

Hedley Fell



volunteering & working together

Project Summary

A project of large-scale landscape change.

Background

In its Forest Plan, the Great North Forest identified several areas with potential for large-scale woodland creation. However, the Forest recognised that the standard mechanisms for creating new woodland were ill-suited to this vision, being generally small-scale and poorly integrated.

So the Forest followed a new approach, working over several years with landowners and residents on the concept of a larger, more cohesive community forest. This approach resulted in the creation of 765 hectares of new woodlands of which Hedley Fell, an area of urban-rural fringe on the boundary of Gateshead and Durham, is one of the largest.

The Project

At Hedley Fell, an opencast mine was restored to woodland and wetland, with local school and community groups helping with tree planting and wildlife projects, funded by local landfill tax. Gateshead Council acquired neighbouring land for heathland re-creation (as part of the Durham BAP), and an adjacent farmer was helped to diversify into woodland and equestrian activities.

What has been achieved?

- The landscape has been rejuvenated, with intensive agriculture and opencast mining replaced by multi-purpose woodland, wetland and meadows.
- The farmer has started a farm shop and offers recreational activities, adding to the critical mass of tourist attractions in the area.

- Public access has increased, with new routes to Gateshead. Way markers and artistic seats have been installed.
- Local people have been heavily involved in educational and community activities.
- Habitat and biodiversity has improved, including national and regional BAP target species, e.g. red squirrel, grey partridge and brown hare.

KEY FACTS	
DATES	1990 — ongoing
Partners	Great North Forest, Woodland Trust, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, private landowner
Costs	£79,700
Funders	Countryside Agency, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, Northumbrian Water, Environmental Trust
Size/scale	1.25 km ²