



The Mersey Forest little book of

messages



Contents

What is The Mersey Forest?	3.
Short descriptions & for policy documents	4.
Our background facts	5.
Our five facts	6.
Meeting the needs of the region	7.
Our focus	8.
People - the difference we make	9.
Places - the difference we make	10.
Economy - the difference we make	11.
Resources & contacts	12.





What is 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' since 1994.

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.

Praised as a “visionary concept”, our 'more from trees' approach brings a whole range of environmental, health and economic benefits to the region. 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.



Our one-sentence description

The Mersey Forest is one of the leading environmental regeneration initiatives in the North West of England, planting more than 8 million trees and involving over 100,000 people since 1994 to combat climate change and provide a sustainable environment for all.

Our three-word description

[Example project] is coordinated by **environmental regeneration initiative** The Mersey Forest.

Our description for policy documents

The Mersey Forest is an environmental regeneration initiative creating woodlands and involving people across Merseyside and North Cheshire.

The Mersey Forest Partnership includes seven local authorities (Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St.Helens and Warrington) as well as the Forestry Commission, Natural England and businesses including United Utilities.

The Partnership works to the 30-year Mersey Forest Plan, written in 1994 and updated in 2001. The Plan sets a target of creating 8,000 hectares of new community woodlands over its 30 years, bringing a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits. The plan is advisory and seeks to bring about changes to the character and landscape of North Cheshire and Merseyside. This provides a framework for each local authority district, enabling the implementation of policies and opportunities for changing land use.

Since 1994 the Partnership has planted over 8 million trees and brought more than 70% of the woodlands in the Forest into management to secure their long-term future.

Our **background facts**

1994

The Mersey Forest was launched in **1994** as part of the national network of **12 Community Forests**, of which it is the largest.

465 sq miles

The Forest covers **465 square miles** of Merseyside and North Cheshire.

Seven local authorities

The Mersey Forest Partnership includes **seven local authorities** (Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St.Helens & Warrington) as well as the Forestry Commission, Natural England and businesses including United Utilities.

1.5m people

The Forest is home to **1.5 million residents** – and lots of wildlife too.

8,000 hectares over 30yrs

Set out in the **30-year Mersey Forest Plan**, our target is to plant **8,000 hectares** of new woodland, an area the size of York, delivering a host of environmental, social and economic benefits.



Our five facts

Through community and partnership working, we have planted more than **8 million** trees.

To date more than **6,000 hectares** of new woodland and improved habitats have been achieved, an area 500 times the size of Wembley Stadium.

Since 1994, more than **70%** of the woodlands in The Mersey Forest have been brought into management to secure their long-term future.

For every **£1** invested in The Mersey Forest, **£8** of outputs is generated, thanks to the way we maximise our funding.

60% of people living in The Mersey Forest use their local woodlands – with nearly **20%** visiting at least once a week.



Meeting the **needs** of the region

The Mersey Forest contains **2 of the top 5** most deprived districts in the country, and **17 of England's top 40** most deprived Super Output Areas.

Per square kilometre, The Mersey Forest contains **74%** more derelict, underused or neglected land than the North West average.

The Mersey Forest is a heavily urban area (**21%** of the Forest is urban, compared to the national average of **3%**), leaving it particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts including the urban heat island effect.

Life expectancy across the Liverpool City Region is **3 years lower** than the England average, and **7 years lower** than in some parts of the South East.

Whilst much has been achieved so far, The Mersey Forest remains a place with significant areas of need.

The Forest directly addresses these needs, improving physical and mental health thanks to new and rejuvenated woodlands and green spaces, building community cohesion through projects such as our Green Streets programme, and improving the image of our towns and cities to attract investment, skilled workers and visitors.

This 'more from trees' approach is working. Since we began, 62% of residents in the Forest have noticed an improvement in their local environment, and 95% support having a Community Forest in their area.



Our focus

more from trees

people, places and a thriving economy



People - the difference we make

The Mersey Forest is created with people, not just for people. It brings a range of social benefits:

Strengthening and engaging communities

The Mersey Forest's Green Streets programme helps bring urban communities together to green their neighbourhoods and feel ownership of the improvements.

"There's more of a community feel, plus it makes the street look wonderful - and people appreciate it."
- local resident

The Forest supports a network of 11 community groups who care for their local woodlands and get people involved long-term in their local environment. Among the wider public 95% of people surveyed supported having a Community Forest in their area.

Keeping people fit and healthy

In The Mersey Forest 60% of people use their local woodlands - with nearly 20% visiting at least once a week.

Thanks to our [Discover The Mersey Forest](#) website of ideas, free maps and directions for walks and cycle rides, we're also helping people to explore new places to exercise, with over 3,000 of our 'route packs' downloaded so far.

Studies have shown that engagement with green spaces boosts both mental as well as physical health.

Natural Play

The Mersey Forest's school grounds improvement programme helps pupils thrive through 'natural play' in a greener school environment.

"Changing your playground will change your children's attitudes to their play. They will be given the opportunity to be inventive, instead of bored; have far less accidents and feel safer."
- Jill Wilkinson, Head Teacher

Pupils pick up trowels to take part in the improvements themselves, and learn about wildlife and healthy eating - with children eager to grow their own snacks in their school orchards and growing areas.

We have already worked with more than half the schools in the Forest area and now our work is taking on an extra dimension thanks to our new Forest Schools programme - which gives children the chance to spend more lesson time in the green outdoors to help reconnect with the natural environment and improve social skills and self-esteem.

OUR HOT TOPIC HEALTH

The science is clear: creating The Mersey Forest means healthier people.

Research in The Lancet has shown that green spaces can help reduce the 'health gap' between rich and poor, with a particularly strong impact on reducing heart disease and strokes.

Researchers at Columbia University have found that children who live in tree-lined streets have lower rates of asthma.

In terms of mental health, seeing trees and green spaces improves people's concentration levels and recovery from mental fatigue, reduces occurrences of aggression and domestic violence, and speeds up recovery times from operations.

Good health also boosts the economy, with the annual cost of ill-health calculated at £2 billion for the Liverpool City Region alone.

All of this demonstrates that The Mersey Forest represents a vital long-term investment in quality of life.

Places - the difference we make

Our environment faces serious challenges, ranging from climate change to habitat fragmentation. The Mersey Forest is playing a vital role in the North West's response.

Creating and managing a well-wooded landscape

Not only is The Mersey Forest helping local authorities, businesses, private landowners and others to create new woodland across the Forest, it is also ensuring that this investment is safeguarded through management plans that will ensure healthy woodlands for decades to come.

Green infrastructure planning

The Mersey Forest is widely acknowledged as a crucial player in the development of green infrastructure in the North West.

Green infrastructure is the region's life support system – the network of natural environmental components and green and blue spaces that lies within and between the North West's cities, towns and villages which provides multiple social, economic and environmental benefits.

Climate change adaptation

Trees and woodlands have a crucial role to play in helping our region adapt to inevitable climate change. Creating green infrastructure in targeted areas can keep towns and cities cool, reducing heat stress and saving lives in the face of heatwaves. Flood risk is also reduced thanks to improved surface water management, with green infrastructure also providing increased opportunities for outdoor recreation in a hotter climate.

Boosting biodiversity

Woodlands, hedgerows and ponds created as part of The Mersey Forest provide shelter for wildlife and connect together areas of valuable habitat.

A strategically planned, well connected landscape will help wildlife move to new locations as temperatures rise due to climate change.

OUR HOT TOPIC THE 10% RULE

If we increase our tree cover in towns and cities by just 10%, we can keep surface temperatures at current levels despite climate change.

This is the message of the ASCCUE (Adaptation Strategies for Climate Change in the Urban Environment) project at the University of Manchester on how the North West can rise to the challenge and 'beat the heat'.

Trees and woodland are a crucial component of our urban green infrastructure. Their powerful cooling effect is thanks to their ability to provide shade as well as the 'evaporative cooling' that takes place as they breathe.

There are no technical barriers to going the extra 10%, it is solely a question of political will. This is why The Mersey Forest is committed to engaging as many partners as possible to work together to achieve this vital target.



Economy - the difference we make

The Mersey Forest contributes both directly and indirectly to the region's economy - through creating jobs, reducing ill-health and showing off the North West at its best.

Attracting investment and increasing land and property values

By planting over 8 million trees, The Mersey Forest is improving the image of our towns and cities, a vital foundation for attracting investment, skilled workers and tourists to the region. Improvements are targeted at key sites such as derelict eyesores or key transport gateways to provide maximum impact.

The economic benefit from all of this is clear: in St. Helens, £15 million was added to property values according to the District Valuer thanks to the development of a community woodland on a former colliery site. US and UK studies have shown that houses prices in tree-lined streets can be worth 18% more than those in tree-less streets.

Timber industry, job creation and partnerships with businesses

The Mersey Forest has a creative and innovative approach to working with businesses for the benefit of the region.

We help bring timber suppliers together with the North West's top craftspeople to create great new products through our Timber Network.

150 new jobs have been created and training programmes run to help excluded pupils get back on track.

Businesses ranging from national vehicle rental firms to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service are also contributing to the creation of the Forest through our innovative Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.

Tourism, recreation and leisure

A new generation of Forest Parks is developing visitor infrastructure and attracting visitors, and there is something for everyone at our walks and cycle rides website, [Discover The Mersey Forest](#).

Value for money

For every £1 invested in The Mersey Forest, £8 of outputs is generated thanks to the way we maximise funding. £31 million of investment in projects has been secured so far. When surveyed, 100% of the Forest's local authority partners were satisfied or very satisfied with The Mersey Forest Partnership & Team.

OUR HOT TOPIC THE 11 BENEFITS

Through the Natural Economy Northwest project, new research from ECOTEC and AMION sets out a wealth of evidence to show how our green infrastructure adds real value to the region's economy categorised into 11 key benefits:

Economic growth and investment

Businesses attract and retain more motivated staff in greener settings

Land and property values

Views of natural landscapes can add up to 18% to property values

Labour productivity

Green spaces near workplaces reduce sickness absence, increasing productivity

Tourism

Rural tourism supports 37,500 jobs in the North West

Products from the land

40,000 people work in agriculture in the North West

Health and well being

Green infrastructure reduces pollution which leads to asthma and heart disease

Recreation and leisure

Footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways enable healthy, low-cost recreation

Quality of place

Community-owned green spaces can create jobs and local pride

Land and biodiversity

Green infrastructure provides vital habitats and jobs managing the land

Flood alleviation and management

Urban green spaces reduce pressure on drainage and flood defences

Climate change adaptation and mitigation

Green infrastructure can counter soaring summer temperatures in cities

Through these 11 benefits, the Forest makes a huge economic contribution to the North West.

Resources & contacts

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the little book of messages or any of our complementary documents, don't hesitate to get in touch with The Mersey Forest Team. We are happy to help. Simply contact:

Mike Bray
Marketing & PR Officer
The Mersey Forest Team
mike.bray@merseyforest.org.uk
Tel: 01925 816217

This little book of messages is just one of a suite of documents that you may find of interest:

Local authority fact sheets

Your at a glance guide to the achievements of The Mersey Forest in each local authority:

www.merseyforest.org.uk/cheshirewestandchester.pdf
www.merseyforest.org.uk/halton.pdf
www.merseyforest.org.uk/knowsley.pdf
www.merseyforest.org.uk/liverpool.pdf
www.merseyforest.org.uk/sefton.pdf
www.merseyforest.org.uk/sthelens.pdf
www.merseyforest.org.uk/warrington.pdf

One page introduction to the Forest

Great for emailing or printing out for newcomers:

www.merseyforest.org.uk/forestintro.pdf

Sources document

Sources for statistics given in this messages PDF:

www.merseyforest.org.uk/sources.pdf

House writing style

A quick and easy guide to gaining consistency in the way we write Mersey Forest publications is here:

www.merseyforest.org.uk/housestyle.pdf

Logo

Our logo is available to download here:

www.merseyforest.org.uk/logo

Visual identity guidelines

Designing Forest publications? A simple guide to logo use, corporate colours and more is here:

www.merseyforest.org.uk/visualidentity.pdf

