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# The National Forest

## *A forest in the making*

Embracing 200 square miles at the heart of England, The National Forest is taking root across parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire. It is one of the biggest and boldest initiatives in the UK; transforming the landscape with the aim of linking the ancient Forest of Charnwood on its eastern fringe with Needwood Forest to its west. Within its boundary lie miles of rolling farmland and the former Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield, which was in desperate need of both environmental and economic regeneration. Forest towns include Burton upon Trent (famous for its brewing industry), Coalville and Swadlincote (formerly associated with mining and pottery) and the historic market town of Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

The idea, first conceived in the late 1980s, was to transform one of the country's least wooded regions into an area with a rich mosaic of land uses, framed by woodland, for the pleasure and benefit of the community, landscape and environment. The ambitious goal for The National Forest is to increase woodland cover to about a third of all the land within its boundary. This is now well under way, with woodland cover having increased from around 6 per cent in 1991 to more than 18 per cent in 2010. As a result, large swathes of countryside are now more accessible to local people and visitors with over 80 per cent of woodland sites open to all, to be explored and enjoyed. In order to create a diverse forest of predominantly broadleaved character, approximately 87 per cent of the trees planted to date are broadleaf species. Many individuals and organisations are involved in the creation of the Forest — local people, private landowners, public and voluntary sector bodies, private businesses and people from all over the country. Spearheading the initiative is The National Forest Company, established by Government in 1995 and sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The Company is responsible, through working with partners, for the delivery of the Government-approved National Forest Strategy — the vision for the Forest.

Creating a new landscape takes ambition, time and sensitivity. Over 7.8 million trees have already been planted, 'greening' more than 6200 hectares (15 300 acres) of derelict coalfield land and mineral workings and converting farmland to woodland. Other wildlife habitats are also being created or brought back into proper management (more than 1700 ha by 2010). The rural economy is stimulated through diversification into a wide range of new enterprises and new jobs are being created, especially at visitor attractions that are part of a rapidly growing tourism sector. Uses for the timber itself are being explored to ensure the woodland economy is viable and therefore sustainable.

Given all of this, The National Forest is a vast working example of sustainable development, fulfilling environmental, social and economic objectives for present and future generations. The National Forest is:

- blending new and maturing woodland within a wide variety of landscapes, presenting opportunities for many to take part in its development
- an inspiring example for the country, in the face of climate change and other environmental pressures
- a place of enjoyment and learning for its residents and visitors
- a place of contrasts, where people find quiet relaxation and active leisure
- a working forest providing new and sustainable livelihoods
- enriching the lives of people, the landscape and wildlife.

## **Get involved**

There are many ways that you can take part in the creation of The National Forest.

Individuals can contribute in many ways: by planting a tree or leaving a legacy or by making a major gift in memory of someone you love or to mark one of life's special occasions.

Community and environmental groups have many opportunities to take an active role in the Forest's creation. These range from volunteering for practical conservation work, community tree planting projects and maintenance of local woods to marking your place in the Forest with a distinctive arts or heritage feature. Whatever your interest, you can contribute your expertise and energy. Grants are available to support many community activities.

Schools within and around the Forest can use a range of excellent education centres and all-weather facilities, which cater for all ages and key stages throughout this huge outdoor classroom.

**Landowners** (existing and aspiring) can gain funding via one of our grant schemes, such as the unique Changing Landscapes Scheme (CLS), to create their own woodland in the Forest.

Although The National Forest Company has Government backing, we are particularly keen to work with the private sector and have a variety of ways that you can help through partnership working, sponsorship (financial and in-kind) and staff engagement.

**Voluntary bodies and charities** work with us on joint projects to realise the Forest's ambitious aims and make this 'a Forest for the nation'.

Whether with your family, in a group of friends or as a lone explorer, there's a wealth of walks, attractions and delights for visitors to discover and enjoy in The National Forest.

## National Forest walks

Whether you are looking for an afternoon stroll through the trees or a challenging 15 mile walk across changing landscapes, The National Forest is the place for you. Whatever your ability, there is something for everyone. There are over 200 woodlands with public access, mile after mile of footpaths to navigate or, if you don't want to work out your own route, there are dozens of walks available via The National Forest website ([www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org)).

The National Forest Company has also produced a series of guides giving information on walks and accessible sites within the Forest. The guides are split into four categories: *Short Walks* (less than 5 miles), *Medium Walks* (5 to 10 miles), *Long Walks* (more than 10 miles) and *Access for All* (specifically designed to provide information on sites and attractions that are suitable for all abilities).

## National Forest and beyond

Each leaflet gives clear, concise directions together with an Ordnance Survey map showing the route. They also provide information about some of the sights along the way and some historical background to the area. All of the walking guides are available from main tourist information centres in the Forest or to download from The National Forest website. We are constantly adding or updating walks so keep checking back for the latest information.

The visitor and attractions guides are updated annually and provide further information on woodland sites, visitor attractions, activities and accommodation in and around The National Forest area.

## Find out more

For more information on The National Forest, places to visit, walking, cycling, horse-riding, wildlife, events, grants available, planting a tree and how to get involved visit: [www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org)

For further information on The National Forest or for details of all National Forest leaflets and guides contact:

The National Forest Company, Enterprise Glade, Bath Lane, Moira, Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE12 6BA.

Tel: 01283 551211 Fax: 01283 552844 Website: <https://www.nationalforest.org> Email: [enquiries@nationalforest.org](mailto:enquiries@nationalforest.org)

## Figures

(Figure 121) Cycling by The Greenheart Lake. Photograph © Christopher Beech courtesy of NFC.

(Figure 122) A selection of walk leaflets.

(Figure 123) Poppies in a field. Photograph © The National Forest Company.

(Figure 124) Location map of The National Forest. © The National Forest Company.

(Figure 125) Tree-lined path. Photograph © Christopher Beech, courtesy of NFC.

(Front cover). Cover photographs: Grand old oak tree at Calke Abbey, Derbyshire [SK 367 226]. Photo: Lesley Hextall, courtesy of the National Forest Company. Walking photograph © National Forest Company Underground gypsum mine photograph © BPB UK Ltd Staunton Harrold church photograph © Lesley Hextall, National Forest Company.

(Rear cover).



(Figure 121) Cycling by The Greenheart Lake. Photograph © Christopher Beech courtesy of NFC.

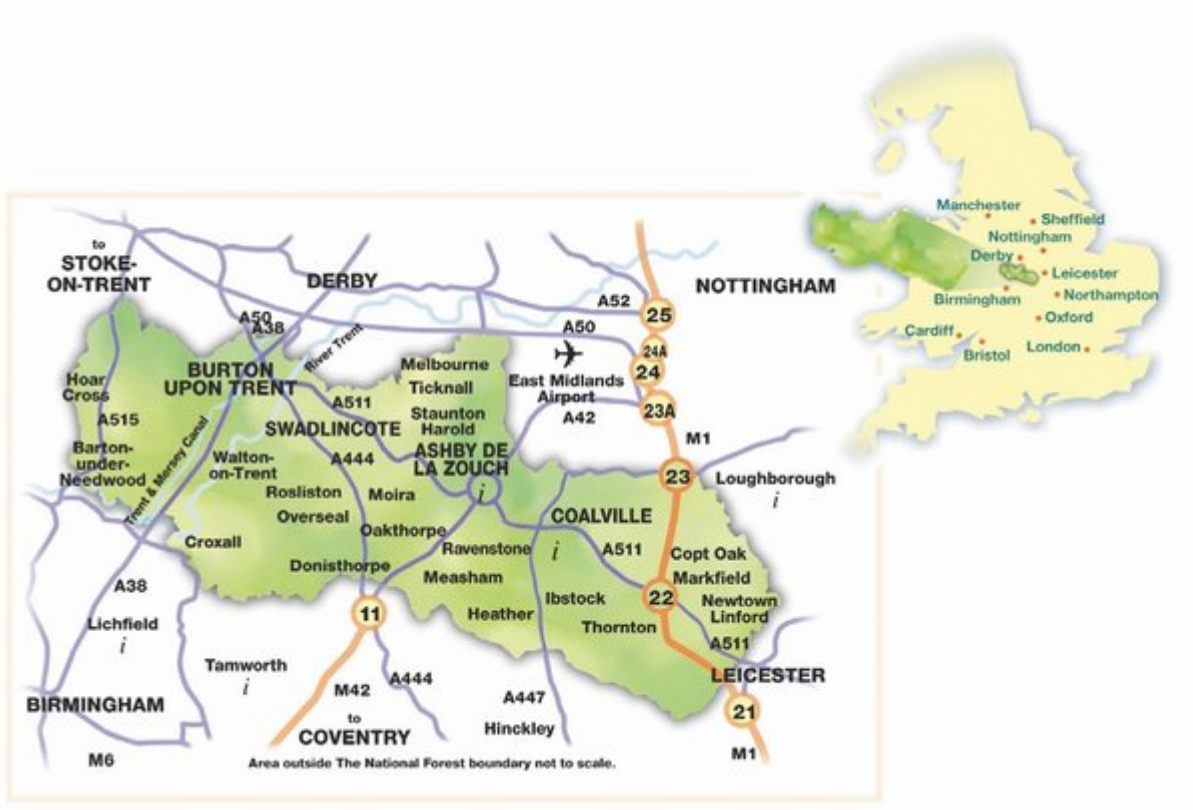


(Figure 122) A selection of walk leaflets.





(Figure 123) Poppies in a field. Photograph © The National Forest Company.



(Figure 124) Location map of The National Forest. © The National Forest Company.



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