

## A message from our Chief Executive



As we emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic and life started to get back to some sense of normality, we were hit with the cost-of-living crisis which presents different challenges.

We were heartened to see less of an impact on our fundraising income this year than anticipated and are proud that permissive access in the Forest was further expanded, giving our visitors more space to connect with nature and escape from their day-to-day stresses.

Once again, the Forest has grown and along with it the charity team that cares for it. Thanks to our expert team and wonderful volunteers, 127,748 native trees and shrubs were planted across 233 acres in five areas of the Forest. Through acquisitions we also added to the mature and ancient woodland, which now totals over 600 acres, being protected as part of the Forest mosaic.

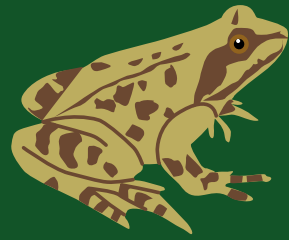
Important as they are, the Forest is more than just trees, and this year we made great progress with our wetland and pond creation at Netherstead, as well as habitat management and enhancement at Gorcott Hill, improving conditions for wildlife and maximising the potential of our Forest sites for mitigating the effects of climate change.

Despite challenging times, thanks to your support we continue to make great strides towards our end goal of a 30,000-acre Forest to benefit the environment, wildlife, and people, both now and for hundreds of years to come.

**BETH**

*Beth Brook*  
Chief Executive, Heart of England Forest

**1** new Local Wildlife Site (LWS) – Gorcott Hill Wood



**4** ponds created at Netherstead

**27** events held in the Forest

**50** acres restored and enhanced at Gorcott Hill



**14** school partners

**77** members in our flying flock

**800** species recorded during surveys



**900** kilograms of seeds collected from trees in the Forest

**1,115** young people visited the Forest for the first time

**2,300** attendees at events



**5,708** learning days for children and adults delivered

**11,144** volunteer hours given, the equivalent of more than 5 full time members of staff

**127,748** native trees and shrubs planted

**£499,446** funding from the Trees Call to Action Fund (TCAF)

## The story so far

We are here for life. Establishing and growing the Forest on land that we have purchased to ensure it is safe and protected for future generations.

The Forest is more than just trees; it is home to an incredible array of habitats, including new tree planting, mature and ancient woodland, grassland, heathland, farmland, and wetland, that enable animals, plants, and people to thrive.

Our work creating biodiverse habitats that support not just wildlife, but human life, will give us all the best chance of adapting to our changing climate.

As the Forest grows, so too will the benefits to both our health and that of the natural world.



To find out how you can support us and be part of an incredible journey that will benefit people and planet, both now and for hundreds of years to come, visit [www.heartofenglandforest.org](http://www.heartofenglandforest.org)



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Company no. 04309564

Chris's expertise has helped build the biodiversity team's skill base and their ability to deliver our Optimising Biodiversity strategy, from running training sessions for us to his work with AiDASH which is enabling the development of new technologies, using the Forest as a pilot area, testing different AI approaches to monitoring long-term habitat change at a landscape-scale.



Chris | Senior Ecologist for AiDASH

*"I have worked with the charity's staff and volunteers over the years at BioBlitzes, delivering training sessions, conducting hedgerow, habitat, and grassland surveys, and recently woodland carbon assessments at Local Wildlife Sites in the Forest. I enjoy being involved with the Heart of England Forest and have personally taken an interest in how it has grown and developed. It's just a great community of wildlife enthusiasts."*

Our event programme, which encourages people to spend time in the Forest, continues to grow. This year we held 27 events with 2,300 attendees who gave an average event feedback score of 9.4 out of 10. A longstanding donor and regular event attendee, Ann likes how the charity's staff and other experts share their knowledge and expertise and enjoys being with other like-minded people.



Ann | event attendee

*"I love the wide variety of events on offer – walks to learn more about the Forest, specialist sessions run by experts like bird ringing, and events which give the opportunity to take part in data gathering exercises, such as the BioBlitz. For me, the most satisfying thing is learning more about the environment in which I live, and about the huge contribution that the Heart of England Forest is making to benefit future generations."*

Steve was recruited as the charity's first Chief Operating Officer to oversee the effective and compliant running of the organisation as it continues to grow. The senior management team has identified areas of focus throughout the year to help improve many areas of governance, including financial analysis, health and safety, facilities management, and financial controls.



Steve | Chief Operating Officer

*"I'm excited to join the charity in this new role to help support and drive forward its crucial governance functions such as finance, IT and HR, to enable us to meet our ambitious objectives. Increasing efficiency in these areas gives the team more time to focus on the Forest and its habitats, and the people and wildlife it benefits, helping the charity to continue to go from strength to strength."*

Linda started volunteering with the Heart of England Forest during lockdown, carrying out ad-hoc activities such as litter picking and footpath checks which helped her to feel less isolated. She then started attending volunteering sessions more regularly and has expanded her skills with a variety of different tasks across the Forest including tree planting, pond work, and butterfly surveying.



Linda | volunteer

*"I'm particularly passionate about the seed-to-tree lifecycle and have been involved with seed picking and sowing into seed trays and seedbeds at the tree nursery, where they'll grow into saplings and eventually be planted in the Forest. Growing a Forest is really important to me and knowing that the saplings I'm planting today will be tomorrow's mature woodland makes me feel good."*



# OUR IMPACT 2022 /23

With your support, we are creating and conserving a Forest that is here for life. Look at what we achieved together.