

**The National Forest Company**

# **Community Perceptions of The National Forest 2014 Update**



**Final report  
16 May 2014**

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## 1 Executive summary

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### **Purpose of the 2014 Community Perceptions Survey**

In 2014 the National Forest Company (NFC) set about updating its Strategy for the further development and management of The National Forest from 2014-24. As part of the evidence gathering to inform the updating, NFC commissioned independent research to examine community perceptions (of local residents and visitors) on how the creation of the Forest was changing the landscape and impacting on individuals and communities.

The 2014 research utilised the same methodology as was used for the community perceptions research undertaken in 2008, to allow comparisons to be made with the 2008 study and so identify trends. The same mix of focus group meetings and a questionnaire survey (face to face and online) were used, based on the same core set of questions, so that the datasets could be combined to maximise the sample size. The core questions were:

1. *Which parts of the Forest do you visit most?*
2. *What are your reasons for going to these particular places?*
3. *How you would rate these places (for landscape maintenance, paths, car parks, interpretation, safety, and signage)?*
4. *Are there any parts of the Forest where you think there may now be enough trees?*
5. *In what ways has your local community benefitted from the creation of the Forest?*
6. *How would you sum up the impact the Forest's creation has had on you personally?*
7. *What if any concerns do you have about the growth of the Forest in the future?*
8. *How could the NFC make it easier for people to get involved in the future development of the Forest?*

Data gathering had to be completed within in a short, six week period between March and April 2014. In the event a total of 238 responses were achieved (compared to 202 in 2008). The sample included more incomers, local business representatives and a higher percentage of young people, providing a broader range of perspectives than in 2008. A total of 181 questionnaires were completed and 57 people took part in one of seven group discussions. Evidence gathering was focussed on Woodville, Ibstock and Walton on Trent and included children and young people.

### **Perceptions of landscape change**

All the respondents recognised that there had been a major change in the landscape around them, and change for the better.

Everyone could now see the trees and although they did not always know whether their settlement or a given woodland *"was part of"* The National Forest, they no longer had to respond to sceptical questions from their visitors of the *"what forest where"* type.

*"It has been wonderful that someone has had a vision greater than something beyond the next election. To see that vision take shape over the last ten years or so has been a real privilege. I am very grateful to the people who have worked hard to make this happen."*  
Questionnaire

*"It gives all of us some pride in the area. You're not afraid to go away from South Derbyshire and shout about it now as The National Forest."*

Woodville Parish Council

*"You can stand on the balcony [at Ibstock Palace] and look across the tree line. I've seen it grow from little saplings right down here and you can't see the buildings now."*

Ibstock Palace session

*"I love trees... I absolutely love trees... and I can see trees from where I live... towards Nailstone. I would hate not to be able to see trees."*

Ibstock Palace session

Everyone supported the notion of planting still more trees and were content for the NFC to keep to its target of 33% woodland cover.

Having said that, there were also some who were sad that access to, and views of, the new woodlands and the fields around them had recently become obscured by new housing and retail developments. This was especially the case around Ibstock.

Getting the balance right between the area covered by trees, the area of fields protected as open space and for food production, and the area given over to housing and other built development, was a recurring theme in responses (and from the young people in particular).

### **Most frequently visited places**

The most frequently visited sites by the 2014 sample were Rosliston Forestry Centre, Conkers, Bradgate Park and Moira Furnace. Sites with water features were also popular including Foremark and Thornton Reservoirs, the canals, Hicks Lodge, Albert Village and Sence Valley. Of the smaller, less formal woodlands Diana, Tunnel, Sarah's, Donisthorpe and the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Woods were each mentioned by around 10% of respondents.

Knowledge and use of sites was highly localised to just one or two sites by the indigenous population. Incomers, retired locals and families that cycled, were more likely to visit "all over" and regularly visit several sites across the Forest area.

### **Main reasons for visits**

To walk, take exercise, walk the dog, enjoy scenery, cycle, find peace and quiet, take the children out and see wildlife, were the main reasons people gave for visiting woodlands in the Forest.

### **Perceptions of landscape quality and personal safety**

Woodland sites were rated as good or very good by at least 85% of respondents (as in 2008) for landscape maintenance, car parking, path maintenance, personal safety and signage. The results indicated a small rise in the proportion of 'very good' scores (31% compared to 27% in 2008).

Paths were generally considered to be in good condition for walkers and horse riders and the cyclists appreciated places with a variety of path terrain. Smooth paths were valued by respondents because they enabled whole families to enjoy visits together, even when one or more had mobility problems or were dependent on buggies or wheelchairs.

The lack of knowledge about local woodlands and the lack of signage *to them* frustrated several respondents, and from around Ibstock in particular.

*"I've lived in Ibstock 14 years and it took me 10 years to find Sence Valley...there are 500 new residents expected in the village soon and they need to know... Still need people to champion it [the Forest]... to spread the message face to face... leaflets, websites... you can't rely on one medium... use the TV screens in community buildings."*

Ibstock Business Centre users

*"It's quite a safe environment where there are paths. If there weren't any paths or The National Forest didn't maintain them I imagine it would be a lot less safe and people just wouldn't bother... because no one would really know their way around."*

Woodville Youth Forum

People valued interpretation boards and had learnt a lot from them. Whilst they understood that they were sometimes lost to vandalism, some commented that many seemed to have also just disappeared from view as the woodland had grown up around them.

*"It's good to have information that you can use to spark the imagination of children. What kind of tree is it and what is it used for."*

Ibstock Palace session

The problem of dog owners leaving behind their dog mess was frequently mentioned in all three locations and the recent removal of dog bins was a particular cause of consternation.

Whilst no one said that they had become fearful of using the new woodlands because of the growth of the trees, some commented that they had become increasingly fearful of dog on dog attacks from dogs off the lead in the woods.

### **Benefits to local communities**

The most frequently mentioned ways in which people felt their community had benefited from the creation of the Forest were:

- Better places for walking
- More things to do/places to visit
- More wildlife to see
- Good for children
- A more attractive setting in which to live
- Brings tourists to the area
- Civic pride
- Community spirit from involvement
- More opportunities to meet neighbours
- Increased house values.

A broader range of social and economic benefits were mentioned in 2014 than in 2008:

*"It's changed the community in its makeup. It's brought new people in and potentially new prosperity; people with new ideas and skills."*

Woodville Parish Council

*"It's encouraged more people to go out... and it's increased the wildlife dramatically... such as buzzards and small birds."*

Ibstock Palace session

*"Tourism figures are going up [due to] the attractiveness of the area and the decent opportunities to do things. It used to be very, very grey and now it's very, very green."*

Woodville Parish Council

*“My Mum walks the dog at Sence Valley every morning and it kind of brings the community together because you speak to people and get to know them.”*

Ibstock College pupil

*“Our kids love it. They come home from school, go in the garage and in two seconds are at the bottom of the road [on] the Miners Walk and we can go round there. It’s on my doorstep which I didn’t have before.”*

Ibstock Business Centre user

### **Impact on individuals**

The impact the creation of the Forest has had on individuals is perhaps best illustrated in the quotes from the questionnaire and focus groups, but the general themes focussed on:

- A greater number and choice of places to visit to suit preferred activities, personal mood, family members’ needs and those of the dog
- A facility that stimulates more people to go outside for fresh air, exercise and contact with wildlife
- A facility that is free to use
- A better place to live, and pride in the area, from the improved environment
- Hope that the regeneration of the former mining settlements will make them just as desirable to visitors and incomers as Ashby and Bosworth
- Income from visitors – tourists and visitors with a professional interest in the Forest.

*“Thirty years ago we had slagheaps, derelict areas and we visited the Peak District for a day out. As I drive around the area now I am so inspired by the beauty of our local area. I feel my family have been privileged to have grown up alongside the trees and country parks and I have encouraged them to participate in the many, many activities in the area. We have planted trees and appreciate how the new woodlands encourage more wildlife. All my extended family enjoy living in an area that has been thoughtfully created, and they don’t need to go to the Peak District for a day out in the countryside.”*

Questionnaire

### **Concerns about the growth of the Forest in the future**

The main concerns people had about the future growth of the Forest included:

- Loss of trees to new development
- Lack of woodland management
- The narrowing of paths
- New housing cutting off people’s visual and physical access to the woodlands
- Achieving a good balance between different land uses (farmland, housing, trees and more open wildlife habitat)
- Certain species of wildlife being lost as open areas become wooded (grass snakes, newts, skylarks)
- Investment in community (and woodland) infrastructure and transport links not keeping up with new development and the influx of more people (including into the woodlands).

Over 30% of questionnaire respondents had no concerns at all.

Some concern was expressed about future funding for the NFC. It was felt that the company’s role in coordinating the further development of the Forest and protecting the woodlands from development and illicit harvesting was important for securing the benefits the communities currently enjoyed from the Forest for the future. Questions were raised about who was looking after the trees that had been planted and who would be maintaining the paths etc. because *“everywhere needs maintenance”*.

There was general and widespread concern about the amount of housing development underway in the area. Several respondents reported losing a degree of visual and physical access to the new woodlands. Few people other than the parish councillors were aware of the local plans for their area and the strategy being used to guide the scale and location of new housing and retail developments.

### **Involvement in the future development of the Forest**

Half the respondents expressed a personal interest in being involved in the future development of the Forest. Of these, the main ideas suggested revolved around first enticing people (and every new generation) to use the woodlands, by engaging them in healthy walks, tree planting, cycling events, school activities and practical conservation activities. Festivals and craft markets that were free to access and enjoy (even if you needed to pay for specific activities once inside) were considered important for people on low incomes like teenagers and pensioners to feel involved.

### **Trends in perception change from 2008-2014**

Perceptions of the Forest had changed since the 2008 survey and the positive perceptions had intensified.

In 2014 the growth of the Forest was evident to all and there was no longer any embarrassment associated with telling people, friends and family that they lived in The National Forest, indeed there was a definite sense that people were proud to make it known to anyone who would listen.

There was much interest in the maps that showed how woodland cover had increased from 6% in 1991 to 19% in 2011, though knowledge of the new informal woods in people's immediate neighbourhoods remained limited (as in 2008) and even more so of the woodlands further away.

Cycling had become a more significant activity for families and young people, across the whole Forest area, than was the case in 2008.

People were still getting lost within the woodlands in 2014, and would appreciate some additional signage to guide them back to their settlements. Having said that everyone considered that there were always enough friendly local people around to point lost souls in the right direction. A few users had begun to avoid the more popular 'people' sites, in their search for more tranquillity in the less frequented woodlands.

There was much more interest in how the relative balance of woodland to farmland and built development was changing, stimulated by a significant increase in house building in the area and around Measham and Ibstock in particular. Several people reported that they had lost their view of the new woodlands and a degree of physical access to them as more and more fields around them were being built over with houses.

As in 2008, respondents still felt that the Forest could be better promoted to people within and outside the area. The business community in particular felt that there should be reciprocal promotional activity between the Forest providers and local traders.

The Forest continues to be a great place to meet neighbours, take visitors to and for families to take their children and grandchildren to enjoy.

As in 2008, people were interested to know more about what was happening to wildlife across the area and the NFC's strategy towards protecting and enhancing it. There was a sense that with more visitors and incomers, there would be more disturbance to wildlife from people, cats and dogs.

The 2014 survey confirmed people's belief that it should be a priority to entice every new generation into the woodlands through a rolling programme of a wide range of educational and leisure activities. Free time was too limited for many to consider getting involved in voluntary work, but there was a keen interest in the NFC working more closely with community groups to cascade out information on events, activities, business and training opportunities.

### **Summary of recommendations for 2014-2024 Strategy**

1. Keep on planting trees.
2. Increase dissemination of information to households about the locations of new woodlands (and what there is to see there), using a variety of media formats and regular feeds to local groups who will cascade it out to members.
3. Protect and develop people's access to woodlands through new housing developments.
4. Work to increase the connectivity of key paths through the area and with the canals and disused railway lines.
5. Feedback information on the status of changes to wildlife and the rise in tourism.
6. Publish more on the approach to woodland and habitat management.
7. Work more closely with local authorities to address people's concerns about the removal of dog bins.
8. Work more closely with the business community to develop economic benefits to local traders.

## **2 Acknowledgments**

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Alison Millward Associates would like to thank all the people of The National Forest who took part in the 2014 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, Beverly Fairbrother and the rest of the team at the National Forest Company, who commissioned and supported this research and will act on its findings.

### 3 Purpose of the research

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In 2014 The National Forest Company (NFC) set about updating its Strategy for the further development and management of the Forest from 2014-24. As part of the evidence gathering to inform the updating, NFC commissioned independent research to examine community perceptions (from local residents and visitors) on how the creation of the Forest was changing the landscape and impacting on individuals and communities.

The 2014 research utilised the same methodology as was used for the community perceptions research undertaken in 2008, to allow comparisons to be made with the 2008 study and so identify trends. The same mix of focus group meetings and a questionnaire survey (face to face and online) were used, based on the same core set of questions, so that the datasets could be combined to maximise the sample size. The core questions were:

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The 2014 research was targeted on three different settlements within the area, which reflected the mix of urban, rural and former coalfield settlements which make up the Forest. The aim was to engage with at least 300 people, equally split between each location.

Two of the settlements were in locations where there had been significant landscape change through Forest creation – Woodville and Ibstock. In comparison, the third location was in an area where there had been less, immediately adjacent woodland creation – Walton on Trent.

Data gathering had to be completed within in a short, six week period between March and April 2014. In the event a total of 238 responses were achieved (compared to 202 in 2008). Some 181 questionnaires were completed and 57 people took part in one of seven group discussions.

Face to face questionnaire surveys were undertaken at Sence Valley, Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee Woodland, Swadlincote Woods, Diana Wood, Albert Village and Rosliston Forestry Centre.

Focus groups were completed with:  
Ibstock Business Centre users  
Ibstock College pupils (11-13 year olds)  
Ibstock Palace (open session for general public)  
Walton on Trent Primary School children  
Walton Community Club members  
Woodville Parish Council  
Woodville Youth Forum

The sample was reasonably representative of the age profile of the general population in the area, but had slightly more females than males. It included more incomers and local business representatives and a higher percentage of young people, providing a broader range of perspectives than in 2008.

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Gender</b>    | <b>%</b>     |
| Female           | 55           |
| Male             | 45           |
|                  | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Age group</b> | <b>%</b>     |
| Under 20         | 23.1         |
| 20-44            | 29.0         |
| 45-64            | 30.3         |
| Over 65          | 17.6         |
| N = 238          | <b>100.0</b> |

A total sample of 238 is relatively small and not every participant in a focus group gave an answer to every question, so precise percentages have not been used in describing the results in section 4. Where a list of responses is given, the most frequently mentioned reasons are listed first.

## 4 Community views on the growth of the National Forest

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### Perceptions of landscape change

All the respondents recognised that there had been a major change in the landscape around them, and change for the better.

Everyone could now see the trees and although they did not always know whether their settlement or a given woodland *“was part of”* The National Forest, they no longer had to respond to sceptical questions from their visitors of the *“what forest where”* type.

*“It has been wonderful that someone has had a vision greater than something beyond the next election. To see that vision take shape over the last ten years or so has been a real privilege. I am very grateful to the people who have worked hard to make this happen.”*

Questionnaire

*“It gives all of us some pride in the area. You’re not afraid to go away from South Derbyshire and shout about it now as The National Forest.”*

Woodville Parish Council

*“You can stand on the balcony [at Ibstock Palace] and look across the tree line. I’ve seen it grow from little saplings right down here and you can’t see the buildings now.”*

Ibstock Palace session

*“I love trees... I absolutely love trees... and I can see trees from where I live... towards Nailstone. I would hate not to be able to see trees.”*

Ibstock Palace session

*“I like to see the trees... If the land is not being used for anything else it might as well be decorative and for the wildlife.”*

Walton Community Club

Having said that, there were also some who were sad that access to, and views of, the new woodlands and the fields around them had recently become obscured by new housing and retail developments. This was especially the case around Ibstock.

*“When I was younger, my brother used to take me on a certain route and now they’ve built houses all over it. We had to find another route and now they’re building houses on that new route.”*

Ibstock College pupil

*“Right outside our house is Darcey Park being built and there used to be a massive field...right next to Sence Valley...My mum used to like watching it...there’s a hedgerow and we’d see loads and loads of sparrows... the houses are not far away from it now and the nature is being disrupted... It’s ruining the quality of our house now...it will be harder to sell...because that nice view has gone.”*

Ibstock College pupil

Getting the balance right between the area covered by trees, the area of fields protected as open space and for food production and the area given over to housing and other built development, was a recurring theme in responses (and from the young people in particular). The following quote typified the most common response:

*“50% for trees, 30% houses, 20% for fields.”*

Walton Primary School child

Everyone supported the notion of planting still more trees and were content for the NFC to keep to its target of 33% woodland cover.

*"Never enough trees."*

Questionnaire

*"Just get them in!"*

Woodville Parish Council

*"If we are calling it a 'forest', and we are, that's what it's about and what we would expect. If you look at the New Forest it's not all trees but you've got a fair proportion... in excess of 30%."*

Woodville Parish Council

The places where some felt there were now enough trees included Albert Village, Beacon Hill, Lullington, Moira, Rosliston Forestry Centre and Sence Valley. The children had particular views on the issue:

*"If you get too many trees in a certain area it's all going to collapse because the roots are going to hit each other. We might need a bigger variety of trees... [to give] a nice shading of different colours...with light in some areas and dark in others."*

Ibstock College pupil

*"There might not be enough room for the flowers as the trees will cover the sun so they can't grow properly."*

Walton Primary School child

There was also some concern amongst all ages about the planting of trees on farmland that might be needed to grow crops:

*"From what I've seen housing developers and foresters are taking land that could be used for producing food. Our greatest worry in the not too distant future is going to be feeding the increasing population of this country."*

Ibstock Palace session

There was very little understanding of the increasing need to begin to thin out the young trees to allow some to grow to maturity. Even fewer had considered the impact this might have on local people's perceptions of the woodlands.

*"There are probably a few areas already where the trees have been allowed to grow [too tall and thin] and will never reach maturity."*

Woodville Parish Council

*"We will run out of trees if we don't replace them. We live off plants and trees. It's one of the things that's keeping us alive."*

Woodville Youth Forum

*"Sometimes when I'm in Rosliston I see the chunks [stumps] of wood where the trees should have been... we don't want to cut down too many trees."*

Walton Primary School child

Areas identified as locations for further tree planting included Trent Valley, Smisby, Blackfordby, Overseal, and between Walton and Cauldwell via Drakelow.

### **Most frequently visited places**

The most frequently visited sites by the 2014 sample were Rosliston Forestry Centre, Conkers, Bradgate Park and Moira Furnace. Sites with water features were also popular including Foremark and Thornton Reservoirs, the canals, Hicks Lodge, Albert Village and Sence Valley. Of the smaller, less formal woodlands Diana, Tunnel, Sarah's, Donisthorpe and the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Woods were each mentioned by around 10% of respondents.

Knowledge and use of sites was highly localised to just one or two sites by the indigenous population.

*"Battram Woods. I'm in there every single day. That's about it really."*  
Ibstock Palace session

*"Rosliston and the National Arboretum. Rarely go over the other side."*  
Walton Community Club

*"Sence Valley was just far enough away without having to get in the car, to take the grandchildren."*  
Ibstock Palace session

Focus group participants were generally surprised to learn that over 8 million trees and been planted and over 90 new larger woodlands created since the 1990s.

Incomers, retired locals and families that cycled, were more likely to visit *"all over"* and regularly visit several sites across the Forest area.

Although the majority of the Walton primary school children were restricted to using woodlands and open spaces within their villages, all the 11-13 year olds from Ibstock College and the 12-18 year olds from Woodville Youth Forum were allowed to use the local woodlands on their own, more than half ranged up to 5 miles away from home on their own and about a third more than 10 miles from home (on foot or on their mountain bikes). A small number of teenagers had chosen not to go into the Forest on their own but were happy to do so with friends and family.

### **Main reasons for visits**

To walk, take exercise, walk the dog, enjoy scenery, cycle, find peace and quiet, take the children out and to see wildlife were the main reasons people gave for visiting woodlands.

*"Sence Valley is exceptional value. It is a hidden valley...an oasis in itself."*  
Ibstock Business Centre user

*"[When the] Moira cycle centre is fully developed and people are fully aware of it and the cycle routes, they can plan trips to take in most of the countryside and the special sites. It's great."*  
Ibstock Business Centre user

Amongst the other reasons given, Tai chi, photography, swimming for the dog, pony trekking, history and meeting friends were mentioned.

### **Perceptions of landscape quality and personal safety**

The woodland sites people visited most were rated as good or very good by at least 85% of respondents (as in 2008) for landscape maintenance, car parking, path maintenance, personal safety and signage. The results indicated a small rise in the proportion of 'very good' scores (31% compared to 27% in 2008) which was encouraging.

Paths were generally considered to be in good condition for walkers and horse riders and the cyclists appreciated places with a variety of path terrain.

Smooth paths were valued by respondents because they enabled whole families to enjoy visits together, even when one or more had mobility problems or were dependent on buggies or wheelchairs.

It was suggested by two older women – one of whom had hip problems but none the less regularly walked at Albert Village - that seats be located immediately beside the paths in future. Siting them half way down a grassy slope might improve the view, but made them inaccessible to people with impaired mobility. They explained that the risk of a fall increases as grass becomes muddy and slippery in wet weather. The opportunity to take a breather for those with additional cardiac and respiratory problems may also be denied in such circumstances. These factors may therefore be deterring older people from using sites just when they really need to keep up their exercise levels.

For others, the paths sometimes lacked a challenge:

*“The [cycling] tracks [at Sence Valley] are alright but we build jumps to make it more challenging.”*

Ibstock College pupil

*“Me and my Dad do an odd 20 miles on our mountain bikes... the tracks at Sence Valley are all gravel so there's not much different terrain. On the '62' [cycle route] you can go off road onto different terrains to suit different abilities... some are just mud... There's lots of bike clubs around the '62' so you can soon get massive groups of cyclists coming past you and they all stop at the cafes and have a bacon butty and then go off again.”*

Ibstock College pupil

*“Cycling wise, I'd like a course [at Hicks Lodge] which is a bit harder... which would be quite interesting... they've got the space.”*

Woodville Youth Forum

The lack of a safe footpath along the main road from Kelham Bridge to Sence Valley was mentioned by more than one respondent.

The lack of knowledge about local woodlands and the lack of signage to them frustrated several respondents, and from around Ibstock in particular.

*“I've lived in Ibstock 14 years and it took me 10 years to find Sence Valley...there are 500 new residents expected in the village soon and they need to know... Still need people to champion it [the Forest]... to spread the message face to face... leaflets, websites... you can't rely on one medium... use the TV screens in community buildings.”*

Ibstock Business Centre users

*“It's quite a safe environment where there are paths. If there weren't any paths or The National Forest didn't maintain them I imagine it would be a lot less safe and people just wouldn't bother... because no one would really know their way around.”*

Woodville Youth Forum

The researchers found it difficult to find the access points into the Albert Village site and Diana Wood. Several people asked for more signs *within* the woodlands pointing the way to surrounding settlements so that the furthest ranging cyclists and walkers could still find their way home.

People valued interpretation boards and had learnt a lot from them. Whilst they understood that they were often lost to vandalism, some commented that many seemed to have also just disappeared from view as the woodland had grown up around them, as at Battram Wood.

*"It's good to have information that you can use to spark the imagination of children. What kind of tree is it and what is it used for."*

Ibstock Palace session

The problem of dog owners leaving behind their dog mess was frequently mentioned in all three locations and the recent removal of dog bins was a particular cause of consternation.

*"The downside I get from people is ... what the dog walkers leave behind and I know it's a bone of contention nationwide. I'd have some hard-line legislation but Ashby Woulds Town Council have taken the bins [away at Albert Village] and people are leaving the poo where the bins used to be."*

Woodville Parish Council



Aftermath of dog bin removal at Albert Village

The researchers explained that it was possible to put dog mess into ordinary litter bins but few respondents had realised this. This is clearly a significant issue for visitors that they have found themselves powerless (and their local authorities unwilling) to tackle.

*"Need bins around Albert Village lake. Tried to get the council to tackle the problem, but with no success."*

Questionnaire

Whilst no one said that they had become fearful of using the new woodlands because of the growth of the trees, some commented that they had become increasingly fearful of dog on dog attacks from dogs off the lead in the woods.

*"It's just loose dogs for me. I keep mine on the lead. Quite often I don't take my dogs out now ... it's too dangerous... I wouldn't go alone."*

Woodville Parish Council

The Ibstock Business Centre users were particularly sensitive to what they perceived as a lack of advertising and the general promotion of the Forest as a tourism destination:

*"The green issue perception of The National Forest and the tourist issue go hand in glove, but I perceive there is an aversion to using what might be seen as a dirty word – 'tourism'."*

Ibstock Business Centre user

*“Without marketing information you cannot realise what is on your doorstep and that it’s great that you don’t have to go miles to enjoy these places.”*

Ibstock Business Centre user

*“Sence Valley is a free holiday and if you market it from that point of view, what is the first thing that catches anybody’s attention - it’s free - and now you’ve got my attention.”*

Ibstock Business Centre user

*“You have to use rolling programmes...today’s teenagers are tomorrow’s OAPs...if you stop marketing, it starts to fail.... In Canada they always market the forests and not just when they’re green, but in the autumn time when there are reds and oranges... and when you see a reflection of that in a lake – who got it right and who got it wrong?”*

Ibstock Business Centre users

*“It’s important even if we don’t have a say, to know what’s going on... I wouldn’t know if there were events going on unless they were advertised on TV. There’s nothing coming through to say ‘We’re thinking about putting on these kinds of events, what do you think?’”*

Woodville Youth Forum

Car parking charges at the main attractions remained contentious for local people. The dog walkers seemed to be less concerned about paying for an annual pass at Rosliston or Conkers because they often made several visits a week which provided good value for money. Others made use of the free pass vouchers that were distributed through local papers (as for the National Memorial Arboretum) and others had found ways of using the public footpath system to enter and enjoy such places at no cost.

One person mentioned the negative impact of HS2.

### **Benefits to local communities**

The most frequently mentioned ways in which people felt their community had benefited from the creation of the Forest were:

- Better places for walking
- More things to do/places to visit
- More wildlife to see
- Good for children
- A more attractive setting in which to live
- Brings tourists to the area
- Civic pride
- Community spirit from involvement
- More opportunities to meet neighbours
- Increased house values.

A broader range of social and economic benefits were mentioned in 2014 than in 2008:

*“It’s changed the community in its makeup. It’s brought new people in and potentially new prosperity; people with new ideas and skills.”*

Woodville Parish Council

*“Tourism figures are going up [due to] the attractiveness of the area and the decent opportunities to do things. It used to be very, very grey and now it’s very, very green.”*

Woodville Parish Council

*"It's encouraged more people to go out... and it's increased the wildlife dramatically... such as buzzards and small birds."*

Ibstock Palace session

*"My Mum walks the dog at Sence Valley every morning and it kind of brings the community together because you speak to people and get to know them."*

Ibstock College pupil

*"Our kids love it. They come home from school, go in the garage and in two seconds are at the bottom of the road [on] the Miners Walk and we can go round there. It's on my doorstep which I didn't have before."*

Ibstock Business Centre user

There were just a few mentions of economic benefits. One of the Ibstock Business Centre users expressed an ongoing interest in developing a wood pellet business (utilising the woodland thinnings) to provide a local source of energy for local businesses. One family had created a job for a tree surgeon and there was a view expressed that the number of saw mills in the area had increased.

### **Impact on individuals**

The impact the creation of the Forest has had on individuals is perhaps best illustrated in the quotes from the questionnaire and focus groups, but the general themes focussed on:

- A greater number and choice of places to visit to suit preferred activities, personal mood, family members' needs and those of the dog
- A facility that stimulates people to go outside for fresh air, exercise and contact with wildlife
- A facility that is free to use
- A better place to live and pride in the area from the improved environment
- Hope that the regeneration of the former mining settlements will make them just as desirable to visitors and incomers as Ashby and Bosworth
- Income from visitors – tourists and visitors with a professional interest in the Forest

*"Every time I see some new trees planted I try to get to the area to investigate what the new area offers. Being able to walk/cycle off-road on trails / bridlepaths makes it a real pleasure to live here. I hate to see resources being wasted so the re-use of communication corridors e.g. canals and railway lines should be encouraged, as well as the linking up of forestry areas. If we feel like a walk, we'll often have a look at the website for a nice route (more required)."*

Questionnaire

*"It saved my sanity when my children were growing up as somewhere to take them. Quick let's go out ... and it was free."*

Woodville Parish Council

*"More places to take my young son and meet up in larger groups without paying the earth."*

Questionnaire

*"A joy for walking and meeting people."*

Questionnaire

*"Thirty years ago we had slagheaps, derelict areas and we visited the Peak District for a day out. As I drive around the area now I am so inspired by the beauty of our local area. I feel my family have been privileged to have grown up alongside the trees and country parks and I have encouraged them to participate in the many, many activities in the area. We have*

*planted trees and appreciate how the new woodlands encourage more wildlife. All my extended family enjoy living in an area that has been thoughtfully created, and they don't need to go to the Peak District for a day out in the countryside."*

Questionnaire

*"I'm happy when I'm in the woodlands because I can hear all the birds chirping and animals happy in their habitats."*

Walton Primary School child

*"Helped me exercise more and with past back problems."*

Questionnaire

*"I like the serenity you get from walking through the forest... it's lovely to see the birdlife. It's something that makes you feel good at the end of a day."*

Ibstock Palace session

Less than a handful of respondents felt that the creation of the Forest had had no impact on them as individuals.

### **Concerns about the growth of the Forest in the future**

The main concerns people had about the future growth of the Forest included:

- Loss of trees to new development
- Lack of woodland management
- The narrowing of paths
- New housing cutting off people's visual and physical access to the woodlands
- Achieving a good balance between different land uses (farmland, trees and more open wildlife habitat)
- Certain species of wildlife being lost as open areas become wooded (grass snakes, newts, skylarks)
- Investment in community (and woodland) infrastructure and transport links not keeping up with new development and the influx of more people (including into the woodlands).

Over 30% of questionnaire respondents had no concerns at all.

In the focus groups some concern was expressed about future funding for the NFC. It was felt that the company's role in coordinating the further development of the Forest and protecting the woodlands from development and illicit harvesting was important for securing the benefits the communities currently enjoyed from the Forest for the future. Questions were raised about who was looking after the trees that had been planted and who would be maintaining the paths etc. because *"everywhere needs maintenance"*.

*"Keen to know what will happen to woodlands in the future. Will the landowners be able to chop them down?"*

Questionnaire

There was general and widespread concern about the amount of housing development underway in the area, and in particular from the young people. Few people other than the parish councillors were aware of the local plans for their area and the strategy being used to guide the scale and location of new housing and retail developments.

*"Where I live there are four or five fields where we walk the dog but David Wilson are trying to put houses on them, so they are taking up the dog walking space."*

Ibstock College pupil

*"It's as if they are joining all the villages together. Soon Ibstock will be with Coalville, and Ravenstone will be with Coalville. It would be good for people to come in but they are just building houses. There won't be enough places in schools for people."*

Ibstock College pupil

*"They are usually building houses on flat land, fields, and not where the woodland has grown up. If they start building on the woodland they should replace the trees somewhere else."*

Woodville Youth Forum

*"I think in the end we will have no forest at all...just houses...it will be boring. You'll just see houses everywhere and no nature."*

Ibstock College pupil

*"It's like we are destroying history. Some of the fields have been there since medieval times. Our history teacher was telling us about how they farmed and how you could see [signs of that] and pick things up from the ground but you can't anymore because there are houses everywhere."*

Ibstock College pupil

One pupil with aspirations to be an architect suggested that there should be a debate about whether you should only be able to allocate half a building plot for the houses and set aside the rest as a wildlife area.

On the issue of wildlife gains and losses there were mixed perceptions:

*"I know how important brownfield sites are for wildlife but I think wildlife has increased greatly as a result of the development of The National Forest."*

Woodville Parish Council

*"In all my tender years it was only three weeks ago I saw a woodpecker as close as we are. I just couldn't believe it. The first time I've ever seen one in my life. It was incredible."*

Woodville Parish Council

On the other hand:

*"From when I was a kid around the derelict areas we've lost things like grass snakes and newts. Some of them have been removed. It was common to see grass snakes when I was a lad."*

Woodville Parish Council

*"It's decreased over our way because they've developed. We used to have skylarks, lapwings... now we get seagulls from the landfill."*

Woodville Parish Council

Several commented on the need to protect wildlife by keeping the public out of certain areas where there were rare or vulnerable species.

*"I'd like to know more about the wildlife strategy too. The array of butterflies at Rosliston is fantastic but at other places it isn't. It's about how wild they let certain bits go and how they manage other bits."*

Woodville Parish Council

Hearing the sound of chain saws in the new woodlands had been disconcerting and had created uncertainty in the minds of respondents about whether the people they heard cutting down trees had permission to do so. It was suggested that it would be helpful for people to

know what the plans were for a particular woodland in their area regarding management operations so that they could report such misuse with confidence when they saw it happening. The question of *who* they should report such misuse could not be answered.

The need to invest in new infrastructure (in parallel with the planting of more woodlands) to support increased numbers of adult woodland users by providing more litter bins, toilets, eateries, car parks in village high streets and new path links from the housing areas into the woodlands were all mentioned.

*"I think the lack of car parking will restrict the future growth of National Forest usage. Also forestry areas need to be linked up: by having information boards showing what other National Forest areas and facilities are nearby."*

Questionnaire

*"The more people go out [into the woodlands] the more facilities you have to put in ... such as dog bins because there will be more dog mess."*

Ibstock Palace session

As in 2008, several people commented on the need to connect more places up to improve accessibility. Utilising the disused railway lines between Swadlincote and Newhall and from Ibstock to Leicester, the Ivanhoe railway line, and extending the canal link through to Leicestershire, were all mentioned.

People living on the western and northern boundaries of the Forest were keen to see more woodland planting in their areas, for example around Hatton and Hilton to increase access without the need to drive for 20 minutes into the heart of the Forest. Members of the Woodville Youth Forum suggested the boundary of the Forest area should be extended towards Derby.

*"Put more forest in and add more centres.... spread it into the East Midlands... make it bigger ... with more trees near us towards Derby."*

Woodville Youth Forum

### **Involvement in the future development of the forest**

Half the respondents expressed a personal interest in being involved in the future development of the Forest. Of these, the main ideas suggested revolved around first enticing people (and every new generation) to use the woodlands, by engaging them in healthy walks, tree planting, cycling events, school activities and practical conservation activities. Festivals and craft markets that were free to access and enjoy (even if you needed to pay for specific activities once inside) were considered important for people on low incomes like teenagers and pensioners to feel involved.

Lack of free time was the main reason people could not get involved, or at least not until they retired.

The business community were keen to work with the NFC to explore and promote reciprocal trading opportunities where for example events could be supported by traders and traders could advertise the Forest's attractions to their customers. They were also keen to see the Forest promoted as a day out destination where people might combine say a visit to a farmers market with a meal in a pub and a walk in a woodland.

*"Would be good if representatives from the NFC could work with local groups ... give talks to people about events and activities... feed into local groups who connect into the local community... use local places for training sessions on hedge-laying."*

Ibstock Palace session

It was suggested that the NFC needed to be explicit about the type of help it might be looking for and when, where and for how long.

Much was said about creating more activities in the woodlands for school children.

*“Make more clubs for the younger generation to make them more interested in wildlife so they don’t litter and disrespect it. Maybe a wildlife walk very month.”*

Ibstock College pupil

*“After school activities, even once a month for an hour...that you could put in the diary... the kids would love that.”*

Ibstock Business Centre users

*“If I said to my grandson you’ve got to clear some bracken tomorrow, he’d have his wellies out ready at dawn.”*

Ibstock Business Centre user

Creating learning areas for outdoor lessons, treasure hunts and natural skate parks with dirt ramps, were also suggested.

The adults in particular had a thirst for answers to many basic questions about why the Forest was formed, the role of the NFC, and the new woodlands in their areas. The existence of the NFC website was acknowledged though few had visited it and most would prefer to receive information in the form of a local newsletter.

## 5 Trends in perception change from 2008 - 2014

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Perceptions of the Forest had changed since the 2008 survey and the positive perceptions had intensified.

In 2014 the growth of the Forest was evident to all and there was no longer any embarrassment associated with telling people friends and family that they lived in The National Forest, indeed there was a definite sense that people were proud to make it known to anyone who would listen.

There was much interest in the maps that showed how woodland cover had increased from 6% in 1991 to 19% in 2011, though knowledge of the new informal woods in people's immediate neighbourhoods remained limited (as in 2008) and even more so of the woodlands further away. All respondents were keen that tree planting should continue and that what they saw as the relatively modest 33% tree cover target should be retained.

The formal woodland sites and visitor attractions continued to enjoy a high level of recognition amongst respondents, although many had still not heard about Hick's Lodge. What was evident in 2014 was that people no longer felt the need to go out of The National Forest area to enjoy a day out, so reducing their carbon footprint and increasing business for local traders in the leisure and trail sector.

Cycling had become a more significant activity for families and young people, across the whole Forest area, than was the case in 2008. There was some evidence that this activity was significantly extending the unaccompanied range of young males in the 9-13 age groups. Cyclists were also very appreciative of being offered different types of terrain (and cafes) to enjoy. The Forest is now very accessible (and attractive) to people wanting to *cycle into* it from Birmingham and Leicester.

The high ratings for landscape quality and personal safety in 2008 had remained the same with a slight rise in the proportion of very good ratings in 2014. As before, particular sites with problems were mentioned more frequently, with the most discontent being expressed about the current state of Albert Village lake. Dog mess left behind, litter and loose dogs were a concern to many in 2014 and had actually stopped some people from using some of the woodlands.

We spoke to many more incomers to the area in the 2014 survey, some of whom had made a conscious decision to move into the area, partly because of the Forest. These people seemed to use their cars to range more freely all over the Forest area than the indigenous population.

People were still getting lost within the woodlands in 2014 and would appreciate some additional signage to guide them back to the settlements. Having said that everyone considered that there were always enough friendly local people around to point lost souls in the right direction. A few users had begun to avoid the popular sites in their search for more tranquillity in the less frequented woodlands. There was an indication that people were beginning to distinguish the woodlands as primarily 'people places' rather than woodlands *per se*.

As in 2008, respondents still felt that the Forest could be better promoted to people within and outside the area. The business community in particular felt that there should be reciprocal promotional activity between the Forest providers and local traders.

The Forest continues to be a great place to meet neighbours, take visitors to and for families to take their children and grandchildren to enjoy.

In 2014 the preference expressed in 2008 for a majority of deciduous and native trees in the new plantings was not tested, though some people still expressed their delight at witnessing the changes in colour that the seasons brought to the woodlands. What had changed was a keen interest in how the relative balance of woodland to farmland and built development was changing, stimulated by a significant increase in house building in the area and around Measham and Ibstock in particular. Several people reported that they had lost their view of the new woodlands and a degree of physical access to them as more and more fields around them were being built over with houses. Finding ways to influence the design of new developments to create and retain access routes and vistas into the new woodlands is a key challenge for the future.

In 2014 opinion was divided as to the impact of the Forest's creation on wildlife. Losses of open ground species such as grass snakes and skylarks were mentioned, but so too was the arrival of more woodland species such as woodpeckers. As in 2008, people were interested to know more about what was happening to wildlife across the area and the NFC's strategy towards protecting and enhancing it. There was a sense that with more visitors and incomers, there would be more disturbance to wildlife from people, cats and dogs.

The 2014 survey confirmed people's belief that it should be a priority to entice every new generation into the woodlands through a rolling programme of a wide range of educational and leisure activities. Time was too limited for many to consider getting involved in voluntary work, but there was a keen interest in the NFC working more closely with community groups to cascade out information on events, activities, business and training opportunities.

## 6 Amending future strategy

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The community was clearly delighted with the overall progress made to date in creating The National Forest and hoped that the NFC would keep up the good work and achieve its 33% tree cover target.

People of all ages and abilities were enjoying a wider range of benefits from being able to access even more woodlands, for free, on their immediate doorsteps (at least in the central and eastern parts of the area).

Work that the NFC might consider taking on to protect and increase these benefits might focus on planning, landscape maintenance, promotional and business development issues.

Bringing influence to bear through the strategic planning and planning application processes to protect and create physical and visual access to the woodlands through new developments, would be appreciated by the community.

Tackling local authorities, private landowners and dog owners about the impact of the removal of dog bins, loose dogs and reduced litter clearance regimes, which have begun to deter people from visiting some sites, would be welcomed.

Still more investment in promoting (and disseminating information about) the Forest, new woodlands in local areas and activity programmes would be appreciated. Getting more information into households and out through community outlets was requested.

Disseminating more information about the benefits of the increase in levels of physical activity amongst all ages, unaccompanied range of young people, house prices and tourism would be of interest to local people.

The role of the new woodlands in preventing the coalescing of historically separate settlements, and directing visitors to make use of struggling high street businesses in the villages, may be worth exploring and promoting as an additional benefit of the Forest's creation.

### Summary of recommendations

1. Keep on planting trees.
2. Increase dissemination of information to households about the locations of new woodlands (and what there is to see there), using a variety of media formats and regular feeds to local groups who will cascade it out to members.
3. Protect and develop people's visual and physical access to woodlands through new housing developments.
4. Work to increase the connectivity of key paths through the area and with the canals and disused railway lines.
5. Feedback information on the status of changes to wildlife and the rise in tourism.
6. Publish more on the approach to woodland and habitat management.
7. Work more closely with local authorities to align priorities and address people's concerns about the removal of dog bins.
8. Work more closely with the business community to develop economic benefits to local traders.

## **Appendix A: Focus Group Topic Schedule**

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*Hello everybody and welcome. As you may know, the National Forest Company monitors the impacts of the creation of The National Forest on the area and the local people who live and work here, and feeds this information into its forward strategy and work plans.*

*Tree planting has been progressing for 15 years but the emphasis will begin to shift now towards managing what we already have, with a little less planting.*

*A new strategy will be published later this year, so we holding discussions with local people around the area to gather views and ideas to feed into this.*

*Over the next hour or so we would like to talk to you about:*

- 1. The parts of the Forest you visit most*
- 2. Your reasons for going to these particular places (activity, scenery, family, events...)*
- 3. How you would rate these places (landscape maintenance, paths, car parks, interpretation, safety, signage – poor good very good)*
- 4. The parts of the Forest where you think there may now be enough trees*
- 5. How your local community may have benefitted from the creation of the Forest*
- 6. The impact the creation of the Forest has had on you personally*
- 7. Any concerns you have about the growth of the Forest in the future*
- 8. How we could make it easier for people to get involved in the future development of the Forest*
- 9. Any other issues local people you would like to comment on.*

*The results of the research will be posted on the [www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org) around June.*

*THANK YOU! Please vote for a good cause.*

## Appendix B: Focus Group Matrix

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| <b>Ibstock</b>                | <b>Woodville</b>                            | <b>Walton on Trent</b>         |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Ibstock TWG & In Bloom        | Woodville Parish Council                    | Walton Community Club          |
| Ibstock Community College     | Woodville Youth Forum and Duke of Edinburgh | Walton on Trent Primary School |
| Ibstock Community Enterprises |   |                                |

## Appendix C: Questionnaire

### Community Perceptions of The National Forest 2014



Q

**Hello. The National Forest Company regularly monitors the impact the creation of The National Forest is having on the area and local people. Tree planting has been progressing for 15 years but the emphasis will begin to shift now towards managing what we already have, with a little less planting. We would like to know your views on the current stage the Forest has reached.**

**Please tick the boxes that apply**

**1 Which parts of The National Forest do you visit most?**

|                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bradgate Park/Beacon Hill | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Calke Abbey               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Canals                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Conkers                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Diana & Tunnel Woods      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Donisthorpe Forest Park   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Donnington Lake           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Foremark Reservoir        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

|                                   |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Moira Furnace                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| National Forest Adventure Farm    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| National Memorial Arboretum       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rosliston Forestry Centre         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sarah's Wood                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sence Valley Forest Park          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Thornton Reservoir                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| All over                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do not/cannot visit the woodlands | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other:                            | <input type="text"/>     |

**2 What are your 3 main reasons for visiting those parts of The National Forest?**

|                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| walking                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| walking the dog         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| cycling                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| exercise                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| scenery                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| peace and quiet         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| taking children to play | <input type="checkbox"/> |

|                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| fishing                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| picnicking                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| forest events and festivals | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| activities for children     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| activities for families     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| wildlife spotting           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other:                      | <input type="text"/>     |

**3 How would you rate the following at the woodland sites that you visit?**

|                                 | Poor                     | Good                     | Very Good                | Don't Know               |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| landscape maintenance/tree care | <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"/> |
| interpretation boards/displays  | <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"/> |
| personal safety                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| signage/way marking             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

|  |   | Yes | No | Don't Know |
|--|---|-----|----|------------|
| 4  | Woodland cover is now at 20% with a target of 33%. Are there parts of the Forest which have enough trees now? |     |    |            |
| If yes, which parts have enough trees now: <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div> |   |     |    |            |

**Please turn over...**

5 In what ways do you think your local community has benefitted from the Forest's creation?

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| more things to do/places to visit<br>better places for walking<br>more wildlife to see<br>good for children<br>more attractive setting in which to live<br>more opportunities to meet neighbours | <input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/> | brings tourists to the area<br>more jobs<br>community spirit from involvement<br>civic pride in the place<br>increased house values<br>other: | <input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div>  |  |   |  |

6 How would you sum up the impact of the Forest's creation on you personally?

7 What if any concerns do you have about the growth of the Forest in the future?

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| woodland not being managed<br>narrowing of paths<br>loss of trees to built development<br>none | <input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/> | blocking of views<br>shading of buildings<br>other: | <input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div>                        |  |   |  |

8 The National Forest Company is keen to encourage local people in the Forests' creation and future development.  
How would you like to get involved in the future?

tree planting   
looking after the woodland on your doorstep   
practical conservation work   
health walks   
helping with forest events & festivals

guiding visitors   
wildlife/heritage surveys   
walk/cycle leader   
not interested

other:

Any other comments:

Gender  
Male   
Female

Age group  
under 20   
20-44   
45-65   
over 65

Postcode

**Thank you**

Please visit [www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org) for more information about The National Forest and the results of the survey.

## Appendix D: Questionnaire Results

### Community Perceptions of The National Forest 2014

|            |     |
|------------|-----|
| Viewed     | 260 |
| Incomplete | 0   |
| Complete   | 181 |
|            |     |

Question 1 - Which parts of The National Forest do you visit most?

|                                       |       |    |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----|
| Rosliston Forestry Centre             | 43.1% | 78 |
| Conkers                               | 37.6% | 68 |
| Bradgate Park/Beacon Hill             | 33.7% | 61 |
| Moira Furnace                         | 32.6% | 59 |
| Calke Abbey                           | 30.9% | 56 |
| Canals                                | 30.4% | 55 |
| Foremark Reservoir                    | 29.3% | 53 |
| Sence Valley Forest Park              | 22.7% | 41 |
| Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre              | 20.4% | 37 |
| Sarah's Wood                          | 17.1% | 31 |
| Thornton Reservoir                    | 16.6% | 30 |
| National Memorial Arboretum           | 12.2% | 22 |
| Diana and Tunnel Woods                | 12.2% | 22 |
| Donisthorpe Forest Park               | 12.2% | 22 |
| Donnington Lake                       | 10.5% | 19 |
| National Forest Adventure Farm        | 9.9%  | 18 |
| All over                              | 4.4%  | 8  |
| Do not/cannot visit the woodlands     | 0.0%  | 0  |
| Other, please specify                 | 8.8%  | 16 |
| Total respondents                     | 181   |    |
| Respondents who skipped this question | 0.0%  |    |

Question 2 - What are your three main reasons for visiting those parts of The National Forest?

|                             |       |     |
|-----------------------------|-------|-----|
| Walking                     | 58.6% | 106 |
| Exercise                    | 37.0% | 67  |
| Scenery                     | 32.0% | 58  |
| Walking the dog             | 32.0% | 58  |
| Peace and quiet             | 21.0% | 38  |
| Cycling                     | 16.0% | 29  |
| Taking children to play     | 15.5% | 28  |
| Wildlife spotting           | 14.4% | 26  |
| Activities for children     | 10.5% | 19  |
| Activities for families     | 8.3%  | 15  |
| Picnicking                  | 7.2%  | 13  |
| Forest events and festivals | 5.5%  | 10  |
| Fishing                     | 1.1%  | 2   |

|                                       |      |    |
|---------------------------------------|------|----|
| Other, please specify                 | 7.2% | 13 |
| Total respondents                     | 181  |    |
| Respondents who skipped this question | 0.0% |    |

Question 3 - How would you rate the following at the woodland sites that you visit?

|                                       | Poor |    | Good  |     | Very good |    | Don't know |    |
|---------------------------------------|------|----|-------|-----|-----------|----|------------|----|
| Landscape maintenance / tree care     | 2.8% | 5  | 51.9% | 94  | 42.0%     | 76 | 3.3%       | 6  |
| Path maintenance                      | 7.2% | 13 | 59.7% | 108 | 28.7%     | 52 | 4.4%       | 8  |
| Interpretation boards / displays      | 5.5% | 10 | 49.7% | 90  | 28.7%     | 52 | 16.0%      | 29 |
| Car parking areas                     | 5.0% | 9  | 56.4% | 102 | 32.0%     | 58 | 6.6%       | 12 |
| Personal safety                       | 3.3% | 6  | 48.6% | 88  | 34.3%     | 62 | 13.8%      | 25 |
| Signage / way marking                 | 5.5% | 10 | 54.7% | 99  | 24.9%     | 45 | 14.9%      | 27 |
| Total respondents                     | 181  |    |       |     |           |    |            |    |
| Respondents who skipped this question | 0.0% |    |       |     |           |    |            |    |

Question 4 - Woodland cover is now at 20% with a target of 33%. Are there parts of the Forest which have enough trees now?

|  |       |    |
|--|-------|----|
| Yes  | 19.3% | 35 |
| No   | 28.2% | 51 |
| Don't know                                 | 52.5% | 95 |
| If yes, which parts have enough trees now: | 17.1% | 31 |
| Total respondents                          | 181   |    |
| Respondents who skipped this question      | 0.0%  |    |

Question 5 - In what ways do you think your local community has benefited from the Forest's creation?

|  |       |     |
|--|-------|-----|
| Better places for walking                | 81.8% | 148 |
| More things to do / places to visit      | 75.7% | 137 |
| More wildlife to see                     | 71.3% | 129 |
| Good for children                        | 70.2% | 127 |
| More attractive setting in which to live | 54.7% | 99  |
| Brings tourism to the area               | 46.4% | 84  |
| Civic pride in the place                 | 33.7% | 61  |
| Community spirit from involvement        | 26.5% | 48  |
| More jobs                                | 24.9% | 45  |
| More opportunities to meet neighbours    | 16.6% | 30  |
| Increased house values                   | 14.4% | 26  |
| Other, please specify                    | 5.5%  | 10  |
| Total respondents                        | 181   |     |
| Respondents who skipped this question    | 0.0%  |     |

Question 6 - How would you sum up the impact of the Forest's creation on you personally?

|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Total respondents                     | 132 |
| Respondents who skipped this question | 49  |

Question 7 - What if any concerns do you have about the growth of the Forest in the future?

|                                       |       |    |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----|
| Loss of trees to built development    | 39.8% | 72 |
| Woodland not being managed            | 33.1% | 60 |
| None                                  | 30.9% | 56 |
| Narrowing of paths                    | 20.4% | 37 |
| Blocking of views                     | 9.9%  | 18 |
| Shading of buildings                  | 5.5%  | 10 |
| Other, please specify                 | 8.8%  | 16 |
| Total respondents                     | 181   |    |
| Respondents who skipped this question | 0.0%  |    |

Question 8 - The National Forest Company is keen to encourage local people in the Forests' creation and future development. How would you like to get involved in the future?

|   |       |    |
|---|-------|----|
| Health walks                                | 26.5% | 48 |
| Tree planting                               | 24.9% | 45 |
| Looking after the woodland on your doorstep | 16.6% | 30 |
| Helping with forest events and festivals    | 16.0% | 29 |
| Practical conservation work                 | 12.2% | 22 |
| Wildlife / heritage surveys                 | 10.5% | 19 |
| Walk / cycle leader                         | 8.3%  | 15 |
| Guiding visitors                            | 7.7%  | 14 |
| Not interested                              | 49.7% | 90 |
| Other, please specify                       | 11.0% | 20 |
| Total respondents                           | 181   |    |
| Respondents who skipped this question       | 0.0%  |    |

Question 9 - Any other comments:

|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Total respondents                     | 169 |
| Respondents who skipped this question | 12  |

Question 10 - Gender

|                                       |       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| Male                                  | 44.8% | 81  |
| Female                                | 55.2% | 100 |
| Total respondents                     | 181   |     |
| Respondents who skipped this question | 0.0%  |     |

Question 11 - Age group

|                                       |       |    |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----|
| Under 20                              | 9.4%  | 17 |
| 20 - 44                               | 36.5% | 66 |
| 45 - 65                               | 34.8% | 63 |
| Over 65                               | 19.3% | 35 |
| Total respondents                     | 181   |    |
| Respondents who skipped this question | 0.0%  |    |

Question 12 - Postcode:

|                                       |      |  |
|---------------------------------------|------|--|
| Total respondents                     | 181  |  |
| Respondents who skipped this question | 0.0% |  |