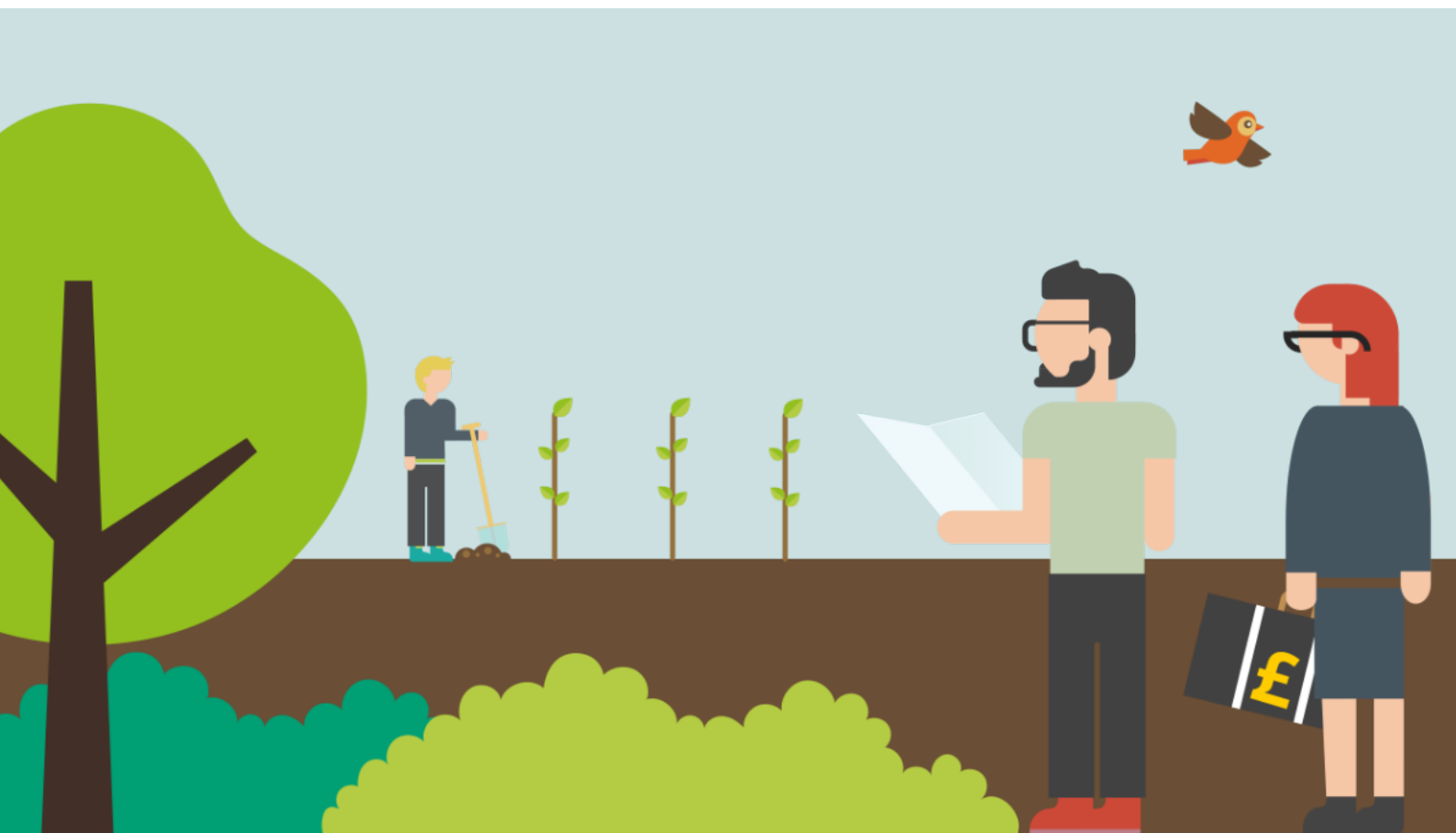




2022-27

Delivery Plan



The Mersey Forest Team



Street trees planted in the Fabric District, Liverpool as part of the URBAN GreenUP programme | Photo: McCoy Wynne

Our vision is to get “more from trees” to help make Merseyside and North Cheshire one of the best places in the country to live.



Together we will double woodland cover across The Mersey Forest by 2050, creating a mosaic of beautiful, cherished woodland landscapes for people and wildlife.

We will work closely with all sectors of our community to create an attractive place to live and work, drawing in new investment and promoting a thriving economy.



An introduction to The Mersey Forest



The Mersey Forest is a network of woodlands and green spaces being created across Merseyside and Cheshire by a wide-ranging partnership of different organisations including local authorities, community groups and businesses.

The Mersey Forest was established in 1991 by central government acting through the Countryside Commission (now Natural England) and the Forestry Commission. It covers 1,370 km² of Merseyside and Cheshire, which is home to over 1.7 million people.

The Forest Plan sets out the long term aims, objectives and spatial strategy for The Mersey Forest. The plan, first launched in 1994 and now in its third iteration, was most recently refreshed in 2014. The fourth iteration will be published in 2025.

www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan

The Annual Mersey Forest Service Plan provides a detailed assessment of the activity of the Forest Team each year, contributing to the Delivery Plan and the longer term Forest Plan.

The core partnership includes a collaboration of seven local authorities – Cheshire West and Chester Council, Knowsley Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, Cheshire East Council and Wirral Borough Council. All of the local authorities are invited to elect a member to the Forest Steering Group.

The local authorities play a pivotal role in the ongoing sustainability of the Forest – contributing core funding towards the Forest team which

supports the drawing down of further external funds to maximise the value and impact of all investments, fund the overheads and enable projects to be funded, delivered and managed.

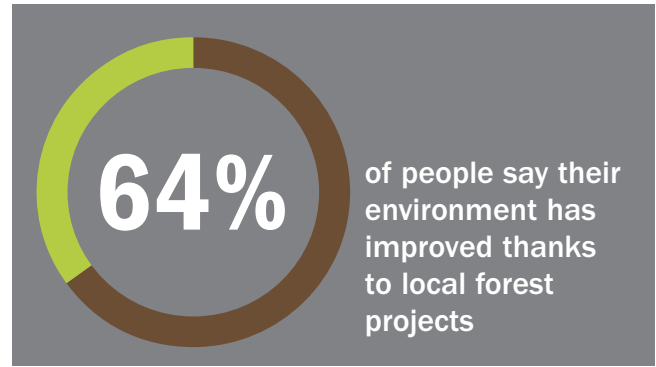
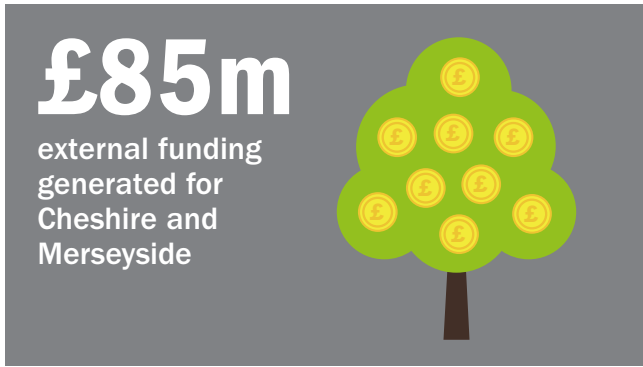
The Mersey Forest Team continues to work closely with a number of organisations, including Community Forest Trust, Community Forest Land Trust and Mersey Forest Foundation all of which are companies limited by guarantee with charitable status. These organisations provide a range of infrastructure support to The Mersey Forest Partnership, including back office function, employment of staff, and accountable body status for several Mersey Forest projects.

Cheshire West and Chester Council is the Lead fund holding and employing authority. The Director of the Mersey Forest Team, reports to a director of the council, and a budget is set annually and approved by the Members' Steering Group.

Cheshire West and Chester Council receives advice from the Members' Steering Group and the Officers' Working Group, both of which have representatives from Natural England, the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency and co-opted representatives from the private and voluntary sector.

The Forest Plan links to national and local policy including:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- England's Forest Strategy
- 25 Year Plan for the Environment
- Nature for Climate programme as part of the government's climate emergency actions



9.2m trees planted in
The Mersey Forest



70%
increase in
woodland cover

Progress to date

Great progress has been made by The Mersey Forest since the inception of the Forest Plan. The Partnership has:

- Planted more than 9.2 million new trees, increasing woodland cover by 70%
- Transformed over 4,000 ha of land into community woodland and associated habitats
- Provided 600 km of new access routes
- Delivered 42,000 community events
- Brought in over £85M of external funding – regularly multiplying partner contributions by a factor of six
- Developed and delivered award winning education and health programmes
- Developed high quality research programmes and projects with local universities, supporting PhDs, MBA, MSc and BSc students
- Created new jobs and supported new business development
- Played a pivotal role in setting up and supporting local nature partnerships
- Influenced policy at local and national level, including references to Community Forestry and case studies within the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the England Trees and Woodland Strategy
- Gained community support: 92% of people in the area support the work of the Forest Partnership, 64% say that they have noticed improvements in their local environment as a result of delivery of forest projects

About this Delivery Plan

This Delivery Plan accompanies The Mersey Forest Plan which is the long term and strategic guide to the work of The Mersey Forest team and wider partnership.



The Mersey Forest Plan sets out the vision and twenty overarching policies under the headings Who, What, How and Why, as well as spatial policies for each local authority area under the heading Where.

This Delivery Plan covers the topic of When – it sets out targets for the next five years, along with the budget and actions for the next year (2022-2023). The Mersey Forest team are largely responsible for the delivery of the actions set out in the Delivery Plan. As such, it also sets out the role, core values and responsibilities of the Forest Team.

The Community Forest Trust, Mersey Forest Foundation and Community Forest Land Trust are all part of a group of charitable trusts that support the delivery of The Mersey Forest Plan.

Each trust has its own governance structure, with the Chief Executive of the Community Forest Trust invited to join The Mersey Forest Steering Group meetings to help coordinate activity across the organisations.

Whilst independent, the Trusts and local authority partnership share the common goals set out in the Mersey Forest Plan and this Delivery Plan.

Approval and Governance

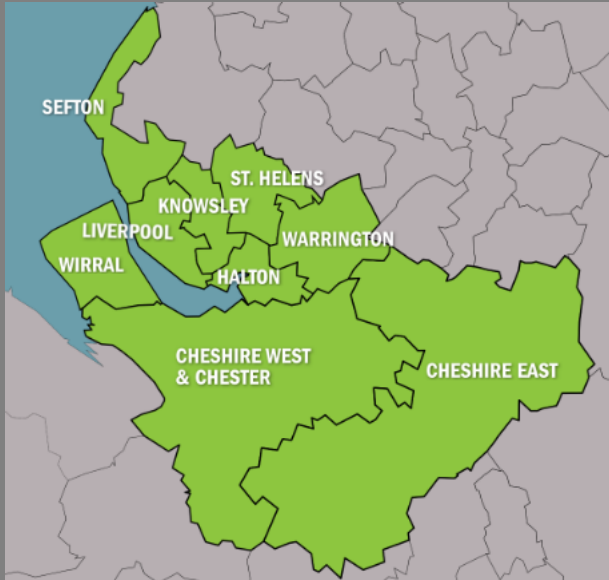
This Delivery Plan was approved by The Mersey Forest Steering Group in January 2022. The Steering Group provides the top-level Partnership wide forum for decision making about the role and strategic action of The Mersey Forest Partnership in delivering The Mersey Forest Plan.

Cheshire West and Chester Council as the accountable body for The Mersey Forest Partnership, manages the partnership agreement that sets out how the partners work together and agree the role that Cheshire West and Chester Council plays.

CW&C provide the governance framework, through its [constitution](#) in the management of The Mersey Forest Team and projects for which it is the accountable body.

The policies set out in The Mersey Forest Plan

www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan



Where

The Mersey Forest works in the following local authority areas:

Cheshire East
Cheshire West and Chester
Halton
Knowsley
Liverpool
Sefton
St. Helens
Warrington
Wirral

Who

1. Partnership working
2. Empowering communities
3. Advising and supporting landowners

What

4. Planting and design
5. Long term management

How

6. Strategies, plans, policies, programmes and initiatives
7. Funding
8. Monitoring and evaluation
9. Research, evidence and mapping
10. Communications

Why

11. The economy and tourism
12. Woodfuel, timber and forest industries
13. Wildlife, biodiversity and ecosystems
14. Climate change
15. Flood alleviation and water management
16. Access, recreation and sustainable travel
17. Health and wellbeing
18. Natural Play and education
19. Life-long learning, training, skills and jobs
20. Culture, heritage and landscape

Key Targets 2022-27

Target Description	Target 2022/23	Target 2022-27	Achieved to date	Related policy
Engagement events held	80 events	500 events	40,900 events	Communities
Woodland created	150 hectares	900 hectares	3,192 hectares	Planting
Street trees planted	500 trees	2,000 trees	9,825 trees	Planting
Existing woodland managed	50 hectares	200 hectares	7,000 hectares	Management
Funding secured by The Mersey Forest team	£20m	£157m	£70m	Funding
Gearing of funds – return on local authority partner funding	1:8 ratio	1:8 ratio	1:10 ratio	Funding
Hedgerow created or managed	5 km	20 km	85 km	Wildlife
Carbon captured	75,000t CO2e	300,000t CO2e	1,200,000t CO2e	Climate change
Natural flood management interventions	30 interventions	100 interventions	60 interventions	Climate change
Good quality walking/cycling networks created or re-opened	10km	120km	210km	Recreation
People supported to improve their wellbeing	120	5,000	3,000	Health and wellbeing

Budgets 2022-25

The secured budget for the next three years totals **£65.3 million**. As well as this directly generated income, the team also enables the release of further funds which go directly to landowners or projects.

The team will work to supplement these funds in line with the specific policy on funding in The Mersey Forest Plan (Policy 7), targeting a range of funds including central government, the private sector, the planning system, consultancy work, donations, and trusts.

The Trees for Climate programme distorts the budget to a large degree as most of this funding will be spent outside of The Mersey Forest area.

However, it does represent an opportunity for the Partnership to maximise its use locally and demonstrate the leading role The Mersey Forest Partnership is playing nationally in managing this fund, demonstrating credibility to deliver on local authorities' Climate Emergency Action Plan targets.

Project	Income 22-25
Core funds	875,000
Esmee Fairbairn	90,000
Green Recovery	125,000
Groundswell - GI and Health	3,000
Ineos	4,500
MMU / Uni of York Treescapes	21,000
Natural Health Service	25,000
NEIRF	3,000
Natural Flood Management	150,000
Northern Forest	300,000
Omega S106	600,000
Parkside St Helens S106	120,000
Trees for Climate	61,420,000
Urban GreenUP	100,000
Urban Tree Challenge Fund	60,000
Urban Tree Challenge Fund 2	450,000
Vacant and Derelict Land Discovery	1,000,000
Total	65,346,500

Action Plan 2022-23

Areas of focus

Climate Change

Adaptation and mitigation, Trees for Climate, Northern Forest and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund all offer huge opportunities to The Mersey Forest Partnership to greatly accelerate woodland establishment. This means locking up carbon in line with the scientific advice on how the country can play its part in meeting the Paris Accord to reach net zero and attempt to limit global temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees. The Partnership recognises that woodland establishment and sustainable forest management are not the whole answer to the climate emergency, but they play a role amongst the plethora of actions that are required.

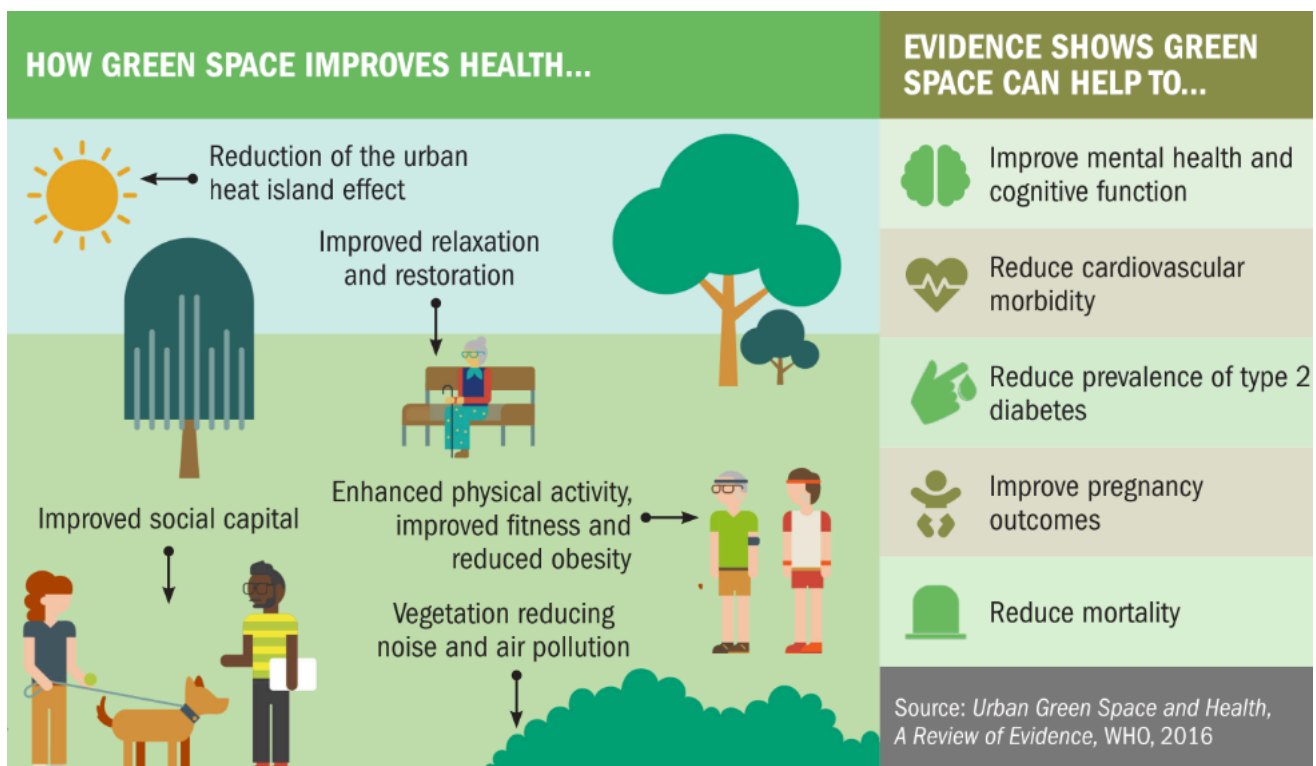
Biodiversity

The Mersey Forest Partnership's work can help to deliver the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategies, creating a framework of connected woodland habitats. Woodland designs implemented through The Mersey Forest incorporate a range of habitats, creating a woodland mosaic.

Health and wellbeing

The Natural Health Service is a flagship project that has supported the wellbeing of thousands of people across the Forest area. Parks, woodlands and other green spaces have been used as 'health assets': venues for evidence-based interventions delivered as group-based short courses, such as healthy walks, mindfulness within nature and conservation activities. These have been targeted at particular groups such as adults, children, young people and groups with particular complex needs or health conditions with the overall aim of reducing local health inequalities.

An independent valuation of the programme by Amion Consulting found that it has generated a social value contribution of over £10.07 million, based on public sector cost savings and social, productivity and economic benefits. This represents a return on investment of £12.18 for every £1 spent by partners and funders on the service.





Education

The Mersey Forest Partnership has always worked closely with schools and young people to encourage outdoor learning and connection to nature. In the coming five years, work will be further extended beyond primary schools to engage a broader range of young people.

Opportunities for career pathways will be developed for those who may want to take up careers in the natural environment. More opportunities will be provided for young people to engage in positive action for the environment and gain better understanding of the natural world around them.

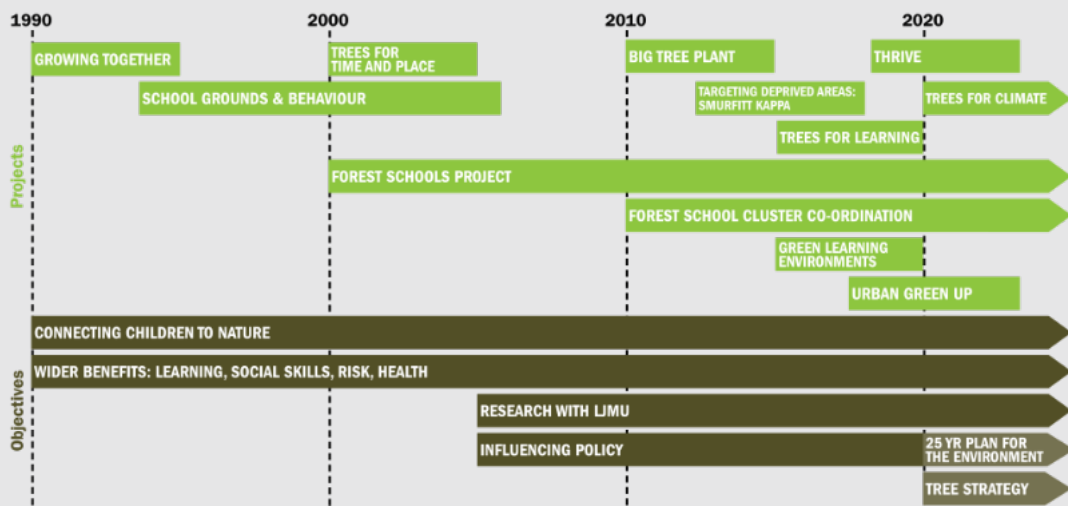
Greening our Towns and Cities

Urban greening projects can benefit neighbourhoods and commercial districts by creating a more attractive environment as well as boosting biodiversity and help adapt urban areas to a changing climate. Schemes such as those carried out in the Fabric District of Liverpool city centre (see infographic above) can demonstrate a clear impact on the quality of place and life for communities and businesses.

Work with developers, planners and communities will continue to find more creative ways to weave trees and green infrastructure into local neighbourhoods.

Trees for learning

A timeline of The Mersey Forest's education programmes since 1990



The Action Plan for 2022-23 is set out in the table below. The actions are linked to the most relevant of the Why policies set out in The Mersey Forest Plan. Whilst the table does not capture all activities of The Mersey Forest team, it gives an indication of the scope of the main projects.

Project	The Economy and Tourism	Woodfuel, Timber and Forest Industries	Wildlife, Biodiversity and Ecosystems	Climate Change	Flood Alleviation and Water Management	Access, Recreation and Sustainable Travel	Health and Wellbeing	Natural Play and Education	Life-Long Learning, Training, Skills and Jobs	Culture, Heritage, and Landscape
Consultancy										
CWAC Climate										
Ellesmere Port s106										
Esmee Fairbairn										
Green Recovery										
Groundswell GI and Health										
Ineos										
Mab Lane										
Mersey Biochar										
MMU Treescapes										
Natural Course										
Natural Health Service										
NEIRF										
Natural Flood Management										
Northern Forest										
Northwich Community Woodlands										
Omega S106										
Outreach										
Parkside St Helens S106										
Seedcorn										
TfC										
Treescapes (with LJMU)										
Uni of York Treescapes										
Urban GreenUP										
Urban Tree Challenge Fund										
Urban Tree Challenge Fund 2										
Vacant and Derelict Land Discovery										

The Mersey Forest Team

The Mersey Forest is a place, with plans for landscape scale environmental improvements led by local communities and led by a partnership. The team coordinates the partnership and is sometimes seen as the face of The Mersey Forest.



The Mersey Forest Team is a well-established, growing mix of professionals from different backgrounds who collaborate to deliver the Mersey Forest Plan and support The Mersey Forest Partnership.

The diverse mix of roles and responsibilities within the team are all equally important in ensuring that the team functions efficiently and effectively to deliver the actions needed to meet the targets set out above.

The Mersey Forest is committed to offering staff a welcoming and nourishing workplace culture. All members of staff have an equal role in ensuring this positive culture is continuously embedded in our daily operations and regular opportunities for discussion around the central ideas are encouraged.

These include:

Professionalism

An expectation that each team member will be ethical, respectful, positive, dependable, a team player and aim to be the best they can be.

Growth mentality

Each staff member is encouraged to grow within their role, through mentoring, shadowing and training opportunities. This benefits the employee and allows the organisation to remain agile in adapting to changing circumstances and ideas.

High quality projects

The Mersey Forest is proud of its reputation locally and nationally in delivering high quality projects. The Team follows a strong project management methodology and is committed to

collaborating with external partners to ensure the highest quality projects are developed and delivered.

Know the bigger picture

The Mersey Forest Team delivers a wide range of programmes and projects which fit within different themes such as climate change, air quality, health and well-being and economic development. Many of these themes are cross-cutting. All team members are encouraged to understand the bigger picture through referencing The Mersey Forest Plan (and subsequent Delivery Plans) to demonstrate how the project they are working on contributes to an overall strategic goal.

Understanding and valuing different views

The Mersey Forest team is made up of a diverse range of professionals from different backgrounds with different views. Different viewpoints are welcomed and members of the team encouraged to challenge new or old ideas.

Celebrate success

All team members are encouraged to share success stories within their field of work. This allows the team to celebrate in success and where appropriate, communicate these successes with external partners and supporters.

Encourage sharing of issues

Mistakes are sometimes made. The Team culture enables support to be given if something goes wrong. Staff are encouraged to raise issues early so solutions can be found by the wider Team. We learn as much from things that do not go to plan as from those that do.

Role of The Mersey Forest Team

The Mersey Forest Team’s role corresponds closely to the Who, What and How policies set out in The Mersey Forest Plan.

Role	Examples
Coordinating and promoting partnership working	Maintaining the core partnership through Steering and Working Groups, establishing partnerships for specific projects
Empowering communities	Supporting Friends of Woodlands groups, encouraging people to get involved, organising community events
Advising and supporting landowners	Providing help and advice on applying for grants for tree and woodland planting and management
Facilitating high quality planting and design	Designing and planting woodland in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard, whilst taking into account local context
Ensuring long term management	Preparing management plans in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard and negotiating with owners
Influencing strategies, plans, policies, programmes and initiatives	Ensuring that suitable wording can be found in local authority plans to enable delivery of The Mersey Forest Plan
Securing and managing funding	Applying for a wide range of grants and other funding sources to supplement core funding
Monitoring and evaluation	Annual monitoring to keep track of partners’ planting, public awareness surveys
Research, evidence and mapping	Developing green infrastructure planning techniques, ensuring the latest thinking underpins the delivery of The Mersey Forest Plan
Communications	Ensuring that partners, communities and landowners are informed of activities, employing a range of methods to suit each audience

Core Values



Be an advocate for the environment and natural world



Work in partnership



Take responsibility and ownership



Look after each other

Responsibilities

The team needs to act responsibly in conducting their business and interacting with the wider community. Performance in relation to these responsibilities is monitored through surveys with the relevant groups.

Category	Responsibilities	Measure
Partners	Partnership is the basis for the work of the team. The Mersey Forest Partnership put the team in place to help deliver The Mersey Forest Plan.	1:1 meetings, check that Partnership remains healthy
Suppliers	The team treats suppliers with respect and strives to understand their business needs.	Survey of suppliers
Funders	The team aims to produce high quality funding applications, to deliver projects for funders, and to meet their evidence needs.	Survey of funders
Employees and their families	Employees are our most important asset. We respect the need for a work-life balance and try to create an environment in which people can thrive.	Team surveys
Our wider network	The team aims to provide the same high quality, professional service to the whole Forest network, from community groups to national bodies.	Involving the wider network in projects and programmes as part of the culture of The Mersey Forest – is this felt by Partners?
The environment	We are mindful of the impact that we have on the wider environment and seek to reduce the pressure that we place upon it.	More use of virtual meetings, less travel, source alternatives to plastic, minimal herbicide by 2025. Efficient equipment, material recycling.
Our communities	Working with communities, responding to need and always listening, supporting and enabling engagement to create a Community Forest that is a cherished part of people's lives.	Feedback survey





THE MERSEY
FOREST
more from trees



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