

Memorandum of Agreement of The Tees Forest

Introduction

1. This document is the Memorandum of Agreement between North East Community Forests Limited and:

Countryside Agency

Forestry Commission

Middlesbrough Council

Darlington Borough Council

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

Hartlepool Borough Council

Referred to as the partners for the planning and implementation of The Tees Forest Plan.

Scope and Purpose

2. This Memorandum of Agreement sets out the arrangements for the members of The Tees Forest Partnership and the way in which they will work individually and together to achieve the aims and aspirations of The Tees Forest.
3. It replaces all previous Memorandum of Agreements in respect of The Tees Forest in their entirety.

Concept and purpose of The Tees Forest

4. The Tees Forest was established in 1991 as part of a national programme of 12 Community Forests.
5. Community Forests are large areas on the edge of towns and cities where environmentally led regeneration will create new, well-wooded landscapes for work, wildlife, recreation and education, improving the health,

well-being and quality of life of local communities.

6. The operational area of The Tees Forest covers some 352km² across the Tees Valley.

The Forest Partnership

7. Success depends on a partnership approach with all partners being fully committed individually and collectively, working together and with a wide range of other agencies to deliver the policies, resources and actions required to create The Tees Forest.

The role of North East Community Forests Limited

8. North East Community Forests Limited a Public Interest Company, is the strategic delivery partner for the planning and implementation of The Tees Forest. It promotes and co-ordinates the policies, partnerships, staffing and actions required to secure the successful implementation of The Tees Forest Plan.
9. It employs people directly or indirectly (as secondees from other members of the Forest Partnership).
10. An Executive Forest Director is responsible for ensuring that the composition and skills of the Forest team match the actions and activities required to implement the Forest Plan.

The Forest Plan

11. The vision for The Tees Forest is set out in The Tees Forest Plan. The first Forest Plan was published in 1994 following



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extensive public consultation, endorsement by the Forest Partnership and approval by central Government. The Forest Plan was updated in November 2000.

Action Plan

12. An Annual Action Plan produced by North East Community Forests Limited with direct input from partners will guide implementation of the Forest Plan. The Annual Action Plan will set out the tasks, targets and resources required to create The Tees Forest, identifying the key agencies involved and detailing the operational framework for the Forest.

Partner roles

13. Each partner has a particular role to play and contribution to make to the success of the project.

14. The **Countryside Agency** or its successors will:

- Contribute financially to North East Community Forests Limited through an annual service led agreement or such other means.
- Seek the advice of North East Community Forests Limited on Countryside Agency supported projects and programmes within the Forest area
- Target grant aid and technical support towards the activities of other public, private, voluntary and community sector partners working to further the creation of The Tees Forest.
- Use its national, regional and local influence to encourage a wide range of other agencies and contribute technical and financial resources to its implementation

- Assist with public relations, media and marketing activity to raise the profile and contribute to the success of the Forest
- Develop and promote policies within its own work that support The Tees Forest
- Promote North East Community Forests Limited at both national and regional level to ensure continued endorsement and enhanced policy and financial support
- Undertake or support appropriate research and training in support of the Forest

15. The **Forestry Commission** or its successors will:

- Contribute financially to North East Community Forests Limited through an annual service led agreement or such other means.
- Recognise the importance of The Tees Forest as a mechanism to deliver against national and regional objectives as set out in the England Forestry Strategy, Regional Forest Strategy and Forestry Commission business plans
- Use its national, regional and local influence to encourage a wide range of other agencies to support The Tees Forest and contribute technical and financial resources to its implementation
- Provide staff time and other resources to promote awareness and uptake of the Woodland Grant Scheme and other tree planting and woodland management schemes.
- Take account of The Tees Forest in the development and management of its existing landholdings within the Forest area

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- Seek to increase its landholding within The Tees Forest to at least 500 hectares
 - Support the development of a range of promotional and marketing initiatives to stimulate woodland creation and management within The Tees Forest
 - Assist with publicity, public relations and marketing activities that will raise the profile of The Tees Forest
 - Promote The Tees Forest to Government at both national and regional level to ensure continued endorsement and enhanced policy and financial support
 - Place its unrivalled technical expertise at the disposal of the Forest
16. **Local Authority** Partners or their successors will:
- Contribute financially to North East Community Forests Limited through annual grant aid, annual service led agreement or such other means.
 - Give high priority to the creation of The Tees Forest in the work of all their departments and committees to ensure a co-ordinated approach and corporate commitment to its success
 - Develop and enhance mechanisms to implement The Tees Forest Plan by deploying appropriate staff within the Forest area
 - Work through a wide range of their own programmes to implement relevant parts of the Forest Plan and seek to use the Forest to increase the financial resources available to such programmes
- Take account of the Forest Plan in their planning policies and development control procedures, including North East Community Forests Limited staff at an early stage on all relevant planning applications or proposals
 - Work with and support other organisations in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors who are able to contribute to the implementation of The Tees Forest
 - Assist with publicity, public relations and marketing activities that will raise the profile of The Tees Forest
 - Seek to acquire and manage land, including existing holdings, in locations and ways that contribute to the implementation of The Tees Forest
 - Continue to provide and where possible increase, management and financial support and resources to assist the creation of The Tees Forest
 - Provide professional, technical administrative and financial assistance and advice to the Forest Team
 - Work closely with and involve the Forest Team in appropriate ways in all of the above actions where relevant

Governance

17. A board of management governs North East Community Forests Limited. The board of management is responsible for ensuring that the terms of this memorandum of agreement are met and has the authority to establish a The Tees Forest steering group. In such a case the Executive Forest Director will service a steering group.

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External Liaison

18. It is important that North East Community Forests Limited and the relevant staff within Forest Partners develop and maintain close-working relationships with each other and with a wide range of external agencies involved in implementing The Tees Forest.
19. The Executive Forest Director will be responsible for establishing appropriate arrangements to ensure the effective engagement of key stakeholders both within and outside the core Forest Partnership.

Financial arrangements

20. The resources required to implement The Tees Forest are significant and will come from a wide range of sources across the public, private and voluntary sectors. The onus will be on all Forest Partners and North East Community Forests Limited to maximise available resources from within their own organisations and to seek additional funding from external agencies.
21. Each partner is asked to contribute to The Tees Forest budget, which will be held and managed by North East Community Forests Limited.
22. The partner's actual contributions will be agreed by the 31st December of the year preceding the financial year. Partners will make every effort to pay grants early in the financial year.

23. A three-year outline agreement will be reached with one year in detail and two years in outline. The budget will be rolled forward on a three year rolling programme.
24. Funding arrangements for each partner may include service level agreements, grant aid and secondments arrived at by mutual agreement between North East Community Forests Limited and the partner.
25. Where individual partners have elected to contribute funding through a service level agreement, the Annual Action Plan will be the work programme for this agreement.

Assets

26. All assets of The Tees Forest are the sole property of North East Community Forests Limited.

Monitoring and evaluation

27. An agreed system of data collection has been established to monitor the implementation of the Community Forest Programme. North East Community Forests Limited will contribute to this process. All partners will collect and supply appropriate data as required to the best of their ability.
28. An Annual Report, based on this data, will be prepared for wide distribution that sets out clearly the progress being made in turning the Forest vision into reality.

Review and revision

29. The Tees Forest is a long-term project and the Forest

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Partnership is committed to maintaining and demonstrating its long-term support. This Memorandum is therefore open ended but will be reviewed and updated:

- In conjunction with periodic reviews of the Forest Plan
- If there is a material change in the circumstances of one or more of the Forest Partners
- If it would significantly assist the implementation of the Forest Plan

30. Any partner may terminate their adherence to this Memorandum at the end of a financial year (31st March following) subject to having given 6 months formal written notice.

Financial Appendix attached