

Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest

Forest Plan 2025-2050

Proud to be part of

England's
Community
Forests



Plymouth and South Devon
Community Forest

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Introduction

Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest (PSDCF) will increase the number and quality of trees and woods across Plymouth and South Devon – from the streets of Plymouth to the uplands of Dartmoor: for people, climate and nature.

This 25-year plan presents the rationale and activities that guide how PSDCF will achieve its vision, by working with residents and organisations to value and improve existing trees, and to plant new trees and create new woodlands. The benefits of doing so are myriad; enhancing biodiversity; mitigating impacts of climate change; increasing health and wellbeing of communities; preserving our historic environment; and connecting habitats across our landscape.

PSDCF is part of a network of 15 Community Forests across England – whose common aim is to see trees and woods at the heart of communities. PSDCF is no different, and the community forest encompasses every tree – from the single cherry in a park or street, through to the ancient oak forests of Dartmoor.

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.”¹



Our vision

The Community Forest will be known for its thriving trees and woodlands, connecting the communities and landscapes of Plymouth, South Devon, West Devon and Dartmoor.

It will stretch from the streets and parks of Plymouth to the uplands of Dartmoor and be rich in wildlife; celebrated and cherished by all and delivering natural solutions to climate change.

The Community Forest will connect people to nature, drive equitable access to the benefits of trees and woods, and plant the seeds of a better future for all.



This plan establishes long term ambitions to 2050, as well as shorter-term actions for 2025 and 2030. Full details are outlined in the plan, but beyond the vision the plan is based around the following four key objectives:

1. VALUING OUR TREES AND WOODS, INSPIRING ACTION AND ENGAGING COMMUNITIES.

Ensuring the value of existing as well as new trees and woodlands is understood and inspiring action that places young people, equity and access for all at the heart of the forest.

2. IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND RESILIENCE OF TREES AND WOODLANDS.

Fostering and delivering thoughtful and high-quality management, increasing the natural services trees and woodlands can deliver.

3. EXPANDING TREES AND WOODLANDS.

Establishing more, and better connected, trees and woodlands delivering benefits for communities, nature, climate and place.

4. DELIVERING THROUGH CONNECTION AND CO-OPERATION.

Working together to deliver the greatest benefits through an inclusive and welcoming partnership.

The targets established in this plan to 2050 include

- Increasing tree cover by 3%: creating over 3,000 hectares of new woodland
- Strategic planting of thousands of impactful individual trees across the City of Plymouth to enhance tree equity and health and wellbeing benefits for residents
- Providing greater access to woodlands and the health benefits they bring
- Supporting landowners to bring all woodlands into informed management
- Working with over 3,000 local residents every year in their communities
- Supporting 1,000 woodland and forestry jobs
- Working in partnership with those who share our ambition and passion for trees

The plan is led by the 7 current PSDCF partners – and core to the delivery of this plan is the ambition to spread the benefits of the Community Forest to every resident, and as many organisations as possible.





SECTION ONE

Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest

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Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest

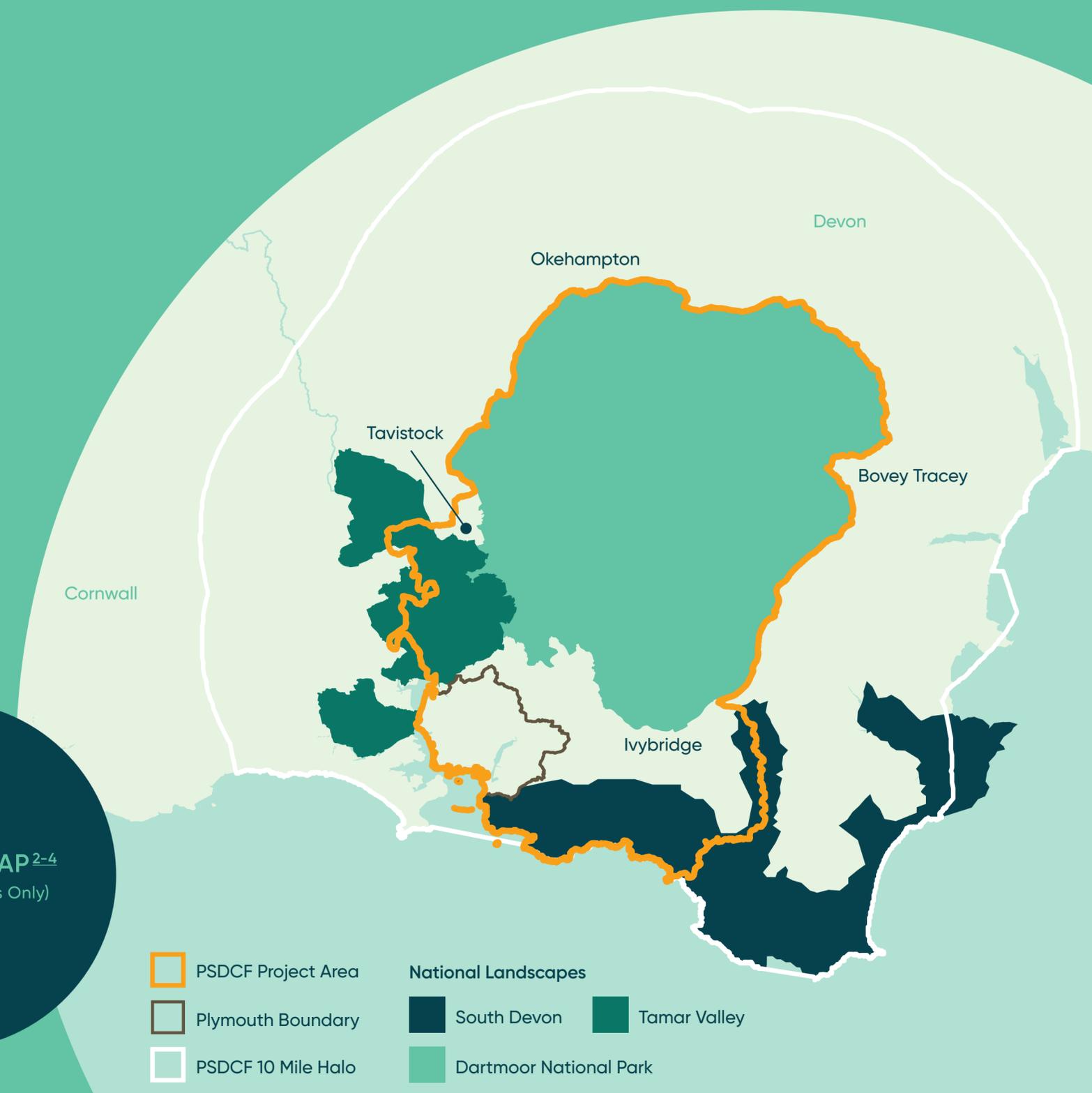
Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest (PSDCF) was established in 2021 with an ambition to significantly increase the benefits of trees and woodlands for people, nature, climate and place. It is one of 15 Community Forests that make up the network of England’s Community Forests*.

PSDCF brings together individuals, landowners, businesses, councils, charities, organisations and government bodies. They come together with a common aim to expand and celebrate the many benefits of trees and woodlands and to cascade those benefits to future generations.

However, PSDCF is not a dense forest of shady trees as we would traditionally know it. The community forest is a mosaic and includes every tree across an area – from individual garden trees to large scale forests. PSDCF delivers a network of trees and woods across its project area.

[*LEARN MORE](#)

BOUNDARY MAP²⁻⁴
(Illustrative Purposes Only)



- PSDCF Project Area
- Plymouth Boundary
- PSDCF 10 Mile Halo
- National Landscapes**
- South Devon
- Tamar Valley
- Dartmoor National Park



“A society grows great when old people plant trees in whose shade they shall never sit.”⁵

PSDCF has supported a rapid increase in woodland creation across Plymouth, South Hams, West Devon and Dartmoor. This work is driven forward by a partnership of Plymouth City Council, The National Trust and The Woodland Trust working alongside Dartmoor National Park Authority and South Hams, West Devon and Devon Councils. Working alongside organisations like the Forestry Commission and Environment Agency it is a partnership of the willing, acting for all.

The forest is a varied landscape, rich in heritage, where managed farmland and secluded valleys join rural lanes, towns and settlements among scenic and dramatic locations.

To date, as part of England’s Community Forests network, PSDCF has delivered Defra’s Trees for Climate fund and has been supported to deliver the following:

- Establishing a team of advisors and woodland managers working with anyone wanting to plant trees and expand woodlands. The PSDCF team provides advice and support, and facilitates funding for tree planting and woodland creation schemes across its programme boundary
- Funding land acquisition to create woodlands

Along with the other 14 Community Forests across England PSDCF is preparing its own Community Forest Plan for the 2025–2050 period. Collectively the plans will set out an ambitious aim to place trees and woods at the heart of communities across England.⁶

In Plymouth and across South Devon, the plan will set out a local vision, objectives, principles and measures of success. The initial focus is on the rapid action needed to establish 500 hectares of woodland well ahead of 2030 but with an eye on the longer-term changes needed to 2050.

Our achievements to date in Plymouth and South Devon

PSDCF has had a rapid lift off since 2021.

Planting has been delivered with a wide range of landowners and communities, increasing canopy cover in Plymouth and across South Devon, enabling new access to woodland, engaging many schools and mobilising a large number of volunteers.

The organisations who established the community forest recognise the importance of trees and woods for future generations and that trees planted now are a gift to the future. Therefore the engagement of young people, and their ownership of the forest, sit central to the ambitions of the PSDCF.

To reflect these ambitions, PSDCF quickly established the groundbreaking 'Forest Rising' programme supporting young people into the community forestry sector and encouraging and enabling them to become part of the Forest's future. Within the first two years of Forest Rising, three Forest Risers have since found full time employment in the sector*.

“Since 2022, over 50 Forest Risers have developed green skills, received a comprehensive introduction to trees, woodland creation and other conservation concepts, as well as green finance, landscape design, woodland management.”

[*LEARN MORE](#)



SINCE 2021, PSDCF HAS:

£9.2m
of funding drawn in

50
landowners supported

3K+
tonnes of carbon are projected to be sequestered annually through woodland creation over the next 100 years

Improved air purification, air cooling and noise regulation

24
organisations partnered with

40K+
households given increased access to trees and woods

507
hectares projected to contribute to the ecological network

496
hectares of new woodland established

313
hectares of woodland created with high potential for natural flood management

8K
volunteers and residents engaged with

12K
metres of new hedgerow planted

380k
individual trees planted (99.44% Whips and 0.56% Standard/Maiden)

Data provided in this report has been produced in partnership with the Natural Capital Hub at Liverpool John Moores University.

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The Plan

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What this Plan will do and who it is for?

This is the first PSDCF plan. It sets out what the PSDCF partners will achieve for people, nature, climate and place. It shows local communities, businesses, partners and funders what PSDCF has achieved to date and what it will deliver in the future.

The Community Forest Plan is not a statutory plan (required by law) and is not seeking to develop new land use policy. The primary purpose of the plan is to facilitate tree planting and woodland creation ambitions across the PSDCF area, engage communities in this work, and deliver the benefits of trees and woods through partnership working. The PSDCF area of activity is administratively complex and it's crucial this PSDCF plan recognises this complexity. There are 5 local authorities and 3 nationally protected landscapes working together within the current PSDCF boundary.

The Plan will deliver two main outcomes;

- Where it is most appropriate this plan will establish targets and actions for the community forest to deliver directly
- Where it is most appropriate the plan will support and embed targets and activities being delivered by others

It is intended that this plan will also provide a framework to support and align with emerging and existing statutory plans such as Local Plans and Local Nature Recovery Strategies, as well as organisational plans such as Climate Emergency and Economic Development Plans*.

[*LEARN MORE](#)

The delivery of the PSDCF Plan will largely lie with the organisations, communities, businesses and landowners who share the passion for a future forest and embrace the aims of the plan. This plan will join and support those sources aimed specifically at:

FARMERS, FORESTERS, AND LANDOWNERS

Those who control the land and can make decisions over where the community forest can grow and thrive. Alongside the support and finance offered by PSDCF there are other policies and funding sources that support the creation and management of the community forest and support their involvement. This plan will join and support those sources, to facilitate best practice and options for landowners to undertake woodland creation and management across the PSDCF programme area.

TREES BENEFIT LAND AND FARMING

Research from Dartmoor shows that the establishment of native woodland improves water retention of soils in upland catchments and improves flash-flood mitigation.⁷

Other studies found significant positive effects for trees planted on farmland (agroforestry) as compared to treeless pasture. There are benefits for water control, water quality and soil erosion.⁸

COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

To succeed and offer real value the community forest needs to be embraced and championed by local organisations. This plan lays the foundations to a wider community-based movement across the forest and the opportunity for partnerships with organisations that work with communities to deliver social, economic, and environmental benefit.

There are 394,000 trees in Plymouth, and they have a public amenity asset value of £3.4 billion based on the benefits delivered from their size, condition, public visibility and life expectancy. Oak contributes 17% of this value, Sycamore contributes 12% and Beech contributes 10%.⁹

BUSINESSES AND ENTERPRISE

Trees and woods are attractive for funding and sponsorship and PSDCF will work with local enterprises for mutual benefit, to build momentum and support for the forest. Tree planting will be an increasing area of interest for businesses looking to credibly mitigate their carbon impact and PSDCF will work with the sector to develop high integrity opportunities.

Within Plymouth the 394,000 trees deliver 4,291 tonnes per year of net carbon sequestration, valued at £1.1 million. They store a total 152,780 tonnes of carbon worth £38.7 million.¹⁰

There is significant potential to develop local timber markets that support all sectors of society across the PSDCF area and drive employment and opportunity.¹¹

THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING SECTOR

Trees and woods, especially in public spaces, offer demonstrable benefits for health and wellbeing. There is obvious common ground between the benefits trees for nature and benefits for local residents. PSDCF will harness these shared benefits by actively seeking opportunities for joined up working and collaboration with partners in the health and wellbeing sector, inclusive Green social prescribing opportunities locally and with NHS England.

Studies in London showed that the rate of antidepressant prescriptions decreased with increasing density of street trees, independently of socioeconomic factors.¹²

A study in Leeds found that doubling canopy coverage across the city could reduce the mean land surface temperature by around 2.5°C during the warmest summer months – with linked benefits for health and wellbeing.¹³

INDIVIDUALS

Everyone and anyone can be involved. This plan establishes opportunities for all – whether directly planting and managing trees or volunteering to collect seed and grow on trees in the community forest nursery.

To ensure the involvement of all, this plan is subject to wide consultation across the forest area and with a full range of organisations, landowners, communities and individuals.

A UK study identifies the mental health benefits of being physically active in forests, with participants mentioning stress relief from being active, the forest as a calming place and the enjoyment associated with being in a forest.¹⁶

Studies show that higher daily exposure rates to natural space and particularly woodland was associated with enhanced cognitive development and mental health, for 3,568 adolescents in London.¹⁵

Five studies found that trees reduced harmful exposure to ultraviolet rays, particularly in school grounds, and where there were large trees with dense foliage.¹⁴

EDUCATION SECTOR

Whether its woodland creation in school grounds or academic research assessing the best techniques to create new woodland, the involvement of the education sector is central to the successful delivery of this plan.



Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest – what is it?

10,000 years ago the land on which we exist would have been dominated by wildwood. This wildwood would have spread from the shores of the Tamar to the highest tors on Dartmoor - the original rainforest. There would have been areas of dense, impenetrable tangled woodland, along with open areas of grazed grassland with more widely spread trees and shrubs. An intricate, varied, dynamic and vibrant mix of trees, shrubs, light, shade and water – loud with the noise of nature.¹⁷

Human impact over the last 10,000 years has been significant and there is now a much reduced, but still vibrant, network of woods and trees across the forest. It is this network of trees and woods that PSDCF will value, improve and expand. Overall tree cover across PSDCF is now 17.8%.¹⁸

To help shape the actions of PSDCF it is important to understand the characteristics of the community forest so we can plan well for the future.

This understanding of the current condition of the Community Forest, and the pressures and opportunities, shape the rest of the plan.



Place Matters

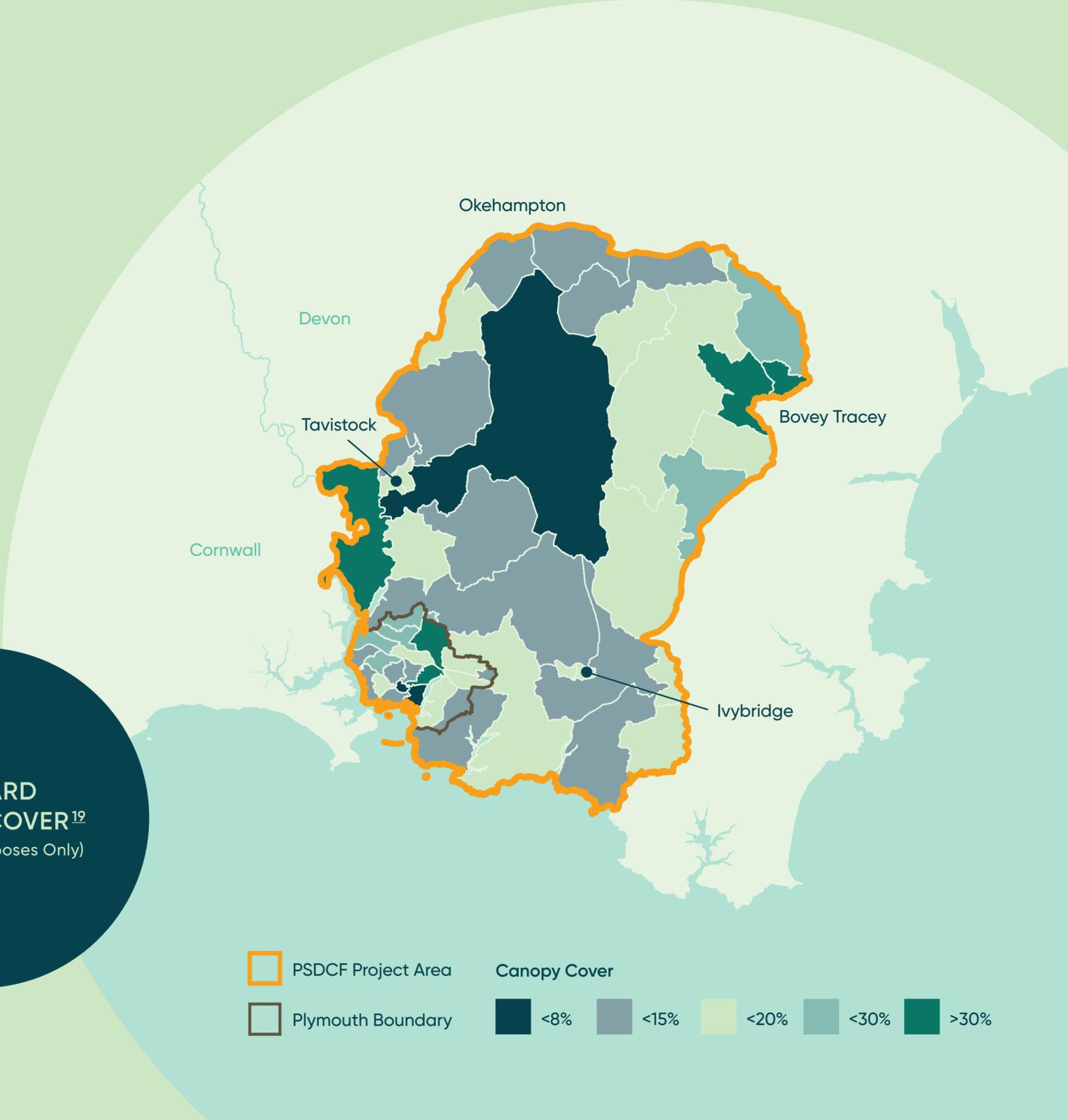
PLYMOUTH, TOWNS, VILLAGES AND COUNTRYSIDE

PSDCF has landscapes as diverse as any community forest in England – ranging from dense urban street networks to rich and intensely managed farmland through to remote, moorland dominated, wilderness.

At scale, the variations in tree cover are reflected across the PSDCF landscape.

However tree cover at this scale itself doesn't tell the whole story. Within the city of Plymouth there are strong fluctuations of tree cover from ward to ward with high density development meaning some areas have tree cover below 4% - significantly limiting people's ability to access the benefits of trees.

UK WARD CANOPY COVER¹⁹
(Illustrative Purposes Only)



IN PLYMOUTH, TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Trees are predominantly in small woods, parks, gardens and streets within developed areas.

Similarly, in the countryside canopy cover at local (parish) level can also be as low as 4%.²⁰ This reflects land use and management practices (both past and present) upon farmland and moorland. These often limit woodland and tree establishment. Both the city and the countryside would benefit from more trees and woods but delivery requires very different solutions.

Whilst this plan will have the same underpinning objectives and principles across the whole plan area, there will be distinct approaches to delivery across two geographies. This recognises that the types of trees and woodlands are often quite different, needing different approaches and solutions.

Throughout the whole community forest there will be a focus on engaging local communities, creating additional access to trees and woodlands and generating the benefits of trees for all. However, to recognise the different local circumstances there will be distinct delivery approaches for PSDCF activity.

IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Trees are predominantly in forests, woodlands and hedgerows within farmed land and moorland.

In Plymouth, Towns, and Villages the primary focus will be:

- The care and management of existing individual trees
- New planting of individual street, park and garden trees
- Focus on tree equity for residents at a local level
- Delivering in partnership with health, business and social enterprise sectors

In the Countryside the primary focus will be to:

- The management of existing forests, woodlands and hedgerows
- Planting and establishment of new resilient woodlands
- Delivering in partnership with the forestry and farming sectors
- Maximum environmental benefit at scale, such as carbon capture and flood alleviation
- Ensuring trees and small woodlands are well integrated into farming landscape and farming business

Species Matter

WILDWOOD, TIMBER AND EXOTIC SPECIES

The PSDCF plan needs to drive planting and creation using a rich combination of native wildwood species, productive timber species and exotic specimen species. All have a role to play.

The vibrant mix of plants, lichens, mosses, insects, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds that are found in the community forest have evolved alongside the mix of native broadleaf tree and shrub species on which they live. It's important that these species, such as Oak, Elm, Alder, Lime, Aspen, Rowan, Birch, Hazel and Holly (all from the original wildwood) are retained in existing woods and used, wherever possible, where new woodlands are being created and where nature recovery is a leading objective. These native species can also be planted to very good effect, as specimens, in Plymouth, towns and villages.

The United Kingdom is the largest net importer of timber in the world after China and USA – importing over 80% of the timber we use.²¹

We use significant amounts of timber and are predicted to use even more as we move to more sustainable forms of building construction. The PSDCF area is renowned for its ability to produce highly productive timber in planted forests using

productive timber species such as Douglas Fir, Western Hemlock and Spruce species. When planted and managed well timber forests deliver multiple benefits and should be encouraged in the PSDCF area.

Since Roman times²² tree species have been introduced and planted in town and country. These trees, often planted as individual specimens or in avenues or clumps, bring variety, colour and diversity to our landscapes. These exotic species, such as sweet chestnut, horse chestnut, cherries, planes, cypresses and pines frame many views in PSDCF and are very well suited to new and replacement planting in Plymouth and the towns and villages.

Whatever trees are being selected for planting in the PSDCF area it is important to consider the suitability of the species to the site under consideration and the potential impacts of pests, diseases and climate change.

BEAVER LOOKOUT

Locally sourced timber from Totnes and Fingle (Larch and Douglas Fir grown on north facing valleys = slow growth, tighter ring structure, higher tensile strength)



Age Matters

OUR ANCIENTS AND VETERANS

The most important woodlands in PSDCF are the Ancient Woodlands – those which have been in existence since at least 1600. At over 400 years old these woodlands provide a continuity of species, habitats and soils potentially back to the original wildwood.

All Ancient Woodlands have been subject to management and change under human influence with two types of Ancient Woodland now occurring in PSDCF

- Ancient Semi Natural Woodland is woodland that retains its native trees and shrubs
- Planted Ancient Woodlands are the ancient woodlands where the native trees and shrubs have been cleared and replaced with other species – notably introduced conifer species but also species such as Beech. Often original soils, seed banks and features (such as ancient trees), remain. Where this is the case, restoration is possible and a priority for action

The PSDCF area also hosts a range of internationally important Ancient and Veteran Trees. These are the oldest living beings in the PSDCF area. They are fantastic, fascinating and some of the most important parts of our natural heritage still surviving. They need valuing and careful management. We need to be thinking to the future and planting our future ancients now.

It is often beneficial to wrap new planting and other semi natural habitats around existing ancient woodlands and trees so that they are protected from harmful impacts, expanded in size and better linked to other habitats.



Management Matters

HEALTHY, RESILIENT WOODLANDS AND INDIVIDUAL TREES

The wildwood would have looked after itself. It would have been subject to storms and the impact of grazing herbivores such as mammoths, bison and beavers.

Although many woods in the PSDCF area contain the echoes of the wildwood they have all been managed by humans – for fuel, timber, farming and food. Where this management replicates natural woodland processes the woodlands can retain their importance for nature. For example felling for timber, but retaining a mix of species with varied structure, age and height, incorporating deadwood and areas of light, shade, wetland and open space will benefit nature. Continuous Cover Forestry is an example of this type of management as it retains a strong, nature rich structure.

All woodlands in the PSDCF boundary, from the ancient rainforests on Dartmoor to commercial conifer forest in the Plym Valley, can deliver nature recovery and public benefit when managed sustainably. There is added community benefit where public access is provided and managed.

The management of woodlands is known as silviculture – the practice of managing a woodland to take into account the whole ecosystem.²⁴

The UK Forestry Standard sets the benchmark for high quality silvicultural management – delivering benefits for nature, climate, people and timber.²⁵

Where individual trees grow in isolation (for example in fields or hedgerows) or are planted as specimens (in parks and gardens) they may need management to ensure they can be retained safely and in suitable condition, ensuring a continuation of the benefits and services they provide. Pollarding of street trees in Plymouth (where the crowns are cut back and allowed to regrow) is an example.

Management of individual trees should only be undertaken where needed, but when done needs to be carefully planned and undertaken to ensure the long term health of the tree. This practice of caring for the individual tree is known as arboriculture.²⁶

PSDCF encourages the sustainable management of all woodlands and trees.



Access and Equity Matters

PEOPLE NEED TREES

Trees and Woods deliver demonstrable benefits to people – supporting an individual's physical and mental well being. The evidence supporting these benefits is significant and well understood*.

The challenge is ensuring there are enough trees for people, that they are in the places that most need them, and that people can access the benefits.

In Plymouth the story is quite complex. Some wards have very high levels of tree cover (up to 37%) with high levels of access to woodlands and parks – other areas have very low levels of tree cover (as low as 4%) with low levels of access. To identify where more trees can have greatest impact PSDCF will use the Woodland Trust's Tree Equity Score UK mapping²⁸ to identify those areas where tree planting can have greatest benefit for residents where they live. Tree equity mapping shows a very clear link between areas of low tree cover and high social deprivation. Providing more trees and access to greenspace in these areas of low tree equity delivers the highest opportunities for improving people's health and wellbeing

In towns, villages and countryside the story is different. Despite a feel that there is more woodland nearby, and more accessibility, the picture can be very different at a local level with some villages having low accessible woodlands within, or around villages. People often travel

significant distances, by car, to visit woodlands. PSDCF will use available data on access to Green Infrastructure²⁹ to identify areas where new woodland creation will have most benefit for people across the whole PSDCF.

The Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust have also issued detailed canopy cover information at local ward level that can be found on the UK Ward Canopy Cover Map.³⁰

Whether in the city or the countryside the work of the community forest will place a particular focus on delivering benefits for future generations to support a resilient future for communities. This will be done by delivering more trees and woodlands in the places where they can have most impact. Be it planting an individual tree on a Plymouth street, or a large scale woodland on the edges of Dartmoor, the work of PSDCF is central to developing a healthy environment for future generations.

Core to this is the involvement of young people who can bring the voice of future generations central to the work of PSDCF.

[*LEARN MORE ²⁷](#)

Pressures and Opportunities

Trees and woodlands are under a wide range of pressures. To help ensure the targets and actions set out in this plan are as robust as possible its helpful to identify these pressures alongside opportunities and potential solutions

PRESSURE

Securing land for woodland creation and tree planting. Availability of land is a key constraint to delivering the ambitions of the Community Forest. High land prices, competing land uses, concerns over food security and a long-held belief that woodland creation devalues land can all hold back action. An increased focus on house building will inevitably increase pressure on land availability.

OPPORTUNITY

The launch of the Community Forest plan provides an **opportunity** to make the case for trees and woods complementing varied land uses, promote the benefits, build the funding available and address the concerns that many have. Trees and woodlands are increasingly providing a financially secure use of land delivering a range of funded benefits.

PRESSURE

Isolation and fragmentation of woodlands as the habitat networks that join them together (hedgerows, watercourses and rivers) are reduced in extent or degraded in condition.

OPPORTUNITY

The **opportunity** is to extend, and join, existing woodlands and use other habitats (such as hedgerows, grasslands and habitat mosaics) to connect woodlands across large scale landscapes.



PRESSURE

Impacts of climate change will be significant. Increased drought, waterlogging, temperatures and storm events will all impact where trees can be planted and the species that will thrive. The impacts are so diverse and unpredictable that's its impossible to plan with certainty.

OPPORTUNITY

The **opportunity** is to plant individual trees and create woodland using a mix of species that have the greatest likelihood of adapting to climate change.³¹ There is also clear opportunity to plant woodland and individual trees that will mitigate the impact of climate change – from slowing flood flow through to lowering temperatures.

PRESSURE**Securing Trees for woodland creation.**

For PSDCF to meet its ambitions it needs to ensure a supply of trees across a wide range of species, sizes and types (from small “whips” suitable for high density woodland planting) through to large standard trees suitable for planting in streets and public spaces.

OPPORTUNITY

There is an **opportunity** to support the growth and capacity of the local tree nursery economy to ensure a wide range of supply across all necessary tree types and from a range of sources. PSDCF support to increased woodland creation will provide incentive and finance to tree nursery capacity. There is also opportunity to make use of natural regeneration and natural colonisation to sustain native species.

PRESSURE**Securing access to trees and woods.**

Changes in land management and development pressures may reduce the presence of trees and people's ability to enjoy the benefits. There is a need to ensure that there are enough trees, that they are in the right place, and that access is available (which involves residents of all ability being able to get to sites where the trees are, and around those sites).

OPPORTUNITY

The **opportunity** is to use Tree Equity and Access to Green Infrastructure information to identify where tree planting and woodland creation can have greatest impact and to plan for that.

PRESSURE**Poor quality management or lack of woodland management.**

Inappropriate management can be detrimental to nature recovery, as can neglect, inconsistency and the loss of natural processes. Management activities that are particularly beneficial include

- Retaining and managing ancient features in a woodland
- Creating a mixed tree age structure with different heights in the canopy
- Ensuring a mix of species controlling dominance of single species, such as holly
- Retaining deadwood in tree crowns and on the ground
- Creating, and maintaining, wide rides and glades within woodlands
- Appropriate levels of grazing (introduced stock or managed deer population) to maintain open areas, but allowing natural regeneration to take place
- Establishing and maintaining public access

OPPORTUNITY

The **opportunity** is to ensure that the ecological condition of all woodlands is understood and that they are under informed, active management to UK Forestry Standard. This can be bolstered by supporting local timber markets and the timber processing and supply chains

PRESSURE**Continuing impacts of historic conversion of Ancient Woodland**

to commercial woodland (PAWS) –This is now stopped with national measures in place to reverse the impacts caused by this widespread practice. However, there are still extensive areas of planted ancient woodland yet to come under management back to semi natural composition. The UK government has a published policy approach to this issue.³²

OPPORTUNITY

The **opportunity** is to bring all PAWs under active management with nature recovery as a priority. The adoption of management systems that mimic natural processes, such as Continuous Cover Forestry (rather than clear cut felling), can produce very nature rich woodlands that are also commercially productive – a shared benefit for nature and economy. There is a need to act with urgency based on detailed assessment and a thorough understanding of the historic features in these ancient woodlands – not least their soils and ancient trees.

PRESSURE**Impact of non-native invasive species.**

Ornamental species (such as Rhododendron and Himalayan balsam) along with regenerating non-native timber species (such as Western hemlock and Spruce) can spread rapidly in woodlands and suppress native trees, shrubs and ground flora.

OPPORTUNITY

The **opportunity** is to include measures for the control of non-native species into management plans.

PRESSURE

Impact of pests and diseases. There is a rapid increase in the accidental introduction of pests and diseases. Two of Devon's most prolific native woodland trees, Elm and Ash, have (or will be) largely lost from the Devon landscape.

OPPORTUNITY

The **opportunity** is to ensure strong biosecurity measures are in place during woodland management and woodland creation work. Sourcing stock from Plant Healthy or United Kingdom Sourced and Grown supplies will ensure adherence to strict biosecurity measures – as will support to developing the local tree nursery sector in the PSDCF area.

PRESSURE

Impact of Deer and Squirrels. Grey squirrels can have a particularly negative impact on the early establishment of woodlands, woodland structure, composition and native hardwood timber production – deer can have equally negative effects on the ability of woodlands to regenerate. Both species are significantly affecting the ability to create and regenerate woodlands in Devon.

OPPORTUNITY

The **opportunity** is for implementing control measures. To be effective these must be co-ordinated and adopted across wider landscapes and not just at a site level.

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Vision

A vision establishes purpose, direction and inspiration. It's a guiding star and a point to come back to check progress.

Given the importance of the community forest for current residents and future generations the proposed vision paints a picture of what could be.

The Community Forest will be known for its thriving trees and woodlands, connecting the communities and landscapes of Plymouth, South Devon, West Devon and Dartmoor.

It will stretch from the streets and parks of Plymouth to the uplands of Dartmoor and be rich in wildlife; celebrated and cherished by all and delivering natural solutions to climate change.

The Community Forest will connect people to nature, drive equitable access to the benefits of trees and woods, and plant the seeds of a better future for all.

This vision underpins all the actions set out in this plan, and all the activity that takes place on the ground.

Objectives

To ensure that actions deliver success the community forest partners are using this plan to establish objectives to guide and drive its activity. The objectives are;

VALUING OUR TREES AND WOODS, INSPIRING ACTION AND ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Ensuring the value of existing as well as new trees and woodlands is understood and inspiring action that places young people, equity and access for all at the heart of the forest.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TREES AND WOODLANDS

Fostering and delivering thoughtful and high-quality management, increasing the natural services trees and woodlands can deliver.

EXPANDING TREES AND WOODLANDS

Establishing more, and better connected, trees and woodlands delivering benefits for communities, nature, climate and place.

DELIVERING THROUGH CONNECTION AND CO-OPERATION

Working together to deliver the greatest benefits through an inclusive and welcoming partnership.

At its very best the activities of PSDCF, particularly the creation of new woodlands, would deliver against all these objectives at the same time, delivering shared benefits for people, nature, climate and place.

The objectives set the structure of this plan and underpin the targets against which success will be measured.





Principles

The following principles will underpin the plan and its delivery. These establish how the community forest partners and delivery team will approach the delivery of the plan. The principles are;

- Enable inclusive **community involvement and engagement** in all forest work
- Actively involve, and support, **young people in the delivery of the plan**
- Deliver **equitable access** to the health and wellbeing benefits of trees
- Establish the **right tree in the right place using the right technique (or for the right purpose)**
- Deliver **nature recovery, climate adaptation and resilience in all activity**
- Drive a **sustainable woodland economy** that embeds the many benefits of trees
- Adopt **sustainable management**, to industry best practice, for woodlands and trees
- Drive **partnership working** to grow the impacts and benefits of the forest
- Deliver **connections and solutions** across the whole forest area.

The Boundary of the Forest

During the consultation process for the Forest Plan in 2024/25, PSDCF proposed the realignment of the Community Forest boundary to maximise the potential of its work. This proposal received very positive feedback from respondents and was supported throughout the consultation process. From 2025, a pilot period has been implemented for an updated boundary, which if successful will be made permanent in Summer 2026. The proposal was delivered to ensure that PSDCF's work aligns seamlessly with neighbouring woodland creation initiatives to offer the very best service and support to landowners.

The pilot boundary will provide comprehensive coverage of woodland creation offers to landowners in Devon and Cornwall – with no overlap and no-one missing out on a locally managed woodland creation offer. The current boundary is shown on page 7, and is enhanced by a 10 mile “halo” within which the community forest offers are also available.

Having consulted with neighbouring organisations the amendments to the boundary offer are as follows.

- To the west. Where the PSDCF halo stretches into Cornwall landowners will be directed to the Forest for Cornwall team for support, advice and funding.

- To the north. Where the PSDCF halo stretches into the North Devon Biosphere landowners will be directed to the North Devon Biosphere and Forestry Commission teams for support, advice and funding.
- To the south and east the boundary is redrawn to align the boundary to the Exe itself and bring all of Teignbridge into the Community Forest. This would create a consistent offer across Teignbridge.

The pilot boundary is shown in the map on the right-hand side of this page, and both the current and proposed boundary are compared on the following page.

PILOT PSDCF BOUNDARY³³
(Illustrative Purposes Only)



- Pilot PSDCF Boundary
- Plymouth Boundary





SECTION FOUR

Actions and Timelines

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Expand

TARGETS, TASKS, AND TIMELINE

OBJECTIVE

Expanding our Trees, Woods, and Hedgerows

Establishing more, and better connected, trees and wooded habitats, delivering benefits for communities, nature, climate and place

TARGET

To offer advice, support and financial assistance to enable landowners to:

- Increase tree canopy cover by 3% across the overall PSDCF area by 2050
- An increase of cover in the city of Plymouth to achieve a Tree Equity score of at least 75 in all neighbourhoods by 2050, with a focus on neighbourhoods significantly below this level

HOW

- Creating 3,000 ha's of woodland across the whole PSDCF area by 2050
- Planting 5,885 medium size trees in streets, parks and gardens in Plymouth by 2050

Prioritise creation and planting that addresses current challenges by providing nature-based solutions, such as

- Giving greater equity of trees
- Giving households increased access to trees and woods
- Providing natural flood management
- Adding woodland and hedgerow to the nature recovery network
- Sequestering and storing carbon
- Improving air purification, air cooling, and noise regulation
- Integrating trees and small woodlands into the farmed landscape

During 2025

Review, promote and continue the PSDCF Woodland Creation grant programme.

Continue to provide the PSDCF woodland creation advisory service.

Undertake research with The Woodland Trust and Oxford University to fine tune the approach to measuring benefits of trees and greenspace for individuals and communities in Plymouth.

TREE PLANTING AND WOODLAND CREATION

In Plymouth, tree planting and woodland creation will be prioritised towards

- Wards and Lower Super Output Areas where the Tree Equity Score is below 75
- Delivering urban nature recovery and climate resilience in line with Plymouth's strategic plans, including Plymouth Plan for Nature and People and Net Zero Action Plan

Around Towns and Villages and in the Countryside woodland creation will be prioritised towards

- Areas identified in the Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Areas identified in the Dartmoor, South Devon and Tamar Valley Protected Landscapes Target and Outcome Frameworks



By 2030

Create 500 ha's of new woodland across the whole PSDCF including in Plymouth, towns and villages.

Plant 1,000 individual trees in Plymouth, towns and villages.

Give households increased access to woodlands.



**SUSTAINABLY
MANAGED
WOODLAND³⁶**

(Illustrative Purposes Only)



During 2025

Seek funds to implement a woodland management advisory and grant aid programme that offers support to woodland owners.

Assess Woodland Economy opportunities. Review how best PSDCF can support the growth of a robust woodland economy across the PSDCF area through a review of opportunities.

By 2030

Support the Devon Tree and Woodland Strategy target to see 70% of woodland in active management.

Directly bring 500 ha's of woodland into sustainable management.

All trees and woods owned and managed by the Community Forest partners are under management to the following standards.

- British Standard 3998 for individual trees
- United Kingdom Forest Standard for woodland management

Improve

TARGETS, TASKS, AND TIMELINE

OBJECTIVE

Improving the quality of trees and woodlands.

Fostering and delivering thoughtful and high-quality management, increasing the natural services trees and woodlands can deliver.

TARGET

To offer advice, support and financial assistance to assist landowners to:

- See all woodlands under sustainable management by 2050 delivering benefits for nature, climate, people and place

HOW

Prioritise support of management that

- Targets Planted Ancient Woodlands (PAWS) and Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW)
- Gives households increased access to trees and woods

Value

TARGETS, TASKS, AND TIMELINE

OBJECTIVE

Valuing our trees and woods, inspiring action and engaging communities.

Ensuring the value of existing as well as new trees and woodlands is understood and inspiring action that places young people, equity and access for all at the heart of the forest.

TARGET

PSDCF collaborating to engage 3,000 people annually.

From 2025 to 2030

Continue growing the Forest Rising initiative.

Promote the benefits of woods and trees to individuals, communities, organisations, landowners and businesses.

Run a series of activity events with a focus on hands on planting and management.

Work with existing greenspace initiatives to deliver locally based projects at park and street level.

Support the Plymouth Urban Tree Festival.

Support the Tree Warden, Threat Detector and Observatree network.



Deliver

TARGETS, TASKS, AND TIMELINE

OBJECTIVE

Delivering through Connection and Co-operation.

Working together to deliver the greatest benefits through an inclusive and welcoming partnership

TARGET

- Support and facilitate 1000 woodland and forestry job years by 2050
- Develop impactful collaborative partnerships across sectors to maximise benefits of PSDCF delivery

HOW

The PSDCF partnership itself will look at how it might become broader and more inclusive in terms of direct membership and those who advise and support its work.

To further drive growth of the forest PSDCF will develop a network of the willing – individuals, landowners, businesses and organisations who want to join PSDCF in delivering its aims and joining it in partnership. Partners will be expected to share the PSDCF vision and embrace the objectives to expand, improve and inspire.

There will be a particular focus on developing partnerships that drive the local woodland economy with specific aim on supporting

- Tree propagation and supply
- Timber harvesting and processing
- Wood products
- Woodland advisory services



By 2030

Work with partners to support delivery of an accredited training and apprenticeship programme.

Work with partners to introduce annual woodland economy measures across local and regional areas.

Work with partners to implement Woodland Economy review and delivery programme.

During 2025

Develop standard “easy start up” partnership programme. Targets for 2025 to include outreach and partnerships with;

- Public Health organisations
- Youth organisations
- Social Enterprises
- Farming groups
- Forestry groups

SECTION FIVE

Appendices

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1. England's Community Forests and the local story

In 1991 the first Community Forests were established in England – on Merseyside and in Manchester. These Forests had their roots in the Garden Cities initiatives of the 1980s and sought to bring woods and trees into towns and cities – with people central to the process.

Through gradual growth there are now 15 Community Forests – all individual organisations but working together as England's Community.³⁷

In 2020 the government sought to grow the Community Forest family. This involved the creation of 2 new forests, alongside around £100m of Nature for Climate funds being allocated to accelerate woodland creation with community benefit. The government support for additional Community Forests reflects government confidence in how well the community forests have delivered nature, economic, and community benefits since the 1990's.

Plymouth City Council, South Hams District Council, West Devon Borough Council, the National Trust and the Woodland Trust created a proposal for PSDCF and were successful in getting government support. PSDCF came into being in June 2021 with initial PSDCF information on the ECF website.³⁸

It had an initial target of delivering 250 hectares of tree planting, but an ambition to plant 500 hectares of woodland by April 2025.

The 250-hectare target will be achieved this year, with the likelihood that over 400 hectares will have been planted in total by the end of this planting season.

The original boundary took in all of Plymouth and parts of South Hams, West Devon and Dartmoor. In 2022, to increase its impact, the Forest was extended to take in all of Dartmoor. It is also general practice that in delivering its work Community Forests work to a 10 mile "halo", enabling it in some circumstances to deliver funding and support beyond its boundary in agreement with partners.

The original five partners have been joined by Devon County Council and Dartmoor National Park Authority. PSDCF is an informal partnership and, unlike some other community forests not (at least yet) an independent organisation.

The development and success of the PSDCF has had significant support from a wide range of organisations – not least Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and Natural England – ensuring the development of the community forest locally incorporates the decades of learning and experience across England.

2. Forest Rising and engagement with Young People

Forest Rising is PSDCF's flagship programme for young people, providing a collaborative space for them to gain essential practical and theoretical skills, whilst contributing to the long-term development of the Community Forest programme.

Over the course of the workshops, they have been part of designing a Plymouth-based tree planting scheme for next winter, learning about woodland habitats and essential tree skills, as well as helping to plant 530 trees at New Barton Farm, Wembury.

Additional Forest Rising sessions have also offered young people an opportunity to learn from and work with other organisations and projects working with trees including Parklife CIC, National Trust, Woodland Trust, Dartmoor Dynamic Landscapes, Building Resilience In Communities and the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park.

Sessions have focused on green skill development and introductions to trees, woodland creation and other conservation concepts such as green finance, landscape design, woodland management, and ancient and veteran trees. Forest Risers are also included and invited to associated events, conferences, and training opportunities across themes such as environmental education, permaculture, hydromorphology, tree species ID and river fly monitoring training.

The Forest Risers are currently exploring the development of a Youth Forum that will continue to work alongside the project to inform decision making, empower young people and allow co-design of the next winter programme.

FOREST RISING IN NUMBERS 23/24

- 37 sessions.
- 5 training/ upskilling opportunities
- 6 young people on the Youth Forum including a strategy lead, a communications representative, chairperson, social media and marketing rep
- 530 trees planted at one of PSDCF's planting scheme sites, New Barton Farm
- 45 Forest Risers
- 2 planned residential weeks in 2025 for tree planting and upskilling

FOREST RISING TESTIMONIALS

Zahra, 16 at time of joining, Forest Rising Youth Forum member, social media and marketing representative

Forest Rising has opened my world view and given me memories forever! It really has inspired me. What I'm looking forward to on the forum is creating a programme by young people for young people. We want to inspire other young people to get involved in the community forest and nature in the city.

Cindy, 24 at time of joining, Forest Rising Youth Forum, Chairperson

The Forest Rising course was an incredible opportunity to network with local experts within woodland restoration and conservation, as well as learn about their career journey. The workshops also provided us with a feel for management of urban and wild areas, threats to natural resources, and solutions. This was especially insightful to me, as a marine biology student; such knowledge gave me the confidence to win the Igniting Innovation challenge set by the Woodland Trust, taking me to lead my own educational project. Finally, the Forest Rising team has been incredibly supportive and has been invaluable connection throughout my journey. I have a better understanding of how green spaces are viewed by society vs how I perceive them. And how they can be managed/ what we can do to improve their management.

Heidi, 23 at time of joining, Forest Rising cohort 1,

I believe that the scheme has provided an excellent opportunity for young people in Plymouth to explore their connections with nature. It has given people the time and space to think and reflect and strengthen those connections. There has been a good mixture of natural and social science during the activities allowing a holistic introduction to green industry. Fantastic scheme! All in all, I just really love and care about nature. I want to ensure everyone has this opportunity if they want to too. The current disconnect from nature in the UK shocking and if more people care about the natural world then we are more likely to be able to successfully co-habit with it, helping both people and nature thrive. I want to focus on this in the Youth Forum.

Jeff, 28 at time of joining, Forest Rising cohort 3

Participating in the Forest Rising program has been incredibly transformative for me professionally. The program provided the opportunity to engage with green skilled professionals who sign-posted potential career pathways that I could follow. Through this program, I have gained hands on experience designing woodland habitats and had the opportunity to present my ideas to decision makers. The networking opportunities and skills learnt at Forest Rising directly contributed towards securing a placement with the PSDCF team, where I am currently sharpening my GIS technical skills. This placement, integral to my master's degree in environmental consultancy and my dissertation on Dartmoor's Rainforests, has not only advanced my technical skills but also opened further career opportunities as I am now pursuing roles in GIS. Overall, Forest Rising has been instrumental in shaping my professional journey and personal growth. And one final point, the program's inclusive age range was particularly valuable, as it allowed me to join at 28 and still benefitted me immensely!

3. The National and Local policy context

The Community Forest plans are being delivered within a broader national context of existing legislation and policy directly engaged with environmental protection and improvement. They will interact with other associated policies and plans that inform woodland management and creation in the wider context of socio-economic, cultural, and ecological conditions and needs.

The Environment Act (2021) contains 13 environmental targets aimed to improve air and water quality, halt the decline of species, and improve our natural environment. Of those targets, a number require direct engagement from Community Forests, inclusive; “to deliver net zero ambitions and boost nature recover by increasing tree and woodland cover to 16.5% of total land area in England by 2050” and “halt the decline in species populations by 2030, and then increase populations by at least 10% to exceed current levels by 2042”.³⁹

The Environmental Improvement Plan (2023) contains goals that will be achieved by sustainable, proactive management and creation of trees and woodlands, broadly related to provision of sustainable timber

resources, investment in skills and capacity, provision of clean and sustainable water, nature-based solutions as a way to mitigate flooding and pollutants, enhancement of species rich habitats, and increased access to greenspace. The vision, objectives, and activities of PSDCF as laid out within this plan will contribute to these goals, with the ambition to support partners and collaborators with their own associated aims and targets.⁴⁰

Supporting the UK government and the targets and goals of the Environment Act (2021) and Environmental Improvement Plan (2023) is a broader set of policies and directives being delivered by national government, regulatory bodies, and large partner organisations. England’s Community Forests, being located in 15 strategic and populous areas across England, are placed to support the delivery of these plans, aiding continuity and success through collaboration across the;⁴¹⁻⁴⁵

- Forestry Act 1967
- Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (2024)
- NFU Tree Strategy (2021)
- National Trust’s Tree Planting targets (2020),
- Forestry Commission Strategy (2023)

and others.

Those targets, and others, are used in the coming sections as evidence and reference to support PSDCF’s own ambitions through its first Community Forest Plan 2025-2050.

LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

The PSDCF Plan has a strong focus on galvanising a collaborative effort on expanding tree planting and woodland creation and securing the good management of existing trees and woods.

Much of this ambition is based on the goodwill and enthusiasm of landowners, individuals and communities. However, there are also a range of local policies and measures that provide a formal backdrop to the work of PSDCF and greatly assist in the Community Forest delivering its ambitions.

It is important that PSDCF understand where these policies are, how they can be influenced by PSDCF and how the work of PSDCF can help to deliver them.

The following table summarises the key plans and policies that set the local framework to the delivery ambitions of PSDCF. In summary these plans, strategies and policies provide

- A comprehensive backdrop of tree protection, management and creation in the statutory Local Plans
- An emerging backdrop of ambitious woodland creation targets across all the Protected Landscape plans sitting within the PSDCF
- A Devon wide adopted Tree Strategy and emerging Nature Recovery Strategy that underpins PSDCF

- A range of other non-statutory plans and strategies that align with, and support, the ambitions of PSDCF

Taken together these plans, strategies and targets set a strong and comprehensive foundation to the PSDCF plan. The great strength of PSDCF is that it can pick up and deliver – truly turning strategy into delivery.

It is worth making particular note of the Devon Tree and Woodland Strategy published in 2024.⁴⁶ This sets a particularly strong backdrop for the work of PSDCF and its emerging plan. In particular it establishes a comprehensive case for the benefits of trees and woods, and the evidence specific to Devon, that PSDCF relies upon, but doesn’t seek to repeat.

Plan, Strategy, Policy	What does it provide?	What does it mean for PSDCF?
<p>Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2019⁴⁷</p> <p>Dartmoor Local Plan 2021⁴⁸</p>	<p>Statutory Plans and Policies that Local Councils must adopt and deliver.</p> <p>Includes policies for tree retention, protection and planting in relation to new development and growth of places.</p>	<p>Ensures that all tree and woodland matters related to new development are dealt with by the Local Planning Authorities (Plymouth, Dartmoor, South Hams and West Devon).</p> <p>Current gov. planning review might give PSDCF plan an increased importance in LPA decisions related to development.</p> <p>PSDCF should contribute to Plan reviews.</p>
<p>Dartmoor National Park Management Plan 2020⁴⁹</p> <p>Tamar Valley National Landscape Management Plan 2019⁵⁰</p> <p>South Devon National Landscape Management Plan 2019⁵¹</p>	<p>Policies and targets for woodland management and creation that must be adopted by the Protected Landscapes partnerships.</p> <p>Delivery lies with partners and landowners.</p> <p>All are likely to adopt a 3% increase in canopy cover by 2050.</p>	<p>These plans bring into effect government targets to increase woodland cover by 3% by 2050.</p> <p>In combination these plans set a framework for the work of PSDCF across the protected landscapes, which cover 81.8% of PSDCF.</p> <p>PSDCF can be the primary delivery partner for the National Landscape Targets within its boundary.</p> <p>PSDCF should contribute to plan creation and review.</p>
<p>Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework 2024, (PLTOF)⁵²</p>	<p>DNPA, SDNL and TVNL all have to deliver apportioned targets for woodland creation to meet the Environmental Improvement Plan and 30x30 targets and beyond</p>	<p>PSDCF will focus its delivery efforts to support the targets established by the Protected Landscapes.</p>
<p>Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy In preparation⁵³</p>	<p>This is an emerging statutory plan that will establish tree and woodlands at the heart of nature recovery.</p> <p>It will set out priorities, measures, targets and mechanisms for delivery of nature recovery and feed into a national Nature Recovery Network.</p>	<p>At final adoption PSDCF Plan will want to align with, and embrace, the targets and delivery mechanisms in the Devon LNRS.</p> <p>Devon LNRS likely to assist the delivery and funding of PSDCF Plan actions</p> <p>PSDCF should contribute to LNRS.</p>

Plan, Strategy, Policy	What does it provide?	What does it mean for PSDCF?
<p>Devon Tree and Woodland Strategy⁵⁴</p> <p>Devon: Right Place, Right Tree 2021⁵⁵</p> <p>Plymouth Nature Recovery Network. In preparation.</p> <p>Plymouth Plan for Trees 2019⁵⁶</p> <p>South Hams Tree Strategy In preparation</p> <p>Plymouth Tree Management Principles 2019⁵⁷</p> <p>South West Rainforest Alliance Action Plan In preparation</p>	<p>A non-statutory plan, and guidance note, that establish a county wide ambition (including Plymouth) to expand, improve, inspire and deliver action for trees and woods.</p> <p>Target to plant 3,000 ha's by 2030 and increase canopy cover to 16.5% by 2050</p> <p>A series of adopted, and emerging, plans that set out approaches to tree and woodland management and creation within the PSDCF area.</p> <p>Include targets for woodland creation and expansion that align with other statutory targets.</p>	<p>All PSDCF partners support the strategy, which sets a strong framework for the PSDCF Plan.</p> <p>Very strong alignment and support to accelerating PSDCF work.</p> <p>PSDCF should take full account of the contents of this strategy.</p> <p>These plans and strategies provide additional policies, targets and delivery mechanisms that underpin the adoption of the PSDCF Plan and subsequent delivery.</p> <p>PSDCF should contribute to the creation, adoption and delivery of these plans.</p>
<p>Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Plan 2023⁵⁸</p> <p>Plymouth Climate Emergency Action Plan 2019⁵⁹</p> <p>Dartmoor Climate Action Plan 2020⁶⁰</p> <p>South Hams and West Devon Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2019⁶¹</p>	<p>Plans for climate mitigation and adaptation that include the importance of trees and woods for carbon sequestration.</p>	<p>Plans create a mandate for woodland creation as part of climate adaptation, supporting PSDCF activity.</p> <p>PSDCF should contribute to the delivery and review of these plans.</p>



4. Canopy Cover Calculation Methodology

DATA SOURCES:

- **National Forest Inventory (NFI) Woodland category** (Forestry Commission). © Crown copyright and database rights
- Forest Research, 2024. NCEA: **National Trees Outside Woodland Map** (pre-publication dataset). [Version 4 – Nov 2024]

PROCESS:

1. **Data Preparation:** NFI.shp and ToW.shp (downloaded 19/12/2024) were corrected for geometry errors and clipped to the PSDCF project boundary. Non-woodland features were removed.
2. **Data Integration:** The NFI and ToW datasets were spatially joined using QGIS.
3. **Exclusion of Traditional Orchards:** Traditional Orchards, initially included, were excluded due to overlap with NFI data, avoiding double-counting of canopy cover.
4. **Feature Identification and Area Calculation:** Each woodland feature was assigned a unique ID and its area (in hectares) was calculated using the QGIS field calculator.
5. **Area Calculation:** The total area of the PSDCF project area was determined.
6. **Canopy Cover Calculation:**

CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Unplantable Areas:** No adjustments were made for unplantable areas, such as hardscapes or water bodies, which may affect the accuracy of canopy cover in specific regions
- **Trees Outside Woodland (ToW)** is an unreleased dataset which was provided by the Forestry Commission upon special request
- The averaged canopy cover from the UK Ward Canopy Cover dataset (p16) for the PSDCF project area is 17.3%. However, discrepancies exist in the methodology for calculating canopy cover across different datasets. The approach outlined here represents the best possible estimate based on available data and the specific limitations of the PSDCF project, acknowledging that variations in data sources and calculation methods may influence the final value

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS:

- **GIS Platform:** QGIS 3.16.7
- **Area Projection:** Cartesian
- **Coordinate System:** EPSG: 27700 British National Grid

$$\left(\frac{\text{(Total Canopy Area (ToW+NFI (Woodland Only)))(Ha)}{\text{PSDCF Project Area (Ha)}} \right) \times 100 = \text{Canopy Cover (\%)}$$

Table 1. Canopy Cover Area Classification by National Forest Inventory (NFI) and Trees Outside Woodland (ToW).

Source	Type	Area (Ha)
National Forest Inventory (Woodland Only)	Assumed Woodland	234.99
	Broadleaved	10794.96
	Conifer	3742.53
	Coppice	7.49
	Failed	14.27
	Felled	1144.33
	Ground Prep	20.31
	Low Density	46.45
	Mixed mainly broadleaved	262.91
	Mixed mainly conifer	283.56
	Shrub	67.73
	Young Trees	561.86
	Trees Outside of Woodland	Group of Trees (ToW)
Lone Tree (Tow)		802.68
NFI OHC		1346.55
Small Woodland		4257.18

Table 2. Canopy Cover Summary for PSDCF Project Area by National Forest Inventory (Woodland Only) and Trees Outside of Woodlands.

	Area (Ha)	NFI (Ha)	NFI Canopy Cover of PSDCF Project Area (%)	ToW (Ha)	ToW Canopy Cover of PSDCF Project Area (%)	NFI + ToW (Ha)	Total Canopy Cover (%)
PSDCF Project Area	141615.58	17181.41	12.13	8061.7	5.69	25243.11	17.83

5.1. Expand Objective: Evidence and Rationale

Expansion of existing woodlands, creation of new wooded habitats and planting of individual trees is a core objective of the Community Forest.

The activities below assume that, in the main, other statutory plans and processes will establish targets and locations for woodland expansion. This will include any %/ha's targets and any identified locations that emerge during 2025 in the:

- Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- The Dartmoor National Park, South Devon National Landscape and Tamar Valley National Landscape "Target and Outcomes Framework"

This PSDCF plan will embrace and embed these targets with a primary focus on the work of the CF driving forward delivery.

There will be a strong and positive focus on two key elements

- In Plymouth, Towns and Villages undertaking planting where there are benefits for the health and wellbeing of local residents
- In the countryside, woodland creation and agroforestry that supports farming

A wide range of techniques and approaches will be used by PSDCF to ensure successful establishment. These will include

- Planting of individual trees (or groups of trees) in pits with guards – more suited to Plymouth, towns and villages
- Woodland planting using young saplings (known as whips) where they grow close together mimicking natural woodlands
- Allowing the natural regeneration of saplings from seed in the ground

The planting of individual trees in Plymouth, Towns and Villages needs to be carefully undertaken with the Trees in hard landscapes guidance a good starting point.⁶²

Guidance on woodland creation includes

Forestry Commission Woodland Creation Guidance⁶³

Woodland Trust Woodland Creation Guidance⁶⁴

Agroforestry (the integration of trees with farming) has multiple benefits and will be actively encouraged as a way of supporting farmers.

Guidance includes

Forestry Commission Agroforestry Guidance⁶⁵

Soil Association Handbook⁶⁶

Species selection is important and will be guided by the site conditions and the aims of the landowner.

Native (wildwood) species will be more likely to be used where nature recovery and landscape character are the priorities

Other species are more likely to be used where they need to be resilient to hard landscape conditions in Plymouth, towns and villages and where timber production is an aim.

In all cases species should be selected, and managed, with a clear understanding of how best to optimise carbon sequestration and to prepare for future climate conditions.

The National Forest Inventory provides very detailed information on the extent of current woodland and tree canopy cover.

There are a range of tools for identifying the best place to create new woodland and plant new trees. PSDCF will use the most appropriate blend of tools to ensure that we deliver against the Right Tree, Right Place principle.

Areas most suitable for creation, based on sensitivity of land, identified in England Woodland Creation Low Sensitivity Map v4.0: variant 2 | Forestry Commission⁶⁷

Areas where there are opportunities that deliver benefits and nature-based solutions targeted in the CF Plan.⁶⁸⁻⁷¹

- Woodland Access Implementation Plan - GOV.UK
- EWCO - NfC Social | Forestry Commission
- Urban Tree Challenge Fund Trees Close To People For England | Forestry Commission
- EWCO - Flood Risk Management | Forestry Commission

Existing level of tree equity in Plymouth identifies those areas with the greatest opportunity to deliver benefits are shown at Tree Equity Score UK.⁷²

5.2 Improve Objective: Evidence and Rationale

Woodlands and individual Trees deliver the widest range of benefits when they are under well planned management.

There are a range of standards for the management of woodlands and trees that are endorsed and used by the Community Forest, and which will assist owners.

Guidance on the management of individual trees is covered in Tree Works British Standard (BS 3998).⁷³

Generally individual trees should be left alone unless there are over-riding reasons to undertake management.

Where there is an identified need to manage an individual tree careful tree surgery should

- Maintain a strong and stable tree structure
- Minimise any safety and nuisance issues
- Manage the long term size of the tree to allow retention

Examples of how the PSDCF partners undertake management include

Plymouth Tree Management Principles⁷⁴

Devon Tree and Woodland Strategy⁷⁵

Guidance on the management of Ancient and Veteran Trees is available from The Ancient Tree Forum⁷⁶

- Ensure the tree is stable and risk of collapse is minimised
- Deadwood is retained in, and around, the tree
- Compaction and damage to surrounding land is minimised

Standards for the management of woodlands are set in the UK Forestry Standard⁷⁷

Differing types of woodland require individual approaches but overall the aims should include

- Ensuring a diversity of age, height, species and structure
- Retaining historic features, other habitats, wet areas and deadwood
- Controlling invasive species, pests, disease, grey squirrels and deer
- Managing for timber through methods that reflect natural processes – continuous cover forestry is a good example
- Create safe and accessible routes for public use

Woodlands. The Forestry Commission surveys woodlands and identifies those under management

Sustainably Managed Woodland England - Headline Key Performance Indicator 31 March 2023 | Forestry Commission.⁷⁸

There is no evidence of the overall condition or management of individual trees or Ancient and Veteran Trees

Woodland Trust Woodland Creation Guidance⁷⁹

Agroforestry (the integration of trees with farming) has multiple benefits and will be actively encouraged as a way of supporting farmers.

5.3 Value Objective: Evidence and Rationale

People are at the heart of the Community Forest. Since 2021 the forest has encouraged over 5,000 individuals to come along and play their part – not with least the introduction of the Forest Rising initiative that recruits and supports young people to help shape and deliver the CF.

PSDCF collaborates to support a wide range of longer established volunteer networks that the Community Forest aims to increase support to – in particular;⁸⁰⁻⁸³

- Tree Wardens
- Observatree Volunteers
- Threat Detectors
- West Devon Wildlife Wardens

The overall objective is to increase awareness of the importance and benefits of trees. This will ensure public support for the retention, management and planting of new trees and woods and their active involvement in planting and managing trees.

Individuals and communities need to be inspired to take action.

All individuals and communities across PSDCF are encouraged to become involved – but the work of PSDCF (and partners) will look to use Tree Equity and Green Infrastructure Accessibility work to identify where there are greatest opportunities for community engagement and action to have highest impact.

Young people, equity and access for all sit at the heart of the work.

There are a wide range of sources of information on the benefits of trees including;

Plant your future - the case for Trees⁸⁴

Health and wellbeing benefits⁸⁵

Forest Research Evidence.

5.4 Deliver Objective: Evidence and Rationale

It takes a community to nurture a forest and the success of PSDCF will only be as strong as the communities that support it and the connections and partnerships that bring them together.

Some of these will be communities of place – so the wards of Plymouth and the parishes of the countryside – where neighbours come together to plant trees and celebrate the places they live in.

Others are communities of likeminded individuals across the whole PSDCF – from Farmers, Businesses and Social Enterprises to Tree Wardens. These groups have key roles to play in shaping and delivering the Forest and a key role for PSDCF is to establish connections with these groups.

At the heart of PSDCF is the partnership of the current 7 organisations that have shaped the forest so far. These are

- Dartmoor National Park Authority
- Devon County Council
- National Trust
- Plymouth City Council
- South Hams District Council
- The Woodland Trust
- West Devon Borough Council

All 7 see the significant benefits in expanding the range of partnerships that are involved.

PSDCF focus on employment builds on the Dartmoor Future Forests work pioneered by the Woodland Trust and funded by the Forestry Commission aimed at understanding, and then developing, the woodland economy on Dartmoor and its hinterland.

The delivery of job years, as a driver for the local woodland economy, was a target/metric announced with launch of Community Forest (350 job years in first ten years). Through the training and apprenticeship routes it places young people as the focus.

Currently within overall Community Forest activity there are close to 20 job years a year being delivered already. There are also a mix of ranger and volunteer opportunities that create opportunities across the partners.

Alongside the partnerships and shared work on job creation there is a much wider ambition to create a connected network of partners across the PSDCF area. The aim is to create easy to Partnership Agreements that aren't legally binding – but set out simply and concisely how PSDCF can work with the other organisation to mutual benefit to share their ambition and resources for the Forest.

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