

Woodland Creation case study

Chatsworth Estate

Transforming underused land into profitable woodland



Turning over a new leaf

Renowned for its rich history, the iconic Chatsworth Estate covers more than 14,000 hectares of the Derbyshire and Staffordshire countryside, comprised of farmland, woodland and moorland. You would be forgiven for thinking that few improvements could be made to this idyllic and popular visitor attraction. Yet, Chatsworth Estate's forestry manager, John Everitt, unearthed an opportunity to transform six hectares of land into a flourishing woodland. Planted adjacent to an existing and thriving woodland, the woods will expand wildlife habitats in the area, capture carbon, generate income through timber production, and provide a natural flood defence to the down-stream and low-lying village of Beeley.

"The village of Beeley is down-stream and has a few flooding issues so we were keen to create a better riparian habitat and to produce a commercial crop for the future."

John Everitt, Forestry Manager,
Chatsworth and Bolton Abbey Estates

Key facts

- **Type of woodland:** Mixed broadleaf and conifer
- **Number of hectares planted:** 6 hectares
- **Date planted:** 2017
- **Species:** Douglas fir, high-density oak and suitable riparian broadleaf species
- **Grant used:** Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation grant, with technical advice and scheme approval by the Forestry Commission
- **Key objectives:** Plant a mixed and multipurpose woodland to produce a commercial crop for the future, while achieving landscape and conservation objectives. Provide natural flood management through riparian planting to the down-stream village of Beeley.

Right tree, right place, for the right reasons

With John's forestry background and an appreciation of the many benefits woodland can bring to an estate like Chatsworth, he was aware of the planning needed before planting any trees.

Working with the Forestry Commission's specialist local Woodland Officer, Tristan Galletley, the pair began to develop a plan to support Chatsworth's landscape and conservation objectives. Planting of this nature would complement the local landscape, by extending and blending the existing woodland down the valley. The woodland would offer additional habitat for specialist woodland bird species such as tree pipit, lesser redpoll, wood warbler and nightjar in the short to medium term, as well as redstart, pied wagtail, spotted flycatcher and lesser spotted woodpecker in the longer term.

The plan involved planting a mixture of conifer, including Douglas fir, and riparian broadleaf – including alder, willow, woody shrubs and high-density oak that grows well in the area. The oak was sourced from France and Germany to incorporate species that would be resilient to a changing climate. Following a bad drought in 2019, around 80-90% of the oaks planted were lost. Loss of trees due to unforeseen weather events is a risk of forestry, however support may be available to replant lost trees in exceptional circumstances, depending on your funding mechanism.

"Creating woodland is not a decision to be made lightly, you need to do it for the right reasons and it has to work with the land, but it can bring valuable money into the farm business and bring multiple benefits for the land."

John Everitt,
Forestry Manager,
Chatsworth and Bolton
Abbey Estates

Jemima Letts, Assistant Forester, John Everitt, Forestry Manager, Chatsworth and Bolton Estates, and George Milne, Graduate Forester

"Here at Chatsworth we're focused on mixed and multipurpose forestry with multiple benefits, so it was easy for us to do the right thing when incentives are supporting us."

John Everitt, Forestry Manager, Chatsworth and Bolton Abbey Estates



Enjoying the fruits of their labour

Alongside generating a fruitful return from timber, the woods will continue to provide a locally sustainable supply of building materials for generations to come.

Chatsworth Estate is having a positive impact on the wider environment by capturing carbon and boosting biodiversity, for example there has been a significant increase in the butterfly population.

The riparian planting scheme offers a natural flood management solution for the neighbouring village of Beeley, by providing additional water percolation – a natural process in which surface water is gradually filtered through the soil – and by reducing cross-slope run-off in an area known for down-stream flash flooding. The woodland has improved local riparian habitats, which has benefitted invertebrates and provided scrubby habitats ideal for woodland birds.

"We run a profitable woodland business and this is due to a combination of grant income, supplemented by timber sales and adding value to our timber products."

John Everitt,
Forestry Manager,
Chatsworth and Bolton
Abbey Estates



"The carbon benefits of trees are well-known, but there are also immediate improvements in terms of biodiversity, and creating a timber resource which will provide a locally sustainable supply of building materials for generations to come."

John Everitt, Forestry Manager, Chatsworth and Bolton Abbey Estates

"Expertise is needed when it comes to woodland creation, but this can be brought in by working with Forestry Commission specialist staff – who will advise you on who, what, when and how."

John Everitt,
Forestry Manager,
Chatsworth and Bolton
Abbey Estates

Top Tips

1. Speak to your local Woodland Creation Officer for expert advice
2. Be clear on your objectives and remember that woodland creation needs to be done for the right reasons and must work with your land
3. Incorporate climate change resilient tree species into your woodland design
4. Woodland management is key to help establish a resilient woodland, capable of producing a commercial crop for the future



Discover how forestry can benefit you

Find out more about how the Forestry Commission can help you create woodland.

Visit: www.gov.uk/forestry/tree-planting-overview

