

# Our Impact

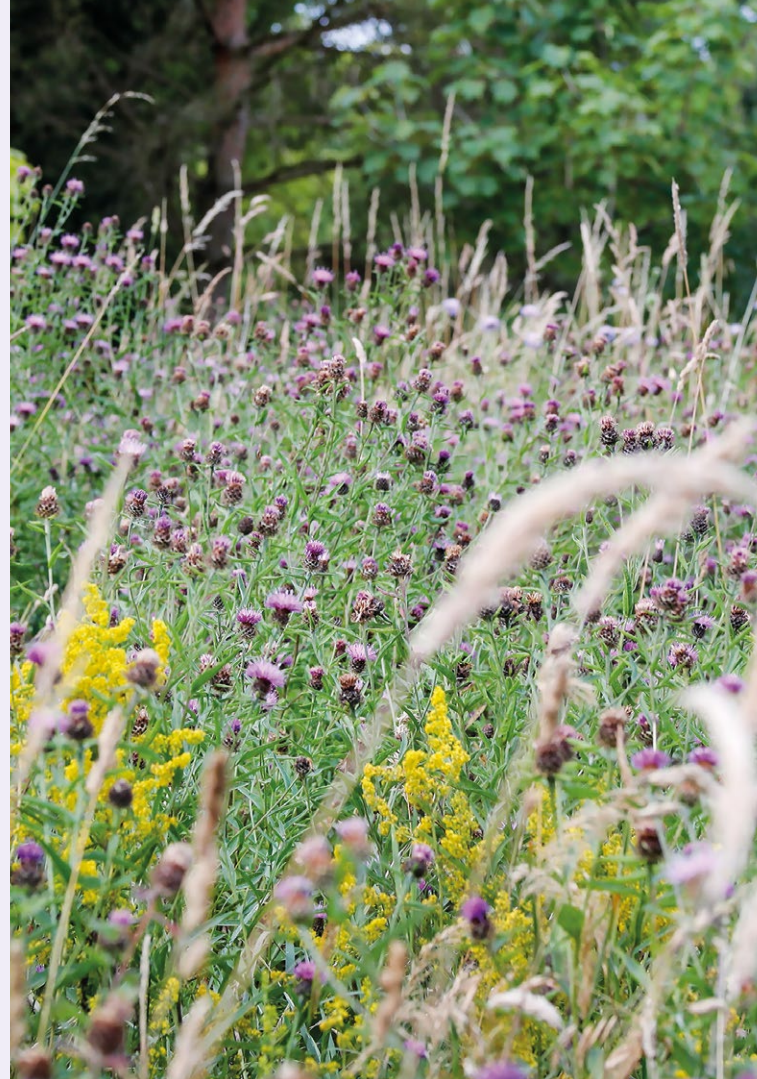
2025 2026

With your support, we are creating and caring for the largest new connected forest in England.  
Look at what we achieved together.

# Who we are

The Heart of England Forest is creating and conserving a vast, connected forest across Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Through the restoration of woodland, grassland, wetland, and other habitats, we are helping nature recover, supporting rare and threatened species across the region.

Our vision is to plant 12 million trees across 12,000 hectares. We are creating a resilient landscape for generations to come – a place where wildlife can flourish, and people can connect, engage, and get involved.



# Why our work matters

Through our landscape-scale woodland creation, nature recovery, and partnership activity, the Forest contributes to a number of national and regional commitments, including the Environmental Improvement Plan, the government's 30x30 target to protect and restore 30% of land for nature by 2030, the England Trees Action Plan, and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

We know that the work we do every day contributes significantly to positive outcomes for nature, carbon storage, climate resilience, and people's health and wellbeing. We cannot do this alone and this year we hosted visits from partners including Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust.

Our supporter base is critical for us to achieve the impacts described here, and without our corporate partners, individual supporters, funders, volunteers, and local community, none of this would be possible.



*Andy Parsons, Chief Executive*

# The year in review

This year has been one of significant progress for the Heart of England Forest. We expanded the Forest, restored habitats, strengthened partnerships, and welcomed thousands of people to experience, support, and care for the Forest. Alongside these achievements, we also laid important foundations for the future, preparing the charity for the next chapter of our long-term vision.

## Our priorities

Our focus this year remained firmly on growing and protecting the Forest. We acquired 376 hectares of land, planted more than 116,500 trees, and continued to restore habitats that will support nature recovery for generations to come. Alongside woodland creation, we invested in wetland restoration, our tree nursery production, and built partnerships that will help us generate landscape-scale environmental change well into the future.

## Our challenges

Creating a forest of this scale requires us to balance today's decisions with tomorrow's needs. During the year we continued to respond to the impacts of extreme weather, replacing trees lost during previous drought conditions, while completing one of our largest ever planting programmes despite exceptionally wet winter conditions. We also strengthened the organisation by recruiting new skills and experience into the senior team and Board of Trustees, ensuring we are well placed to deliver our long-term ambitions in an increasingly complex environmental and funding landscape.

## Our people

Our staff, volunteers, supporters, partners, funders, and local communities all played a vital role this year. Record volunteer hours, new corporate partnerships, continued support from our Friends of the Forest, and thousands of children experiencing the Forest through learning outdoors demonstrate the growing community behind our mission. Together, they are helping to build a Forest that will benefit people, wildlife, and the environment for generations to come.



# Our supporters

We simply cannot achieve all that we have without the generosity and encouragement of our Supporters. There are so many ways to support the Forest, from Friends of the Forest who give a monthly gift or one-off donation, to attending our community events and engaging with our online news and activities.

This is our opportunity to say a genuine thank you to every donor, corporate partner, organisation, trust and foundation that has invested in our work and the growth of the Forest. We are indebted to those who choose to support us.

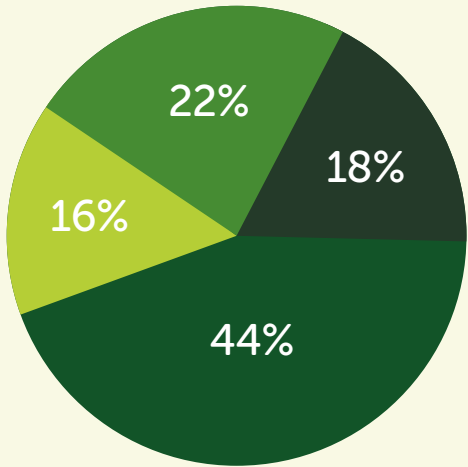


Above: Attendees and employees at the 2025 Midsummer reception

## Your support in numbers

- 1003 Friends of the Forest
- 233 people dedicated a tree
- 449 personal donations
- 1359 corporate volunteering hours
- 274 corporate employee visits
- 20 corporate partners and supporters
- 21 Trust and Foundations funding
- 2 supporters ran the London Marathon

### Fundraising income



Key:

- Trusts and Grants (16%)
- Individual donations (22%)
- Individual legacy (18%)
- Corporate support (44%)

# Legacy

Some gifts arrive quietly, but their impact echoes for generations. In 2025, the Heart of England Forest received an unexpected gift in a will from a long-standing Friend of the Forest: a neighbour who walked among the trees daily and found connection, peace and wellbeing here over many years. Their unrestricted legacy, the majority of their estate, is a profound reminder that every path maintained, every tree planted, every conversation and every welcome can create a strong sense of belonging. Gifts in wills enable the long-term care, planting and protection that our Forest needs, giving us the freedom to respond where the need is greatest. They help ensure a true legacy for the Forest, so it continues to grow for the benefit of people, wildlife and climate long into the future.

In December 2025, 100 trees were planted with us by two brothers in memory of their mother Gwen who “loved the countryside and the changing seasons”. Afterwards the brothers told us: “It was a special and memorable day, and Gwen would approve of the result.”



“I’ve always loved being outside, trees and adventures. Growing up I spent most of my time building dens and exploring. In the Forest you get away from hustle and bustle – it’s so good for your mental health. But you have to put something back in ”

– Marathon Runner Olly

“Look around and see all the things happening here – and all because of people supporting the Forest. The Heart of England Forest is a brilliant idea. It makes a better world. ”

– Michael, Friend of the Forest



Above right: Olly running the London Marathon  
Above: Brothers planting trees in memory of their mum with Forest Ranger Mel

## A Worcestershire Pomona – Traditional Orchard Restoration

Funding of £14,000 from Defra's Trees Outside Woodland Fund, delivered by the Tree Council, enabled the creation of a significant new traditional orchard in the Vale of Evesham, with 120 heritage apple, pear, plum and damson trees. This investment has helped restore an important cultural landscape, reflecting the area's rich orchard heritage while transforming former arable land into a valuable wildlife habitat.

The orchard strengthens ecological connectivity by linking neighbouring orchard sites and creating wildlife corridors for pollinators, birds and orchard dependant invertebrates. The funding supported community planting days, bringing together volunteers and local groups to participate in hands-on conservation. Planting and environmental learning increased their understanding of traditional orchards and developed a lasting sense of stewardship for its future.



### Corporate

“Environmental challenges affect everyone, so it makes sense for businesses to be part of the solution. Partnerships like ours show that commercial success and social responsibility can go hand in hand.”

– Ed Powell, Managing Director, Vectric

Our corporate partnerships have flourished this year. We were delighted to welcome employee benefits provider Wider Plan to the fold with a transformational multi-year partnership. Their long-term commitment will help shape the Forest for generations to come. Corporate support takes many forms: National Grid Electricity Distribution funded our new volunteering management system, work across The Lenches, and vital hedgerow surveys, while Gateley's generosity brought the Forest to life for children at Ark King's Academy's after-school club. We also welcomed NFU Mutual as a new partner for staff volunteering days, while Vectric, Mercedes-Benz World, and many smaller corporate partners continued their valued support.

We are hugely grateful to all our corporate partners – every partnership, large or small, helps the Forest to grow and thrive.

Left: Newly planted orchard trees with guards at Naunton Beauchamp  
Above: Wider Plan staff and members of the Forest team with the 1st tree planted at Eastern Hill

## Growing the Forest



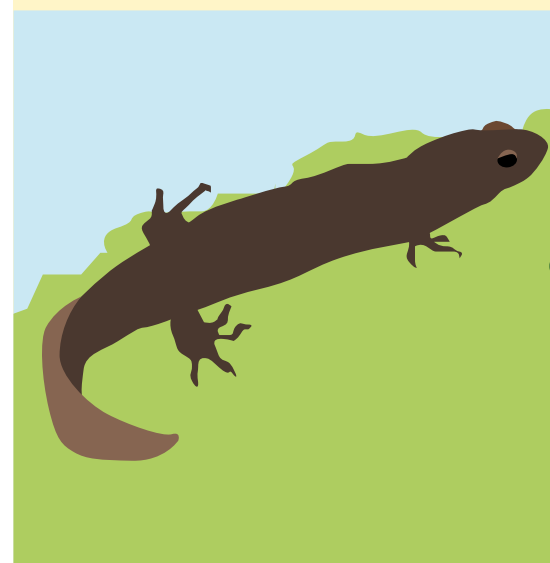
### In numbers

**376 hectares of land acquired**

across six sites, increasing the Forest's total landholding by 11.9%. This represents significant progress towards our long-term target for the scale of the Forest.

**76,746 trees supplied by our own tree nursery**

were planted out in the Forest. This is 66% of all trees planted during the winter season.



**116,500 trees planted this season**

, including the creation of approximately 50 hectares of new woodland

**7 ponds with populations of Great Crested Newts (GCN)**, bringing the total to 51 ponds across the Forest. GCN is a protected species, so by restoring and managing our ponds we are contributing to their conservation.



**64,200 trees were planted at Naunton Beauchamp**

Linking up the new woodland previously planted in phase 1 at this site – the start of large-scale habitat change.

**700 metres of new watercourse created**

as part of a wetland improvement project in partnership with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency. This will support a wide range of species including amphibians, invertebrates, and wading birds, while improving the site's resilience to both flooding and drought conditions.



## Highlights

**A community-focussed Back to Nature Pond Project** funded by the Stratford District Council Community Climate Change and Nature Recovery Fund, enabled us to deliver practical habitat management on 14 ponds, improving light penetration, removing scrub, enhancing margins with native aquatic plants, and opening them for amphibian breeding. The project exceeded its target of 10 ponds while strengthening local environmental knowledge and increasing hands-on community involvement.

Left: A volunteer clearing bulrush from around a pond

We established and enhanced orchards across three sites with the planting of 175 orchard trees, thanks to funding from the Coronation Living Heritage Fund and Defra's Trees Outside of Woodland funding, administered by the Tree Council. The variety of orchard trees – from the traditional apple, pear and stone fruit species to heritage fruits like quince and medlar – flower and fruit at slightly different times, providing a continued supply of food for pollinators and other species. All our traditional orchards were registered with the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and are now represented as part of Natural England's traditional orchard mapping project.

Right: Newly planted apple tree



## Forest Firsts

- 1 A significant grant secured from the Environment Agency (EA) will enable the transformation of two sites acquired along the River Avon:** Hillborough in Warwickshire, and Harvington Wood, in Worcestershire. This grant will cover activity including water stewardship, nature recovery, carbon sequestration, community engagement, and sensitively designed public access. A separate application to the English Woodland Creation Offer will support the planting of 50,000 trees to establish the new woodland. In time, we aim for these sites to become some of the richest and most biodiverse stretches of the Avon valley, enhancing both nature recovery and public enjoyment of this distinctive landscape.



- 2 Adders-tongue fern was recorded in Long Meadow and Gravel Pitts at Naunton Beauchamp** – a good indicator species of ancient meadows, which provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.
- 3 We became a Tubex local tree shelter collection and recycling hub for the Forest and others in the surrounding area.** To date, over 20,000 tree tubes have been recycled. In addition, we have changed how we protect newly planted trees – by using shorter protective tubes and guards and more deer fencing – to reduce the amount of single use plastic across the Forest.



1. Land at Hillborough
2. Adder's-tongue fern
3. Tree guard recycling



## A closer look

### Harvington Wood: From tees to trees

The former 47-hectare golf course acquired this year will be transformed, thanks to Environment Agency funding, into a diverse landscape of woodland, wetlands, and species-rich meadows, creating a lasting legacy for nature and local communities. The restoration will increase carbon storage, improve biodiversity, and help reduce flood risk across the catchment through Natural Flood Management. Existing trees, woodland, and hedgerows will be retained and enhanced, while former golf course features are being reshaped into valuable wetland habitats. New public access routes will also connect people with this evolving landscape, demonstrating how carefully planned habitat restoration can bring significant environmental benefits while creating a resilient, nature-rich place for future generations.

## A closer look

### From seed to tree

Every woodland begins with a single seed, but creating the Heart of England Forest takes far more than nature alone. It takes expertise, care, and the dedication of people at every stage of the journey.

Each year, our tree nursery team, supported by volunteers, carefully collects native seeds from across the Forest. These locally sourced seeds are naturally adapted to the area's climate and wildlife, helping to create resilient woodlands for the future.



The seeds are then nurtured, by our expert nursery team and supported by volunteers and corporate groups, before growing into healthy saplings ready for planting. This year, the nursery supplied 76,746 saplings, 66% of all the trees planted during the winter season.

From October to March, our forestry team and volunteers plant these young trees across the Forest, creating new woodlands and hedgerows that will benefit wildlife, landscapes, and local communities for generations. This season, a total of 116,500 trees were planted across 50 hectares.



Behind every tree is a team of people, with every contribution helping to expand the Heart of England Forest. Together, they are creating a lasting legacy – one seed, one tree, and one woodland at a time.



## Belonging to the Forest

### In numbers

**17,216** volunteer hours given.

An increase of 14.2% on the previous year and equivalent to more than 10 full-time employees.



**3,499** learning days delivered with schools.

Visiting on multiple occasions, learning new skills whilst delivering a deeper connection to nature.



**650** learning days for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), 700 days

to children eligible for Pupil Premium support, and more than 550 to children for whom English is not their first language.



**5** community consultations were held

for feedback on woodland creation plans, helping to gather local insight and strengthen neighbourhood community relationships in both Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

**2,995** attendees enjoyed our varied programme

of walks, talks, and events in the Forest, bringing people closer to nature on their doorstep.



## Highlights

Our evening volunteering pilot programme expanded significantly, attracting almost 150 people and creating more accessible opportunities for people unable to attend daytime sessions.

Left: Evening volunteers weeding at the tree nursery

The awe and wonder of children seeing wildlife for the first time and listening to the things children say as they begin to truly connect with nature - “I loved the smell of the yellow flowers in my special place – it smelt like home. It made me feel safe.”

98% of event attendees who scored the Forest event they attended gave a score of 8+ out of 10, showing a high level of satisfaction across the varied programme.

Right: School pupils connecting with nature



## Forest Firsts

- 1 Fully funded weekly After School club sessions** ran for two Redditch primary schools thanks to corporate partner Gateley, which were transformative for the pupils that participated, boosting confidence, wellbeing, social skills, and a lifelong connection with the natural world for young people who face significant challenges in their daily lives.
- 2 44 Woodland Wardens recruited** creating a new network of volunteers caring for the growing Forest.
- 3 A new project funded by Worcestershire Duckworth Trust began,** working with 5 schools in Redditch providing regular sessions in the Forest to improve nature connectedness among children who may otherwise face barriers to accessing the countryside. Through this programme 195 children attended 363 learning days, the schools also benefiting from our newly developed guidance materials and outdoor learning for staff.

- 4 The launch of our first volunteer management system,** thanks to funding from corporate partner National Grid Electricity Distribution, to strengthen volunteer recruitment, induction, and training processes, helping to improve coordination and support future growth.



Above: A pupil with Outdoor Learning Officer Elly  
1. Pupils enjoying After School club  
2. A Woodland Warden in the Forest  
3. Nature Connectedness Guide produced for schools



## A closer look

### Providing greater equality of access to nature

Our outdoor learning team worked with Year 4 students at St Luke's First School and St George's First School, both in Redditch, as part of the Worcestershire Duckworth Trust project, and mixed age students chosen by the schools for the Gateley funded After School club sessions.

“Our Year 4 class have absolutely loved the three forest learning sessions and have asked me frequently across the year when the next one will be! They have always been full of enthusiasm when they have returned to school after these sessions. The After School clubs have also been a massive success - the children selected for this from our vulnerable groups have thrived. I knew this would be a special experience for our pupils, and it has certainly exposed them to so many things they wouldn't have had the chance to do otherwise.”

– Sally Baker, Headteacher, St Luke's First School.



Above: Woodland Wardens Victoria, Matthew and Heather at Morgrove Coppice

## A closer look

### Woodland Wardens

Woodland wardens – a brand-new role launched this year – are a valued part of the Heart of England Forest community, helping to care for the Forest while building a deeper connection with nature.

Developed as part of our volunteering programme, Wardens regularly walk the Forest to check young saplings, inspect tree guards and stakes, monitor paths, and report any signs of damage or disease. Many also record wildlife sightings and seasonal changes, providing valuable information that helps us understand how the Forest is growing and evolving.

Giving their time when they can – whether on a morning stroll, a weekend walk, or while out with the dog – our Woodland Wardens help keep the Forest safe, cared for, and welcoming for everyone. Their commitment shows that belonging to the Forest isn't just about visiting; it's about playing an active role in helping it thrive, one walk at a time.

“Becoming a Woodland Warden feels like a natural way to give something back to a place that means so much to me. I feel a sense of responsibility for helping to protect and nurture the Forest, ensuring that it continues to thrive and provide a haven for wildlife, as well as joy, and a connection with nature for everyone who visits. I hope, in my own small way, to help safeguard this wonderful place for generations to come.” – Viki

## The Forest so far...

The Heart of England Forest is creating and conserving a vast, connected forest across Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

By restoring woodland, grassland, wetland, and other habitats, we are helping rare and threatened species thrive and supporting nature's recovery.

The Forest currently covers 3,640 hectares and nearly 2.3 million trees have been planted across 1,980 hectares since the charity began. To achieve our ultimate goal of a 12,000 hectare Forest, we will plant 12 million trees.

Created on land we acquire; the Forest will be here for generations to come. A place for wildlife to flourish and for people to find peace, connection, and community.

Through long-term protection and restoration, we are building a resilient landscape that grows stronger when nurtured together.

## What will your impact be?

How will you help?

Visit [heartofenglandforest.org](https://heartofenglandforest.org)



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