

## What can we do?

### The Urban Forest needs action to remain resilient

The urban forest needs self reliant, long lived trees. Younger trees should become our mature trees of the future – yet there were fewer younger trees in the urban forest in 2008 compared to 1992.<sup>23</sup> Larger trees, bringing particularly strong benefits<sup>24</sup> are being cut down faster than they are being replaced.<sup>23</sup>

Trees in urban areas can be badly affected by pests and disease,<sup>25</sup> and a pathway for spreading these to the wider environment. It is critical we keep alert. We must plant a range of species to improve resilience to diseases and climate change.<sup>26</sup> The Forestry Commission is working to slow, and where possible prevent, the spread of pests and diseases in close partnership with public and private sector organisations.

### Let's work together to protect, improve and expand our Urban Forest

Local authorities are key players in protecting the Urban Forest, in a complex delivery environment with other partners and landowners.<sup>23</sup> The Forestry Commission can help raise the profile of the urban forest, through evidence and awareness raising.

Local authorities can make sure that the opportunities trees and woodlands provide for economic, environmental and social value, are reflected in policies and budgets.<sup>27</sup> This can include valuing the urban forest in your area (using tools such as iTree<sup>28</sup>), and making space for it in planning policy.<sup>29</sup>

### Innovative investment

Public sector funding for managing the urban forest is reducing.<sup>23, 30</sup> There are hard choices to be made.

Yet many innovative sources of investment are arising, including:

- Private sponsorship for local tree partnerships, such as TreeBristol.<sup>31</sup>
- Developer contributions – in the Atlantic Gateway (Merseyside), Peel Holdings are contributing 1% of their profits to a Community Environmental Fund.<sup>32</sup> In the Thames Chase Community Forest, the Forestry Commission has developed an innovative funding model in partnership with with **Ingrebourne Valley Ltd** to restore former landfill sites into community woodlands.
- Birmingham City Council is exploring a Tree Bond, financing Urban Forest management from reduced energy bills through use of woodfuel.<sup>22</sup>
- Local Enterprise Partnerships can fund Green Infrastructure development.
- Charities can hold the key to unlocking corporate social responsibility funding.

[forestry.gov.uk/england](http://forestry.gov.uk/england)

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# The Urban Forest

How trees and woodlands can improve our lives in our towns and cities

We all love England's trees and woodlands. And they give us a lot in return.

More than 80% of people in England live in urban areas. This means it is the trees and woodlands in our towns and cities which enhance the lives of the most people, the most often.

Trees and woodlands provide clear advantages for local economies, local environments, and local people. They punch above their weight as part of our 'green infrastructure'.

In fact, this 'Urban Forest' makes up 15% of all the woodland in England. To enjoy the benefits it offers, we must work together to protect, improve and expand it.

**urban forest** (noun) 1. the whole population of trees and woodlands in urban areas<sup>1</sup> – whether owned by private landowners, institutions or local authorities. Key part of England's network of green spaces.

## Good for the Economy

### Urban forests... grow local economies

Every £1 invested in the Mersey Forest's community trees and woodlands has created £9.20 in local economic benefits.<sup>2</sup>

London's street trees alone have been valued at £4.2bn. This places them on a par with other critical urban infrastructure such as street lighting, footways and street furniture and demonstrates the need for parity of investment in urban forests to secure them for future generations.<sup>3</sup>



### ...increase residential value

Creation of Bold Colliery Community Woodland has directly enhanced the value of property in the surrounding area, by around £15 million. The project has helped secure a further £75 million of new development.<sup>4</sup>



### ...are good for business

Employees with access to natural green space can be more productive<sup>5</sup>, with greater job satisfaction.<sup>6</sup> Customers spend more time and money in retail areas with trees.<sup>7</sup>

The 81% of the UK that live in urban areas drive demand for the wood product economy. 1/5 of wood products we use come from UK woodland.

## Good for the Environment

### Urban forests... cool the air naturally

Trees in cities can cool the air by 2°C to 8°C, reducing heat-related illness.<sup>8</sup>

### ...reduce pollution, and tackle climate change

Appropriately placed trees in cities can reduce very large quantities of air pollutants<sup>9</sup>. In Torbay, trees provide £1.3 million worth of pollution removal, £5 million carbon storage and £173k carbon sequestration.<sup>10</sup>



### ...combat flooding

Trees reduce the impact of heavy rain and floods, making Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems more effective. In Milwaukee, the urban forest reduced run off flow by 22% and provided more than \$15 million in benefits.<sup>11</sup>

### And another thing...

Green space with good levels of trees is less costly to maintain than grass.<sup>12</sup>

## Good for People

### Urban forests... mean relaxation and enjoyment

More than 2/3 of respondents to a recent survey visited woodlands in and around towns in the last few years. The top woodland activities were exercise, relaxation and, for parents, playing with their children.<sup>13</sup>



### ...make people healthy and happy

Using the urban forest regularly improves physical health – reduced obesity, heart rate and blood pressure – as well as cognitive benefits, improved mood, increased self esteem, and social contact.<sup>14</sup>

### ...bring communities closer

Community groups accessing Big Tree Plant funding enjoyed multiple benefits, from developing community spirit, to improving their environment and nature conservation.<sup>15</sup>

## But is green space benefiting everyone?

### Half of England's population lives in or within reach of a Community Forest.<sup>16</sup>

People are most likely to visit green spaces – and therefore enjoy the benefits of urban woodland – closest to their homes.<sup>17, 18</sup>



### But not everyone's benefiting

Availability of quality green spaces varies, particularly in inner cities.<sup>19</sup> People in deprived urban areas underuse the most convenient local green spaces when they are of poor quality and feel unsafe.<sup>20</sup>

In inner city London, where a large proportion of residents are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME), there is 11 times less green space than in outer London where residents are mainly from non-BAME communities.<sup>18, 21</sup> The Mayor of London's Street Tree Initiative is planting in areas that lack green space.

### Green space is a good investment

In Birmingham, green space is mapped alongside the Potential Years of Life Lost (against national life expectancy). In areas with the most green space, total Potential Years of Life Lost was nearly 4 times lower than in the area with least green space.<sup>22</sup>

