

Growing natural capital: Morgan Sindall and Blenheim Estate land to create new woodlands

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The construction and regeneration Group is to create nine new woodlands, planting more than a quarter of a million trees, in partnership with the Blenheim Estate in Oxfordshire.



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Chief Executive John Morgan

The 25-year project will transform the land as part of an ambitious series of sustainability initiatives.

The Group has signed an agreement with Blenheim Estate for the project to be delivered in conjunction with Grown In Britain, an independent not-for-profit that it helped set up in 2011, focusing on revitalising and investing in woodlands and certifying British wood products.

"This exciting project is about more than our quest to achieve net zero – though that remains our very valid goal," said Chief Executive John Morgan. "This is about creating a legacy with an environmental net gain and the creation of substantial natural capital, across the board."

"Our woodlands will provide measurable, demonstrable gains in terms of soil, air and water quality, not to mention the wellbeing benefits for all those who can come and enjoy the forest as it grows."

Commenting on the new partnership, Blenheim Estates Director Roy Cox said: "One of our strategic aims in the next five years is to not only offset our own carbon to be net zero, but also to help others do the same.

"This partnership with Morgan Sindall is a first for us and is incredibly exciting in terms of both scale and what it will deliver in improving our estate, the environment and surrounding communities," he added.

Long-term thinking

Though forests offer numerous benefits – including absorbing and storing carbon from the atmosphere, regulating temperature and cleaning the air, the UK is one of the least wooded areas of Europe, with less than 12% woodland cover compared to around 44% for Europe.

Morgan Sindall will help fund, design and create the woodlands, in collaboration with Cotswolds-based forestry company, Nicholsons.

The woods will incorporate 28 carefully selected varieties of trees – including Hornbeam, Lime, Sycamore, Wild Cherry, Oak, Norway Maple, Alder and Beech in the mixed woodlands with an understorey of woody shrub species including Hazel, Hawthorn, Viburnums, Euonymus and Dogwoods to create a diverse and self-sustaining eco-system. Experimental species will also be included to assess climate resilience and a small percentage of conifer planted to provide winter habitats for wildlife.

