



# 1 Introduction and key messages

## The purpose of this pack

This pack presents the Forestry Commission's key messages on climate change. It draws together the information available from the Forestry Commission, Forest Research and other relevant organisations, to explain in one document the role of trees, woods and forests in tackling climate change.

## Who is this pack aimed at?

The pack is primarily aimed at Forestry Commission staff, to help them communicate the key messages about forestry and climate change, but it will also be of interest to anyone who would like to find out more about these issues.



## Key messages: a summary

Trees, woods and forests can provide part of the solution to limiting climate change, and to helping society to adapt to the changes that we all face. We must help our trees, woods and forests to adapt and become resilient to the changing climate.

- Climate change resulting from human activity is a reality. Forests and forestry can be an important and attractive part of the solution.
- On a global scale, we must protect and manage the woods and forests that we already have as well as planting new forests, to 'mitigate' climate change.
- Cutting down trees is not always bad for the environment. As long as woodlands are managed in a sustainable way, there can be a multitude of benefits: for the climate, for people and for wildlife.

- Wood is a smart choice. Timber is renewable and can replace other materials that require much larger fossil fuel inputs for their production. It can also replace fossil fuels directly in the form of renewable energy, or woodfuel.
- Trees can help us to adapt to a changing climate. They provide shade, alleviate flooding, and create a valuable wildlife habitat.
- Our forests are changing due to climate change and we need to plan ahead to help them adapt.

The Forestry Commission is working to provide the answers and best practical solutions based on sound evidence. Through its management of the public forest estate, and its research and promotional work, the Forestry Commission is already playing an important role in combating climate change, and in helping our forests adapt to the changing climate.

*This pack provides more information about each of these key messages.*

## The Convenient Truth

The 'A Convenient Truth' pack and DVD produced by the Forestry Commission in 2007, breaks these messages down into six actions that we can take:

**Protect** what we already have

**Reduce** deforestation

**Restore** the world's forest cover

**Use** wood for energy

**Replace** other materials with wood

**Plan** to adapt to our changing climate.



## A note about sustainable living

Living sustainably by reducing waste, recycling, reducing consumption and generally adopting a 'greener lifestyle' are all really important ways in which we can reduce our impact on the environment. However, sustainable living is dealt with extensively elsewhere by other organisations, and

the messages are not unique to the Forestry Commission. See for example: [www.direct.gov.uk/greenerliving](http://www.direct.gov.uk/greenerliving). Therefore this publication focuses on the unique role of trees, woodlands and forests in regulating our climate and helping us mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

## What do the UK public think about forests and climate change?

The Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2009 included questions about climate change, and the answers identified clear areas that required more communication. For example:

- 52% of people said that cutting down trees and forests makes climate change worse, even if they are replanted. A further 26% were unsure.
- Only 43% of people thought that using wood as a building material was better for climate change than concrete or steel.
- 36% of people thought that using wood as fuel makes climate change worse, because it releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere,

but 48% of people agreed that using wood as fuel was better than using fuels such as coal and gas.

- 17% of people thought that trees should not be felled in any circumstances, even if they are replaced.
- 49% of people thought that the UK could offset all its greenhouse gas emissions by planting more trees.

The full survey can be found at: [www.forestry.gov.uk/statistics](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/statistics). Some of the misconceptions identified by this report have helped to shape the information provided in this pack. This should arm Forestry Commission staff with the information required to address common questions or concerns about these subjects.