

OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (EDI) ACROSS THE CHARITY

- The Heart of England Forest Board of trustees has adopted the Charity Governance Code and committed to EDI as one of its two priority areas of work this year, providing leadership to the charity. This has included Board training, and a commitment to engage external expertise to support the charity to develop an effective EDI strategy, linking directly to the charity's mission and objectives.
- All senior managers have committed to a series of training sessions to understand further the impacts of unconscious bias on our work and the way we all operate as individuals, and to learn more about dignity in the workplace, to enable us to lead and model a positive and inclusive culture.
- We have committed to roll out EDI training to all staff this year. As a provider of supported internships - year-long placements for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) – we have worked with charity partners Think Forward to deliver inclusion and respect training to enable us to further understand and support our young people on the programme.
- We have commenced strategy planning for our key areas of work, looking at how we can focus on improving EDI and making the work of our charity more appealing and accessible to a wider range of audiences. We have undertaken this work in communications, fundraising, HR, volunteering, and commercial development, with further work planned to widen this scope across the remainder of the charity's work during 2022/23.
- We have set up our Supported Internship Programme, a year-long placement for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) – to provide training and quality work experience placements to support young people to develop employability skills, with the aim of entering employment.
- We have developed our new tree nursery as a social enterprise, which will be staffed by adults with SEND, providing a pipeline of real employment opportunities for our supported interns to consider.
- We have developed an all access trail and car parking facility within the Forest at Morgrove Coppice, to allow better access to the natural world for people with limited mobility, parents and carers with prams, wheelchair users, etc.
- We have set up a forestry internship programme – a year long, paid internship which allows young people, or people changing career, to gain training and experience in all aspects of social forestry. The internship covers external accredited training, such as chainsaw use and tractor driving, as well as a range of inhouse training spanning biodiversity surveying, tree identification, public access work, etc. The forestry industry is traditionally a male dominated, aging profession, and we are working hard to change the image and address the skills shortage for the sector. 100% of our forestry interns have moved into paid employment with the Heart of England Forest if they wanted to stay, and the remainder have gone on to successful paid employment elsewhere in the sector.
- We are also one of the first organisations in the country to deliver the forestry apprenticeship, again as an important mechanism to address the skills gap and improve diversity within the sector.

- We have opened our first accessible holiday cottage, allowing people with limited mobility to stay in the Forest. The holiday cottage has disabled access including a bedroom and wetroom on the ground floor, and we are considering accessibility and EDI in the design of all new building projects.
- We are a Living Wage Foundation accredited employer, meaning that all our staff and contractors are paid at least the Real Living Wage. We feel that it is important to offer a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and want to ensure that finance and background are not barriers to coming to work for us.
- We have improved the monitoring process within our recruitment practices, using blind applications for shortlisting, and a multiple people recruitment panel.

Our initial actions have helped us to start on the journey and have open and honest conversations about the subject of diversity and inclusion. We have much work still to do and look forward to working with others to learn and progress.