



— THE —
HEART
— OF —
ENGLAND
FOREST

OUR IMPACT 2021 /22

At a time when our work has never been more needed, the Forest continued to grow with your support. Look at what we achieved together.

A message from our chair



In a year that we continued to manage the ongoing impact of, and uncertainty around, COVID-19, the Forest continued to not only grow but thrive thanks to the resilience and dedication shown by the Forest team and our volunteers.

A highlight was planting the 2 millionth tree, marking an exciting and important milestone in our journey to create and conserve a 30,000 acre Forest to benefit the environment, wildlife, and people for generations to come.

We acquired 209 acres of land, and continued our work creating and enhancing woodland, wetland, grassland, and farmland that make up the rich mosaic of habitats in the Forest. 90,000 trees were planted at two new sites, and a further 25,000 hedgerow trees and shrubs were planted. We have now established 4,450 acres of native broadleaf woodland.

The Forest we are planting and protecting here in the heart of the country will not only benefit our local communities, but it will also help to address some of the most pressing social and environmental challenges we face as a nation. With this in mind, and with your help, we are more focused than ever on achieving our end goal.

The continued support we have received has never been more needed, so I would like to thank all our supporters, volunteers, donors, corporate partners, and trusts who have so generously helped ensure our important work can continue.

Jon Snow
Chair, Heart of England Forest

The year in numbers

1 New charity website launched

1.5 Miles of waymarked walking route created at College Wood

2 Eco-friendly holiday cottages developed



3 Themed audio trails opened

6 Young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) on our Supported Internship Programme

10 Longhorn cows added to our conservation grazing, free range cattle herd

18 Hectares of grassland enhanced with 20 species of wildflowers and grasses

100 Percent of Forestry Apprentices and Forestry Interns employed

300 Acres of woodland created

363 Animal and plant species recorded at our 1st BioBlitz



5,502 Learning days for children and adults delivered

10,078 Volunteer hours given, the equivalent of more than 5 full time members of staff

£249k Grant secured from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund

2m An exciting tree planting milestone reached!



Our continued commitment to investing in entry level training and development opportunities is vital, not just for the future of the Forest, but to help address the wider green skills shortage in the UK. We employed 100% of our Forestry Apprentices and Forestry Interns from the 2021/22 intake, further supporting these individuals with their forestry careers.



“Since starting as a Forestry Intern in March 2021, I have had many memorable experiences, from qualifying in chainsaw operations to helping grow the Forest during tree planting season. One personal highlight was identifying a green sandpiper while surveying Oak Wood’s new wetlands as part of my intern project, a species not previously recorded here before. Being offered a full time position in December as an Assistant Forest Ranger, highlights the value of the skills I gained during the internship to progress within the field of conservation forestry.”

Melissa | Assistant Forest Ranger

Our weekly sessions with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) schools Welcombe Hills and Vale of Evesham, and urban schools Ark Kings Academy and Rednal Junior School in Birmingham, have enabled us to make an impact with disadvantaged pupils, improving their wellbeing, knowledge, and connection to nature.



“One of the topics we have explored with Welcombe Hills pupils has been human impacts on the environment, applying this to Gorcott Hill and how it may affect the wildlife living here. It has been lovely to see the pupils excited about the sessions, asking lots of questions about the woodland and what exciting creatures they may see. It has also been great to see students who were shy at the beginning gain confidence and become chattier as they’ve spent more time in the Forest.”

Ellie | Gorcott Education Officer

Our army of fantastic volunteers help with all aspects of creating and conserving the Forest. This year, a staggering 10,078 volunteer hours were given, which equates to almost five Full Time Equivalent staff members. This is a record number for the charity, and even more impressive considering the continued COVID-19 restrictions.



“I started volunteering as I wanted to help be part of the solution, tackling climate change and addressing habitat loss. No matter the activity (and weather conditions) it is always fun, everyone mucks in and there is a real sense of people coming together to make a difference. Personally, they’ve inspired me to make a career change to the environmental industry. Volunteering with the Heart of England Forest exemplifies the fact we can all do something today, however small, that collectively makes a huge difference for the future.”

Leon | Regular volunteer

We were awarded funding from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) for an 18 month project at Gorcott Hill. One of the main goals of the project is to restore and enhance the habitats and wildlife that already exist at the 62-acre site near Redditch, and to help achieve this we boosted our biodiversity team by recruiting a Gorcott Biodiversity Officer.



“Over the last year I have had the opportunity to learn from both external and internal experts within their field, and my identification skills have dramatically improved. I have nurtured my passion for flora and have focused on improving my knowledge. A particular highlight was the number of species observed during the Honeybourne reptile transect, including slow worms, common lizards, and grass snakes. Getting to share this knowledge with our Friends of the Forest whilst leading an exclusive guided walk for them was fantastic.”

Tasha | Gorcott Biodiversity Officer

The story so far

- 2 million trees planted across 4,450 acres since the charity began
- These newly created woodlands join a mosaic of habitats in the Forest including mature and ancient woodland, grassland, heathland, farmland and wetland, **to benefit the environment, wildlife and people**
- A Forest around 7,000 acres strong – that's 23% of the journey towards our 30,000 acre goal
- More than a new woodland for the region, the Forest is already an **incredible national asset for the country**



To find out how you can get involved in our exciting and vital mission to create and conserve a Forest that is here for life, visit www.heartofenglandforest.org



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