
FORESTRY SKILLS FORUM

**FORESTRY
SKILLS
TRANSITION
PLAN
2023/24**

FORESTRY SKILLS FORUM



ABOUT THE PLAN

The purpose of the Forestry Skills Forum (FSF) is to:

- Agree actions across the forestry sector on priority skills and education issues
- Share information and resources among members
- Advocate and promote education, learning and development in English and Welsh forestry.

The FSF organise and monitor their activities through the development and delivery of a Forestry Skills Plan. The first version of this Forestry Skills Plan was published in 2019 and is due to run until the end of 2024. The plan was written by partners of the Forestry Skills Forum to address challenges together through collaboration rather than working in isolation. The aim of the plan was to:

- Facilitate a long term coordinated approach to skills issues
- Prioritise activity
- Enable partners to work more efficiently, for example, by preventing duplication

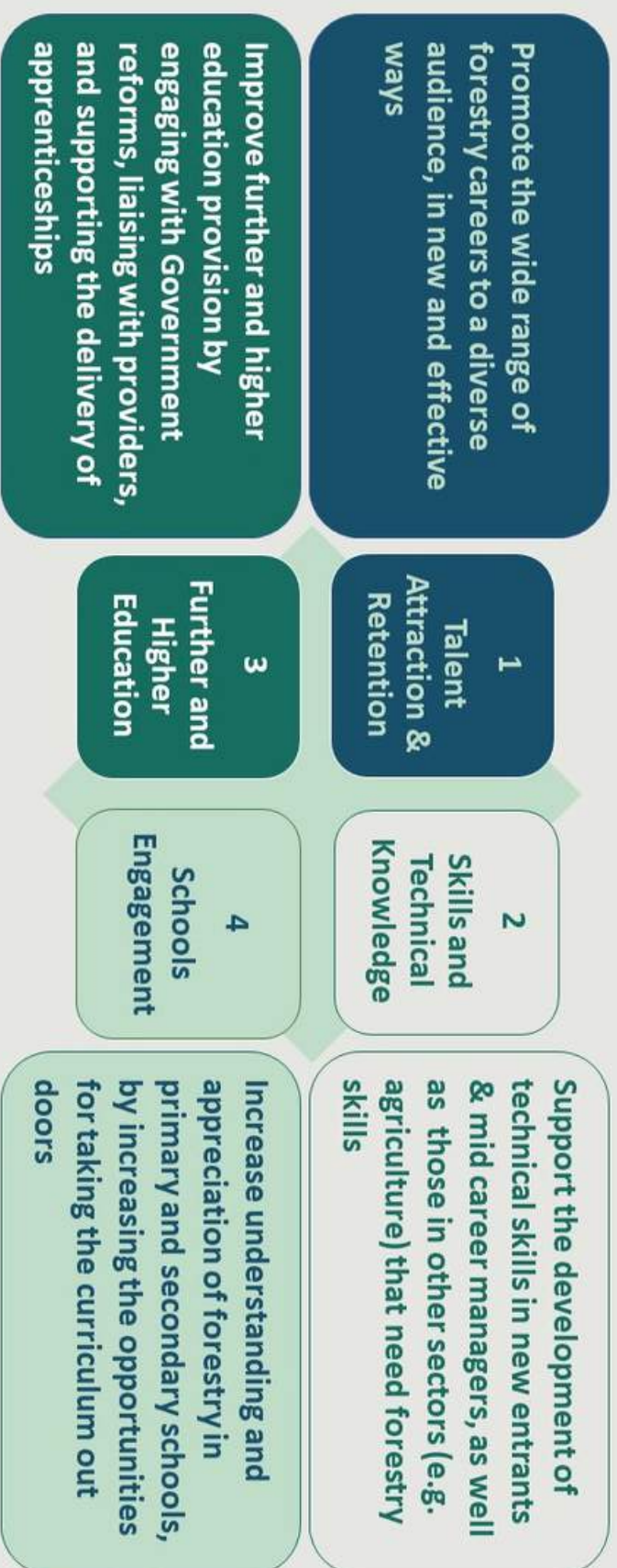
The original plan was written to address issues identified in the 2017 Forestry Skills Study for England and Wales. The 2021 Forestry Workforce Research was then used to update the plan that year. Formal reports and plan revisions were published in 2021 and 2022. These reviews enabled the Forum to respond to external factors such as COVID-19 and Government policy to mitigate and adapt to our changing climate.

This review will set out our achievements from January 2022- March 2023 (unless otherwise stated), but also our objectives while we develop and transition to a new plan. This revision reflects the position at the point of publication. The actions are all ongoing and the FSF delivery plans evolve, reflecting the current priorities of the group.

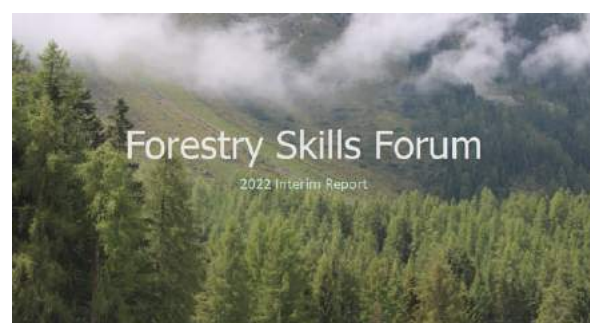
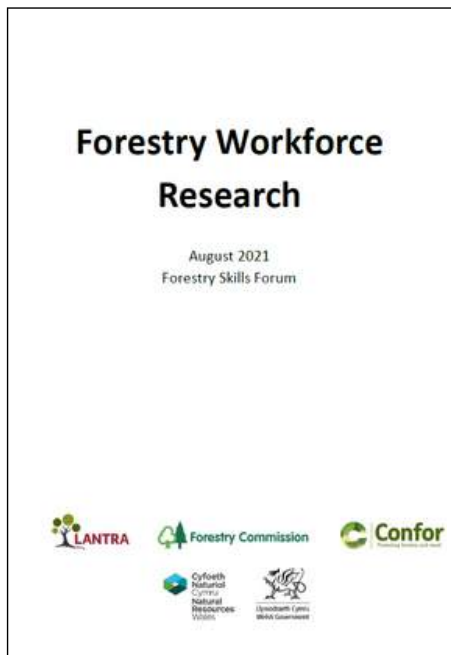
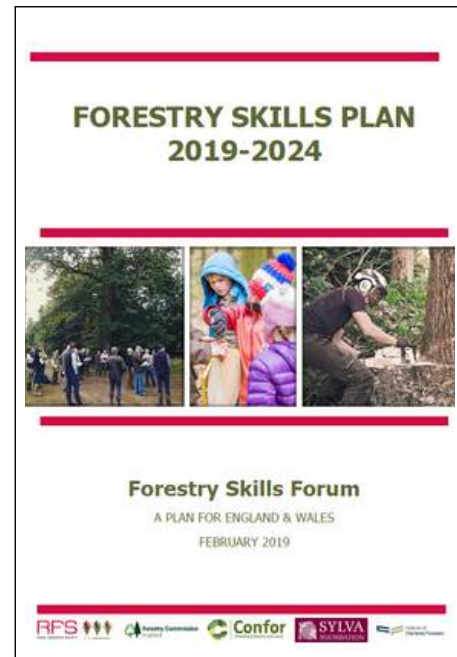
Please note that numbering is not always sequential as completed and ongoing actions are in different places. Where items are funded by the Nature for Climate Fund this is indicated with a tree symbol.



THEMES OF THE FORESTRY SKILLS PLAN



The Forestry Skills Plan over time



POLICY CONTEXT

The 25 Year Environment Plan¹ was published in 2018 and sets out the Government's vision for the environmental agenda including a target to increase tree canopy and woodland cover in England to 12% by 2060. The 2021 Net Zero Strategy² committed to trebling woodland creation rates by the end of this Parliament to ensure England supports the UK manifesto target of 30,000 Ha per year. This included the establishment of the Nature for Climate Fund to enable targets to be achieved.

In 2023, the Environment Improvement Plan³ reviewed progress and sets out how natural resources will be used more sustainably. It includes a target that 12% of England have woodland cover by 2050. The plan also recognises the importance of woodland for health and wellbeing of local communities. There are additional commitments on creating woodland, improving access to new and existing woodland and encouraging use of the domestic timber resource.

It recognises that more people are needed to plant and manage trees. To increase sector capacity, Defra will:

- Deliver a Forestry Training Fund
- Expand the Professional Forester apprenticeships and increase industry support for apprenticeships, T Levels and other technical training routes
- Resolve barriers to education and training in forestry
- Scope options for a digital hub to bring together forestry education, careers and skills resources into one place
- Look at connecting schools to nature based sectors such as forestry.



1. HM Government (2018). A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

2. HM Government (2021). Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

3. HM Government (2023). Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>

TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

Promote the wide range of forestry careers to a diverse audience, in new and effective ways

Lead: Confor

What we said we would do in 2018

- Produce promotional resources for forestry under the 'forestry careers' banner
- Coordination of careers event activity
- Improve appeal and reach to a more diverse audience

Highlights from previous years

The [Forestry Careers](#) website hosted by the RFS was updated, including case studies, videos and mobile compatibility

Lantra successfully advocated for a forestry category within the STEM ambassadors programme, enabling

- Teachers and community groups to request Stem ambassadors from forestry
- Communication with and therefore provision of support to STEM ambassadors from forestry

Revised plan priorities

The priorities of the group are now:

- Production of promotional resources for forestry
- Coordination of promotional activity
- Improve appeal and reach to a more diverse audience
- Understand staff retention in forestry



Report on actions

Action: 1.3 Update careers information on Lantra website

Owner: Lantra Status: complete

Lantra careers information updated and new [careers website](#) launched.

Action: 1.4a Create support materials for forestry STEM ambassadors

Owner: Lantra Status: complete



Stem support materials created and available on the STEM website.

Action 1.4b Create induction pack for new entrants

Owner: Lantra Status: complete



[Forestry Induction Pack](#) for new entrants published, over 2000 copies now distributed and third revision / print run planned with new chapter on wood. Reception very positive.



Action: 1.5 promote STEM ambassadors to foresters.

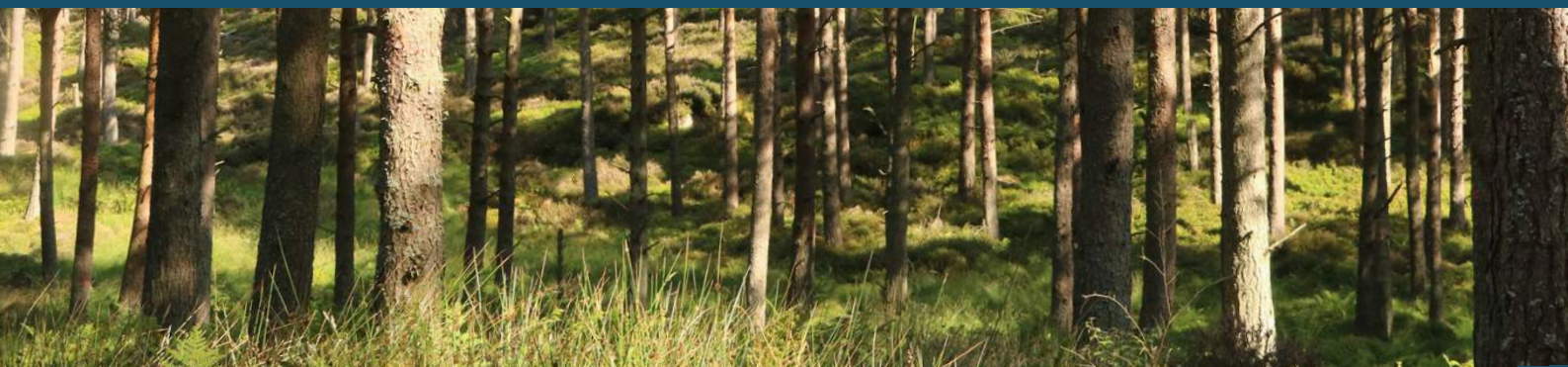
Owner: Lantra Status: ongoing

Various promotional activities have occurred including an ICF breakfast and a members hour. Bangor University in collaboration with Confor are expanding the role of staff and students in the STEM Ambassadors' scheme.














Action: 1.6 Deliver two careers roadshows

Owner: RFS Action: complete

Careers roadshows run at Holme Lacy and Coleg Glynllifon. Around 75 school children attended each event which showcased the breadth of forestry including college and university courses, employers, machinery manufacturers, forest science and plant health.



FUTURE ACTIONS

Action	Output	Date	Owner	Notes	
1.1 Forestry skills information available online	Online forestry skills info integrated and comprehensive	Mar 2024	FC		 
1.2 Campaign to promote Forestry Careers	Advertising campaign designed and delivered	Mar 2023	Lantra	Campaign designed. Awaiting decision on scheduling.	 
1.5 Promote STEM ambassadors to foresters	Increase the number of STEM ambassadors and promote their use by schools	Annual	Lantra	See main report	 
REPLACE 1.6: Deliver RFS Career Roadshows	Run two roadshows and identify funds for 2 additional events	Jun 2024 & Aug 2023	RFS	Two roadshows by 06/24. Funding proposal 08/24	 
NEW Deliver talks to military leavers	Promote forestry as a career through talks	Annual	Confor		 
NEW Research staff retention in forestry including scale and causes	Proposal developed for funding to do semi structured interviews with 30 employers	Sep 2023	Confor		
NEW Support and promote forestry boot camps	Boot camp started in Northumberland	Aug 23	Confor	First cohort run with 7, several planned in 2024	
NEW Research perceptions of new entrants to the sector	Proposal for funding developed to engage with 5 secondary schools	Oct 2023	Confor		

SKILLS AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Support the development of technical skills in new entrants & mid career managers, as well as those in other sectors (for example agriculture) that need forestry skills

Lead: Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF)

What we said we would do in 2018

- Find a way forward for machinery operator training
- Improve technical skills of new entrants and mid-career operatives / managers
- More skilled planting contractors
- Promote forestry in other sectors (eg agriculture)

Highlights from previous years

- Partners designed and delivered continuing professional development (CPD) provision to address gaps identified in the original skills report
- Training, CPD, internships and placements offered by partners

Revised plan priorities

The current priorities for the group are:

- Improve technical forestry skills
- Increase skills and update existing workforce
- Promote work experience and job placement opportunities
- Increase skills of forest owners and managers who are not foresters
- Support early careers in forestry



Report on Actions

Action: 2.3 Support a diverse range of CPD opportunities for foresters, especially mid career including online and in person

Owner: ICF Status: ongoing

ICF, Confor and RFS all offer a range of CPD opportunities both face to face and online. The Woodland Trust are now making limited places on courses available to partner organisations . Examples include lowland habitat ID, tree grafting.

Action: 2.4 Develop and deliver training on the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS)

Owner: ICF Status: complete

Content was developed in 2021 for this online programme and delivered to over 1,000 participants by the end of 2022.

Action: 2.5 Develop accredited online training on the UKFS

Owner: ICF Status: delayed

Initial targets to source funding for this programme have been achieved from the Trees Call for Action Fund. Planning is underway for course structure, however revisions to the UKFS are due to be published and work cannot be completed until the new version is available.

Action: 2.6 Develop forestry leadership and management training

Owner: ICF Status: complete

ICF have developed two leadership and management training programmes for foresters. The Discover Programme saw 50 learners complete the four-week introduction to leadership online course. The more in depth six-month Emerging Leader Programme finished in July 2023, with 15 Emerging Leaders from England, ten from Wales and ten from Scotland.”



Action: 2.7a Develop a webpage to promote work placements

Owner: ICF Status: complete

A dedicated webpage has been developed for forestry work placements.

**Action: 2.7b Produce an employer toolkit to support work placements**

Owner: ICF Status: complete

Toolkit published to support employers take on work placements, apprentices or interns.

**Action: 2.7c Provide work placement and experience opportunities**

Owner: ICF Status: ongoing

RFS Forestry Roots has 7 trainees in the 2022/23 cohort and 10 in 2023/24. The Woodland Trust is engaging with Derby College and Nottingham Trent University to investigate student involvement. They have 11 Youth Forum members who provided 605 hours work at Mead. They also offer a placement to a young person as part of the UK Year of Service scheme.

Action: 2.9 Provide training in forestry skills for non-foresters











Owner: ICF Status: ongoing









Royal Forestry Society (RFS) forestry for non-foresters training has seven training courses delivered or planned for 103 learners.

ICF Conference 2023 'Connecting Trees Farmers and Foresters' targeted foresters and farmers. Attendance around 300 people and further engagement activities proposed.



FUTURE ACTIONS

Action	Output	Date	Owner	Notes	
2.1 Establish a way forward for Forest Machine Operator Training	Evaluate success of a Scottish pilot and find funding to deliver something similar in England and Wales	Mar 23	Confor	Scottish pilot complete with 77 applications, 18 with training on a machine	 
2.2 Professional recognition for mid-career foresters	Establish an ICF Technical Membership with first accreditations achieved	Dec 23	ICF	Development now complete with pilot planned	 
2.3 Support a diverse range of CPD opportunities for foresters	Range of CPD opportunities offered and undertaken	Annual	ICF	See main report	 
2.5 Develop accredited online training on UKFS	Training developed	Dec 2023	ICF	See main report	 
REPLACE 2.7 Promote work placement web pages and tool kit to employers	Drive more placement opportunities to the page by promoting the page and toolkit	Mar 24	ICF		 

Action	Output	Date	Owner	Notes	
2.8 Offer supported internships, work placements and site visits	A range of placements for different ages. Forestry Roots increased to 12 paid internships	Annual	ICF		 
2.9 Provide training in forestry for non-foresters	RFS forestry for non-foresters training continues to be delivered	Annual	RFS	See main report	 
NEW Support farmers with forestry and foresters with farming	Scope and source funding to develop training for farmers in forestry and foresters in farming	Dec 2023	ICF		 
NEW Support early careers in forestry	Run a study tour and conference for those in their first 10 years of their career	Nov 23	ICF	Study tour June 2023, Conference November 2023	 



FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Improve further and higher education provision by engaging with Government reforms, liaising with providers, and supporting the delivery of apprenticeships and T Levels

Lead: Forestry Commission (FC)

What we said we would do in 2018

- Improve further education provision
- Engage with Government reforms (for example, T Levels)
- Improve liaison with higher education provision
- Support the delivery of existing apprenticeships
- Develop new higher / degree apprenticeship(s)
- Support PhD provision

Highlights from previous years

- Engaged with national consultations including T Level outline content development, flexi apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships.
- First achievements on Forest Operative apprenticeship
- Development of Professional Forester apprenticeship
- Forestry Workforce research

Revised plan priorities

Current priorities for this theme are:

- Engage with Government skills reforms
- Increase forestry apprentices
- Explore the role of higher technical qualifications in forestry
- Identify barriers to recruitment and progression through forestry education



Report on actions

Action: 3.1 Understand the funding environment and communicate opportunities and options

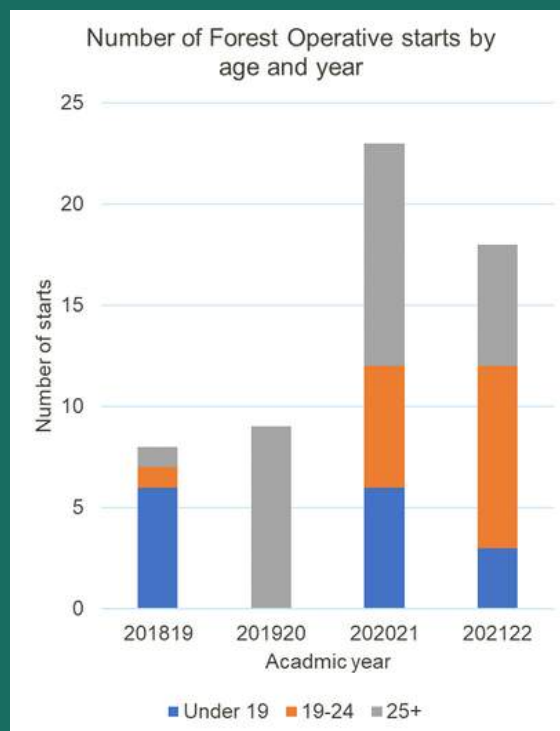
Owner: Defra Status: complete

E-alerts circulated, web pages and news items published with funding information.

Action: 3.4 Monitor apprenticeship delivery and implementation

Owner: Trailblazer Status: ongoing

Forest Operative grew steadily in numbers, with a slight reduction in 2021/22, but this is due to the absence of a Forestry Commission intake, the number of apprentices with other employers grew.



Action: 3.5a Revise Forest Operative apprenticeship

Owner: Trailblazer

Status: complete

Forest Operative revisions completed with name changed to Forest Craftsperson. Approved for delivery September 2022 with first starts in official data now at 13.

3.5b Development of End Point Assessment (EPA)

Owner: Lantra

Status: ongoing

Funded and development started by Lantra.



Action: 3.6 Revise Professional Forester apprenticeship

Owner: Trailblazer Status: complete

Revisions to this apprenticeship were submitted for approval in January 2022 to bring it in line with changing Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) policy. The revised apprenticeship was approved in August 2022 and the funding band increased from £18,000 to £22,000.

Action: 3.7 Prepare for the first cohort of Professional Forester apprentices

Owner: Forestry Commission

Status: complete

University of Cumbria developed the programme and degree. Forestry Commission commenced promotion from beginning 2022 followed by a two-week long recruitment centre. Twenty-five learners started in September 2022 from four employers. All still on programme. 2023 intake promoted and recruited with more learners from additional employers anticipated.

**Action: 3.8 Establish demand for intermediate apprenticeship in Forestry**

Owner: Forestry Commission

Status: complete

Demand established for Forest Works Supervisor / Manager training and assessment, but higher technical qualification with modular delivery preferred to apprenticeship.






Action: 3.10 Work with awarding organisation on detailed T Level delivery









Owner: Forestry Commission

Status: complete

Forestry professionals engaged with IFATE and City & Guilds during detailed content development. T Level due to be launched in September 2023.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Action	Output	Date	Owner	Notes	
3.2 Respond to Government consultations and engage with reform programmes	Consultations responded to and or promoted; engagement with workshops and Committees	Annual	Tblazer	Engaged with post 16 level 2 qualifications, T Level Transition Programme and Mandatory Qualifications	
3.4 Monitor apprenticeship delivery	Track public apprenticeship data	Annual	Tblazer	See main report	
REPLACE 3.5a Expand delivery of Forest Craftsperson	Develop a plan to increase provision, employer engagement and numbers of students	March 23	FC	Outreach team being set up and provider event run	
3.5b Forest Craftsperson end point assessment revised	Fund and support Lantra to revise EPA	June 24	Lantra		
NEW Increase trainers and assessors for Forest Craftsperson	Support recruitment of trainers and assessors	Mar 24	Tblazer		

Action	Output	Date	Owner	Notes	
REVISED 3.7 Expand delivery of Professional Forester apprenticeship	Recruit 15 FE apprentices and increase private sector employers for 2024 intake	Annual	FC		
NEW Advocate for higher / degree apprenticeship in Wales	Collaboration with Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government and ICF	Ongoing	Bangor Univeristy		
REVISED 3.8 Develop Forest Works Supervisor / Manager provision	Develop a Standard and work towards a higher technical qualification	Jun 24	FC	Activity to start in September 23	 
3.11 Increase work placement opportunities for T Level learners	Work with Forestry England and others to identify opportunities to engage with T Level delivery	Dec 23	FC		
NEW Understand routes into the industry and early progression	Work with training providers to understand learner journey in early careers	Aug 23	FC	Event run in July 2023	 
NEW Understand barriers to progression such as recognition of forestry apprenticeships by UCAS	Work with partners to understand progression to academic qualifications from technical and work based programmes	Dec 23	FC		

SCHOOLS ENGAGEMENT

Increase understanding and appreciation of forestry in primary and secondary schools, by increasing opportunities to take the curriculum outdoors

Lead: RFS

What we said we would do in 2018

- Support, sustain and promote existing school based programmes on forestry
- Increase the use and understanding of British forestry topics in primary and secondary school national curricula

Highlights from previous years

- Forest Schools Association conference reaches approximately 200 practitioners each year
- Resources produced for schools by partners including Forestry England, Woodland Trust, BiFor and Sylva. This includes primary, secondary, GCSE and A Level audiences.
- Royal Forestry Society Teaching Trees programme trialled the addition of training for teachers

Revised plan priorities

The current priorities for the group are:

- Engage children in learning in and learning about trees woodlands and forests
- Equip educational professionals to increase use of forestry, trees, woodlands and forests in teaching.
- Increase political recognition and funding of outdoor learning



Report on Actions

Action: 4.1 Engage children in practical forest education activities in person and through promotion

Owner: RFS Status: ongoing

FENE partners engaged with approximately 75,500 children in the 2023 calendar year. For example, RFS project that 8,000 children will have completed practical courses in that period, bringing them close to pre pandemic numbers. The Woodland Trust have over 14,000 schools signed up to their Green Tree Schools Awards.

Action: 4.2 Promote outdoor education through Junior Forester Awards and other national campaigns

Owner: RFS Status: ongoing

Junior Forester Awards engaged over 100,000 children since 2018. Young People in European Forests (YPEF) competition had winners in Scotland and England in 2022, but has been less successful in 2023. Consideration like timing and lack of marketing are being evaluated for lessons learnt, as this is a key age group to engage.

Action: 4.3 Develop Ofqual regulated Level 1 Award in Forestry in the Community

Owner: RFS Status: closed

This qualification is suitable for delivery in mainstream secondary schools without specialist staff or equipment and takes 40 hours of learning. Award developed in 2022, pilot initiated September 2022. Forty-one registrations across two providers with first achievements now happening.



Action 4.4: FENE Tree Generation Conference on practical ways to engage young people in woodland management

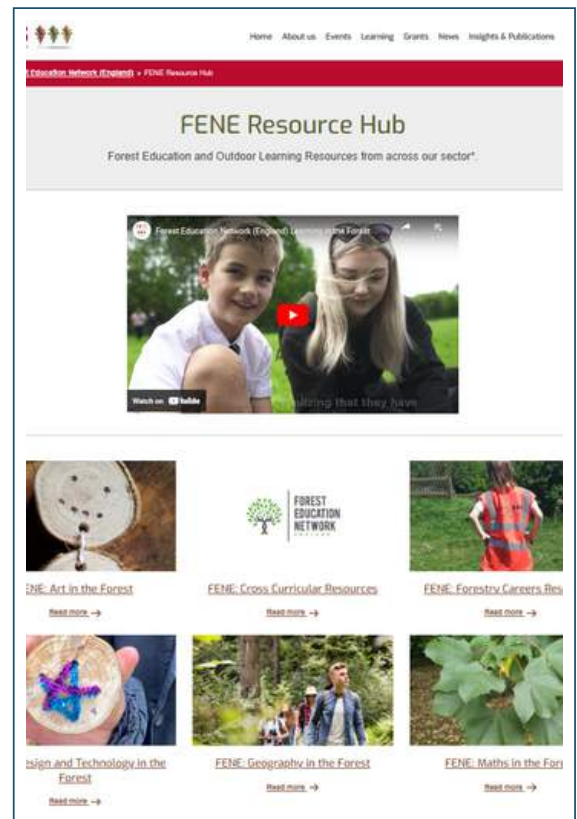


Owner: RFS

Status: complete

Conference held with 39 attendees - a rail strike and wave of COVID-19 caused late cancellations.

Resources from the conference developed and now available online.



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Action: 4.7: Run subsidised courses for outdoor educators or aspiring outdoor educators to gain a Level 2 Award in Curriculum Based Learning Outdoors (forest context)



Owner: RFS











Status: complete

Programme developed and promoted. All 90 places booked with 85 attending.






A series of training videos have been developed and published on the FENE resource hub aimed at schools to help them use forests for teaching.

External evaluation commissioned.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Action	Output	Date	Who	Notes	
4.1 Engage children in practical forest education activities in person and through promotion	Partners deliver varied forest education offer in both primary and secondary schools	Annual	RFS	See main report	 
4.2 Promote outdoor education through Junior Forester Awards and other national campaigns	Research on how to increase engagement and proposals for additional marketing for YPEF Competition	Annual	RFS		 
REVISED 4.3a Evaluate and promote Level 1 Award in Forestry in the Community	Evaluate the pilot and use findings to expand for example by offering training sessions for tutors or grants for equipment	Jan 2024	RFS	Target three new centres in 2024	 
REVISED 4.3b Gain Welsh recognition and funding for level 1 award in Forestry in the Community	Award recognised and funded in Wales	Jan 2024	RFS		
REVISED 4.4 Develop FENE resource hub	Promote resource hub and develop further content	Annual	FENE		 
4.5 Develop a curriculum for children and young people's forest experiences	Framework for children and young people's educational forest experiences with knowledge, skills and experiences required	Dec 2023	FE	Work is underway	

FUTURE ACTIONS

Action	Output	Date	Who	Notes	
4.6 Support the campaign to embed Nature Premium into school funding	The campaign advocates for funding for regular access to nature-based learning for young people 3 - 18 years throughout their education	Annual	Steering group including FSA, Woodland Trust, RFS and others		
REPLACE 4.7 Evaluate impact of courses for outdoor educators to gain a Level 2 Award in Curriculum Based Outdoor Learning (forest ecosystem)	External evaluation of the project with recommendations to inform future investment	Oct 2023	FENE		 
NEW Campaign to make outdoor learning standard part of the Post Graduate Certificate in Education	Support moves to embed the Level 2 Award in Curriculum Based Outdoor Learning in the PGCE	Annual	RFS		 



NATURE FOR CLIMATE FUND

1.4a Create support materials for forestry STEM ambassadors

Owner: Lantra Status: complete

Stem support materials created and available on the STEM website.

1.4b Create induction pack for new entrants

Owner: Lantra Status: complete

New entrant Forestry Induction Pack published, over 2000 copies now distributed and third revision / print run planned with new chapter on wood. Reception very positive.

2.7a Develop a webpage to promote work placements

Owner: ICF Status: complete

A dedicated webpage has been developed for forestry work placements.

2.7b Produce an employer toolkit to support work placements

Owner: ICF Status: complete

Toolkit published to support employers take on work placements, apprentices or interns.

REVISED 3.5a Expand delivery of Forest Craftsperson

Owner: Trailblazer Status ongoing

Future of Forestry FE Provider event run to identify opportunities to expand delivery. Training Specification now underway and other suggestions being reviewed.

3.5b Forest Craftsperson end point assessment revised

Owner: Lantra Status: ongoing

Funded and development started by Lantra.

4.4: FENE Tree Generation Conference on practical ways to engage young people in woodland management

Owner: RFS Status: complete

Conference held with 39 attendees. Resources from the conference developed.

4.7: Run subsidised courses for outdoor educators or aspiring outdoor educators to gain a Level 2 Award in Curriculum Based Learning Outdoors (forest context)

Owner: RFS Status: complete

Programme developed, 90 places booked with 85 attending. Training videos have been developed and published on the FENE resource hub. External evaluation commissioned.