



Modern Slavery Statement 2025/2026

Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

About us

The Forestry Commission provides the government's expertise on forestry and is a Non Ministerial Department. We are tackling some of society's biggest challenges through thriving trees, woods and forests and we increase the value of woodlands to society and the environment. We have two agencies: Forestry England and Forest Research.

Forestry England is England's largest land manager, largest outdoor recreation provider and custodian of the nation's public forests. Forestry England has around 1,200 committed staff and volunteers looking after more land and more trees than any other organisation. It generates revenue by sustainably harvesting and selling timber, and by working with commercial partners to offer new ways to experience and enjoy woodlands and develop business activities.

Forest Research is Great Britain's principal organisation for forestry and tree related research and is internationally renowned for the provision of evidence and scientific services in support of sustainable forestry.

Our supply chains

Our supply chains are made up of a diverse range of third-party providers, many of which are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). We procure a varied range of goods, from corporate clothing and tree shelters, through to services such as harvesting timber, planting trees, forest road maintenance, plant health surveillance and recreation provision. We also award grants to others to protect, improve, expand and connect England's woodlands. In 2025/26, our total spend with suppliers was approximately £157 million and we awarded approximately £45 million in grant funding.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to slavery and human trafficking and are committed to ensuring that there is no modern slavery or human trafficking in our supply chains or in any part of our business.

This statement explains the steps that we took during the financial year 2025/26 to identify, prevent and mitigate modern slavery in our operations and supply chains. We publish this statement on our gov.uk website, and the [modern slavery statement registry](#).

Risk Areas

We recognise that modern slavery risks can arise within any part of our operations and supply chains. Based on our risk assessments, our higher-risk areas include:

- Construction, maintenance and infrastructure works
- Corporate goods such as uniforms, PPE and equipment with global manufacturing supply chains.
- Forestry, land management and timber harvesting operations, where seasonal and manual labour may be used.
- Recreational and concession partnerships where third-party labour models are used.

As a major land manager and forestry operator, we recognise sector-specific risks associated with forestry operations, including the use of seasonal labour, remote working environments and multi-tier subcontracting. These factors can increase vulnerability to labour exploitation if not carefully managed.

Steps to tackle modern slavery

We have taken the following steps to reduce the risk of modern slavery in our business:

Recruitment, safeguarding & employee relations

We carry out appropriate background checks including Right to Work and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all appointments. As part of safer recruitment, an analysis of job roles has been undertaken identifying those which require an enhanced DBS check.

We pay all our employees at or above the National Living Wage. We have dispute resolution, safeguarding, bullying and harassment, and whistleblowing policies that give a platform for our employees and volunteers to raise concerns on any wrong-doing or poor working practices.

Our safeguarding approach plays an important role in identifying and preventing modern slavery, as exploitation often overlaps with abuse, coercion and vulnerability. By embedding safeguarding practices across our organisation, we strengthen our ability to recognise early warning signs and take preventative action. We have a national safeguarding working group where all areas of the organisation are represented by senior staff members.

Every two years we carry out a staff engagement survey across the Forestry Commission. The results of the survey, run by an independent, external provider, help us to understand what makes the Forestry Commission a great place to work and where we need to make improvements.

Forestry Commission Trade Unions (FCTU) is the joint trade union of the Forestry Commission. It is made up of representatives from each of the recognised unions and from all parts of the FC (Forestry England, Forest Services and Forest Research). There is a multi-tier reporting route for staff councils so everyone can get in touch with their union representatives.

Collaboration with other bodies

We are active members of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) modern slavery steering group. The group drives forward initiatives centered around the elimination of and reporting of modern slavery in our business operations and activities. We are also part of Defra's safeguarding working group.

We are an affiliate of Electronics Watch, an independent monitoring organisation that supports responsible public procurement in the electronics sector. Through this affiliation, we gain access to shared intelligence, worker-driven monitoring and remediation activities within global electronics supply chains, helping to strengthen our approach to identifying and addressing modern slavery risks.

Selecting who we work with

We require our suppliers to follow the Government [Supplier Code of Conduct](#) and our grant recipients are expected to follow the Government [Code of Conduct for Grant Recipients](#).

We follow the due diligence processes and obligations of the Procurement Act 2023. All major procurements explicitly evaluate social value, including the bidders' approach to tackling modern slavery risks where this is relevant. This is completed as part of our assessment of the most advantageous tender and accounts for at least 10% of scoring.

During each major procurement, we check the centralised debarment list maintained by the Cabinet Office where suppliers, associated suppliers or sub-contractors who have been excluded from public contracts are published.

We also review the slavery and human trafficking statements of those bidding for our contracts.

Risk Assessments

A risk assessment is completed during the sourcing strategy stage of the procurement lifecycle. This assessment looks at aspects such as industry type, supplier location and nature of the workforce, as well as recent market intelligence. Where a high level of risk is indicated, detailed supply chain information is required from suppliers as part of the conditions of participation.

Health and Safety

Many signs of modern slavery include health and safety violations such as injuries, fatigue, excessive working hours, and lack of access to personal protective equipment. The Forestry Commission is committed to the management of health, safety and wellbeing throughout the organisation and considers it to be a fundamental principle of a sustainable business.

We aim to develop and maintain an effective health and safety culture. This helps us lead the way for our industry and ensure our standards, policies and facilities work to produce positive outcomes. We drive continuous improvement of our health and safety management through effective resourcing, relevant training and development and good communications with staff, volunteers, stakeholders and business partners.

Before using a supplier, we need to be satisfied that they will do the job safely and without risks to health. We use our Contractor Health and Safety Questionnaires to do this. These require evidence of good H&S practice such as policies, training and qualifications before work can start.

Contract terms

Our standard conditions of contract reflect our zero-tolerance approach to slavery and human trafficking. This includes requirements to conduct proper and detailed checks on any sub-contractors and to assist the Forestry Commission in identifying any non-compliance.

Training

All staff in Forest Services and Forestry England complete online training in safeguarding children and adults. Those with enhanced DBS requirements, such as staff and volunteers that work in public facing roles which may have contact with children and/or vulnerable individuals, undertake level two accredited safeguarding training.

Bespoke safeguarding training is provided for senior Leaders to raise awareness, support understanding and strengthen our approach.

Our Commercial Services & Procurement teams undertake regular Continuing Professional Development which includes the annual Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) ethical procurement eLearning and assessment.

Raising Awareness

We marked National Safeguarding Adults Week (17–21 November 2025) to reinforce our commitment to protecting the health, wellbeing and human rights of all those we work with, aligning closely with our approach to preventing modern slavery and exploitation. Through awareness-raising communications and events focused on this year's theme of prevention, we continue to embed safeguarding into everyday practice, ensuring our people are equipped to identify risks early and act to protect colleagues, volunteers, contractors and visitors from harm.

Signatory

This statement is made pursuant to section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and constitutes our slavery and human trafficking statement for the financial year ending 31st March 2026.

Signed:



Richard Stanford

Position: Chief Executive Officer, Forestry Commission