

The National Forest Company

Community Perceptions of The National Forest



**Final Report
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1 Executive Summary

Purpose of the Research

Alison Millward Associates were appointed by The National Forest Company (NFC) in July 2008 to carry out research to:

- Generate a snapshot of community views on how the creation of The National Forest was progressing
- Elicit the community's perceptions about how the area was changing
- Explore the potential for the NFC to adopt new approaches to working with local communities
- Enable the NFC to confirm its approach to implementation through to 2014.

During September and October 2008, views were collected from 202 people. Some 101 people responded to the questionnaire survey and another 101 people participated in 11 focus groups plus two substitute questionnaire samples*. A wide range of people participated in the research: 10 year olds, teenagers, disabled youngsters and their carers, young parents, 50+ groups, local action groups, a parish council, a church group and retired miners.

Data collection was focussed on three communities around Moira/Donisthorpe, Swadlincote/Woodville and Walton on Trent: areas which had received a high, medium and low level of tree planting respectively and reflected the different types of settlements and local economies present throughout The National Forest area.

It's Good News

The people of The National Forest have been delighted with the creation of the National Forest. They, their families and visitors greatly appreciate the environmental transformation of the area that has taken place, that has wiped away the pollution and dereliction of the past. For many it is the ease by which they can now get onto the footpath system and into the woodlands (new and old) within easy walking distance of their homes that is particularly valued and so much so that it has been the main reason why many have moved into or back into the area.

A deep sense of pride in the area is felt, as people can see it continuing to improve, and pride in themselves for having helped to plant the trees that are very much a part of those improvements. The vast majority of people, young and old, feel totally safe using the woodlands and commented on how friendly the people were they met on the footpaths.

"When I came to live here... I thought oh dear have I done the right thing ... now since they took the wheel down and levelled out the parks ... it's a lovely place to live ... I couldn't wish for anything better than the park.... all those trees right at the back of my house, the wildlife that comes into my garden ... the woodpeckers ... I mean the pride is there."

Ashby Woulds Parish Plan Group

* The focus groups for Walton Parish Council and Gresley Old Hall Miners were substituted with questionnaire responses as focus groups proved difficult to organise in the time available.

There was widespread support for what The National Forest Company had been doing and how. The community want to know more about the long term strategy, how new generations will be encouraged to get involved in the creation and care of the Forest in the future, and the designations that may be sought to help protect the new landscape.

Community views on the creation of The National Forest

People from the three research communities had seen signs and evidence of the National Forest's creation in the form of the tree plantings and new woodlands springing up all around them but also on road and village signs throughout the area; from Coalville to Alrewas, from Foremark to Rosliston. However, only a very small minority were able to quote the 200 square mile size of the area and identify its geographical boundaries.

The most frequently visited places were Conkers, Rosliston Forestry Centre, the National Memorial Arboretum and the woodlands around Moira and Donisthorpe, but a further 30 specific and general locations were mentioned. Whilst people from Walton made substantial use of Rosliston Forestry Centre they bemoaned the fact that they could not get easy access on foot into other woodlands as none had so far been planted immediately adjacent to the village. Use of the woodlands was highly localised to those places within easy walking distance of homes and around Moira in particular. Access to woodlands was generally by car for the vast majority of Walton residents. A number of the more elderly people we talked with, and especially those without private transport, had had little if any direct experience of the new woodland plantings and visitor attractions.

The majority of people visited the new woodlands for walking, walking the dog, enjoying the scenery, taking the children out, wildlife watching and cycling. The vast majority of the questionnaire respondents rated the standard of the places they visited for tree care, path maintenance, information boards, car parks and personal safety as good (57%) or very good (27%).

The potholed condition of some car parks received criticism from nine people. Whilst most people said they felt safe enough to use the woodlands on their own, there was some evidence that older women were beginning to avoid areas where the trees had grown to a height and density that now obstructed sightlines.

Over three quarters of the questionnaire respondents rated the new recreation and visitor attractions as very good or excellent. A number of adverse comments were made about Conkers: the high cost of visits for families and unsupervised children, its lack of appeal to older age groups, and the poor condition of the indoor and outdoor interactive displays. People were pleased to see that new events such as concerts and evening performances were being developed at Conkers and Rosliston which, it was felt, would bring communities together.

The vast majority felt that The National Forest had greatly benefitted their communities. It had:

- Made their communities much more attractive places to live
- Created many more places to visit and things to do
- Created better places for walking
- Brought more tourists into the area
- Improved the facilities for children
- Increased the wildlife.

A number from Moira also mentioned how they had been persuaded to move back into the area after a period out in the 'wildernesses' of Ashby and Blackfordby, despite the scepticism of their friends and relatives. Others we met in the course of the research had moved into The National Forest from Sutton Coldfield, West Wales and South Africa. All had been delighted with their decision: they valued the cleanliness, peace and tranquillity of the environment, the improved view from the houses, having more places right on their doorsteps to go to in their leisure time, greater freedom for their children to play outside, more wildlife in their gardens and rising house prices.

People described their growing sense of pride in the area as it continued to improve and, in having helped to create the new landscape by planting trees themselves. The emotional attachment felt by those who had watched the trees they had personally planted grow over the last 5-10 years was commented on by several. A number of parents spoke with delight of their children's interest in making repeat visits to the trees they had planted to see how they were getting on. All were surprised at how fast the trees had grown up.

The vast majority of people and of all ages felt totally safe using the woodlands during the day time. Some were beginning to avoid areas where the plantings had become dense and dark. Most would not use the urban woodlands at night. Whilst the majority commented on how friendly the people they met were when out and about in the woodlands, including young people, some also commented on their fear of encountering groups of teenagers and drug users in the evenings.

Perceptions of change

There was universal agreement that the new woodland plantings had improved the landscape for the better and even so from those who had lived in the area all their lives and known the derelict sites before they had been mined or quarried, when they had been open farmland.

People thought that The National Forest had improved the local environment because:

- There were new places (and therefore more encouragement) to go walking
- There were now more trees in the area
- More wildlife in the woodlands and their gardens
- More open spaces
- More leisure and tourism attractions
- The derelict sites had been restored.

The majority were pleased to know that more visitors were being attracted into the area and some commented that they had been acting as ambassadors and impromptu guides, pointing out good places to visit and the like to visitors they happened across on the footpaths. The vast majority of respondents had no experience of any problems being caused by the creation of The National Forest and only a handful mentioned traffic congestion, more litter and dog fouling. When asked to give their thoughts on the negative effects of more visitors coming to the area, a third mentioned traffic congestion, nine mentioned the need to manage an anticipated rise in the amount of litter, and a few mentioned the need to create new infrastructure of community facilities like doctor's surgeries to keep pace with the growing number of families moving into the new housing.

Working with local communities in the future

NFC was asked to ensure that they:

- Found ways of working with children on a repeat basis throughout their school careers, to reinforce their engagement and understanding of the Forest
- Created a community chest so that villages can get small grants to create woodlands and other Forest related facilities within and immediately adjacent to their houses to create an immediate connection with the Forest
- Distributed free information to every household periodically to update people on NFC's strategy, the new areas being planted, the naming of new plantings and the justification for tree removals and other management practices on specific sites
- Consulted more with local people about site based projects – new and existing
- Arranged gift tree plantings close to where people live
- Designated and promoted woodland burial sites
- Provided guidance for householders on the planning status of trees in their properties
- Improved the information available about accessible paths beyond the main visitors attractions
- Engaged communities in planting spring bulbs and other wildflowers and especially where it is no longer possible to plant trees (eg Rosliston and the National Memorial Arboretum)
- Widened opportunities for participation in practical volunteering, healthy walks, events and festivals.

Amending strategy

Generally speaking most respondents felt NFC had been doing a good job and should carry on in the same fashion.

The majority of people agreed that there should be more tree planting and were reasonably comfortable with NFC's target of achieving 33% cover. Some felt that there were probably now enough trees around Moira, and Willesley in particular. The balance of wooded to open land was felt to be about right at Rosliston, Hicks Lodge and in the Sence Valley. A few were unhappy about some of the open grassland and wetland sites that had been planted with trees and yet had already been rich in wildlife. Some felt strongly that the wrong species had been planted in some places, such as large European cherries close to the edge of paths. NFC's forward strategy needed to promote the use of native British species at appropriate densities, in combination with other habitats to maximise the benefits to wildlife and people. The plantings at Hicks Lodge were felt to meet this aspiration quite well.

NFC were asked to adopt a strategy to plant trees in combination with the protection and enhancement of other habitats, creating woodlands that open out into grasslands and wetlands, and that are of social and environmental benefit to people and wildlife, as well as of some economic value to the land owner. There is a need to clarify the 'game plan' as some respondents put it and to open up a debate about how the new tree plantings are to be protected from development in the future and the planning status that might apply to them and The National Forest area as a whole. What was the aim? To make the area like a National Park, like the New Forest or what? How would landowners be prevented from felling trees in the future that residents had planted in the past? How should land owners and householders manage their own trees?

The locations respondents gave priority to for new tree planting were, in descending order of popularity:

- On derelict sites
- Near areas of new development (houses and factories)
- As links between existing woodlands
- In the towns and along the streets
- On farmland if it was no longer required for food production.

Several who had had to suffer the jokes of visiting relatives (eg 'What trees – what National Forest?'), commented that it would be good to plant more trees on the land around The National Forest road signs.

The vast majority of respondents supported the current emphasis on planting broadleaved species, but wanted to see an amount of conifers retained in the mix and not planted in separate blocks. An interesting request came from several to plant more fruit trees in the mix to benefit wildlife but also people who might then be encouraged to harvest them for free whilst on a walk.

The vast majority felt that it was either important or very important to create major new green spaces in new housing estates. However, there were mixed views on whether to plant new trees only around the outside of new housing areas, in ribbons through the middle or in isolated copses throughout. A few focus group participants felt that trees had been planted too closely and too densely adjacent to new housing in the past causing problems now by shading out gardens and heaving up paths. A number also commented that it was important to keep an amount of open space within and adjacent to new housing areas to allow children to play ball games and run around freely within sight of homes.

More signage (not maps) was required in and around the plantings to help people find their way. As the trees grow up people lose sight of the surrounding built landmarks and several reported having found themselves lost and some distance away from where they had left their car. This need is perhaps particularly relevant given the estimated flow of many more new residents and tourists likely to come into the area in future years.

Young people and adults of all ages referenced to the Forest's contribution to the creation of more sustainable settlements within the Forest area, and its contribution to reducing carbon footprints and global warming.

Many questions were asked about NFC's role in promoting the need for regular inspection and appropriate management of the new plantings.

2 Acknowledgements

Alison Millward and Sarah Royal would like to thank all the people of The National Forest who took part in the research, encouraged others to do so and helped us to arrange venues and refreshments. We were made to feel very welcome and it was our privilege to learn so much about how the creation of The National Forest was affecting people's lives.

Our sincere thanks also go to Simon Evans, Sophie Churchill and the rest of the team at The National Forest Company, who commissioned this research. Our job was made much easier by being able to mine the team's local knowledge and photographic collection.

3 Purpose of the Research

The Community Perceptions Research was designed to:

- Generate a snapshot of community views on how the creation of The National Forest was progressing
- Elicit the community's perceptions about how the area was changing
- Explore the potential for the NFC to adopt new approaches to working with local communities
- Enable the NFC to confirm its approach to implementation through to 2014.

It aimed to build on the findings of the 2006 study of social change in The National Forest conducted by Lancaster University and the Forestry Commission. This study - published as "Growing Places" – found that:

- The National Forest was becoming perceived as a place where environmental and economic conditions were improving
- People were using the Forest to enjoy time and activities with their families and to develop their social networks with others
- Relationships between farmers and the public were changing as a result of increased access and expectations about responsibilities by each of the other
- New networks of cooperation were being forged between business and political interests.

The Growing Places study pointed to the need for a greater examination of the social and access impacts of the new Forest's creation.

The Community Perceptions Research aimed to address these two issues and help NFC take stock of where it had got to in transforming the Forest area in the eyes and minds of its inhabitants, and tease out how the latter felt NFC and the communities themselves should pursue the implementation of the strategy through to 2014.

To this end during September and October 2008, views were collected from 202 people. Some 101 people responded to the questionnaire survey and another 101 people participated in 11 focus groups plus two substitute questionnaire samples. A wide range of people participated in the research: 10 year olds, teenagers, disabled youngsters and their carers, young parents, 50+ groups, local action groups, a parish council, a church group and retired miners.

Data collection was focussed on three communities around Moira/Donisthorpe, Swadlincote/Woodville and Walton on Trent: areas which had received a high, medium and low level of tree planting respectively and reflected the different types of settlements and local economies present throughout The National Forest area.

The original aim had been to collect the views of 300 people, but this proved difficult to achieve on the ground. Walton is a relatively small village of only a few hundred inhabitants and we found it difficult to engage 100 different people in the research within the four week data collection period. Many of the people we happened across in Walton belonged to more than one of the small number of local groups we had to work with in our focus groups and several potential focus group members had already been captured through the questionnaire survey prior to the holding of their focus group sessions. This inevitably reduced the numbers of focus groups we could run and the numbers of individuals we were able to attract to those focus group sessions.

Although the same factors affected the level of participation in Moira and Donisthorpe too, the lengthy nature of the questionnaire (29 questions) and the in-depth nature of the information generated by the focus groups still provided a substantive and richly detailed body of evidence.

Details of the focus group topic schedule and matrix are provided in Appendices A and B. The questionnaire and summary results are provided in Appendices C and D. Quotes from the focus groups are interspersed throughout the text.

4 Community views on the creation of The National Forest

Signs and evidence of the Forest's creation

People from the three research communities had seen signs and evidence of The National Forest's creation in the form of the tree plantings and new woodlands springing up all around them but also on road and village signs throughout the area. Comments such as *"We live in it"* and *"It's everywhere"* were frequently made.

People from Walton, Blackfordby and Oakthorpe felt that the Forest was being created at some distance from their settlements. For those living in Moira and Donisthorpe the signs were much more obvious.

"Well we are in The National Forest... Let me draw the curtains and we can see the Forest, where it's been set, and that's just down the fields from us."

St John the Evangelist Group, Donisthorpe

"Well I'm a dog walker and I walk towards the Furnace, on that trail. It's the quietest ... and if you do it day in day out you do notice the trees changing... from spring, the summer, and the autumn. Me and the dog love it."

St John the Evangelist Group, Donisthorpe

"I like trees. They're everywhere. A sort of welcome to the environment."

Oakthorpe Primary School Child

Plantings from Coalville to Alrewas, and from Foremark to Rosliston were mentioned. However, only a very small minority were able to quote the 200 square mile size of the area and identify its geographical boundaries.

Some people had clearly noticed variations in the growth rates of plantings (where ground conditions had been particularly poor or even toxic), evidence of first thinnings and the need for thinning in several other places.

There was some debate about where precisely the 'Heart of the Forest' was – at Conkers, Bath Yard or Willesley crossroads.

Most frequently visited places

The most frequently visited places by people from the three research communities were Conkers, Rosliston Forestry Centre, the National Memorial Arboretum and the woodlands around Moira and Donisthorpe including Sarah's Wood and Moira Furnace. A further 30 other specific and general locations were mentioned including: Staunton Harold, Foremark Reservoir, Overseal, Calke Abbey and Willesley; the canal, reservoir, pits, lakes and floods.

Whilst people from Walton made substantial use of Rosliston they bemoaned the fact that they could not get easy access on foot into other woodlands as none had so far been planted immediately adjacent to their village. Use of the woodlands was highly localised to those places within easy walking distance of homes and around Moira and Donisthorpe in particular.

Access was generally by car for the vast majority of Walton residents and to places on the western side of the Forest namely Rosliston Forestry Centre, the National Memorial Arboretum and Barton Water Park.

A number of the more elderly people we talked with, and especially those without private transport, had had little if any direct experience of the Forest.

The majority of people visited the new woodlands for walking, walking the dog, enjoying the scenery and the peace and quiet, taking the children out, wildlife watching and cycling. Taking exercise and tree planting were mentioned by several. Some of the older people mentioned places to eat and some of the young parents talked about the importance of having free places to go that had lots of different things to do to take the children for cheap days out in the summer holidays.

"I feel most relaxed when I am out walking in the countryside. It lifts your heart ... even if you're feeling really depressed ... you've had a rubbish day at work... you can go out for a walk with the dog or with your family and just be out in the outdoors."
Walton Footpath Group

"I feel all relaxed when I go into the forest near me, like I am going to sleep."
Oakthorpe Primary Children's Group

Some people reported using certain places like the visitor attractions less as their children had grown older, and some adults reported reduced usage as a result of feeling less safe as the trees had grown so much as to obscure sight lines.

Perceptions of quality

All the respondents who were able to, enjoyed using the woodlands.

"You now feel like you are enveloped in the woodlands [at Rosliston Forestry Centre], which is nice I think – it's an experience for people...we never used to go out and walk in woodlands in Nottinghamshire ...I think it must be fascinating for young children to go out and come across creatures they haven't seen before... I'd never seen a grass snake in my life before, until I went to Rosliston."
Walton Footpath Group

The vast majority of the questionnaire respondents rated the standard of the places they visited for tree care, path maintenance, information boards, car parks and personal safety as good (57%) or very good (27%). However, a number could also identify particular places where one or more of these features could be improved. Problems relating to uncollected dog mess, trial bikers on the towpath, flashers, vandalism in some urban woodland parks and uncut grassy paths were all mentioned.

Other problems preventing people accessing the visitor attractions included lack of personal transport (for older people in particular) and the cost of entry and car parking. The presence of stiles, the lack of signage and seating, and poor standards of path maintenance were also identified as barriers.

The potholed condition of some car parks received criticism from nine people. Whilst most people said they felt safe enough to use the woodlands on their own, there was some evidence that older women were beginning to avoid areas where the trees had grown to a height and density that now obstructed sightlines.

A number of adverse comments were made about Conkers: the high cost of visits for families and unsupervised children, its lack of appeal to older age groups, and the poor condition of the indoor and outdoor interactive displays. People were pleased to see that new events such as concerts and evening performances were being

developed at Conkers and Rosliston which, it was felt, would bring communities together.

Perceptions of benefits

The vast majority felt that The National Forest had greatly benefitted their communities. It had:

- Made their communities much more attractive places to live
- Created many more places to visit and things to do
- Created better places for walking
- Brought more tourists into the area
- Improved the facilities for children
- Increased the wildlife.

Those who had been involved in the tree planting had enjoyed the experience and several people had made it their business to visit and re-visit each new planting as they had heard about them in local newsletters.

A sociable place

The evidence suggests that the creation of the Forest is generating more and more social connectedness: not just re-connecting people to places within it but also people to people.

A number from the Moira and Donisthorpe groups mentioned how they had been persuaded to move back into the area after a period out in the 'wildernesses' of Ashby and Blackfordby, despite the scepticism of their friends and relatives.

"We lived in Ashby for 12 years and moved out here [to Moira] 7 or 8 years ago and everybody said you must be barking because of course Moira had this reputation for being hell on earth. It's not just the planting that is impressive it's the fact that it is open access, so that my children will be able to get into hundreds of acres ... to just go off on their bikes and disappear."

Ashby Woulds Parish Plan Group

"When I came to live here... I thought oh dear have I done the right thing ... now since they took the wheel down and levelled out the parks ... it's a lovely place to live ... I couldn't wish for anything better than the park.... all those trees right at the back of my house, the wildlife that comes into my garden ... the woodpeckers ... I mean the pride is there."

Ashby Woulds Parish Plan Group

Others we met in the course of the research had moved into The National Forest from Sutton Coldfield, West Wales and South Africa. All had been delighted with their decision: they valued the cleanliness, peace and tranquillity of the environment, the improved view from the houses, having more places to go in their leisure time right on their doorsteps, greater freedom for their children to play outside, more wildlife in their gardens and rising house prices.

"We actually moved from an ideal situation in West Wales – beautiful walks, mountains, fields, everything you could actually imagine but we were too far away from our family. We never saw anyone. So we literally stuck a pin in a map and moved as near to the middle of the country as we could, but part of our reason was we did see the number of footpaths and plantings of trees around here."

St John the Evangelist Group

Other aspects of the perception that the Forest was good for families were expressed as:

- Providing places for families to do things together such as tree plantings, walks and cycle rides
- Venues for families to enjoy events and festivals
- Offering a wide range of things for all age groups to do together and independently of each other.

“My in-laws love it all. They come down from Southport and there is always a new place for them to discover.”

Woodville Sure Start Group

In more general terms, the Forest was felt to be a friendly place where people of all ages said hello to you, even the young people.

“The mining community was a close knit community and people naturally said hello....When I first came down here I would see teenagers walking the dog and expect them to shuffle past looking at the ground, but they smile and say hello and I just wasn't used to that and I am used to working with teenagers.”

Ashby Woulds Parish Plan Group

A growing sense of pride and privilege

A number of people described their growing sense of pride in the area as it continued to improve and, in having helped to create the new landscape by planting trees. The emotional attachment felt by many who had watched the trees they had personally planted grow up over the last 5-10 years was commented on by several. A number of parents spoke with delight of their children's interest in making repeat visits to the trees they had planted to see how they were getting on. All were surprised at how fast the trees had grown up.

The increasing number of places to visit has also nurtured a sense of privilege.

“I feel quite privileged to have so many places near really. I go out a lot on my own and there's no one else about and it feels like it's mine.”

Woodville Sure Start Group

Perceptions of personal safety

The vast majority of people and of all ages felt totally safe using the woodlands during the day time. Some of the children were able to use the woodlands without adults as long as they were accompanied by older siblings, older children visited alone, and parents occasionally dropped children off at a wood and collected them later. The ubiquitous ownership of mobile phones seems to have facilitated this degree of freedom and confidence.

Some women said that they were beginning to avoid areas where the plantings had become dense and dark. Some said they would not use the urban woodlands at night. Whilst the majority commented on how friendly the people they met were when out and about in the woodlands, including young people, some also commented on their fear of encountering groups of teenagers and drug users in the evenings.

People occasionally reported having got themselves lost. No one had been particularly concerned about this when it had happened. They had latched on to another group and followed them out, asked local householders for directions or would have phoned home for help. People were content to get to know their local

woodlands better to avoid such problems in the future, rather than demand maps; though it seems additional signage would be welcomed.

Problems resulting from the creation of The National Forest

People had experienced very few problems as a result of the creation of The National Forest. Of the few who mentioned anything, traffic congestion, dog fouling, litter, vandalism and trees causing shading of properties and raising driveway surfaces, were the most common problems reported.

A degree of resentment was expressed about the charging policies at Rosliston Forestry Centre and Conkers – the latter in particular. Low cost annual passes for local people were generally considered reasonable, but charging at all excluded some low income families and indeed some children who might otherwise have been allowed to use Conkers as a local park on a regular basis.

5 Perceptions of change

Landscape change for the better

There was universal agreement that the new woodland plantings had improved the landscape for the better and even from those who had lived in the area all their lives and known the derelict sites before they had been mined or quarried, when they had been open farmland.

The majority of people felt that more tree planting could take place anywhere in the area, a third were less sure of the best locations and a few felt that there were probably enough trees in the following locations:

- Beehive
- Donisthorpe
- Moira
- Overseal
- Rosliston
- Short Heath
- Willesley
- Woodville.

The overwhelming majority favoured the existing balance of 87% broad leaves to 13% conifers, a few favoured more of a 50:50 balance and a similarly small number felt unable to express a view.

The broadleaves were valued for their autumn colour, being the natural and traditional flora of Britain, better for wildlife and long lived. Conifers were valued for their shape, all year round green, and fast, and therefore commercial, growth rates.

The vast majority preferred mixed rather than single species blocks within woodland plantings.

The relative proportions of woodland plantings to land given over to other habitats were commented on. The overall landscape effect at Hick's Lodge, Rosliston and the Sence Valley were approved of because the woodland plantings were interspersed with open areas of grassland, wetlands and water bodies. People enjoyed the feeling of periodically being able to emerge from the woodland areas and come out into the sunshine where they could see other types of flowers and wildlife. There was a clear and widespread view that a mixture of habitats was better for biodiversity and better for people.

Amongst the questionnaire respondents and the focus group participants a number complained that trees had been planted in the wrong places:

- on land that was already rich in wildlife such as orchids and ground nesting birds
- too close to the back of houses
- too close to well used paths causing saplings to be inadvertently knocked over
- where it was known that future development would or might take place
- where re-development had taken place.

“At Donisthorpe Pit there was a marvellous opportunity for heathland but they went straight over with trees.”

St John the Evangelist Group

Others complained that non-native and over vigorous species had been planted such as European cherries. Others complained that some of the woodlands appear to be over managed, for example where beautiful old trees appear to have been taken out which might have housed bat roosts.

These experiences combined to make some wonder whether the NFC was taking a sufficiently well informed approach to the negotiation of potential sites, the planting design and its implementation.

“They’ve made a vast improvement between Donisthorpe and Acresford ... but are we going to have the same problems there as at Meashamand the marina at Bath Yard.... Are they going to come and rip it all up later on?”

Donisthorpe Miners Group

An improved environment

People thought that The National Forest had improved the local environment because:

- There were new places (and therefore more encouragement) to go walking
- There were now more trees in the area
- More wildlife in the woodlands and their gardens
- More open spaces
- More leisure and tourism attractions
- The derelict sites had been restored.

“To be quite honest, I am amazed at how well the trees have grown over here [Donisthorpe Woodland Park] because in a way I was responsible for pumping some of the rubbish that went over there and it wasn’t all fool’s gold, fine clay and that sort of stuff... quite toxic...it used to clog the pumps up every other day... and I didn’t think they would grow at all.”

Donisthorpe Miners Group

“We appreciate the changes. The whole area is cleaner, pleasanter... no one has to work underground anymore in the area.”

Donisthorpe Miners Group

“We certainly appreciate all the walks and the pleasant vistas, the return of the wildlife, especially the birds. I haven’t seen a lot of evidence of small mammals but the sky larks are back and there are many more birds in the new woodland than there used to be in the area. Our daughter summed it up. She left to live in New Zealand in 1991 and when she came back last year for a holiday, for the first time

since she went, she said she had left a mining village and come back to a tourist area.”

St John the Evangelist Group

The younger people knew much about how the trees would be helping to reduce air pollution, ameliorate climate change impacts and reduce people's carbon footprints.

A few adults commented that the tree planting had probably helped to protect land from yet more house building and raise the prices of existing housing.

“Horace always said I never thought I'd see a house in Albert Village sell for over a quarter of a million pounds because at one time you couldn't give them away could you... you avoided going there...the roads were covered in this fine slurry that would blast the walls of your house ... what came out of the clay fires through the chimneys, if it was a damp miserable day, just used to roll back down the High Street and you couldn't see.”

Donisthorpe Miners Group

There were mixed views as to whether it had been better to keep and plant new trees within and through the new housing estates or just plant new trees around the edges. It was agreed that having a few trees within the housing area helped to soften their impact in what was after all mainly a rural setting throughout the area. It was also agreed that it was great to have access to woodlands immediately next door to the new estates, so that people did not have to get in their cars to visit open spaces. The majority wanted the planners to make sure that there were adequate open areas within and on the edge of the new housing estates for children to play ball games and let off steam within sight of the houses; that the woodland plantings should not come up too close to people's gardens and should be open rather than too dense in character.

“I think for the environment, the houses should be planned around the trees, not the trees around the houses ... it would certainly be nicer to look at than just blocks of houses going up.”

Granville School Group

“Some people might have concerns about the safety of their children ... and just can't see them when they are playing [in the woodlands]. They can be only 50 or 100 yards away and disappear almost.”

Donisthorpe Miners Group

A number of comments were made as to how further improvements to the environment could be achieved. Villages like Moira wished to become more sustainable and encourage local people and visitors to move about the area on foot and by bicycle. There was therefore a need to develop a fully connected network of cycling and walking routes throughout 200 square mile area to be able to achieve this. The need to promote the use of domestic wood burning stoves and be able to supply them with wood fuel was also raised.

A warm welcome awaits

The majority were pleased to know that more visitors were being attracted into the area and some commented that they had been acting as ambassadors and impromptu guides, pointing out good places to visit and the like to visitors they happened across on the footpaths. There was a sense that people were looking forward to showing off the place that they lived in to visitors, and that they were glad that The National Forest had put their area 'on the map'. One of the primary school

children said that she was looking forward to making friends with the visitors she might meet at Conkers.

Concerns for the future

In terms of the impacts of the Forest on quality of life, a third expressed concerns about a likely increase in traffic congestion and nine mentioned the need to manage an anticipated rise in the amount of litter. A few mentioned the need to create new infrastructure of community facilities like doctor's surgeries to keep pace with the growing number of families moving into the area to enable the communities to become more sustainable.

In relation to concerns about the future of the plantings, a number of issues were raised. People were keen to know more about the planning status of the Forest:

- Will it be designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Will it be like the New Forest in 800 years time
- Will it be a National Park
- Will there be a National Forest style of housing design
- Could the trees be cut down in 20 years
- How will management agreements be enforced
- How should house owners manage their trees
- Why have private and public landowners within The National Forest area been allowed to remove established trees as at Drakelow, and newly planted memorial trees at Cadley and Bath Yard.

6 Working with local communities

Many of the 202 people we talked to had been involved in one or more Forest-related activities (other than general leisure use) including:

- Tree planting
- Guided walks
- Volunteering
- Forest management
- Game keeping
- Tender Scheme
- Educational visits
- Healthy walks
- Training events on forest skills
- Investigating the availability of woodland burial sites
- Attending presentations by the NFC
- Sumo wrestling (held at Rosliston Forestry Centre)
- Toddler Groups
- School tree planting
- Cycle safety training
- Bonfire nights.

"We bought and put up bat boxes and created refuges for the insects and birds and did some fencing ... for a 50th birthday...It gives you a day out. It's great. There were 20 of us and this was a gift to the person as he is quite interested in this sort of thing."

Walton Community Club Group

"My Dad planted 60,000 trees over a year.... Some are bigger than me now, some ain't.... the scenery on the farm has changed for the better... planted them round the fields and all over a field."

Granville School Group

NFC was asked to ensure that they:

- Found ways of working with children and young people on a repeat basis throughout their school careers, to reinforce their engagement and understanding of the Forest
- Created a community chest so that villages can get small grants to create woodlands and other Forest related facilities within and immediately adjacent to their houses so creating a more immediate connection with the Forest
- Distributed free information to every household periodically to update people on NFC's strategy, the new areas being planted, the naming of new plantings and the justification for tree removals and other management practices on specific sites
- Consulted more with local people about site based projects – new and existing
- Arranged gift tree plantings close to where people live
- Designated and promoted woodland burial sites
- Provided guidance for householders on the planning status of trees in their properties
- Improved the information available about accessible paths beyond the main visitors attractions
- Engaged communities in planting spring bulbs and other wildflowers and especially where it is no longer possible to plant trees (eg The National Arboretum)
- Widened opportunities for participation in practical volunteering, healthy walks, events and festivals
- Promoted the creation of more decorative village signs that helped to promote The National Forest brand.

7 Amending strategy

Keep it going and tell us more

Generally speaking most respondents felt NFC had been doing a good job to date and should carry on in the same fashion. They wanted future tree planting that involved local people to be educational, located close to where the planters lived and always be fun. There was concern that some of the sites had already been closed to future tree planting. Some also wondered whether it would be possible to help plant up the undergrowth of such sites with bulbs and spring flowers, to continue their involvement and connection with those special sites.

The NFC Chief Executives were perceived as having been very accessible to local people, competent mediators and genuinely interested in local issues.

Reviewing and communicating the game plan

There was some concern that NFC might be losing some momentum. There did not seem to be as many opportunities for people to get involved in the plantings as there had been in the early years, nor were there as many free newsletter and leaflets put through doors informing people of the latest happenings. Some people had used the web site to find out about local walks, but were not using it to gather news.

People wanted to know more about the NFC's forward strategy, how much money they had left, the type of woodlands they would be seeking to create, where, for how long and with what status. People also wanted to be clearer about what they could expect NFC to be able to influence regarding planning decisions, site disposals and future housing development.

More trees please but in combination with other habitats and open spaces

The majority of people agreed that there should be more tree planting and were reasonably comfortable with NFC's target of achieving 33% cover. Some felt that there were probably now enough trees around Moira, and Willesley in particular. The balance of wooded to open land was felt to be about right at Rosliston, Hicks Lodge and in the Sence Valley. A few were unhappy about some of the open grassland and wetland sites that had been planted with trees and yet had already been rich in wildlife. Some felt strongly that the wrong species had been planted in some places, such as large European cherries close to the edge of paths. NFC's forward strategy needed to promote the use of native British species at appropriate densities, in combination with other habitats to maximise the benefits to wildlife and people. The plantings at Hicks Lodge were felt to meet this aspiration quite well.

A number of people, young and old, emphasised the importance of integrating open areas within the woodland areas where younger children in particular could play ball games, let off steam and yet remain within sight of houses. There were many suggestions as to how to make the woodlands more interesting to people and especially children. Laying trails and incorporating sculptures to be searched for, and installing interpretation boards beside seats to enable parents and grand parents to stop for a while and talk to their children about the Forest, were all suggested.

Persuading land owners to improve general access and for a greater number of abilities was stressed by many. Removing and replacing stiles, installing many more seats along paths and providing better pre-arrival information to help people plan and enjoy visits with older or disabled family members, wheeled vehicle users and the visually impaired, were all requested.

Planning, priorities and protection

People wanted NFC to open up the debate about how the new tree plantings should be protected from development in the future and the planning status that might apply to them and The National Forest area as a whole. What was the aim? To make the area like a National Park, like the New Forest or what? How would landowners be prevented from felling trees in the future that residents had planted in the past? How should land owners and householders manage their own trees?

The locations respondents gave priority to for new tree planting were, in descending order of priority:

- On derelict sites
- Near areas of new development (houses and factories)
- As links between existing woodlands
- In the towns and along the streets
- On farmland if it was no longer required for food production.

Several who had had to suffer the jokes of visiting relatives (eg 'What trees – what National Forest?'), commented that it would be good to plant more trees on the land around The National Forest road signs.

The vast majority of respondents supported the current emphasis on planting broadleaved species, but wanted to see an amount of conifers retained in the mix and not planted in separate single species blocks. An interesting request came from several to plant more fruit trees in the mix to benefit wildlife but also people who might then be encouraged to harvest them for free whilst on a walk.

Maximising benefits

More signage (not maps) was required in and around the plantings to help people find their way. As the trees grow up people lose sight of the surrounding built landmarks and several reported having found themselves lost and some distance away from where they had left their car. This need is perhaps particularly relevant given the estimated flow of many more new residents and tourists likely to come into the area in future years.

Young people and adults of all ages referenced to the Forest's contribution to the creation of more sustainable settlements within the Forest area, and its contribution to reducing carbon footprints and global warming. Many encouraged NFC to continue to promote tourism and new employment opportunities in the area. The new small and medium sized enterprises that had been set up in connection with the Forest were deemed to be rather vulnerable still and in need of marketing and promotion.

Many questions were asked about NFC's role in promoting the need for regular inspection and appropriate management of the new plantings. People were becoming concerned about the lack of thinning, the overgrown nature of some plantings, and the loss of access created by poor maintenance of stiles and paths.

NFC was felt by many to have a leading role in ensuring that the physical landmarks and oral histories of the areas past inhabitants were recorded, collated and protected for future generations.

The promotion and use of the forest as a venue for events and festivals had an important role to play in developing social networks and community spirit between the established communities and the newcomers.

Appendix A

Focus Group Topic Schedule

Introduction

Hello I am ... from Alison Millward Associates and this is We have been commissioned as independent consultants, by The National Forest Company to find out what people think about the **impact the creation of The National Forest is having on this area and the local people.**

We are hoping to interview around 150 people on high streets in the area and to run around 12 focus groups with another 150 people of different ages, backgrounds and interests, across the area. The NFC will be making a small cash donation to your group and will provide trees for you to plant as a thank you for your time today.

After introductions, I would like to discuss a number of issues with you over the next 45 minutes or so. These are: (Just say main question and not the prompts)

1. What you know about the National Forest initiative
 - Signs or evidence of the Forest
2. Which parts of the Forest you visit and why
 - Recreation
 - Visitor attractions
 - Reasons
3. How the Forest's creation has changed the landscape
 - Improvements
 - On balance better or worse
4. The impact the Forest's creation has had on you personally
 - Pride in area
 - Health
 - Social contact
 - Involvement
5. How the Forest's creation has changed your local community
 - Benefits
 - Negative impacts
6. Where and at what pace the NFC should plant more woodland
 - Yes or no to more trees
 - If yes, where – farmland, urban areas, derelict sites, new housing as linkages between existing woods
 - Just broadleaves, a mix or....
7. Other advice you would give to NFC to guide them in their future work
8. How you and your local community might like to be involved in the future development of the Forest.
 - Tree planting, health activities, volunteering, events and festivals ...

The discussion is entirely confidential and no one will be named in the report, so please feel free to speak freely. We are using a tape recorder just so that we can

concentrate on what you are telling us, but please be assured that these tapes will remain in our possession. Are there any questions?

So shall we just go round the table to introduce everyone to each other.....

Appendix B

Focus Group Matrix

Focus Groups	Swadlincote/ Woodville	Moira/Donisthorpe	Walton on Trent
Women's Groups			Walton Community Club
Men's Groups	Gresley Old Hall and S Derbys Miners Welfare Scheme Dance Club – but via questionnaires	Donisthorpe Miners Welfare Access Centre	
Church/Parish Groups		St John the Evangelist	Walton Parish Council – but via questionnaires
School children	Granville Community School (Secondary)	Oakthorpe Primary	
Disabled youth organisation	Woodville In Club		
Parents groups	Woodville Sure Start Children's Centre	Oakthorpe Primary	Walton On Trent Primary
Special interest groups		Ashby Woulds Parish Plan Group	Walton Footpath Group

Appendix C

**The National Forest
Community Perceptions Research Questionnaire**

Hello, we are trying to find out what people think about the impact the creation of The National Forest is having on this area and the local people. Could you please spare us 5 minutes or so to answer a few questions? Thank you.

The first few questions are quite general, so can I ask you:

- 1 Had you heard of The National Forest before today? (Use x in the box that applies)
- yes
 - no [If no, please go to question 16]

- 2 Where have you seen signs or evidence of the creation of The National Forest locally?

- 3 Which parts of the National Forest do you visit?

- 4 What are your main reasons for visiting those parts of The National Forest? [x all that apply]
- walking
 - cycling
 - horse riding
 - wildlife/bird watching
 - peace and quiet
 - picnicking
 - exercise (e.g. jogging)
 - general interest in scenery
 - walking the dog
 - other (please specify)

- 5 How would you rate the following at woodland sites that you visit?

	Poor	Good	Very good	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/> landscape maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> path maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> interpretation boards/signage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> car parking areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> personal safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Note any comments about particular sites mentioned)

- 6 How would you rate the quality of recreation facilities and Forest-related visitor attractions that have been created?
- i) Recreation facilities (including e.g. new woodlands, Forest trails, cycle routes, sports facilities – fishing, orienteering etc)
 - excellent
 - very good
 - average
 - poor
 - don't know

 - ii) Visitor attractions (including places such as e.g. Conkers Discovery Centre, Rosliston Forestry Centre, National Memorial Arboretum)
 - excellent
 - very good
 - average
 - poor
 - don't know

The next questions are about the impact you feel The National Forest might be having.

- 7 Do you think that The National Forest has improved the local environment?
- yes
 - no (If no, please go to question 9)
 - don't know
- 8 In what ways has The National Forest improved the local environment? (Please x all that apply).
- more trees in general
 - masked the dereliction created by industry/restored derelict industrial sites
 - new places for walking
 - new leisure and tourism attractions
 - more wildlife
 - new accessible greenspace/open spaces (e.g. woodlands, parks, trails) near to where people live
 - other (please specify)

- 9 On balance, do you think the Forest's creation has changed the *look of the landscape* for the better or worse?
- better

- worse
- don't know

For what reasons?

Now for some questions about the tree planting that has gone on occurred in The National Forest.

Woodland cover has risen from 6% of the land surface to almost 18% since 1995, with the aim being to reach around 33% eventually.

- 10 Woodland cover has risen from 6% of the land surface to almost 18% since 1995, with the aim being to reach around 33% eventually. Do you think that any parts of the Forest area now have enough trees? Are there any parts of the Forest that don't need any more trees planting?
- yes [If yes, please specify which areas]
 - no
 - don't know

- 11 Where would you prefer to see new trees being planted within the Forest? In what sort of areas should more woodland be planted? (Please x all that apply).
- on farmland and open countryside
 - within urban areas
 - on old mineral, waste disposal and derelict land sites
 - near to areas of new development (e.g. housing estates, industrial areas)
 - to create small-scale connections between woods in well-wooded landscapes
- 12 87% of the trees planted so far are broadleaves such as oak, ash and lime. Should there continue to be:
- a strong emphasis on broadleaves (over 85%)
 - a higher emphasis on conifer planting. If so at what sort of percentage?% If so, at what sort of percentage split?

Broadleaves

Conifers

- don't know

13 In the future do you think that we should be trying just to plant more trees or, to create woodlands which are linked plantings combined with, and connected, to other habitats such as meadows, ponds and heathland?

- just trees, or
- in combination with other habitats
- don't know

(Note any reasons given)

The next questions are about the impact the Forest's creation may be having on your community.

14 In what ways has do you think your local community has benefited from the creation of the The National Forest?

Benefits:

15 What problems hHas your local community experienced any problems as a result of the The National Forest?

Negative impacts:

- Not applicable

16 In the future, the Forest will grow as a visitor destination. What are your thoughts on increasing numbers of visitors coming to the area?

Beneficial effects:

Negative effects:

17 How important do you feel it will be to create major new green spaces (such as woodlands, parks, trails, recreation areas) in the new housing estates to bethat are built in this area?

- very important

- quite important
- not important
- don't know

18 What other advice might you want to give to those aiming to create more woodland in the National Forest area over the next 5 years?

19 The National Forest Company is continually looking at different ways to get local people involved in the Forest. Have you or your community been involved in any Forest-related events or activities? (e.g. tree planting, health walks, conservation volunteering, local events such as the National Forest Wood Fair).

- yes [If yes, what types of activities?]
- no [If no, please go to question 21]
- not sure/don't know

20 Did you find these events enjoyable and informative?

- yes
- no

Note any reasons why/why not.

21 How would you like to get involved in the Forest in the future? (Please x x all that apply).

- tree planting activities
- health walks
- conservation volunteering (e.g. working on nature reserves)
- Forest events and festivals (e.g. National Forest Wood Fair)
- I don't want to be involved
- other (please specify)

- 22 Would you like to receive further information about National Forest activities and events?
 yes
 no (If no, please go to question 24)

- 23 If yes, would you like information on:
 tree planting opportunities
 local walks and woodlands to visit
 recreation and visitor attractions
 Forest events (eg community tree planting days; National Forest Wood Fair)
 places to see wildlife
 how the Forest is progressing (through the twice-yearly newsheet, Forest Scene)

Other:

Almost at the end now and I just need to ask some questions about you (show the list below)

- 24 What age group do you fall under:
 16-24 25-34 35-44 45-54
 55-64 65 and over

- 25 Male Female

- 26 Which one of these groups do you belong to?
 Asian: Asian British or any other Asian background
 Black: Black British or any other Black background
 Chinese, including Chinese British
 Mixed ethnic background
 White: White British/Irish
 Other ethnic group

- 27 Name, address and contact details – optional. (Only needs to be completed if respondent wants more information).

Title Initials Surname

Address

.....

Town

.....

County

Postcode

Telephone Email

28 How long have you lived in this area?

.....yrs

29 And finally, if you were to summarise in just a few words what impact the creation of The National Forest has had on you personally, what would they be?

Thank you so much for your time. Please visit The National Forest web site in a few months time to read about the results. www.nationalforest.org.

Appendix D
The National Forest
Community Perceptions Research Questionnaire Results 2008

Number of Completed Questionnaires: 101

1. Have you heard of the National Forest before today?

Yes	101
No	0

2. Where have you seen signs or evidence of the creation of The National Forest locally?

All over/Around/Everywhere	23
Sign Posts & Road Signs	19
Moira	16
Conkers	13
Rosliston	10
Donisthorpe	7
Swadlincote	5
Moira Furnace	3
Staunton Harold	3
Ski Centre	3
Local Paper	3
Not answered	3
Foremark Reservoir	2
Sarah's Wood	2
Canal	2
Overseal	2
Tree Planting	2
M42	2
Willesley	1
Woodville	1
Ashby	1
Was told about it	1
Walton on Trent	1
Princess Diana Memorial Park	1
Pitt Lane Wood	1
Ibstock	1
Ticknall	1
Woodlands	1
Measham	1
Coalville	1
A444	1

3. Which parts of the National Forest do you visit?

Conkers	29
Rosliston Forestry Centre	14
Moira	14
Donisthorpe	10
Rosliston	9
Sarah's Wood	7
Moira Furnace	7
Staunton Harold	5
Foremark Reservoir	5

Community Perceptions of The National Forest

National Memorial Arboretum	4
All over/Around/Everywhere	4
Woodlands	4
Canal	4
Overseal	3
Don't visit any	3
Calke Abbey	3
Railway Walk	2
Ibstock	2
Albert Village	2
Not answered	2
Linton	1
Ashby	1
Gravel Pits	1
The Park	1
Waterside	1
Talbot Village	1
Ivanhoe Trail	1
Willesley	1
Walton on Trent	1
Pitt Lane Wood	1
Burton Fishing Lakes	1
Local walks	1
Ticknall	1
Woodville	1
Cannot get to anywhere as disabled & no transport	1
Coalville	1

4. What are your main reasons for visiting those parts of The National Forest?

Walking	77	A
Cycling	16	B
Horse riding	3	C
Bird watching/wildlife spotting	20	D
Peace & quiet	40	E
Picnicking	26	F
Exercise	24	G
General interest/scenery	37	H
Walking dog	34	I
Children's play	14	J
Fishing	5	K
Not answered	5	L
Blackberry/fruit picking	1	M
Photography	1	N
Concerts	1	O
Tree planting	1	P
Educational	1	Q
Art	1	R

5. How would you rate the following at woodland sites that you visit?

	Poor	Good	Very Good	DK	NA
Tree Care	1	57	34	5	3
Path Maintenance	6	64	24	2	3
Information Boards	6	60	25	4	5
Car Parks	9	50	22	15	4

Community Perceptions of The National Forest

Personal Safety	8	54	29	5	4
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6 i. How would you rate the quality of recreation facilities that have been created?

Excellent	16
Very Good	57
Average	17
Poor	0
Don't know	7
Not answered	3

6 ii. How would you rate the quality of the Forest-related visitor attractions?

Excellent	22
Very Good	57
Average	8
Poor	0
Don't know	8
Not answered	5

7. Do you think that The National Forest has improved the local environment?

Yes	94
No	2
Don't know	4
Not answered	1

8. In what ways has The National Forest improved the local environment?

More trees in general	69
Restored derelict industrial sites	55
New places for walking	73
New leisure & tourism attractions	62
More wildlife	67
New open spaces	65
Scenery, much more pleasant environment now	5
Raised awareness of the environment	1
Not answered	6

9. On balance, do you think the Forest's creation has changed the look of the landscape for:

Better	97
Worse	0
Don't know	1
Better & worse	1
Not answered	2

10. Are there any parts of the Forest that don't need any more tree planting?

Yes	12
No	51
Don't know	37
Not answered	1

11. Where would you prefer to see new trees being planted within the Forest?

Farmland/open countryside	26
Urban areas	42
Derelict sites	77
Near areas of new development	65

Between existing woods	63
Everywhere	1
Don't know	1
Not answered	4

12. Broadleaves or Conifers?

Strong emphasis on broadleaves	61
More conifers (%)	10
50:50 mix	6
Don't know	20
Not answered	4

13. Just plant trees or create a combination of habitats e.g. meadows, ponds, heathlands?

Just trees	3
In combination with other habitats	93
Don't know	3
Not answered	2

14. In what ways has your community benefited from the creation of The National Forest?

More attractive setting in which to live	22
More things to do/more activities/places to visit	20
Better places for walking	20
Brings in more tourists to the area	15
No answer	12
Good for the children	9
More wildlife to see	8
Increases house prices, which is both good & bad	6
Cleaner & better place to live	4
More jobs	3
Healthier	3
Somewhere to relax & get closer to wildlife	2
More trees	2
General improvement to the area	2
Civic pride	2
Nothing	2
Reduces chances of large housing developments	1
Good paths for pushchairs	1
Reduces pollution	1
Places to cycle	1
Don't know	1

15. Has your local community experienced any problems as a result of The National Forest?

No answer	77
Traffic congestion	6
More dog fouling & dogs	4
More litter	3
Too many people/commuters, loose community spirit	3
Vandalism & fires	2
Young people/teenagers congregating	2
Too many cyclists at fast pace	1
Motorbike problems with youngsters	1
Some areas could be damaged by tree roots	1
Lots of bugs	1
Introduction of adders bad idea	1

Some children still do not use it to the full	1
Foxes & badgers can take family pets	1
Building work blocking pathways	1
Noise from concerts	1
Wrong species of trees planted	1
Don't know	1

16. What are your thoughts on increasing numbers of visitors coming to the area?

Beneficial effects:

More income to local businesses & in to the local area	46
Not answered	18
Attracts new people to the area	10
More jobs	9
Good for the area	9
Puts us on the map	4
Quality attractions	3
Encourages family activities together	2
No difference	2
Better facilities	2
As long as public transport is improved	1
Community development	1
Helps people become aware of nature	1
Improved landscape	1
As long as they stay in main areas	1

Negative effects:

No answer	44
Traffic congestion on local roads/pollution	35
More litter will need managing	9
Bring in the wrong sort of people. Need good security	4
Not enough infrastructure to cope e.g. cafes, pubs	3
Car park problems at night must be managed	2
Too many people/commuters, lose community spirit	2
Footpath erosion	2
Vandalism, fires & crime	2
More dog fouling	2
Don't know	2

17. How important will it be to create major new green spaces in new housing estates?

Very Important	64
Quite Important	27
Not Important	4
Don't know	4
Not answered	2

18. What other advice might you want to give to The National Forest Company?

Not answered	25
Carry on with the good work	20
Make sure local people are consulted first	8
OK as it is	7
More natural environment eg lakes, meadow	3
Plant on derelict land not farm land/countryside	3
Customise it to each site	3

Community Perceptions of The National Forest

Plant more efficiently so they don't die	2
Plant a mix of trees to encourage varied wildlife	2
Create sites close to residential areas	2
Don't know	2
Make sure there is enough wildlife and accessible	1
More cycle routes	1
More wild flowers & areas for birds & butterflies	1
Involve the local children in the improvements	1
More trees are good for the environment and weather	1
Make sure the trees get watered	1
Keep trees away from roads	1
Plant trees on land that is lying idle	1
Make it more of an event and get people involved	1
Keep it family & dog friendly	1
Protect existing trees	1
Plant more fruit trees for wildlife	1
Plant British trees & plant them proudly	1
Make sure hedgerows are protected	1
Keep open and safe areas for children to play	1
Need more footpaths & leaflets about the longer walks.	1
Plant at the edge of housing estates, not in the middle	1
Access for visitors from main highways with sign posts	1
Keep it natural eg like Cannock Chase	1
Re-open railway or create a park & ride	1
Recreation facilities for older children/young adults	1
Golf course in Swadlincote to be in partnership with NFC	1
Safeguard arable land	1

19. Have you or your community been involved in any Forest-related events or activities?

Yes	39
No	51
Don't know	8
Not answered	3

20. Did you find these events enjoyable and informative?

Yes	38
No	1
Not Answered	62

21. How would you like to get involved in the Forest in the future?

Tree planting activities	27
Health walks	24
Conservation volunteering	17
Forest events & festivals	26
Don't want to be involved	38
Being involved in surveys	1
Educational walks	1
Don't know	3
Not answered	10

22. Would you like to receive further information about activities and events?

Yes	53
-----	----

No	45
Not Answered	3

23. If yes, would you like information on:

Tree planting	24
Local walks & woodlands to visit	34
Recreation & visitor attractions	29
Forest events	26
Places to see wildlife	24
Forest Scene Newsletter	29
Wildlife events	1
General	1

24. Age Group

16 - 24	12
25 - 34	15
35 - 44	17
45 - 54	15
55 - 64	21
65+	19

25. Gender

Male	34
Female	67

26. Background

Asian	0
Black	1
Chinese	0
Mixed ethnic	1
White British/Irish	90
Other Ethnic Group (South African)	1
Not answered	8

Areas of Consultation:

Swadlincote	42
Moira/Donisthorpe	38
Walton on Trent	17
Address unknown	2