South Yorkshire Forest Plan - 2002

Foreword

In 1991, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Sheffield City Council and the Sheffield Development Corporation joined in partnership with the Countryside Agency (formerly the Countryside Commission) and Forestry Commission to develop a strategic plan for a Community Forest in South Yorkshire. The vision was a simple one - to develop an attractive, well-wooded and accessible landscape and to create an environment that people can use, cherish and enjoy, which contributes to economic progress and social regeneration. That vision relied upon a wide range of organisations working together towards making it happen.

Together the founding partners established a small team to develop the activities of the partnership. A wide ranging consultation exercise with experts, organisations and local people informed the production of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan which was approved by Government ministers in November 1994. Each of the partner local authorities also adopted it as their corporate policy and committed themselves to its delivery. In 1998, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions carried out an evaluation of the first five years of the Community Forest programme. The conclusions were positive and confirmed the success of the first years of implementation. The evaluation was also the pre-cursor to the review of each strategic Forest Plan, which took place during 2000. This document is the result of that review and takes on board many comments and observations put forward during the consultation exercise at that time.

Linking environmental improvement and economic progress was, at the time of the first Forest Plan, new thinking, which is now gaining wide acceptance. The partnership has grown and real benefits have been achieved by involving communities in regenerating the environment and improving local quality of life.

The South Yorkshire Forest now forms a key element in assisting the economic regeneration of South Yorkshire. It acts as a focus for environmental regeneration in those areas that have suffered most from industrial decline. This Plan presents the ways in which that can become reality. The review process helped in clearly defining where efforts should be targeted. It has also helped in clarifying how the South Yorkshire Forest Partnership can both contribute to and benefit from wider activity, across the whole of South Yorkshire and the Yorkshire & the Humber region.

Please take the opportunity to read and consider how you can become involved in what remains an exciting vision for South Yorkshire’s environment.

Richard Walker
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Copies of this plan are available at local libraries.
It is also available at the South Yorkshire Forest Partnership web site www.syforest.co.uk
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1. Introduction

The South Yorkshire Forest forms a key element in assisting economic regeneration of South Yorkshire. It acts as a focus for environmental regeneration in those areas that have suffered most from industrial decline.

New woodlands, open areas, outdoor recreation opportunities and accessible sites provide an attractive backdrop for inward investment and other activities that develop and diversify economic activity.

The Forest Plan puts in place an integrated vision for transforming the environment, creating access to a countryside experience on people’s doorstep, and improving the quality of life for local people who have least access to more traditional rural areas. Involving people in the process of developing these places provides new direct opportunities for economic enhancement, jobs and training. An improved environment also leads to a healthier environment.

The South Yorkshire Forest Plan:
- offers a consistent and sustainable vision for the future of South Yorkshire’s landscape;
- pieces together a suite of objectives in a way that will allow numerous organisations to develop their actions as part of an integrated and strategic vision;
- acts as a framework to help in bidding for new resources;
- offers a foundation around which numerous agencies and organisations can frame their actions.

Delivering the South Yorkshire Forest Plan is contributing to delivering sustainability locally. It is about a well-wooded environment that offers social, economic and environmental benefits to all who live, work and invest in the area.

The South Yorkshire Forest Plan:
- introduces the national context in which the Community Forests are being developed;
- describes the regional and local issues that affect the development of the Forest;
- articulates the vision for a number of themes and a series of ‘strategic objectives’ that will help deliver that vision;
- develops a ‘spatial strategy’, identifying key areas and priorities for action;
- outlines some of the ways in which the vision can be made real.

The Forest Plan does not try to describe all the actions that will need to be put in place to make the vision real. The South Yorkshire Forest Partnership will seek to pull that ‘jigsaw’ together in a business plan identifying opportunities and priorities for delivery in a given time scale. There does however need to be a clear connection between the South Yorkshire Forest Plan and those actions ‘on the ground’.
The logic is simple - from an understanding of the local situation (the South Yorkshire Forest today), the aims of the partnership can be described, informed both by the national and regional/local contexts. From these aims, strategic objectives are derived which should steer the partnership’s delivery in their short and medium term planning.

Before detailing the major part of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan a number of ‘cross-cutting’ principles need to be described that apply throughout. They will not be spelt out in every section but their application needs to be taken into account throughout.

- **Sustainability** - delivery of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan should seek to deliver long-term environmental, social and economic objectives.

- **Addressing social exclusion** - priority actions will be focussed toward those who have least access to facilities/services/quality of environment.

- **Equal opportunities** - the benefits of the developing South Yorkshire Forest should be available to all.

- The Forest Plan seeks to **protect** what is best and **enhance** those areas where it is most needed.

- **Integration** - the objectives in the Plan and, wherever possible, the actions that contribute to their delivery, should seek to integrate a range of factors and not focus narrowly on one topic.

- **Communication** - in order to fully deliver the South Yorkshire Forest Plan the Partnership’s aims and objectives need to be effectively communicated to target audiences.
What’s so valuable about woodlands and open spaces?

The South Yorkshire Forest Partnership aims to promote and extend the following benefits:

Trees, woods and open spaces play an important part in our natural life support system: they play a vital role in the sustainability of our environment. A thriving environment contributes to making the area a healthy place in which to live and can contribute to economic prosperity. There are numerous social, economic and environmental benefits:

- **Community** - environmental projects strengthen neighbourhood communities by providing people with an easy opportunity to work together to improve and enjoy their local environment.

- **Healthier lives** - trees have an important impact on the incidence of skin cancer, they filter polluted air, reduce smog formation and provide an attractive, calming setting for recreation. Open-air activity and access to open spaces also have a role in reducing stress related illnesses.

- **Local economy** - greening the landscape creates a setting that encourages investment, creates jobs and can increase property values. Sustainable management of environmental assets provide another way in which the local economy can be diversified.

- **Landscape** - greenspaces soften the landscape making the environment greener and more attractive.

- **Wildlife** - a range of habitats in the local area, including local wooded spaces, play a vital role in the ecosystem by helping to support a great variety of wildlife that people can enjoy close to their home.

- **The atmosphere** - trees reduce the effects of air pollution and help reduce CO\(^2\) levels (helping to offset the effects of climate change).

- **Built environment** - trees can reduce energy consumption in nearby houses. They stabilise the soil, prevent erosion, reduce storm-water run-off and aid in land reclamation.
2. The national context

To many people the word ‘forest’ conjures up an image of dense, closely grown trees stretching as far as the eye can see.

Eight hundred years ago, in medieval times, it meant something quite different. Then, the great forests of England were not only trees, but a magnificent mix of woods, heaths, farmland, wetlands, ponds and streams. Here also were settlements - hamlets, villages and small towns - where people lived and worked. Today, the concept of Community Forests is breathing new life into this ancient meaning of the word. This echo from our past is now set to become a signpost to a better future.

Community Forests cover large areas in and around the edges of towns and cities. They are not continuous plantings of trees but a rich mosaic of wooded landscapes and land uses including farmland, villages, leisure enterprises, nature areas and public open space. The aim is to create well-wooded landscapes for wildlife, work and education, with new opportunities for recreation, all on the doorstep of half of England’s population.

The Forests for the Community programme, which consists of 12 Community Forests in England, is now over five years into implementation. Established by the Countryside Agency (then the Countryside Commission) and the Forestry Commission in partnership with a wide range of local partners, much has been achieved in the first few years. In total over 6,000 hectares of new woodland planting has been created, along with numerous benefits to the landscape and to local people. Importantly, Community Forests have become a mainstay of environmentally led regeneration and sustainability.

The 12 Community Forests -

- Forest of Avon around Bristol
- Forest of Mercia in southern Staffordshire
- Great North Forest in south Tyne and Wear and north-east Durham
- Great Western Community Forest around Swindon
- Greenwood Community Forest north of Nottingham
- Forest of Marston Vale to the south of Bedford
- Mersey Forest on Merseyside
- Red Rose Forest in Greater Manchester
- South Yorkshire Forest in Sheffield, Rotherham and Barnsley
- The Tees Forest around Cleveland
- Thames Chase to the east of London
- Watling Chase in south Hertfordshire/north London

 establishments with a wide range of local partners.
Each Community Forest has a non-statutory plan, approved by Government, which describes the proposals for developing that Forest over the next 35 years guides its implementation.

In each Forest the Countryside Agency, the Forestry Commission and 58 local authorities have appointed dedicated project teams to oversee implementation. Many other national and local organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors have become involved and are now supporting the partnerships. All are valued partners, critical to the success of the Forests.

2.1 Aims and objectives

The aim of the national programme of Community Forests is to achieve major environmental improvements around towns and cities, creating beautiful areas rich in wildlife, with associated provision for access, leisure and education, thereby making them more attractive places in which to live, do business and enjoy leisure time.

The corporate objectives originally agreed by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which each Community Forest partnership has adopted, are:

- to regenerate the environment of the Green Belt and equivalent areas, where it is public policy to keep it open, and help to ensure that it is permanently green and open;
- to improve the landscape of the area, including reclamation of derelict land, to create a visually exciting and functionally diverse environment;
- to increase opportunities for sport and recreation, including artistic and cultural events and access;
- to protect areas of high quality landscape or historical or archaeological interest;
- to provide new opportunities for educational use of the area, and ensure the mosaic of habitats in the forest can be used for the full range of environmental education needs of the surrounding schools. Also to ensure that urban schools are not disadvantaged in meeting the needs of the National Curriculum;
- to protect the best agricultural land and increase opportunities for farm diversification elsewhere in accordance with Government agricultural and local planning policies;
- to establish a supply of timber and other woodland products;
- to achieve a high level of local community commitment to the concept and involvement in its implementation;
- to give public and private sector confidence in the long-term prospects for the area and to provide a proper base for investment.
- to improve the environment near housing and local industry and to increase the value of properties and businesses;
- to seek private sector support to implement the Forest and to invest in leisure and other relevant service sectors;
- to create jobs in the new woodland industries, both management of woodland and use of the raw materials;
- to create jobs in the leisure industry developed in and around the Community Forest;
- to sustain other local jobs by providing an outstanding environment as a comparative economic advantage over competitor areas;
- to complement the Government’s priorities for inner cities, by providing for associated leisure and open space needs at the physically closest locations;
- to remain flexible in the light of changes, such as in the leisure market.
In 1998 the DETR carried out an evaluation of the first five years of the Community Forests. The conclusions were positive and confirmed the success of the first years of implementation. It also confirmed that the objectives remained valid.

Existing tree cover within the 12 forests at the start of the programme averaged 6.9%, with an average of 170 hectares of woodland planted each year. The aim is to increase tree cover to about 30% over about 30 years. This implies a significant increase in tree planting. In the first five years, 6,000 hectares were planted throughout the 12 Forests.

2.2 Current policy framework

As the Community Forests develop, so too does the policy framework which embraces them. Within Community Forests, pioneering approaches to regeneration have been adopted through community-based partnerships that give them life well into the 21st century. Those partnerships are well placed to respond to future policy changes across a broad spectrum of interests, including environmental, economic and social.

Internationally, the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 acknowledged the essential nature of forestry for the well-being of the planet and marked the first ever global agreement on forest principles. The need to make future development sustainable was clearly recognised. The development of the Community Forests embraces the government’s four objectives for sustainable development:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- effective protection of the environment;
- prudent use of natural resources; and
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

Nationally the Government has begun a programme of devolution in Scotland and Wales, and regionalisation in the creation of Regional Development Agencies in England. There has also been an increasing emphasis on ‘sustainability’ as a fundamental attribute of government-funded regeneration and development programmes. The Community Forests offer the Regional Development Agencies a tried and tested model that combines a strategic mechanism for delivering...
environmental improvement alongside sustainable economic regeneration.

Community Forests operate in a climate of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform through Agenda 2000, which is designed to pave the way for European Union enlargement and, in relation to agriculture, to address international trade concerns by bringing EU farm prices nearer to world market prices. This simplification of the CAP is a further step towards decoupling farm support from production, and pave the way for a new ‘second pillar of the CAP’ designed to promote environmental action, forestry and rural development.

The introduction of the Rural Development Regulation provides the framework for making rural development a ‘second pillar’ of the CAP as more resources are diverted from mainstream CAP support. The Regulation is a small step in the transition towards fully integrating agricultural policy with rural policy to meet the environmental, social and economic needs of rural areas. The Regulation brings together nine separate measures into a single framework, the England Rural Development Programme, which provides the foundation on which to build a long term, integrated, rural policy, linking agriculture, forestry and support for the wider rural economy.

2.3 Countryside Agency

On 1 April 1999 the Countryside Agency was formed from the merger of the Countryside Commission and part of the Rural Development Commission (RDC). The balance of the RDC was merged with the Regional Development Agencies. The Countryside Agency is the new statutory body working:

- to conserve and enhance the countryside;
- to promote social equity and economic opportunity for the people who live there; and
- to help everyone, wherever they live, to enjoy this national asset.

The Countryside Commission’s publication England’s Trees and Woods (1993) expresses
the Agency’s overall policy and remains valid as context for increasing tree cover in England, especially through principles of multipurpose forestry embraced within the Community Forests. A new policy context for the regeneration of the countryside in and around towns, ‘Linking Towns and Country’, was published in March 1999, in which the multi-purpose, strategic, community-based partnerships pioneered within Community Forests are flagships.

The Countryside Agency’s objectives cover the full breadth of sustainable development - social, economic and environmental - and the Agency intends to use Community Forests to test innovative approaches. The urban and rural white papers published in 2000 were important in setting the context for this work. The broad framework of the Countryside Agency will allow it to make full use of the Community Forests as test-beds for a wide range of policies.

2.4 Forestry Commission

The Government decided following devolution that the Forestry Commission would continue to be the department with responsibility for forestry throughout Great Britain. The Forestry Commission is now organised to meet the requirements of devolution with structures in place to serve the needs of England, Scotland and Wales, while drawing upon central resources where needed. These arrangements allow the Forestry Commission to develop policies tailored to the particular needs and circumstances of each country. In England this will involve building on the England Forestry Strategy, launched in December 1998.

The England Forestry Strategy sets out the Government’s strategic priorities and programmes over the next five to ten years. It demonstrates the strengthened commitment to social forestry in England as well as focusing on areas of greatest opportunity and need. The strategy has four key programmes: Forestry for Rural Development; Forestry for Economic Regeneration; Forestry for Recreation, Access and Tourism and Forestry for the Environment and Conservation. The delivery of these programmes can be greatly assisted in the Community Forests which will remain major partners with the Forestry Commission in achieving these goals. The Community Forests are therefore seen as a major delivery mechanism to achieve large scale, multi-purpose, sustainable forestry where it is most required.

The Forestry Commission has set up the Land Regeneration Unit, with the aim of greater involvement in restoring derelict land, targeting where possible, within the Community Forest areas. This innovative approach is opening up a significant number of opportunities where substantial areas of new woodlands are already planned or under way.

The Countryside Agency and the Forestry Commission remain committed to the Community Forest programme and they will continue to be national lead partners with undiminished roles.

2.5 Funding regimes

Creating Community Forests is not dependent upon large-scale changes in land ownership. The main approach is to encourage farmers, landowners and businesses to consider the opportunities which the Forests might present, while at the same time recognising the essential role that productive and profitable farming will continue to have for the landscape, wildlife and recreation within the Community Forest areas.

Finance for the development of Community Forests comes from a number of sources. Grants from the Forestry Commission, the Countryside Agency, DEFRA and other government bodies help with planting, management, restoration of derelict land and provision of facilities for sport and recreation. Further money comes from local government and industry. Private investment will be attracted from companies who see a market potential such as those for wood products or in the leisure sector. Resources from the voluntary sector have an equally valuable role. Sound business partnerships are the key for those responsible for planning, developing and managing a Community Forest.

Since the establishment of the programme, Community Forests have drawn in substantial
funds from other sources such as the National Lottery, Europe, landfill tax, business sponsorship, developers’ contributions for projects on the ground and donations from charitable trusts for land acquisitions and tree planting. The gearing ratio, for example, of the Countryside Agency’s expenditure on Community Forest teams and project work is excellent. The Forest Partnerships are well placed to make the most of new funding opportunities, offering strategic vision, local, regional and national partnerships and a proven record of delivery.

2.6 Conclusion

Community Forests will take 35 years to develop, but the improvements are already tangible. We will not reap all the advantages in one lifetime, but significant benefits will flow from the early years. Community Forests will be a legacy for the future, to be used, cherished and enjoyed by our children and our children’s children.
3. Regional and local context

3.1 Landscape history & geology

The story of South Yorkshire’s landscape is directly connected with events that happened millions of years ago. The underlying rocks, which were deposited as sediment on the beds of ancient seas or as silts and vegetation in river deltas, have been buckled by movements in the earth’s crust and eroded by the effects of water, ice and wind. These fundamental forces of nature have given rise to a characteristic ‘belted’ landscape of ridges and vales which rises to 359m on Whitwell Moor, near Stocksbridge, and descends east-north-eastwards to only 19m above sea level at Bolton upon Dearne.

The terrain, the soils and the minerals within the rocks have influenced the courses of rivers, the pattern of agriculture, the location of settlements and the nature and growth of industries. This is the landscape we see today.

Almost all of the Forest lies on coal measures; rocks that contain narrow seams of coal. The exceptions are a small area of magnesian limestone near Hooton Roberts and a narrow strip of millstone grit in the west. The millstone grit, a coarse-grained sandstone traditionally used for grinding grain, forms a series of closely grouped escarpments, notably at Wharncliffe Crags and Grenoside.

Three rivers, the Don, Dearne and Rother, cross the area, the first two having created gaps through the escarpments. Here, broad strips of alluvium formed from river-borne deposits occur along the main river valleys.

The influence of people

After the last Ice Age, 9000-13,000 years ago, the whole area became cloaked in continuous broadleaved woodland, known as the ‘wildwood’; 6000 years ago, people began to make their mark through a process of deliberate woodland clearance. Most clearance has been to accommodate agricultural expansion, though in the last two centuries mining and industrial...
and urban development have also made their mark on the landscape.

As early as Domesday Book (AD 1086), woodland covered only 15-20% of the South Yorkshire Forest area; today, this is down to 7.7%.

In many cases ancient woodland, those that are known to have been wooded since at least 1600, has been much altered, perhaps felled and allowed to re-grow. Most are now neglected and heavily replanted.

As field systems developed, so did hunting chases and deer parks at Wharncliffe, Thrybergh, Ravenfield, Kimberworth and Tankersley. Later, landscaped parks around important country houses, as at Wentworth Woodhouse, Stainborough and Thundercliffe, became and still remain important features of the historic landscape. The open field systems, meadows and commons were gradually enclosed, at first by private agreement and then, from 1750 to 1830, by Acts of Parliament.

There are nine historic parks and gardens within the Forest on English Heritage’s Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Scientific Interest, including Stainborough Park and Norfolk Park. Other sites of historic value are protected by the UDPs. The distribution of surviving historic, rural landscapes is uneven. They are most obvious in the less-industrialised and urbanised west and north-west, and in the north-central part of the area. However, the urban spread of Sheffield and Rotherham has seen them fragmented or lost completely in the southern and south-central parts of the Forest.

The list of scheduled Ancient Monuments in the South Yorkshire Forest is under review and is likely to increase substantially. There are a number of important early industrial sites in the schedule, including both the blast furnace and the engine house at Rockley, Wortley Top Forge iron works, and glass workings at Catcliffe and Stocksbridge. The scheduled sites represent those monuments considered nationally important and having statutory protection. There are also many other non-scheduled sites, which are listed in the South Yorkshire Sites and Monuments Record (held by South Yorkshire Archaeology Service) along with the scheduled sites.

**Industrialisation**

Both mining and manufacturing had early beginnings in the area. They gradually encroached on the rural scene, not only through the urban expansion of Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield, but also through the establishment of completely new industrial communities, such as at Stocksbridge, and the enlargement of existing rural villages into mining settlements, for example at Wombwell and Wath. Others more recently became commuter villages, as at Thorpe Hesley.
In some places, such as large parts of the Lower Don, Rother and Dearne Valleys, heavy and prolonged industrialisation has completely changed the landscape. Today, about 40% of the South Yorkshire Forest area is urbanised.

The Forest area is well known for its steel and coal industries. Iron and steel making began in the seventeenth century, driven by the local supply of iron ore. The ore was smelted first by charcoal from the local woods and later by coal and coke. Furnaces were powered by water, then steam and ultimately electricity. Steel making, centred on the Lower Don Valley, reached its peak in the mid-1800s. By 1843, Sheffield made 90% of Britain’s steel and almost half of Europe’s.

However, the decline of the steel making and coal industries, along with mineral extraction and waste tipping, has left large areas of the Forest area derelict or neglected. Much of this relates to the former coal mining areas in the Dearne and Rother Valleys, and when considered along with the decline of steel making in the Lower Don Valley, dereliction can be seen throughout the Forest area.

The decline of the area’s traditional industrial base has continued through to the end of the 20th century. No deep mine collieries remain within the South Yorkshire Forest area, the final ones at Grimethorpe and at Silverwood closing during the mid 1990’s.

3.2 South Yorkshire Forest today - the issues

Road & rail corridors

A number of major transport routes influence the area. The Forest is bisected by the M1 and bounded on the eastern side by the M1/M18 corridor. Several other significant roads pass through, including the A616 from Manchester, which enters the Forest at Stocksbridge and meets the M1 near Tankersley. Two main rail lines, Sheffield to Barnsley and the route via Rotherham to Doncaster and Leeds, also cross the area. Environmental quality along these main transport routes affects perceptions of the region. Improvement of these major corridors will increase investor confidence & enhance prospects for economic regeneration.

River valleys

There are three main rivers. The Don, which enters the Forest near Deepcar and follows the boundary near Parkwood Springs, turns to flow north-eastwards through Rotherham towards Mexborough. The Rother flows in a northerly direction to its confluence with the Don near the centre of Rotherham. The Dearne cuts through the north-eastern side of the area, eventually to join the Don just outside the Forest. Features throughout the river valleys together create significant opportunities for public enjoyment and recreation.

Employment & economy

Despite the decline in steel making, steel manufacturing and related industries still feature highly both in terms of employment and business turnover. The main manufacturing industries are steel, refractory products, construction, brick making, machine tools and brewing. Employment in the mining industry has continued to decline through the 1990s. As a result of the development of service industries in Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield, many people are employed in public services, health, education and the retail trade.

During the 1990’s figures that measure the strength of the area’s economy continued to decline. By the end of the decade Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita had fallen to 71% of the EU average, below the 75% threshold that qualify South Yorkshire for funding targeted toward restructuring the economy of the most deprived parts of Europe (Objective 1 Structural Funds).

Regeneration

A number of initiatives have been established that are primarily aimed at encouraging the economic regeneration of the area. The Sheffield Development Corporation was established to foster economic development
in and around Sheffield’s lower Don Valley. That initiative came to an end in 1997 but has left its mark for generations to come. The Dearne Valley Partnership was set up following a City Challenge award aimed at economic restructuring in the Dearne Valley area of Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham. The valley had been at the heart of South Yorkshire’s coal mining industry and suffered greatly in economic and environmental terms through its decline. Other major UK Government funds have been directed at parts of South Yorkshire seeking to turn around the area’s economic and social decline.

Environmental improvements are a significant contribution in delivering economic and social regeneration. It is important that this is taken on-board by further initiatives that seek to foster economic and social regeneration, such as the Sheffield Urban Regeneration Company, rather than viewing the environment as a regulatory hurdle.

All of the South Yorkshire Forest was within the area designated for European Objective 2 funds. From 2000, the whole of South Yorkshire became eligible for Objective 1. Projects need to fit in with the Single Programme Document and should lead to accelerated activity aimed at significantly creating jobs, restructuring the economy and raising GDP.

Recreation

The network of footpaths is generally good across the Forest area, serving both rural and urban communities. The main breaks in the network seem to be associated with industrial activity. In particular, links along the valleys are fragmented, though efforts are being made to restore them with initiatives such as the Five Weirs Walk in the Lower Don.

Horse-riding is a significant activity. However, the system of bridleways is poor across most of the Forest and there are few long-distance and circular routes. The lack of designated routes manifests itself in problems such as the safety hazard of horses on roads and the physical damage caused by unauthorised use of the footpath network.

Off-road cyclists are allowed to use the bridleway network. In most circumstances, cycling requires a level, good-condition surface and, wherever possible, separation from horse-riders. The majority of bridleways are not surfaced and are not separated for these two uses. Difficulties have arisen in the urban fringe, in woodlands, open spaces and on public rights of way where casual off-road motorcycling has taken place. A rise in the popularity of mountain bikes for off-road use has resulted in the use of rough, uneven and hilly tracks throughout the Forest area.

There is varied provision for formal ‘countryside’ sport in the Forest area. Orienteering is well suited to a wooded environment. There are 15 golf courses or driving ranges in and around the Forest area, with two courses and a driving range just outside. Just three of the sites are public courses. Water sports are well catered for in the Forest at a range of sites, the principal one being Rother Valley Country Park. Canoeing, sailing, windsurfing, water skiing and jet skiing all take place on a regular basis in the Forest. Coarse fishing takes place on the majority of water in the Forest and there is significant demand for more water to be made available though poor water quality in several rivers is still a major constraint.

Climbing tends to be a minority sport nationally but the close proximity of the Forest to the gritstone edges in the Peak District means that a significant number of participants live in the area. There are a few climbing sites in the Forest, principally at Wharncliffe Crags. Likewise archery is a minority sport in the Forest and takes place at three venues: Rother Valley and Ulley Country Parks, and at Hesley Wood Activity Centre.

Tourism and leisure

Whilst tourism remains a minor industry in the Forest, an increasing number of attractions exist in and around the area. Attractions include shopping facilities, museums, theatres and cinemas in Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield centres, and also out-of-town shopping and cinemas at Meadowhall and Crystal Peaks centres.
Redevelopment in the Lower Don Valley has provided two major sporting and recreational venues: Sheffield Arena and Don Valley Stadium. Other attractions are connected with the area’s industrial heritage, such as Wortley Top Forge and Elsecar Heritage Centre, and with its urban and country parks. For example, Rother Valley Country Park, to the south of the Forest, attracts people nationally for its water sports and countryside recreation. Nearby, the Peak District National Park is a popular tourist destination. A number of major lottery-funded attractions are being developed and if marketed well these, along with the range of hotels, bed-and-breakfasts and the associated leisure facilities will contribute to the diversification of South Yorkshire’s economy. The natural heritage within the Forest area has the potential to attract both day visitors and those spending a longer break in and around the area.

Wildlife

Each of the three boroughs have identified and classified sites of particular value to wildlife in the Forest area. Sites of known wildlife value cover a wide variety of habitats, including open water and wetlands, grasslands, lowland heath and woodland. A number of sites lie close to or in the urban area. There are five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the Forest. These have statutory protection against potentially damaging operations: four are scheduled for their geological interest, the fifth is Cadman Wood, part of the Moss Valley SSSI. Currently there are 15 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) in the Forest and with many other sites under review the number is likely to increase over the next year. Some wildlife sites in the Forest are being managed with nature conservation as the primary management objective. The wildlife in the Forest area is already interesting and varied. However, good management practices with the development of new areas for wildlife will enrich the nature conservation and biodiversity value of the Forest.

Woods & timber related industries

In 1991, woodland in the Forest amounted to 3020 ha, just over 7.7% of the area. That included areas planted as woodland in the previous 10 years, many of which are not obvious in the landscape at present. The native woodland of the area is predominately birch and oak. However, all woodlands show the effects of mankind through the introduction of non-native trees such as beech and sweet chestnut. Of particular value are the ancient woodland sites. Whilst many of these have been replanted with commercial conifer and broadleaved tree species, but still retain their historical, ecological and landscape importance. The need for more woodland and the opportunities to create them varies across the Forest area. In the west, three extensively replanted ancient woodland sites, Wharncliffe, Greno and Wheata Woods, together occupy 730ha, nearly a quarter of the Forest’s existing woodland.

The east of the Forest is largely unwooded. These areas are predominately rural with significant areas of urban fringe and derelict land. New woodlands are significant, particularly in the Rother Valley where extensive planting has taken place as part of the reclamation of coal-extraction sites. The urban area around Sheffield is surprisingly well wooded, bearing in mind that over 70% of it is built up. Most of the woodlands are small and are associated with the ridges and valleys that reach right into the heart of Sheffield’s urban areas. Many are in public ownership and are highly valued for public access and their urban wildlife.

The small scale of the forestry industry reflects the emphasis on amenity rather than commercial woodlands. Most timber cut from Wharncliffe Wood, the largest commercial plantation in the Forest, goes to make paper at Ellesmere Port or to a sawmill in Doncaster. An increase in the amount of woodland being planted and managed is likely to be reflected in growth of the local forestry industry and the employment prospects it has to offer.
Agriculture

Registered agricultural land accounts for two-thirds of the non-urban parts of the Forest. There are around 387 individual agricultural land holdings; 190 of these are farmed on a part-time basis. Of the farms run on a full-time basis, the main industry is cereal production. The proximity of the Forest to urban areas often makes farming problematic. Farmers in the Forest area have to deal with a greater incidence of crime, vandalism and trespass than those in rural parts of Britain.

Agricultural land is graded from 1 (excellent) to 5 (poor). The DEFRA (previously MAFF) provisional 1 inch to 1 mile Agricultural Land Classification map (Ordnance Survey 1961) shows that 43.3% of agricultural land in the Forest area is classified as grade 3. 5.3% is grade 4, with most of this occurring towards the western edge of the Forest, as the land rises towards the boundary with the Peak District National Park. There are isolated patches of grade 5 land throughout the Forest. The amount of grade 2 land is negligible, and no grade 1 land is shown at this scale. However, information from these maps should be regarded as indicative; accurate grading can only be ascertained by fieldwork.

3.3 Planning framework

Regional Planning Guidance

The Regional Planning Guidance for Yorkshire & the Humber (Department of Transport Local Government & the Regions, 2001) provides a regional spatial strategy for much of the life of the Forest Plan (to 2016). It has been prepared in parallel to the ‘Regional Economic Strategy’ produced by Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency (RDA). The RPG provides a regional spatial strategy within which local authority development plans and local transport plans can be prepared. By virtue of being a spatial strategy, it will also inform the development and implementation of other strategies and programmes including the Regional Economic Strategy & the Objective 1 European Structural Funds Programme.

The RPG presents 4 strategic themes:

- Economic regeneration & growth;
- Promoting social inclusion;
- Urban & rural renaissance;
- Conserving & enhancing natural resources.

The RPG develops policies that amplify these themes.

The development of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan contributes very substantially to a range of these themes and policies. For example;

**Policy S3** - **“In preparing development plans and other ... strategies and programmes, local authorities and other local and regional agencies should ... foster the renaissance of existing urban and rural settlements ... making them more attractive, high quality and safe places to live, work, shop, spend leisure time and invest.**

**Policy S4** - “The quality of life in urban and rural settlements should be raised through improvements to the environment. ... Development plans should;

Encourage the creation of high quality sustainable places ... Encourage the informed and active participation of local communities in the planning of their areas ... Encourage urban regeneration, including reclamation and remediation of derelict and under-used land for development, open space, recreation and amenity.

Ensuring that the needs of local communities for access to (on foot, bicycle or public transport) and experience of, nature are protected, helping the vulnerable, disadvantaged or excluded groups to gain access to nature and wildspace”

**Policy S4** - “The quality of life in urban and rural settlements should be raised through improvements to the environment. ... Development plans should;

Encourage the creation of high quality sustainable places ... Encourage the informed and active participation of local communities in the planning of their areas ... Encourage urban regeneration, including reclamation and remediation of derelict and under-used land ... Use trees in towns to contribute to urban renaissance by enhancing urban greenspace (and) providing settings for new development ... Recognise the particular importance of access to urban greenspace and to countryside and the urban fringe.”
RPG gives specific direction for the consideration of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan:

**Policy N4** - “Development plans and other strategies and programmes should encourage tree cover in the region to be increased in ways which reinforce and support the regional spatial strategy by:

- Including land use policies which facilitate the implementation of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan in the development plans for Barnsley, Rotherham & Sheffield.

- Including substantial woodland planting as part of comprehensive schemes for regeneration of previously used/derelict land.”

### Unitary Development Plans

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and Sheffield City Council have each adopted Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) that guide development and conservation of the environment in the three boroughs over the next 10 years. These statutory plans are reviewed on a regular cycle. The UDPs provide the formal basis for planning and control of development within the South Yorkshire Forest.

Each UDP makes specific reference to the Forest.

- **Unitary Development Plan (Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council 1993) Policy GS17:** “The Council will support the creation of the South Yorkshire Community Forest.”

- **Unitary Development Plan (Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, June 1995) Policy ENV6** “Community Forest: The Council will support the development of the South Yorkshire Forest.”

- **Unitary Development Plan (Sheffield City Council, 1993) Policy GE14** - “South Yorkshire Community Forest: Support will be given for the creation of part of the South Yorkshire Community Forest on the northern and eastern sides of the City.”

A range of other relevant policies in the UDPs will influence the development of the South Yorkshire Forest. Included within each UDP is the location of Green Belt land. The Forest Plan is designed to work within the UDP system and therefore relates to the UDP policies and Green Belt boundaries.

### Non-statutory policies

All three local authorities have been involved in the preparation of non-statutory plans that guide their action and response to environmental issues in the Forest area.
These documents, which relate to the countryside and nature conservation, have been taken into account in producing the Forest Plan.

3.4 Regional and local strategic context

A number of regional organisations influence the way in which South Yorkshire’s environment and economy develop. Strategy development through these organisations will be important in setting the parameters for opportunities to improve the South Yorkshire Forest.

Regional Economic Strategy

Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency for Yorkshire & the Humber has developed the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) to steer economic development in the region over a 10-year timescale. The RES takes account of the Regional Development Agency’s five-fold remit, including consideration of sustainable development. Sitting alongside Regional Planning Guidance, the RES provides a framework for the regional economy, not just Yorkshire Forward. The development of the South Yorkshire Forest therefore needs both to be informed by this important regional framework, reflecting its priorities, and to benefit from the opportunities and priorities it articulates.

The strategy includes 6 objectives:

1) grow the region’s businesses;
2) achieve higher business birth and survival rates;
3) create and retain more investment;
4) radically improve the development and application of education, learning and skills;
5) implement targeted community-based regeneration programmes;
6) get the best of the region’s physical assets and conserve and enhance its environmental assets.

The development of the South Yorkshire Forest will contribute to delivering all of these objectives to a greater of lesser extent, for example, creating and retaining investment in the region by removing one of the impediments to investment (i.e. replacing a poor quality environment with a more attractive and healthy setting for new investors).

The regional economic strategy also sets out a suite of actions. Numerous actions included in the strategy are of relevance including:

Objective 6 ➔ To get the best out of the region’s physical assets and conserve and enhance its environmental quality;

How? ➔ Yorkshire Forward and Community Forests (of which the South Yorkshire Forest is the only one in the region);

Objective 1 Single Programme Document

The Single Programming Document (SPD) for the European Union Objective 1 structural funds programme sets the strategy and priorities for delivering a ‘step-change’ in South Yorkshire’s economic performance. It forms the basis for decisions over funding proposals under a £740 million programme. As such it shapes & informs many actions being delivered within the Forest area. The lifespan of the SPD & of the Objective 1 funding is to 2007.

Delivering the South Yorkshire Forest forms part of the SPD strategy. The SDP recognises the potential that it can offer in supporting South Yorkshire’s economic regeneration, through creating an attractive setting for investment & through the strategic environmental framework that the Forest Plan provides. Notably, the Objective 1 programme includes a measure, allowing expenditure specifically aimed at developing forestry resources. The broader economic development framework places weight over spatial issues. For example, in seeking to benefit from clusters of growth areas within Strategic Economic Zones. Developing the South Yorkshire Forest also has great potential in contribute to environmental setting & to the accessibility within and around the zones.
Regional Sustainable Development Framework

The Regional Sustainable Development Framework provides a sustainable development context for regional strategies and plans. The framework bridges the gap between national and local sustainable development policy. Sustainable development means integrating economic, social and environmental factors with a regard to the future consequences of actions to give a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. The South Yorkshire Forest Plan forms a major sub-regional strategy for the area integrating environmental, economic and social factors. Sustainability is at its very heart.

The sustainability framework incorporates 15 themes for sustainable development in Yorkshire & the Humber and delivering the South Yorkshire Forest Plan will contribute to achieving a number of these themes.

Local Transport Plan

The Local Transport Plan is seeking to develop a sustainable framework for transport provision within the county. The South Yorkshire Forest Plan continue to put forward complementary objectives and proposals. The Forest Plan will help inform the development of this and other related transport and access frameworks as they are reviewed and updated in the future.

Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP)

The Environment Agency for England & Wales was established in April 1996 and is taking action to improve land, air and water in an integrated manner. The LEAP for South Yorkshire & North East Derbyshire describes priorities for environmental actions, relating primarily to air, water and land contamination, that complement those described with the South Yorkshire Forest Plan.

Other strategies

Other regional and sub-regional plans provide a context within which the development of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan is influenced. For example, the Countryside Agency has developed a vision for sustainable regeneration in the Don & Dearne corridors (‘20:20 vision’), building upon the work of a number of other agencies. Economic, health and education plans (e.g. Health Action Zones) all have relevance to South Yorkshire’s sustainable environmental and social regeneration and hence be of relevance in the development of the South Yorkshire Forest.

3.5 The South Yorkshire Forest boundary

The South Yorkshire Forest Plan review process, during 2000, provided the opportunity to take a critical look at the area targeted by the Forest Partnership. Using the rationale for defining the Forest boundary (see boxed text) some areas very clearly fell within these criteria but were previously outside the Forest boundary. This was particularly so in the north east of Barnsley which has suffered severely from the decline in the coal industry and where environmental regeneration is a key priority.

The South Yorkshire Forest now covers an area of 50,530 ha (nearly 200 square miles). It stretches almost into the heart of Sheffield, including the Lower Don Valley on the eastern side of the city, encompassing the suburbs of Manor, Arbourthorne, Park Hill, Heeley and Meersbrook, Gleadless and Mosborough to the south and Parson Cross and Ecclesfield to the north.

Westwards it extends to meet the Peak District National Park near Stocksbridge and, to the north, it includes the Barnsley urban area and the communities of Grimethorpe, Royston, Shafton, Great Houghton, Little Houghton and Cudworth. The boundary extends to the Barnsley borough boundary in the north and east (to Wakefield and Doncaster) and to the M1 motorway in the west.

To the north and east, the whole of Rotherham town and the Dearne Valley are included.

In total, about 40% of the area is urban. Administratively, the Forest includes parts of the Boroughs of Barnsley, Rotherham and the City of Sheffield.
The South Yorkshire Forest boundary - a rationale

The South Yorkshire Forest acts as a focus for environmental regeneration in those parts of the area that have suffered most from industrial decline.

It forms a key element in assisting the economic regeneration of South Yorkshire. New woodlands, open areas, outdoor recreation opportunities and accessible sites provide an attractive backdrop to inward investment measures and other activities that develop and diversity economic activity.

The Forest Plan sets out a vision for transforming the environment, creating access to a countryside experience on people’s doorstep, improving the quality of life for people who have least access to more traditional rural areas. Involving people in the process of developing their environment also provides new direct opportunities for economic enhancement, jobs and training. The Forest Partnership therefore develops ways of delivering social inclusion in those areas where it is most an issue.

The boundary therefore seeks to encompass those parts of the area where these issues are most relevant.

The Forest Plan presents both thematic priorities, those issues that are relevant to varying degrees across the board, and spatial priorities. Actions taken to develop the Plan within the defined boundary will often therefore have implications on environmental improvement outside the Forest boundary. Some issues delivered on a broader scale, for example across the whole of South Yorkshire, will benefit the communities in the Forest. These need to be expressed in the Partnership’s business plan.
To many people the image of South Yorkshire is one of unreclaimed waste, dereliction, ragged urban edges and farmland devoid of structure and variety through the loss of hedgerows, copses and woods.

While derelict and neglected land can blight the landscape, it can also become a focus for regeneration. Land renewal creates opportunities for employment, housing, recreation and new wildlife habitats. Regenerating areas of derelict landscape improves the perception of the area, helps build confidence and assists in securing new investment.

In parts of the Forest area, the work of renewing the landscape began some years ago, the benefits of which are becoming apparent. The most successful schemes incorporate green space, including tree planting in the form of woodland blocks, informal belts or avenues in parkland and urban areas.

Such green spaces are vital in a landscape in which people work, live and play, and where wildlife can flourish. Green spaces are increasingly supporting healthy communities and helping to create new sustainable employment.

Pockets of a new landscape exist. The series of lakes and young woodlands at Rother Valley Country Park demonstrates how, with time, effort and money, an opencast coal site can be transformed into a marvellous recreation area.

Developing the South Yorkshire Forest creates a new landscape incorporating and conserving the best landscape and wildlife areas, clears up the dereliction and provides a new environment for economic recovery and improved quality of life. Central to the vision is a network of open spaces and water areas linked by pathways. Trees in woodlands and in hedgerows, at the water’s edge and along avenues and roads are another vital linking element emphasising the structure of the landscape, screening eyesores and creating a habitat for wildlife and a setting for human activity.

The Forest also plays its part in improving the national and global environment. The area’s biodiversity is enhanced and trees lock up atmospheric carbon, reducing greenhouse gases & help make a positive contribution to climate change. New woodlands also help to reduce air pollution, improve water quality and conserve soil fertility.

The aims and strategic objectives for each themed section convert the national programme objectives into tangible steps. Translating these steps into action at a local level further make the South Yorkshire Forest a thriving and prosperous place in which to live and work.
4. Forest-wide vision
aims & strategic objectives

Aims
The aim within each section seeks to express the character and quality of the Forest as we hope to see it for each of the topics outlined.

Strategic objectives
The strategic objectives set out specific goals that can be achieved in moving toward the aims (in bold text and coded e.g. P4, AG3, throughout each chapter). Each section the South Yorkshire Forest Plan also includes a discussion of the issues and opportunities. All the strategic objectives will have a strong and positive influence on the quality of the environment, quality of life and over the area’s economic prospects. Numerous actions will need to be taken in order to realise these objectives. For the Forest Plan to succeed, many people and organisations need to be involved. In many circumstances the key agencies are the local authorities, but to meet the whole range of policies, landowners, businesses, government agencies, voluntary organisations, community groups, individuals and the Forest team will all have important parts to play.

The Forest Plan has a further 35-year life span (out of the original 40 year vision). Year-by-year actions will be set out in a partnership business plan that will take account of priorities and opportunities as they arise and vary over time. The strategic objectives will provide the framework for the actions on the ground in the business plan.

4.1 Regeneration, Planning & Development

Aim
New development that contributes to a high quality, diverse, accessible and well wooded landscape which is rich in biodiversity and that will provide an attractive setting, assisting in securing economic regeneration and improving the quality of life for local people.
An improved setting for business and investment

The development of the South Yorkshire Forest provides the foundation upon which positive perceptions of the area’s natural and physical assets can be built. Improved sites within the Forest will not only provide a context for the immediate vicinity but will also contribute to the perceptions of the local area. The Forest can also help to ensure the sustainability of the local economy and arrest the potential for social exclusion and economic decline, particularly in areas where the traditional industry no longer exists.

Diversifying South Yorkshire’s economic base, including attracting new investment and retaining expanding local businesses in the area, is restrained in some parts of South Yorkshire by the poor quality of the environment. Poor perception of the environment in these areas is a hindrance in securing that new investment. A high quality environment is crucial in sustaining a healthy workforce. Large areas of derelict, degraded and vacant/underused land within South Yorkshire reduce quality of life and act as a disincentive for qualified individuals to live and work locally.

The corridors around major transport routes (roads and railways) should be important targets for increased woodland cover and other projects that will help develop an improved setting for new business.

Development in the Forest

P1 Incorporate significant areas of new woodland planting, green corridors and local green space into major new developments as part of a strategically planned ‘green space’ network.

P2 Resist developments that destroy ancient woodland, mature trees, hedgerows, wetland and other high quality habitats and landscapes.

P3 Ensure that new developments reflect and strengthen the character of the local landscape & biodiversity and restore distinctiveness.

P4 Ensure new developments lead to a net gain in ‘environmental capital’

If planned and designed appropriately new development could contribute to delivering the wide range of Forest Plan objectives and hence assist in local economic regeneration. The objectives of the Forest Plan should be considered, wherever possible, in landscape and environmental proposals, helping each new development make a positive contribution to the area. In particular, development that improves attractiveness along transport corridors, accessibility, environmental education and those developments that provide an improved environmental quality for those with least access to greenspace should be encouraged.

The South Yorkshire Forest includes both Green Belt and significant parts of the urban area. Opportunities for environmental improvements will vary, but these should be taken particularly where they provide the chance for deprived communities to experience woodland and other greenspace.

Planning legislation that relates to environmental enhancement and protection, trees and greenspace should be strictly enforced. Developers should be made to adhere to planning conditions involving tree planting and the creation of woodland. Wherever possible, the creation of new greenspace and access routes and the planting and management of woodlands should be encouraged through agreements made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Her Majesty’s Government 1990b).

Existing woodlands provide an important basis from which the Forest can expand. In many circumstances they represent the last remnants of a previously well-wooded landscape. Except where woodland has been planted as a temporary land use, the loss of woodland should be avoided.

‘A better quality of life: a strategy for sustainable development for the UK’ (Her Majesty’s Government 1999) sets out concepts of economic capital, social capital and environmental capital and describes the need to conserve them all. It is important
to seek opportunities to achieve objectives simultaneously, and to consider the cumulative impact of decisions on overall environmental capital. Some elements of the environment capital are irreplaceable. Others can be recreated or their value improved. Delivering the objectives of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan will secure enhancements that contribute to an overall improvement in environmental quality and improvements to quality of life.

**Green Belt**

The Forest partnership aims to provide new places for people and wildlife, while improving the landscape quality of the urban fringes. However, it is in these areas that there is the greatest pressure to extend the towns and cities into the countryside. However, much of this is designated as Green Belt, allowing the planning authorities to apply planning policies and conditions to control the type of development that occurs. In total, about 60% of the Forest is designated as Green Belt by the three authorities. The development of the South Yorkshire Forest should further enhance and re-enforce the quality of the Green Belt by providing a mechanism for positive landscape and environmental change.

Reviewing the Unitary Development Plans and re-affirming the Green Belt boundaries should reduce the pressure of speculative development. Other statutory and non-statutory policies can then be used to turn the urban fringes from areas of poor landscape value into high-quality amenity and wildlife areas, interspersed with areas of commercial agriculture and forestry.

The visual quality of the Green Belt should be enhanced through the adoption of the landscape strategy set out in the Forest Plan. This strategy indicates areas in need of restoration and improvement as well as the high-quality landscapes that require little change.

**Derelict, vacant and brownfield land**

**P5** Restore areas of derelict, brownfield and vacant land, that are not to be redeveloped, to woodland, other new habitats, green space and recreation provision.

There are significant areas of derelict and vacant land throughout the Forest area. These act as scars on the environment, hindering prospects for local economic activity and lowering the quality of people’s experience. Whilst they provide a substantial pool from which to draw upon for new housing and industry, many of them cannot be developed for ‘hard’ end use either fully or in part. These then provide numerous significant opportunities to develop the Forest vision seeking their restoration to woodland, other greenspace and for recreation. Such improvements will also create a healthier environment for example, through the benefits brought about by the role of trees in reducing airborne pollution. The South Yorkshire Forest Partnership will take a proactive approach in promoting woodland planting as a means of regeneration suitable brownfield sites.

**Mineral extraction & waste disposal**

Mineral and waste sites provide significant opportunities for greenspace development, woodland creation and outdoor recreation, which should be reflected in restoration proposals wherever possible. Each of the waste management plans of the three boroughs (Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council 1990, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council 1990b and Sheffield City Council 1990) and the South Yorkshire county minerals plan (South Yorkshire County Council 1989) were considered in developing the initial Forest strategy.

The restoration of coal tips and opencast sites presents a major opportunity to create new areas of woodland and open space that will act as a setting for sport and informal recreation and a framework for new development.

For example, as one of their final acts, the British Coal Opencast Executive agreed to restore their opencast site at Pithouse West, adjacent to Rother Valley Country Park, as a substantial new woodland and quiet recreation area. The site is being transferred to the local authority for recreational and community use and is already beginning to provide a ‘green backdrop’ to investment decisions in the area.
Further mineral extraction sites in the Forest will present opportunities to create large new areas of woodland and public access. Restoration plans, which will be agreed by the local authorities, should propose a high standard of restoration that includes tree planting appropriate to the locality and to the end use of the site. Wherever possible, the creation of paths and recreation areas that benefit the local community will be sought as a part of future restoration proposals.

Transport

P6 Incorporate multiple-user non-motorised access provision (e.g. cycle paths) that fully integrate with other transport provision, into major new developments.

P7 Ensure consideration is given within development plans and in major new developments to integrated transport provision.

P8 Ensure that promotion of the transport network includes information on accessibility to key sites in the South Yorkshire Forest.

P9 Ensure that changes to the transport network contribute to the development of the Forest including improving the environment along major transport corridors by replacing hedgerows and planting trees.

Transport provision within the Forest is affected both through specific developments designed to enhance transport provision (e.g. new roads, public transport infrastructure) and in association with other developments that have an indirect impact (e.g. large housing schemes).

Both new and existing roads should be integrated into the Forest landscape through roadside planting. Changes to the road system should also consider the effects on public access. Trees can help to filter wind, dust and other pollution and screen transport corridors. Development of the transport network may provide opportunities for the Forest, such as the creation of footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes or the introduction of new woodlands. Consideration of links with the public transport network should ensure access to the Forest for all sectors of the community.

Strategy development

P10 Incorporate integrated environmental, social and economic measures and recognition of the South Yorkshire Forest into new economic and social regeneration strategies.

The Forest provides a strategic framework on which a range of other initiatives can work together to create a new, high-quality environment.

Policy decisions should be taken with the Forest in mind and should use the Forest Plan as a framework for combined actions, allocating resources accordingly. The Forest Plan’s 40-year life-span will see a number of strategic initiatives develop. Each initiative should build the Forest’s development into their strategic planning.
4.2 Landscape

Aim

An attractive, diverse and high quality environment, which is more wooded in character, where the best quality landscapes and those of recognisable historic merit are protected and where degraded areas are improved. A more wooded and attractive landscape that encourages new investment, economic regeneration and improves the quality of life for local people.

Improving the landscape

L1 Plant new woodland to help improve derelict and disturbed land and to screen eyesores.

L2 Develop an extensive network of well managed field boundaries (hedges and walls), re-planting and restoring them where necessary.

L3 Expand the framework of urban trees, including small woods, street trees and trees within parks and gardens.

There are many landscapes in need of improvement. The essence of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan is about making those areas, such as the Dearne Valley and parts of the Lower Don Valley, better places in which to live and work and to support initiatives aimed at attracting investment, creating employment and improving the landscape quality.

Of all vegetation types, trees have the greatest visual impact. Consequently, creation of woodlands throughout the South Yorkshire Forest will have a dramatic effect upon the landscape. A range of factors, including the size of woodlands and the ratio of woodland to open land, together with the effect on the landform and existing habitats, must be carefully considered to ensure the desired aim of enriching the appearance and diversity of the landscape will be achieved. Some project designs, for example field boundary restoration, may be constrained by the need to protect areas of historic, visual and ecological value.

Where land has been disturbed through mineral extraction, tipping or poor-quality restoration, enhancing the landscape through woodland establishment often provides the best option for improving the local area and hence the quality of life for local people.
By creative, yet sensitive design, new features can be formed, helping to reintegrate them with their surroundings. However, woodland establishment on such sites is likely to prove both difficult and costly. Every opportunity should be taken to use the expertise available to reclaim these sites and to secure sufficient funding, for example through Government grants.

Where space permits, introduction of trees and woodland into existing areas of poor visual quality will reduce their negative impact. New developments should be accompanied by new woodland and tree planting which will help to integrate the development into its location and create the feeling of a wooded environment.

People understandably have strong views about the character of their immediate surroundings. Woodland planting close to housing areas may therefore not always be appropriate, particularly where people are accustomed to open views.

Urban parks and recreation grounds form an important part of the Forest’s diverse landscape. By using new management and maintenance techniques, the local authorities should be able to create more diverse landscapes that contribute to the overall forest environment and which will be cheaper to maintain. Wherever possible, these landscapes should contain small areas of woodland.

**Landscape character**

L4 Design major new developments, including soft landscaped areas and large woodland, to take account of the local character of the area.

Views and viewpoints form an important part of how the Forest is perceived and contribute to each area’s local character and interest. Planting should be carefully designed to preserve and enhance views.

The exact nature of any woodland establishment and other landscape improvements needs to relate to individual site conditions. A thorough analysis of the site should be made to assist in the design process and should include an assessment of the soil, microclimate, ecology and visual characteristics. The involvement of a suitably qualified landscape professional in the design of new areas would ensure that these factors are taken into account.

Sites that are of ecological importance are not confined to historic or even established landscapes. Relatively new and disturbed landscapes can be a home to interesting pioneer plant communities that have adapted to survive in conditions that are generally unsuited to plant growth. Implementation of the Forest’s landscape strategy must balance the need to protect existing wildlife habitats with the need to reclaim derelict land and improve the area’s visual qualities through tree planting. Whatever changes are imposed on such areas, management is essential to achieve the desired aim.

Where there are high-quality landscapes or where the original character of the landscape is still identifiable, new woodlands, tree belts, copses, hedgerows and individual trees should be integrated into the landscape by planting on an appropriate scale and using appropriate species. In some areas, the landscape character has largely been lost through human activity. Here, planting can help to develop a new structure and character.

Personal safety is an important issue that must be addressed when landscape changes are taking place. Narrow paths through wooded areas, with limited lines of sight, may be particularly unwelcome where the route is designed for everyday use, such as for access to shops or school journeys. Woodland paths such as these should be taken by choice, not because they are the only option. Design guidelines, based on national research, could advise on the methods and techniques for safe and effective woodland planting in urban areas.

**Archaeological sites**

L5 Conserve sites of archaeological interest.

The South Yorkshire Forest contains a wealth of sites and artefacts of historic, natural and archaeological importance. Sites of archaeological interest should be conserved,
as they are a finite, non-renewable record of our past. They are valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism. The archaeology of an area often forms part of its local character and interest, and in many cases there is a close association between archaeological, landscape and wildlife values. Archaeological sites are often vulnerable to damage and Scheduled Monuments have statutory protection. Many other archaeological sites are included on the South Yorkshire Sites and Monument Record (held by South Yorkshire Archaeology Service). The record provides the most complete record of archaeology in the Forest area available, but many sites remain unrecorded or undiscovered and this must be borne in mind when considering woodland planting or development. In creating new landscapes and woodlands, care must be taken to protect sites of heritage value by consulting the relevant bodies, such as the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service, where appropriate. Woodland management operations can also damage a site’s archaeological interest and where relevant, any site in woodland should be noted and protected from damaging operations.

Some archaeological sites may have an important role because of their educational and recreational potential. This potential should be fully explored by the landowners, in conjunction with the local authorities and the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service, in a manner that protects the site from damage. It is also important to increase our knowledge and understanding of archaeology by studying and interpreting a number of these sites.

**Historic landscapes**

**L6** Protect and restore, where appropriate, historic landscapes.

**L7** Protect individual trees of historical value and other significant trees.

Historic landscapes are of importance for both their inherent value and their potential role in education and tourism. Where they have become derelict or degraded, they should be restored with reference to their former structure.

South Yorkshire, along with the rest of Britain, was once well wooded. With the clearance of woodland, certain landscape and field patterns developed, some of which remain today, while others are purely a record of history. The current landscape, archaeology, old maps and the historical record together give clues as to how it evolved. This should be borne in mind when planning woodland and other planting. Particular attention needs to be paid to ancient field boundaries and ancient woodland sites.

Certain landscapes have a special historical value. Nine sites, Norfolk Park, Oakes Park, Hillsborough Park, Locke Park, Boston Park, Clifton Park, Stainborough Park, Wentworth Park and Wortley Park, have been included on a non-statutory register of historic parks and gardens that is maintained by English Heritage.

Individual trees sometimes play a very significant role in the landscape. Such trees are important as they connect us to the past by marking important events or periods of our history. Where appropriate, they should be given statutory protection under Tree Preservation Orders.
4.3 Recreation & Access

Aim
Accessible countryside, and woodland in particular, with facilities, services and information that make formal and informal countryside recreation and sport available to all sectors of the community and contribute to a healthy society.

Informal recreation

R1 Develop an extensive and comprehensive network of access routes across the Forest, particularly those linked with people’s homes and those designed for a range of users, including bridle and cycle paths.

R2 Ensure that every resident has access to woodland or wooded area within easy reach of their home.

R3 Promote the use of non-motorised access for work, commuting and leisure.

R4 Promote informal outdoor recreation.

The provision of access is not limited to making opportunities available for recreational use but also toward the need for safe viable alternatives to car transport for work and for other day-to-day activities.

This programme provides an opportunity to consider access both within and across local authority areas, creating an area-wide network of routes. In order to provide a range of opportunities for those with and without their own transport and to ensure that everyone gains the benefit from the developing Forest environment an extensive network of routes should be developed by the local authority that includes bridleway and cycle routes as well as footpaths. The existing network should be improved and extended to improve access to the countryside and provide links to and between key areas. Short, circular, surfaced routes should also be created in woodlands and green space near residential areas. All routes should be marked by a recognisable system of signs and waymarkers and should be well maintained and kept free of obstruction.

The proposed network of green links, all of which will contain footpaths and some of which will be designated for cyclists or horse-riders, will extend the current system of routes. Strategic green links are shown on the zone maps that accompany this Plan.

With the agreement of landowners and occupiers, new statutory rights of way should be created and new permissive routes designated.

Guidelines need to be produced advising how routes should be designed and managed to ensure the safety and enjoyment of each user group. Information leaflets should be produced and events organised.

Walking is one of the most popular forms of recreation. Research by the Countryside Commission indicated that a large proportion of walkers remain on country lanes and roads, rather than on the public rights of way network. People with disabilities, the elderly and those using push-chairs face particular problems of accessibility.

There is a need to provide additional safe bridleways that are accessible to local riders throughout the Forest area. There is considerable potential for creating new bridleways and trails, particularly in conjunction with proposals to restore derelict and disused areas. Where the Forest’s current system of statutory routes is inadequate, it may be possible to negotiate additional statutory or permissive routes.
In the Forest area, major opportunities for improving the longer-distance walking, riding and cycling routes arise from a number of existing initiatives. In particular, the coast-to-coast Trans-Pennine Trail, which passes through the north of the Forest, with the connections southwards to the urban areas of Sheffield and Rotherham, provides great potential for multi-user routes between key recreational sites.

Formal sport in the countryside

R5 Increase opportunities for formal sport in the countryside.

The proximity of the Forest to urban areas provides opportunities for recreation and sport without the need to use a car. Certain places can be designated or specifically designed to cater for more formal, countryside-related sports.

The local authorities would consider sympathetically planning applications to develop appropriate facilities for countryside-related sports in the Green Belt. These should stand on their own merit, rather than depending on unrelated development such as housing or hotels.

Crowe & Sollars (1993) have identified a need for more golf courses in the Forest area. The greatest demand appears to be for pay-as-you-play courses rather than membership clubs. Golf courses, when sensitively designed, can be easily accommodated and often provide the opportunity for woodland planting and habitat management which otherwise may not arise.

The same study also identified a need for more local orienteering courses. The need is twofold: for more mapped areas in the Forest, giving people easy access to nearby events; and for more permanently marked courses, which can be used at any time on an informal basis.

Other suitable formal activities in the South Yorkshire Forest include archery and rock climbing. Both these sports could be developed at appropriate sites. The possibility of
establishing permanent off-road mountain bike circuits should also be investigated.

Water is a vital element in the Forest landscape, providing a setting both for informal recreation and a venue for water-based sports. Opportunities should be taken to create new water areas and to develop the Dearne, Don & Rother river corridors for recreation and conservation. Improvement in water quality may provide new opportunities for sports such as canoeing along the main river and canal network.

The noise problem and physical damage caused by illegal use of motor cycles and four-wheel-drive vehicles in the urban fringe should be fully explored with relevant organisations, including local authorities, sports’ governing bodies, local clubs and the police and probation services and a variety of solutions considered. Solutions could range from defensive measures to the provision of a purpose-built ‘wheels park’ facility. Defensive measures such as fencing and gates should be designed so as not to restrict people with disabilities.

Opportunities for all

R6 Give particular encouragement to sectors of the community who have poor access to a high quality environment and to those who are under-represented in their use of the countryside for recreation and sport.

Certain sectors of the community are under-represented in their use of the countryside. Wherever possible, sites within of the Forest will be planned and designed to encourage wider use and to be accessible by all sectors of the community.

Particular attention will be directed towards people who are disadvantaged as a result of age, gender, ability, mobility or ethnic origin. Single-parent families, those with low incomes and people without a car will also be targeted.

Managing recreation and sport

The development of a Community Forest in South Yorkshire provides excellent opportunities for a range of recreational activities, from the informal to organised and competitive sports. The demand for a particular form of recreation together with the wishes of landowners will determine which activities take place.

Sites should only be used for recreation and sport where the frequency of use is environmentally sustainable. Activities will be situated in suitable locations in terms of resilience and sustainability of the environment. Activities that could damage sensitive sites will be located in areas able to withstand the activity. There will be no obligation on landowners or occupiers to allow access to or across their land. Where activities are developed, it should be in a structured and sustainable way. Financial incentives that encourage access to land will vary over time but they should be utilised as far as is possible.
Good planning, design and management will minimise the environmental impact of recreational activities. It will also ensure that recreational uses are compatible, both with each other and with other land uses such as agriculture and nature conservation. This may be achieved by physical separation, by zoning a site or by arranging for activities to take place at different times to remove potential conflict of use. The more sensitive environments should be avoided. Management and supervision of areas and routes used for recreation should help to protect other interests and land uses.

### Tourism & visitor attractions

**R7 Increase usage of existing local outdoor leisure and tourist attractions, improve accessibility and enhance the range of the facilities available.**

Existing outdoor visitor facilities, such as the parks, woodlands, country parks and recreation areas, are important assets in the life and economy of South Yorkshire. Use of these facilities will bring increased income into the area and help support wider economic activity. Information and promotion of these facilities will be a key aspect in encouraging use. The range of places within and around the South Yorkshire Forest offer an excellent opportunity to promote outdoor attractions in a way that will gain maximum benefit.

The local authorities will encourage the introduction of new tourist attractions that will bring employment and recreational facilities to the Forest area.

Further research is needed on the types of tourist attractions that will improve the local economy and extend the range of activities available. Developments, which will need to comply with Green Belt policies, should be sensitively designed and integrated into the Forest setting.

### Health & the environment

**R8 Promote the health benefits offered by the recreational opportunities and conservation activities in the Forest.**

In addition to the recreation potential of outdoor activity, the Forest environment offers a number of health benefits that should be promoted as an additional incentive in encouraging broader participation. For example, walking is good for the heart and general outdoor activity provides a positive environment and therapeutic benefits for some mental illnesses.

A number of organisations have already recognised the health benefits of outdoor leisure pursuit (e.g. Sheffield City Council’s health walks programme). The link between health and environment also creates new opportunities to raise awareness of the benefits of the developing Forest environments to new audiences, for example in health promotion publications and through GP surgeries.
4.4 The Community

Aim

An environment where everyone has access to a countryside experience and the chance to enjoy, appreciate and feel involved in the management of their surroundings. An environment that helps improve health and quality of life and in which the process of managing the environment provides opportunities for employment and training.

Involving the community

C1 Seek people’s views and encourage communities to be involved in planning improvements within the Forest.

C2 Increase opportunities for local people to participate, restore and manage the sites near to where they live.

Local people benefit most from improvements in their local environment. To maximize this, the community needs to be involved in the way the South Yorkshire Forest takes shape. Wherever projects are being proposed, it is important to involve local people in the planning and development process. For example, when drawing up design or management plans for sites, the local communities that use the area or may be affected in some way should be encouraged to take part in the planning and decision-making process.

This needs to be a creative and innovative process. The more the community is involved in a project, the more successful the project. Community involvement will also help to increase people’s respect for their local environment and reduce problems such as vandalism and misuse of sites.

Direct active involvement also ensures that members of the community feel a part of the development of the South Yorkshire Forest. People need to be encouraged to be involved in creating and managing local woodlands and open spaces. Communities generally have a good understanding of their local open spaces and woodlands and how they would like to see them managed. With professional advice and training, local people can often provide the help needed to ensure that their green spaces continue to be valuable assets.

In some circumstance, resources are available to assist community groups access both advice and finance. The means of making these resources known and of extending their benefits need to be more fully developed.

C3 Form partnerships involving local people, businesses, community groups and environmental organisations.

It is important to build on existing initiatives and partnerships. In many areas the links in the community, and between the community and other bodies such as the local authorities and industry, are already established. These links can be particularly useful and productive. Businesses should take the opportunity to channel investment into improving their local environment. Partnerships between local communities and employers will help to ensure that such investment is directed where it is most needed. A good example of a successful partnership in the Forest area is the Stocksbridge Steel Valley and Upper Don Project, where Corus Engineering Steels has joined with the community to improve their local environment. Projects include the creation of the Steel Valley Walk, a new landscaped footpath on land owned by the company. In another partnership, at Stairfoot, on the southern edge of Barnsley, Marshalls Clay Products (formerly Yorkshire Brick) has been working with local schools and the community to create new woodland and wildlife habitats on reclaimed mineral workings.
The success of the Forest will depend upon involving the community in the widest possible way. The resources available to the business community, local people and groups with knowledge of the local environment can complement each other. Existing projects that have community-wide support, including business interests, have been notable for their success, and similar partnerships will be encouraged throughout the Forest area. For example, the Sheffield Countryside Management Partnership, a consortium between Sheffield Countryside Planning Department and four community groups carries out valuable work with local business, volunteers, schools and New Deal workers to help deliver the Forest’s aims. Their joint activity is levering new resources and creating jobs in the Forest.

**Jobs in the Community**

**C4** Develop a thriving and sustainable network of environmentally related business (managing the environment, providing environmental services and utilising environmentally related products), creating new jobs and training opportunities.

South Yorkshire’s economy has suffered much over the last two decades through the decline of its traditional industrial base. Managing the environment and utilising products derived from the environment will have a contribution to play in assisting in re-structuring the area’s economy, creating jobs for local people.

In South Yorkshire in excess of 300 local businesses, most of which could be categorised as micro businesses (under 10 employees) rely upon the environment for their livelihood. With the development of the South Yorkshire Forest, landscape opportunities exist to strengthen this network and create additional jobs. Business needs that are common amongst very small companies, such as effective marketing and access to capital support needed for expansion, may be addressed through mainstream business support mechanisms. Clustering of activities will help provide specialist and tailor-made support for this sector of the economy.

**Creating community confidence**

**C5** Use environmental management as a means of assisting local community confidence building and of increasing the capacity of local people to regenerate the social fabric of their community.

Poor economic performance and low rates of economic activity following the collapse of the traditional industries have left communities with little hope. Investment in local people as primary agents of change is a fundamental first step to reversing the cycle of economic and social exclusion.
Well planned integrated packages of environmentally related activities, particularly those with basis in job creation and the development of community enterprises have the potential to assist local people to be those primary change agents. To reach their maximum potential projects need to be community led and managed.

**Art in the Forest**

_C6 Promote art and arts events to help people understand and identify with their local environment and with the South Yorkshire Forest._

To the people who live in and around it, the South Yorkshire Forest is not a readily identifiable area. It has no coherent, homogeneous and shared history, society or purpose. Through theatre, music, dance, literature and the visual arts, people will see the Forest as an active area where interesting and entertaining things happen.

Working with an artist on a project promotes a shared sense of ownership and pride in a place. The products of a partnership between an artist and the community say something about the place and the people. This is particularly relevant when trying to define boundaries, entrances, gateways and specific sites or routes through the Forest. Contemporary artists are often well placed to help people make connections between themselves and their environment.

Art in the landscape should not be seen as a substitute for nature but as a bonus that can provide extra enjoyment for casual visitors and local residents and can help to direct or attract people to new areas, particularly people from disadvantaged groups.
4.5 Woodlands & Timber Related Industries

Aim
A well-wooded environment benefiting both wildlife and local people, where new and existing woods are accessible to local people. Increased woodland cover and well managed existing woodlands that provide the raw materials for sustainable job creation and new training opportunities in timber related industries. New woodlands that help to restore degraded and derelict landscapes.

New woodlands

F1 Plant new woodland, increasing woodland cover to 30% of the non-urbanised Forest area.

F2 Design new woodlands to suit the needs and aspirations of the local community and the character of the local environment.

The location, shape and scale of new planting and the balance between woodland and open spaces must always be considered in the context of the woodland’s surroundings and should complement the character of the surrounding area. It is important to create new areas of woodland that are both suited to the local environment and suitable for local and native wildlife. Those planting trees and shrubs will be encouraged to use species occurring naturally in the locality. Where this is not practicable, consideration should be given to other familiar trees of the South Yorkshire countryside. In many cases this will mean designing new woodlands which perpetuate the essentially broadleaved character of the English landscape.

The South Yorkshire Forest contains a wealth of sites and artefacts of historic, natural and archaeological importance. In creating new landscapes and woodlands, care must be taken to protect these sites of heritage value.

One of the objectives of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan is to create a multipurpose wooded environment. Different species will be used, depending on the priorities of the landowner or manager. Some owners and managers will want to plant commercial woodlands in the Forest; if farmers are transferring land from agriculture to forestry, one of their objectives may be to grow the most profitable and saleable timber crop. Currently, 80% of the demand in the UK is for softwood timber. Although uniform conifer planting will be discouraged, commercial forestry is likely to continue to concentrate on
growing these species.

Demonstration areas will provide local examples of appropriate design, planting techniques and management for a variety of situations. These should include farm woodlands, short-rotation coppice, low maintenance/low cost amenity landscapes, woodland associated with businesses and development, school sites and reclamation sites e.g. coal spoil and domestic waste.

When carefully designed, mixed woodlands containing native and non-native broadleaves with coniferous species can be attractive to people and wildlife, while still producing profitable crops of softwood and hardwood timber. In some parts of the Forest area, non-native species already form an integral part of the landscape. As a short-term measure, planting conifers or quick-growing, non-native broadleaves may also help to establish woodlands and provide a stop-gap while slower-growing broadleaved woodland establishes.

On severely disturbed ground where growing conditions are difficult, a greater range of species such as pine or alder will need to be considered. In urban and urban fringe settings, non-native species may well be appropriate. Cost-effective planting techniques and methods to combat damage and vandalism and to give maximum visual benefit will be promoted.

In certain situations, for example on land designated for development, fast-growing amenity woodland or biomass for energy production may be encouraged as a temporary land use. Planting before the development may be particularly beneficial in situations where it takes a long time to attract new uses to a site. It will be important to manage such sites with a view to their subsequent use on the understanding that most of the trees may be removed when development proceeds.

**Woodland management**

**F3** Restore neglected woodlands and manage the Forest’s existing woods to benefit wildlife, landscape, accessibility/recreation, wood production and the local economy.

Many of the Forest’s woodlands are in poor condition. Many have lost their economic potential, so eliminating an incentive to their management. Existing broadleaved woodlands should be managed to promote their structural variation and biodiversity. The reintroduction of traditional management systems such as coppicing will help restore both their structural and biological diversity either in existing or new woods. It also adds an element of historical continuity to woodland management that can be interpreted for educational or tourism purposes. Improved woodland management will be achieved through the provision of management grants, by encouraging landowners and farmers to prepare woodland management plans based on sound silvicultural techniques and by creating financial incentives and a market for sustainable timber products. Training for owners and managers of woodlands may be required in order to deliver such management.

Natural regeneration is a valuable method for restoring under-managed woodlands. The young trees are well suited to their environment and because the seed originates from trees native to the area it ensures local provenance. However, areas of natural regeneration need to be managed. In certain circumstances it may also be possible to establish new woodlands by natural regeneration.

In managing new and restored woodland, sound silvicultural management techniques should be employed. Continuous cover techniques should be employed where appropriate. Research and advice, particularly from the Forestry Commission will be made available to assist landowners in employing these techniques.

Removal of woodland generally runs counter to the South Yorkshire Forest Plan. Before woodland is removed, felled or thinned, a felling licence is required, including plans for replanting. Management or felling of trees covered by a preservation order must have the permission of the planning authority.

Woodlands formed from native, broadleaved species usually have a high value for nature conservation, particularly those identified as ancient woodlands. Such ancient sites are irreplaceable and cannot be re-created. The
wildlife and landscape value of these plantations varies considerably. Wildlife, landscape and recreation, as well as timber value, should be taken into account when determining the management of the plantations.

**Urban forestry**

About 40% of the Forest area is urban; here, opportunities for larger scale woodland planting are limited. However, urban trees add to the landscape, creating a seamless web between the wooded urban fringes and the town itself. Future tree and woodland strategies should reflect this, aiming to contribute to and complement the Forest Plan.

**Acquisition of land**

Organisations such as the Woodland Trust, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Forest Enterprise and local authorities will be encouraged to acquire existing woodland or land for afforestation, though land acquisition will not be the major method for creating a wooded environment. There will be no compulsory purchase of land for Community Forest purposes.

When an area of existing woodland is to be sold, purchase by an organisation that is committed to retaining public access will help to maintain the network of woodlands available to the public for informal recreation. Acquisition of new areas for planting will add to this network.

**Employment opportunities**

**F4** Develop a local timber related industry supporting new jobs and training opportunities and involving local people.

**F5** Develop sustainable markets for wood and wood products including wood produced for energy generation.

A skilled labour force is needed to plant the new woodlands and to manage them until the trees become established. People are needed to take care of the longer-term management demands such as thinning, felling and restocking. As the Forest grows, opportunities arise for local sawmills and other processing industries such as charcoal making and wood turning. In the early stages of the Forest’s development, local people who already have the necessary skills are being employed, through landscape and forestry contractors, local authorities and established voluntary and conservation organisations.

A cradle-to-grave approach will be promoted so that local people can be employed and involved in activities ranging from collecting and growing seed through to processing timber and other woodland products. Nurseries will be encouraged to grow trees for the Forest. The Forest team will explore local markets for the complete range of forest products. A labour force with appropriate skills will be needed to undertake forestry work, guided by those responsible for the planning, design and management of woodland projects.
4.6 Agriculture

Aim

A thriving, diverse rural & land based economy with well managed, productive new and existing farm woodlands and areas of agricultural land managed for recreational and environmental benefits.

Farming in the Forest

The emphasis of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan is on encouraging farmers to diversify from agriculture into forestry recreation, conservation and tourism-related activities, where appropriate. However, most agricultural land will continue to be farmed. Continuation of agriculture, in combination with forestry and other relevant enterprises, is important as a means of sustaining land-based employment and rural communities. Farmers continuing to produce food crops in the area should not be disadvantaged by the participation of others around them in South Yorkshire Forest related projects.

Registered agricultural land holdings account for two-thirds of the non-urban land in the South Yorkshire Forest area. The involvement of the agricultural community in woodland establishment is therefore a key to the full delivery of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan. Many farms include areas of woodland, though in total this represents only 1.5% of all the agricultural land in the Forest. As a consequence, although many farmers are familiar with the idea of having responsibility for woodland, few farm woodlands are actively managed, for either their timber, wildlife or amenity benefits.

There are around 387 individual agricultural landholders in the Forest area. Of the farms operated on a full-time basis, the predominant industry is cereal production. However, 49% of holdings are run on a part-time basis. These are likely to account for many of the smaller farms, where either the farmer has accepted only a modest return or where agriculture is not the main source of income.

Potential for new farm woodlands

AG1 Encourage farmers and landowners to plant new woodlands, trees and hedgerows on agricultural land.

Those responsible for farming smaller scale farms may be amenable to taking on a non-food-producing enterprise, but may not have the land to devote to woodland. Larger farms may offer better prospects for sizeable woodland planting. However, many of these are profitable enterprises and the grants and incentives available are unlikely to tempt these farmers to convert land to forestry.

Land tenure is likely to be a major factor in the decision-making process. In the Forest area, 53.9% of the agricultural land is tenanted or rented (as opposed to owner occupied), which is greater than the national average of 26%. Tenant farmers may find it difficult to make a long-term commitment to woodland establishment. Planting on tenanted land should only take place with the agreement of landlord and tenant. Farmers do not see forestry as a ‘mainstream’ activity and steps will need to be taken to change this if sufficient numbers of new woodlands are to be introduced into agricultural areas. A sustainable financial return both on woodland management and on woodland establishment needs to be
realised in order to affect this mainstreaming. The time taken to realise a return will be an important decision making factor when a farmer is thinking of putting land into forestry. Future incentives therefore need to be designed with the long-term commitment of woodland establishment in mind.

Demand for willow or poplar grown as short rotation coppice (SRC) has substantially increased with the establishment of an SRC burning power generation plant in North Yorkshire. This market is likely to increase, particularly if other generation plants are established in the vicinity. When designed appropriately, SRC grown on agricultural land is likely to provide a very useful wood based ‘crop’ that provides a much more rapid return than ‘high forest’.

Incentives to plant woodland on agricultural land will vary. Actions delivered under the Rural Development regulations, the Woodland Grant Scheme, Farm Woodland Premium Scheme, Energy Crops Scheme and set-aside payments under the arable area payment scheme have, or will in the future, all play their part. However, further financial incentives, the establishment of increased market demand and a more sustainable forestry and land-based industry will be needed in order to create favourable conditions for woodland creation on agricultural holdings.

**Farm woodlands**

**AG2 Bring farm woodlands into productive management.**

Farmers will be encouraged to view their farm woodlands as an important timber, wildlife and amenity resource. The economically sustainable management of existing woodlands will be a crucial precursor to large scale woodland establishment. Without a visible return on existing trees little incentive will be apparent to plant new ones.

Help and advice can be provided by a range of organisations and steps will need to be taken to extend relevant advice where gaps in provision exist. Farmers will be encouraged to train in the skills necessary to plant and manage woodlands. This training may also enable them to operate as contractors in other parts of the Forest.

**Farm diversification**

**AG3 Support land based jobs and develop a diverse land based economy through farm diversification and other measures.**

Large scale changes in the agricultural economy in the 1990’s have led to an increased demand for alternative sources on land-based income. The South Yorkshire Forest Partnership provides an ideal platform from which new sustainable income streams can be identified. South Yorkshire was designated as an eligible area for European Objective 1 structural funds in 2000 due to the county’s very poor economic performance (below 75% of the EU average GDP per capita). Farm diversification opportunities provide a strand in the economic recovery of the area.
Diversification to forestry is not the only opportunity for farmers within the South Yorkshire Forest. Opportunities may arise for recreation, tourism and sports-related developments. For example, farmers might meet the needs of visitors by providing bed and breakfast, self-catering cottages, camping barns and well-screened camping sites. Wherever possible these could be packaged with facilities for countryside interpretation and appropriate schemes for landscape improvement. Recreation and sporting facilities may provide opportunities, such as stabling and farriers adjacent to equestrian activities. To cater for the needs of day visitors there may be a demand for small-scale, farm-based cafes and restaurants, perhaps linked to farm or woodland craft shops. Other opportunities to diversify may arise from business related to timber or landscape.

Diversification proposals should conform with local planning policies, particularly those relating to development in the Green Belt. Enhancement of the landscape must be seen as an integral part of any farm diversification. Although planning permission will be required for many farm diversification schemes, where the scheme is of a temporary nature this may not always be the case.

Environmental improvements

AG4 Increase the area of farmland managed for recreation, wildlife, landscape and heritage benefits.

Many opportunities exist within agricultural holdings to increase their landscape and biodiversity value, for example, through wide field margins, by changing management of semi-improved grassland and by sympathetic hedgerow management. Indeed these very improvements may well contribute to the potential future diversification of agricultural holdings. Farmers and landowners may be eligible for a range of financial incentives intended to help them to improve the wildlife and landscape value of their land and, should they wish, to encourage public access to parts of it. The DEFRA administered Countryside Stewardship scheme is targeted at the South Yorkshire Forest with specific emphasis on hedgerow planting and grassland management to benefit wildlife.

Although the potential economic benefits may provide the initial spur in persuading a farmer to diversify, the visual aspects of diversification into forestry or other environmental improvements must not be ignored. The aesthetic quality of the rural landscape in the Forest is important, and diversification should be seen as an opportunity to retain the character of the better areas and to improve the appearance of degraded land, particularly on the urban fringes.
4.7 Education & Interpretation

Aim

A wide appreciation amongst young people of the natural environment and of the educational and health benefits of activity and involvement in managing local sites. Forest sites used as a way of meeting a range of educational and curriculum needs. A broad understanding of the natural environment, of the value and use of trees and woodland & of agricultural activity amongst urban and rural communities alike.

Environmental education

E1 Ensure all schools within the Forest have the opportunity to be involved in improving their own surroundings.

E2 Improve school grounds, making them more attractive areas, rich in wildlife, and increase their contribution to learning.

E3 Make educational materials available to all schools within and around the Forest.

The South Yorkshire Forest can be used as a focus for environmental education. The idea of a forest, with its range of environments and activities, can be used to help people appreciate the natural world and can demonstrate positive ways in which they can contribute to their local area.

The Forest will be developed in a way that provides a rich and diverse resource for environmental education, serving schools and other educational needs. For children, visiting the Forest can start at home or at school. Within school grounds, activities can start on children’s doorsteps by planting trees and hedges and by managing or creating ponds and wildlife areas. They will be able to observe, investigate, study and learn to understand the environment. They will also have the opportunity to help to manage the Forest environment, influence how it takes shape and watch it grow. Activities in the Forest can be used help to fulfil the needs of the national curriculum and start to bridge the gap in understanding between urban and rural communities. With trees, woods, forests and other environmental themes as a focus, children will be able to study national curriculum subjects, including science, geography, history and technology. Many materials and other resources are already available that help teachers in developing those links to the national curriculum. Those resources are varied and sometimes overlapping, for example, the Forest Education Initiative. However, the existing resources can be drawn together in a commonly available directory using the cross boundary and multi-disciplinary nature of the South Yorkshire Forest Partnership as a focus.

There are many opportunities for direct links between education and the Forest including environmental arts and the design and implementation of tree planting or other environmental projects. Already, productive relationships have been developed between the South Yorkshire Forest team and a number of schools. Both of Sheffield’s universities have also been involved in Forest related projects.

Interpretation & lifelong learning

E4 Inform the wider community of the development of the Forest.

Education does not finish at the end of the school day or even when formal education is complete. Education about the Forest should not just involve young people. All parts of the community, of all abilities and backgrounds, should be involved and should understand the principles behind managing the environment.
Interpretative facilities and literature can be provided for sites to help people from all backgrounds and abilities to understand the principles of woodland ecology and management, particularly felling and thinning operations. Information provided through new technologies that can be accessed by a very wide range of people, at the time of their choice and at their own pace, will also be an important facet in ensuring equality of access in the learning process.

Countryside project officers and rangers have an important role to play in educating the wider community. As the Forest develops, environmental education officers and teachers could be employed to increase contact with schools, other educational establishments, youth groups and the community at large. All these officers and rangers will need the skills to recognise the needs of disadvantaged and socially excluded groups.

Where appropriate, field studies centres should be established so that the Forest can be used as an outdoor classroom. This will increase children’s understanding of the mosaic of Forest landscapes and environments.

**Bridging the urban/rural divide**

E5 Develop a better understanding between rural and urban communities, stressing the importance of agriculture, woodland management, the uses of timber as a resource, wildlife and the use of the countryside for recreation and relaxation.

The very diverse communities within the South Yorkshire Forest and the breadth of people’s experience present particular challenges and opportunities. Urban communities will particularly feel the benefits of the improved environmental quality and of increased opportunity for outdoor enjoyment where these assets are currently poorly represented. People within rural communities may well experience opportunities for economic diversification. Those rural communities also suffer from some of the ever-present problems of the urban fringe such as vandalism and fly tipping.

In order to fully deliver the benefits of the integrated South Yorkshire Forest Plan, attention needs to be paid to improving the understanding between of urban and rural communities. This should include an increased awareness and appreciation both of the processes that are involved in land management and of the needs and aspiration of urban based communities.
4.8 Wildlife

Aim

An area thriving in biodiversity, where a broad range of habitats are protected and managed specifically for their wildlife value and where new areas are created to encourage wildlife. Increased local community appreciation with many opportunities to enjoy wildlife at first hand.

The South Yorkshire Forest is not continuous woodland. The Forest Plan is about integrating a variety of land uses and environmental measures within a substantially improved landscape well into the 21st century. Ensuring that the area is managed to maintain a high biodiversity value is a significant thread in a sustainable society, it provides a wealth of wildlife for local people to appreciate and will support global biodiversity priorities.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and the regional and local BAPs that are being developed will provide a key tool in identifying those species and habitats that are of crucial importance within the South Yorkshire Forest. In order to realise their full potential, discussion regarding the implementation of BAPs should involve all sectors of the community, including land-owning and management sectors.

A mosaic of habitats

W1 Protect a network of valuable wildlife sites and corridors throughout the Forest.

It is important, both that sites of wildlife value are retained and that a network of sites and connected corridors are managed in the most appropriate way, such as wet woodland and parkland habitats which have been targeted in the most recent BAP process. Habitats of particular value include the river valleys and washlands, wetland flashes, ponds, wet grasslands, neutral grasslands, hay meadows, hedgerows and relict low-lying moors and heaths, as well as woodlands. Some derelict sites also contain nationally important species.

Local authorities have identified the most valuable wildlife sites. Sites recognised by the local authorities, as being of wildlife value should be protected from development or management that is inappropriate or damaging. It will be important to ensure that ecological survey keeps the records of valuable wildlife sites up to date.

Each of the three local authority Unitary Development Plans (Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council 1993; Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council 1993; Sheffield City Council 1993) contain policies that relate to nature conservation. Sheffield City Council and
Rotherham MBC have produced non-statutory documents with policies for protecting and enhancing the natural environment. The Regional Biodiversity audit for Yorkshire & the Humber also provides a basis for the development of local action plans.

Wildlife diversity is important and should be maintained in terms of both the habitats provided for wildlife and the plants and animals themselves. Rare and locally rare species should be conserved and, if possible, the amount of suitable habitat increased. New developments and changes in land management offer the opportunity to create a range of habitats.

**W2 Create new habitats, particularly where opportunities are afforded through the restoration of derelict, brownfield and vacant land and in agricultural landscapes, to improve the overall wildlife interest in the Forest.**

New habitats will be created, expanding the current mosaic of diverse wildlife sites, creating links and wildlife corridors wherever possible.

Many of these new habitats will be created through woodland planting, not only because they will look better or provide areas for recreation, but because new wildlife habitats will be created. New planting may be of particular value on derelict sites and on farmland where the wildlife value is shown to be low. Attention will need to be paid to ensure that sites of particular wildlife value on derelict or other land are not destroyed or damaged.

Other important habitats within the area include unimproved grassland, heathland and valley-bottom wetland areas. Habitat creation should focus on replicating the character of these habitats and others described within the biodiversity action plans for the area.

Woodland, tree and hedgerow planting can be designed to extend or link existing woodlands, further increasing their value to wildlife. Useful design guidance exists in the publications *Forest Practice Guides & Forest Design Planning* (Forestry Commission 1998c & 1998b).

**Community understanding**

**W3 Increase the community’s appreciation and knowledge of wildlife and nature conservation.**

Community appreciation of the wildlife value of their surroundings will be a crucial element in gaining wide spread support for the changes that will be needed to improve the quality of the local environment. Management changes that will sometimes appear to be drastic will need to be accompanied by an appreciation of their prospective beneficial impact upon the local wildlife.

Interpretative information and facilities, developed by wildlife groups or in conjunction with the local authorities, will help local people and visitors to learn about and enjoy the wildlife of the Forest area. These facilities may attract extra visitors and should be located in suitable areas and designed to minimise disruption to wildlife. Through a network of local groups, people will be able to be involved in the planning and management of wildlife areas. Awareness-raising events such as arts and theatre, based on wildlife and environmental
themes, should be used to encourage care and understanding of wildlife habitats.

**Site management**

*W4 Prepare and implement management plans that seek to enhance the wildlife value of all key sites within the Forest.*

The wildlife value of the whole Forest should be enhanced through good management practices.

The preparation and implementation of management plans at key sites throughout the Forest will be essential to ensure that decisions taken benefit the Forest’s biodiversity. The effects of implementing management plans will be reviewed through regular monitoring. This could possibly be achieved by using local people who have an interest in the wildlife of the area.

Our current knowledge of the plant and animal communities that inhabit wildlife sites forms a basis for decision making about their protection and management. This knowledge is by no means complete and the communities continue to change. In order to assist in decision making it is therefore important to allocate resources to investigating the ecology of sites believed to be of wildlife value and to monitor the changes occurring to sites of known value.

Environmentally sensitive management would also improve the wildlife value of such areas as urban parks, school grounds and highway verges. These same principles of wildlife management should be applied across the Forest area.
5. Spatial strategy - mapping the opportunities

Introduction

The spatial strategy describes locations within the Forest where opportunities present themselves and which should be considered for priority action in delivering the Forest Plan.

The descriptions here should be read in conjunction with a single sheet A1 sized map, based on the Ordnance Survey plan at 1:50,000 scale and over which the spatial strategy is presented.

The descriptions within this section are based primarily upon spatial features and priorities. The cross-cutting principles that apply through the Forest Plan are relevant, though they are not spelt out in detail within each landscape management zone. Clearly many people live within each area. In delivering actions related to the spatial priorities these cross-cutting principles should be at the forefront of those working locally and in the planning of those actions. These principles are re-stated here.

- **Sustainability** - delivery of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan should seek to deliver long-term environmental, social and economic objectives.

- **Addressing social exclusion** - priority actions will be focussed toward those who have least access to facilities/services/quality of environment.

- **Equal opportunities** - the benefits of the developing South Yorkshire Forest should be available to all.

- The Forest Plan seeks to protect what is best and enhance those areas where it is most needed.

- **Integration** - the objectives in the Plan and, wherever possible, the actions that contribute to their delivery, should seek to integrate a range of factors and not focus narrowly on one topic.

- **Communication** - in order to fully deliver the South Yorkshire Forest Plan the Partnership’s aims and objectives need to be effectively communicated to target audiences.

The strategy map includes a number of elements, these are described in the following paragraphs.

**South Yorkshire Forest boundary**

The South Yorkshire Forest boundary, including the proposed extension areas, is shown.

**Management zones**

Landscape surveys of the Forest area have identified the character of specific areas and the Forest has been divided into nine broad landscape management zones. Common geography, ecology and human influence distinguish each zone, the boundaries following main topographical features.

These nine zones will act as management tools to help those who are working locally to target and direct their actions, enabling them to view the extensive and complex landscape of South Yorkshire in more manageable sections.

The nine landscape zones, which are described in more detail later, are:

Upper Don;
Wentworth Parks;
Northern Sheffield Valleys;
Southern Sheffield Valleys;
Lower Don Valley;
Dearne Towns;
Rother Valley;
Rotherham Plain; and
North East Barnsley.
Existing Features
Established woodland i.e. woodland that was present when the original Forest Plan was compiled is indicated, together with new woodland that has been established since 1993. The map also shows urban areas i.e. areas not included in the Green Belt, Historic Parklands as included in the English Heritage register and major waterways and water bodies.

Landscape Strategy
The landscape strategy, which deals principally with the non-urban parts of the Forest, provides a guide to the areas of greatest need and opportunity in improving the overall perception of South Yorkshire’s environment. Actions relating to the landscape strategy will contribute to raising the region’s image and help to secure new investment and economic activity. Improving the priority locations indicated here will also help to increase local quality of life though enhanced overall attractiveness and better health prospects.

The landscape has been defined under the following categories.

Landscape restoration areas - Major areas of dereliction, tipping and former mineral workings are shown as landscape restoration areas. These areas present major opportunities and their improvement should be viewed as a priority.

In these locations, creating new woodland and other habitats can play an important part in the restoration process. The nature and amount of woodland that should be planted and the balance between woods, open space, wetlands and grasslands will depend on the after-use of the site. In many areas woodland and other soft after-uses will provide a setting for new development or recreation provision.

Newly restored landscapes - Former restoration areas that have undergone a measure of reclamation since the publication of the original Forest Plan. Further enhancement and landscape development may be appropriate on some sites included in this category.

Landscape improvement areas - Areas of countryside where the appearance and quality of the landscape could be improved. Included in this category are areas of lowland agriculture that have an open character, with few woodlands or hedgerows and areas on the urban fringe where marginal farmland could be planted with woodland to create a buffer between the town and adjoining land. New woodlands in these areas must suit the character of the surrounding landscape in their siting, scale and species choice. Open areas that are valuable habitats, such as species-rich grasslands or wetlands will form an important part of the diverse developing landscape.

Areas of little change - In landscapes of high visual quality there should be an emphasis on management to conserve the existing character. The actual nature of the landscape varies from zone to zone. Each zone includes some areas of little change that typify its character. Here, the nature and pattern of the countryside provides a model for work in adjacent landscape improvement areas.

Key areas
Forest core areas - These areas are generally associated with the river corridors and present major opportunities to develop public access and recreation along with habitat management and improvement. Studies have shown that these ‘Green Corridors’ also present significant opportunities for regeneration and for improving the image of the area through comprehensive greening projects (Don and Dearne Green Corridors Study, 1999).

Core areas may cover several square kilometres and will contain a mosaic of landscape types in a wooded framework. Some forest core areas will be well wooded, while others will have a more open, parkland or wetland character.

The emphasis will be on managing these areas for public access, informal and formal outdoor recreation, environmental education and nature conservation. They offer a range of facilities that will attract day and half-day visits. There will be substantial areas of woodland used for informal recreation, which provides a landscape setting for facilities such as visitor centres,
sporting activities and car parking. Forest core areas often contain sites of wildlife, landscape and historical interest. It is essential that they are managed to retain and enhance these.

Privately owned woodlands and farmland may be included in the forest core areas as they represent major opportunities for landowners and farmers to diversify their businesses and encourage well-managed recreation and public access.

**Key sites** - Key sites provide the main ‘gateways’ for the people of the area to enjoy and appreciate a countryside experience near to their home, even in the heart of the city. Key sites have been identified throughout the Forest area, in urban, rural and urban fringe locations.

Gateway sites are places for people to enjoy and could be the focus for developing sustainable community life. They will be a gateway to a countryside experience, to understanding, to health, to enjoyment and through which local people will be able to build their confidence and capacity in other areas of life.

The key sites will all have public access. However, not all of them are yet fully accessible and efforts will need to be made to develop their potential for public enjoyment. Not all of the key sites are in public ownership and the process of improving accessibility will need to be undertaken with the full agreement of their respective owners.

Many will be wooded areas. Others will have an open character, with meadows, wetland or heath. In the urban areas, park regeneration projects will often offer the best opportunity to create a natural experience for local people. The aim will be to manage and improve the key sites to make them suitable for visitors, with an emphasis on local use. Depending on the facilities they offer and the sensitivity of the site, they may be developed for informal recreation, outdoor sports and environmental education.

The development of local green links to such sites will play a crucial part in the management of the key sites.

**Green links and strategic green links** - There is a substantial network of green links, which includes public rights of way and other routes for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and disabled people throughout the Forest. Green links connect places where people live with key sites and other public facilities. The development of a comprehensive and well-maintained network of green links will be a priority throughout the Forest area, as an attractive and viable alternative to the use of motorised transport for use from home to school and for work.

Green links have a particular significance within the core areas where they provide important connections between individual visitor sites. Green links will also form valuable wildlife corridors, helping wildlife to move around the network of Forest sites and giving continuity through individual landscape management zones.

Only the strategic green links, such as the Trans-Pennine Trail, which have a national, regional or borough significance, are indicated on the map. However the development of local networks is equally important. Provision and promotion of information on these networks will be crucial in ensuring that opportunities for physical access are translated into real opportunities for local communities - people need to know about the opportunities available to them.
6. Landscape management zones

6.1 Upper Don

**Description**

The Upper Don zone is the most dramatic landscape of the Forest area.

Despite the expansion of settlements such as Worral and Oughtibridge and some industrial development associated with the Don Valley, principally at Stocksbridge where the steelworks is a dominant feature of the valley floor, only about 12% of the area is built up.

The zone is also the most heavily wooded, with 23% of the zone occupied by woodland.

To the west of the Don and to the south of its tributary, the Little Don, the underlying rock is millstone grit. Elsewhere, the zone is on coal-bearing sandstones and shales. Between Worral in the south and Green Moor in the north, the River Don occupies a deep asymmetrical valley, dominated by the steeply sloping Wharncliffe Crags that rise to 250 m. In the west, the valley sides are less steep and are interrupted by tributary valleys. Here, the ground rises to reach 350 m on Whitwell Moor. To the north of the Little Don, the ground again rises quickly and reaches more than 320 m at its highest point.

For many centuries this was a district of hamlets and isolated farms. The hill country between Worral and Bolsterstone is an outstanding example of this established pattern of farming, in which stone-walled fields, winding lanes, hamlets and isolated farmsteads together with valley woodlands form a perfect complement to the natural landscape. The ancient field pattern was a complex mosaic of small, irregular fields and, less commonly, subdivided open fields. The open field system gradually went into decline and groups of strips were enclosed by walls that are identified by their straight boundaries.

Most of the farmland is now improved grassland, but areas of heath survive at Whitwell Moor and on other pockets of high ground. The open, relatively treeless area, stretching from Whitwell Moor to the Little Don, has a stark beauty. By contrast, the Stocksbridge bypass and a series of power cables dominate the valley sides and plateau to the north of the Little Don. This area would benefit greatly from additional woodland cover.

Twenty-three ancient woodland sites survive in the zone, altogether covering 835 ha, although most are now established as conifers or broadleaved plantations on ancient sites. Despite heavy planting and neglect, these woods are important not only in landscape terms but also from the ecological and archaeological points of view.

Wharncliffe Chase, an important open area, was created in the thirteenth century as a hunting chase by the Wortley family.

The native-tree cover would have been dominated by oak woodland with a wider range of species in the narrow valley bottom, but areas of open heath and the recent coniferous plantations also contribute to the character of the area. The pattern of new woodland planting and other landscape improvement must be suited to the locality, with small woods nestling in the minor valleys and around the urban edge and larger blocks stretching over the plateaux onto the sides of the Don valley. Species should generally be native to the area.

**Priorities and opportunities**

- Conserving, improving, enriching and interpreting the character of this landscape, and its regionally important habitats.
- Wharncliffe Chase should continue to be managed as a predominantly open grassy heath.
- Improving damaged landscape on the fringes of towns and on some of the improved grassland areas that are now of marginal value as grazing and that are becoming visibly degraded, through new woodland, scrub and hedge planting.
- Utilize opportunities offered by extensive blocks of woodland, owned by the Forest...
Enterprise and by Sheffield City Council, that provide excellent opportunities for people from Sheffield, Barnsley and beyond to come and spend days out. The area is valued for its peace and quiet.

- Carefully zone activities and appropriate management. The high nature conservation value of the area can be maintained and enhanced and there is potential to study and interpret the wildlife habitats through nature trails and interpretive centres.

  - Woodland owned by the Forestry Commission should be managed for the benefit of the public, for its timber and wildlife value and in accordance with the Forest Design Plan for Wharncliffe Wood.

  - Oak and birch woodland, which is natural to the Wharncliffe area, should be managed and extended. Manage coniferous plantations for their timber value and for the contribution that they make to the landscape.

- Continue to develop the network of public footpaths and woods for informal and formal recreation to serve the nearby urban population and to reduce visitor pressure in the Peak District.

- Interpret and explain the area’s rich and well-documented record of human history going back to the Mesolithic. A number of studies including those undertaken by Professor Melvyn Jones have shown that the interpretation of this heritage should be developed for the benefit of local people. Interpretation could take the form of heritage trails, together with a programme of identifying and restoring significant local landmarks and historic artefacts including stonewalls and holloways.

Proposals (refer to South Yorkshire Forest map)

The Wharncliffe Forest core area encompasses the green corridor of the Upper Don, the substantial woodlands on the valley sides and adjoining open land. Initiatives in the core area will focus on;

- Developing facilities for visitors including the establishment of improved access for people with limited mobility, safe routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and improving interpretation.

- The development, where appropriate, of countryside-related sports such as climbing, cyclo-cross, orienteering and archery.
Creating new opportunities for farmers within the core area to diversify into recreation and forestry.

Key sites and strategic green links have been identified at:

- Wharncliffe, Greno, Wheata, Prior Royd, Birkin Royd, Bitholmes, Sheephouse and Beeley Woods;
- More Hall and Underbank reservoirs and their associated woodlands;
- Wharncliffe Chase;
- Glen Howe Park, near Wharncliffe Side;
- New Hall Wood and Oxley Park, Wood Royd/Fox Glen and Pot House Wood in Stocksbridge;
- Sensical Park, Oughtibridge; and
- The Steel Valley Walk.

A network of green links, linking the countryside with the city and extending out to the Peak District is planned. Some of these links have the potential to be developed and interpreted as heritage trails. A number of strategic links including the Trans Pennine Trail pass through the zone and these are shown on the Forest Plan map.
6.2 Wentworth Parks

Description

Wentworth Parks is the largest and most diverse zone in the South Yorkshire Forest. It lies almost entirely on coal-bearing rocks that have been exploited from early times, by means of adits, bell pits, deep-shaft mines and opencast operations. The zone exhibits considerable evidence of past mining activity such as industrial relics and waste tips. The towns and villages of Worsbrough Dale, Hoyland, Elsecar, Swinton, Rawmarsh, Greasbrough, Kimberworth and Thorpe Hesley all grew up around coal extraction and iron and steel making.

A major opencast coal operation on the Rockingham and Barrow tip sites is being progressively restored and presents a valuable opportunity to improve the landscape by introducing woodlands, hedgerows, wetland and scrub habitats.

The landscape is pleasantly rolling, reflecting the alternating succession of north-easterly dipping shales and sandstones. The old villages are typically sited on the shallow sandstone slopes.

Despite the long period of mining activity and industrial development, the zone contains a great variety of historic rural landscapes, including prehistoric settlement sites at Scholes Coppice and Wombwell Wood and the linear earthwork known as the Roman Ridge. The main distinguishing feature of this zone, in comparison with the others, is the impact of the large estates that were responsible for the development of a number of parks. Kimberworth Park, Tankersley Park and Wortley Old Park, which all now contain golf courses, were once deer parks. Thundercliffe Grange, Stainborough and Wentworth Woodhouse are eighteenth-century designs. The last two are substantially intact and contain many of the classical features of landscaped parks.

Small woodlands, some relics of ancient woodland and more recent estate plantations are found throughout the zone and are an essential part of its character. The estate at Wentworth Woodhouse includes both ancient and plantation woodlands, managed for their timber. The walled park still contains a herd of deer, and the surrounding estate landscape is distinguished by Wentworth village with its prominent church spire and a number of monuments and follies. In places, opencast mining has led to the destruction of walls, hedges and woodland, and these areas would benefit from additional tree and hedgerow planting.

The western corner of the zone, which encompasses Wortley and Stainborough parks, is equally attractive. There is a pleasing combination of isolated farms, cottages and hamlets surrounded by small hedged fields and ancient woodlands.

The zone includes two woods, Broad Ing Plantation at Pilley and Bagger Wood, near Hood Green, which are managed with the help of the community. Both Worsbrough Mill Museum and Wigfield Farm provide an educational resource and tourist attraction within Worsbrough Country Park.

An extensive footpath and bridleway network already exists, giving access to the established recreational facilities and to areas of historic interest such as Wentworth and Wortley Parks.

Priorities and opportunities

- The extensive network of small woods and hedgerows, valued as habitat and landscape features, should be conserved and managed. Where this characteristic pattern has been disturbed through opencast mining, new woods and hedgerows should be planted.
Woodland planting for public access, conservation or commercial purposes, should be encouraged around the urban fringes, where farmland often has a fragmented and disturbed character.

The very extensive network of public rights of way within the zone needs to be maintained and promoted for local use to allow local people the opportunity to benefit from the existing and proposed visitor facilities.

The zone includes substantial pockets of very attractive countryside, and all of it within easy reach of urban settlements. There are considerable opportunities for farm diversification and to develop selected areas for public access, including visitor facilities and a varied pattern of woodland establishment.

As the landscape management zone name suggests, the historic parkland and historic settlements offer opportunities to manage and interpret the landscape for public enjoyment. Stainborough Park in particular, which is owned by Barnsley MBC, is a Grade 1 registered historic landscape that has the potential to be developed as a visitor facility. The opportunities afforded by the Heritage Lottery Fund could make its restoration a major project within Barnsley’s regeneration strategy.

Proposals (refer to South Yorkshire Forest map)

The Dove Valley Woods core area is being developed to provide a range of formal and informal countryside recreation facilities. Initiatives in the core area will focus on:

- Restoring the parkland at Stainborough as a historic landscape of regional significance, which could form the focus for a series of visitor facilities within the core area;

- Providing opportunities for quiet informal recreation at Worsbrough Country Park and in the woodlands that are managed for public access;

- Developing facilities for visitors including improved access for people with limited mobility, safe routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and appropriate interpretation;

- Creating new opportunities for farmers within the core area to diversify into recreation and forestry.

Key sites and strategic green links have been identified at:

- Bagger, Old Park, Birdwell, Wombwell, Miller Hill and Lower Lee Woods;

- Stainborough Park and Wortley Park historic parklands;

- Worsbrough Country Park;

- The reclaimed Rockingham Barrow open cast coal site;

- Woods and open land at Scholes Coppice, Grange Park and Warren Vale;

- Creighton Woods in Swinton, Hudson’s Rough and Bassingthorpe Spring near Kimberworth, Broad Ing and Potter Holes Plantations in Tankersley Parish and Barley Hall plantation;

- Elsecar Heritage Centre and parkland;

- Urban park regeneration and management at Hoyland, Locke Park and Worsbrough Common.

A number of strategic green links pass through the zone including the principal east-west arm of the Trans-Pennine Trail. These are shown on the Forest Plan map. There is considerable scope to upgrade and extend the system of paths and tracks throughout the zone in order to create a comprehensive network of green links that gives local people easy access to these strategic routes.
6.3 Northern Sheffield Valleys

Description

The topography of the largely urbanised Northern Sheffield Valleys is varied, with many steep slopes and sudden dips.

Before industrialisation this was an attractive rural area. Today, the countryside survives as a series of remnants, many of them tattered and heavily pressured by urban encroachment. The largest surviving area lies between Grenoside and Ecclesfield village, and includes five small ancient woodland fragments. Within these areas a series of urban parks are often the only opportunity local people have for a countryside experience.

The suburbs of Pitsmoor, Longley, Firth Park, Parson Cross, Shiregreen and Ecclesfield occupy the southern two-thirds of the zone. Further north are the settlements of High Green and Chapeltown, now much expanded by residential growth.

Thorncliffe Wood, Hesley Wood, Westwood and Smithy Wood are all sites of ancient woodland that have been severely affected by mining activity. Together, they form an almost continuous belt of woodland that frames the north-eastern boundary of the zone.

The woodlands and associated open spaces are in both public and private ownership. At the north of the woodland belt is Sheffield City Council’s Westwood Country Park, which includes areas of newly planted woodland on a restored spoil tip. Near the southern end is Hesley Wood Activity Centre, run by the Scouts.

There are also a number of ancient woodland sites surviving in the heart of the built-up area. Woolley Wood is important for its wild cherries and hornbeams, and Wincobank Wood contains an Iron Age fort.

The quality of landscape in the Green Belt varies from the truly rural landscape of the vale around Whitley to the more ragged farmland that fringes the eastern edge of the zone.

The steep west-facing slopes the of the Don Valley between Wadsley Bridge and Pitsmoor, now known as Parkwood Springs, form a prominent scar of tipped and scrub ground. This very visible valley side creates a poor image on the northern approach to Sheffield along the A61 road. The area would benefit from sympathetic tree planting and management creating a resource for the local communities and providing a more attractive backdrop for new investment along this important transport corridor.
Priorities and opportunities

- Restoring despoiled land to woodland with public access, such as Hesley Wood tip and Parkwood Springs, with the possibility of introducing suitable outdoor recreation activities for the enjoyment of local people should be a priority.

- The urban fringes, shown as landscape improvement areas on the South Yorkshire Forest map would benefit from the establishment of small mixed deciduous woods, with oak as the principal long-term species.

- Maintain, enhance and promote the very extensive network of public rights of way, which pass into the heart of the urban areas, for local use.

- Though largely urban this zone has some significant opportunities for woodland management and planting, particularly on the undeveloped ridges and in the valleys. The areas of open land and woodland that have survived are precious assets, giving much-needed breathing space and creating landmarks in a sprawling urban landscape.

Proposals (refer to South Yorkshire Forest map)

Key sites and strategic green links have been identified at:

- Woods and open land at Westwood Park, Smithy and Hesley Woods, Charlton Brook, Hartley Brook, Hinde Common Wood, Wincobank & Parkwood Springs;

- Woolley and Roe Woods;

- Crabtree Pond and associated woodland;

- Urban park regeneration at Parson Cross, Ecclesfield, Firth, Longley and Concord & Hillsborough Parks.

A network of green links, connecting the key sites with residential areas is being developed. A section of the Trans Pennine Trail passes through the zone and is shown as a strategic green link. The Northern Round Walk is an important local trail.
6.4 Southern Sheffield Valleys

Description

The landscape of the Southern Sheffield Valleys has developed on coal-bearing sandstones and shales that have been bisected by the Sheaf and its tributary, the Meers Brook, along with the Shirtcliff, Shire and Moss Brooks, each tributaries of the River Rother. Parts of the area are hilly, rising to 218m at Gleadless and 210m at Arbouerthorne, sloping quite steeply from the Wybourn, Park Hill, Heeley and Meersbrook housing areas down to the Don and Sheaf Valleys to the north and west. To the east the land shelves more gently towards the Rother Valley.

The northern part of the zone at Darnall and Handsworth has long been built up. More recent suburban growth has all but covered the remainder of open land, swallowing up the older villages of Norton, Gleadless and Mosborough. The very extensive housing estates of the Manor and Castle are sited in an area that formed part of Sheffield Great Park, a medieval deer park that once covered 2400 acres. Relics of this historic landscape remain, as exposed open spaces overlooking the housing estates, and in the ruins of the Manor Lodge.

A number of woodlands survive in the urban area. The small ancient woods in the Gleadless Valley, that once marked the division between Yorkshire and Derbyshire, have the added distinction of being situated on the ancient boundary between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia. Bowden Housteads Wood is an ancient woodland of 32 ha in the northern urban area.

The southern most part of the zone is more open and rural in character. It includes Oakes Park, a historic parkland that contains woodland, unimproved grassland and open water, all valued for their wildlife and Graves Park, a major public park that includes a visitor farm. In the south-eastern corner is a portion of the Moss Valley, an area of ancient hedged fields and linear riverside woodlands.

Priorities and opportunities

- Providing local people with access to woodland and other semi-natural habitats in very close to their homes should be a priority as the zone is predominantly urban in character.
- Maintain, enhance and promote the very extensive network of public rights of way, which pass into the heart of the urban areas for local use.
- Regenerate and manage substantial areas of publicly owned open space within the Manor, Park Hill, Arbouerthorne and Norfolk Park. Plant trees and small woodlands in areas that are devoid of trees.
Proposals (refer to South Yorkshire Forest map)

Key sites and strategic green links have been identified at:

- Woods and open land at Shirtcliff and Shirebrook Valleys, Owthorpe, Gleadless Valley, Fishponds, Corker Bottoms, Deep Pits, Arbourthorne, Black Bank, Sky Edge and Holbrook;

- Bowden Housteads Wood;

- Park regeneration and conservation at Norfolk Park, Oakes Park, Graves Park and Meersbrook Park.

A network of green links, linking the key sites with residential areas is being developed. A section of the Trans Pennine Trail passes through the zone and is shown as a strategic green link. Mosborough Country Walk is an important local trail.
6.5 Lower Don Valley

Description

The zone occupies the narrow Don flood plain and lower valley slopes from the confluence of the Don and Sheaf, near the centre of Sheffield, as far north as the steelworks at Rawmarsh.

For 120 years the zone was South Yorkshire’s industrial heartland. However, most of it was predominantly rural until the mid-nineteenth century. At that time, industrial development was clustered in the immediate vicinity of Sheffield and Rotherham and at Masbrough, Parkgate and Kilnhurst. Aldwarke was still a country mansion set in landscaped grounds and the settlements at Brightside, Attercliffe and Tinsley were separated from Sheffield and Rotherham by meadows, cow pastures and woodlands.

From the 1850’s, the valley was steadily transformed into an almost continuous belt of heavy industry. By the middle of the twentieth century, steel and engineering works, tips, houses, transport corridors, gas works, sewage works and power stations occupied almost the whole valley.

The local steel and engineering industries went into steep decline in the late 1970’s yet industry survives in all parts of the valley today. Whilst economic regeneration and environmental improvement are transforming much of the area, parts of the zone remain scarred by dereliction and neglect.

Few areas of historic countryside or woodland remain intact in the valley. The once-extensive Tinsley Park Wood has been reduced to a fragment, although new planting has taken place following opencast coal extraction and scrub woodland is regenerating along the riverbanks.

Water quality along the River Don is also improving allowing for the restoration of riverside and wetland habitats. The reclamation of the former sewage lagoons at the Blackburn Meadows treatment works has created a green enclave within a heavily built-up area.

The establishment of the Five Weirs Walk project in 1988 has opened up the river corridor in Sheffield to the public. This complements the recreational possibilities that occur along the Sheffield and Yorkshire Navigation, which remains a working waterway.

The zone includes one of the major approaches to Sheffield and Rotherham with the M1 corridor passing through its heart and in the development of Sheffield airport. The Meadowhall centre, one of the largest retail facilities in the country also sits at the heart of the valley drawing in tens of thousands of people each week. In addition, Magna, a major Millennium Fund supported project is being developed which too should draw many people.
The appearance of the Lower Don valley and its environmental quality will have a pivotal role to play in the economic regeneration of South Yorkshire, prospective investors gaining their first impressions of the area from the valley landscape.

**Priorities and opportunities**

- Redevelop land left from disused and derelict industries to create a new business environment, with a high quality landscape appropriate to an urban area, with additional tree planting to regenerate the valley corridor.

- Improve the appearance of the urban spaces and in particular of prominent gateway sites and valley slopes, introducing and managing woodland.

- Develop strategic routes for cyclists and pedestrians alongside the river and canal into the inner city areas.

- Encourage the development of natural habitats associated with the river valley and develop the existing facilities a Blackburn Meadows for education and interpretation.

- Restore the ancient woodland at Tinsley Park that has the benefit of being included in the ‘Fuelling a Revolution’ Heritage Lottery award.

**Proposals (refer to South Yorkshire Forest map)**

Key sites and strategic green links have been identified at:

- Woods and open land at Wincobank, which extends into the adjoining Sheffield Northern Valleys zone, Tinsley Park, and the open space at Aldwarke;

- Blackburn Meadows nature reserve;

- The river and canal corridors are being developed as strategic routes for walkers and where appropriate, as bridle and cycle routes. Where space allows, the opportunity will be taken to introduce landscape improvements and management to improve the appearance and habitat value of these important green corridors.
6.6 Dearne Towns

Description

The Dearne Towns zone lies partly on the River Dearne flood plain and partly on the coal-bearing sandstones and shales. To the south of the river is an unbroken ribbon of urban development comprising Wath, West Melton, Brampton and Wombwell.

To the north lies the flat, wide Dearne flood plain and beyond that an area of gently rolling, featureless countryside. This area contains the sprawling former pit villages of Darfield, Thurnscoe, Goldthorpe and Bolton upon Dearne, and the agricultural villages of Billingley and Great and Little Houghton.

In the Dearne valley, small remnants of the riverside ings, or seasonally flooded meadows, have survived, and flashes formed by mining subsidence have also developed.

These are important feeding and roosting areas for migrating, over wintering and breeding birds. Most of these hedges created by mid-eighteenth century through the enclosure of large field systems have been removed. No woodland is recorded at Billingley in the Domesday Book, so the parish has been unwooded for at least 1000 years though in the extreme south a remnant of the once-extensive Wath Wood remains.

The closure of the numerous coal mines that dominated the valley floor up until the late 1980’s has left a legacy of derelict land, from spoil tips, disused railway marshalling yards and other related infrastructure. The concentration of coal mine closures and the resultant economic decline locally has led to resources being targeted at the area, focussed towards its economic restructuring. New investment has already flowed into the valley, particularly in the Wath Manvers area. This is likely to continue, with the Dearne Valley being targeted as a strategic economic regeneration zone in the Objective 1 programme for South Yorkshire.

Priorities and opportunities

- Redevelop and renew derelict land within the Dearne Valley area to create a new landscape with open spaces for recreation, new wildlife habitats and amenity planting as a setting for new businesses and housing developments.
- Conserve and develop wetland areas for quiet enjoyment, education and wildlife conservation.
- Develop woodlands and tree belts to define urban edges, new developments, transport corridors and exposed slopes that overlook the valley.
Continue to restore, manage and enhance the former colliery sites and tips that are designated as greenspace.

Improve farmland through the restoration of hedgerows and by introducing small woodlands and copses.

Restore Wath & Boyd Royd Woods, which have the benefit of being included in the ‘Fuelling a Revolution’ Heritage Lottery award.

**Proposals (refer to South Yorkshire Forest map)**

The **Dearne Valley core area** is being developed to provide a range of formal and informal countryside recreation facilities. Initiatives in the core area will focus on:

- Working with agencies concerned with regenerating the valley to create a high quality environment for businesses, local people and visitors.
- Developing facilities for visitors, including improved access for people with limited mobility, safe routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and appropriate interpretation.

**Key sites and strategic green links have been identified at:**

- Old Moor Wetland Centre, acting as a focus for visitors to the Dearne Valley core area;
- Other wetlands at Wombwell Ings, Broomhill Flash and Gypsy Marsh;
- Bolton upon Dearne (the former WR3 tip) which has restored to woodland and open space and needs to be further developed as a site for the local community to enjoy;
- Wath Manvers, including restored parkland, a lake and golf course development and proposed woodland on the former plant site which is awaiting restoration;
- Netherwood Country Park and associated woodland on adjoining restored colliery land;
- Wath Wood, the only remaining ancient, semi-natural woodland in the Dearne Towns;
- Hickleton/Goldthorpe and Barnburgh collieries that are being restored and landscaped with a mixture of woodland and open space;
- Open spaces within the urban areas of West Melton, Darfield, Thurnscoe East and at Dearnside Fishponds where there are opportunities for enhanced landscaping and tree planting;

The principal east-west arm of the Trans Pennine Trail follows the Dearne river corridor and is shown on the Forest Plan map as a strategic route. There is considerable scope to develop an extensive network of local green links that connect to the main Trail.
6.7 Rother Valley

Description

The Rother Valley zone occupies the valley floor and adjacent slopes of the Rother valley between Norwood to the south and the confluence of the Rother and Don in Rotherham to the north. The valley floor is filled with river-borne deposits and the surrounding slopes are formed of coal-bearing sandstones and shales.

North of the M1 motorway, the zone is largely occupied by industry and housing. To the south of the motorway, the landscape has been much affected by deep-shaft coal mining and by opencast coal operations. Derelict and restored land is widespread. The maturing Rother Valley Country Park shows how restoration can overcome difficult ground conditions and use water as the dominant theme to create a new landscape.

The zone includes major approaches to Sheffield and Rotherham from the south & east along the M1 motorway and on the A57. The appearance of the Rother Valley and its environmental quality will have a pivotal role to play in the economic regeneration of South Yorkshire, prospective investors gaining their first impressions of the area from the valley landscape. Gateway sites and transport corridors along arterial routes are therefore key.

The zone is noteworthy for its large areas of manmade or man-induced water bodies at Treeton Dyke, Rother Valley Country Park and Catcliffe.

Few elements of historic landscape have survived. On the eastern side of the river between Catcliffe and Whiston, a small part of the once-extensive Rother valley meadowland still exists. This area, known as Blue Man’s Bower, also contains important archaeological features.

The other surviving historic landscapes are all ancient woodlands and include Canklow Wood, Hail Mary Wood, Treeton Wood and Nor Wood. At Canklow Wood, widespread clearance has greatly reduced the area of ancient oak-birch woodland. The site also contains an important Iron Age settlement.

Priorities and opportunities

- Conserve and manage the semi-natural landscape of meadows, washlands, wetlands and emergent wet woodlands within the river corridor.
- Continue to restore, manage and enhance opencast sites with high quality wooded landscapes as a backdrop to new investment.
- Incorporate informal recreation and sporting provision and increase biodiversity through the creation of other new wildlife habitats on restored sites.
- Improve farmland on the urban edges and along the motorway corridor, through the restoration of hedgerows and by introducing small woodlands and copses.
- Restore Canklow, Treeton, Falconer and Hail Mary Hill Woods, which that have the benefit of being included in the ‘Fuelling a Revolution’ Heritage Lottery award.

Proposals (refer to South Yorkshire Forest map)

The Rother Valley core area is being developed to provide a range of formal and informal countryside recreation facilities. Initiatives in the core area will focus on:

- Developing facilities for visitors including improved access for people with limited mobility, safe routes for walkers, cyclists and
horse riders and appropriate interpretation;

- Developing a mosaic of habitats including open water, wetlands, meadows, woodlands that will provide a setting for quiet enjoyment and formal and informal recreation by various means, such as farm diversification.

**Key sites and strategic green links have been identified at:**

- Rother Valley Country Park and the Pithouse West extension, that will continue to be developed and managed as a principal gateway site within the Forest;

- Wetlands and wet meadows at Woodhouse Washlands, Treeton Dyke and Catcliffe Flash, Flatts Lane and Blue Man’s Bower;

- Canklow, Treeton, Falconer and Hail Mary Hill Woods;

- Orgreave - The site offers considerable opportunities for new woodland planting;

- Areas of public open space at Brinsworth and Treeton that have the potential to be developed as key sites with tree planting and enhanced landscaping.

The Trans Pennine Trail follows the river corridor and is shown on the Forest Plan map as a strategic route. There is considerable scope to improve access to the Trail for local users through an improved system of local paths and tracks.
6.8 Rotherham Plain

Description

Rotherham Plain is a zone of contrasting human and physical landscapes. The underlying geology consists almost entirely of coal-bearing sandstones and shales. A small area at the northern tip of the zone is on magnesian limestone. The valleys of the westward-flowing Hooton, Whiston, Ulley and Morthen Brooks dissect the rolling topography. Settlements include a large part of central Rotherham and its surrounding suburbs, the towns of Wickersley, Bramley, Dalton and Thrybergh, and the small villages of Hooton Roberts, Ravenfield, Ulley, Whiston and Morthen.

Large parts of the zone are still agricultural. The area of rolling farmland centred on Whiston and Ulley parishes still retains a variety of interesting field systems, although the mechanisation of arable farming has led to the loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and the intrusion of electricity transmission lines lowers the quality of the landscape in places. Although smaller, the rural landscape at Dalton Dean is also an important survivor, as is the area around Hooton Roberts.

The remnants of two deer parks at Ravenfield and Thrybergh both contain fish ponds. Thrybergh Park includes Bluebell Wood, an ancient woodland. In all, eleven ancient woodland sites survive, although replanting has damaged some, such as Herringthorpe and Silver Wood. The most valuable ancient wood in the zone is at Hooton Cliff, situated on the magnesian limestone. It is a disturbed wood of ash, wych elm and hazel and contains locally rare tree, shrub and herbaceous species. Fragments of valley wood remain along Ulley and Pinch Brooks.

Priorities and opportunities

- Strengthen the buffer zone between town and country, create opportunities to widen public access to the countryside and expand commercial timber opportunities by planting woodland and creating open space on the urban fringe, particularly where farmland has a fragmented and disturbed character.
- Improve the visual impression along the motorway corridors.
- Improve the agricultural landscape by conserving, managing and extending the network of small woods and hedgerows that are valued as habitat and landscape features. Farmers and landowners are being encouraged to restore hedgerows and to enhance habitats, and a number of successful Countryside Stewardship agreements are already in place.
- Restore Gibbing Greave & Herringthorpe and Wickersley woods, which have the benefit of being included in the "Fueling a Revolution" Heritage Lottery award.

Proposals (refer to South Yorkshire Forest map)

Key sites and strategic green links have been identified at:

- Reservoirs and surrounding land at Thrybergh and Ulley Country Parks;
- Woodland, open water and meadowland at Ravenfield Park and Firby Reservoir;
- Gulling, Gibbing Greave & Herringthorpe and Wickersley woods;
- Open land and woodland at Whiston Meadows, Kilnhurst Riverside and Wickersley Gorse;
- Silverwood tip, currently being restored, offers the potential for substantial tree planting;
- Herringthorpe playing field, which has the potential for tree planting and enhanced landscaping.
6.9 North East Barnsley

Description

The landscape of the North East Barnsley zone is fragmented, with urban settlements interspersed with pockets of marginal farmland and open ridges and man-made tips. The underlying Carboniferous coal measures gave rise to rich coal seams that were extensively worked until recent times. The coal industry has had a profound influence upon the landscape, giving rise to a rather fragmented pattern of settlement and industrial development on the higher ground overlooking the Dearne and its tributaries.

The area is overlooked by a number of tips in various stages of reworking and restoration, which have considerably altered its natural relief and physical appearance. The affect of coal working upon the natural landscape is particularly sharp around Grimethorpe where the settlement starkly overlooks a natural valley that has been all but obliterated by former coal tips and a large coking plant. This is currently undergoing redevelopment.

The local economy has been dominated by a very small number of traditional industries, notably coal mining. The closure of the coalmines, the final one ceasing to operate in the mid 1990’s, has had a substantial detrimental impact on the economy and on local employment. This economic decline has led to regeneration funds being targeted at the area and this is likely to continue. Regeneration projects, such as the Grimethorpe Regeneration Executive, which involve partnerships of the community, business and statutory agencies, are expected to play a growing part in this process.

The River Dearne cuts across the zone in a south-easterly direction, through an open lowland corridor. The riverside landscape associated with the main valley and its tributaries is varied and fragmented with marginal farmland and horse grazing, interspersed with large scale industrial work and cut by transport corridors, disused mineral railways and pylon lines.

The Dearne Valley Park is a successful restoration scheme that provides a welcome island of tranquillity in the heart of Barnsley. Carlton Marsh nature reserve is another successfully restored wetland landscape. Elsewhere newly restored tips, such as Athersley Memorial Park, have been planted with blocks of woodland and have the potential to develop into significant landscape features which, in time, will transform the character of the area.

Established woodland is very fragmented with a small number of linear woodlands such as Horse Carr Wood that lies on a steep ridge overlooking the Dearne. West Haigh Wood is the only significant block of semi-natural woodland that occupies a hillside to the east of Grimethorpe.

The zone includes the main Barnsley town centre and its associated communities, along with the outlying pit communities, such as Darton, Royston, Shafton & Grimethorpe.

Priorities and opportunities

- Redevelop and renew former colliery sites and tips and other derelict land, where designated as greenspace, to create an improved landscape with open spaces for recreation, new wildlife habitats and amenity planting as a setting for new business and to benefit local communities.
- Develop woodlands and tree belts to define urban edges, new developments, transport corridors and exposed slopes that overlook the valley.
- Conserve and develop areas within the open

The zone includes the main Barnsley town centre and its associated communities, along with the outlying pit communities, such as Darton, Royston, Shafton & Grimethorpe.
river valleys for quiet enjoyment, education and wildlife conservation.

- Improve degraded urban edge farmland through farm diversification, the restoration of hedgerows and by introducing of small woodlands and copses.
- Restore existing woodlands for local communities to use and enjoy.

Proposals (refer to South Yorkshire Forest map)

The Upper Dearne Valley core area is being developed to provide a range of formal and informal countryside recreation facilities. Initiatives in the core area will focus on:

- Working with agencies concerned with regenerating the valley to maximise the potential for creating a high quality environment for businesses and local people;
- Developing facilities for visitors including improved access for people with limited mobility, safe routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and appropriate interpretation;
- Interpreting the rich history of the area, which includes Bretton Priory, as well as examples of the area’s recent industrial heritage.

Key sites and strategic green links have been identified at:

- Restored tips and mines at Barnsley Main, Standhill Wood Tip and Swallow Hill that may offer opportunities for further landscaping including woodland planting;
- Dearne Valley Park, that can develop as a focus for visitors to the area and nearby sites at The Fleets and Burton Bank;
- Grange Lane & Bretton Priory;
- Carlton Marsh Nature Reserve.
- Rabbit Ings Colliery, which requires complete restoration;
- Ferry Moor tip, currently being opencasted and restored;
- Husband Wood, West Haigh Wood and Lady Wood;
- Recently restored sites at Woolley Colliery, Athersley Memorial Park, Grimethorpe Tip, Woodmoor, which have been partially planted but which offer opportunities to create a stronger woodland structure within the area;
- Open spaces within the urban areas of Darton, Yews Lane at Kendray and Lundwood;
- Carlton and Monk Bretton where there are opportunities for enhanced landscaping and tree planting.

The Dearne Way follows the main river corridor and is shown on the Forest Plan map as a strategic route. There is considerable scope to develop an extensive network of local green links that connect to the main route.
7. Developing the Forest
the way forward

7.1 Who will be involved?
- the partners

The nature, scale and the time over which
the vision of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan
needs to be developed, means that it can only
possibly be delivered through the endeavours of
many public agencies, voluntary groups, private
companies and individuals.

As has already been set out, the South Yorkshire
Forest Plan:

- Offers a consistent and sustainable vision for
  the future of South Yorkshire’s landscape;
- Pieces together a suite of objectives in a
  way that will allow numerous organisations
to see their actions as part of an integrated
  and strategic vision;
- Acts as a framework to help in bidding for
  new resources;
- Offers a foundation around which numerous
  agencies and organisations can frame their
  actions.

The South Yorkshire Forest Plan is therefore not
one organisation’s strategy, but rather a tool
that a number of groups can use in developing
their own projects. This opportunity is open
to many organisations. The roles that these
organisations will play will differ.

Government

The Government supports the South
Yorkshire Forest through the involvement of
the Countryside Agency and the Forestry
Commission. As initiators of the Community
Forest programme, Government needs to sustain
its support for activity within the South Yorkshire
Forest and direct funds to it through a variety of
means.

The programme’s two national sponsors,
the Countryside Agency and the Forestry
Commission have indicated their continued
support both through a variety of grant aid
mechanisms and through their role as national
advocates of activity within the Community
Forests. The Forestry Commission and the local
Community Forest partnerships have entered
into a ‘joint accord’ that publicly spells out the
commitment to work to mutual benefit, the
programme being a prime delivery mechanism
for the England Forestry Strategy.

Government departments will also need to
play a key role in delivering the vision set
out in this South Yorkshire Forest Plan. The
Department of the Environment, Food & Rural
Affairs (DEFRA), the successor to the Ministry
of Agriculture Fisheries and Food and some of
the environment functions of the Department
of the Environment, Transport and the Regions,
has a role to play in fostering the continued
success of the Community Forest programme.

The national Community Forest Programme
continues to monitor its progress against DEFRA-set measures. The Department has a very significant part to play in promoting policies and programmes that encourage woodland expansion, in encouraging farm diversification and the conversion of land from intensive agriculture to woodland and in a range of other environmental improvements. As agri-environment schemes change and evolve, the South Yorkshire Forest should be considered as an ongoing target area, as it is for the Countryside Stewardship scheme.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has a key role in influencing regional planning policy and regional development. Ensuring that the South Yorkshire Forest, along with the remainder of the Community Forest programme, continues to figure within spatial and economic development strategies (e.g. future Planning Policy Guidance) will be important in sustaining the profile of the South Yorkshire Forest within the national programme. Similarly, ODPM has a very important role in recognising that environmental regeneration plays in contributing to economic regeneration.

The development of the South Yorkshire Forest will have a role in economic regeneration, healthy living and educational attainment in the area. Other Government departments such as the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Health and Department for Education & Employment may well therefore have an increasing interest and involvement in the success of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan. The Government Office for Yorkshire & the Humber is already involved in steering the development of the Forest Plan.

Other Government agencies, such as English Nature, Sport England, English Heritage, the Environment Agency, the Highways Agency and the Arts Council have pivotal roles to play in their respective areas of interest. They will be able to influence the way in which the strategic objectives in the Plan are delivered and where necessary, provide advice and funding for research, projects and activities.

Regional agencies

In preparing the Regional Economic Strategy, Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency for Yorkshire & the Humber has indicated the importance of environmental quality in the economic prosperity of the region. Yorkshire Forward could have a significant role to play in the development of the South Yorkshire Forest. This would be both through continuing to advocate the Forest partnership’s role in the region’s life in its own strategy statements and in financial support for Forest related programmes where they deliver Yorkshire Forward’s own agenda.

Local authorities

The local authorities are key players. They already own and manage much land that is accessible to the public. These will need to be managed and developed to maximize their contribution to the Forest. Local authorities also drive other agenda within their areas, such as development control and education. It is crucially important that local authorities remain core supporters in the development of the Forest and that this commitment extends throughout their own corporate structure. The South Yorkshire Forest Plan has the potential to provide a unique platform on which a wide range of local authority policies can be delivered in a seamless fashion.

The local authority partners will need to continue their commitment to the programme and where possible target their resources in order to develop the series of key sites. This funding will help release central government and European funds. Local authority staff, particularly countryside project officers and rangers, will play an important and continuing role in involving local people in Forest related projects and so realising a crucial part of the Forest Plan.

The South Yorkshire Forest’s core local authority partners are Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and Sheffield City Council.
Voluntary and community organisations

The South Yorkshire Forest can only be delivered by taking the views of local people into account. The established networks of voluntary and community organisations will form an essential means by which this can take place.

One of the challenges for the South Yorkshire Forest Partnership will be to articulate and deliver the benefits that working in partnership within the Forest offers to organisations whose primary objective may not be environmentally related, for example, to health and education groups.

Business & industry

Industrial and commercial organisations have several potential roles to play in the development of the South Yorkshire Forest. Many leaders of industry are also major players within the local community. Their advocacy for the exciting potential that the South Yorkshire Forest can play within the region’s life will be an important contributory factor to its ongoing success.

Industrial and commercial organisations often own significant portions of land that may benefit from woodland planting and other environmental improvements. The owners and managers of former mineral sites can make a particularly important contribution to environmental regeneration. Many of these properties are located along major transport corridors and their improvement will lead to enhanced prospects for the sub-regional economy. In areas where development is planned, businesses may choose to create attractive environments as part of their masterplans for the site. The business community are beginning to realise that attractive business locations are more conducive to higher productivity and a healthy workforce.

The opportunities offered for marketing products through a company’s involvement in South Yorkshire Forest related projects may give commercial concerns an incentive to support those projects financially. Indeed, a number of companies have already seen this potential and are involved in a number of programmes throughout the Forest.

Forestry and other environmentally related industries

There will be further employment and training opportunities arising as a result of physical improvements within the South Yorkshire Forest and from related initiatives that enhance business prospects. The process of planting and managing woodlands and of developing an attractive and locally distinctive landscape with its wide range of habitats will in itself offer opportunities for employment. Development of the Forest will strengthen the nursery, landscape contracting, forestry management and horticulturally related industries in the area. Other businesses that use timber products or that supply services in the environment will also benefit.

Individuals

Everyone has their part to play. Individuals who do not have a voice through a group or organisation should neither be precluded from experiencing the benefits of the developing South Yorkshire Forest or from expressing their views. Steps will need to be taken to market the opportunities offered within the South Yorkshire Forest and of the activity of the groups and organisations working within its area. Channels of communication will need to be constantly reviewed to ensure that accessible information is provided.
7.2 Business planning

The long timescale of the South Yorkshire Forest Plan means that its delivery can only truly be delivered in ‘bite-size’ chunks. The partnership will further develop a business planning approach, which is key to turning the Forest Plan into reality. The full South Yorkshire Forest Plan cannot possibly foresee or describe all the opportunities and possible delivery mechanisms that may arise over the long-term vision that it sets out. Circumstances will change and opportunities to deliver the plan objectives will come and go.

A partnership business plan will therefore be prepared that will seek to articulate how, within a given time frame, specific parts of the Forest Plan will be delivered. There needs to be seamless links between the Forest Plan and local actions contained within the business plan (see flow diagram in the Introduction - chapter 1).

The business plan will act as a useful tool to help judge what progress is being made in making the South Yorkshire Forest happen. It should be an accessible ‘off-the-shelf’ guide to see what should be tackled next within the resources and opportunities available at the time. It should also inform and direct the partner’s efforts.

The business plan needs to relate the Forest Plan strategic objectives, to national and regional strategy and policy, taking account of more short-term needs and opportunities. It should include a number of elements.

- Business plan priorities - based upon the range of circumstances, including national policy direction, progress to date in delivering Forest Plan objectives and short term opportunities.
- Summary progress to date - measurable progress that will help inform the development of future priorities, targets and actions.
- Targets - expressing challenging yet deliverable targets that will help in measuring delivery of the range of South Yorkshire Forest Plan strategic objectives.

Local delivery actions - actions that will be undertaken framed around the strategic objectives (included in the ‘Forest-wide vision, chapter 4) and relating to the spatial strategy (chapter 5).

The business plan should be prepared on a 5 year rolling programme with yearly updates.

The business plan will need to be prepared in consultation with a wide range of organisations. The integrated nature of the Forest Plan objectives means that many groups will contribute to its delivery. This process for involving a wide range of groups will need to be continually improved so that local delivery actions become as full and extensive as possible.
7.3 Funding opportunities

The business plan will express the opportunities for delivering the objectives in much greater detail. There are however, a number of opportunities that are worth highlighting that illustrate the kinds of actions and programmes that are being, or could be, developed.

National sponsor support

The Countryside Agency has to date prioritised its resources toward the development of the Community Forest programme. They have expressed their continuing support and the partnership looks forward to further involvement. As Agency priorities continue to change, the partnership will need to be creative in the way in which it develops South Yorkshire Forest Plan related projects. The Community Forest programme was established to be innovative in the way it seeks to improve the environment in and around towns and cities for the benefit of the local economy and local quality of life. Creating a 'test-bed' for ideas is therefore not new and in order to continue to benefit from Countryside Agency financial support the local partners will need to find ways of delivering the Plan objectives within the context of ongoing Countryside Agency priorities.

The Forestry Commission’s Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) provides the mainstay of incentives for woodland establishment. Woodland creation and management in the Community Forest programme meets a number of priorities in the England Forestry Strategy (EFS). Within the increasingly discretionary nature of the WGS, applications delivering Community Forest objectives are likely to be favoured. Partnership funding for specific projects is also likely to benefit work in the South Yorkshire Forest. For example, as a priority area for ‘Forestry for Regeneration’, one of the 4 EFS themes, joint funding is likely to help in developing a woodland setting for new businesses on previously derelict and degraded land.

Regeneration funding

The benefits of an improved environment on the economic prosperity and quality of life for people within the area are being increasingly appreciated. This should help provide a focus for regeneration funding streams.

Woodland planting and other environmental improvements can be undertaken as part of capital works to restore derelict land. Land regeneration funding has been available in different forms over time and is likely to change in the future. Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency, has been managing land regeneration programmes as a successor to the derelict land grant. The opportunities offered by these, and other related funds that may arise, in delivering South Yorkshire Forest Plan objectives need to be continually explored. For example, in 2000, Forest Enterprise was successful in securing £9 million from the Government’s Capital Modernisation Fund for work in 3 Community Forests.

Importantly, the South Yorkshire Forest features within the Single Programming Document for European Objective 1 structural funding. Maximum effort needs to be made to deliver a package of measures aimed at increasing environmentally related jobs and training opportunities and at developing the green infrastructure in South Yorkshire. The Forest partnership also needs to be exploring the potential that may be offered through other...
funding opportunities, for example, the Single Regeneration Budget.

Environmentally related grants

In 1996 the Government introduced the Landfill Tax regulations. Waste site operators are required to pay tax on every tonne of waste sent to landfill. They were also given the chance of tax rebates if donations were made to approved environmental projects. The environmental credits scheme is nationally regulated by ‘Entrust’, an organisation established specially for the purpose. Landfill tax environmental credits have already helped many projects within the Forest.

This was the first direct environmentally related taxation scheme. Others may well arise in the future. There is already speculation over the potential for a ‘carbon tax’ and the opportunities it may offer to offset potential tax liabilities through the carbon locked up through tree planting. The Forest partnership is well placed to develop these opportunities.

Several grant schemes are targeted primarily at farmers and other landowners in the countryside. The Countryside Stewardship scheme, which is administered by the Department of the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, is targeted at Community Forest areas. The scheme offers annual incentives, paid on a per hectare basis, to manage areas for their wildlife value. Capital grants are also available to help restore and create landscape features, such as hedges and traditional stone walls. The scheme also provides financial incentives to landowners to increase public access.

Small amounts of money are sometimes available from other organisations as discretionary grants, or as environmental awards on a competitive basis. Organisations include English Nature, private companies and various charitable organisations.

National lottery

Funds for projects through each of the various national lottery distributing organisations have already been secured for a number of projects within the South Yorkshire Forest.

For example, the Heritage Lottery Fund is providing £1.6 million for the South Yorkshire Forest wide ‘Fuelling a Revolution’ programme to restore ancient woodlands and provide a range of new community and learning opportunities. The New Opportunities Fund, with its 3-fold emphasis on education, health and environment, is likely to provide continuing chances to contribute to projects within the Forest in all of their priority themes.

New funding opportunities

The integrated nature of the Forest Partnership’s agenda offers an ideal chance to link with other potential funding opportunities that will help to deliver Forest related objectives. The link between health and environmental quality may well prove a fruitful avenue. Examples already exist. Sheffield City Council is implementing a programme of health walks and the Countryside Agency together with the British Heart Foundation and the New Opportunities fund is developing incentives and promotional measures aimed at encouraging health related activity.

The benefits of a high quality wooded environment have yet to be fully articulated and understood. These benefits, when fully spelt out may also lead to other financial opportunities not previously available. For example, tree cover in urban environments has been shown to significantly decrease the speed and scale of storm water overflow. The subsequent reduced need for very costly and highly engineered storm water control could be traced directly to increased investment in urban tree-scape.
7.4 The South Yorkshire Forest Partnership - the core team

Financial incentives alone will not deliver the South Yorkshire Forest Plan objectives. Although, the Forest Plan presents a strategy for developing the South Yorkshire Forest, a strategic overview of its development is essential and will continue during the lifetime of this Plan. Encouragement, support and advice are needed to create the network of key areas and connecting green links. A core team will need to co-ordinate the efforts of public, private and voluntary sector bodies active in the Forest. The role of the partners has already been expressed and the South Yorkshire Forest team has already performed a number of roles. These will need to continue to be delivered.

Strategic overview in delivering the wide range of Forest Plan objectives and to fit individual actions into the wider Forest ‘jigsaw’ is of continuing importance for this important cross border programme. The team is also involved in marketing the South Yorkshire Forest to a wide range of people. Increasing awareness and appreciation of the South Yorkshire Forest as a place and the successes of the groups working within it will be of continuing significance in its further development. Marketing the Forest also needs to take the form of ‘selling’ the benefits that a high quality environment will bring to the prosperity of the region and quality of life of those who live within it.

Securing new resources for projects within the Forest will be an important driver for the success of the Partnership. The Forest team needs to play a continuing pivotal role in finding and securing new funds that will deliver further projects across the whole partnership. Allied to this, and weighing up its strategic overview role, the team needs to have the flexibility to identify and establish new delivery mechanisms where none presently exist. To date, the Forest team has played a supporting role for existing agencies throughout the area. Whilst this will still remain the primary role for the core team, development of some of the objectives within the South Yorkshire Forest Plan may well be dependant upon new innovative ways of making things happen.

Reflecting upon the two national programme objectives not cross-referenced to aims and strategic objectives within this Plan (see appendix 1), the core team needs to remain flexible, identifying and adopting delivery mechanisms that will accelerate the development of the Forest Plan, working with partners throughout the area. This flexibility could manifest itself in a range of ways but the potential offered by a catalytic team able and ready to seize opportunities to develop programmes remains attractive.

In a similar vein, the core South Yorkshire Forest team needs to further identify shared objectives with the private sector, working together to implement Forest related projects.

The future of the core Forest team should, for the short term (5 to 10 years), remain within the local authority founding partners. The Countryside Agency has indicated its continuing commitment to this arrangement. Beyond that time the range of options available will need to be explored. There is likely to remain a need for a strategic and ‘fleet-of-foot’ team during the life of the strategic plan. However the nature of those arrangements could change and all available routes need to be examined.

New ways of delivering South Yorkshire Forest Plan objectives need to be continually explored. There are already examples both with the South Yorkshire Forest Partnership and across the Community Forest programme where innovative solutions have been found. The potential for joint funding projects, with partners not traditionally working in conjunction with each other, is just one example. The Forest team will continue to seek the most effective ways of delivering the objectives within the South Yorkshire Forest Plan.
7.5 It’s already happening

This reviewed South Yorkshire Forest Plan has been prepared several years into the initial programme. Each of the local partners has already undertaken considerable work within their areas and much progress has already been made in developing the South Yorkshire Forest. Each year the business plan and the annual review will update detailed progress against specific measures agreed as part of the Department of the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs monitoring requirements.

However, the statistics presented in those documents will only paint a very small part of the picture of the benefits associated with the improving South Yorkshire Forest. The quality of each individual’s experiences, the economic prospects of the area, the willingness of new companies to invest locally, the thriving wildlife and attractive landscapes and the pride in which local people take in the environment can never be fully put into words. Both this Plan and the process of review and consultation will give renewed impetus to specific actions on the ground to make South Yorkshire a thriving and more attractive place.
## APPENDIX 1

**Summary - National programme objectives**

- South Yorkshire Forest Plan aims
- Strategic objectives

### National Objective

To regenerate the environment of the Green Belt and equivalent areas, where it is public policy to keep it open, and help to ensure that it is permanently green and open.

To give public and private sector confidence in the long-term prospects for the area and to provide a proper base for investment.

To improve the environment near housing and local industry and to increase the value of properties and businesses.

### South Yorkshire Forest Plan Aims

#### 1. Regeneration, Planning & Development

New development that contributes to a high quality, diverse, accessible and well wooded landscape which is rich in biodiversity and that will provide an attractive setting, assisting in securing economic regeneration and improving the quality of life for local people.

### Strategic objectives

- **P1** Incorporate significant areas of new woodland planting, green corridors and local green space into major new developments as part of a strategically planned ‘green space’ network.

- **P2** Resist developments that destroy ancient woodland, mature trees, copses and hedgerows and other high quality habitats and landscape.

- **P3** Ensure that new developments reflect and strengthen the character of the local landscape and restore distinctiveness.

- **P4** Ensure new developments lead to a net gain in ‘environmental capital’.

- **P5** Restore areas of derelict, brownfield and vacant land, that are not to be redeveloped, to woodland, other new habitats, greenspace and recreation provision.

- **P6** Incorporate multiple-user non-motorised access provision (e.g. cycle paths), that fully integrate with other transport provision, into major new developments.

- **P7** Ensure consideration is given within development plans and in major new developments to integrated transport provision.

- **P8** Ensure that promotion of the transport network includes information on accessibility to key sites in the South Yorkshire Forest.

- **P9** Ensure that changes to the transport network contribute to the development of the Forest including improving the environment along all major transport corridors by replanting hedgerows and planting trees.

- **P10** Incorporate integrated environmental, social and economic measures and recognition of the South Yorkshire Forest into new economic and social regeneration strategies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Objective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To improve the landscape of the area, including reclamation of derelict land, to create a visually exciting and functionally diverse environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To protect areas of high quality landscape or historical or archaeological interest.</td>
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<tr>
<th>South Yorkshire Forest Plan Aims</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Landscape</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An attractive, diverse and high quality environment, which is more wooded in character, where the best quality landscapes, and those of recognisable historic merit, are protected and where degraded areas are improved. A more wooded and attractive landscape that encourages new investment, economic regeneration and improves the quality of life for local people.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>L1</strong> Plant new woodland to help improve derelict and disturbed land and to screen eyesores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L2</strong> Develop an extensive network of well managed field boundaries (hedges and walls), re-planting and restoring them where necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L3</strong> Expand the framework of urban trees, including small woods, street trees and trees within parks and gardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L4</strong> Design major new developments, including soft landscaped areas and large woodland, to take account of the local character of the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L5</strong> Conserve sites of archaeological interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L6</strong> Protect and restore, where appropriate, historic landscapes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L7</strong> Protect individual trees of historical value and other significant trees.</td>
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<th>3. Recreation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible countryside, and woodland in particular, with facilities, services and information that make formal and informal countryside recreation and sport available to all sectors of the community and contribute to a healthy society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| R1 **Develop an extensive and comprehensive network of access routes across the Forest, particularly those linked with people's homes and those designed for a range of users, including bridle and cycle paths.** |
| R2 Ensure that every resident has access to woodland or wooded area within easy reach of their home. |
| R3 **Promote the use of non-motorised access for work, commuting and leisure.** |
| R4 Promote informal outdoor recreation. |
| R5 Increase opportunities for formal sport in the countryside. |
| R6 Give particular encouragement to sectors of the community who have poor access to a high quality environment and to those who are under-represented in their use of the countryside for recreation and sport. |
| R7 Increase usage of existing local outdoor leisure and tourist attractions, improve accessibility and enhance the range of the facilities available. |
| R8 Promote the health benefits offered by the recreational opportunities in the Forest. |
## National Objective
To achieve a high level of local community commitment to the concept and involvement in its implementation.
To create jobs in the new woodland industries, both management of woodland and use of the raw materials.
To create jobs in the leisure industry developed in and around the Community Forest.
To sustain other local jobs by providing an outstanding environment as a comparative economic advantage over competitor areas.

## South Yorkshire Forest Plan Aims

### 4. The Community
- **An environment where everyone** has access to a countryside experience and the chance to enjoy, appreciate and feel involved in the management of their surroundings. An environment that helps improve health and quality of life and in which the process of managing the environment provides opportunities for employment and training.

### 5. Woodlands and timber related industries
- **A well-wooded environment** benefiting both wildlife and local people, where new and existing woods are accessible to local people. Increased woodland cover and well managed existing woodlands that provide the raw materials for sustainable job creation and new training opportunities in timber related industries. New woodlands that help to restore degraded and derelict landscapes.

## Strategic objectives

| C1 | Seek people’s views and encourage communities to be involved in planning improvements within the Forest. |
| C2 | Increase opportunities for local people to participate, restore and manage the sites near to where they live. |
| C3 | Form partnerships involving local people, businesses, community groups and environmental organisations. |
| C4 | Develop a thriving and sustainable network of environmentally related business (managing the environment, providing environmental services and utilising environmentally related products), creating new jobs and training opportunities. |
| C5 | Use environmental management as a means of assisting local community confidence building and of increasing the capacity of local people to regenerate the social fabric of their community. |
| C6 | Promote art and arts events to help people understand and identify with their local environment and with the South Yorkshire Forest. |

| F1 | Plant new woodland, increasing woodland cover to 30% of the non-urbanised Forest area. |
| F2 | Design new woodlands to suit the needs and aspirations of the local community and the character of the local environment. |
| F3 | Restore neglected woodlands and manage the Forest’s existing woods to benefit wildlife, landscape, accessibility/recreation, wood production and the local economy. |
| F4 | Develop a local timber related industry supporting new jobs and training opportunities and involving local people. |
| F5 | Develop sustainable markets for wood and wood products inc. wood produced for energy generation. |
National Objective

To protect the best agricultural land and increase opportunities for farm diversification elsewhere, in accordance with Government agricultural and local planning policies.

South Yorkshire Forest Plan Aims

6. Agriculture

A thriving, diverse rural & land based economy with well managed, productive new and existing farm woodlands and areas of agricultural land managed for recreational and environmental benefits.

7. Education & Interpretation

A wide appreciation amongst young people of the natural environment and of the educational and health benefits of activity and involvement in managing local sites. Forest sites used as a way of meeting a range of educational and curriculum needs. A broad understanding of the natural environment, of the value and use of trees and woodland & of agricultural activity amongst urban and rural communities alike.

8. Wildlife

An area thriving in biodiversity, where a broad range of habitats are protected and managed specifically for their wildlife value and where new areas are created to encourage wildlife. Increased local community appreciation and many opportunities to enjoy wildlife at first hand.

Strategic objectives

AG1 Encourage farmers and landowners to plant new woodlands, trees and hedgerows on agricultural land.

AG2 Bring farm woodlands into productive management.

AG3 Support land based jobs and develop a diverse land based economy through farm diversification and other measures.

AG4 Increase the area of farmland managed for recreation, wildlife and landscape and heritage benefits.

E1 Ensure all schools within the Forest have the opportunity to be involved in improving their own surroundings.

E2 Improve school grounds, making them more attractive areas, rich in wildlife and increase their contribution to learning.

E3 Make educational materials available to all schools within and around the Forest.

E4 Inform the wider community of the development of the Forest.

E5 Develop a better understanding between rural and urban communities, stressing the importance of agriculture, woodland management, the uses of timber as a resource and the use of the countryside for recreation and relaxation.

W1 Protect a network of valuable wildlife sites and corridors throughout the Forest.

W2 Create new habitats, particularly where opportunities are afforded through the restoration of derelict, brownfield and vacant land and in agricultural landscapes, to improve the overall wildlife interest in the Forest.

W3 Increase the community’s appreciation and knowledge of wildlife and nature conservation.

W4 Prepare and implement management plans for all key areas within the Forest that will seek to enhance the wildlife value of those sites.
Two national objectives listed in chapter 2 remain without cross-references to the South Yorkshire Forest Plan aims and strategic objectives - as follows.

- To remain flexible in the light of changes, such as in the leisure market.
- To seek private sector support to implement the Forest and to invest in leisure and other relevant service sectors.

Both of these national programme objectives describe part of the way in which the South Yorkshire Forest Partnership’s activities will be delivered rather than an end product. They are therefore less easily translated into strategic objectives at a Forest-wide level. Flexibility in delivering new and innovative programmes is integral to the partnership’s programmes. Private sector support will be sought, where appropriate, in a range of the strategic objectives. These are both expressed within chapter 7 (“Developing the Forest - the way forward”).
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