

Forest of Marston Vale



A Natural Partnership



Working in



The Forest of Marston Vale - Planting trees and creating new habitats to repair the damage of a hundred years of industrialisation.

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partnership to create



Helping industry deliver their environmental goals by contributing to the creation of the Forest of Marston Vale.

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accessible green space



At the heart of the Forest of Marston Vale, the Forest Centre and Millennium Country Park is a thriving attraction for the public and a spectacular venue for conferences and functions - generating revenue for the development of the Forest.

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for everyone to enjoy



Creating solutions through partnerships with industry, local authorities, volunteers and other stake-holders to create a rich landscape in the Marston Vale

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Wild and natural places that are accessible to everyone are as important for our quality of life as the design of the buildings in which we live and work. Over the last twelve years the Forest of Marston Vale has worked with local people and built partnerships to create woodland, wetland and high quality natural areas for all to enjoy.

The Forest covers 61 square miles between Milton Keynes and Bedford - an area that is scheduled to undergo extensive development over the next 20 years. Our Charitable Trust status allows us to identify strategic opportunities for delivering a varied green landscape in the Vale and to broker integrated solutions with a range of partners. In addition to our current and developing partnerships, we are working with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister “to develop initiatives to ensure that housing growth is sensitive to the local landscape and creates an extensive green infrastructure”*. The Community Forest is a unique vehicle for the delivery of green infrastructure throughout the Marston Vale.

The aim of the Trust - environmentally led regeneration of the Vale - is wholly compatible with sustainable development. We are working with planners, developers and builders to ensure that development is of high quality and delivers significant environmental benefit to the Forest and those that live and work here.

This booklet gives a glimpse of what we are achieving and how we are working in partnership to deliver a greener Vale for the benefit of all.

Tony Talbot
(Managing Director)

*Sustainable Communities Action Plan - Making It Happen (ODPM)



Involving



Creating





Creating the Forest of Marston Vale

The Forest of Marston Vale is working with local people and public and private sector partners to create new woods and other wild places for everyone to enjoy, helping improve the quality of life for both people and wildlife in the Marston Vale.

Our work is guided by the Forest Plan, a strategic framework for action, endorsed by a wide range of national, regional and local organisations, including central Government, and local communities.

Creating and managing high quality green spaces

- ✿ We provide professional advisory services on woodland and other habitat creation, helping landowners to deliver environmental improvements.
- ✿ We acquire land to create strategic blocks of community woodland and open spaces, providing major landscape, biodiversity and recreational benefits.
- ✿ We work with local communities to create accessible green spaces close to where people live.
- ✿ We use our expertise to ensure that existing woodlands and green spaces continue to deliver wide-ranging benefits for local people and wildlife.

Delivering integrated environmental solutions

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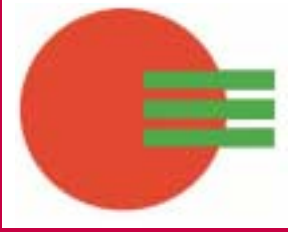
We use innovative design to provide environmental solutions to specific problems, from surface water management to visual screening. The unique experience and blend of expertise within the Forest Team allows us to develop solutions that simultaneously provide a wide range of benefits.

- ✿ We are working with public and private sector partners to create an area of new publicly accessible community woodland incorporating naturally designed surface water management features and delivering major biodiversity benefits.
- ✿ Our Millennium Country Park demonstrates how we can successfully integrate recreational, biodiversity, tourism and landscape benefits.
- ✿ We are working with EEDA to help develop a local market for wood fuel and other biomass as a renewable energy source delivering local economic and environmental benefits.

Involving people

New woodlands and other green spaces are most valuable when they meet the needs of the community. The Forest Team works with local people to design solutions that are right for the community. Our growing number of Community Volunteers are testimony to how much local support our work has gained over recent years, with volunteers helping out with every aspect of our business.

Sustainability



futureforests
for a Carbon Neutral¹ world



Solutions



Development





Solutions for business

The Forest of Marston Vale is working with business to solve problems and help deliver environmental aspirations. Being a Community Forest recognised by both National and Local Government and being operated by an independent charitable Trust, the Forest of Marston Vale is able to broker deals between Local Authorities and businesses for the benefit of all concerned - the Forest, business and the local community.

The Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy identifies Marston Vale as a key strategic corridor in a major potential growth area. Up to 19,000 dwellings and associated businesses and infrastructure are planned for Bedford, Kempston and Northern Marston Vale by 2021.

Planning

Our planning adviser works with the planning authorities to help them ensure appropriate benefits are delivered when development occurs in the Marston Vale.

Development

- ✿ We have worked with planners and developers to secure land in the Vale for community woodland which integrates with the built environment, locks up carbon from industry and contributes to key biodiversity targets.
- ✿ We have solved onsite and offsite landscaping and woodland creation problems associated with planning applications, for a wide range of commercial organisations.

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Sustainability

We are assisting local and national businesses to address sustainability issues - for greater efficiency, enhanced reputation and to help meet Corporate Social Responsibility aspirations - by working in partnership with:

- ✿ The National Energy Foundation - who have placed a member of staff at the Forest Centre, advising on renewable energy.
- ✿ Future Forests - to deliver carbon audits, sustainability advice and take companies carbon neutral.
- ✿ Westbury Homes - to help them become the market leader in sustainable residential development.

Corporate Friends and Partners

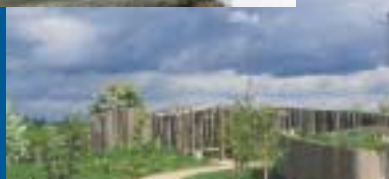
We offer a range of opportunities for businesses to hold corporate events and team-building exercises while supporting the activities of the Community Forest.



Events



Functions





The Forest Centre - The Natural Place to Meet

At the heart of the Forest of Marston Vale, the Forest Centre is set in the Millennium Country Park - 250 hectares of wetlands, open space and developing woodlands.

The Forest Centre was purpose-built to generate revenue, with all profits being applied to the creation of the Forest of Marston Vale. Meetings, conferences or events held at the Forest Centre help us deliver a greener future and make a positive statement about our clients' environmental commitment.

Conferences

- ✿ Purpose designed and well equipped meeting rooms for small groups or up to 120 delegates are available at competitive rates.
- ✿ All rooms have spectacular views.
- ✿ We offer a quality service so whether you require our all-inclusive conference package or a five-course dinner we are committed to the highest standards of food, drink, and customer care.

Functions

- ✿ A natural venue for wedding receptions and parties for all ages.
- ✿ Evening functions and BBQs are particularly popular as the Centre is closed to the public after 6pm and the whole Centre and the lake-front are available.

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A great venue for events

- ✿ We have held a number of very successful major public events - for children and the whole family.
- ✿ We are also the perfect flexible venue for all organisations to hold events.

Green tourism

- ✿ A wetland reserve rich in wildlife.
- ✿ Miles of trails to explore.
- ✿ Visitor centre with café and bar, gift shop, cycle hire, gallery, interactive exhibition and children's play area.

Partnerships for change

Over the twelve years since its creation, the Forest of Marston Vale has built relationships and partnerships with organisations that are key to the regeneration of the area. These organisations include planning and decision making bodies (both local and national), landowners, developers, businesses and the local community.

It is our ability to build relationships between these organisations that allows the Forest of Marston Vale to play a central role in delivering coherent environmental benefits as an integral part of sustainable development in the Vale.

By working proactively with our partners we deliver better environmental solutions, more efficiently - for the benefit of all.

Policy and decision-making bodies

We are expert on current policy and routinely contribute to consultation and policy generating exercises. We have regular contacts with the following key decision-makers:

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
The Highways Agency
DEFRA
The Countryside Agency
The Forestry Commission

Bedfordshire County Council
GO-East
Bedford Borough Council
Mid Beds District Council
The Internal Drainage Board

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Corporate Partners and sponsors

The Forest of Marston Vale is actively supported, both financially and in our aspirations, by a large number of local and national businesses. A full list of our Corporate Friends and sponsors is available in our annual review.

Sustainability partners

The Community Forest is about so much more than planting trees. The Vale is changing and will continue to do so. There is an opportunity for us to be the catalyst in the creation of high quality environmental enhancements, supported by sustainable technologies. We are working with the following organisations to make this happen:

The National Energy Foundation
Future Forests
Sustrans

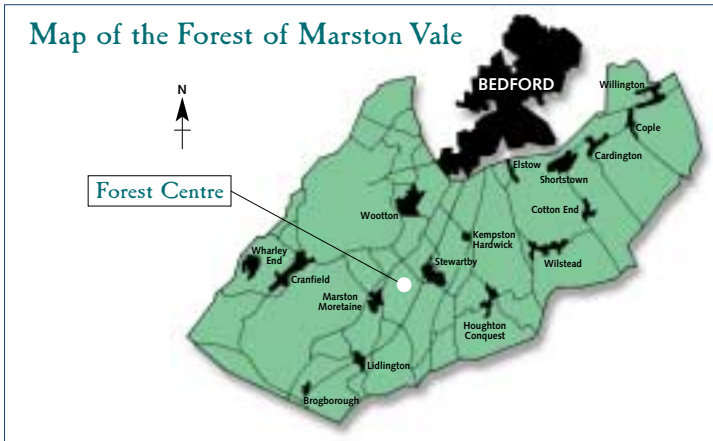
National Community Forests Partnership
East of England Development Agency
The Milton Keynes Energy Agency

The Forest of Marston Vale - a proven delivery vehicle

The Forest of Marston Vale has an impressive track record for the delivery of projects ranging in value from a few thousand to several million pounds. The success of these projects has depended on our ability as project managers, both to finance projects from a complex mix of private and public funding bodies and to deliver to the satisfaction of our clients.

- ❁ The Forest Centre and Millennium Country Park - a £6 million project built at the heart of the Community Forest, funded by the Millennium Commission, Hanson Properties Ltd, Shanks & McEwan Waste Services, National Power, City and St James Properties Ltd, the Countryside Commission, Bedfordshire County Council, Mid Beds District Council and the Countryside Agency.
- ❁ We secured £0.5 million from Heritage Lottery Fund, English Nature, shanks first fund, Bedfordshire County Council, the Countryside Agency, Cranfield Parish Council and the Linley Wightman Shaw Foundation, to buy seventy hectares of farmland to be planted as new woodland.
- ❁ In the first six months of 2003 we negotiated contributions from industry in excess of £300,000, for the delivery of environmental enhancement and woodland in the Vale.
- ❁ We are delivering the Bedfordshire section of Sustrans Route 51 (Oxford to Cambridge) with a total value of £3.3 million. The project is on budget and on schedule.
- ❁ We are delivering a £100,000 project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to record the oral history of the Vale
- ❁ We have delivered a large number of community projects ranging from pocket parks and community gardens to arts and interpretation projects.
- ❁ We have brokered direct support for landowners for environmental improvements to a total value in excess of £1.25million.
- ❁ We actively manage over 300 hectares of high quality public green space.

Map of the Forest of Marston Vale



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The Natural place to meet

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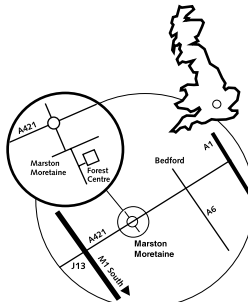
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Forest Centre
Between Bedford & Milton Keynes only
10 minutes from the M1 motorway
Junction 13.

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Pictures courtesy of Barry Mason and the Marston
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