

In this issue...

### Trees worth £100 to be won

Sign up to receive information about the Forest to be in with a chance of winning

### Water links developments

Two important developments in the Forest are bringing huge recreational and wildlife benefits to the area



# commentree

Issue 57 | Summer 2011



## Bedfordshire's forest - 20 years of success

Twenty years ago the visionary decision was taken to create a forest across 61 square miles of Bedfordshire between Milton Keynes and Bedford repairing the damage of a hundred years of clay extraction, brick making and landfill.

The Forest would replace an industrial landscape and create wild places for everyone to enjoy, making the Marston Vale a great place to live and work.

Twenty years on and with well over a million trees planted in the Forest, a great deal has been achieved. We aim to plant another five million by 2031.

### More than just trees

As you would expect, tree planting is very important, but there's a load more to the Forest than trees. Anyone visiting the Forest

Centre will realise just how vital people and wildlife are to the plan. Without you the Forest can't succeed.

### An independent charity

The Marston Vale Trust was created in 1998 to enable the Forest to own the land on which to build the Forest Centre.

Since then the organisation has become independent of local authorities, allowing us to bring in money from lots of sources that wouldn't have otherwise been available.

### Your support is vital

Our mission is clear – to create a Community Forest in Bedfordshire. To succeed we need your support.

We need you to plant a tree, make a donation, take part in one of our events, visit the Forest Centre (all profits are used to create the Forest), become a Forest Volunteer, adopt a

tree, become a Member, remember us in your will, sponsor Hannah's marathon run...

**A Forest in Bedfordshire is becoming a reality. Be part of it.**

Sign up to receive regular information about the Forest at [www.marstonvale.org/news](http://www.marstonvale.org/news)

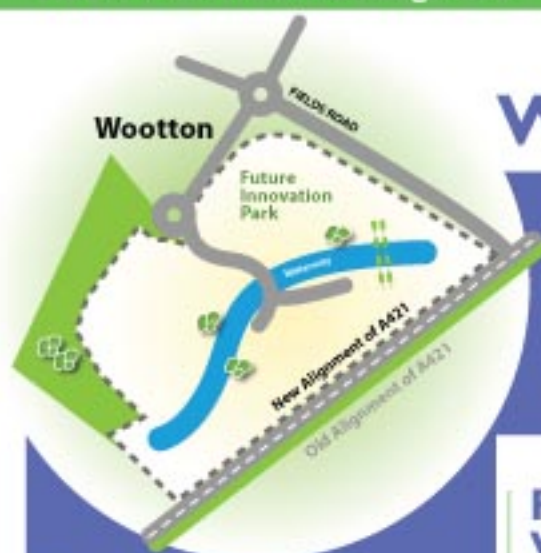


## Creating the Forest of Marston Vale

## Water links future developments

Two exciting and significant schemes in the Forest are moving closer to reality. Whilst work on one is due to start this year, the other is a more distant ambition.

Both however, will create significant wildlife habitats and recreational facilities, both are watery projects with wetlands and water-based recreational at their hearts and both are being made possible by creative thinking on the part of planners, developers, local land owners and charities.



### Waterway Park in Wootton

Bedford Borough Council has been moving forward the Marston Vale Innovation Park south of Fields Road. Landscaping works are planned for this year and later; four connected, long, thin ponds will be constructed.

This is the clever bit - initially these will be 'just a feature' in the Innovation Park but in the future they will become a significant section of the Bedford Milton Keynes Waterway - a new waterway linking the Grand Union Canal to the river Great Ouse - see plan above. The Park will also build a new, off road section of Route 51 cycleway.

More information Innovation Park - <http://tinyurl.com/4x1h9s3>  
Bedford Milton Keynes Waterway Park [www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk](http://www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk)

### Willington Watersports Lake

The second development is the 2.3km Watersports Lake in Bedford River Valley Park. The lake moved a step closer in March when Bedford Borough Council's Executive approved the principle of limited development in the Park to fund its construction.

Overwhelming public support was received for the project which will create a lake for a whole range of watersports and will include an Olympic length rowing course.

To celebrate this landmark, Mayor Dave Hodgson and representatives of the numerous partner organisations in the project (pictured below) planted four trees on what will become the north shore of the new lake.



### Forest Centre Wetland Trail

In recent months you may have noticed the new surfaced path meandering around the Wetland Reserve at the Millennium Country Park.

The new path, generously funded by WREN has created a firm and even path across level ground so the Trail's 2.5 kilometres is now easily accessible for pedestrians, wheelchair users and buggies.

The circular walk offers great views over lakes, ponds and reedbeds and it's only a short stroll to the bird hides where at this time of year you can catch a glimpse of a little egret or perhaps an oystercatcher or two.



Other notable sightings around the reserve in April were cuckoos, turtle doves and a pair of nesting tawny owls. Many wildflowers are appearing around the Reserve and if you are really lucky you may catch a view of an otter scampering along the edge of the Pilling Lake.

Children can have fun discovering our new interactive interpretation boards on the edge of the new Trail which offer an insight into the wildlife found in the Wetlands.

Admission to the Wetlands Reserve is £2.50/adult; £1.75/child & concessions. Please pay at reception; all income is ploughed back into the management of this special reserve.

### ISO14001 success

The Marston Vale Trust has once again successfully passed its annual ISO14001 accreditation audit, which means that our Environmental Management System meets the internationally accepted environmental management standard.

### WOODWORKS!

the festival of wood, woodlands and wood products

3 & 4 September 2011

Woodworks 2011 is shaping up to be a bumper weekend!!

Planning the ninth annual festival of wood, woodlands and wood products began as soon as the 2010 event was over and plenty of exhibitors have confirmed already including lots of firm favourites - lumberjacks, Vikings and birds of prey will all be back in the show ring, joined this year by ferret racing.

There's also a full line up of great music confirmed for both days.

Get those dates in your diary; it's the family event you won't want to miss!

[www.marstonvale.org/woodworks](http://www.marstonvale.org/woodworks)

### Frost fails to frustrate planting

More than seven hundred Bedfordians planted trees at Shocott Spring and in Bedford River Valley Park during February and March this year, more than making up for the loss of a day's planting in a frustratingly frosty December.

February saw the completion of Shocott Spring, a new Community Woodland where trees were first planted in 2005.

Since then several hundred people, including many local lower school pupils have planted trees there. The wood is open all the time, has lots of open space, surfaced paths and places to sit.

You can reach it on foot via a well marked footpath from Cotton End. Why not visit this summer?

It's easy and free. There are several ways to get on the list and make sure you are in with a chance of winning £100 worth of trees (see right). We just need your email or postal address...

Send a request to [info@marstonvale.org](mailto:info@marstonvale.org)  
Sign up at [www.marstonvale.org/news](http://www.marstonvale.org/news)  
Visit [www.bedfordshire-news.co.uk](http://www.bedfordshire-news.co.uk) and sign up there  
(until 30 June 2011) or call Guy Lambourne on 01234 762608



Sign up now!

## New wood - new name

The first trees of Octagon Wood were planted in March, on land close to Octagon Farm, east of Bedford. The new plantation marks an important stage in the development of Bedford River Valley Park - these are the first trees to be planted in the Park on land owned by Bedford Borough Council. More than two hundred people helped and enjoyed good weather, bacon sandwiches and cups of tea.



Picture by John O'Reilly

Whilst enjoying a break, everyone who took part was asked to suggest a name for the new wood and we were fortunate to have the help of Bedford Mayor, Dave Hodgson, who later, chose the name Octagon Wood.

Congratulations to Bob Hook and Penny Ward who both made the same suggestion. We expect to plant the second half of the wood next winter - look out for details at [www.marstonvale.org/news](http://www.marstonvale.org/news). The new woodland is open to the public and can be reached on foot or by bicycle via Route 51 from Priory Country Park.

## Centre for hire

~ great evening rates

Zumba's aerobic dancing classes are one of the first groups to take advantage of great evening hire rates at the Forest Centre, available now.



With a variety of sized rooms it could be just the venue you've been looking for. If you are planning meetings, training, or if you lead a regular leisure activity, its beautiful parkland location, ample, free parking and up to the minute audio-visual equipment will make it an attractive proposition for your clients.

Evening hire (6-10pm) costs £30 an hour. If you need catering laid on or other facilities brought in, that's no problem; just let us know.

Talk to Sue Harrison our Centre Manager on 01234 762616 [sue.harrison@marstonvale.org](mailto:sue.harrison@marstonvale.org)

## A marathon not a sprint

I've decided to run the Edinburgh Marathon to raise money to help create the Forest of Marston Vale. On 22 May I will be struggling along mile after mile of tarmac in support of a cause that plants thousands of trees, year after year.

If you have been involved in any of the Forest's places or events over the years, then you have been touched by the charitable activities of the Marston Vale Trust. Why not show your support for the Forest by sponsoring me as I embark on this marathon challenge? A donation of £15 will guarantee that one tree makes it to maturity.



Type Hannah Braithwaite at

[www.virginmoneygiving.com](http://www.virginmoneygiving.com)

Alternatively, make a donation at Forest Centre reception or contact me direct.

Life is a marathon not a sprint and by planting trees we are working together to create a better future for generations to come.

Thank you so much for your support.

Hannah Braithwaite, Fundraiser,

Tel: 01234 762615

Email: [hannah.braithwaite@marstonvale.org](mailto:hannah.braithwaite@marstonvale.org)

## Get out to the Grange



## Bedford River Valley Park

It may be a few years before the whole of Bedford River Valley Park is complete, but there's already

plenty going on to make it worth a visit. The Grange Estate is a great example of what can be achieved with the right mix of enthusiasm, dedication and public support. Here's what's planned in 2011...

- A 400m pedestrian path alongside a new back channel
- Planting reed along the edge of Dovecote Lake to reduce erosion and increase biodiversity
- A pond dipping platform
- A kayak portage
- Information boards
- A tern nesting raft and viewing screen at Causeway Lake.

Read more at [www.bedfordrivervalleypark.org](http://www.bedfordrivervalleypark.org)

## Forest Volunteers

- worthwhile, welcoming and well-organised. Volunteers make a huge contribution to the creation of the Forest. Could you be a part of it? You could make a real contribution to Bedfordshire's future. It's fun and sociable.

[www.marstonvale.org](http://www.marstonvale.org) or

[joan.ferguson@marstonvale.org](mailto:joan.ferguson@marstonvale.org)

## Forest news keep in touch

It's now really easy to make sure you keep up with everything that's going on in the Forest of Marston Vale.

Give us your postal address and we will send a paper copy of Commentree to you by post, twice a year, free of charge.

Alternatively, to receive everything electronically, including additional bulletins, we just need your email address.

## Ten trees worth £100 to be won

To show just how keen we are to hear from you, if you sign up during May and June we will enter your name into a draw to win the adoption of ten trees at Shocott Spring, between Shortstown and Cotton End (usual cost £100).

The winner will make a dedication for a special person or occasion and receive a certificate to mark the adoption. The draw will take place in early July.



Follow us on  
**facebook**

We are now using Facebook to tell people about stuff in the Forest. Become a fan of our new Facebook page by liking it, or alternatively you can visit this link <http://tinyurl.com/6h3jfkq> to become a fan of The Forest of Marston Vale

## At the Forest Centre

### Fathers' Day lunch

Sunday 19 June  
Two courses plus a present  
for Dad £13.99

Booking essential; call 01234 762613

### Crafty kids at the Forest Centre

Events aimed at 4-10 year olds.  
All materials provided.

Children must be accompanied by an adult. When booking please specify names and ages of children, name of adult attending and a contact phone number.

Ring 01234 767037 or email [info@marstonvale.org](mailto:info@marstonvale.org) to book a place.

### In search of the Green Man

Monday 30 May  
3 Sessions: 10.30am-12noon, 1pm-2.30pm,  
3pm-4.30pm Outdoor adventure.

£3.50 per child

### Kite making and flying

Friday 29 July  
3 Sessions: 10.30-12noon, 1-2.30pm,  
3-4.30pm Inside and out

£3.50 per child

### Make a minibeast

Monday 8 August  
4 Sessions: 10am, 11am and 1pm and 2pm  
Fun, facts and craft.

£2.50 per child

### Chasing Dragons

Friday 19 August  
3 Sessions: 10.30am -12noon,  
1-2.30pm, 3-4.30pm  
Dragon tales and dragonfly searching.

£3.50 per child



## In the Millennium Country Park

### Conservation volunteer tasks

Do something special, fun and active to help look after the Forest. We carry out a wide variety of practical projects, mostly at the Millennium Country Park. Everyone is welcome and there's no need to book. Wear old clothes and bring lunch if you can stay all day. Training, tools, tea and biscuits provided. Meet at the Forest Centre, 10.15am. Finishes around 4.15pm.

For more information contact  
[anna.charles@marstonvale.org](mailto:anna.charles@marstonvale.org) or  
[stephen.gascoyne@marstonvale.org](mailto:stephen.gascoyne@marstonvale.org)  
or call 01234 767037

### Forest 5k

Friday 17 June, 7.30pm start  
Ampthill & Fitzwick Flyers' excellent event. The course is fast, very flat and scenic and follows the paths around the Marston Vale Millennium Country Park.

All entry details visit  
[www.marstonforest5k.org.uk](http://www.marstonforest5k.org.uk)

### WOODWORKS!

Two days of wood craft, trees, machines, real ale, arena displays and fantastic folk roots music.  
At the Forest Centre, 11am- 5pm.  
[www.marstonvale.org/woodworks](http://www.marstonvale.org/woodworks)

## Guided Walks

### Sunday Strolls

5 Jun, 3 Jul, 7 Aug, 4 Sept at 10.30am  
Gentle Sunday walks in the Country Park. Hear how the Park was set up and a little about the surrounding area.  
On hard surfaced tracks which are mostly level but have short sections of gradient up to 1:9.

01234 767037 for more details.  
Cost £1, payable on the day - no need to book. Meet at reception. Walks last approximately 2 hours

### Herbal Medicine walk

Sun 12 Jun 2-3.30pm  
A walk focusing on a seasonal plant; recipes, medicinal uses of plants, research, myths and legends.

Booking essential, call 01234 767037.  
£5 per person (£2.50 donated to the Forest)

### Meet the Ranger walks

Sun 17 July, Sun 16 Oct 10am  
Join Park Rangers to find out about their job - park management, wildlife and much more.  
1 1/2 - 2 hours.  
Some rough paths and gradients of over 1:6

£3 Adults, £2 children (£1 discount for Forest Volunteers and Friends).  
Booking essential 01234 767037.

### Bird walks

Join our expert and friendly volunteer leaders to find out about the birds and other wildlife of the Country Park.



Wear waterproof footwear. Some rough paths and gradients over 1:6. About 3 hours.

Costs £3/adult, £2/child, £1 reduction for Forest Volunteers and Friends. Book in advance but pay the leader in the day.  
Call 01234 767037.

### Wildlife Walk

Saturday 11 June  
Nature in top gear on show today - birds, butterflies, flowers, dragonflies.  
What more could you want?

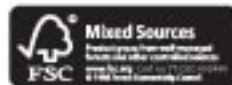
### Autumn migrants

Saturday 11 September  
Summer's done and birds are on the move.  
Check out the arrivals ahead of the frost.

## Address

The Forest Centre, Station Road,  
Marston Moretaine, Bedfordshire,  
England, MK43 0PR

Phone: 01234 767037  
Email: [info@marstonvale.org](mailto:info@marstonvale.org)  
Registered Charity No 1069229.



## How to find us

- By train - an enjoyable train ride (to Millbrook or Stewartby on the Bedford to Bletchley line) and a lovely 20 minute walk through the Park.  
Call 0845 602 4277 or visit [www.londonmidland.com](http://www.londonmidland.com)
- By bus - call Traveline 0871 200 22 33 or visit [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)
- By cycle - Route 51 takes you direct to the Forest Centre.
- By car - follow the brown signs from the A421 at Marston Moretaine.  
The entrance is off Station Road.

## Opening Times

The Country Park is open all the time. However the Centre and car park are open 7 days per week 10am - 6pm, until 30 October, then 10am - 5pm.

Cycle hire is open 10am - 5pm weekends and bank holidays in term time and every day except Wednesday and Thursday in school holidays.

From October, bikes should be booked 24 hours in advance.  
Call 07773 254627.