

The Future

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This strategy is the start of a process. It identifies aims and objectives and sets out policies focused on the key issues facing trees, woods and forests in Dorset. The future of Dorset's trees, woods and forests will be dependent on the ability of those involved in their management to adapt to new demands, opportunities and markets, aided by the support of local and central government.

Biodiversity, economics and social needs are intrinsically linked to successful management of woods and forests. What is needed is sound advice and support to re-energise and add value for the owners, whether the main purpose is for wood products, recreation, biodiversity or social benefit.

Predicting the future is impossible, but with the growing evidence for climate change we can be sure that changes will occur. Climate change will impact on trees, woods and forests that exist and predictions suggest that while some tree species, such as beech could not tolerate the change, species such as Douglas fir could be grown more extensively in Dorset and the South West.



New woodland planting © David Rees

The Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change is a voluntary pledge to address the issues of climate change. It represents a high-level, broad statement of commitment that any council can make to its own community. The declaration was originally launched in October 2000 at a conference in Nottingham with 200 leaders, chief executives and senior managers of UK



local government. To mark the fifth anniversary of the declaration it was re-launched on 5 December 2005 at the second National Councils Climate Conference. The new version of the declaration is broadly similar to the original, but better reflects current thinking. To date Dorset County Council, West Dorset District Council, Weymouth and Portland Borough Council, Purbeck District Council and Bournemouth Borough Council have all signed up.

Government and local policies already exist to reduce carbon emissions and schemes exist that enable the off-setting of carbon by funding tree planting or renewable energies in various parts of the world. Opportunities in Dorset are being investigated with the aim of providing a carbon off-setting scheme to enable the planting of community/urban forests, providing green infrastructure, reducing habitat fragmentation and supporting the installation of biomass boilers.



Chipping for woodfuel © Forestry Commission

In the timber industry prices for homegrown timber have been depressed for over ten years, but new markets are opening up with the help of new technologies, particularly for small round wood and co-products such as woodchip. Recreation is beginning to generate income for woodland owners whilst the market for sawn timber in construction and furnishings is growing. All this is leading to stronger demand and higher price, which is helping woodland owners and businesses to expand and plan for the future more positively than for many years.

Woods and forests managed commercially retain their value in several ways, whether for timber, biodiversity, recreation, education, shooting or other social benefits, examples being Moors Valley Country Park at Ringwood and Wareham Forest. With the right type of management woods and forests can support and enhance these uses, with many areas being able to sustain 'multi-use' activities. In addition to the historic environment, native species and habitats being under threat from lack of management, there is a very real threat from rising deer numbers and non-native species such as grey squirrels and rhododendron. These species need to be controlled to enable our native woodland flora and fauna to flourish and regenerate naturally.



The multi-purpose use of the county's trees, woods and forests should be actively promoted and supported by both the private sector and authorities. There is a need to raise the profile of the benefits of multi-purpose woodlands and forestry including its economic values.

Health benefits of trees, woods and forests in towns and cities have been documented since the early 1980's. Reports show that hospital recovery rates where patients have a view of trees are significantly quicker than those that don't and that woodlands can provide significant health benefits, both mental and physical (Ulrich R.S 1984)

Looking at, or travelling through, treed landscapes reduce states of stress and anxiety. Regular moderate exercise in well designed, accessible woods can lead to a reduction in heart disease and other physical illnesses. Strenuous exercise, such as mountain biking and orienteering, can have greater beneficial health effects. Improvements in air quality as trees filter pollutants and provision of shade in urban areas reduces ultraviolet radiation exposure.

Social benefits relate to improved physical and mental health, enhanced living environments, increased community pride, recreation, education and community engagement.

Economic benefits, in addition to employment and the value of timber, include positive influences on inward investment, increased property values, reduced energy costs, regeneration of derelict and damaged land and tourism.

Identification of appropriate woods and forests that can be most effectively utilised by the tourism industry and local communities for both organised sport and informal recreation within Dorset would enable a coordinated and planned approach to marketing and development on a county wide basis.



Firewood © Forestry Commission

The benefits and opportunities provided by woodlands and forests should be reflected in county and district planning guidance, local development frameworks and local plans. Examples of benefits include use of local timber for sustainable development, planning for community access and education, achieving healthier lifestyles and providing sources of renewable energy.

A county woodland initiative, such as Woodlink, encourages woodland and forest owners/managers in both the public and private sector to work more closely together. This can stimulate greater use of local timber in the woodchain and to improve marketing in order to retain a higher proportion of timber value within the region.

Efforts need to be made to raise awareness amongst developers, specifiers, timber processors and the construction industry of the potential to increase local timber sourcing for construction and ancillary purposes. With increasing transport costs and carbon emissions utilising local timber products has a commercial as well as environmental advantage.

Steps could also be taken to make education and training in forestry and related construction, environmental and leisure sectors more relevant to students' needs for the multipurpose agenda in future forestry work. Across the Southwest a need to develop mechanisms to coordinate practical experience has been identified, following on from college-based studies.

The use of woodfuel from existing woodlands and ensuring that its potential is recognised by developers, planners and woodland owners should be promoted. Further research should be undertaken at a county level to assess the potential of utilising thinnings and low-grade wood for heat and energy generation.

A network of contacts representing sporting interests should be developed to stimulate economic activity based around the management of deer and shooting interests. Not only would this benefit those involved and gain higher prices for game and venison, it would act as an incentive to undertake proper and targeted management of wild deer populations.

A certification scheme, Direct from Dorset, exists to promote and market local produce that includes timber, woodland products and artefacts, venison (and other food products), woodfuel, and charcoal. This scheme should be supported by woodland owners and managers as it can add value to products.

Partnerships should be identified that would provide opportunities for closer collaboration between successful initiatives whether they be sport, recreation, tourism, timber production, development, community projects or education.