

Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators

Headline Performance Update
30 September 2023

Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators Headline Performance Update at 30 September 2023 (First Release)

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Forestry Commission headline indicators by goal | |
| Goal one: More trees, more diverse species, growing & thriving | |
| New planting of woodland and trees in England | 6 |
| Number of new resilient species becoming established | 9 |
| Goal two: Better managed woods & forests that are protected and improving | |
| Proportion of woodland in England sustainably managed | 10 |
| Number of pests and diseases becoming established | 11 |
| Proportion of known tree felling in England carried out with Forestry Commission approval | 13 |
| Goal three: Bigger benefits for nature, climate, people and the economy | |
| Carbon captured by England's woodland | 14 |
| Natural Capital Value of England's forests and woodlands | 15 |
| Ecological condition of woodland in England | 16 |
| % of adults in England who visited a forest or woodland | 17 |
| Gross Value Added of forestry sector for the economy in England | 18 |

Introduction

1. The Forestry Commission are government's forestry and woodland experts. Our long-term vision is helping to tackle some of society's biggest challenges with thriving trees, woods and forests. Trees provide a uniquely versatile and proven solution to a range of today's problems, from reducing carbon in the atmosphere and creating habitats for biodiversity, through to supporting rural economies, providing timber and relieving the burdens on our health services.
2. Our three goals describe what needs to happen to bring about the vision and are set out in *Thriving for the Future: Forestry Commission Strategy 2023-28*¹. The goals are:
 - Goal 1: More trees, more diverse species, growing and thriving
 - Goal 2: Better managed woods & forests that are protected and improving
 - Goal 3: Bigger benefits for nature, climate, people and the economy
3. The Forestry Commission publishes a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) to highlight our contribution towards these three goals and to show barometers of trends in the wider forestry sector in England. Our use of indicators also reflects our commitment to evidence-based working, and to ensuring that there is a robust data available to the forestry sector to underpin policies and operational decisions. As such the KPIs also reflect our strong commitment to deliver the Government's plans for the environment as set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan², the England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024³ and the Tree Health Resilience Strategy 2018⁴.
4. We have reviewed our headline indicators to ensure that these align well with the Forestry Commission's vision and goals. There are now ten headline indicators as listed in Table 1. The full set of KPIs were most recently reported in the *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2022-23*, published⁵ in June 2023. A mid-year interim report for 2023-24 for the ten headline indicators is provided in this *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Headline Performance Update at 30 September 2023*.
5. The coverage of all our key performance indicators is England, and figures are at country level. Most of the indicators are based on statistical and geographical analysis of Forestry Commission administrative data, the National Forest Inventory from Forest Research, surveys conducted by or commissioned for us by the Forest Research statistics team, data available from other parts of Defra Group and other available data collections. The Government Internal Audit Agency have reviewed and assured the latest and previous annual out-turn statistics. This is an Official Statistics publication, produced with a view to adhering to the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics (Office for Statistics Regulation and UK Statistics Authority, 2022).

¹ Forestry Commission (2023) *Thriving for the Future: Forestry Commission Strategy 2023-28*, 44 pages, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/forestry-commission-strategy-2023-2028>

² HM Government (2018) *A Green Future: Our Plan to Improve the Environment*, London: Defra, 151 pages, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

³ UK Government (2021) *The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024*, London: Defra, 38 pages, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-trees-action-plan-2021-to-2024>

⁴ Defra (2018) *Tree Health Resilience Strategy*, London: Defra, 63 pages at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-health-resilience-strategy-2018>

⁵ Forestry Commission (2023) *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2022-23*, Bristol: Forestry Commission, 60 pages, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forestry-commission-key-performance-indicators-report-for-2022-23>

Table 1: Forestry Commission Headline Key Performance Indicators

| Key outcome | Headline indicator |
|--|--|
| Goal one: | |
| More trees, more diverse species, growing & thriving | |
| Expanding tree cover | New planting of woodland and trees in England ¹ |
| Increase diverse species | Number of new resilient species becoming established ³ |
| Goal two: | |
| Better managed woods & forests that are protected and improving | |
| Sustainably managing more of England's woods and forests | Proportion of woodland in England sustainably managed ¹ |
| Protecting trees from pests, diseases and invasive species | Number of pests and diseases becoming established ² |
| Preventing illegal felling of trees | Proportion of known tree felling in England carried out with Forestry Commission approval ¹ |
| Goal three: | |
| Bigger benefits for nature, climate, people and the economy | |
| Making woods and forests work for tackling the climate crisis | Carbon captured by England's woodland ² |
| Enhancing the natural capital of trees, woods and forests for the nation | Natural Capital Value of England's forests and woodlands ² |
| Making woods and forests work for nature recovery | Ecological condition of woodland in England ² |
| Making woods and forests work for people and communities | % of adults in England who visited a forest or woodland ² |
| Making woods and forests work for the economy | Gross Value Added of forestry sector for the economy in England ² |

Notes to Table 1:

1. This indicator is reported twice per annum at 31 March and 30 September
2. Updates to this indicator are reported annually
3. This indicator is currently being developed

6. In November 2022 we sought views from the users of the key performance indicator statistics on proposals to changes the frequency of reporting the headline indicators. We received no objections so the cycle for reporting headline indicators has moved from quarterly to half-yearly.
7. We now publish:
 - Updates on the ten headline Forest Commission indicators twice per annum: full year out-turns to 31 March, with a single interim report for the first half of the year to 30 September for the indicators where data are available at that time or year
 - Updates on the six headline Forestry England indicators annually
 - Reports on the full suite of all Forestry Commission indicators annually
8. See the [Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators web pages on GOV.UK](#) for these and other reports in this statistical series.

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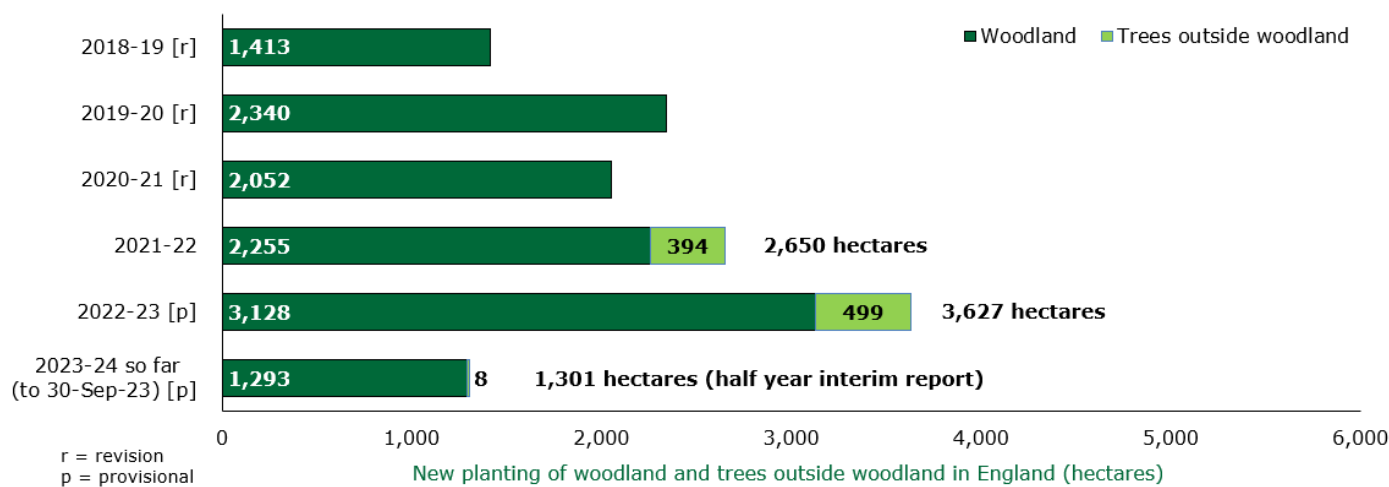
Enquiries: evidence@forestrycommission.gov.uk

16 November 2023

Goal one: More trees, more diverse species, growing and thriving

New planting of woodland and trees in England

Figure 1: New planting of woodland and trees in England, 2018-19 to 30 September 2023



Notes: Statistics to 2021-22 are for new planting of woodland; from 2022-23 onwards for woodland and trees outside woodland. Statistics in the bar chart may not sum due to rounding. The figure for 2019-20 has been revised from 2,358 hectares to 2,340 hectares to incorporate more accurate data on Forestry England’s new planting of woodland.

Source: [Forestry Statistics 2023](#) (Forest Research) and Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators.

9. An area of 1,293 hectares of new woodland creation in England was reported in the first six months of 2023-24, 60% more than reported for the first six months of 2022-23. In addition, Government supported the planting of 6,000 trees outside woodland (approximately 8 hectares). Total new creation of woodland and planting of trees in England in the first half of 2023-24 was 1,301 hectares (approximately 2,114,000 trees).

Table 2: New planting of woodland and trees in England, 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023

| New planting by type of support | Area of woodland newly planted, 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 (hectares) | Area of woodland newly planted, 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 (equivalent in number of trees) |
|--|---|--|
| Woodland¹ | | |
| Government-supported | | |
| Countryside Stewardship woodland | 14 ^(1a) | 24,000 |
| England Woodland Creation Offer | 929 | 1,526,000 |
| High Speed 2 Woodland Fund | 7 | 14,000 |
| Forestry England | 107 | 311,000 |
| Countryside Stewardship: other tree planting options | 49 ^(1b) | 78,000 |
| Northern Forest | 0 | 0 |
| National Forest Company | 0 | 0 |
| Sub-total Government-supported | 1,107 | 1,954,000 |
| Other support and non-governmental organisations | | |
| Woodland Carbon Guarantee | 187 | 154,000 |
| Woodland Trust | 0 | 0 |
| Sub-total | 187 | 154,000 |
| Total woodland | 1,293 hectares of woodland | 2,108,000 trees within woodland |
| New planting of trees outside woodland by type of support | | |
| Trees outside woodland² | | |
| Government-supported | | |
| Countryside Stewardship single trees | 8 ^(2a) | 6,000 |
| Total trees outside woodland | Approx. 8 hectares | 6,000 trees outside woodland |
| Grand total woodland and trees outside woodland | Approx. 1,301 hectares within and outside woodland | 2,114,000 trees within and outside woodland |

Notes to Table 2:

1. Statistics for woodland are for planting that meets the National Forest Inventory (NFI) definition of woodland, namely as land with a minimum area of 0.5 hectare under stands of trees, and tree crown cover of at least 20%, or the potential to achieve this. The minimum width for woodland is 20 metres. All the statistics shown for new planting of woodland are based directly on returns for that respective contribution, except in two cases where returns expressed in tree numbers have been converted to an approximate area equivalent in hectares based on the nature of the schemes. These are a) Countryside Stewardship at 1,733 trees to 1 hectare and b) Countryside Stewardship: other tree planting options at 1,600 trees to 1 hectare.
2. Statistics on trees outside woodland have been converted to an approximate equivalent area in hectares, based on (a) the professional advice of the Trees and Woodland Scientific Advisory Group an assumed stocking density of 800 trees to 1 hectare has been applied, except (b) where we have actual scheme records or (c) there is a need for a mix of both.
3. The density of tree planting, in numbers of trees planted per hectare of land, varies between planting schemes.
4. There are no data available at the mid-year point for several of the contributors. This table therefore necessarily includes only reports on the contributions to new planting for which there are data about the first half of the financial year. The next report for all contributions is planned to be included in our report for the full 2023-24 financial year. This report is scheduled to be published on 20 June 2024.
5. Areas of woodland are rounded to the nearest hectare and tree numbers are approximate and rounded to the nearest 1,000 trees. Statistics in the table may not sum due to rounding.
6. This indicator at present includes new planting of woodland that is either supported by Government or that facilitated by the Woodland Carbon Guarantee or supported by the Woodland Trust, and for which we have received records. It is anticipated that future reports will include other new planting of woodland and trees in England.

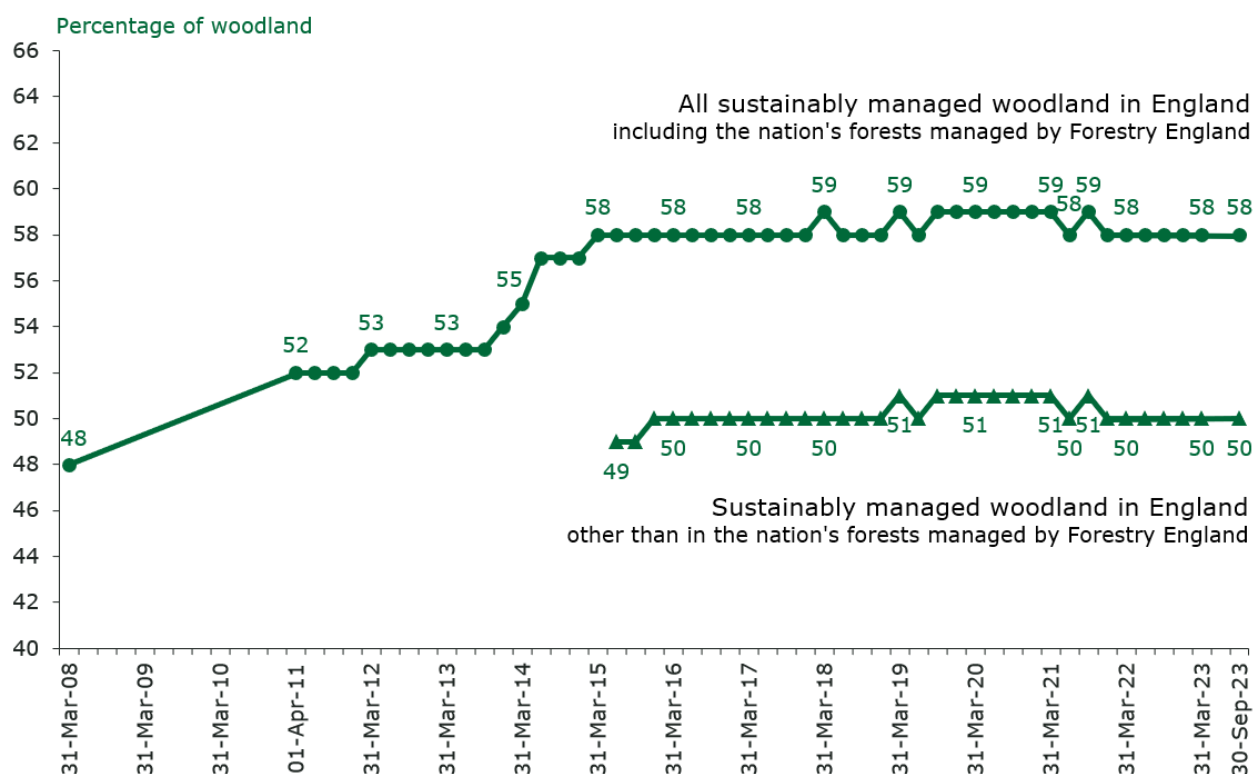
Number of new resilient species becoming established

This indicator is new and currently being developed.

Goal two: Better managed woods & forests that are protected and improving

Proportion of woodland in England sustainably managed

Figure 2: Proportion of woodland in England sustainably managed, 31 March 2008 to 30 September 2023

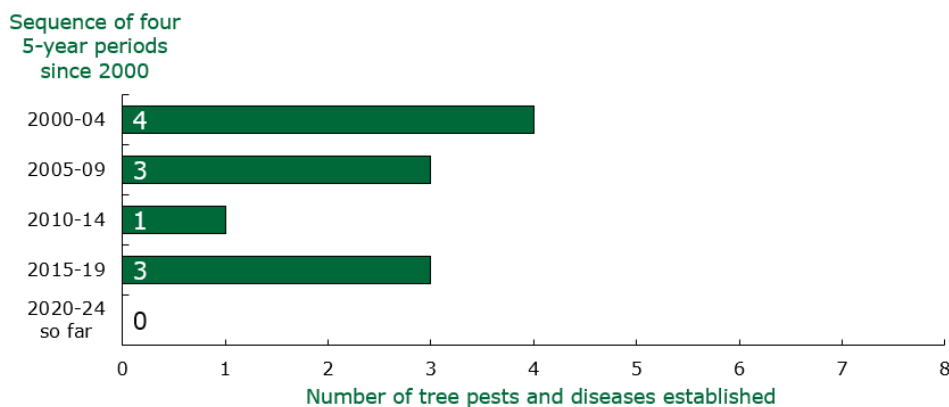
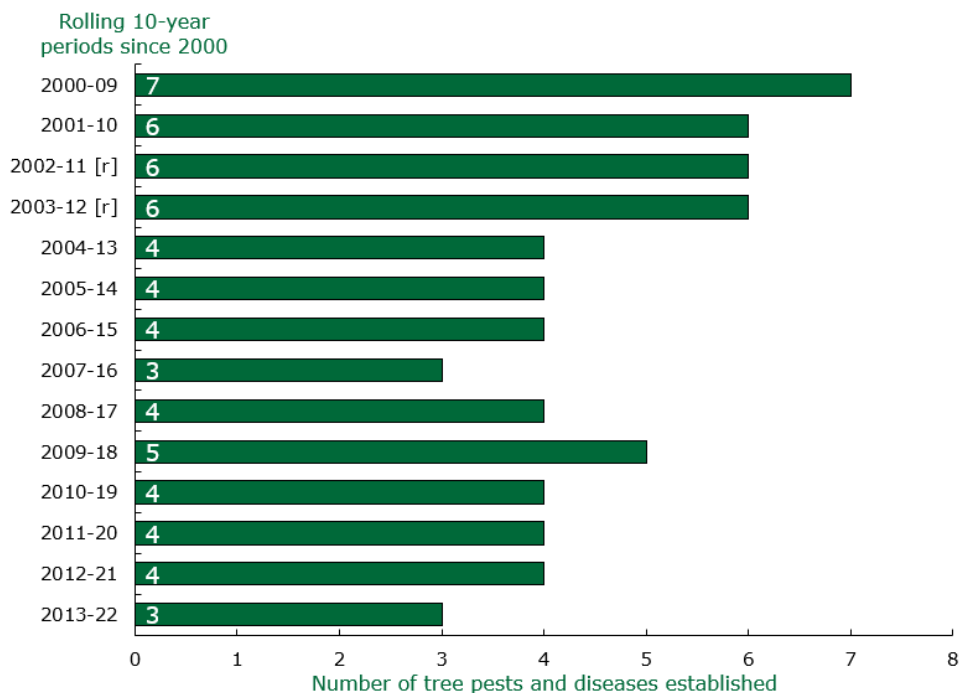


Source: Forestry Commission administrative data and the [National Forest Inventory](#) (Forest Research).

10. As at 30 September 2023, 58% of all woodland in England was considered sustainably managed; totalling 766,000 hectares of woodland in management (at this date, when rounded). The equivalent figure for woodland other than in the nation's forests was 50%, totalling 552,000 hectares of woodland in management (at this date, when rounded).
11. Our definition of 'sustainably managed' is woodland managed to the UK Forestry Standard that has a Woodland Management Plan, for which we have made a previous grant of felling licence in the last 15 years, and other management activity. It also includes, for example, all woodland in the nation's forests managed by Forestry England and all woodland on Defence Infrastructure Organisation training areas. It is recognised that other woodland might be considered as managed as well.
12. Demand for timber and timber products remains high, and there is scope to further increase the area of woodland sustainably managed to meet demand for UK grown timber. This will help improve woodland resilience, manage tree pests and diseases, and reduce England's reliance on timber imports in the face of global supply-chain uncertainties.

Number of pests and diseases becoming established

Figure 3: Number of tree pests and diseases becoming established, 2000-09 to 2013-22



Source: Forestry Commission administrative data.

13. Updates to this indicator are reported annually⁶. The most recent report is as follows.

14. The number of additional tree pests and diseases becoming established in England within a rolling 10-year period fell from a peak of seven in the 10-year period 2000-09 to a low of three in 2007-16 and 2013-22.

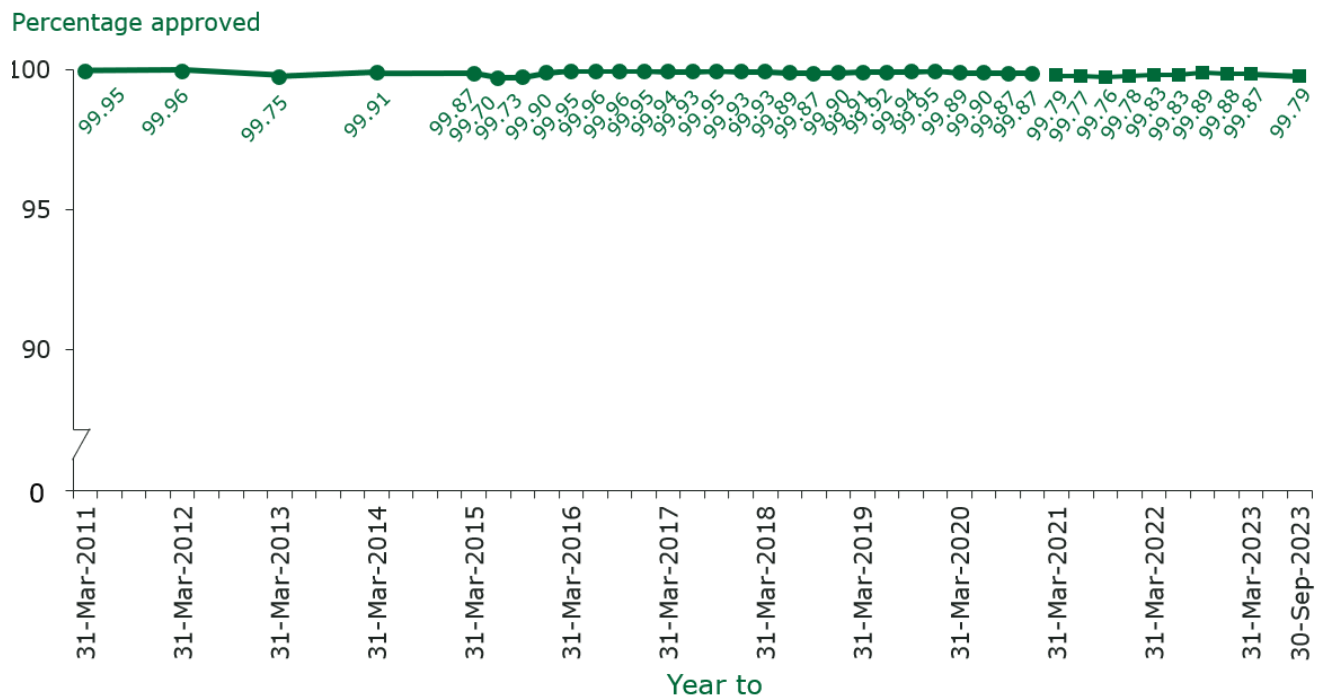
⁶ Forestry Commission (2023) Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2022-23, Bristol: Forestry Commission, 60 pages, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forestry-commission-key-performance-indicators-report-for-2022-23>

15. In the most recent ten-year period (2013-22), three tree pests and diseases became 'established' in England:

- a. Oriental chestnut gall wasp (*Dryocosmus kuriphilus*): The wasp population continues to spread and is now present at over 150 sites across southern England and the Midlands. In 2021, following a robust scientific review, approval was given for the release of a natural biological control agent, parasitoid wasp called *Torymus sinensis*, to help reduce the spread of Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp in England to protect the health of sweet chestnut trees. *Torymus sinensis* was already present naturally in England but in very low numbers. Further releases of the parasitoid will enable the population to build up to a level to effectively control Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp. This method of biological control is used successfully in many countries across Europe.
- b. Sweet chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*): Surveillance has continued across England to determine the extent of the disease, with a view to removing infected trees where possible. There have been no significant new findings of the disease in the last year, and ongoing monitoring and management of sites is in place along with an extensive programme of research to inform longer term management actions.
- c. Elm zigzag sawfly (*Aproceros leucopoda*): This continues to spread across a wide area of southeast England and the East Midlands. The full potential extent of its distribution is unknown, but the expectation is still that it will continue to spread and become a major competitor of other foliage-feeding species on elm trees.

Proportion of known tree felling in England carried out with Forestry Commission approval

Figure 4: Proportion of known tree felling in England carried out with Forestry Commission approval, 31 March 2011 to 30 September 2023



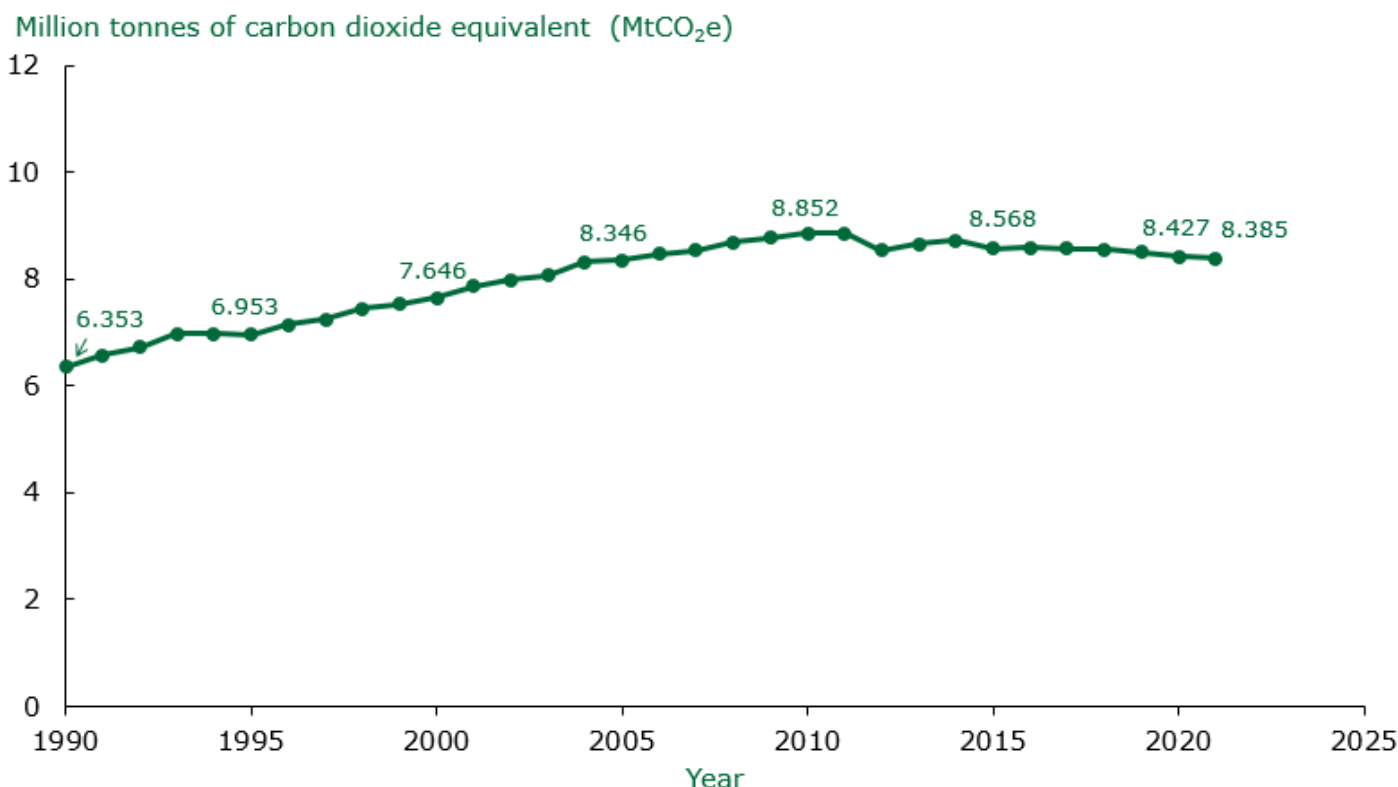
Source: Forestry Commission administrative data.

16. The overall figure of legal felling remains at a consistently very high level.

Goal three: Bigger benefits for nature, climate, people and the economy

Carbon captured by England's woodland

Figure 5: Carbon captured by England's woodland, 1990 to 2021



Source: Data from the [Final UK greenhouse gas emissions national statistics 1990-2021](#), (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2023).

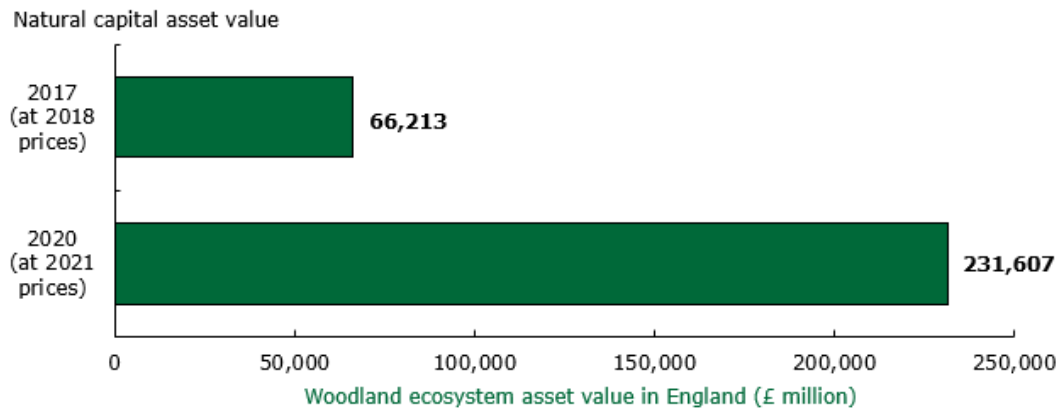
17. Updates to this indicator are reported annually. The most recent report is as follows.

18. The net greenhouse gas sink strength of England's woodlands has decreased slightly from 8.427 MtCO₂e in 2020 to 8.385 MtCO₂e in 2021 (based on the updated time-series), but remained broadly stable; however, it is expected to decline in the medium term as the greenhouse gas sink strength is dominated by past planting rates and subsequent harvesting activity. A removal (or sink) of 8.385 MtCO₂e is equivalent to 2.0% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions for 2020, or 17.5% of agricultural emissions (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2 of

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1146751/final-greenhouse-gas-emissions-tables-2021.xlsx for UK total greenhouse gas emissions and UK agricultural emissions, respectively.

Natural Capital Value of England's forests and woodlands

Figure 6: Natural Capital Value of England's forests and woodlands, 2017 and 2020



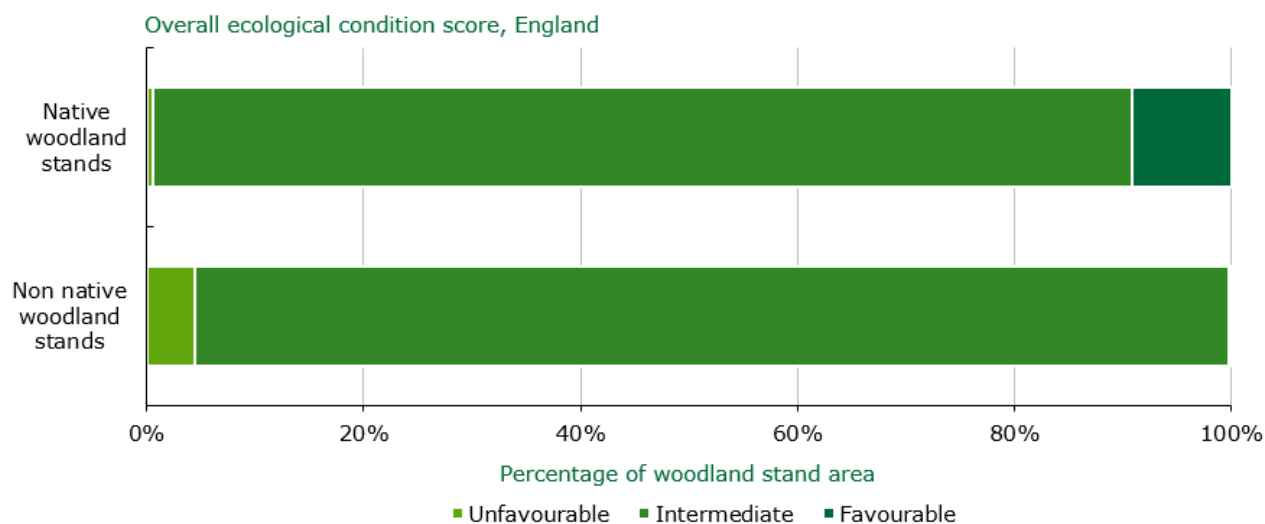
Source: [Woodland natural capital accounts: 2022](#) (Office for National Statistics, 2022).

19. Updates to this indicator are reported periodically. The most recent report is as follows.

20. The latest Office for National Statistics' report for Woodland Natural Capital identifies that 'As a result of changing methods and an expanding portfolio of natural services measured, this latest account cannot be compared with previous years' accounts on a like-for-like basis'. The overall value of natural capital from England's woodlands is estimated at £232 billion in 2020, which is over three times higher than the 2017 estimate. Although the change in accounting methodology and inclusion of a wider set of services account for most of this change, the Forest Research, *Forestry Statistics 2022*, do indicate an increasing area of woodland in England year after year. Increased services from new woodland creation will contribute to a positive trend in ecosystem service value, that will be better identified in future accounts.

Ecological condition of woodland in England

Figure 7: Ecological condition of woodland in England, 2010-15



Source: Forestry Commission (2020) [NFI woodland ecological condition in England: classification results](#), National Forest Inventory.

21. Updates to this indicator are reported periodically. The most recent report is as follows.

22. There are 914 thousand hectares of native woodland in England (around 68% of all woodland) and 419 thousand hectares of non-native woodland (30%). 99.5% of native woodland, and 95.6% of non-native woodland, is in favourable or intermediate condition, based on the latest available National Forest Inventory (2010-15) survey cycle data.

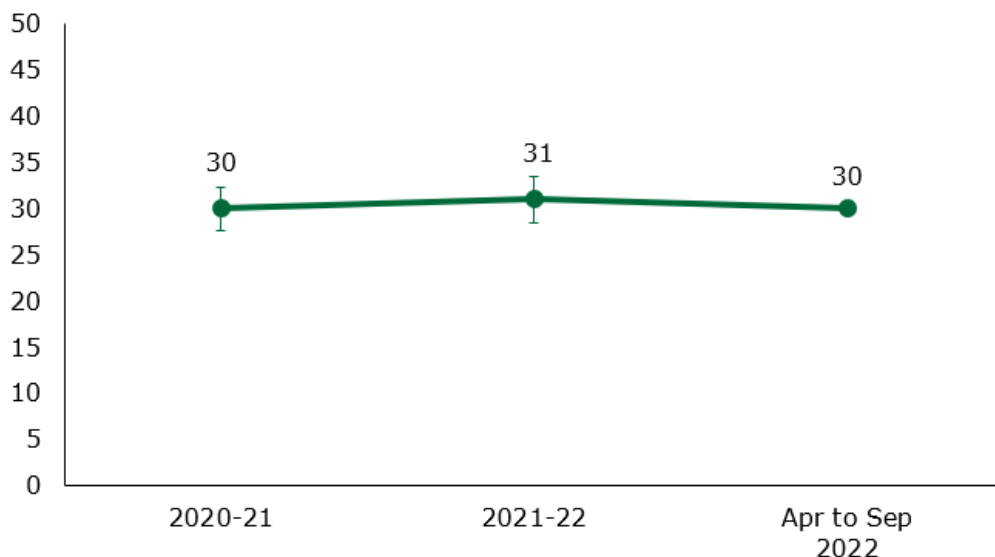
23. Up to 2020, the Biodiversity Strategy interim reporting of condition drew on the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) data and area of priority habitat in management to indicate progress against Biodiversity 2020 targets. In early 2020 work concluded to analyse and agree the condition status of England's woodland. Fifteen ecological condition indicators were measured as part of the National Forest Inventory survey cycle 2010-15 and compared to a benchmark of a stand of ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) in good condition. This enabled native, near native and non-native woodland stands (outside of protected sites) to be classified as favourable, intermediate or unfavourable in terms of their ecological condition for the first time.

24. Ten reports were published in 2020 in relation to woodland ecological condition; executive summary, methodology, statistics and classification results, by country and for Great Britain. These reports and data can be found on the [National Forest Inventory Woodland Ecological Condition](#) pages of the Forest Research website.

% of adults in England who visited a forest or woodland

Figure 8: % of adults in England who visited a forest or woodland, 2020-21 to April-September 2022

Average monthly percentage of adults (aged 16+) in England who reported having visited a woodland or forest



Source: [People and Nature Survey for England](#) (Natural England).

Note: The indicator is an average of the monthly survey findings and shown with approximate confidence limits where available.

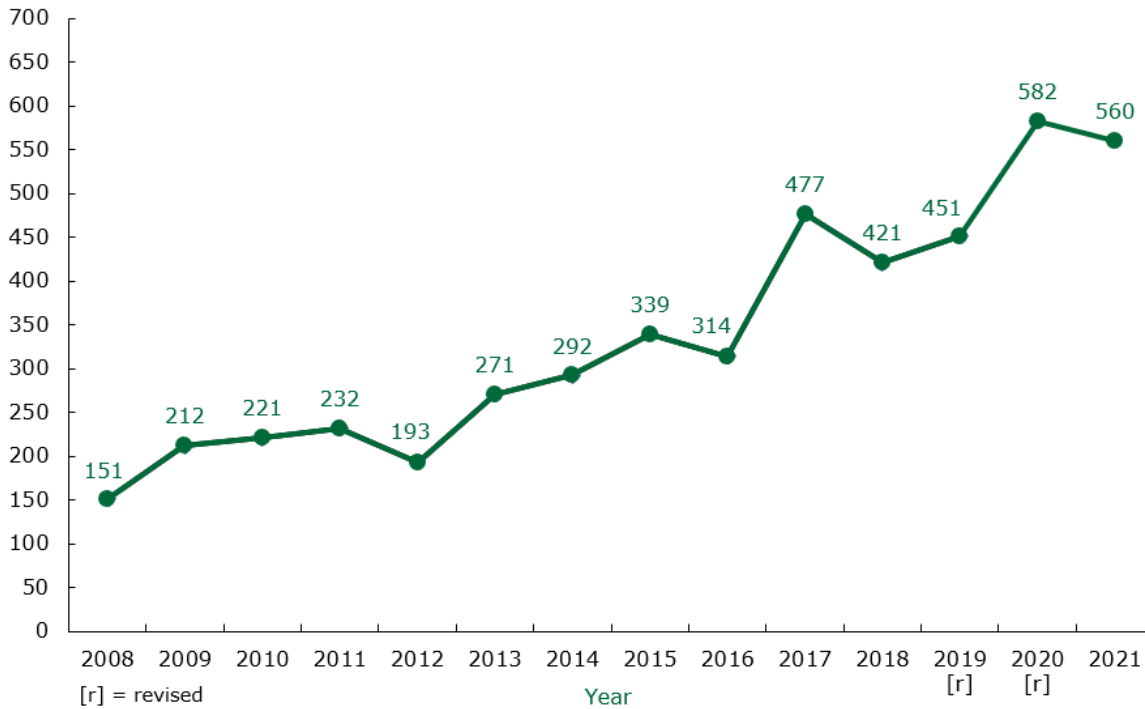
25. Updates to this indicator are reported annually. The most recent report is as follows.

26. Previous years' figures from the People and Nature Survey (PANS) indicated a 30% visit rate per month. This early analysis from this year's PANS shows a similar pattern to the previous analysis. This compares with Forestry England survey results which show an increase in their visitor numbers between 2020-21 and 2021-22 and the Public Opinion Survey of Forestry which shows a statistically significant increase in the number of people visiting woodlands over the last few years. We can confidently demonstrate that visitor numbers are maintaining, if not increasing.

Gross Value Added of forestry sector for the economy in England

Figure 9: Gross Value Added of forestry sector for the economy in England, 2008 to 2021

Approximate gross value added (England, £ million)



Source: [Annual Business Survey 2021](#) and quality measures ([Office for National Statistics](#)).

Note: The graph shows the Gross Value Added from domestic forestry figures for each year with their respective standard errors.

27. Updates to this indicator are reported annually. The most recent report is as follows.

28. Strong demand for domestic timber in light of reduced imports due to Covid trade restrictions helped forestry contribute a significant increase in GVA during 2020 which continued into 2021.