Delivering more from trees

View over Frodsham from Frodsham Hill, towards the River Weaver as it joins the River Mersey by Rock Savage. Photo by Mike Roberts.

Our vision is to get 'more from trees' to help make Merseyside and North Cheshire one of the best places in the country to live.

We will work with partners, communities and landowners across rural and urban areas, to plant trees and woodlands, improve their management, and complement other habitats. This will increase woodland cover to 20% of the area. We will revitalise a woodland culture, and bring economic and social benefits through our transformed environment.

An introduction to The Mersey Forest

The story so far...

The Mersey Forest is a growing network of trees and woodlands covering 1,370 km^2 of Merseyside and North Cheshire, which is home to 1.7 million people.

It was established in 1991 as one of England's Community Forests. It is made up of a core partnership of seven local authorities (Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St.Helens, Warrington), Natural England, the Forestry Commission, and the Environment Agency, along with a wider partnership of landowners, businesses and local communities. The partnership is coordinated by a dedicated team. Transnational working and learning is an important aspect of the partnership.

There is increasing recognition at a strategic level that green infrastructure, of which trees and woodlands are an important component, is fundamental to society. It provides benefits and ecosystem services that improve our health, wellbeing, quality of life, and prosperity. The Mersey Forest is recognised as an early and continuing champion of this agenda.
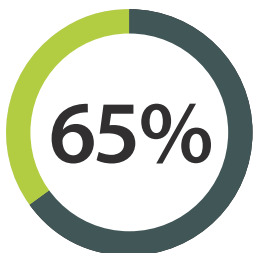
The Mersey Forest brings a wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits. In working towards the vision – to get 'more from trees' – it tackles key issues facing the area:

- **Attracting investment and strengthening the local economy** – through large-scale tree planting, making the area more attractive for businesses and skilled workers, and encouraging forest enterprises and industries.

- **Boosting health and wellbeing** – by engaging people with the great outdoors, planting street trees to create more pleasant, walkable neighbourhoods, and encouraging physical activity within the maturing woodlands.

- **Getting the most from woods** – by sustainably managing existing woodlands, helping flora and fauna to thrive, and adapting to climate change by providing urban cooling and flood alleviation.

9 million

The number of trees planted so far [1]

65%

of people say their environment has improved thanks to The Mersey Forest [2]

4% → 8%

Woodland cover has doubled from 4% to 8% [4]

£41m
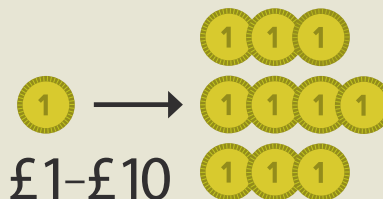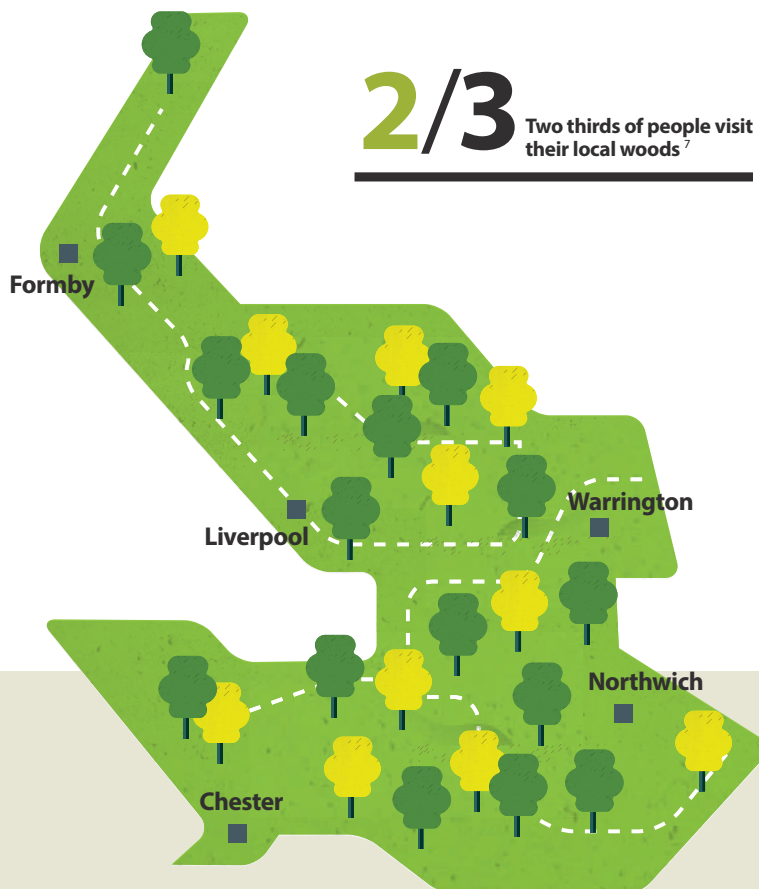
Investment secured in projects [3]

35%

Only 35% of woodland is unmanaged, compared to an England average of 50%; well managed woodland provides multiple benefits [4]

1.3m

The amount of carbon, in tonnes, that will be stored by existing woodlands over 80 years [5]

2/3

Two thirds of people visit their local woods [7]

Formby

Liverpool

Warrington

Northwich

Chester

£1–£10

1 → 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

For every £1 of core funding contributed by the local authority partners, £10 is secured from other sources [6]

About this Delivery Plan

This Delivery Plan accompanies The Mersey Forest Plan (www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan), which is the long term and strategic guide to the work of The Mersey Forest team and partners. The policy and legislative context for The Mersey Forest Plan is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains relevant. The Delivery Plan covers a five-year period and is updated annually, with progress reported at www.merseyforest.org.uk/monitoring.

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The Mersey Forest Plan sets out the vision to get 'more from trees' (page 3). It also sets out 20 overarching policies under the headings Who, What, How and Why, as well as spatial policies for each local authority area under the heading Where (page 7).

This Delivery Plan covers the topic of When; it sets out targets for the next five years, along with the budget and actions for the next year. It also sets out the role, core values and responsibilities of The Mersey Forest team, as they are largely responsible for the delivery of the actions.

If the targets for the next five years are reached then there will be significant economic, social and environmental benefits.

The economic benefits from reaching the five year targets set out in this Delivery Plan (page 8) include[8]:

- **£12.1m of gross value added**[9] - through increased employment in land management and the tourism sector, increased tourism expenditure, savings from lower work absenteeism, avoided costs for air pollution control measures, reduced energy for heating buildings, and energy and carbon savings as a result of less water entering sewers and requiring treatment.

- **£16.7m of other economic benefits**[10] - through increased carbon sequestered and stored in woodlands, increased walking and cycling leading to reduced mortality, increased recreation value for the local population, and lower carbon emissions as a result of using less energy for heating buildings.

- **Increased land and property values.**

The Policies set out in The Mersey Forest Plan:

Who

1. Partnership working
2. Empowering communities
3. Advising and supporting landowners

What

4. Planting and design
5. Long term management

How

6. Strategies, plans, policies, programmes and initiatives
7. Funding
8. Monitoring and evaluation
9. Research, evidence and mapping
10. Communications

Why

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 wellbeing
18. Natural play and education
19. Life-long learning, training, skills and jobs
20. Culture, heritage and landscape

Where

Cheshire West and Chester
Halton
Knowsley
Liverpool
Sefton
St.Helens
Warrington

Key targets

The key targets to help deliver The Mersey Forest Plan are set out in the table below. It shows the targets for the next year and the next five years, alongside what has been achieved to date. Progress in achieving these targets will be reported annually at www.merseyforest.org.uk/monitoring. The table also sets out the most relevant policy from The Mersey Forest Plan. The Mersey Forest Plan includes a specific policy on monitoring and evaluation.

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Target description	Target		Achieved to date	Policy in The Mersey Forest Plan
	2017-18	2017-22		
Woodland created	20 ha	100 ha	3,014 ha[11]	4. Planting
Street trees planted	500	2,000	12,582[12]	4. Planting
Woodland managed	100 ha	450 ha	7,054 ha[13]	5. Management
Community engagement events	250	1,250	39,765[14]	2. Communities
Landowners supported	50	250	639[15]	3. Landowners
Non-woodland habitats created or managed	75 ha	500 ha	7,570[16]	13. Wildlife
Good quality walking/cycling networks created or reopened	20 km	100 km	218 km[16]	16. Recreation
New jobs created in forest-related companies	10	40	190[17]	12. Timber 19. Jobs
Funding secured by The Mersey Forest team	£0.7m	£3.5m	£43.7m[17]	7. Funding
Return on local authority partner funding	1:4	1:4	1:10[18]	7. Funding

Budget

The secured budget for the next year totals £1.2 million, and includes £1.2 million to deliver the Action Plan (pages 10-13). These funds will go through The Mersey Forest team's accounts, but the team will also enable further funds which go directly to landowners or projects. Some funds have already been secured for future years, and the team will work to supplement these in line with the specific policy on funding in The Mersey Forest Plan (policy 7), targeting a range of funds including EU funds while still available, central government, the private sector, the planning system, consultancy work, donations, and trusts.

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2017-18 Budget

Securing Future Funds

Delivery of Action Plan

£1.2m

Core team	Supplies	Premises
£130k	£35k	£29k

£15m

Funding the team will bid for over the next five years

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£4.5m

Funding that may be secured over the next five years based on an assessment of probability; equivalent to £0.9m per year

Action Plan

The Action Plan for 2017-18 is set out in the table below. The activities/projects listed are linked to the most relevant of the Why policies set out in The Mersey Forest Plan. Arguably, each activity/project could be linked to more of the policies, especially since the policies themselves interconnect. Whilst the table does not capture all activities of The Mersey Forest team, it indicates the scope of the main projects. It also sets out the main project funders[19]. Progress in delivering these activities/projects will be reported annually at www.merseyforest.org.uk/monitoring.

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			Policy in The Mersey Forest Plan									
Activity/Project	**Description**	**Funder**	**11. Economy**	**12. Timber**	**13. Wildlife**	**14. Climate**	**15. Water**	**16. Recreation**	**17. Health**	**18. Education**	**19. Jobs**	**20. Culture**
1 million trees for children	Continuing to plant trees and engaging children in primary schools	Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs			🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳		🌳
Cheshire's Natural Health Service	Tackling health inequalities across Cheshire West through the power of nature	Cheshire West & Chester Council							🌳		🌳	
Colliers Moss	Restoring this area of greenspace for community benefits	Landfill Communities Fund			🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳
Forest Education	To create a sustainable Forest School movement across the Forest	Private sector sponsorship	🌳		🌳			🌳	🌳	🌳		

Activity/Project	Description	Funder	Policy in The Mersey Forest Plan									
			11. Economy	12. Timber	13. Wildlife	14. Climate	15. Water	16. Recreation	17. Health	18. Education	19. Jobs	20. Culture
Funding development for future projects	Developing new funding bids to provide money and support for project delivery	Partnership funding	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳
Geocaching in the Forest	Developing geocaching locations to encourage greater activity outside in the Forest	Merseyside Sports Partnership						🌳	🌳			🌳
Glazebury Natural Play Area	Improving a natural play area for Glazebury	Tesco Bags of Help						🌳	🌳	🌳		
Green Learning Environments	Transnational working to develop Forest School for pupils with additional needs	Erasmus+						🌳	🌳	🌳		
Green Streets, Ellesmere Port	New street trees linking homes to employment	Section 106 Developer Contribution	🌳			🌳	🌳		🌳		🌳	🌳
Green Infrastructure Planning	Providing tailor-made green infrastructure plans for local authorities	Local authorities	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳
Landowner support	Providing advice, guidance and support to landowners who wish to deliver aspects of The Mersey Forest Plan	Partnership Funding	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳
Natural Course	Delivering Urban Catchment Forestry demonstration sites	Life+	🌳		🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳		🌳

			Policy in The Mersey Forest Plan									
Activity/Project	**Description**	**Funder**	**11. Economy**	**12. Timber**	**13. Wildlife**	**14. Climate**	**15. Water**	**16. Recreation**	**17. Health**	**18. Education**	**19. Jobs**	**20. Culture**
Natural Health Service	Developing this in line with its Business Plan, working closely with health commissioners	Partnership funding							✓	✓	✓	
Natural Health Service - Next Steps	Specialist work developing the Natural Health Service ready to be commissioned	Big Potential							✓		✓	
Natural Play	Working with communities to improve play facilities	Chester West & Cheshire Council			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Nature4Health	Tackling health inequalities in targeted communities through the power of nature	Big Lottery Fund							✓	✓	✓	
Natural Solutions Sankey Valley	Working with landowners in the Sankey River catchment to improve the natural environment at a landscape scale	Environment Agency	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
North West Forest Forum Support	Bringing together parties interested in developing North West England's forest sector	Partnership funding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Forest	Develop the concept of a new Northern Forest from Liverpool across to Hull	Woodland Trust	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Planning and Forestry Network	A network promoting the use of the planning system to increase the quantity and quality of tree and woodland planting and management	Partnership funding	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓

			Policy in The Mersey Forest Plan									
Activity/Project	Description	Funder	11. Economy	12. Timber	13. Wildlife	14. Climate	15. Water	16. Recreation	17. Health	18. Education	19. Jobs	20. Culture
Research	Continuing action-led research to improve the way in which projects are delivered	Community Forest Trust	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳
Saltscape	Landscape scale programme of activity engaging communities in the landscape of the Weaver Valley	Heritage Lottery: Landscape Partnership Scheme			🌳	🌳	🌳				🌳	🌳
St Helens Landscape Project	Landscape improvements to a large area of the borough's natural environment	Section 106 developer contribution	🌳		🌳			🌳		🌳		🌳
Supporting groups and networks	Supporting community groups which are delivering aspects of The Mersey Forest Plan	Partnership funding / Woodland Trust			🌳			🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳
Urban GreenUP	Transnational project to tackle environmental city issues through Nature Based Solutions	Horizon 2020	🌳		🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	
Wood allotments	Developing community led woodland management to produce firewood	Partners' Funding	🌳	🌳		🌳			🌳			🌳
Woodland management and planting	Working with landowners	Forestry Commission and others	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳

The Mersey Forest Team

Whilst The Mersey Forest is a partnership, the team coordinates the partnership and is sometimes seen as the face of The Mersey Forest. The team also drives forward the delivery of the Action Plan (pages 10-13) to reach the targets (page 8). As such, the role, core values, and responsibilities of The Mersey Forest team are important in helping to deliver The Mersey Forest Plan and achieve the vision to get 'more from trees'.

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The Mersey Forest team, January 2014. Photo by Mccoy Wynne

Role

The Mersey Forest team's role corresponds closely to the Who, What and How policies set out in The Mersey Forest Plan (page 7).

Role	Examples	Policy in The Mersey Forest Plan
Coordinating and promoting partnership working	Maintaining the core partnership through Steering and Working Groups, establishing partnerships for specific projects	1. Partnership
Empowering communities	Supporting Friends of Woodlands groups, encouraging people to get involved, organising community events	2. Communities
Advising and supporting landowners	Providing help and advice on applying for grants for tree and woodland planting and management	3. Landowners
Facilitating high-quality planting and design	Designing and planting woodland in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard, whilst taking into account local context	4. Planting
Ensuring long-term management	Preparing management plans in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard and negotiating with owners	5. Management
Influencing strategies, plans, policies, programmes and initiatives	Ensuring that suitable wording can be found in local authority plans to enable delivery of The Mersey Forest Plan	6. Strategies
Securing and managing funding	Applying for a wide range of grants and other funding sources to supplement core funding	7. Funding
Monitoring and evaluation	Annual monitoring to keep track of partners' planting, public awareness surveys	8. Monitoring
Research, evidence and mapping	Developing green infrastructure planning techniques, ensuring the latest thinking underpins the delivery of The Mersey Forest Plan	9. Research
Communications	Ensuring that partners, communities and landowners are informed of activities, employing a range of methods to suit each audience	10. Communications

Core values

The Mersey Forest team's core values are to:

Work in partnership

Share information with each other

Provide flexible working conditions to enable a work/life balance

The Mersey Forest Team

Look after each other

Take responsibility and ownership

Deliver high quality projects with passion and integrity

Find ways to say yes in order to deliver The Mersey Forest Plan, rather than reasons to say no

Responsibilities

The Mersey Forest team needs to act responsibly whilst conducting their business and interacting with the wider community. Performance in relation to these responsibilities is monitored through surveys with the relevant groups.

Group/category	Responsibilities
Partners	Partnership is the basis for the work of the team. The Mersey Forest partnership put the team in place to help deliver The Mersey Forest Plan.
Suppliers	The team treats suppliers with respect and strives to understand their business needs.
Funders	The team aims to produce high quality funding applications, to deliver projects for funders, and to meet their evidence needs.
Employees and their families	Employees are the most important asset of The Mersey Forest. The need for a work-life balance is respected and an environment is created in which people can thrive.
Our wider network	The team aims to provide the same high quality, professional service to the whole Forest network, from community groups to national bodies.
The environment	The team is mindful of their impact on the wider environment and seeks to reduce the pressure that they place upon it.

Notes

1. From 1990-91 until 2012-13
2. Vision 21 (2010). Awareness Survey. Based on 1,121 telephone interviews. Interviewees were asked "Do you think that your local environment has improved in the last 10 years through the work of The Mersey Forest, for example have you seen more trees, woodlands, hedgerows, ponds, wildflowers etc?".
3. From 1994-95 until 2012-13
4. From National Forest Inventory (2010) and Mersey Forest data from 1990-91 until 2012-13
5. The C-Flow model (version 6.6e) estimates that (over an 80-year period, based on *Quercus* Yield Class 6, and assuming 10% leakage) 1 hectare of woodland would sequester 435 tonnes CO_2 or 119 tonnes carbon.
6. From 2009-10 until 2012-13
7. Vision 21 (2010). Awareness survey. Based on 1,121 telephone interviews. Of the total 1,121 interviewed, 863 (or 77% of all interviewees) have visited a named woodland in The Mersey Forest at some point. Of this 863 people, 690 (equivalent to 62% of all 1,121 people interviewed) visit less often than this.
8. Economic benefits are calculated over a 50-year period using the Green Infrastructure Valuation Toolkit www.bit.ly/givaluationtoolkit
9. 'GVA' or 'market' style benefits are those that relate best to the contribution that green infrastructure can make to a local economy in terms of the value of goods, services, and employment; measured either as production, income (for example through jobs) or expenditure.
10. These are in addition to or alternatives to the 'GVA' benefits. They include benefits that can be monetised but do not currently have a market. They are perhaps more closely associated with social, environmental and welfare economics.
11. From 1990-91 until 2014-15
12. From 2005-06 until 2014-15
13. This figure includes existing woodland managed data (from 2000-01 until 2012-13; data was also gathered from 1994-95 until 1990-2000 but under a different framework, so it is not included here) and woodland created data (from 1990-91 until 2012-13, as set out in the first row of the table).
14. From 1995-96 until 2014-15. Since 2007 only the events delivered by The Mersey Forest team have been recorded, rather than all partner events which were recorded prior to this. The data for the latest years is indicative only.
15. From 2001-02 until 2014-15. The total is of unique landowners, many of whom have been supported on numerous occasions within one year or over many years. The number is likely to be an underestimate. The annual target is for unique landowners within that year (but they may have been supported in a previous year); the five year target will duplicate landowners from each of the years (i.e. it is literally the annual target multiplied by five years).
16. From 2003-04 until 2014-15
17. From 1994-95 until 2014-15
18. From 2009-10 until 2012-15
19. There may be other funders who are not listed here, as The Mersey Forest team works to bring together different funding sources (see policy 7 of The Mersey Forest Plan).

A family plant flowers underneath their new street trees as part of a Green Streets programme in Bootle, Litherland and Seaforth, Sefton. Photo by Monty Rakusen

THE MERSEY
FOREST
more from trees

The Mersey Forest Delivery Plan
2017 - 2022