

England's community forests



Workshop

The annual conference of England's Community Forests discussed the development of a new Forest Charter by Woodland Trust, working with partners across the UK.

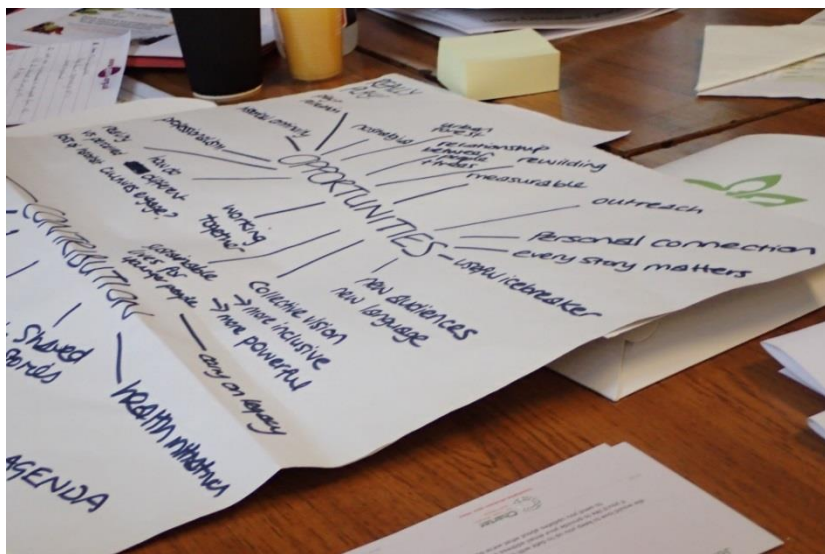
<http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/news/new-vision-launched-at-largest-ever-englands-community-forestry-conference/>

The Charter website is here – <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/tree-charter/>

Woodland Trust's Chief Executive, Becky Speight, presented the Charter at the conference – <http://www.cheshirecommunityfoundation.org.uk/helping-you-give/warrington-charities-trust/>

Our workshop looked at three specific questions raised in the Vision;

- 1 What are the opportunities that the Charter might provide
- 2 What are the benefits that a new Charter might bring
- 3 How might we contribute to the Charter



At the heart of the work to develop a new Forest Charter is a drive to gather stories about people's experience of trees, whether that is a favourite tree, or a memory of an event etc.

AS the workshop was predominantly of people in the tree and forest sector, we gathered stories about the journey each of us has made to get to the point where we are working in this sector.

These stories were written up and sent to Woodland Trust to be compiled onto their website.



Chestnuts!

“My childhood was spent in Berkshire, close to woodland with lots of Sweet Chestnut trees. We often collected the chestnuts with family and with friends. One memory is of collecting two carrier bags full of chestnuts one December. We took them home and laid them out on the carpet to dry. It was a new carpet. We did not realise that the sweet chestnuts also contained lots of creepy crawlies including some very fat maggots.

So, the smell of wet woodland, sweet chestnuts bursting out of their shells and a carpet full of maggots is a vivid memory for me, along with all the good times walking and cycling around the woods“

One of many stories from the conference.

Opportunities

The feedback from the workshop was overwhelmingly supportive of capturing stories from across communities and cultures, recording these stories provides an opportunity to engage new audiences, to reminds people of their connections, current or past to woodland – or where there us no connection to maybe lead some reflection on why.

A charter can provide a unity of voice, empowering communities and help to develop our woodland culture – a link back to the Independent Panel on Forestry report and the ECF Conference 2015.



Figure 1 Feedback Wordle

Benefits

It was felt there should be a physical Charter that all this work (more widely than the conference) contributes to and that this would help to get trees and woodland back on the agenda politically and provide a catalyst for action.

The Charter may help to set standards for tree management targets and make “trees matter more”



Figure 2 benefits wordle

Contributions

Encouraging more people to provide more stories was seen as a major contribution participants could make to the Charter.

Sharing case studies and helping to reach new audiences was seen as important. Reaching grassroots and policy makers were seen as important but a challenging stretch of resources.

Charter Champions can spread messages locally and help to promote the benefits of woodlands and trees.