where trees are needed

Suggest where trees are needed for your chance to win a pair of tickets to Chester Zoo:

☒ Happy to be a supporter of The Mersey Forest? (it's free and you'll get our quarterly news)
 ☐ Do you own or help manage this site?

### Suggest how to make sites even better

Suggest how to make sites even better for your chance to win a pair of tickets to Chester Zoo:

☒ Happy to be a supporter of The Mersey Forest? (it's free and you'll get our quarterly news)
 ☐ Do you own or help manage this site?

+

-

## ADD YOUR FAVOURITE TREES & WOODS

Don't see your favourite existing trees or woods on the map yet? Click to add them and tell us why they're important to you.

## SUGGEST WHERE TREES ARE NEEDED

Add a pin where you'd like to see street trees or new woods. Tell us about barren land or grey town centres that need greening.

## SUGGEST HOW TO MAKE SITES EVEN BETTER

A third of people use their woods every month. What could be done to encourage even more use?

Riverside Retail Park, Warrington

Added by Reece Blackburn:

I would like to see more trees because there is just buildings so there needs to be a bit more trees.

1 vote

1 comment

Helsbels says:

Agree, more trees needed here its very grey not green!

© Getmapping plc © 2010 GeoEye © 2010

The on-line mapping campaign was disseminated using a variety of media:

- The Mersey Forest website – The campaign was promoted through a banner on the homepage throughout summer 2012 (Figure 16). This was seen by an approximately 2,600 people based upon Google Analytics.
- Facebook – Posts throughout the summer by The Mersey Forest to 600 people (Figure 17); and by Sutton Beauty to 204 people (12<sup>th</sup> July 2012). These posts were shared.
- Twitter – Tweets by @merseyforest to 530 people (repeatedly through summer). There were 8 re-tweets with an estimated reach of 6,327 people.
  - June 2012 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/213658965085663232>
  - July 2012 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/220890306793586690>
  - August 2012 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/236104043578159104>
  - September 2012 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/248744881621696513>
  - September 2012 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/251349651398217728>
  - September 2012 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/251350032111001601>
- E-mail to supporters – Sent to 964 supporters of The Mersey Forest plus local councillors [www.merseyforest.org.uk/supporters-bulletin-september-2012](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/supporters-bulletin-september-2012)
- The Mersey Forest Steering Group link officers – We contacted all of the local authority link officers to let them know about the campaign and invited them to share it with their community networks
- Local authority websites – We contacted local authority press offices about it to ask them to promote it on their websites
- Press releases – Locally tailored press releases were sent to local papers, with the coverage gained reaching an estimated 119,727 people. This coverage has an equivalent advertising value of £2,698 and was spread across five publications: Warrington Worldwide, Southport Champion, Formby Champion, Aintree Champion, Crosby Champion and Bootle Champion.
- Councillor Settle, a member of The Mersey Forest Steering Group, also referred to the mapping website in his response to a story in Warrington Worldwide about the felling of trees in the area. The story can be viewed at [www.warrington-worldwide.co.uk/articles/13622/1/Anger-over-felling-of-trees/Page1.html](http://www.warrington-worldwide.co.uk/articles/13622/1/Anger-over-felling-of-trees/Page1.html), but Councillor Settle's comment on the story is no longer available to view.
- Project Dirt – A blog was placed on the Project Dirt Liverpool homepage, which was seen by approximately 140 people based upon Google Analytics. In addition, an e-mail was sent to 600 Project Dirt members.
- Leaflet – A leaflet was produced to promote The Mersey Forest generally, with reference to the mapping campaign (Figure 18). The leaflet was handed out during the off-line mapping campaign (section 4.2.2) as well as at community events and in visitor centres.

Figure 16. Banner on The Mersey Forest website homepage to promote the online mapping campaign





Figure 17. Facebook posts in summer 2012 by The Mersey Forest about the online mapping campaign

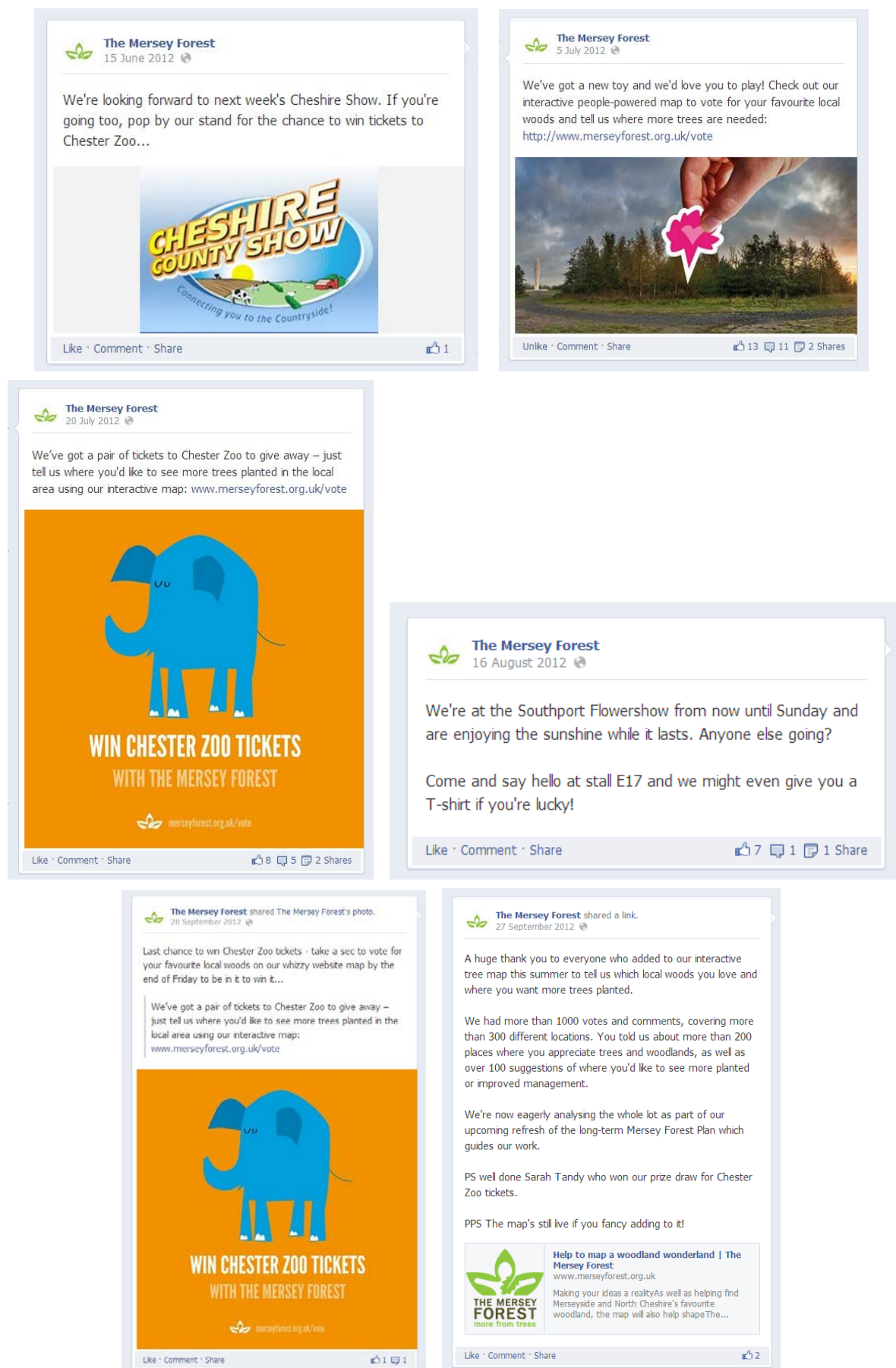




Figure 18. Leaflet promoting The Mersey Forest generally, with reference to the mapping campaign



Welcome to  
**The Mersey Forest**



**9 million**  
TREES PLANTED SO FAR  
93% OF PEOPLE SUPPORT what we do

We're making Merseyside and North Cheshire one of the best places in the country to live – working together to create **woodlands** and help **people** explore the nature on their doorstep.

## MORE FROM TREES

The Mersey Forest is a growing network of woodlands and green spaces being created across North Cheshire and Merseyside.

Since 1991, our partnership of local authorities, schools, community groups, businesses and others has planted almost 9 million trees, bringing a whole range of benefits to the local area:



### For people

1 in 3 people in The Mersey Forest area use their local woods every month, helping them to keep fit and healthy.



### For wildlife

We create vital habitat for all kinds of wildlife, from the smallest bugs to our best-loved birds and mammals.



### For the economy

We make our towns and cities attractive places to live, work and visit, helping to boost the local economy.

## GET IN TOUCH

Call The Mersey Forest Offices on **01925 816217**, email us at [mail@merseyforest.org.uk](mailto:mail@merseyforest.org.uk), get in touch on **Facebook** or **Twitter**, or visit our website:

[www.merseyforest.org.uk](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk)



**GIFT-T!**  
Green Infrastructure For  
Tomorrow - Together!



Map: © Crown Copyright and database right 2012 Ordnance Survey 100031461



## WHAT CAN I DO?

### Support us (it's free)

Show your backing for more tree planting in the local area by signing up as a supporter (it's free).

[www.merseyforest.org.uk/supporters](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/supporters)

### Get help to plant trees

Need advice/trees to create an area of woodland? Call **01925 816217**.

### Help to map a woodland wonderland

Suggest where you'd like to see more trees on our map and vote for the area's favourite woodland.

[www.merseyforest.org.uk/vote](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/vote)

### Become a volunteer

Join a Friends of the Woods group.

[www.merseyforest.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/volunteer)

### Discover great walks

Download our free walk maps.

[www.discoverthemerseyforest.co.uk](http://www.discoverthemerseyforest.co.uk)

#### 4.2.2 The 'off-line' version

In addition to the on-line mapping campaign, we also held an off-line version at three summer events in 2012. The events were the Cheshire Show and Risley Moss Green Safari Day (both in June 2012) and the Southport Flower Show (in August 2012). At the Cheshire Show and the Green Safari Day, as well as for the submissions online, we offered a prize of a trip to Chester Zoo as an incentive to take part. At Southport Flower Show, due to its more northerly location, we offered a more local prize of a meal for two at Formby Hall Golf Resort.

Figure 19. The display board used for the mapping consultation at Green Safari Day



At the three summer shows we set up a large display with a map of The Mersey Forest area (Figure 19). We encouraged people to add cards (Figure 20) to the board with a corresponding pin on the map. These showed one of three things:

- Their favourite trees and woodlands, and why they think it is great (green cards in Figure 19)
- Where more trees are needed, telling us what it's like now and what they'd like to see (yellow cards in Figure 19)
- How sites can be made even better (red cards in Figure 19).

We collected their personal information on the back of the card, including their name, e-mail address, telephone number, and postcode. We used tick boxes to add them to our ongoing supporters list, so that we can keep in touch with them in the longer term and add them to the total number of people who "support" The Mersey Forest.

We also encouraged people to add voting stickers to other peoples' cards if they agreed with them.

We later added all the comments and votes submitted at these events to the 'on-line' version of the map (section 4.2.1).


During the events we also handed out leaflets produced to promote The Mersey Forest, which included a link to the online mapping campaign for people to follow up (Figure 18).

## Add your favourite trees and woodlands to our map


Place name (please be specific):

Vote for this with a sticker!


Why is it great?



Don't miss your chance to **win a meal for two** at Formby Hall Golf Resort - add your details on the back.



**GIFT-T!**  
Green Infrastructure For  
Tomorrow - Together!



Fill in your contact details below to be in with the chance of winning **a meal for two at Formby Hall Golf Resort** in our prize draw.

Your name:

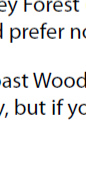
Your email address:

Your telephone number:

Your postcode:

☐ Most people agree to be a supporter of The Mersey Forest (it's free) and receive our quarterly enewsletter, but if you'd prefer not to, just tick.
 ☐ We'd also love to contact you when the Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan consultation begins so that you can have your say, but if you'd prefer we didn't, just tick.

Your comment and name will appear on our website at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/vote](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/vote).



## Critical analysis of approach for both the online and offline versions of the mapping campaign:

We estimate a total reach of 131,692 people for the mapping campaign (excluding those engaged at stalls at live events). During the pre-consultation period, we estimate that 1,294 responses were made to our mapping campaign. There was a fairly even split between those using the online and offline maps, with 665 responses through the former and 629 the latter. Similarly 456 pins and comments were added in the pre-consultation stage, with the split for 237 added online and 219 at shows.

The off-line version of the mapping campaign was also judged to be successful. Attendance at the shows meant we reached a large number of people, including some who would not have used an online version of the map. However, the people attending the shows are perhaps those who already have an interest in gardening, outdoor activities and the countryside; so we may not have captured the opinions of harder to reach groups.

Table 5 sets out some of the statistics from the offline mapping campaign. 219 cards (which translated as pins/comments in the online map) were added to our map as a result of these shows; averaging 31 pins/comments for each day spent at the shows. 246 people signed up to be supporters of The Mersey Forest; averaging 35 new supporters for each day spent at the shows.

**Table 5. Statistics from the off-line version of the mapping campaign at three summer shows in 2012**

Statistic	Show name			TOTAL
	Cheshire Show	Green Safari Day	Southport Flower Show	
Days attended by team	2	1	4	7
No. of cards – all types	81	48	90	219
No. of cards – LOVE trees	56	35	49	140
No. of cards – PLANT trees	14	8	23	45
No. of cards – IMPROVE trees	11	5	18	34
No. of cards – average per day	41	48	23	31
No. of voting stickers – total added to cards	69	74	48	191
No. of voting stickers – average per day	35	74	12	27
No. of people signing up as supporters – total	89	54	103	246
No. of people signing up as supporters – average per day	45	54	26	35
No. of people signing up for e-newsletter – total	34	26	67	127

At Southport Flower Show, we gathered the highest number of cards and supporters overall, but the daily averages were well down. This could be the result of a number of factors. Southport is at the northerly tip of The Mersey Forest, so many people attending the flower show are from outside of our area; the 2010 statistics for Southport Flower Show showed that 21% of attendees were from Merseyside, 58% from other areas of North West England, and 17% from other areas of the UK. In addition, our stall at the Southport Flower Show was as part of a street with a range of other vendors, many trying to sell products to the attendees; this may have resulted in us being overlooked. The weather was also less good at this event, with some rain; we had a covered stall but in an outdoor area.

Green Safari Day came out top in terms of daily averages. This is a fairly small event so may be easier to capture people's attention. At that stage we had also learnt from the Cheshire Show

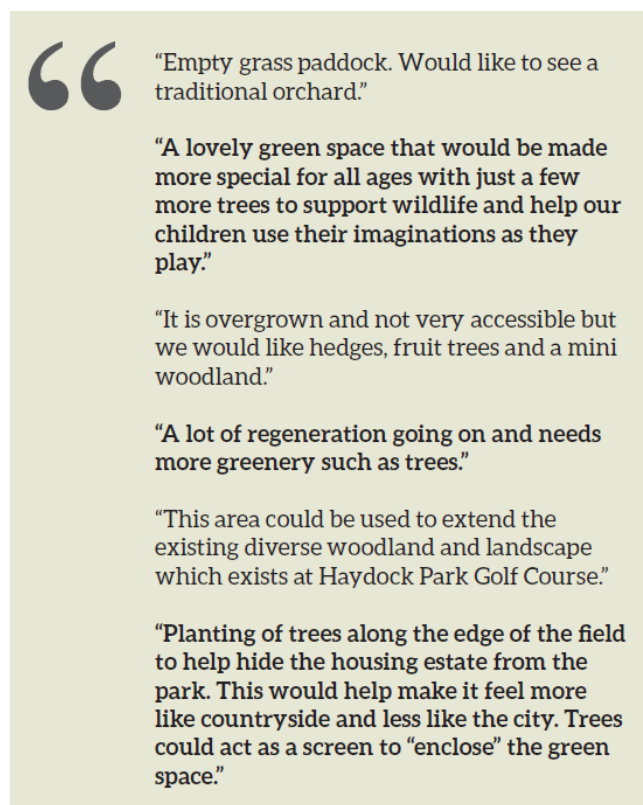
about how best to try to draw people in and to ask them to tick the relevant boxes to be supporters and receive the e-newsletter.

At the Cheshire Show and Green Safari Day we had included boxes which people had to tick in order to be a supporter / receive the e-newsletter. However, for the Southport Flower Show we changed this so that people had to tick the box to opt out of these. This meant that more people signed up as supporters. However, we still felt that there was potentially some confusion with the wording of this (see Figure 20) as some people seemed to misread it and tick the box to be a supporter (when they should have left it unticked). The lesson learnt from this is to use opt in boxes and keep the wording as simple as possible.

At Cheshire Show and the Green Safari Day we did not ask for postcodes, but at Southport we did. This was as a result of discussion with the GIFT-T! partners, as it could provide a further way to analyse the resulting data.

The on-line interactive map was deemed very successful by the team and partners. As such, it was kept live for people to add to throughout the wider and more formal three month consultation on the Plan (section 4.3); much of the discussion below relates to comments submitted during both the pre-consultation and wider consultation phases. The map allowed people to respond at a scale which made sense to individual members of the community, they could add comments that related to, for example, their street or local park (Figure 21). Therefore, it enabled people to really think about the areas where they live, work and visit in relation to the trees and woodlands that already exist there or which could be planted.

Figure 21. Some examples of the comments submitted during the mapping campaign



When submitting a location or comment people were asked why they thought this and, as a result, we were able to analyse the comments to gain an understanding of the policies that members of the public were especially interested in (even though they did not use the same wording as the policy) and to also relate these to green infrastructure functions / ecosystem services.



A record was kept of all the responses and how any comments were taken into consideration in the final Plan, following the wider consultation where the map was also kept live (section 4.3). For example, some comments shaped the wording of specific policies, others were included as quotations in the Plan, and others informed the policy sub-text. Many of the comments were messages of support, rather than requiring any specific change to the Plan.

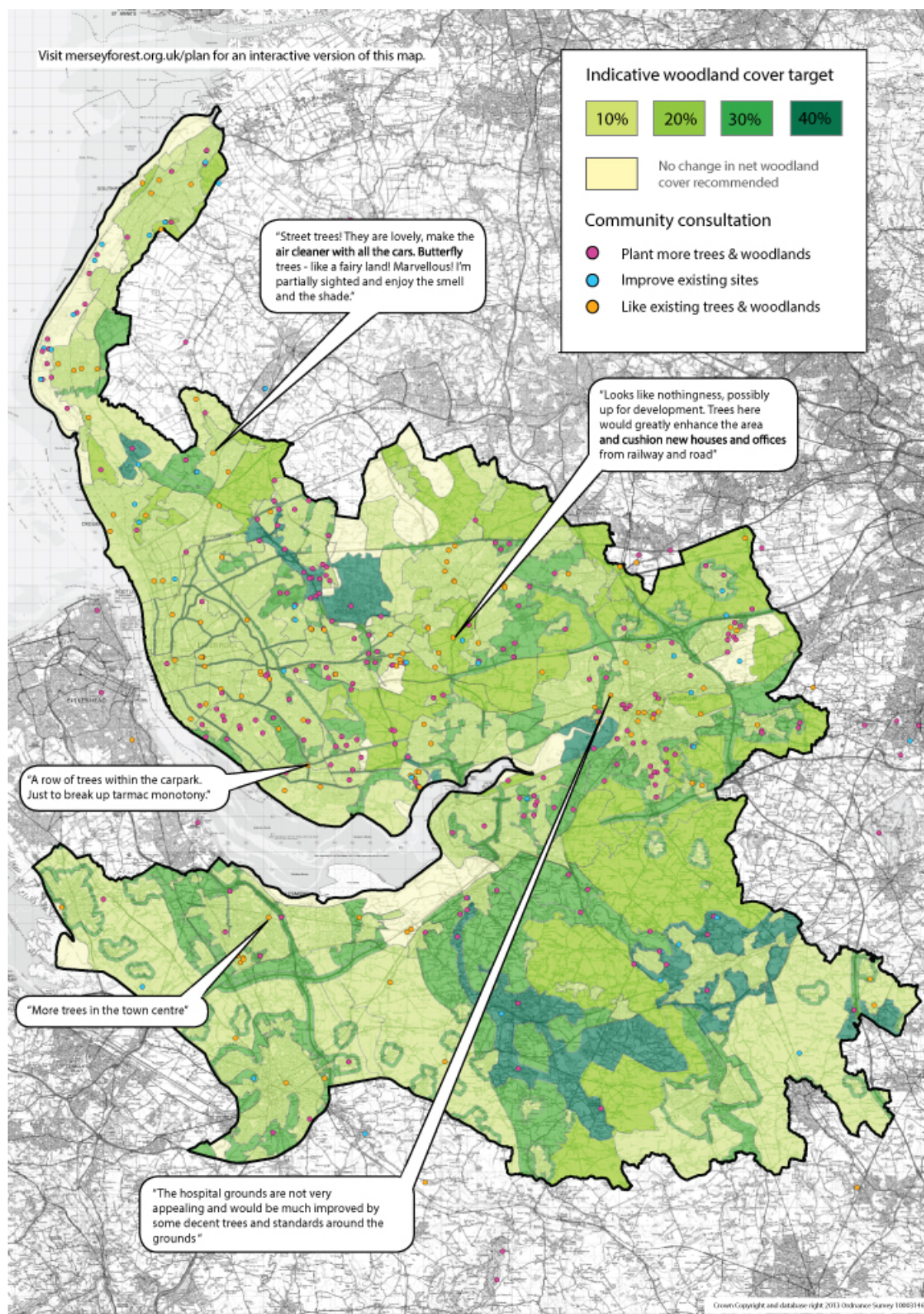
Some of the comments received through the mapping related to issues that could be teased out in the wider Plan. For example, one comment was “Great planting the trees, but in my local area, Barnton, this has resulted in the loss of ponds for fishing which is not very good”. While this is about a specific area, we felt that there was an important message that we built into the sub-text on policy 4 (on planting and design) following the wider consultation; here we stated more clearly that we will get communities involved in the planting and design, and that in some instances planting may be inappropriate.

Another comment said “Plant more native trees and shrubs and ensure that the future management process is in place. If feasible negotiate with landfill operators that there are strict requirements in the content to ensure that funding is up front from the start”. For this, in policy 4 following the wider consultation, we have added some sub-text about the design of planting schemes which sets out more specifically where we plant, the form of planting, the choice of species, and the provenance of seeds and trees. We also added some sub-text to policy 5 (on long term management) to say that “We will continue to work with partners to secure funding (at the outset wherever possible) for long term management (and perpetuity where this is possible), which we recognise as a crucial issue”.

The vast majority of the comments were about very detailed locations. This meant that they were too detailed to incorporate directly into the Plan (see Figure 21). However, following the wider consultation we presented a map in the final Plan at the start of the Where policies (Figure 22) which showed the location of the pins from the community consultation and highlighted five of the comments by way of example. This page also directs people to the website where the interactive version of the map remains and can be added to.

It was decided that the comments submitted on the map, and the map itself, are a useful ongoing resource to guide the work of the team and partners. As such, the online mapping will be kept live beyond the consultation on the Plan as an ongoing mechanism through which people can engage with The Mersey Forest and get their opinions heard to help direct future planting schemes. The team will endeavour to plant new trees and manage woodlands in or near to the suggested locations as funding becomes available (indeed, in some instances recent funding has asked for evidence that there is a local demand for tree planting, so this map will be able to provide some evidence of this if needed) and as land ownership permits. We will also be able to use the mapping approach for other consultations on particular locations.

Figure 22. The inclusion of the mapping campaign outcomes in The Mersey Forest Plan; this includes comments submitted during the pre-consultation phase of the mapping campaign (section 4.2), as well as during the wider consultation (section 4.3)



### 4.3 Wider consultation

From February to April 2013 we held a major three month formal consultation on the Plan. Whilst The Mersey Forest Plan is not itself a statutory document, under the National Planning Policy Framework it can be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications. As such, this formal wider consultation phase was carried out to closely match the statutory consultation approach for Local Plans. During this period we welcomed feedback from anyone who wanted to take part – the team, core partners, and the wider community and partnership. The consultation had both an online on our website and an off-line presence in local libraries.

A dedicated website was set up as the main hub for the online consultation (Figure 23). This included:

- A link to the consultation draft of the Plan
- Hyperlinks directly to specific sections of the Plan
- A form to submit responses with, asking three questions which were designed to focus people on certain aspects of the Plan without being too prescriptive:
  - Do you support the Plan and our Vision?
  - Do you have comments about any of the "Who", "What", "How" or "Why" policies or the case studies?
  - Is there anything else you'd like to say about the Plan?
- A link to a document setting out the early design mock-ups for the Plan; which was intended to reassure people that we would be giving the design a lot more consideration in the final Plan.
- An interactive map (carried over from the online mapping campaign set out in section 4.2.1). As previously, this allowed people to add pins, comments and votes about trees and woodlands they like, locations they'd like to see more, and locations they'd like to see improved management. In addition, for the duration of the wider consultation, the interactive map also displayed the indicative woodland cover targets (alongside the existing woodland cover) and the related policy wording for each area. There was an option to comment directly on these targets and policies.
- An e-mail address to respond to if this method was preferred to any of the other methods.

In addition to the webpage as the online hub, it was felt that an offline consultation was important as not everyone has access to the internet. As such, we used the libraries in The Mersey Forest as the offline hub. All 94 libraries within The Mersey Forest were sent:

- A hard copy of the consultation draft
- A large A2 map of the Local Authority that the library is in, showing the indicative woodland cover targets and the associated policies for each area (Figure 28).
- 20 freepost postcards for responses (Figure 29)
- 30 leaflets promoting the consultation (Figure 30).



Figure 23. Mock-up of The Mersey Forest Plan webpage for the wider consultation (N.B. final webpage differed slightly)

About The Mersey Forest

Contact us - Privacy and Cookies - Accessibility - Our other websites

Home | News | Things to do | Our work | Support we offer | Work with us | Library

# The Mersey Forest Plan

We'd love to hear your views as we refresh  
The Mersey Forest's long term plan for the  
decades ahead. Take part to help shape a  
healthy, prosperous future for the local area.

You can send us comments up until the end of April 2015

On this page you can:

- [Read our vision](#)
- [Read the draft Plan](#)
- [Use the interactive map](#) to view and comment on proposals for your local areas, and add ideas for where more trees should be planted
- [Send us general comments](#) using the online form or by email

The Mersey Forest is helping transform landscapes and create jobs in one of the best places in the country to live – by getting more businesses.

Over the past 20 years our partnership has planted 12 million trees, from creating entirely new woodlands to planting thousands of street trees. Two thirds of local residents say their local environment has improved thanks to our work.

## Our vision is to deliver "More from Trees"...

...with partners, communities and landowners transforming their landscape and revitalising a woodland culture in and around our towns and cities.

Woodland will cover 20% of the area thanks to the planting of new woods and individual trees, complementing other habitats. Woodlands will be managed so that they achieve their potential. And all of us will prosper thanks to the economic and social benefits of environmental regeneration.

## Read the draft Plan

[View PDF](#)

Or skip to the sections that interest you most...

POLICIES	CASE STUDIES
<b>WOODLANDS AND LANDSCAPE</b> Restoring and creating woodland corridors Addressing landscape challenges	<b>WOODLANDS AND LANDSCAPE</b> Warrington Woods and Landscape Warrington Woods and Landscape Warrington Woods and Landscape
<b>TOWN TREES AND ALLEYS</b> Local authorities and private organisations Planning and design Landscaping and management	<b>TOWN TREES AND ALLEYS</b> Chester City Centre Chester City Centre Chester City Centre
<b>WOODLANDS, FIELDS, PARKS, RECREATION AND EDUCATION</b> Creating Green spaces Recreation and education Recreation, education and training Communities	<b>WOODLANDS, FIELDS, PARKS, RECREATION AND EDUCATION</b> Cheshire Wildlife Trust Cheshire Wildlife Trust Cheshire Wildlife Trust

## See the "Where" policies and add your comments

**Policy areas**

Click green areas on the map to find information and to comment.

**Do you support the woodland cover targets and "Where" policies for areas you and families enjoy?**

**Key**

Indicative target for woodland cover

10%	20%	30%	40%
-----	-----	-----	-----

No change or no modified woodland proposed

**Specific locations**

These areas protect where people have said they want more trees planted.

Are there any specific locations where you'd like to see more trees and potentially planted?

## General comments

Fill in the boxes below or email your comments to [plan@merseyforest.org.uk](mailto:plan@merseyforest.org.uk) by the end of April.

Happy to be a supporter of The Mersey Forest? (If yes and you put your quality rating)

Do you support the Plan and our vision?

Do you have comments about any of the "what", "why", "how" or "who" policies or the case studies?

Is there anything else you'd like to say about the Plan?

[Send](#)

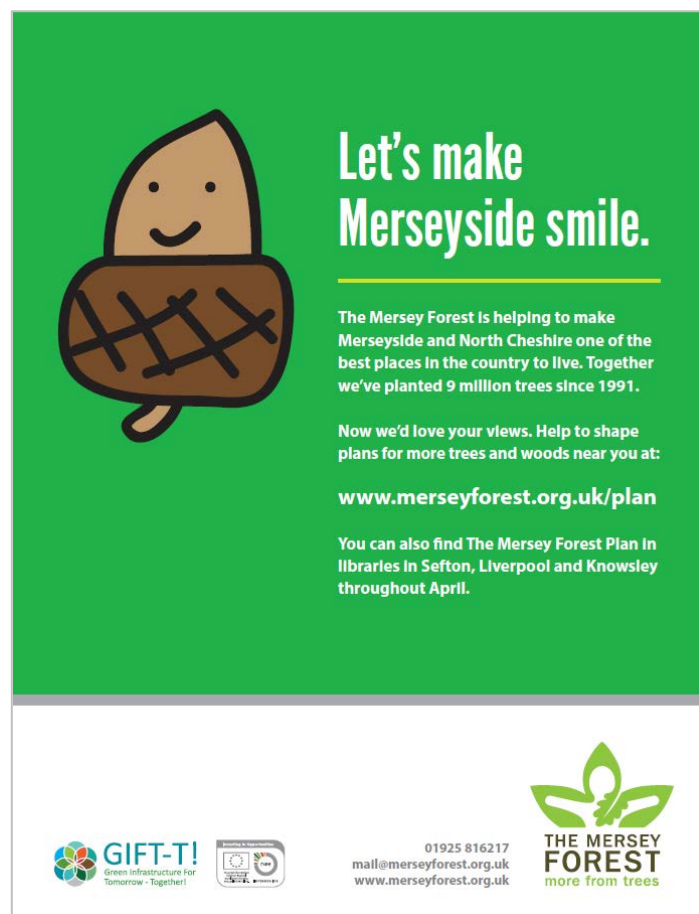
Contact | Accessibility | Site map | The Mersey Forest logo | Privacy and Cookies

The Mersey Forest Offices, Rode Meadows, Ordsall Avenue, Birchwood, Warrington, WA1 4SS

The wider consultation was promoted using a variety of media:

- Advert in all local papers in Mersey Forest area – The advertisement (Figure 24) had an estimated reach of 651,578 people. The papers were: Chester Standard, Liverpool Echo, St.Helens Reporter, St.Helens Star, Southport Champion, Runcorn and Widnes World, Ellesmere Port Standard, Warrington Guardian, Metro (Liverpool), Bootle Champion, Crosby Champion, Chester Chronicle, Middlewich and Winsford Guardian, Maghull Champion, Northwich Guardian, Southport Visitor, Formby Champion, Formby Times, Runcorn and Widnes Weekly News, Liverpool Post, and Ellesmere Port Pioneer.

Figure 24. Example of newspaper advert for Plan consultation (the named locations varied depending on the newspaper)



- Press articles – We achieved 18 pieces of coverage in 9 separate titles, reaching 267,176 people and worth the advertising equivalent of £11,239. The press coverage included:
  - Liverpool Echo, print and [website](#), 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013
  - It's Liverpool, [8<sup>th</sup> March](#) 2013
  - Warrington Worldwide, [website](#), 14<sup>th</sup> March 2013
  - Runcorn and Widnes Weekly News, print and website, [14<sup>th</sup> March](#), [4<sup>th</sup> April](#), [11<sup>th</sup> April](#) 2013
  - St.Helens Star, website, [8<sup>th</sup> April](#) 2013 (& multiple – I can only find one)
  - About My Area, Neston, website, [14<sup>th</sup> February](#) 2013
  - Chester Leader (print)
  - The Chester Chronicle (print)
  - Ellesmere Port Pioneer (print)
  - Horticulture Week (print)

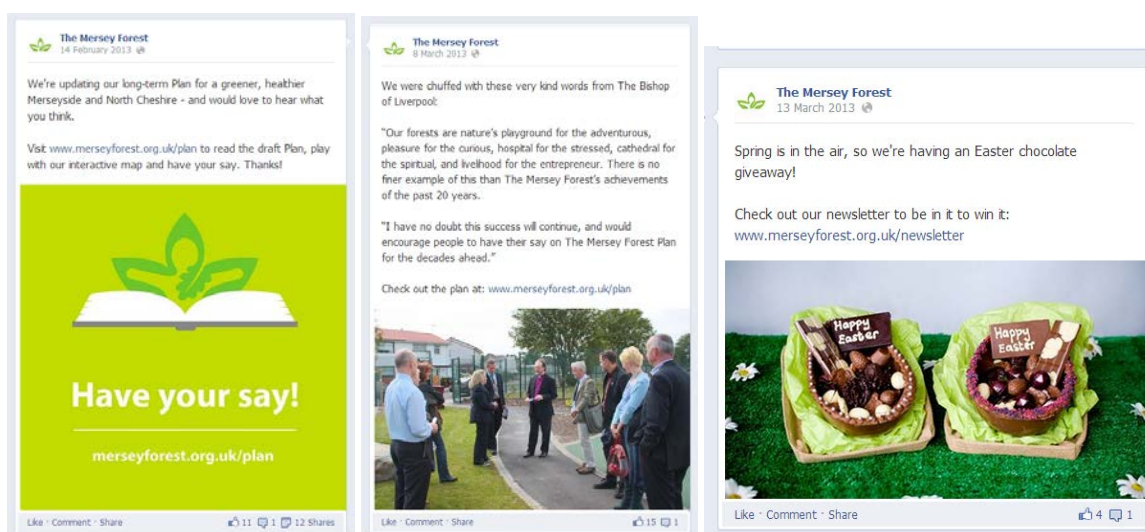
- Press releases (Appendix H) – Sent to all of the above, as well as to the BBC, Liverpool Confidential, Click Liverpool, Warrington Guardian, Northwich Guardian, the Chester Evening Leader, Cheshire Life, The Challenge, Forestry Journal, Formby Times, Formby Champion, Southport Reporter, and Ellesmere Port Standard.
- Facebook advertisement (Figure 25) – This was placed from 1<sup>st</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and reached an estimated 36,262 people in The Mersey Forest area (through adverts mentioning The Mersey Forest Plan placed down right hand side of the Facebook page). This prompted 675 clicks through to our main Facebook page (of which 62% were from women, 38% from men). As a result, we got 470 new Facebook followers (taking us from 768 followers to 1,238; a 61% increase). It also led to 63 visits to our main website (compared to 22 in the same period of the previous month). Of these visits, 20 were to the Forest Plan consultation page itself. At least one of these people got significantly involved in the consultation, making multiple contributions.

Figure 25. Screenshot of the Facebook advertisement for the consultation



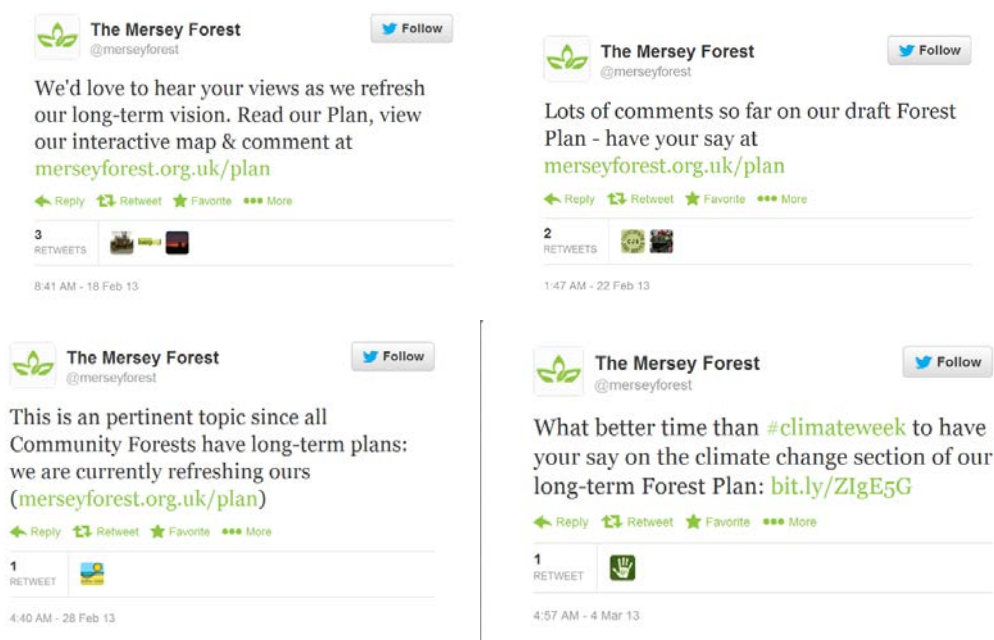
- Facebook posts (Figure 26) – It is estimated that the posts and 12 shares reached 2,464 people.

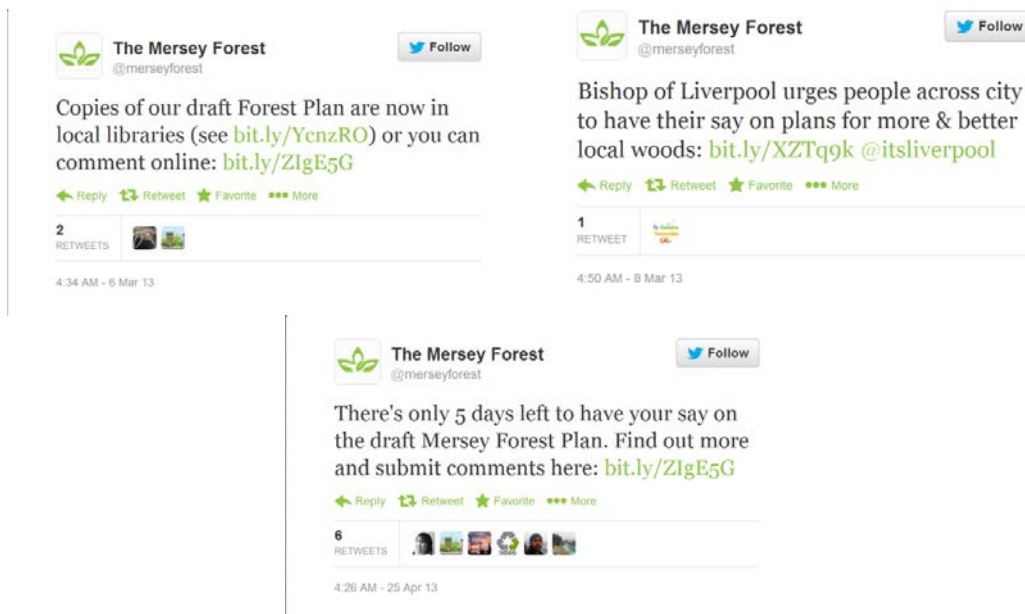
Figure 26. Facebook posts by The Mersey Forest to promote the wider consultation



- Twitter – It is estimated that 29,041 people were reached via Twitter. Seven tweets were made by The Mersey Forest during the consultation period (Figure 27; the tweets are also viewable using the links below). They were re-tweeted by 16 people / organisations. There were also a number of independent tweets about the consultation.
  - Feb 2013 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/303544842531766273>
  - Feb 2013 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/304890179326459904>
  - Feb 2013 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/307107893021405185>
  - Mar 2013 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/308561926932275200>
  - Mar 2013 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/309280859570176000>
  - Mar 2013 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/310009744444227584>
  - Apr 2013 <https://twitter.com/merseyforest/status/327383068480532481>

Figure 27. Tweets from The Mersey Forest during the consultation period





- E-mail to The Mersey Forest contacts – An e-mail was sent to a selected list of largely existing contacts of The Mersey Forest. This reached a total of 3,410 people. The e-mail message was tailored very slightly for the different audiences (Table 6; see Appendix I for one example of the e-mail wording). Prior to the end of the consultation we also sent a reminder e-mail to individual named people to prompt further response.

Table 6. Audiences receiving tailored e-mails about the consultation

E-mail audience	No. of people
People already involved in the pre-consultation on the Plan (Section 3)	80
Cheshire West and Chester Council	217
Halton Council	79
Knowsley Council	90
Liverpool Council	143
Sefton Council	95
St.Helens Council	70
Warrington Council	97
Natural England	50
Forestry Commission	64
Environment Agency	46
Parish Councils	95
Supporters	1,036
Schools (sample of those in The Mersey Forest)	28
Others (from a range of organisations including Members of Parliament, consultants, academics, businesses, non-governmental organisations, housing associations, national government departments, partnerships, health sector, etc)	1,220
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,410</b>

- Spring 2013 e-newsletter [www.merseyforest.org.uk/spring-2013-newsletter-forest-plan-special](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/spring-2013-newsletter-forest-plan-special) – This edition was a Forest Plan special, featuring information about The Mersey Forest Plan, feedback from the wider consultation so far, and prompting people to send their comments. It was sent to 2,644 people in total: 1,744 professional contacts, 853 supporters, and 47 people who'd already taken part in the consultation. Each of these groups received a slightly differently worded version. It included an Easter giveaway competition (with a prize of luxury chocolates) to encourage people to take part.

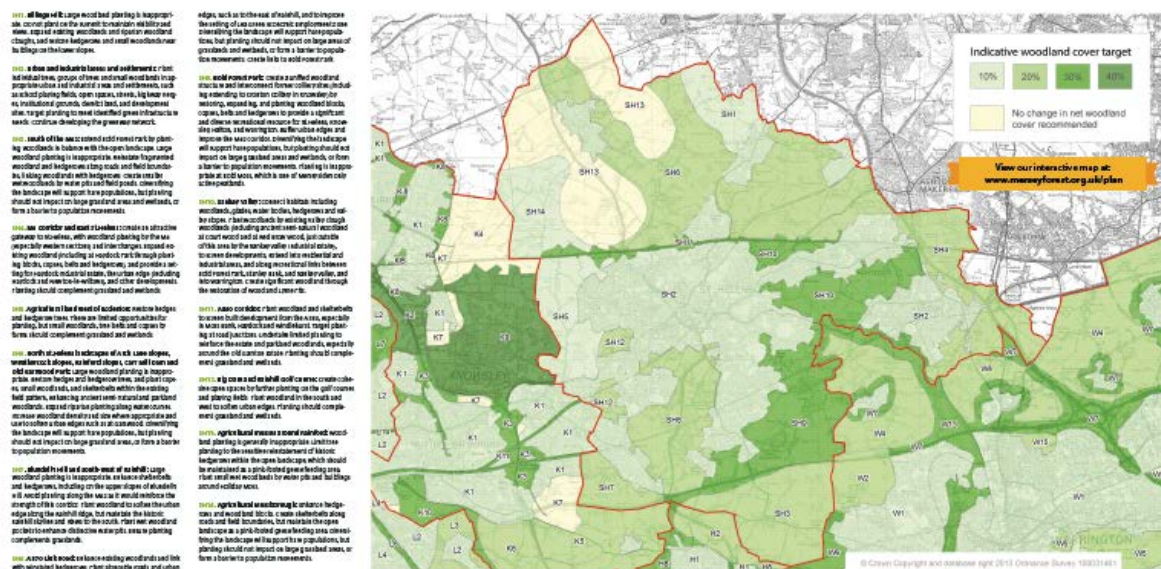


- Local authority websites – stories featured on some of the local authority websites, including Cheshire West and Chester ([http://talkingwestcheshire.org/talking\\_together\\_direct/news\\_talking\\_together\\_direct/media\\_releases\\_for\\_2013\\_-\\_ttd/march\\_2013/have\\_your\\_say\\_on\\_cheshire\\_west.aspx](http://talkingwestcheshire.org/talking_together_direct/news_talking_together_direct/media_releases_for_2013_-_ttd/march_2013/have_your_say_on_cheshire_west.aspx)) and St.Helens ([www.sthelens.gov.uk/newsroom/2013/03/19/have-your-say-on-st-helens-woodland-plans](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/newsroom/2013/03/19/have-your-say-on-st-helens-woodland-plans)); links are no longer available for the other local authorities.
- Stories in community and partner newsletters, websites and e-mails to networks – These included:
  - CLASP. February 2013 Sustainability Update
  - Faiths4Change. With February 2013 e-news
  - Low Carbon Liverpool website ([www.lowcarbonliverpool.com/news\\_detail.php?id=47](http://www.lowcarbonliverpool.com/news_detail.php?id=47))
  - Cheshire Tree Warden and Landscape Wardens
  - North West Coastal Forum. March 2013 ([www.nwcoastalforum.org.uk/2013/03/04/consultation-on-the-mersey-forests-long-term-plan](http://www.nwcoastalforum.org.uk/2013/03/04/consultation-on-the-mersey-forests-long-term-plan))
  - Aintree Hospital E-newsletter. March 2013
  - Love Liverpool Parks E-Newsletter - March Events and News
  - West Cheshire Together. Edition 50. April 2013
  - Northwich and Winsford Locality Team Newsletter. April 2013
- Project Dirt – A post on the green social network website ([www.projectdirt.com/project/8685/#!/journal\\_entry/13411](http://www.projectdirt.com/project/8685/#!/journal_entry/13411)).
- Libraries – Copies of the Plan, leaflets (Figure 30), freepost postcards for responses (Figure 29), and A2 maps (Figure 28), along with covering letters (Appendix G) were sent to 94 local libraries.

Figure 28. An example of the A2 maps sent to libraries and used during the wider consultation. Similar maps were produced for each of the local authority areas.

## The Mersey Forest Plan - Have your say

Policies for St.Helens



**Have your say!**

The Mersey Forests helping transform Merseyside and North Cheshire into one of the best places in the country to live – by getting more trees, trees.

Over the past 20 years our partnership has planted 6 million trees, from creating entire new woodlands to planting thousands of street trees. Two thirds of local residents say their local environments improved thanks to our work.

Now, we'd love to hear your views on what The Mersey Forests long-term plan for the decades ahead.

Read the draft Plan and send in your comments:

- A copy of the Plan can be found in your local library, with freepost postcards for responses. If you'd like to send a longer response to us in the post, the freepost address is: The Mersey Forest Project, FREEPOST WA 1659, Mossley, St Helens, Merseyside, WA16 6RN.
- Alternatively, to read the Plan, view our interactive map, and send in your comments, visit: [www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan)




Figure 29. The front and back of the Freepost postcard which was sent to all of the libraries within The Mersey Forest

# The Mersey Forest Plan - Have your say

**Whether you'd like to comment on the policies for the local authority where you live, or have a general comment about the Plan, we want to hear from you.**

You may find these questions useful when reading the Plan and writing your comments:



- 1 Do you support the Plan and our vision?
- 2 Do you have any comments about any of the "Who", "What", or "Why" policies for areas you are familiar with?
- 3 Do you support the woodland cover targets and "Where" policies for areas you are familiar with?
- 4 Are there any specific locations where you'd like to see more trees and woodlands planted?
- 5 Is there anything else you'd like to say about the Plan?



Please write your comments in the space overleaf and return to us by the end of April. Need more space? Send your comments using the FREEPOST address on the right, or submit them online at [www.merseyforest.com/plan](http://www.merseyforest.com/plan)

**No stamp necessary**

The Mersey Forest Project  
FREEPOST WA1839  
Mossgate  
Birchwood  
Warrington  
WA3 6BR

**Please enter your comments:**

Name:

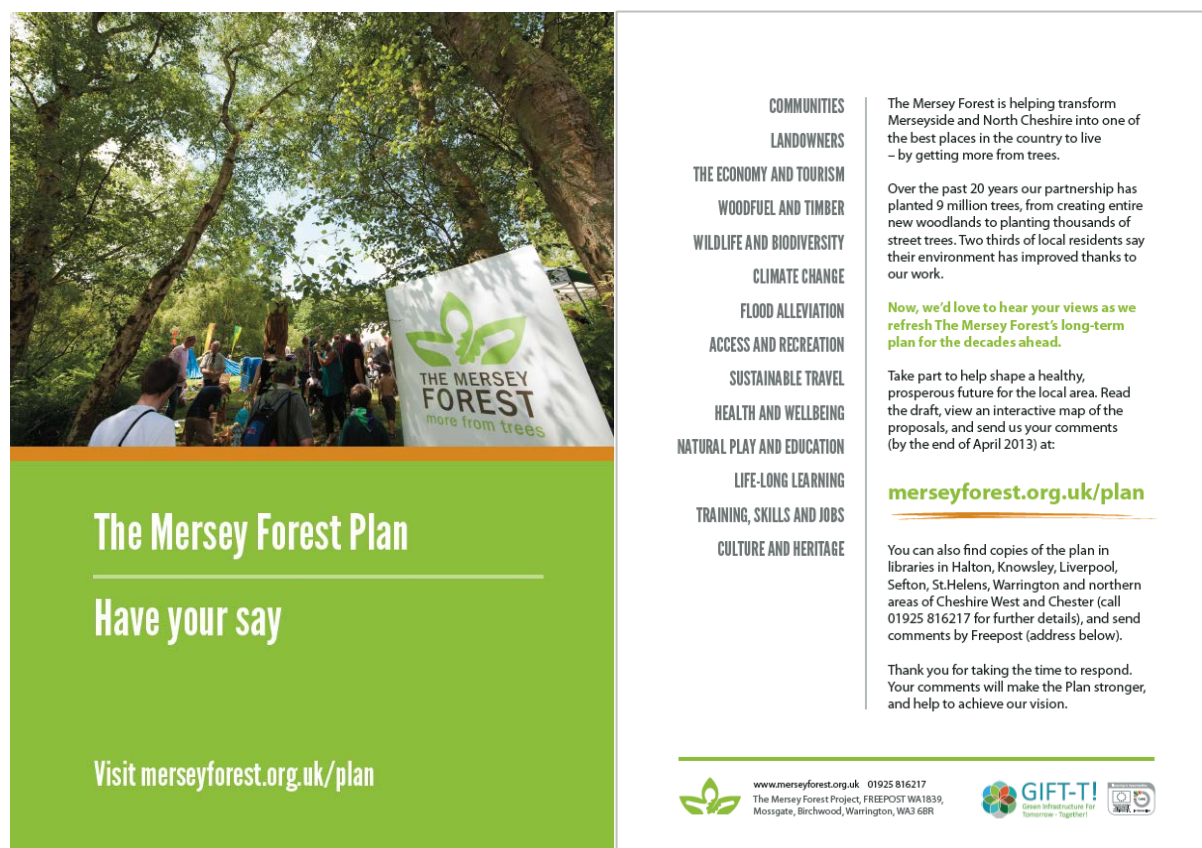
Email:

Postcode:

Tick to add yourself to The Mersey Forest's list of supporters (it's free): ☐

- Leaflets (Figure 30) – These were sent with covering letters (Appendix G) to 171 community centres including village halls, town halls / council offices, and one stop shops; 324 doctors surgeries, 58 sports centres, and 23 outdoor tourist attractions / visitors centres; a total of 576 places. We employed a company to print and post most of these leaflets, but others were distributed by the team and partners at meetings, events etc.

Figure 30. The promotional leaflet for the consultation on The Mersey Forest Plan (front and back; printed on A5)



- The Mersey Forest team email signatures – These featured a banner promoting the consultation throughout the consultation period (Figure 31).

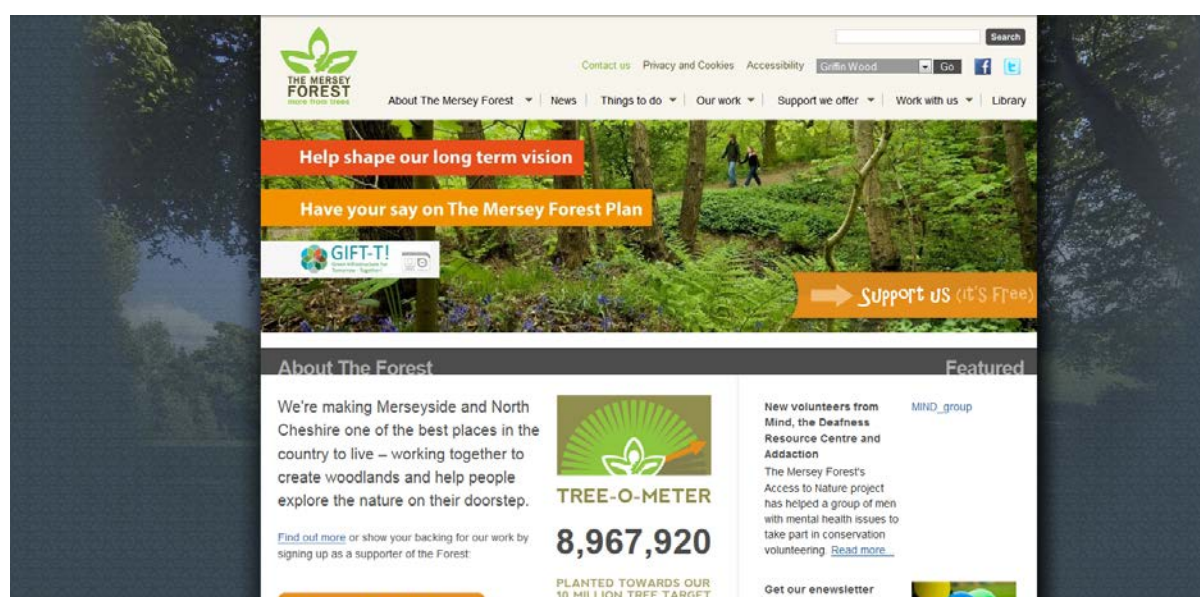
Figure 31. The Mersey Forest team e-mail signature banner during the wider consultation period





- Homepage banner on Mersey Forest website (Figure 32) – This linked to the dedicated consultation web page.

Figure 32. Screenshot of The Mersey Forest homepage, showing the banner to the webpage holding the consultation



- The Mersey Forest team – All team members were asked to play an active part in promoting the consultation. As part of a dedicated team meeting discussion (section 2.2), we held a workshop session where we asked the team what resources they would need to feel confident in promoting the Plan amongst their contacts. As a result of this discussion, we put together a Team Kit to help them to do this (Appendix J), which set out the resources developed for them (with links to these), set out how to record any activity, and who to approach if they needed any more information. Each team member was given a hard copy of the Plan. They were asked to promote the consultation in the most appropriate ways to their contacts, for example, to mention the consultation and distribute leaflets (Figure 30) at meetings and events, show large map print outs (Figure 28; showing the indicative woodland cover targets and policies for each local authority) to groups, to hand out Freepost postcards for responses (Figure 29), to use and adapt specially developed powerpoint presentation slides, to send a one page written summary of the Plan and consultation to contacts, to showcase the interactive map live (with a laptop and dongle available to do this if needed). A list of frequently asked questions was put together (and added to by the team) to provide answers to questions they may be asked when promoting the consultation (Appendix K).

In total, the consultation was promoted by 7 team members at 29 meetings / events, with an estimated reach of 1,054 people. 387 leaflets were distributed at these, and 6 involved a Powerpoint presentation. We kept a record as to the main Mersey Forest Plan policies that these meetings corresponded to; all policies were covered (except for policy 10 on communications). The meetings attended covered a broad range of stakeholders, including Friends of Woodland groups, national government agencies, local authority boards, landscape partnerships, students, researchers, funding officers, etc. A full list of these meetings was kept as a record.

### Critical analysis of approach:

It is estimated that the total campaign reach was almost 1 million people. So, in terms of awareness raising it was a positive campaign. However, it must be stressed that this is only a theoretical figure, as in reality not everyone exposed to the message will have taken it in, and there may be a significant overlap in the people reached (i.e. the same person was reached through a variety of different methods, rather than each different method engaging new people).

The wider consultation received 305 contributions in total (Table 7) and it is estimated that these came from 175 individuals. Whilst this is a respectable number of contributions, there is a fairly low response rate compared to the estimated reach. This perhaps reflects the in-depth nature of the call to action. A record was kept of all the responses and how any comments were taken into consideration in the final Plan. This record is not included with this write up of the consultation process.

**Table 7. Summary of wider consultation responses (including responses from the mapping campaign in section 4.2). N.B. this shows responses rather than numbers of people, as some people submitted more than 1 response**

Response method	Number of responses			% using method (in wider consultation)
	Pre-consultation mapping campaign (section 4.2)	Wider consultation	Total	
Website – form (answering 3 questions)	-	70	70	23.0
Website – policy unit (using map to comment on policies for local authority areas)	-	52	52	17.0
Online and offline map – pins added (using map to add new pins)	357	42	399	13.8
Online and offline map – extra comments added to pins (using map to add comments to existing pins)	99	7	106	2.3
Online and offline map – votes on pins (using map to add votes to existing pins)	838	84	922	27.5
E-mail	-	34	34	11.1
Facebook	-	1	1	0.3
Phone messages	-	4	4	1.3
Freepost Postcard	-	9	9	3.0
Letter	-	2	2	0.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,294</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>1,599</b>	<b>100.0</b>

People used a variety of different ways to submit responses (Table 7). Voting on existing pins was the most popular, accounting for 27.5% of responses; this is also the least involved of all ways to respond. Using the web form to submit responses was also popular (23.0% of responses), and this is one of the more involved ways to respond. The least popular methods were Facebook (0.3%), letters (0.7%), and phone messages (1.3%); none of these methods were promoted as a way to submit a response. Adding comments to existing pins was also not very popular (2.3%) and using the freepost postcards (3.0%). The former is interesting, as in the pre-consultation phase (section 4.2) it was a highly popular approach. It may be that the map became a little busy during the wider consultation, with lots of different ways to use it, so that may have confused people a bit. We need to make sure we simplify options if we keep it live in the future.

When the responses from this wider consultation are added to the mapping campaign during the pre-consultation (section 4.2), we reach a total of 1,599 responses from the wider community

and partner consultation. This figure does not include comments gained from team members and core partners (sections 2 and 3).

Google Analytics was used to offer some insight into which of the communication methods listed above prompted these responses:

- The consultation webpage received 1,588 unique visitors during the consultation period.
- Almost a third of these (496) visited during a three-day period following the initial email sent to our existing contacts.
- A further 20 to 30 visits were prompted by each of the stories on the local authority websites, plus 45 visiting from Facebook and 47 from Twitter.
- The newspaper advert in the final fortnight of the campaign had no noticeable impact on visits to the webpage.

While the print campaigns reached high numbers of people and helped to raise broad awareness about the Plan, as expected it was the online avenues (which gave the opportunity to take part instantly) that prompted the vast majority of contributions. Even in the online sphere however, the proportion of people reached who actually followed through and visited the consultation webpage was low (1,588 out of a theoretical 70,000 reached online). This perhaps indicates even among the dozens of people who were happy to show their broad support for the Plan by “Liking”, sharing and re-tweeting, there was a feeling that visiting the webpage to read the Plan and comment would be too time-consuming and technical.

In terms of the 1,588 people who did visit the consultation webpage, this generated nearly 300 online responses from an estimated 160 people (so 10% of people visiting the webpage submitted a response). Again, this suggests the call to action was perceived as time-consuming and technical. In our user testing of the webpage prior to launch, several people also found the map quite complicated to use. We made alterations to the map following this feedback, but it may still have deterred some users. Potentially more time should have been left for further testing of the map in advance of the consultation. On the other hand, partners felt that the map was extremely useful and it has been decided to keep a simplified version as a live tool for people to add suggestions to.

We had 22 new contributions to the consultation during the 10-day duration of the Easter give-away competition. However it is difficult to attribute whether these were thanks to the competition itself or from one of our other promotional avenues (newspaper articles, stories on local authority websites, etc).

The advertisement placed on Facebook, for very modest input in terms of time and money, achieved very well against our aim of raising awareness about the consultation. It was less successful against our other aim of prompting comments on the Forest Plan. The ad campaign will also have long-lasting benefits for The Mersey Forest, both in terms of reputation (having 1,200+ followers makes us look popular with the public), and in terms of reach (our future Facebook posts will now reach more people for the same level of effort).

In addition to the above analysis of “reach versus conversion”, it is also worth considering the “effort / resource versus conversion”. For example, Twitter was not massively effective in getting responses, but it was very quick and easy to implement. On the other hand, not many responses came in with Freepost postcards from the hard copies of the Plan sent to the libraries and it took considerable time and resource to print the materials, put together the packs to go to the libraries, and post these to the libraries. However, due to the fact that this made the consultation more accessible to non-internet users it was potentially still worth doing. In a future consultation it may be better to try and streamline the library-based aspects of the consultation if possible. The newspaper advertisements seemed to prompt little response and were expensive and took a

lot of administrative time to organise for all of the different publications. That said, they may have helped to raise awareness of The Mersey Forest at a basic level.

E-mail follow-ups to key named individuals were important in prompting responses from the wider partnership.

#### **4.4 Summary of wider community and partner consultation**

We estimate that around 600 people responded to the wider community and partner consultation, with around 1,600 responses submitted. So each person responding submitted an average of 2.7 responses. The majority of these were for the mapping campaign (section 4.2) and the fewest for the initial awareness raising campaign (section 4.1).

The online presence to the consultation garnered the most responses, but the team still felt that the offline presence was important in making the consultation more accessible to people without internet access. However, this was a particularly time consuming aspect to organise, so could perhaps be streamlined in the future.

The interactive map was deemed by the team and partners to be a particularly innovative and successful approach. It enabled people to engage at a scale which was meaningful for them. As such, it is being kept live and used to inform ongoing work of the team and partners. It will provide an ongoing mechanism through which people can engage with The Mersey Forest and get their opinions heard to help direct future planting schemes. The team will endeavour to plant new trees and manage woodlands in or near to the suggested locations as funding becomes available (indeed, in some instances recent funding has asked for evidence that there is a local demand for tree planting, so this map will be able to provide some evidence of this if needed) and as land ownership permits. We will also be able to use the mapping approach for other consultations on particular locations.

Whilst we received comments from around 600 people, the reach of the consultation and engagement activities was much wider. As many as 1 million of the 1.7 million people living in The Mersey Forest may have been reached, although this number is speculative as some people were reached using a variety of methods (e.g. in press articles, newspaper advertisements, Facebook posts, etc). This does, however, suggest that the campaign would have been fairly successful in terms of raising awareness of The Mersey Forest.

## 5. The connection with the GIFT-T! project

The development of The Mersey Forest Plan, including the consultation and engagement set out in this document, was part funded by the EU Interreg IVB GIFT-T! (Green Infrastructure For Tomorrow – Together!) project ([www.gift-t.eu](http://www.gift-t.eu)). As well as enabling us to be more thorough with the consultation and engagement, involvement in the GIFT-T! project encouraged us to think more carefully about the different techniques used to reach each audience and to learn and adapt experiences from elsewhere in Europe.

Consultation and engagement was a key part of GIFT-T! (Work Package 2), and the approach used in developing The Mersey Forest Plan followed the GIFT-T! approach. The GIFT-T! approach was to develop a long-term regional ambition plan, in which local stakeholder groups and end users identify the benefits from ecosystem services, why they are of interest for the sustainable future of the area, and how these may be enforced by developing green infrastructure in regional plans and investment decisions.

There are five case studies in GIFT-T! across the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands. The Province of South Holland in the Netherlands led the work package on working with local communities. A method identified by South Holland was the use of “Dream Sessions” whereby small groups of stakeholders met together. However, due to the large size and population of The Mersey Forest (1,370 km<sup>2</sup> and 1.7 million people, respectively) we decided that it was not possible to apply this approach. Through discussions at GIFT-T! partner meetings and subsequently, the Province of South Holland had demonstrated an interactive map for Leiden ([www.leknergroenrondleiden.nl/](http://www.leknergroenrondleiden.nl/)) which looked an excellent basis for engaging with the wider community across The Mersey Forest case study. As such, we adapted the mapping method to form a virtual “dream session” through the use of a bespoke website housing an interactive map ([www.merseyforest/plan](http://www.merseyforest/plan); see section 4.2).

We updated GIFT-T! partners regularly on the approach we were taking as regards consultation and engagement, and on the progress made. This enabled us to adapt our approach; for example, following discussion with the GIFT-T! partners, the mapping approach was modified to ask for the post codes of the respondents to enable further analyses. In addition we undertook an analysis of the comments received to see which policies and green infrastructure functions they related to, and mapped the results to produce “desire” maps for the different green infrastructure functions.

## 6. Conclusion

The consultation and engagement on The Mersey Forest Plan was thorough and robust, with people engaged early on and throughout the process. It provided a range of opportunities, both formal and informal, for people to get involved. It had a large reach of almost one million people across three key audiences: The Mersey Forest team, core partners, and wider community and partners.

In terms of both the team and partners, a particular success was engaging early in the process and continuing to engage and consult on key elements throughout. For the team consultation, useful aspects were using team meetings and away days to get input on key aspects, and asking individuals to check on the specific policies most relevant to their. For the partners, The Mersey Forest Steering Group meetings provided a good mechanism to enable ongoing engagement, as well as ad hoc email discussions with individuals. The early partner meetings were felt to be especially important aspect; these were organised by the partner authorities, with individuals invited from within each organisation, so representing a range of departments. These meetings provided timely input to help shape the Plan. They also helped to reinforce the nature of The Mersey Forest, as being a partnership organisation with a team put in place by the partnership to coordinate delivery. In terms of the wider community and partner consultation, the interactive map was deemed to be a particularly innovative and successful approach, enabling people to engage at a scale which was meaningful for them. As such, it is being kept live and used to inform ongoing work of the team and partners.

The consultation and engagement had both an online and offline presence, to encourage a wide range of people to get involved. Whilst the online methods gained most responses, the offline versions were also deemed essential to try and reach people without internet access.

Overall, it is estimated that 771 individuals had active involvement in at least one step of the consultation and engagement, whereas many were involved in more than one step or submitted more than one response. 85% of these people were from the wider community and partners, rather than The Mersey Forest team and core partners. In total 55 organisations were actively involved. We had over 1,600 individual responses. 316 people signed up to be supporters of The Mersey Forest during the period, accounting for 18% of all of our supporters at the time.

The contributions made a real difference to the final Mersey Forest Plan; helping to shape the structure, policies, content, and presentation of the document. The vast majority of the comments received were positive and supportive, with some comments challenging us to amend specific aspects of the wording. We have kept a record of all of the contributions and how we responded to each.

This thorough engagement and consultation was made possible through part funding via the EU Interreg IVB GIFT-T! project. As well as enabling us to be more thorough, involvement in the GIFT-T! project encouraged us to think more carefully about the different techniques used to reach each audience and to learn and adapt experiences from elsewhere in Europe.

## Appendix A – Initial e-mail to the team (section 2.1)

As we are just starting on the refresh of TMF Plan, it would be fantastic to get the team's thoughts or comments at this stage to guide the process – TMF Plan is meant to guide the long term delivery of The Mersey Forest.

The aim is to keep the flavour of the existing Plan, but to bring it up to date by putting more emphasis on what has been achieved so far and where the Forest is going, removing obviously dated references, and bringing it up-to-date with the latest context and thinking (whilst not writing a document which then becomes instantly dated), updating images, the overall look, and the branding, etc. The refresh is not intended to be an in depth review of all the recommendations contained within the Plan. The refreshed Plan should be punchier, less wordy, and will be principally located online, making it quicker and more flexible to navigate and search, and easier to update.

We want to create a Plan that is more useful to both the Forest team and partners in playing their part in delivering The Mersey Forest. So your comments on the 2001 version of the Plan (available at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/forest\\_plan](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/forest_plan)) can help to make this happen! Please use the questions below to guide your thoughts – but please don't be restricted by them! Also, please do be completely honest; if the current plan isn't at all on your radar or you currently don't find it useful, please do let us know (but try to be as helpfully critical as possible).

Question	Your answer
1. Do you currently use the Plan? a. If so, please describe how b. If not, please let us know why you don't currently use it – e.g. too hard to find relevant parts, I don't see it as useful in my job, etc	
2. What do you like about the current Plan (and would like us to retain)?	
3. What do you dislike about the current Plan (and would like to see changed)?	
4. What could make the Plan more useful to you and colleagues?	
5. As part of the refresh we are also trying to make better connections between the Plan and:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TMF Delivery Plan <a href="P:\Projects\TMF Plan Review 2011\links to useful TMF docs\Delivery Plan 2009-2014.Ink">P:\Projects\TMF Plan Review 2011\links to useful TMF docs\Delivery Plan 2009-2014.Ink</a></li><li>• Objectives Hierarchy (<a href="http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/pages/hierarchy.asp?id=1">http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/pages/hierarchy.asp?id=1</a>)</li><li>• Little Book of Messages <a href="P:\Projects\TMF Plan Review 2011\links to useful TMF docs\Shortcut to messages.pdf.Ink">P:\Projects\TMF Plan Review 2011\links to useful TMF docs\Shortcut to messages.pdf.Ink</a></li></ul>	
Please can you also comment on these with regard to qus 1-4 above.	
6. Have you any other thoughts or comments to guide the refresh of the Plan?	

Please send me your thoughts by Friday 14th October (or sooner!). Or come and chat to me if you would rather.



## Appendix B – Initial e-mail to key partners (section 3.1)

Apologies if you have already received this message. We have been having some problems with our e-mail, so I am re-sending this.

The Mersey Forest Team are currently refreshing The Mersey Forest Plan. We want to create a Plan that is more useful to both the Forest team and partners in playing their part in delivering The Mersey Forest. Therefore, **we would really value your thoughts or comments on the 2001 version of the Plan** (available at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/forest\\_plan](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/forest_plan)).

The Mersey Forest Plan is the main strategic document which guides the long term delivery of The Mersey Forest. It was first approved in 1994, and was last reviewed in 2001. As 10 years have passed since then, The Mersey Forest team are now looking to refresh the Plan by April 2012. We are undertaking this in-house.

We don't envisage this being a complete re-write of the Plan. The aim is to keep the flavour of the existing Plan, but to bring it up to date by putting more emphasis on what has been achieved so far and where the Forest is going, removing obviously dated references, and bringing it up-to-date with the latest context (whilst not writing a document which then becomes instantly dated), updating images, the overall look, and the branding, etc. The refresh is not intended to be an in depth review of all the recommendations contained within the Plan. The refreshed Plan should be punchier, less wordy, and will be principally located online, making it quicker and more flexible to navigate and search, and easier to update.

**We would be most grateful if you could take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Your complete honesty is very much appreciated; if the current plan isn't at all on your radar or you currently don't find it useful, please do let us know!**

Questions:

1. Do you currently use the Plan?
  - a. If so, please describe how
  - b. If not, please let us know why you don't currently use it (e.g. too hard to find relevant parts, I don't see it as useful in my job, etc)

2. What do you like about the current Plan (and would like us to retain)?

3. What do you dislike about the current Plan (and would like to see changed)?

4. What could make the Plan more useful to you and colleagues?

5. The draft National Planning Policy Framework (July 2011) states that:

"Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife. An approved Community Forest plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications. Any development proposals within Community Forests in the Green Belt should be subject to the normal policies controlling development in Green Belts."

**Is there anything in particular that you would like/need to see from The Mersey Forest Plan if it may be material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications?**

6. Have you any other thoughts or comments to guide the refresh of the Plan?

Please feel free to send this message on to any of your colleagues who are willing or able to respond.

Please send any comments back to us by Monday 24th October. Please send your response to Susannah Gill ([susannah.gill@merseyforest.org.uk](mailto:susannah.gill@merseyforest.org.uk); or contact her on 01925 859610 if you would like to discuss any issues).

Many thanks and we look forward to hearing from you.



## **Appendix C – Message sent to partners asking them to organise a partner meeting (section 3.2.10)**

Following the last Mersey Forest Steering Group meeting, I am writing to you to ask you to help us to arrange a meeting in December with St. Helens Council to discuss the current refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan and any more specific needs / requirements you may have with regard to this.

The Mersey Forest Plan was last updated in 2001. The importance of having an up-to-date plan which is endorsed by The Mersey Forest partners is reinforced by the draft National Planning Policy Framework (July 2011) which states that "Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife. An approved Community Forest plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications. Any development proposals within Community Forests in the Green Belt should be subject to the normal policies controlling development in Green Belts."

The proposed meeting will be a good opportunity to make the refreshed Plan as relevant and useful to St. Helens Council as possible, as well to raise awareness of The Mersey Forest within your organisation.

It is proposed that the meeting would cover the following points (although this will be reviewed closer to the time):

1. Introduction to the refresh of TMF Plan – key timescales etc
2. Overview of the emerging TMF Plan
3. Discussion of any strengths and weaknesses of the existing TMF Plan from the partners perspective (picking up on any points not discussed above)
4. Discussion of key strategies we want TMF Plan to influence in your area (e.g. LDF, Community Strategy, etc)
5. Discussion of generic recommendations
6. Discussion of partner specific recommendations
7. Discussion of how best to get TMF Plan recognised / endorsed by partner (e.g. committee reports, website, etc).

It would be useful if you could invite as many of your colleagues as you see fit and who would like to contribute to the discussion, to make sure that we get a broad range of perspectives. This could include:

- Planners
- Tree or woodland officers
- Ecologists
- Parks and recreation officers
- Rights of way officers
- Climate change officers
- Education officers
- Health officers
- Community officers
- Councillors, etc

As a starting point, could you please send through some dates in December to Chris Speakman ([christine.speakman@merseyforest.org.uk](mailto:christine.speakman@merseyforest.org.uk)) which you and your colleagues can make (we anticipate the meeting would need to last 2 hours). Chris will then liaise with you to organise the meeting. Please give me a call if you want to discuss further (01925 859610).

## **Appendix D – Example of a partner meeting agenda (section 3.2.1)**

### **The Mersey Forest Plan Refresh – Liverpool City Council meeting**

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2011  
1<sup>st</sup> floor, Millennium House, Liverpool  
10am-12

#### **Agenda**

---

1. Introduction to the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan – key timescales etc
2. Overview of the emerging Plan (see Refresh 2011.doc)
3. Discussion of strengths and weaknesses of the existing Plan from the partners perspective. Does the current Plan help Liverpool officers and how could it better help them?
4. Discussion of key strategies that the Plan ought to try to influence in Liverpool (e.g. LDF, Community Strategy, etc) or be aware of. How best to get the Plan recognised / endorsed by Liverpool City Council (e.g. committee reports, website, etc).
5. Discussion of Forest-wide policies (see chapter 3 of Refresh 2011.doc)

We have reduced the number of policies from 70 in the 2001 version of The Mersey Forest Plan to 20 in the current version of the refreshed Plan. It would be really useful to have a good discussion of these.

6. Discussion of Liverpool specific policies (see chapter 4.4 of Refresh 2011.doc)

There are currently 17 policies in here (last reviewed in 2006). It would be very useful if we could have a good discussion of these.

7. AOB



## Appendix E – Steering Group papers (section 3.3)

### PAPER 2 – October 2011

Meeting:	Steering Group October 19 <sup>th</sup> 2011
Subject:	Mersey Forest Plan Refresh
Status of paper:	Discussion
Author:	Susannah Gill
Estimate of time required:	30 minutes

---

#### Introduction

The Mersey Forest Plan provides the long term vision for the work of the team and partnership.

It was approved by Government in October 1994, updated in 2001, with further work on assessing progress toward the delivery of the plan objectives completed in 2005.

We now are refreshing the Plan to bring it up to date, reflect the progress that has been made and incorporate other strands of work such as the Objectives Hierarchy that have been developed in parallel to the plan but which now need to be better aligned to it.

The aim is to reduce the number of documents we refer to overall, improve consistency of language, clarify the main objectives and set out the refreshed plan for the delivery of The Mersey Forest.

Dr Susannah Gill is leading on the re-write with support from Mike Bray and the rest of the Forest Team.

#### Progress

1. A project plan has been developed (attached excel spreadsheet if further information required). This outlines activities, who will deliver them, and when. The activities relate to: writing, design / images, consultation, print copies, put on web, publicity, launch, steering group meetings. Key dates are:
  - Dec – meetings with Local Authorities on emerging draft to discuss any requirements for them
  - Early Jan – Consultation draft sent to steering group for them to circulate to their colleagues so that we can get approval prior to the meeting & wider consultation
  - 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012 meeting – Consultation draft approved by steering group
  - February 2012 – Wider consultation (4 week period)
  - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2012 meeting – Final plan approved by steering group
  - June 2012 – Launch
2. Consultation plan developed (attached word document if further information required). This is to gain approval and support from TMF team, steering group, other partners/key agencies, the wider community, sponsors/funders, and national government. A robust local consultation is important, especially as the Plan may be material consideration in preparing local development plans and in deciding planning applications (as stated in the draft National Planning Policy Framework). However, we need to balance this with the time and budget we have to develop the plan, and recognize that it is not a statutory document itself.
  - Early consultation e-mail sent to team, steering group, working group and other key partners (asked for comments by 14<sup>th</sup> Oct).

3. Review of current TMF Plan, Delivery Plan, Objectives Hierarchy, and Little Book of Messages. These documents refer to: Vision, Aims, Objectives, Goals, Focus, Targets, Purposes, Outputs, Recommendations, Policies and opportunities, and Activities! We intend to clarify and simplify these. The emerging way forward is to have a maximum of 4 tiers: Vision, Objectives, Strategies, and Detailed Activities. These will be measured by targets. This will guide the way in which we structure the contents of the refreshed Plan.

#### **Recommendation**

- Partners support and promote the refresh of The Forest Plan
- Partners ensure that the departments and individuals who may have an interest in the Plan (e.g. planners, ecologists, tree officers, parks, etc) are involved in the refresh (e.g. by asking them to respond to consultation e-mails, inviting them to meetings, etc)
- Partners work with The Forest Team to embed the MF Plan into key partner strategies and plans

## PAPER 3 – January 2012

Meeting:	Joint Steering and Working Groups January 26 <sup>th</sup> 2012
Subject:	Mersey Forest Plan Refresh
Status of paper:	Update
Author:	Susannah Gill
Estimate of time required:	30 minutes

---

### Introduction

Since the last steering group meeting work has been progressing on the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan. This work is part-funded through an EU Interreg grant, GIFT-T!, which will provide over £326,000 for the next three years to help develop green infrastructure planning and valuation methodologies across The Mersey Forest. The work will identify key areas for increasing woodland landscape connectivity that can assist not only in helping to reduce habitat fragmentation, but also provide a range of services.

### Progress

1. **Initial team and partner consultation:** An e-mail was sent to gauge use, strengths and weaknesses of current Plan. Sent to team members and key partners.
2. **Emerging draft of refreshed Plan:** The 70 recommendations in the 2001 version of the Plan have been reviewed and reduced to 20 Forest-Wide policies.
3. **Local residents' stories campaign:** We have started to engage members of the public in the refresh, by running a campaign to garner local residents' views about why they value their local woodlands. A wide range of inspiring anecdotes and stories were submitted which will help in the development of the new Forest Plan. You can read people's comments at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/views](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/views). This has included press coverage (worth £4,500 and reaching >200,000 people).
4. **Partner consultation meetings:** To date 38 people have taken part in these meetings (with 3 partners still to go at the time of writing). By the time of the steering group meeting, individual consultation meetings will have been held with all of the local authority partners, as well as with Natural England, the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency, and Groundwork Cheshire and Merseyside.

### Next steps

The team will work up a consultation draft of the refreshed Mersey Forest Plan, taking on board comments so far. This will be circulated to partners in advance of a public consultation period of one month (we currently aim to consult in April). Following the public consultation a final version of the Plan will be finalised by the end of June 2012.

### Recommendation

- Partners support and promote the refresh of The Forest Plan
- Partners ensure that the departments and individuals who may have an interest in the Plan (e.g. planners, ecologists, tree officers, parks, etc) are involved in the refresh
- Partners start to explore the most appropriate mechanisms for getting endorsement for The Mersey Forest Plan in their authorities, so that it can be finalised by the end of June 2012
- Partners work with The Forest Team to embed the MF Plan into key partner strategies and plans

## PAPER 1 – July 2012

Meeting:	Steering Group July 19th 2012
Subject:	Mersey Forest Plan Refresh – local authority policies
Status of paper:	Discussion
Author:	Susannah Gill
Estimate of time required:	30 minutes

---

### Introduction

The Mersey Forest Plan provides the long term vision for the work of the team and partnership. The Forest Team are currently drafting a refreshed Plan. As part of this we held consultation meetings with local authority partners and key agencies. We have also developed a website ([www.merseyforest.org.uk/vote](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/vote)) to gather local opinions on trees and woodlands, where they'd like to see more, and ideas to improve existing sites. We have added comments gathered at the Cheshire Show and Risley Moss' Green Safari Day; and will promote it over the summer.

The draft refreshed Plan is taking shape, with 20 Forest-Wide Policies: 1. Partnership Working; 2. Community Participation; 3. Landowners; 4. Designing and Planting Urban and Rural Trees, Woodlands and Associated Habitats; 5. Management; 6. Strategies, Plans, Policies, Programmes and Initiatives; 7. Funding, Advice and Support; 8. Monitoring and Evaluation; 9. Research, Evidence and Mapping; 10. Communications; 11. The Economy and Tourism; 12. Woodfuel, Timber and Forest Industries; 13. Wildlife, Biodiversity and Ecosystems; 14. Climate Change; 15. Flood Alleviation and Water Management; 16. Access, Recreation and Sustainable Travel; 17. Health and Well-Being; 18. Play and Education; 19. Life-Long Learning, Training, Skills and Jobs; 20. Landscape, Culture and Heritage.

### Local Authority Specific Policies

One remaining task is to draft the Local Authority Specific Policies. As in the current Plan, they will guide new planting within each local authority area (but not necessarily by the local authority). At the partner consultation meetings, these policies were felt to be very useful; and in most of the meetings we made a first attempt at revising the policies based on the partners' knowledge. Comments included that the policies should tie in better to what is needed in an area (e.g. using green infrastructure mapping), be grounded in an understanding of what has been delivered to date, and on the scope for new planting. As such, we propose to revise the planting strategy maps and policies in the following way:

#### **(1) To use the National Character Areas as the basis for the planting strategies**

There are 8 in TMF area. Their profiles are currently being revised, to be published in autumn. They will provide a description of the area, key characteristics, and opportunities, and will be available online, so we will not need to include lengthy descriptions in TMF Plan. They provide a common unit across the whole TMF area. They are similar to the 7 landscape regions which form the basis of the planting strategies in the current Plan. Using them provides a strong link to the Natural Environment White Paper and national policy.

#### **(2) To divide these according to the 14 landscape types set out in appendix A of the current TMF Plan**

These were mapped in 1993 and may need revising to take into account changes. We will sub-divide these further for a more detailed planting strategy as in the current Plan (e.g. buffering roads and settlements, highlighting linear routes). Landscape types: 1. Community urban fringe; 2. Large-scale industry; 3. Urban-fringe farmland; 4. Large-scale open farmland; 5. Medium to large-scale farmland; 6. Small to medium-scale farmland; 7. Moss farmland; 8. Forestry/large-scale farmland; 9. Forestry/medium-scale farmland; 10. Wooded parkland; 11. River valley; 12. Estuary farmland; 13. Estuary marsh; 14. Coastal dune.



**(3) Each resulting polygon/unit (i.e. combination of area and type) to have a proposed woodland cover and associated policy**

Policy wording for each area will include: the proposed woodland cover, guidance on the most appropriate type/scale of new planting, and the particular needs which new planting could meet. Where possible, one policy will apply to different units (e.g. a generic policy for all urban units / a generic policy for units of the same type within one National Character Area, etc). To inform the policies and proposed woodland covers we combine the draft revised policies from the partner meetings with information from a range of GIS layers, which are likely to include:

- Local Landscape Character Assessments, historic LCAs, regional Landscape Character Framework, and opportunities in the National Character Areas
- GI mapping (especially unfulfilled needs which trees and woodlands can meet)
- An assessment of planting to date and the FC/NE woodland potential calculator
- Constraints to woodland planting
- Outcomes of running STAR (surface temperature and runoff) tools
- Information provided by local communities online or as part of awareness survey.

**Recommendation**

- Partners approve approach to revising planting strategy maps and policies
- Partners suggest (and ask colleagues to send) other GIS data we should use to inform policies
- Partners comment on local authority planting strategy maps and policies as they become available (this could be done as part of the 1:1 meetings in autumn)

## PAPER 1 – January 2013

Meeting:	Steering Group 24th January 2013
Subject:	Mersey Forest Plan Refresh – First Draft
Status of paper:	Discussion
Author:	Susannah Gill
Estimate of time required:	20 minutes

---

### Introduction

The Mersey Forest Plan provides the long term vision for the work of the team and partnership. The Forest Team are currently drafting a refreshed Plan supported by the EU Interreg Project GIFT\_T (<http://www.gift-t.eu/index/index> ).

The refresh of the Forest Plan was reported to the Steering Group in July 2012.

Since then the Plan has been developed with a great deal of partner input from officers.

Whilst staying close to the original ethos and vision for The Mersey Forest, the Plan has been updated bringing in information that has been developed over the last 10 years, includes case studies and provides a more concise set of policies that are in keeping with Local Authority Local Plan policies as well as national policy.

We know that the government will announce its response to the Independent Panel on Forestry at the end of January and that we will need to ensure that the Plan is not completely contrary to this response. Given the indications that the response is likely to be supportive of the Panel's Report ( <http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/> ) and that we are confident that at a strategic level this refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan is in keeping with aspirations of that report we are confident that we will not have to adjust the plan significantly. We would also argue that as this is our long term plan we should not allow the new policy to shape the plan too much in any case – this will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> statement of Forest Policy in 12 years for an industry/sector where one crop takes 80 – 100+ years to grow!

However, our Delivery Plan may have to be more in tune with this new policy as it is shorter term in outlook (Steering Group Paper 2 Jan 2013).

Partner officers have seen and approved the wording for the individual authority strategy sections of the document.

### Proposal

An overview of the new plan will be provided at the SG meeting and following this it is proposed that the document is sent out for wider consultation including to the general public and in particular those who have participated in the “vote” for the favourite woodland and those who have signed up as Mersey Forest supporters.

### Recommendation

- Partners approve the draft to enable it to go out to wider consultation to coincide with the Government announcement on the response to the Independent Panel on Forestry.
- Partners help in dissemination of the documents for comment.
- MF Team report back at the July SG on the consultation and how responses have been taken into account in the final draft version of the document
- Partners provide information to the MF Team on how the partnership plan could/should be formally approved within individual authorities.

## PAPER 1 – October 2013

Meeting:	Steering Group 17 October 2013
Subject:	Mersey Forest Plan Refresh
Status of paper:	Discussion
Author:	Clare Oliver
Estimate of time required:	20 minutes

---

### Introduction

The Mersey Forest Plan provides the long term vision for the work of the team and partnership. The Forest Team are currently drafting a refreshed Plan supported by the EU Interreg Project GIFT\_T (<http://www.gift-t.eu/index/index> ).

Whilst staying close to the original ethos and vision for The Mersey Forest, the Plan has been updated bringing in information that has been developed over the last 10 years, includes case studies and provides a more concise set of policies that are in keeping with local authority Local Plan policies as well as national policy.

The refresh of the Forest Plan was reported to the Steering Group in July 2012 and in January 2013. Following approval at the January Steering Group, there was a period of extended community consultation between February and April 2013.

For those with access to the internet the communication methods led stakeholders to an interactive website. To this end, adverts and article placed in all local papers reaching over 917,000 people and social media reached over 65,000. In addition to e-newsletters sent to all officers and members there were articles signposting to the consultation page website via each partner website; a large mail out of flyers to all community centres, doctor surgeries, sports centres and other places where people gather to encourage a wide range of stakeholders to have their say.

Aware that not all stakeholders had access to the internet, hard copies of the documents and plans were left in libraries, with free-post postcards available for responses to be made by hand.

During the short period, the consultation received over 300 contributions, which reflected the in-depth nature of the call to action. More have been received since.

Following the consultation, the responses were discussed and agreed with partner officers and a final draft of the document prepared during the summer. A copy of this was sent to the Steering Group on 4 September with the request that members and officers take the partnership plan through to be formally approved / endorsed within their individual authorities.

Upon approval, the plan will succeed the previous one and will be web-based at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan). There will be a limited number of printed copies and these will be produced over the coming months ready for the formal launch at the January Steering Group on 23 January 2014.

### Recommendation

- Partners approve the final Forest Plan
- Partners support the launch of the plan at the January Steering Group on 23 January 2014
- Partners continue to promote the Plan and the programme of activity within their organisations.
-

## **Appendix F – Example of partner e-mail about policies, prior to wider consultation (section 3.4)**

Just a quick reminder to ask for <organisation inserted>'s comments on the <organisation inserted> specific policies for the refresh of The Mersey Forest Plan. If at all possible, it would be good if I could have a coordinated response from <organisation inserted> by Mon 10<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Please find attached 2 documents to have a look at:

1. LA strategies – approach taken – <organisation inserted>.doc: This sets out the <organisation inserted> specific policies, which are tied to specific areas. It would be great to get your feedback in particular focusing on fig 1 and table 1, to see if you are happy with the policy units used, proposed woodland cover, and policy wording. The rest of the document is background information supporting the approach taken; we think that this wouldn't sit in the finalised Plan, but could be in a supporting document in case it was needed for evidence purposes.
2. TMF Plan refresh – vision & policies 27112012.doc: This sets out the latest version of the partnership wide vision and policies. Please let me know if you have any amendments, but focus on 1 above if you are pushed for time.

Please share these documents with other colleagues for their comments as you see fit. The following people attended the meeting we had back in Jan, so it may be useful to run it by them to make sure they are happy with it <names inserted>. There may also be other people you want to send it to for their comments at this stage. Please can you let me know who you have sent it to, or if you would like me to coordinate this.

## Appendix G – Covering letters for libraries etc as part of wider consultation (section 4.3)



The Mersey Forest Offices,  
Risley Moss, Ordnance Avenue,  
Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6QX

Tel: 01925 816217  
Fax: 01925 821793  
mail@merseyforest.org.uk  
www.merseyforest.org.uk

Dear Librarian,

Please find enclosed consultation materials about The Mersey Forest Plan (draft Plan, local map, leaflets and Freepost postcards).

**We would be very grateful if you could display these materials within the library between now and the end of April 2013.**

This will enable members of the public to have their say on proposals to plant millions of trees and create a greener, healthier Merseyside and North Cheshire.

The consultation will be promoted in the local press in the coming weeks, with libraries put forward as the main place where people without internet access can go to read the Plan and fill in a Freepost postcard with their comments.

Thank you in advance for your help with this matter - it is very much appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

On behalf of The Mersey Forest

Paul Nolan  
Project Director

Patrons: The Rt. Hon. Lord Thomas of Macclesfield and  
His Grace The Duke of Westminster KG CB OBE TD CD DL

An initiative of Cheshire West and Chester Council, Halton Borough Council, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, Warrington Borough Council, Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

100% recycled  
FSC certified paper





The Mersey Forest Offices,  
Risley Moss, Ordnance Avenue,  
Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6QX

Tel: 01925 816217  
Fax: 01925 821793  
mail@merseyforest.org.uk  
www.merseyforest.org.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find enclosed leaflets inviting your service users to comment on The Mersey Forest Plan.

**We would be grateful if you could display these leaflets within your establishment between now and the end of April 2013.**

This will enable members of the public to have their say on proposals to plant millions of trees within Merseyside and North Cheshire to create a greener, healthier local area.

Thank you in advance for your help with this matter - it is very much appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

On behalf of The Mersey Forest

**Paul Nolan**  
Project Director

Patrons: The Rt. Hon. Lord Thomas of Macclesfield and  
His Grace The Duke of Westminster KG CB OBE TD CD DL

An initiative of Cheshire West and Chester Council, Halton Borough Council, Knowsley Metropolitan  
Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council, Sefton Metropolitan  
Borough Council, Warrington Borough Council, Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

100% recycled  
FSC certified paper



INVOLVING PEOPLE



## **Appendix H – Press release for wider consultation (section 4.3)**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

Today's Date: 07/03/2013 | Media Contact: <team member inserted>, The Mersey Forest Tel: 01925 859611 / 07770 735755 | <team e-mail address inserted>

#### **Bishop welcomes Merseyside woodland plans**

The Bishop of Liverpool has welcomed plans to create more woodlands in Merseyside and North Cheshire, and urged people to have their say on the proposals.

The newly updated Mersey Forest Plan aims to plant millions more trees across the local area, with long-term aspirations to plant urban trees, copses, and larger woodlands and improve their management for people and wildlife.

The Rt. Rev. James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, said: "Our forests are nature's playground for the adventurous, pleasure for the curious, hospital for the stressed, cathedral for the spiritual, and livelihood for the entrepreneur. There is no finer example of this than The Mersey Forest's achievements of the past 20 years.

"I have no doubt this success will continue, and would encourage people to have their say on this new plan for the decades ahead."

The plan has been created by The Mersey Forest Partnership which has planted 9 million trees since 1991. The partnership is made up of seven local authorities, the Forestry Commission, Natural England, Environment Agency and local communities and businesses.

The draft document can be found at [www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan), where residents can see proposals for their local area on an interactive map, and put forward their views until the end of April. Printed copies of the plan are also in libraries in Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St. Helens, Warrington and northern areas of Cheshire West and Chester (call 01925 816217 for further details).

The Bishop's comments follow hot on the heels of a new national approach to forestry unveiled by the government in January. This confirmed that England's public woodlands will be held in trust for the nation, and saw the government endorse the vast majority of recommendations made by the Independent Panel on Forestry, chaired by the Bishop. The Panel was set up in 2010 following an uproar over plans to sell many public woodlands and forests.

GIFT-T! (Green Infrastructure for Tomorrow – Together!) has contributed to the funding of The Mersey Forest Plan consultation. The Mersey Forest is working with partners in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands to share approaches and develop best practice between 2011 and 2014 as part of this EU Interreg funded project.

**ENDS**

**Media contact:** <team member inserted>, tel. 01925 859 611 / 07770 735 755

**Notes to editors:**

#### **The Mersey Forest**

The Mersey Forest is a growing network of woodlands and green spaces spread across Cheshire and Merseyside, which has been creating 'woodlands on your doorstep' for 20 years.

The Forest is one of the leading environmental regeneration initiatives in the North West. Through community and partnership working, we have planted more than 8 million trees - equivalent to five new trees for every person living within the Forest area.

The Forest helps our towns and cities adapt to climate change and has won the Brian Redhead Award for Environmental Sustainability, creates woodlands that 20% of local people visit at least once a week, and by improving the image of our towns and cities sets the scene for growth within the region's £98 billion economy.

We achieve all of this and more through our partnership of local authorities, landowners, the Forestry Commission, Natural England and businesses including United Utilities.

[www.merseyforest.org.uk](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk)

### **The Independent Panel on Forestry**

The Independent Panel on Forestry published its Final Report on 4 July 2012 and has now completed its work. The Panel was chaired by the Right Reverend James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, and the members were selected for their wide experience, knowledge and interests in the economic, social and environmental aspects of forestry and woodlands.

The Independent Forestry Panel was established on 17 March 2011 by the Secretary of State, Caroline Spelman, to advise government on the future direction of forestry and woodland policy in England.

[www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel](http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel)

### **GIFT-T!**

GIFT-T! (Green Infrastructure for Tomorrow – Together!) has contributed to the funding of The Mersey Forest Plan consultation. The Mersey Forest is working with partners in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands to share approaches and develop best practice between 2011 and 2014 as part of this EU Interreg funded project. GIFT-T! started in Sept 2011 and involves seven partners that invest in creating jobs, protecting valuable habitats and boosting the rural economy.

GIFT-T! brings public and private partnerships together to address issues such as climate change, energy and food security, and facilitate new initiatives for green enterprises such as recreation and bio-energy.

[www.gift-t.eu](http://www.gift-t.eu)

## Appendix I – Example of e-mail sent to contacts for wider consultation (section 4.3)

The Mersey Forest is helping transform Merseyside and North Cheshire into one of the best places in the country to live – by getting more from trees.

Over the past 20 years our partnership has planted 9 million trees, from creating entire new woodlands to planting thousands of street trees. Two thirds of local residents say their local environment has improved thanks to our work.

**Now, we'd really appreciate your views as we refresh The Mersey Forest's long-term plan for the decades ahead.**

The Plan includes a wide range of policies and case studies which may be of interest to you.

Read the draft Plan, view an interactive map of the area, and send us your comments (by the end of April 2013) at:

[www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan)

Many thanks in advance for taking the time to respond. We really appreciate your comments, which will make the Plan stronger, and help to achieve the vision.

Also, please help spread the word by forwarding this message to your contacts.

Paul Nolan  
Project Director | The Mersey Forest  
01925 816217

----

*The Mersey Forest Plan at a glance:*

**Our vision is to deliver “More from Trees”** – with partners and communities transforming their landscape and revitalising a woodland culture in and around our towns and cities. Woodland will cover 20% of the area thanks to the planting of new woods and individual trees, complementing other habitats. Woodlands will also be managed so that they achieve their potential. And we will all prosper thanks to the economic and social benefits of environmental regeneration.

### **Policies**

The Plan sets out a number of policies. Please have a look if any of these topics are of interest to you:

- **Who** – Partnership Working | Empowering Communities | Advising and Supporting Landowners
- **What** – Planting and Design | Long Term Management
- **How** – Strategies, Plans, Policies, Programmes and Initiatives | Funding | Monitoring and Evaluation | Research, Evidence and Mapping | Communications
- **Why** – The Economy and Tourism | Woodfuel, Timber and Forest Industries | Wildlife, Biodiversity and Ecosystems | Climate Change | Flood Alleviation and Water Management | Access, Recreation and Sustainable Travel | Health and Wellbeing | Natural Play and Education | Life-Long Learning, Training, Skills and Jobs | Culture, Heritage, and Landscape
- **Where** – Area based policies for seven local authorities (Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St.Helens, Warrington).

## Case Studies

Eight case studies showcase some of the work to date, and list the funders and partners who have worked with us on these projects. They are of: Bold Forest Park, Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan, Green Streets in Knowsley, Wood allotments, GRaBS: climate change resources, Forest School, Green infrastructure strategy into action, Natural play in Euclid Park.

Read more and add your comments:

[www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan)



**GIFT-T!**  
Green Infrastructure For  
Tomorrow - Together!



If you'd prefer not to receive these emails in future, click to [unsubscribe](#).

Issued in accordance with our [privacy policy](#).

## Appendix J – Team kit for wider consultation (section 4.3)

---



# The Mersey Forest Plan

## Team Kit for Consultation

This document sets out the resources that are available to help you promote TMF Plan consultation to your contacts, at meetings, events, and presentations. It also sets out how to record your activity. Please ask <team member name inserted> if you need anything else.

---

### 1. Resources

#### Website - <link inserted to webpage>

This is the main hub to direct people to wherever possible. Please familiarise yourself with it. The site contains everything needed to read the Plan, use the interactive map, and respond.

#### Libraries

For people who don't have internet access, you can also direct them to local libraries. We have sent 1 hard copy of the Plan to all libraries <link inserted to list of libraries> within The Mersey Forest. This is accompanied by a large A2 map of the Local Authority that the library is in, plus 20 freepost postcards for responses, and 30 leaflets.

#### Hard copies of the Plan

You all have your own hard copy of the Plan. Please familiarise yourself with it, and especially the sections most relevant to you or which you will be promoting to others. Let <team member name inserted> know if you need another copy or if you want a more durable cover. Or you can print your own copy from the pdf <link inserted to the pdf>. Please do not send the pdf to others unless you have to, but point them to the website where they can download their own copy.

#### Pdfs of individual sections of the Plan

We will shortly create individual pdfs for all the policies, case studies, and Local Authorities. You can then print out copies of the most relevant ones to hand out at meetings, events, and presentations. Please ask <team member name inserted> to coordinate printing if needed.

#### Leaflets (A5)

Leaflets are on the top shelf in the nice wood cupboard by the door. Please take to meetings and events, etc. They could be handed out on their own, or to reinforce an agenda item or presentation that you have given. Copies of the leaflet have also been sent to libraries <link inserted to list of libraries> and other 'community' places <link inserted to list of community places> where people gather, such as GP surgeries, community centres, one stop shops, leisure centres, visitor centres, and tourist attractions. Please refer to these lists and, if you send/take any leaflets to other places, add places in the worksheets for each Local Authority (which have tabs starting with "ALL...").

#### Large maps (A2)

Large maps for each Local Authority are on the top shelf in the nice wood cupboard by the door. Please take to meetings (and bring them back too if you can, there are only 5 copies for each

Local Authority). These show the indicative woodland cover targets for each area and the associated policy wording. These maps have also been sent to libraries to display.

### **Freepost postcards for responses**

Freepost postcards are on the top shelf in the nice wood cupboard by the door. Please try to direct people to the website for them to feedback any comments, but use these postcards if you think that they are more appropriate for your groups.

### **Presentation slides**

- Single slide <link inserted to single slide> which you can incorporate into any other presentation you are giving during the consultation period. Adapt the slide as you need to for your presentation.
- Master presentation <link inserted to master presentation> includes slides to pick and choose from according to your audience and the length of presentation. Please ask Susannah if a slide you want is not there. Adapt the slides as you need to for your presentation.
- <link inserted to folder containing all presentations given> – Look at other peoples' presentations for ideas and save your presentation or a shortcut to it in here so that others can also see how you used or adapted the slides. If you can include your name, the date of presentation, and the name of group or event in the presentation title then this would be useful.

### **1 page written summary**

Written summary <link inserted to written summary> if needed e.g. for sending in advance of a presentation to a group.

### **Early design mock ups**

There is a pdf <link inserted to the pdf> of early design mock ups. You probably won't need to share it, but it is available on the website if you need to reassure anyone that we intend to make the final version of the Plan look a lot nicer.

### **Laptop and dongle**

If you take the laptop and dongle, then you can connect from anywhere to the interactive map on the website. This will mean that you could look at the map with groups and ask them to comment straight away on the proposals for their area; or to suggest places to plant more trees and woodlands, improve existing sites, or where they like existing trees and woodlands. Make sure you familiarise yourself with the interactive map first.

### **Stickers for back of business cards (and maybe other places)**

Coming shortly

### **E-mail signatures**

Now in place.

### **Logos**

Include TMF logo and GIFT-T! and Interreg logos <link inserted to logos> in all communications. These are already incorporated in all the material provided, but please use them if you are doing something bespoke. (N.B. Other versions of the logos are available in the folders if you need higher resolutions etc).

### **FAQs**

Please have a look in advance at the FAQs <link inserted to FAQs> and print out to take along with you if needed. Please also add any questions you anticipate being asked, or questions that you were asked and the response you gave. We need to collectively add to the list and improve our responses.



## 2. Recording activity

<e-mail address inserted>

Please send any correspondence you have about the Plan to this e-mail address, also send a message if you notice the consultation getting shared in newsletters, tweeted, etc. This will keep all the info in one place.

### **Log for activity**

Please log activity you undertake in the spreadsheet <link inserted to spreadsheet> – even if you have only mentioned the Plan at a meeting. We have to write up what we have done for the consultation, so this will be a very important record for this. We will check for anything that has been missed at team meetings.

### **Where to code time?**

<table inserted specifying where team members should code time to>

If you are coding mileage, please complete the mileage form with as much detail as possible (i.e. where and who) and don't include home to work mileage. The code is <code inserted>.

### **Outlets for leaflets**

If you send/take any leaflets to other places, add places in spreadsheet <link inserted to spreadsheet> in the worksheets for each Local Authority (which have tabs starting with "ALL...").

### **Presentations**

Please save your presentations/shortcuts to them in <link inserted to folder>. If you can include your name, the date of presentation, and the name of group or event in the presentation title then this would be useful.

## 3. Do you need anything else? Ask <team member name inserted>

e.g. Do you also want maps showing current woodland cover? This information is available on the interactive map, but we can produce in other formats if useful (e.g. map, table).

## **Appendix K – Frequently asked questions for wider consultation (section 4.3)**

---



# **The Mersey Forest Plan Consultation**

## **FAQs**

This document sets out FAQs you may be asked when promoting the consultation on TMF Plan. Please familiarise yourself with the questions and potential responses. Also please add any other questions you encounter and responses you gave so that we can build a list that is useful for everyone.

---

### **What is the timescale of the Plan?**

It is a long term Plan with no set end date. The Plan will be updated about every 10 years, but in the interim, smaller changes may be made on the website. (The original Plan was for a 30 year period; but we are no longer using this.)

### **How long are you consulting on the Plan?**

3 month period, until the end of April.

### **Who have you spoken to so far?**

TMF Steering Group approved the Plan for wider consultation – this consists of officers and members from our LA partners, plus, NE, FC (and EA are to join). Prior to this approval we have met with and have had e-mail dialogue with all of these partners over a period of more than a year; to ensure that the policies were worded in a way which suited them. In this process we have also spoken to officers from Groundwork Cheshire, Lancs Wildlife Trust, Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service, and EA.

We have also developed an online map where people have added comments on where they would like to see more trees and woods, existing sites improved, or like their existing trees and woodlands. This was populated at a number of events over summer 2012 (Cheshire Show, Green Safari Day, Southport Flower Show) as well as online. We are keeping this open as part of this consultation on the Plan.

### **How will/should my Local Authority or organisation respond?**

However they want. 1 coordinated response (saying who has input into it) is best from our perspective as we will have fewer comments to try and incorporate into the Plan and any discussion / compromises will take place internally. However, if this makes it too difficult for the organisation to respond, then we are happy to receive multiple responses.

Please see above – who has been involved so far.

### **What is the planning status of The Mersey Forest Plan?**

The Mersey Forest plan is not a statutory development Plan. It has not gone through the formal legal preparation procedures in terms of consultation, soundness, examination and adoption

required by the Planning Acts. This means it is not as important as statutory plans or in planning jargon carries less weight when making decisions on new development

However para 92 of the National Planning Policy Framework states “An approved Community Forest plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications”

That gives it some weight. That weight or importance will increase if the Local planning authority makes reference to it in their statutory plan-see below

## **What is the link to Local Authority Local Plans & Policies?**

The current relationship between the Forest Plan and emerging Partner planning policies are quoted below. Note that anything not adopted is still subject to change.

**HALTON** (adopted) don't seem to have established a reference  
**SEFTON'S** policies are still to be published.

**ST HELENS LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY** (adopted October 2012)

- **Policy CQL2 Trees and Woodlands**
- The multipurpose value of trees, woodlands and hedgerows will be protected and enhanced by:
  - 6 Implementing the Town in the Forest Initiative, Mersey Forest Plan and Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan

**KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY** (proposed submission November 2012)

- **CS 8 Green Infrastructure includes**  
Knowsley Council will work with partners to help deliver local and sub-regional programmes, initiatives and strategies to enhance Green Infrastructure.
- No specific reference to Mersey Forest, although paragraph 2.32 confirms Knowsley is part of the Mersey Forest initiative

**WARRINGTON LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY** (proposed submission draft June 2012)

- **CS 5 Overall Spatial Strategy – Strategic Green Links**
- The Council will work with partners to develop and adopt a strategic approach to the care and management of the Boroughs green infrastructure. A key focus of these effects will be on reinforcing and maximising the environment and socio-economic benefits from those Strategic Green Links which connect through the wider sub-region such as .....
- The Council is committed to supporting wider programmes and initiatives which seek to connect the Borough's Strategic Green Links with employment areas, residential communities and Green Infrastructural assets including the Manchester Mosses, Mersey Forest, Walton Hall Estate and the potential significant country park in the Arpley area when landfill operation have finished and restoration is complete. Paragraph 44 identifies the Mersey Forest as a delivery partner for CS5.
- **Policy QE3 Green Infrastructure**
- The preface to the policy in the vision in 2027 for Being Natural and Durable states “The green infrastructure network, which includes the countryside and the Red Rose and Mersey Forests provides an attractive setting for residents, visitors and investors.
- Paragraph 11.22 identifies the Mersey Forest as a delivery partner for QE3.

**LIVERPOOL CORE STRATEGY** (Submission draft March 2012)

- **Strategic Policy 27 – Supporting Green Infrastructure Initiatives**
- The City Council will support and help deliver the aims and objectives of local and sub regional green infrastructure initiatives and programmes that seek to enhance and create

green infrastructure in Liverpool and which deliver a wide range of environmental, economic and quality of life benefits for local communities within the City including:

- a. The Mersey Forest
- b. Green Infrastructure framework for Liverpool City Region
- c. North Mersey side Biodiversity Action Plan
- d. Liverpool City Regional Ecological Framework

#### **CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER CORE STRATEGY (Preferred Policy Options August 2012)**

- **Preferred Policy Direction –PD19 Natural Environment**
- Through Development management and by working in partnership, the Council will seek to:
  - Create, protect, manage and enhance:  
An integrated network of high quality multifunctional Green infrastructure both within the Borough and wider sub-region, including the Mersey Forest

### **What does this mean for me? e.g. landowner, community, etc**

Trees and woodlands are important for so many reasons and provide benefits which different people value. Therefore there is a reason for most people to be interested in TMF Plan. Our vision includes that “all of us will prosper thanks to the economic and social benefits of environmental regeneration”.

### **How is the delivery of the Plan funded?**

The Plan does not have attached funding mechanisms. Our Delivery Plan – reviewed annually – sets out this sort of information. We will secure funds from a variety of sources: grants, consultancy work, CSR, unrestricted donations, and innovative mechanisms such as through the planning system.

Our local authority partners contribute some core funding, and we use this to help build funds – on average for every £1 of core funding we secure £8 of additional funding.

### **This is all rather general, what about the detail?**

We produce an annual Delivery Plan which sets out more detail. Also, individual woodlands or groups of woodlands will have their own management Plans.

### **How do you take X legislation into account?**

e.g. biodiversity, habitats directive, etc

Broadly speaking, we refer to UK Forestry Standard which sets out legal and good practice requirements for the design, planting, and management of woodlands.

### **Why does TMF Plan aim so high with a 20% woodland cover target, when the Independent Panel recommended 15% nationwide, and the government response believes 12% to be a realistic target?**

Our track record shows that between 1991 and 2012, our planting rates have been 3 times higher than in the English average. This is despite the fact that we are relatively more urban than the rest of England (urban areas cover 20% of our area, compared to 5% of England).

There are also multiple reasons why an increased woodland cover will be beneficial – not least climate change.

As such, we think that we should have an ambitious target.

Our target has also been set from the bottom up. We analysed current woodland cover and landscape character for all of our policy units in order to determine an appropriate woodland

cover in each broad area. Then we summed these to give an overall target across TMF – this came to about 20% woodland. We currently have 8% woodland cover.

This cover target also ties in with FC definition of “forest” in UK Forestry Standard: “The term forest is used to describe land predominately covered in trees (defined as land under stands of trees with a canopy cover of at least 20%), whether in large tracts (generally called forests) or smaller areas known by a variety of terms (including woods, copses, spinneys or shelterbelts).”

The national targets are also for 2060 – we are not setting a date on when we will reach the 20% target. A lot will depend on factors such as changing agricultural subsidies, commodity prices, land availability and ownership.

## **What is the current woodland cover in an area?**

Across TMF the current woodland cover is 8%, up from 4% at the outset of TMF in 1991. The England average is 10%.

Please refer to the interactive map on the website [www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan) to see the woodland cover % in specific areas. For each policy unit you can see what the indicative woodland cover target is, and what the woodland cover currently is. Please let Susannah know if you'd like this information available in another format at all.

## **Who are the Steering Group members?**

<inserted Steering Group members>

## **Have you done / do you intend to do a sustainability appraisal?**

We are looking into this issue. We have consulted with an independent consultant and FC on this. Feedback from one of the authors of "Strategic Environmental Assessment and Biodiversity: Guidance for Practitioners" (2004) and "Strategic Environmental Assessment and Climate Change: Guidance for Practitioners" (2004) suggests that:

- SA is not required because only a very few plans (DPDs and SPDs, neither of which a forest plan is) require SA
- SEA is unlikely to be required because community plans are not 'required' and are not prepared by a formal 'authority'
- It could be argued that SEA should be carried out as a matter of good practice. However
  - Community forest plans generally have beneficial impacts, which could of course be enhanced, but typically don't have significant negative impacts
  - The precedent is that other haven't done it
  - Doing a 'partial' or 'voluntary' SEA could open up the planning authority to accusations that it should be more comprehensive/formal/etc