

RAISE: Cumbria Community Forest Plan

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report asks Members to adopt the Cumbria Community Forest 2025 – 2050 so that it can be included in the next Local Plan review and development of the Lake District National Park Partnership Plan 2026 – 2031.

Recommendation that:	a	Members agree to adopt the Cumbria Community Forest Plan 2025-2050
	b	It is included in the future Local Plan review and development of the Lake District National Park Partnership Plan 2026 – 2031
	c	Members provide comments on the Forest Plan for inclusion in its next review

2. Background

- 2.1. Established in 2021, the Cumbria Community Forest, led by RAISE, is one of 15 Community Forests in England. This paper presents the first Community Forest Plan for Cumbria, setting out its vision and goals for the period 2025 to 2050. It includes a five-year action plan for major programme of tree and woodland establishment in the county and National Park. See Annex 1: Cumbria Community Forest Plan.
- 2.2. RAISE and the Cumbria Community Forest Partnership, which comprises local authorities and Protected Landscapes, statutory and non-statutory environmental organisations including several woodland delivery organisations and local communities, supported the development and creation of the Plan.
- 2.3. The Forest Plan was approved on 26 March 2025 by the Community Forest Trust board of trustees. It will be published but is subject to ongoing review and updating with feedback, for example by going through the processes of local authority adoption. Delivery of the Cumbria Community Forest Plan will be in partnership with local government, statutory bodies, environmental NGOs, woodland creation partners, landowners and community organisations.
- 2.4. The Forest Plan aims to deliver a range of environmental, social and economic benefits. Since 2021, RAISE has delivered 854 hectares of trees and woodland planting increasing this habitat cover from 12.77% to 13.01%. Including planting more than 144,000 trees and providing employment opportunities in 54 green jobs. Five Community Forest schemes have been delivered within the Lake District National Park with planting mixed native broadleaved species to create hedgerows, wood-pasture and different sizes of new woodland areas.
- 2.5. Forest Plans are not statutory but are strongly encouraged by Defra to be adopted by local authorities and can be used to inform the LDNPA Local Plan and Lake District National Park Partnership Plan.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. The Forest Plan relates to national land use planning, environmental protection, climate change and net zero, water, public health and employment and economic policies. Of relevance are:
 - a) The National Planning Policy Framework, setting out how a Community Forest Plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications
 - b) Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework 2024, for contributing to target seven: to increase tree canopy and woodland cover
 - c) Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy, creating a delivery mechanism for woodland nature recovery in the county
- 3.2. The Forest Plan will support the delivery of the tree canopy and woodland cover targets set out in the Lake District National Park Partnership (LDNPP) Plan and the LDNPP Nature Recovery Plan.
- 3.3. By adopting the Forest Plan there will be opportunities for including it in the next Local Plan review.

4. Options

- 4.1.
 - a) Members agree to adopt the Cumbria Community Forest Plan, include it in the next Local Plan review and development of the Lake District National Park Partnership Plan 2026 – 2031; and provide feedback for inclusion in its next review.
 - b) Members propose an alternative approach.

5. Proposals

- 5.1. Option a) is recommended to provide opportunities for it to be utilised in the next Local Plan review and development of the Partnership Plan 2026 – 2031.

6. Stakeholder Consultation

- 6.1. Raise has led the co-creation of this Forest Plan, with input and scrutiny from the Cumbria Community Forest Partnership and commissioned experts. It has evolved the Forest Plan in consultation with local stakeholders, through engagement of under-served communities within a framework determined by England's Community Forests. Extensive partner engagement has also informed the creation of the Forest Plan.

7. Demonstrating Best Value

- a) Challenged – Forest Plans are not statutory but are strongly encouraged by Defra to be adopted by local authorities and can be used to inform the LDNPA Local Plan and Lake District National Park Partnership Plan
- b) Compared – adoption of the Forest Plan is consistent with the approach taken by each of the Community Forests in England's Community Forest Network
- c) Consulted – comprehensive consultation has been undertaken
- d) Compete – not relevant

8. Finance Considerations

8.1. There are no significant financial issues arising from this report.

9. Risk

9.1

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
Members do not Adopt the Cumbria Community Forest Plan	An alternative approach to support the Community Forest will need to be agreed	An achievable and realistic plan is already agreed
Members give feedback on the Cumbria Community Forest Plan that recommends change	Cumbria Community Forest will take on feedback and consider a revision to update the Plan	Presentation at the Committee meeting from the Cumbria Community Forest will give time for feedback

10. Legal Considerations

10.1 Community Forest expectations The LDNPA's adoption of the Forest Plan will be a formal endorsement of its strategic alignment with the LDNPP Plan's objectives and future local plan review.

11. Human Resources

11.1 The Forest Plan is overseen by the Cumbria Community Forest Partnership, of which the LDNPA is a member and supports with one colleague for quarterly meetings.

12. Diversity Implications

12.1 The Plan prioritises areas of greatest need, contributing to tackling environmental, health, and educational inequalities within the footprint of the Forest. Furthermore, the Plan promotes diverse community engagement and addresses the barriers to accessing greenspace.

13. Sustainability

13.1 In itself, there are no significant environmental, economic and social effect arising from agreeing this document. It is consistent with UK Forestry Standard, supports the delivery of the Cumbria LNRS and Zero Carbon Cumbria Decarbonisation Plan, by contributing to woodland creation targets.

Background Papers
 Author/Post

Annex 1: Cumbria Community Forest Plan
 Tim Duckmanton, Team Leader Strategy and Environment

Responsible Director
 Date Written

Steve Ratcliffe, Director of Sustainable Development
 28 March 2025

Annex 1: Cumbria Community Forest Plan